

## **SECTION FOUR**

### **What Other Denominations Say About Freemasonry**

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"No one shall be received into membership into a PCA church who is a member of a Masonic organization. Present members of a church in the PCA who are members of a Masonic organization will be given a period of one year to read the report of the Committee to Study Freemasonry, pray, and consider their membership in the Order in light of the clear statement of incompatibility of Freemasonry with Biblical Christianity. After said, year, they will be allowed to resign membership or become the subject of formal church discipline." (Adopted April 15-16, 1988)

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#### Section IV: What Other Denominations Say About Freemasonry

The following denominations are part of those who have taken a public and official stand against the Masonic Lodge. The documents referred to are on file with the Home Mission Board in the office of the President, Vice-President for Evangelism and Director of the Interfaith Witness Department. In addition, the President of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Executive Secretary of the Convention and the Chairman of the Home Mission Board's board of trustees each have a copy of all of these documents.

1. Roman Catholic Church -- National Catholic Conference of Bishops
  - a. Bishops' Committee Calls Masonry Irreconcilable With Catholic Faith" -- June 10, 1985
  - b. Pastoral Problem Of Masonic Membership, Report of the Committee for Pastoral Research and Practices -- March 14, 1985
  - c. Catholicism and Freemasonry -- April 2, 1985
  - d. "Catholicism Vs. Freemasonry Irreconcilable Forever" -- Soul Magazine, May-June 1991 ("The goal of Masonry is the overthrow and replacement of the Christian religious and political order with a new order based on naturalism.")
  - e. New Catholic Encyclopedia, article on Freemasonry
  - f. Papacy and Freemasonry -- Speech Made by the Late Monsignor Jouin on December 8, 1930
  - g. Humanum Genus, Encyclical Letter of his holiness Pope Leo XIII on Freemasonry, April 20, 1884
  - h. About Freemasonry and the Church, January 1975
2. Methodist Church of England
  - a. "Methodist Committee Counsels Against Joining Freemasonry" -- August 9, 1985
  - b. "British Methodists' report on Masons creates furor in U.S." -- August 9, 1985
  - c. Guidance To Methodists on Freemasonry -- This is an important document

3. Wesleyan Methodist Church -- Membership Commitments

4. Russian Orthodox Church

- a. Orthodoxy and Masonry, May 1973
- b. Masonry or Christ: Including the position of Orthodox Christianity regarding Freemasonry

"We must warn all good Christians that Masonry in reality is a religion....It is shameful and illogical for a Christian to admit that he is in a state of darkness and is seeking light through masonry...Since Masonry rejects the Divinity of Jesus Christ and places Him on an equal level with founders of other religions, every Christian should stop and realize the implications of Masonry to his Christian Faith...Thus the incompatible contradiction between Christianity and Freemasonry is quite clear. It is natural that various Churches of other denominations have taken a stand against Freemasonry"

This is an excellent and important document.

- c. "Resolution on Masonry", December, 1955

"Freemasonry, in any of its forms, can not be tolerated within the Body of Christ, His Church."

4. Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod

- a. Statement of the Synod's position and congregational responsibilities in reference to fraternal organizations.
- b. "Ancient Free and Accepted Masons"
- c. "Christians and Their Affiliations", adapted July, 1990.
- d. Masonry in the Light of the Bible

"In view of the obvious conflicts between the religious philosophy of Masonry and the declared divine truths of Scripture, the question arises: Can a Mason honestly maintain that he can be and remain a consistent, confessional, churchgoing Christian and at the same time pass as an active lodge member?"

The obvious conclusion is, "No!"

5. Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

- a. Model Constitution and Bylaws
- b. The Shepherd and Organizations

**This is an important document. It addresses many critical questions about Freemasonry.**

- c. "What is Wrong With the Lodge", The Northwestern Lutheran, August 31, 1958
- d. "What is Wrong with the Lodge", The Northwestern Lutheran, September 14, 1958
- e. "Why Do We Object To Lodge Membership?", The Northwestern Lutheran, January 10, 1965
- f. "The Lodges and Social Memberships", The Northwestern Lutheran, November 7, 1971
- g. "Dislodging the Lodge", 1988

6. Synod Anglican Church of England

- a. "Anglican Synod Condemns Freemasonry", July 14, 1987
- b. "Anglicans Accuse Masons of Blasphemy and Heresy", July 14, 1987
- c. "Anglican Leaders Endorse Report Blasting Masons", February 18, 1987
- d. Freemasonry and Christianity: Are They Compatible? High Anglican Church of England, 1987 -- **This is an excellent tool**

7. Church of the Assemblies of God

- a. The General Council of the Assemblies of God Office of the General Secretary, section 4. Membership in Secret Orders
- b. The Question of Freemasonry, J. Edward Decker, Jr., published by a member of the Assemblies of God

8. Church of the Nazarene

Manual, Church of the Nazarene, 1989

**"Membership in oath-bound secret orders or societies. The quasi-religious nature of such organizations dilutes the Christian's commitment, and their secrecy contravenes the Christian's open witness."**

9. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (This church later merged with the PCA)

Christ or the Lodge?, The Committee on Christian Education, The Orthodox Presbyterian Church

10. Reformed Presbyterian Church

- a. "Which God? A Brief Statement Regarding Freemasonry"
- b. Report of the "Special Committee to study Overture 1d on Freemasonry", May 20, 1969
- c. Report of Bills and Overtures Committee, May 22, 1981
- d. 1955 Statement of the Bible Presbyterian Church Concerning Oath-bound Secret Societies

11. General Assembly Presbyterian Church in America

- a. Ad Interim Committee on F, 1988
- b. Overture 29: From Missouri Presbytery

"No one shall be received into membership into a PCA church who is a member of a Masonic organization. Present members of a church in the PCA who are members of a Masonic organization will be given a period of one year to read the report of the Committee to Study Freemasonry, pray, and consider their membership in the Order in light of the clear statement of incompatibility of Freemasonry with Biblical Christianity. After said, year, they will be allowed to resign membership or become the subject of formal church discipline." (Adopted April 15-16, 1988)

- c. Topical Summary of Document Sources
- d. Ad Interim Committee to Study Freemasonry, 1987, Full Text of their report enclosed.

12. Synod: Christian Reformed Church in America

- a. The Christian Reformed Position on Lodge Membership, 1975
- b. The Christian Reformed Position on Lodge Membership, 1977
- c. Acts of Synod, 1958
- d. Acts of Synod, 1974
- e. Acts of Synod, 1975
- f. Acts of Synod, 1977

13. Seventh-Day Adventists

Freemasonry and Christianity, 1989

"Therefore, from a Christian point of view one cannot be a true Christian and a Freemason."

14. Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches

Freemasonry and Christianity, 1980

15. General Association of Regular Baptist Churches

a. The Christian and the Lodge, 1962

b. I Left the Lodge

16. Baptist Union of Scotland

Baptists and Freemasonry

17. Quote From the book The Atheist Viewpoint by a famous French Freemason, advisory editor Madalyn Murray O'Hair

"Let us not forget that we (Freemasons) are the counter church; that we must destroy the influence of religion in every form in which it presents itself. The church is our terrible adversary, the Beast that is wounded to death, but which in the convulsions of its agony, is gathering strength to make a last desperate attack."

MASONS June 7, 1985 (350 words)

# BISHOPS' COMMITTEE CALLS MASONRY 'IRRECONCILABLE' WITH CATHOLIC FAITH

By Jerry Filteau

WASHINGTON (NC) — A committee of U.S. bishops has called Freemasonry "irreconcilable" not only with Catholicism, but with all Christianity.

In a confidential report mailed this spring to all Catholic bishops in the country, the committee said that "the principles and basic rituals of Masonry embody a naturalistic religion, active participation in which is incompatible with Christian faith and practice. Those who knowingly embrace such principles are committing serious sin."

