

SECTION ONE:

Southern Baptist Convention Motion on Freemasonry

	<u>PAGE</u>
1. Motion and its Meaning	1
2. Letter from Executive Director	3
3. Motion Sent to Home Mission Board	4
(Note motion was not "referred" to H.M.B. The Convention gave specific direction to the H.M.B.)	
4. S.B.C. Bullentins from 1992 Convention with introduction and discussion of the motion	5
5. Dr. Holly's comments addressing the motion, June 10, 1992	8
6. News reports of the motion	
a. <u>Good News</u>	10
b. <u>Baptist Message</u>	11
c. <u>Houston Post</u>	12
d. <u>Baptist Standard</u>	13
e. <u>Baptist Message</u> "Editorial"	14

"Vote to initiate a study of Freemasonry is a historic vote."

1870-1871

1871-1872

1872-1873

Section I: S.B.C. Motion on Freemasonry

The Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in Annual session at Indianapolis passed the following motion:

"The Southern Baptist Convention in annual session June 9-11, 1992, at Indianapolis, Indiana, directs the Interfaith Witness Department of the Home Mission Board to study the compatibility with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine of the organization known variously (sic) as the Masonic Lodge, Masonry, Freemasonry, and/or Ancient and Accepted Right (sic) of Freemasonry. The study is to encompass any and all branches and/or lodges thereof. Furthermore, the convention charges the Home Mission Board with the responsibility of bringing a report with recommendation to the Convention which is to meet in Houston, Texas, June, 1993."

The key elements of this motion are:

1. The Home Mission Board's Interfaith Witness Department has been instructed by her parent organization to prepare a study on Freemasonry. This is not a resolution which was referred by the Resolutions Committee to the Home Mission Board for them to do as they will with it. This is an action by the S.B.C. which requires a response from the Home Mission Board.
2. The Home Mission Board has been instructed to prepare a study which determines "the compatibility with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine of the organization known variously (sic) as the Masonic Lodge, Masonry, Freemasonry, and/or Ancient and Accepted Right (sic) of Freemasonry."
3. To fulfill this responsibility the Interfaith Witness Department must determine:
 - a. What is Freemasonry? What does it teach? What are its goals?
 - b. At what points of concern do Christianity and Freemasonry intersect? At these points of concern do they occupy compatible or contradictory positions?
 - c. Can a person hold to the postulates of Freemasonry and at the same time, sincerely, genuinely and honestly hold to the postulates of the Christian faith?
 - d. Are the methods, motives and goals of the Freemasons the same as the Church of Jesus Christ.

4. Furthermore, the Home Mission Board was instructed by the Southern Baptist Convention that this "study is to encompass any and all branches and/or lodges thereof." There is no organization of the Freemasonic Lodge, whether it be the Grotto of the Arabic Shrine or the Eastern Star, which shall be excluded from this study.
5. In addition, the Home Mission Board is charged by the convention "with the responsibility of bringing a report" to the Southern Baptist Convention in June of 1993 which will meet in Houston, Texas. This report will contain sections of conclusions and the supporting documentation in order to determine is Freemasonry compatible with Christianity.
6. Finally, the Home Mission Board has been charged with making a "recommendation to the Convention which is to meet in Houston, Texas, June, 1993." That recommendation will address the original question raised in this motion, i.e., "Is Freemasonry compatible with Christianity and Southern Baptist Doctrine."
7. In order to fulfill the responsibility established by this motion the Home Mission Board must:
 - a. Do a thorough study.
 - b. Reach a conclusion as to whether the teachings and practices of the Masonic Lodge are compatible with the Christian faith and with Southern Baptist doctrine.
 - c. A report must be made to the 1993 Southern Baptist Convention. While the motion does not address that issue, the distribution of that report prior to the Convention would facilitate it being responded to intelligently by the messengers at the Convention.
8. The Convention will act on the recommendation of the study.



Executive Committee
Southern Baptist Convention

Harold C. Bennett *President and Treasurer*

July 24, 1992

Dr. James L. Holly
550 N. Tenth Street
Beaumont, TX 77702

Dear Dr. Holly:

For your information and file, I am enclosing a copy of the motion on freemasonry which was referred to the Home Mission Board by the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, June 9-11, 1992.

The Home Mission Board will report on this matter to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Houston, Texas, June 15-17, 1993.