A background study included in the report also described most U.S. Masonry today as "politically reactionary and racist" and said that, with the exception of one local lodge in New Jersey that admits blacks, "all women, men under 21, and blacks are barred from Masonic initiation in regular lodges."

The study sharply criticized the "pseudo-Islamic ritual" of the nation's 600,000 Shriners, who are high-level Masons of the Scottish Rite or the York Rite.

The study rejected the idea that it is unecumenical to discuss such matters. Christian churches which are "open to men and women, blacks and whites, young and old, rich and poor" exemplify brotherhood better than Masonry and "need not apologize for their stand on lodge membership," it said.

The report was put together by the Committee for Pastoral Research and Practices of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, headed by Cardinal Bernard F. Law of Boston. In an April 19 cover letter accompanying the report, Cardinal (then Archbishop) Law said that he was sending it to the bishops "for your own personal information."

The NCCB released the cardinal's letter and the report to National Catholic News Service in Washington after a copy had been given to NC News in Rome.

The report marks another major step in a controversy that goes back more than a decade concerning the nature of Freemasonry in general, U.S. Freemasonry in particular, and the compatibility of being a Catholic and a Mason.

Because of widespread confusion in recent years, there are "serious problems" of Catholics who joined Masonic lodges in good faith, and these issues must be approached with "great tact," the report said.

MORE TO COME

Committee for Pastoral Research and Practice  
NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS  
3211 Fourth Street. N.E.,  
Washington, D.C. 20017  
United States of America

Phone 202-541-3000

This information was released through the  
Catholic News Service on June 7, 1985

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MASONS ADD June 10, 1985 (880 words)

Add to MASONS of June 7, 1985:

The Pastoral Research and Practices Committee said it had concluded that "even though there is no longer an excommunication attached to joining organizations that plot against the faith, it would still be wrong to join such an organization. And even though Masonic organizations may not in particular cases plot against the faith, it would still be wrong to join them because their basic principles are irreconcilable with those of the Catholic faith."

The committee said it sees two problems regarding Catholics and Masons:

— The "pastoral problem" of Catholics who have become Masons in good faith. For these Catholics, it said, "the traditional principles" for dealing with people who have acted in good faith should be applied.

— The "public relations problem" the church faces in criticizing Masonic principles and practices when most Americans view Masonry "as a purely social and philanthropic organization."

Cardinal Law said in his covering letter that he was sending the bishops the committee report, with the authorization of the NCCB Administrative Committee, in hopes that "the information you find here will be a useful clarification" of some of the confusion in recent years.

Current confusion has centered mainly on a change in church law and a 1983 declaration by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Issued the day before the church's new Code of Canon Law went into effect, the declaration noted that the new code does not expressly invoke an excommunication for belonging to the Masons, as the old code did.

But this change was due to changes in the new code's approach to penal law, not to a change in the church position on Masonry, the document said.

The principles of Masonic associations "have always been regarded as irreconcilable with the church's doctrine," said the declaration. "Hence joining them remains prohibited by the church. Catholics enrolled in Masonic associations are involved in serious sin and may not approach Holy Communion."

"What is at stake is the distinction between penal law and morality," said Cardinal Law's committee. Removal of the legal penalty does not affect the moral point at issue, it said.

The bulk of the 38-page information report that the committee sent to the bishops consisted of a study by historian William Whalen of Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind., which was commissioned by the committee.

Whalen, long considered the leading U.S. Catholic expert on Masonry, said that of the estimated 6 million Masons worldwide, an estimated 5.4 million, or 90 percent, live in English-speaking countries, and an estimated 4 million, or two-thirds, live in the United States.

He rejected an argument sometimes advanced in Catholic circles, that Vatican pronouncements on Masonry have been unduly influenced by or directed against the anti-clerical Grand Orient lodges of continental Europe and Latin America.

"For the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to advise Catholics against joining these Grand Orient lodges would

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be like the NAACP advising blacks against applying for membership in the KKK," Whalen wrote. "Those who say that the church really directs her condemnation against the Grand Orient lodges must assume that the Vatican does not know that Freemasonry is English in origin and overwhelmingly English-speaking in membership."

The chief reason the church opposes Masonry, however, is not its anti-Catholicism where that exists but its religious naturalism which claims a set of distinct beliefs, some of them at odds with Christian faith, said Whalen.

"Perhaps a religious naturalism is better than no religious belief at all," he wrote, "but for the professing Christian it represents a retreat from the Gospel.... The lodge honors Jesus Christ as it honors Socrates, Buddha and Mohammed. It cannot acknowledge any special spiritual claims by Jesus since this would violate the basis of Freemasonry."

Whalen also cited the solemn oaths required for Masonic membership as a basic problem for Catholics. In a sample Master Mason's oath which he quoted in full, the candidate swears to keep Masonic secrets and do or not do various other things on penalty of being killed and having one's "bowels...burned to ashes" and "scattered before the four winds of heaven."

The Roman Catholic Church allows the swearing of oaths for serious reasons but has never countenanced it for light reasons such as joining fraternal societies, Whalen said.

He quoted from another Catholic investigator of Freemasonry, Father Walton Hannah: "Either the oaths mean what they say, or they do not. If they do mean what they say, then the candidate is entering into a pact consenting to his own murder by barbarous torture and mutilation should he break it. If they do not mean what they say, then he is swearing high-sounding schoolboy nonsense on the Bible, which verges on blasphemy."

Whalen said that "opposition to Freemasonry is often seen as solely a Roman Catholic position," but numerous other church bodies, including world Orthodoxy, have condemned it. "In fact most Christians around the world belong to churches which forbid or discourage Masonic affiliation," he said.

The report sent to bishops by Cardinal Law's committee included as additional background the texts of three key Vatican documents on Catholic membership in the Masons; an editorial on the topic earlier this year by the Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano; and a 1980 document by the West German bishops on Catholic-Masonic relations.

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: TEXT MASONS June 12, 1985 (7,500 words) 87

WASHINGTON (NC) — Here is the text of a report by the Committee for Pastoral Research and Practices of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops on Catholic membership in Masonry, and a study of U.S. Masonry by William Whalen of Purdue University. Also included is an April 19 cover letter accompanying the report to U.S. bishops by Cardinal Bernard F. Law of Boston, committee chairman. The letter, report and study were released to National Catholic News Service by the NCCB June 7.

CARDINAL LAW'S COVER LETTER:

Your Excellency-Eminence: 71-

For your own personal information, the Administrative Committee, on March 20, 1985, authorized my sending you the report of the Committee for Pastoral Research and Practices on the pastoral issues arising from Catholic membership in Masonry.

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The enclosed report shows that the principles of Masonry are incompatible with Christian faith and practice whether or not a specific Masonic organization happens to be engaging in activity against the church. For this purpose, we include three studies that explain the issue of incompatibility — the study of Masonic principles and rituals done by the West German conference of bishops in 1980, a study of American Masonry by Professor William Whalen of Purdue University written for the committee, and a recent article that appeared in the March 11, 1985, L'Osservatore Romano, "Irreconcilability Between Catholic Faith and Freemasonry."

This report should be seen in the context of the 1973 and 1983 decrees of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith dealing with excommunication and incompatibility respectively.

Since many bishops stated in their reply to an earlier survey that confusion had been generated by a perceived change in approach by the SCDF, we hope that the information you find here will be a useful clarification.

PASTORAL PROBLEM OF MASONIC MEMBERSHIP, Report of the Committee for Pastoral Research and Practices, March 14, 1985.

#### I. History of the Masons' Situation.

Recently (Nov. 6, 1983) the SCDF responded to an inquiry whether the church's position regarding Masonic organizations has been altered, especially since no explicit mention is made of them in the Code of Canon Law, as there was in the old code.

The congregation stated that the Masons and other organizations were omitted in the new code due to a different criterion adopted in drafting the code. They were included in broader categories. The congregation did not, however, specify the categories it had in mind (It might have been thinking of such canons as c. 1364), but it insisted that the church is still opposed to Masonic associations since their principles are irreconcilable with the church's doctrine, and that it would be seriously wrong to join them.

In the old code an excommunication was incurred by those who joined the Masons or other organizations that plotted against the church or legitimate civil authority.

In a response given by Cardinal Seper in 1973 regarding the force and meaning of Canon 2335 it was stated that the canon still remained in force but that since penal laws are subject to strict interpretation the penalty would be incurred in a particular case only by those who join associations which plot against the church. If the particular organization did not plot against the church, the excommunication would not be incurred by the person who joined them.

This was interpreted by some bishops to mean that it was permissible to join the Masons if the particular organization did not plot against the church, etc.

In 1981, since the previous letter had "given rise to erroneous and tendentious interpretations," the SCDF affirmed the current (at that time) canonical discipline, and while still admitting a strict interpretation of the penalty, denied any intention of remanding to bishops' conferences the making of public pronouncements of a general nature on the nature of the Masonic associations, etc. But since the congregation spoke in the context of the old code (c. 2335), it is not entirely relevant today.

The whole issue came into sharper focus with the advent of the new code, and the absence of a censure for joining organizations that plotted against the church. The response of the SCDF on Nov. 6, 1983, was to this issue.

What is at stake is the distinction between penal law and morality. There is a difference between the two. Not everything that is immoral is penalized in the church. Nor can one conclude from the fact that penal law does not cover some sin or that it is removed from it (or changed), that it is permissible to commit it. A clear example of this is abortion. Even if excommunication were removed from abortion, it would still be wrong. Similarly, even if the excommunication was removed from joining an organization that plotted against the church, it would still be wrong to join such an organization.

Moreover, even if the Masons did not plot against the church, it might be seriously wrong to join them for other reasons. The congregation presents as the reason for its judgment the fact that the principles of Masonry are "Irreconcilable" with

those of the church. The six-year study of Masonry by the German bishops and the study of American Masonry by Prof. William Whalen (commissioned by the Pastoral Research and Practice Committee) both confirm that the principles and basic rituals of Masonry embody a naturalistic religion active participation in which is incompatible with Christian faith and practice. Those who knowingly embrace such principles are committing serious sin (they might also fall under the penalty in c. 1364 in the new code).

Briefly, the conclusion is that even though there is no longer an excommunication attached to joining organizations that plot against the faith, it would still be wrong to join such an organization. And even though Masonic organizations may not in particular cases plot against the faith, it would still be wrong to join them because their basic principles are irreconcilable with those of the Catholic faith.

## II. Problems with the Masonic Question

The committee recognizes two problems in regard to the Masonic question:

1. A pastoral problem for those who have become or continue to be Masons in good faith on the basis of the less restrictive interpretation which followed the SCDF letter to Cardinal Krol. It is the question of applying the traditional principles for leaving them in good faith.
2. A public relations problem resulting from the common American perception of Masonry as a purely social and philanthropic organization.

## CATHOLICISM AND FREEMASONRY, Prof. William Whalen, April 2, 1985

Modern speculative Freemasonry began in 1717 with the establishment in London of the Grand Lodge of England. A little more than two decades later Clement XII forbade Catholic membership in these lodges and the opposition of the Catholic Church has been restated by seven other popes.

The most recent statement was given by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on Nov. 26, 1983. In part it declared: "The church's negative position on Masonic associations therefore remains unaltered since their principles have always been regarded as irreconcilable with the church's doctrine." The document added that "Catholics enrolled in Masonic associations are involved in serious sin and may not approach Holy Communion."

This paper will examine the reasons for the historical and the present position of the church vis-a-vis Freemasonry and will do so in the American context. We should understand that worldwide Freemasonry shares many beliefs and customs but is not a unified organization. It includes the United Grand Lodge of England; the 50 Independent grand lodges in the U.S.; lodges in Canada, Australia and New Zealand; Prince Hall Masonry; the so-called Christian Masonry of Germany and three Scandinavian countries; the various Grand Orients of Europe and Latin America; co-Masonic bodies; irregular lodges such as the Italian P2 lodge; and others.

### Pastoral Problem Due to Misunderstanding

That the church has for centuries condemned Freemasonry and excommunicated Catholics who joined the lodge or refused baptism to those who declined to sever their lodge affiliations is clear. That the church today considers Masonic membership serious enough to deny Eucharist to "Catholic Masons" is also clear. What has created a pastoral problem in some dioceses is that for a period of some years membership by the laity in Masonic lodges seemed to be an option. From 1974 to 1981 and even beyond an undetermined number of Catholic men joined the lodge and many retain their membership. Articles in the Catholic press told readers that under certain circumstances such membership was now allowed. The general public, Catholic and non-Catholic, got the impression that the church had softened its stand against membership in Freemasonry.

We will examine the reasons why the church has taken the attitude it has since the mid-18th century and why these reasons justify the present position. But first we should take a brief look at the documents which created the recent confusion.

Cardinal Franjo Seper, then prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, sent a letter dated July

19, 1974, to Cardinal John Krol which concluded that "canon 2335 regards only those Catholics who join associations which plot against the church." Even if it were determined that a Masonic association did not plot against the church, membership was still forbidden to clerics, Religious and members of secular Institutes.

Presumably the local Ordinary was expected to conduct an investigation to see whether a particular secret society in his diocese was engaged in a plot against the church. Cardinal Seper's letter made no reference to the traditional objections to Freemasonry, namely its religious naturalism and its oaths. Nor did the letter suggest a methodology by which a bishop might conduct his investigation in view of the fact the members of the lodge, like members of the IRA, the Mafia and other secret organizations, were sworn to secrecy.

As late as October 1984 a nationally syndicated columnist for the Catholic press was assuring his readers that Catholics "may indeed hold membership in organizations, Masonic and otherwise, which are not basically anti-Catholic and do not plot against the church." The columnist told his readers that "direction and guidance concerning the various organizations in your locality can easily be obtained from the chancery of your diocese." Would that it were so. At the very least one would suppose that anyone professing minimum expertise in the area of Freemasonry would have studied the ritual of the lodge as well as basic Masonic sources such as "Pike's Morals and Dogma," "Humanum Genus" by Leo XIII, such criticisms as Father Walton Hannah's "Darkness Visible and Christian by Degrees" and Whalen's "Christianity and American Freemasonry." One wonders how many people in the typical chancery have spent even this amount of time on the question so that they could answer inquirers' questions with confidence.

Some bishops evidently conducted such investigations or perhaps decided they had no way of determining the character of a particular secret society and allowed Catholic men in their dioceses to join the lodges. Other bishops denied requests to join.

A clarification was published on March 2, 1981. It referred to "erroneous and tendentious interpretations" of the "confidential letter" of July 19, 1974. The clarification affirmed that the present canonical discipline had not been modified in any way, that neither the excommunication nor other penalties had been abrogated, and that it was not the intention of the congregation "to remand to the bishops' conferences the making of public pronouncements with a judgment of a general nature on the nature of the Masonic associations, such as would imply the derogation of the aforesaid norms."

Canon 2335 of the 1917 Code of Canon Law had stated: "Those who join a Masonic sect or other societies of the same sort, which plot against the church or against legitimate civil authority, incur excommunication." When the new Code of Canon Law was published no mention was made of the traditional penalty of excommunication for Catholics who joined the Masonic lodge. Again the possibility of misunderstanding arose because the general public was not aware that the number of offenses for which excommunication was applied has been reduced from 37 to seven. The 1971 clarification had received little publicity. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger then issued the Nov. 26, 1983, document which reaffirmed the historic position against Freemasonry. This statement had also been specifically approved by John Paul II.