Sincerely yours,

Harold C. Bennett

HCB:gd

Enclosure

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

June 9-11, 1992

MOTION ON FREEMASONRY

During the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana, June 9-11, 1992, James L. Holly (TX) presented the following motion:

Motion: That the Southern Baptist Convention in annual session, June 9-11, 1992, at Indianapolis, Indiana, directs the president elected at this convention, to appoint an ad hoc committee for the study of the compatibility with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine of the organization known variously as the Masonic Lodge, Masonry, Freemasonry and/or Ancient and Accepted Rite of Freemasonry. The study is to encompass any and all branches and/or lodges thereof. Furthermore, the Convention directs the president to appoint this committee within thirty days of the conclusion of this Convention and to charge this committee with the responsibility of bringing a report with recommendation to the convention which is to meet in Houston, Texas, June 1993.

This motion was amended to refer the motion to the Interfaith Witness Department of the Home Mission Board. The amended motion is as follows:

That the Southern Baptist Convention in annual session June 9-11, 1992, at Indianapolis, Indiana, directs the Interfaith Witness Department of the Home Mission Board to study the compatibility with Christianity and Southern Baptist Doctrine of the organization known variously as the Masonic Lodge, Masonry, Freemasonry, and/or Ancient and Accepted Right of Freemasonry. The study is to encompass any and all branches and/or lodges thereof. Furthermore, the convention charges the Home Mission Board with the responsibility of bringing a report with recommendation to the Convention which is to meet in Houston, Texas, June 15-17, 1993.

Items 27, 55, 148, and 149
Proceedings of the
Southern Baptist Convention
June 9-11, 1992

Action:

Referred to the Interfaith
Witness Department of the
Home Mission Board.

ACB

MOTIONS PRESENTED TUESDAY

James L. Holley (TX)—Motion to direct the President elected by the 1992 Southern Baptist Convention to appoint an ad hoc committee to study all branches of Free Masonry; and to instruct the ad hoc committee to make their report and recommendations to the 1993 Southern Baptist Convention.

Bobby McFalls (FL)—Motion to request every institution of the Southern Baptist Convention to consider certain limitations on severance benefits and to report to the 1993 Convention the results of that consideration.

Fred Minix (VA)—Motion directing every institution of the Southern Baptist Convention to limit severance and entertainment benefits to a maximum of \$200.

Babb Adams (FL)—Motion to direct the Stewardship Commission and the Sunday School Board to work together to include a stewardship lesson in Sunday School materials during any month which has five Sundays.

Arthur H. McMillan (FL)—Motion to amend Article III of the Constitution to prohibit registering messengers from any church which endorses homosexual behavior.

Frank Ingram, Jr. (TX)—Motion to prepare

the SBC budget so as to permit every church to have a Metro Sunday School clinic every year.

Danny Creech (KY)—Motion to prohibit any Southern Baptist Convention Seminary from awarding an earned degree to any person who does not have the prerequisite degrees.

David Brumbelow (TX)—Motion that the Executive Committee and Baptist Press investigate printing a monthly publication.

Bob Philbeck (NC)—Motion that the Convention appoint a committee to study insurance benefits provided through the Annuity Board to cover treatment or therapy for victims of stress burn-out.

Doyle Smith (KS)—Motion to direct the Foreign Mission Board to encourage Keith Parks to remain as President until 1995.

Ray Barnhill (NC)—Motion to request the Annuity Board to consider reducing the health care insurance deductible and copayment limits.

Wayne Harrison (VA)—Motion to study implementation of a voting system to let all Southern Baptists vote on every matter coming before the Convention.

Joe Lenamon (TX)—Motion to study scheduling future meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention to begin on Monday and end on Wednesday.

Indiana Baptist Open House

State Convention Offices
900 N. High School Road
Indianapolis
2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

RIDE THE SHUTTLE BUS

Group transportation for messengers and visitors to the Hoosier Dome has been arranged by CHRISTIAN TRAVELERS of Des Plaines, Illinois. A daily SHUTTLE BUS SERVICE is available from most of the outlying hotels to and from the Hoosier Dome. Six bus routes will provide hourly service to 90% of the convention hotels. The shuttle bus service began on Sunday afternoon and will end after the final session on Thursday.

SHUTTLE BUS PASSES
(Unlimited travel on all routes)
\$15 per person

ROUNDTRIP AIRPORT TRANSFERS

Prearranged transportation from the airport to the hotel upon arrival and pickup from hotel back to the airport on day of departure. Rates are based on the distance from the airport and all rates reflect a significant cost savings.