#### Reasons for Condemnation

The March 11, 1985, issue of L'Osservatore Romano carried an article entitled "Irreconcilability between Christian Faith and Freemasonry" as a comment on the November 26, 1983, declaration. In part the Vatican newspaper said a Christian "cannot cultivate relations of two types with God, nor express his relation with the Creator through symbolic forms of two types. That would be something completely different from that collaboration, which to him is obvious, with all those who are committed to doing good, even if beginning from different principles. On the one hand, a Catholic Christian cannot at the same time share in the full communion of Christian brotherhood and, on the other hand, look upon his Christian brother, from the Masonic perspective as an 'outsider.'"

Some have suggested that the reaffirmation of the historic condemnation by church was prompted by the P2 scandal. Grand Master Licio Gelli directed this secret Masonic lodge known as Propaganda Two or P2 whose aim seems to have been to restore fascism in Italy and to bolster right-wing governments in Latin America. When Italian police raided his villa,

they discovered the lodge membership roster which listed 953 people including heads of Italy's Intelligence agencies, generals, cabinet ministers, judges, bankers, industrialists, and the like. Gelli had persuaded a number of individuals such as Roberto Calvi that membership in the Masonic lodge was now allowed by the church. Actually it appears that the P2 plotted more against the state than the church although Masonic financiers who were called in to handle the Vatican's investments (such as Sindona) cost the church many millions of dollars. The P2 case did demonstrate that Masonic secrecy could camouflage and facilitate conspiracies of the political right even in the shadows of St. Peter's.

On the other hand a recent book by Stephen Knight alleges that the KGB used the secrecy and networking of English Freemasonry to place spies in top intelligence jobs. It encouraged its operatives to try and join Masonic lodges to gain preferential treatment in their careers. In particular, the author charges that Freemasons propelled Sir Roger Hollis into a series of rapid promotions which led to his being named head of M15 counterintelligence in 1956. A book by Chapman Pincher, published in 1981, attempted to prove that Hollis was a Soviet agent. Knight's book was published in the United States in November 1984 by Stein and Day of New York: "The Brotherhood: The Secret World of Freemasons."

Both the right and the left have seen the advantages of using the Masonic organizations to further their causes. At one time Masonry was known as a chief bulwark of republican forms of governments. Actually in the United States today most observers would probably label the lodges as both politically reactionary and racist.

Although the 1981 clarification by the Sacred Congregation came shortly after the exposure of the P2 conspiracy, nothing in the statement indicates that its intent was limited to Italian or continental Masonry. An estimated 30,000 Masons belong to 500 lodges within three jurisdictions in Italy. Everyone knows that the Grand Orient lodges of Europe and Latin America have been anti-clerical from the start. For the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to advise Catholics against joining these Grand Orient lodges would be like the NAACP advising blacks against applying for membership in the KKK. Those who say that the church really directs her condemnation against the Grand Orient lodges must assume that the Vatican does not know that Freemasonry is English in origin and overwhelmingly English-speaking in membership. Of the estimated 6 million members in all the various types of Masonic lodges worldwide about 4 million live in the United States, 750,000 in the United Kingdom, 250,000 in Canada, and 400,000 in Australia and New Zealand. Perhaps nine out of 10 members live in an English-speaking country.

For many bishops and priests the pastoral problem not only involves those Catholic lay men who joined Masonic lodges during the period of confusion in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It extends to the general public, Catholic and non-Catholic, which does not understand why the Catholic Church in an era of ecumenism persists in condemning an organization often known for its charities and good work. We have no reason to doubt the testimony of so many American Masons that they have never heard a word of criticism of the Roman church in lodge meetings or functions. In fact Masonry rules out discussions of religion and politics in the lodge.

#### Masonic Stands, Ritual and Principles

We should understand that Masonry basically consists of the three degrees of the Blue lodge: entered apprentice, fellow craft, and master Mason. The lodges are grouped in independent grand lodges in the 50 states.

If he wishes, a master Mason may elect to continue his Masonic career by entering the so-called higher degrees: The Scottish or the York (or American) rite. (Jews are, however, barred from the York rite.) Membership in the Scottish rite leads to the 32nd degree and the honorary 33rd degree. The fourth to the 32nd degrees are ordinarily conferred on a class over a weekend in a Scottish rite cathedral; in Europe the candidate must spend many years to reach the 32nd degree which is another contrast between the mass Masonry in the U.S. and the elite Masonry of the continent. The goal of all those who choose to go up the York-rite ladder is membership in the Knights Templar. Both 32nd degree Scottish-rite Masons and Knights Templar are eligible to join the Shrine which serves as the playground of American Masonry and supports notable charitable institutions such as its hospitals for crippled children. Father Hannah called its pseudo-Islamic ritual the "adolescent and occasionally Rabelaisian nadir of drivelling tomfoolery and burlesque blasphemies." English Freemasonry would

never tolerate an organization such as the Shrine but obviously hundreds of thousands of U.S. Masons find in the Shrine the fun they do not find in the teetotaling, sober Blue lodges.

Many other organizations require Masonic membership but they do not form an integral part of Freemasonry. These include the Grotto, Square and Compass Clubs, National Sojourners, High Twelve clubs, Tall Cedars of Lebanon, etc. A Mason who quits or is expelled from his Blue lodge forfeits membership in any other Masonic organizations. Attendance requirements are unknown in the Blue lodge so that simple payment of dues keeps members in good standing.

If the American Blue lodges are not especially anti-Catholic, the religious neutrality of an organization such as the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish rite which enrolls 600,000 Masons in 33 Southern and Western states is another matter. The hostility of this group to parochial schools remains unabated and readers of the New Age are well aware of the attitude of the Southern Jurisdiction to Roman Catholicism.

In a 1978 article in the Review of Religious Research two (non-Catholic) scholars examined "Fraternal Associations and Civil Religions: Scottish Rite Freemasonry." Among many observations the authors noted:

"In their support of civil religion, the Masons are militantly 'anti-particularistic,' to use Sidney Mead's term. They vigorously denounce parochial schools for challenging the public school system and, implicitly, the unifying civil religion. Sectarian religion has positive values, but it is relegated to the sphere of private morality and positive faith." (Pamela M. Jolicoeur and Louis L. Knowles, Vol. 20, No. 1, Fall 1978, pp.13-14).

Those who direct the Scottish rite, Southern Jurisdiction, would be delighted if every parochial school closed tomorrow. This may not technically involve a plot against the church but it raises the question of allowing, much less encouraging, Catholics in these Southern and Western states from participating in the Scottish rite.

If anti-Catholicism and racism in the U.S. Masonry were the major reasons for the church's condemnation, we might envision some sort of rapprochement in the foreseeable future. The irreconcilable principles to which the 1983 letter refers remain the basic reason for the condemnation by the Catholic Church and other Christian bodies. We agree with the assessment of the German hierarchy which studied the Masonic question between 1974 and 1980 and observed in part:

"Although it may be important to distinguish between favorable, neutral or hostile Masonry with regard to the church, the same distinction, in this context, leads to error, because it insinuates that for Catholics only membership in a hostile branch would be inadmissible."

If we try to make "plotting against the church" the sole criterion for allowing or disallowing membership, we in effect are saying that we do not concern ourselves with the nature of an organization or what it teaches. By the same token we should allow membership by Catholics in organizations of Spiritualists, Theosophists, and Occultists so long as these groups do not plot against the church. But the church's historic stand has not been based primarily on whether the Masonic lodges are hostile or neutral toward the church but on the principles for which the lodge stands.

To grasp the fundamental objections to Freemasonry we have to briefly review the history of the craft.

Unlike other craftsmen in the Middle Ages the stonemasons who built the great cathedrals of Europe were forced to move from place to place to follow their occupation. To protect their skills and to recognize fellow masons they devised a system of signs and passwords. These served the purpose of a union card. Their worksheds were called lodges.

With the decline of cathedral-building some of the lodges of stonemasons began to admit non-working or honorary masons. In time the number of honorary Free and Accepted Masons outnumbered the working masons. They used the tools, symbols, signs, grips and passwords of the masons' trade union to create what we know as speculative Freemasonry. This new Craft Masonry usually defines itself as "a peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols."

The masons of early medieval times were Catholics like almost everyone else in Europe. But under the influence of deism all traces of Christianity were excised from speculative Freemasonry. In the 1723 Book of Constitutions the new attitude toward religious belief was spelled out: "A Mason is obliged by his tenure, to obey the moral law; and if he rightly understands the art, he will never be a stupid atheist, nor an irreligious libertine. But though in ancient times Masons were charged in

every country to be of the religion of that country or nation, whatever it was, yet 'tis now thought more expedient only to oblige them to that religion in which all men agree, leaving their particular opinions to themselves..."

#### Freemasonry As Universal Religion

Clearly whatever constitutes "that religion in which all men agree" it is not Christianity or revealed religion. Masons as Masons believe in the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of mankind, and the immortality of the soul. These are beliefs which they maintain can be discovered by human reason. The inspiration of the Bible, the unique claims of Jesus Christ, the authority and teaching role of the church, and the sacraments as means of grace are "particular opinions" which Freemasons are asked to keep to themselves rather than disturb the brothers in the lodge.

A century ago in his encyclical on Freemasonry, "Humanum Genus," Pope Leo XIII defined naturalism which he saw as the primary objection to the Masonic system:

"Now the fundamental doctrine of the naturalists, which they sufficiently make known by their very name, is that human nature and human reason ought in all things be mistress and guide.... For they deny that anything has been taught by God; they allow no dogma of religion or truth which cannot be understood by human intelligence, nor any teacher who ought to be believed by reason of his authority."

In keeping with the naturalism of the lodge no prayers in the Blue lodges are ever offered in the name of Jesus Christ. God, whom Christians have been told to address as Our Father, is worshipped as the deistic Great Architect of the Universe. As the authors of the recent article in the Review of Religious Research put it: "The nature of the Masonic God is best seen in their favorite title for him: the Supreme Architect. The masonic God is first of all a deistic God who is found at the top of the ladder of Masonic wisdom" (Jolicoeur and Knowles, pp. 14-15).

In U.S. Freemasonry all women, men under 21 and blacks are barred from Masonic initiation in regular lodges. Otherwise only the atheist, technically the "stupid atheist," and the "irreligious libertine" are unwelcome. By jettisoning the vestiges of Christianity modern Freemasonry opened its doors to Deists, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and any who acknowledge the existence of the GAOTU and believe in the immortality of the soul. Perhaps a religious naturalism is better than no religious belief at all, but for the professing Christian it represents a retreat from the Gospel.

We can agree with Albert Pike when he wrote: "Every Masonic lodge is a temple of religion and its teachings are instruction in religion" ("Morals and Dogma," p. 213). Pike served as sovereign grand inspector of the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish rite for many years and is sometimes considered American Freemasonry's most eminent philosopher. His book, "Morals and Dogma," is traditionally presented to those who attain the 32nd degree of the Scottish rite.

Not only does Freemasonry see itself as a religion, but it sees itself as the universal religion while Christianity is simply another of the dozens of sects whose particular opinions have divided mankind over the ages. Again we may refer to Pike:

"But Masonry teaches, and has preserved in their purity, the cardinal tenets of the old primitive faith, which underlie and are the foundation of all religions. All that ever existed have had a basis of truth; all have overlaid that truth with error." ("Morals and Dogma," p. 161)

"Religion, to obtain currency and influence with the great mass of mankind, must needs be alloyed with such an amount of error as to place it far below the standard attainable by the higher human capacities." (p. 224)

"Catholicism was a vital truth in its earliest ages, but it became obsolete, and Protestantism arose, flourished and deteriorated." (p. 38)

In his Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, Albert G. Mackey writes:

"I contend without any sort of hesitation that Masonry is, in every sense of the word, except one, and that is its least philosophical, an eminently religious institution.... That without this religious element it would scarcely be worthy of cultivation by the wise and good.... Who can deny that it is eminently a religious institution?... But the religion of Masonry is not sectarian.... It is not Judaism, though there is nothing in it to offend a Jew; it is not Christianity, but there is nothing in it pugnacious to the faith of a Christian. Its religion is that general one of nature and primitive revelation — handed down to

us from some ancient and patriarchal priesthood — in which all men may agree and in which no men can differ. It inculcates the practice of virtue, but supplies no scheme of redemption for sin.... Masonry, then, is indeed a religious institution; and on this ground mainly, if not alone, should the religious Mason defend it." (pp. 617-619).

Hannah comments: "On reading the ritual carefully, Masonry will be found to present itself as a complete and self-sufficient system of moral and spiritual guidance through this world and the next. It teaches one's whole duty to God and to man, and a way of justification by works which if followed will lead to salvation. Nowhere does it give the slightest hint that anything further is necessary to the religious life." ("Darkness Visible" p. 40)

While religious, Freemasonry clearly rejects dogma and the possibility of absolute truth. After six years the German episcopal conference reported its conclusion in the June 1980 issue of *Amtsblatt des Erzbistums Köln*, pp.102-111. On this particular point the German hierarchy observed:

"The religious conception of the Mason is relativistic: all religions are competitive attempts to explain the truth about God which, in the last analysis is unattainable. Therefore, only the language of Masonic symbols, which is ambiguous and left to the subjective interpretation of the individual Mason is adapted to this truth about God."

#### Attitude Toward Christ, Bible

Some Protestant defenders of the lodge try to deny its religious character. Other Protestants and Catholics ask, "What element is missing in Freemasonry which we find in a religion?" Freemasonry has a creed and ritual, prayers to the GAOTU, an altar and temples, feast days, chaplains, an initiation ceremony, a creed and a system of morality. As its funeral service makes plain the lodge promises its members salvation and entry into the Grand Lodge Above if they follow the precepts of the Craft.

The lodge honors Jesus Christ as it honors Socrates, Buddha and Mohammed. It cannot acknowledge any special spiritual claims by Jesus since this would violate the basis of Freemasonry.

True, other fraternal and service organizations appoint chaplains and include prayers in their meetings, but the claims to a superior path to spiritual advancement and a superior morality are peculiar to Freemasonry.

Every lodge works with an open Bible on its altar and to some Masons this seems to affirm its Christian orientation. The preferred term and the one used in English Freemasonry is the Volume of the Sacred Law (VSL). That no special authority is attached to the Old and New Testament is clear since a lodge of Muslims may substitute the Koran, a predominately Hindu lodge the Vedas, etc. As the Digest of Masonic Law makes clear:

"To say that a candidate profess a belief in the divine authority of the Bible is a serious innovation in the very body of Masonry. The Jews, the Chinese, the Turks, each reject either the Old or the New Testament, or both, and yet we see no good reason why they should not be made Masons. In fact, Blue Lodge Masonry has nothing whatever to do with the Bible. It is not founded on the Bible. If it were, it would not be Masonry." (p. 206)

Again we turn to Pike:

"The Bible is an indispensable part of the furniture of a Christian lodge only because it is the sacred book of the Christian religion. The Hebrew Pentateuch in a Hebrew lodge and the Koran in a Mohammedan one, belong on the altar; and one of these, and the square and the compass, properly understood, are the Great Lights by which a Mason must walk and work. The obligation of the candidate is always to be taken on the sacred book or books of his religion, that he may deem it more solemn and binding; and therefore it was that you were asked of what religion you were. We have no other concern with your religious creed." (p. 11).