AREA A: \$10 PER PERSON, ROUNDTRIP
ALL DOWNTOWN HOTELS
ALL SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST HOTELS
ALL WEST HOTELS (SPEEDWAY AREA)

AREA B: \$18 PER PERSON, ROUNDTRIP
ALL EAST HOTELS
ALL NORTHWEST HOTELS
(MICHIGAN ROAD AREA)

AREA C: \$25 PER PERSON, ROUNDTRIP
ALL NORTHEAST HOTELS (CASTLETON AREA)
MOST AIRPORT HOTELS HAVE FREE COURTESY VAN
OR BUS SERVICE TO AND FROM THE TERMINAL

Pages

ACTEENS NATIONAL ADVISORY PANEL

Shawna Byrd	—	North Carolina
Amy Goode	—	Kentucky
Cassie McAlister	—	Oklahoma
Shona Sugarek	—	Texas
Melanie Tedder	—	Florida
Duffy Walls	—	Tennessee

HIGH SCHOOL BAPTIST YOUNG MEN

David C. Harvey	—	Louisiana
Donivan R. McCoy	—	Louisiana
D. Kyle Sivadon	—	Oklahoma
Tim R. Whitehead	—	Oklahoma
Kelly D. Montgomery	—	Illinois
Len Singleton	—	Alabama
Timothy W. Conner	—	Alabama
Jeremy Wellmon	—	South Carolina
Justin L. Bunting	—	Texas
Steve Currie	—	Texas
Shawn Messer	—	Texas
Rusty Carter	—	Georgia
Robert Shonce	—	Michigan
John Highsmith	—	Tennessee

MISSIONS DAY CAMP

A Missions Day Camp will be provided for children who have completed grades 1-6 and whose parents are attending the Southern Baptist Convention. It is sponsored by the children and youth division of the Southern Baptist Convention Brotherhood Commission, with assistance from the Brotherhood Department of Indiana, Northside Baptist Church, Indianapolis, the Metropolitan Baptist Association, and the church recreation department of the Sunday School Board.

The Missions Day Camp will provide a missions education program and activities for the children of messengers during all daytime sessions of the Convention as follows:

Tuesday	8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Wednesday	8:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.
Thursday	8:00 a.m. - 11:40 p.m.

The cost is \$8.00 per day per child. This covers a lunch for Tuesday and refreshments each day, accident insurance and transportation.

All registration must be done at the Missions Day Camp booth near the Information Booth in the Indiana Convention Center. Registration will be from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. on Monday, June 8, and during daytime Convention sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Prescribed dress codes must be met in order to board the bus: no short shorts, no tank tops, and only soft-soled recreational shoes—with socks.

Wheelchairs Available

Persons needing wheelchairs inside the Convention Center and Hoosier Dome should check with First Aid.

Comments Made By James L. Holly, M.D.
In Support of Motion to Study Freemasonry
at 1992 Southern Baptist Convention
in Indianapolis, Indiana

Mr. President, Brothers and Sisters-in-Christ, I speak to implore you to support the motion which is before the convention.

What I think about Freemasonry is well known.

But the issue before us today is not what I believe or think about Freemasonry.

The issue is what do Southern Baptist as a Convention really **KNOW** about Freemasonry!

The issue is not how many Masons will stand up and profess belief in the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

The issue is what do Southern Baptists actually know about the Masonic Lodge.

The issue before us is not whether messengers at this Convention want to be bothered with this matter.

The issue is what do Southern Baptists as a covenant community in reality know about what Masons do and what they teach.

A few weeks ago the ministry team which I lead conducted a conference in North Carolina. On Saturday afternoon, for over two hours men stood and confessed sins in their lives and became accountable to their brothers in Christ for victory.

During that time, one man stood and said:

"Dr. Holly has not taught on this and he has not spoken to me about it, but I read a paper written by him. God has led me to a decision. For the past twenty-two years there has been a Masonic ring on this finger. It is no longer there, I have renounced Freemasonry."

That man was a Companion and Sir Knight in the York Rite Body of Freemasons. He is an active deacon in his church. He loves the Lord Jesus. But, even in all this, he did not understand the implications of the things he had done until they were explained to him. Once he understood them, he acted in obedience to God.

As a convention, we need to help countless numbers of other Southern Baptist deacons, pastors and laymen, understand the implications of what they have done.

Later in this discussion, this former Mason will give testimony of the need for Southern Baptists to study and to know what the Lodge teaches, believes and practices.

If evangelism is your priority, you should support this study.

If revival is your priority, you should support this study.

If the truth is your priority, you should support this study.

If you are a member of the Masonic Lodge and believe it to be a harmless fraternal organization, you should support this study. With this study, you will have the opportunity to disprove the accusations which I and others have made against the Masonic Lodge.

Let us as Southern Baptists heed God's admonition in I Corinthians 16:13-14:

Be true to God's standard, be alert to spiritual danger,
Be strong, be a man, be kind and gentle in all that you
do."

For all of these reasons and many more, I humbly request and beseech my fellow messengers who bow their knee to the Lord Jesus Christ Alone, to stand to the question, to support this study, to vote for this motion.

Thank you, Mr. President.

James L. Holly, M.D.
Wednesday, June 10, 1992

Cults: Tom Perkins

KVOI

Southern Baptists Vote To Study Masonry

A motion to examine Masonry was approved by Southern Baptists during their annual convention held in Indianapolis last month. The year-long study will look into charges that Masonry is incompatible with Southern Baptist beliefs and with Christianity.

Masonry, an international fraternal organization, claims there is no conflict between their teachings and religion. But it has long been condemned by many Christian leaders and denominations as being a secret organization with occultic influences. The Assemblies of God, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Salvation Army, Wesleyan, Nazarene, Free Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church in America and the Roman Catholic Church are some of the denominations that discourage or forbid its members to join the Masonic lodge.

The Masonic Grand Lodge of Utah also refused membership to Mormons in the past because LDS temple ceremonies were taken from secret Masonic initiation rites.

The Southern Baptist Church is the largest Protestant denomination with over 15 million members. According to the *Arima Baptist Beacon*, 18% of its deacons and 1% of its pastors are or have been members in the Masonic lodge.

The Southern Baptist study was proposed by James C. Holly, a physician from Beaumont, Texas. He hopes the convention will prevent Masons from holding leadership positions in the Southern Baptist Church. Holly, a member of the Southern Baptist Convention Board for eight years, gave out 10,000 copies of his booklet, *The Southern Baptist Convention and Freemasonry* to denominational leaders. The 16-page booklet compares biblical teachings with writings of Masonic leaders and leaders. According to Holly, the Masonic lodge is incompatible with faith in Jesus Christ, is deceitful and is condemned by the Word of God.

Associate Pastor Hector Martin agrees with Holly's proposal on banning pastors, deacons and Sunday school teachers that are Masons. Martin, the administration director at Casas Adobes Baptist Church, says most Southern Baptists are unaware of Masonry's evil roots. "Outwardly it

appears good with their accomplishments in society, but this is common among cults to lead people in."

Steve Dowdle, Ph.D., is also an associate pastor at Casas Adobes Baptist Church and directs its counseling center. His grandfather was a 32nd degree Scottish Rite Mason and both his mother and grandmother were active in the Eastern Star, a Masonic auxiliary for women. "All of them said Masonry is a wonderful organization," according to Dowdle, "but I have a problem with secret organizations, oaths, and rites. Feelings run very deep—this is a sign there is a problem with Masonry."

Dowdle believes that Masonry is a part of the culture in many small southern towns where the Southern Baptist Church and the business community are influential. Many businessmen and politicians are Masons. Baptists are also joiners and conditioned to structured organizations like Masonry.

Most people are ignorant of the occult, according to Dowdle. "Even Sunday School Board President James Draper was a Mason, until he looked into their teachings and left," said Dowdle. He also agrees with Holly that Masonry is seductive in nature and occultic.

Robert Hannon disagrees. Hannon is the Sovereign Grand Inspector General in Arizona, the highest level for the Scottish Rite in the state. Hannon, himself a member of a Tucson United Methodist Church, said there is no set doctrine, therefore Masonry doesn't conflict with Christianity. Masonry has core beliefs of brotherly love, relief and truth. "It is a religious organization, but it is not a religion," said Hannon.

But according to some Masonic writers, it is a religion. Hannon's personal representative, Rex R. Hutchens, Ph.D. acknowledged Masonry is a religion, depending on how one defines the word. Masonry could be considered a religion because it is an organization that believes in God.

Hutchens was raised Pentecostal and is a college philosophy teacher. He has written a book about the 32 degrees in the Scottish Rite and explained that it is O.K. to be more than one religion, such as Christian and Mason or Christian and Taoist.