#### Use of Oaths

The second major reason for the church's hostility is the Masonic oath or rather the series of oaths required of initiates. Unlike some of the Protestant sects such as the Mennonites or Quakers, the Roman Catholic Church has interpreted the biblical injunction against swearing to allow for exceptions in serious cases, e.g. in a court of law.

The use of solemn oaths taken on the Bible in order to join a fraternal society or advance to its higher degrees has never

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been countenanced. Objectively speaking, those who swear such oaths are guilty of either vain or rash swearing. For most American Masons the oaths are given for what turns out to be the supposed secrecy of a few passwords and handshakes. Anyone who has investigated Masonry knows what these "secrets" are anyway. In fact, someone has said that the greatest secret about Freemasonry is that there are no secrets. If there are not, then Christians have no justification for making such solemn oaths.

Hannah posed the basic dilemma of the Masonic oaths when he wrote:

"Either the oaths mean what they say, or they do not. If they do mean what they say then the candidate is entering into a pact consenting to his own murder by barbarous torture and mutilation should he break it. If they do not mean what they say, then he is swearing high-sounding schoolboy nonsense on the Bible, which verges on blasphemy." ("Darkness Visible," p. 21).

For example, this is the oath of the master Mason's degree (each grand lodge controls its own ritual so there may be minor variations in wording from state to state):

"I, —, of my own free will and accord, in the presence of Almighty God, and his worshipful lodge, erected to him and dedicated to the holy Sts. John, do hereby and hereon most solemnly and sincerely promise and swear that I will always hail, ever conceal, and never reveal any of the secrets, arts, parts, point or points, of the master Masons' degree, to any person or persons whomsoever, except that it be to a true and lawful brother of this degree, or in a regularly constituted lodge of master Masons, nor unto him, or them, until by strict trial, due examination, or lawful information, I shall have found him, or them, as lawfully entitled to the same as I am myself.

"I furthermore promise and swear that I will stand to abide by all laws, rules, and regulations of the master Mason's degree, and of the lodge of which I may hereafter become a member, as far as the same shall come to my knowledge; and that I will ever maintain and support the constitution, laws and edicts of the Grand Lodge under which the same shall be holden.

"Further, that I will acknowledge and obey all due signs and summonses sent to me from a master Masons' lodge, or given me by a brother of that degree, if within the length of my cable tow.

"Further, that I will always aid and assist all poor, distressed, worthy master Masons, their widows and orphans, knowing them to be such, as far as their necessities may require, and my ability permit, without material injury to myself and family.

"Further, that I will keep a worthy brother master Masons' secrets inviolable, when communicated to and received by me as such, murder and treason excepted.

"Further, that I will not aid, nor be present at, the initiation, passing, or raising of a woman, an old man in his dotage, a young man in his nonage, an atheist, a madman, or a fool, knowing them to be such.

"Further, that I will not sit in a lodge of clandestine-made Masons, nor converse on the subject of Masonry with a clandestine-made Mason, nor one who has been expelled or suspended from a lodge, while under that sentence, knowing him or them to be such.

"Further, I will not cheat, wrong, nor defraud a master Mason's lodge, nor a brother of this degree, knowingly, nor supplant him in any of his laudable undertakings, but will give him due and timely notice, that he may ward off all danger.

"Further, that I will not knowingly strike a brother master Mason, or otherwise do him personal violence in anger, except in the necessary defense of my family or property.

"Further, that I will not have illegal carnal intercourse with a master Masons' wife, his mother, sister or daughter knowing them to be such, nor suffer the same to be done by others, if in my power to prevent.

"Further, that I will not give the Grand Masonic word, in any other manner or form than that in which I shall receive it, and then in a low breath.

"Further, that I will not give the grand hailing sign of distress except in case of the most imminent danger, in a just and lawful lodge, or for the benefit of instruction; and if ever I should see it given, or hear the words accompanying it, by a worthy brother in distress, I will fly to his relief, if there is a greater probability of saving his life than losing my own.

"All this I most solemnly, sincerely promise and swear, with a firm and steady resolution to perform the same, without any hesitation, mental reservation, or secret evasion of mind whatever, binding myself, under no less penalty than that of having my body severed in two, my bowels taken from thence and burned to ashes, the ashes scattered before the four winds of heaven, that no more remembrance might be had of so vile and wicked a wretch as I would be, should I ever, knowingly, violate this my master Masons' obligation. So help me God, and keep me steadfast in the due performance of the same."

#### Opposition Of Other Christian Churches

Like opposition to abortion, opposition to Freemasonry is often seen as solely a Roman Catholic position. But the Catholic Church is hardly the only Christian body to recognize the essential difference between the Masonic and Christian religions. In fact most Christians around the world belong to churches which forbid or discourage Masonic affiliation.

The Inter-Orthodox commission which met on Mount Athos (1933) and represented all the autocephalous Eastern Orthodox churches characterized Freemasonry as a "false and anti-Christian system." This remains the position of Orthodoxy.

Other groups hostile to lodge membership include many branches of Lutheranism, the Christian Reformed church, most Pentecostals, the Church of the Nazarene, the Seventh-day Adventists, the Holiness churches, the Quakers, the United Brethren in Christ, the Mennonites, the Free Methodists, the Church of the Brethren, the Assemblies of God, the Wesleyans, the Regular Baptists, the Salvation Army, and significant minorities in such mainline churches as the Episcopal.

Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also oppose Masonry. Joseph Smith Jr. joined the Masonic lodge in Nauvoo, Ill., and turned to the lodge ritual to find elements for his secret temple rites. Masons in the mob which stormed the Carthage jail and murdered the Prophet ignored his grand hailing sign of distress. The Grand Lodge of Utah refuses to initiate a Mormon and any Mormon who joins the lodge outside of Utah finds his advancement in the hierarchy severely curtailed.

Obviously the problem all these religious groups have with Freemasonry is not its anti-Catholic character.

The Lutheran Cyclopedia explains: "While frankly anti-Christian in its French, German and Italian branches, Freemasonry in England and the United States has always called itself a supporter of the morality and doctrine of the Protestant Church. Very few candidates realize that they are joining an organization which is essentially antagonistic to the Christian belief in the inspiration of the Bible and the divinity of Jesus Christ." (p. 392)

For millions of other American Protestants, such as Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians and Episcopalians, dual membership in the church and the lodge is acceptable. Individual members, however, may have reservations about the compatibility of the GAOTU and the triune God. British Methodism has been less favorably inclined toward Freemasonry perhaps reflecting John Wesley's observation about the lodge: "What an amazing banter on all mankind is Freemasonry." Currently a commission of English Methodists is studying the lodge question. Within the past year a general synod of the Church of England also voted to investigate Freemasonry to determine if Masonic beliefs and practices are compatible with Christianity.

Since neither the religious naturalism nor the required oaths of Freemasonry are ever likely to change, the hope that these irreconcilable principles can ever be reconciled is dim. Another objection to U.S. Masonry which should give pause to any Christian is the blatant racism of the lodges. This may someday change, but the lodges have lagged far behind the rest of American society in this matter.

Simply stated, the predominant Blue Lodges refuse to initiate anyone known to be black. There is a single exception: Alpha Lodge No. 116 of Newark, N.J., which is recognized by the Grand Lodge of New Jersey. Stories have circulated in recent years about a black candidate in Wisconsin or some other state being initiated but these are unverified.

Blacks long ago established their own parallel organization of Masonry known as Prince Hall along with black counterparts of the Scottish rite, Shrine, etc. These are viewed as clandestine and irregular by white Masonry. A Prince Hall Mason cannot be admitted to a meeting of the Blue Lodge and a black man who evidences an interest in Masonry will be politely directed to a Prince Hall lodge.

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This situation is an embarrassment to many American Masons as well as to the Grand Lodge of England, the mother lodge, which does not practice such racial discrimination. Sooner or later, we believe, the American lodges will have to re-examine their racist standards and bring them into alignment with the rest of society.

#### Ecumenical Attitudes

No doubt the ecumenical spirit has contributed to the desire on the part of many that the church relax its ban on Masonic membership. Maintenance of the ban may indeed hamper some ecumenical efforts but a few things should be kept in mind. As we saw, most of the world's Christians now belong to churches which forbid or discourage Masonic membership. This may be a situation in which those who belong to denominations which allow membership should ask themselves why Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, many Lutherans and fellow Protestants take the stand they do against the lodge. Father Walton Hannah observed: "No church that has seriously investigated the religious teachings and implications of Freemasonry has ever yet failed to condemn it." ("Darkness Visible," p. 78)

In his critique of Freemasonry the distinguished Anglican theologian Dr. Hubert S. Box examined the claim of the lodge that its chief purpose is to teach men about the nature of God and observed:

"But to teach men about the nature of God is properly the responsibility of the church, by virtue of its divine commission, so that the church, being aware that some of its members are receiving instructions on the nature of God within the barricaded secrecy of a rival teaching body having no divine commission to exercise such a function, has the right to make inquiries as to the sort of instruction they are receiving." ("The Nature of Freemasonry," p. 5)

The Catholic Church and other churches need not apologize for their stand on lodge membership. One of the boasts of Freemasonry has been that it fosters brotherhood; the church's refusal to allow dual membership in the church and the lodge may seem mean-spirited to some. We can, however, ask our non-Catholic friends which institution best exemplifies brotherhood: American Freemasonry or the church which is open to men and women, blacks and whites, young and old, rich and poor?

Does this mean that antagonism between Freemasonry and the Christian churches which forbid membership should be fostered? In no way. Dialogue between Christians and Masons can lessen hostility between these groups. Cooperation in civic and charitable works can be encouraged. Some Catholics believe the most fantastic things about Masonry and should be helped to form a rational judgment on the lodge. Some Masons see the church of Rome as the church of the Inquisition, the Crusades, the prop for discredited monarchies. No one benefits from such caricatures.

The Catholic Church now engages in dialogue with many Protestant, Eastern Orthodox and even non-Christian bodies. The fact that a Roman Catholic may not at the same time profess Islam does not mean that fruitful Catholic-Muslim dialogue is impossible or useless.

#### Problem Of Catholics As Recent Members

The serious problems of Catholic men who joined a Masonic lodge during those recent years in which such membership was apparently tolerated remains and the approach requires great tact. There are 32nd-degree Masons who are daily communicants and active members of Catholic parishes.

In good faith many of these men asked their pastor and-or bishop for permission to join the lodge. Some converts were received into the church during these years and were not asked to relinquish their Masonic affiliation. (In Freemasonry no one is supposed to be solicited to join the lodge and no one is supposed to become a Mason by the consent of another. Some Masons viewed the 1974 statement by Cardinal Saper as requiring Catholics to obtain the consent of the bishop in order to petition for membership and as such this constituted un-Masonic conduct).

One possible solution for these men would be to allow them to retain passive membership in their Masonic lodges. The apostolic delegation was empowered to approve such passive membership in a decree of the Holy Office of May 31, 1911, in "Una Scrantonem," if the following conditions were verified:

1. If petitioners gave their names to the sect in good faith before they knew it was condemned.

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2. If there is no scandal or if it can be removed with an appropriate declaration, they can remain in the sect passively and for a time so they do not lose the right to benefits, abstaining from communion with the group and from any participation, even material.

3. If serious harm would result for them or their family from their renunciation.

4. If there is no danger of perversion for them or their family, especially in case of sickness or death.

This possible solution is far from perfect. In effect the church is saying that if an individual meets these conditions he may pay his dues but not attend meetings, read Masonic literature, consent to a Masonic funeral, etc. "You may remain a Mason but don't take Masonry seriously."

(Many bishops and priests seem to think that the Masonic lodge is a fraternal benefit society similar to the Knights of Columbus. Masons may expect some measure of financial assistance from fellow Masons as may their widows and orphans, but Freemasonry is not an insurance company. Masons do not buy insurance from their grand lodges and resignation from the lodge does not mean forfeiture of insurance benefits).

In some respects most Masons are passive members. The week-to-week business of a Masonic lodge is simply dull and consists mainly in putting candidates through the three degrees. A lodge with hundreds of members may have difficulty rounding up enough members to conduct the ritual. American Masons who read much more than an occasional Masonic newsletter are rare and most are unaware of the standard Masonic books by Pike, Mackey, et al. They may absorb the naturalism of Freemasonry unconsciously but seldom make a serious study of its Weltanschauung. Not to be smug about it, we should acknowledge that millions of Catholics are also passive or nominal members of the church.

Except in certain communities, often in the South or rural areas, the Masonic lodge has lost most of its erstwhile attraction. The term often applied to English Freemasonry, the Mafia of the mediocre, seems even more applicable to the American lodges. A recent article in the Texas Monthly (December 1983) points up the problems for the lodge in a state which has traditionally had a strong grand lodge.

"Unless enrollment trends change soon, by the turn of the century few Masons will be left in Texas. The number of people who ask to join has been declining in both orders (white and black lodges) since the years immediately following World War II.... Other fraternal orders that have fared better, such as the Lions and Rotary clubs, are wired to commerce; they are practical clubs for modern men, and joining them (by invitation) is simple. Joining the Masons (by application) with all their traditions and odd rituals of brotherhood, is akin to joining a college fraternity, but today's men of the world no longer seem interested in whiling away their hours by fraternizing in the lodge or memorizing ritual codes."

The lodges have conspicuously failed to attract the diploma elite. Even politicians no longer see the need to wear the Masonic apron. Eisenhower, Kennedy, Nixon, Carter and Reagan managed to win the White House without Masonic affiliation. Johnson received the first or entered apprentice degree but never advanced to master Mason.

This suggests that the requests from Catholic men to join the lodge are not likely to increase. The opportunities for making business contacts and enjoying fellowship in other organizations are so plentiful that no Catholic need feel he is sacrificing much by following the precepts of his church in shunning the lodge. He can join the Kiwanis, Lions, Elks, Eagles, Chamber of Commerce, JayCees, Moose, Knights of Columbus, American Legion, VFW, Serra Club, Optimists, Exchange, Rotary and dozens of other civic and service organizations.

A separate pastoral problem arises when we turn to the affiliated Masonic organizations which enroll both Masons and non-Masons. An example would be the Order of the Eastern Star, whose membership is open to master Masons and their wives, widows, mothers, sisters and daughters. Thousands of Catholic women fall into this eligibility category. Other Masonic-related groups include the DeMolay order for young men, Job's Daughters and Rainbow Girls for young women, and the Acacia college fraternity.

Although the possibility of scandal may exist, the fact remains that these women and young people do not swear Masonic oaths and are not considered Masons. We can apply the general canonical principle that "favorable laws are to be inter-

preted broadly and odious laws are to be interpreted strictly" (*odios a restringenda favorabilia extendenda*). This would not mean that pastors would encourage such affiliation.

The Catholic Church should not launch any kind of new vendetta against Freemasonry and should welcome the lessening of anti-Catholicism, whether in the lodge, the Southern Baptist Convention, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod or any other group. At the same time it must affirm that membership by Catholics in the lodge is inappropriate.

#### Conclusion

My conclusion is the same as that of the German episcopal conference: "In-depth research on the ritual and on the Masonic mentality makes it clear that it is impossible to belong to the Catholic Church and to Freemasonry at the same time."

The false ecumenism which seeks to ignore basic differences between Masonic naturalism and Christianity and the desire of a few Catholic men to find in the lodge a fellowship, a better chance for promotion, or a wider base of customers than they can find through other organizations are no reason to ignore the serious objections to Freemasonry raised by the church.