Hutchens is extremely offended at the things said about Masonry. Competition between the church and the lodge for resources is why he believes there is controversy. Anti-masonic promoters make a lot of money. "They know they're not telling the truth," said Hutchens. Hutchens is writing another book entitled *Generation of Vipers* which will deal with accusations made by anti-masonic ministers.

Holly and others have charged that the rituals and symbols used in Masonry are derived from occultic and pagan origins. "Get off it! Christianity is shot through with nature worship and astrology," said Hutchens. "That doesn't make Christ's truth invalid."

According to Hutchens, some examples of paganism in Christianity are the date of Christmas celebrations, feast days for saints and the symbol of the lamb. The lamb actually comes from the constellation Aries, he said.

This symbolism in Masonry is similar to the parables Jesus taught, because the masses would not understand them. "A lot of it is our fault for tolerating ignorance far more than we should," said Hutchens. "But the church does the same thing when it requires rote memorization of scriptures without understanding."

Pastor Martin says that Baptists and other Christians involved with Masonry should do an honest search into the organization to see how it compares to the mandate of Christ in the Scriptures. Hutchens and Hannon agree and hope that the study in the Southern Baptist convention will clear up misunderstandings in the denomination.

Tom Perkins is vice president of the Christian Awareness Fellowship and can be heard every Monday on the "Good News Daily Magazine" from 3:00-4:00pm on 690 AM, KVOI.

Christian Awareness Fellowship is a ministry that educates the Church about false religions and the lost about Jesus Christ. For free information on why many feel Masonry is incompatible with Christianity, write the CAF at P.O. Box 35335, Tucson, AZ 85740, or call 742-3032.

Messengers approve Freemasonry study

INDIANAPOLIS — Southern Baptist Convention messengers set the stage last week for what may prove to be a divisive battle, agreeing to study Freemasonry's "compatibility" with Christianity and denominational doctrine.

Messengers voted overwhelmingly to "instruct" the interfaith witness department of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board to study the matter. The action disappointed both Larry Holly, who was pushing for appointment of a special committee to study the matter, and Larry Lewis, president of the Home Mission Board.

"But I'm just going to pray and trust the Home Mission Board will deal with it," said Holly, who added he would seek to change the report if it does not deal with the issue honestly. Holly is a Beaumont, Texas, physician.

The board will deal with the issue but not without apprehension, Lewis said. In fact, the study inevitably will hurt missions, he added. "Any position we take — either for Masons or against Masons — will generate a certain amount of ire and wrath and thus hurt missions."

The board has declined to study Freemasonry on two other occasions. This time, however, messengers made their language clear. When someone later suggested the board could not conduct the study a third time, SBC President Morris Chapman reminded him the convention had "instructed" the study and expected a report in 1993.

As Lewis predicted, the study is likely to spark debate. A recent poll indicates 14 percent of Southern Baptist pastors, 13 percent of directors of missions and 18 percent of deacon chairs are or have been Masons. On the other hand, Holly and others adamantly oppose Freemasonry because of its secrecy and what they claim are cult-like activities. Holly has called Freemasonry "a force of darkness that is preventing revival" in the convention.

Last month, Holly mailed out 5,000 copies of a 58-page booklet opposing Freemasonry at an estimated cost of \$8,000. Last week, Holly sought to establish an ad hoc committee to study Freemasonry. When the motion came up for debate, Holly declared: "The issue is not how many Masons will stand up and profess belief in the saving grace of Jesus

Christ. The issue is: What do Southern Baptists actually know about the Masonic Lodge?"

Holly urged all Southern Baptists interested in revival and truth to support the study and called on Masons to support the study as a way to disprove his charges.

Fred McPeake of Knoxville, Tenn., countered that his experience as a Mason convinces him it is not a religion, a substitute for religion or a false religion and "is not in conflict with the Baptist faith." He added, "It would be a waste of time, a waste of funds in needed areas to get involved in investigating a fraternity that is well known and has been well known for years and years."

Randy Day of Texas then spoke in favor of the study as a means of offering counsel to churches on the subject.

At that time, Alvin Rowe of Florida offered an amendment to instruct the Home Mission Board rather than a special committee to make the study. The amendment was adopted easily, as was the amended motion.

The fact that the subsequent study will spark emotions seems assured. Even last week, a messenger rose twice to defend Freemasonry, insisting he has never met an atheistic or agnostic Mason. After the second statement, Chapman urged messengers to direct their emotion into prayers for the Home Mission Board and its study.

Meanwhile, Louisiana messengers differed on whether the study was a good idea or not. Overall, six of the 10 messengers asked disagreed with the study. (Some responses are included in question-and-answer box).

Those agreeing with the study said it would help the convention to know what Masonic beliefs are so people can make their own decisions about it. However, others warned the study may come with too great a cost.

Director of Missions Lawrence Clegg of Hammond noted Masons have made major contributions to Baptist work as individual church members and leaders. Pastor Daniel O'Reagan of Tioga cited the difficulty of learning what a secret society believes without being a member. And pastor George Haile of Baton Rouge wondered where the study would lead. "You start with one group, then what other group will you target?" he asked.

Southern Baptists to undertake study of Freemasonry teachings

BY STEVE BRUNSMAN
OF THE HOUSTON POST STAFF

INDIANAPOLIS — The Southern Baptist Convention meeting called for a study of Freemasonry as a pseudo-religion Wednesday as a local gay and lesbian coalition claimed the Baptists were bigoted.

A one-year study focusing on how Masonic teachings compare with Christianity was easily approved by voting delegates, called messengers, during the annual meeting of the 15-million member denomination.

James Holley, of Beaumont, the man behind a 58-page booklet arguing that Lucifer is god of the Masonic Lodge and that the lodge's worship is satanic, requested the study.

One survey suggests that 20 percent of Southern Baptist men have been Masons.

The study will be done by the SBC's Home Mission Board. A report will be issued at next year's SBC meeting in Houston.

"The issue is not what I think or what I believe. The issue is what do Southern Baptists really know about Freemasonry?" Holley asked prior to the vote.

Fred McPeake of Knoxville, Tenn., executive director of the Scottish Rite of Masons, disagreed. Freemasonry is not a religion and has no god or path of salvation like Christianity, he said.

"Freemasonry has been in existence for generations. Most members know it is not in conflict with the Baptist faith," he said.

In the same session, Baptists later OK'd a resolution urging members to refrain from joining "organizations with teachings, oaths, or mystical knowledge which are contrary to the Bible." It is unclear if the Masons, not named in the resolution, were tar-

gets of the statement.

Resolutions committee chairman R. Albert Mohler said his group received a number of petitions on Masons and knew that an action was planned by Holley.

Blocks away, the Gays and Lesbians Working Against Violence group, ripped into the Baptist organization, saying its condemnation of homosexuality was "hatred in the name of God."

On Tuesday, the convention's 17,500 delegates censured and "withdrew fellowship" from two North Carolina churches for blessing the union of two men and ordaining a gay minister.

They also approved an SBC constitutional change that will likely oust churches that "affirm, approve or endorse homosexual behavior."

The change must be approved again next year in the SBC's Houston meeting for the bylaw to take effect.

"Gays and lesbians in this country can no longer stand silent as the country's largest Protestant church spews out hatred in the name of God," coalition member Chris Gonzalez said. "They are using the book of love to spew out hatred."

Gonzalez, 28, said other major U.S. religious groups, like Roman Catholics, have been more willing to treat gays and lesbians as human beings, even if they disagreed with homosexuality.

Joining Gonzalez was Rose Zee Miller, 38, a lesbian mother and grandmother, and the Rev. Howard Warren, 57, an openly gay Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) minister who directs an AIDS center.

In their action, the Baptists said that the Bible clearly and without argument declares homosexuality a sin.

Warren disagreed, saying that anti-gay views rest largely on literal reading of fewer than a dozen Bible verses.

Masonic study to be asked

■ THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION will be asked to make a study of Masonic Lodge membership and its relationship to Christianity at its annual meeting in Indianapolis, June 9-11. James Larry Holly, Beaumont physician and frequent critic of then President Lloyd Elder while serving as a Sunday School Board trustee, 1983-91, has distributed a 58-page booklet to SBC and state convention leadership and Indiana churches contending Freemasonry is antagonistic to Christianity. He, with Charles Burchett, pastor of First Church, Kirbyville, asks them to support a motion for an ad hoc committee to study the Masonic Lodge and report to the 1993 convention. Holly, who is a member of Calvary Church, Beaumont, said he wants to be on the committee. In 1985 Holly and Burchett co-sponsored a resolution on Masonry which was referred to the Home Mission Board Interfaith Witness Department for study. The HMB declined to make the study. According to the Sunday School Board's View Poll, 14 percent of Southern Baptist pastors are or have been Masonic lodge members along with 13 percent of directors of missions and 18 percent of deacon chairmen.

1992 Southern Baptist Convention *speaks for itself*

The 1992 Southern Baptist Convention pretty well speaks for itself.

The fundamental/conservatives continued more strongly in control. There was absolutely no question about the outcome of any vote, except one that will be mentioned later.

Issues that surfaced before the convention were determined in the fashion most observers predicted.

There was an overwhelming vote to send a clear message about the convention's stand on homosexuality. Not only were the two North Carolina Baptist churches that had sanctioned homosexuality as a lifestyle turned out of the convention, messengers took the first step to make permanent the exclusion of any church that sanctions homosexuality.

Certainly homosexuality is a sinful lifestyle that is repugnant to the huge majority of Southern Baptists. And, certainly convention messengers were right in sounding a clear condemnation of a homosexual lifestyle. But, as numerous people have pointed out, making a matter of faith and practice a basis for affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention, and placing that matter in the constitution, is a historic action that should only be taken with grave awareness of the consequences. It has taken the Southern Baptist Convention 147 years to place a matter of faith and practice into the constitution, even for the first vote. If messengers to next year's convention approve the constitutional amendment, and they are very likely to do so, will this open the door to additional stipulations and thereby continue to drastically change the nature of the convention? Of course, it will. The only remaining question will be how soon will efforts be made to place additional faith and practice issues in the constitution.

Also, messengers' vote to initiate a study of Freemasonry is a historic vote. Baptists are pretty well willing to go along with any study. A study is innocuous and implies neither approval or condemnation. As the debate developed on the motion to initiate the study, an interesting dynamic developed concerning who would conduct the study. Strong supporters of the motion wanted the SBC president to appoint a committee to study the Freemasons, and some wanted to be part of the committee. James Holly, a strong advocate of the study, has already conducted his study of the Masons and printed a 60-page report of the study that he sent to 5,000 Southern Baptist pastors and other leaders. Holly concludes that Freemasonry is "occultic," and that the "men who are involved in Freemasonry, on the whole, are not evil men. Yet, they are men who are being used for an evil purpose." He also concludes that Freemasonry among Southern Baptists is a hindrance to revival in the Southern Baptist Convention. Undoubtedly, he would like the SBC study to reach the same conclusions.

But, the task of the study was given to the Inter-Faith Witness Department of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. HMB President Larry Lewis strongly objects to his agency receiving the assignment. His agency has twice looked at Freemasonry and determined it is not a religion and, therefore, is not in the purview of his Inter-Faith Witness Department that studies only religions. But, SBC President Morris Chapman ruled that messengers had instructed the agency to conduct the study, and study Freemasonry it must. Lewis was unable to gain a microphone to respond to messengers, but told reporters later that such a study by the Home Mission Board would only hurt SBC missions.

Lewis is right. If the study his agency conducts is seen as favorable to Freemasonry, those opposing it will be upset and likely vindictive. If it is seen as unfavorable to Freemasonry, Freemasons, who make up about 15 to 18 percent of SBC pastors and deacons, will be angry and could take it out on mission giving. The HMB has been placed in a no-win situation.

The presidential election was absolutely no surprise. The only question anyone had about the election was if Ed Young would win without a run-off. He did, easily. Messengers continue to support the fundamental/conservative leadership of the convention.

The other matters that aroused pre-convention interest centered around the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. There was no question about what messengers would do about the last remaining particle of SBC relationship with the BJC; it was eradicated. The only question was if messengers would support the SBC Executive Committee recommendation to distribute to other agencies the \$300,000 fund the BJC claimed, or if messengers would agree to Christian arbitration suggested by the BJC. Again, messengers followed the leadership and voted to give the money to the Executive Committee to distribute as it sees fit. The only question remaining is if the board will decide, in its October board meeting, to sue the convention. If it does, legal fees will continue to be a major expenditure of the convention.

So, what was the surprise vote? This year as last year, Lee Porter, registration secretary, survived another effort by the fundamental/conservatives to oust him. How? Who knows for sure. Apparently, Porter's integrity in the exercise of his duties is unquestioned. His manner is reassuring as he instructs messengers how to cast their votes, and his reporting of votes, with measured expression that builds to a climax of revelation, has become a fixture of convention life messengers simply are not willing to change.