Perhaps some accommodations may be made for pastoral reasons in exceptional cases. Converts might be permitted to retain passive membership. Those Catholic men who joined the lodge in good faith during the recent years of confusion might be offered the same option. Membership in Masonic-related organizations such as the Eastern Star should be discouraged but does not carry the same penalty of exclusion from the Eucharist. Otherwise the position of the church remains what it has been for many years: Catholics in the United States may not be Freemasons.

END

# Catholicism vs. Freemasonry:

*At the National Symposium of the World Apostolate of Fatima (Washington, D.C., June 30, 1990) I presented a paper entitled "The Masonic Movement and the Fatima Message." It consisted of a broad historical survey of Freemasonry, and concluded that the Masonic movement is best summarized as the premier institutionalization of secular humanism in modern times, and that the Fatima message is thus far the most fitting expression of the judgment of heaven on that movement. I have been asked for a "sequel" to that paper, to elucidate two points of particular importance, clearly*

**The goal of Masonry is the overthrow and replacement of the Christian religious and political order with a new order based on naturalism.**

*enough indicated but not proportionately developed in that original presentation. The two points in question are these: (1) Is it a fact that the Catholic Church is still formally and totally opposed to Freemasonry? and (2) if so, why is she so opposed?*

What is the truth regarding the present official attitude of the Catholic Church toward Freemasonry? To begin this inquiry into that which is now in effect, we should go back to what was stated in the Church's canon law before there was any doubt about where the Church stood on Masonry. The former code (which, incidentally, was promulgated on Pentecost, May 27, 1917, just two weeks after Our Lady's first apparition at Fatima) contained a canon which definitely capped all the previous papal condemnations of it. Canon 2335 reads as follows:

Persons joining associations of the Masonic sect or any others of the same kind which plot against the

Church and legitimate civil authorities contract *ipso facto* excommunication simply reserved to the Apostolic See.

In the wake of the Second Vatican Council, however, when the revision of the Code of Canon Law was underway, the prevailing spirit of "ecumenical dialogue" prompted questions among various bishops as to whether or not Canon 2335 was still in force. Responding to these questions, a letter from Cardinal Francis Seper, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, to the presidents of all the episcopal conferences, dated July 18, 1974, stated that: (1) the Holy See has repeatedly sought information from the bishops about contemporary Masonic activities directed against the Church; (2) there will be no new law on this matter, pending the revision of the Code now underway; (3) all penal canons must be interpreted strictly and (4) the express prohibition against Masonic membership by clerics, religious and members of secular institutes is hereby reiterated.<sup>1</sup>

This rather awkwardly structured letter (which, for whatever reason, was not published in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, the official journal of record for the Holy See) came to be interpreted in many quarters as allowing membership by laymen in any particular Masonic (or similar) lodge which, in the judgment of the local bishop, was not actively plotting against the Church or legitimate civil authorities.

This state of affairs, in which undoubtedly a fair number of Catholics in good faith became Masons, lasted for some years. Then, on February 17, 1981, Cardinal Seper issued a formal declaration: (1) his original letter did not in any way change the force of the existing Canon 2335; (2) the stated canonical penalties are in no way abrogated and (3) he was but recalling the general principles of interpretation to be applied by the local bishop for resolving cases of individual persons, which is not to say that any episcopal conference now has the competence to publicly pass judgment of a general character on the nature of Masonic asso-

ciations, in such a way as to derogate from the previously stated norms.<sup>2</sup>

Because this second statement seemed to be as awkwardly put together as the first, the confusion persisted. Finally, in 1983 came the new Code with its Canon 1374:

A person who joins an association which plots against the Church is to be punished with a just penalty; one who promotes or takes office in such an association is to be punished with an interdict.

## Cardinal Ratzinger's Declaration

Following the promulgation of the new Code, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the new Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, issued a new declaration: (1) the new Canon 1374 has the same essential import as the old Canon 2335, and the fact that the "Masonic sect" is no longer explicitly named is irrelevant; (2) the Church's negative judgment on Masonry remains unchanged, because the Masonic principles are irreconcilable with the Church's teaching ("earum principia semper iconciliabilia habita sunt cum Ecclesiae doctrina"); (3) Catholics who join the Masons are in the state of grave sin and may not receive Holy Communion and (4) no local ecclesiastical authority has competence to derogate from these judgments of the Sacred Congregation.<sup>3</sup>

With these official statements of the Universal Church now on record,<sup>4</sup> it should be clear that the lamentable confusion of so many Catholics regarding Freemasonry must be seen as only a temporary aberration — to be written off as one most costly consequence of a mindless "spirit of Vatican II." But we may hope that, as in other issues that have plagued the Church in the last score of years, there is a providence in this, a veritable blessing in disguise. For now, more clearly than ever before, we should see just *why* the Catholic Church has been — and will always be — so opposed to Masonry.

II

It may at first seem plausible that the main (if not only) reason for its being

# Irreconcilable Forever

By Rev. Robert I. Bradley, S.J.

condemned by the Catholic Church is that Masonry is *conspiratorial*. Its plotting against the Church (and, in the old Code, its also plotting against the State) is the one descriptive statement mentioned in both versions of the Code of Canon Law. Moreover, as the first curial document we cited (that of 1974) seems clearly to imply, the one requisite condition for permitting Catholics to join a Masonic lodge is that the lodge in question was not actively plotting against Church and State. Yet, for all its initial plausibility, this opinion seems to be inadequate. The proof of this is evident not only from the two subsequent curial documents (of 1981 and 1983), but more decisively still from the entire previous history of Roman documents, both curial and papal, treating of Masonry.

Beginning in 1738 with Clement XII's encyclical *In Eminenti* (just twenty-one years after the establishment of the Grand Lodge of England, the event usually recognized as the commencement of the modern Masonic movement) and running through ten successive pontificates, the Church's case against Freemasonry finds its culminating statement in 1884 in Leo XIII's encyclical *Humanum Genus*. Masonic deceitfulness regarding its real objectives in society — and its consequent policy of secrecy regarding the authorities of Church and State, and including even the rank-and-file of its own membership — has always been noted by the popes, and most tellingly by Leo XIII.<sup>5</sup> And in the century since then and in our own country this conspiratorial policy has been amply documented.<sup>6</sup>

However useful this knowledge of Masonic strategy is for our understanding of the authentic nature of the movement, it is quite secondary. It is wholly subordinate to that which *defines* the movement itself: the content in function of which conspiracy is but "method," the end determining and justifying the means. That content — that end — is what we must now examine, if we are to find the fundamental and explicit reason

for the Church's condemnation of Freemasonry.

This fundamental reason can be briefly stated. The following summary passage from Leo XIII's *Humanum Genus* suffices.

...that which is their ultimate purpose forces itself into view — namely, the utter overthrow of that whole religious and political order of the world which the Christian teach-



Drawing by Ariel Agemian  
Courtesy Confraternity of the Precious Blood

Just as the Jewish priests rejected Christ, Masonry rejects his Church and claims a truth that is diametrically opposed to the Faith.

ing has produced, and the substitution of a new state of things in accordance with their ideas, of which the foundations and laws shall be drawn from mere "Naturalism."...

Now, the fundamental doctrine of the Naturalists, which they sufficiently make known by their very name, is that human nature and human reason ought in all things to be mistress and guide. Laying this down, they care little for duties to

God, or pervert them by erroneous and vague opinions. For they deny that anything has been taught by God; they allow no dogma of religion or truth which cannot be understood by the human intelligence, nor any teacher who ought to be believed by reason of his authority. And since it is the special and exclusive duty of the Catholic Church fully to set forth in words truths divinely received, to teach, besides other divine helps to salvation, the authority of its office, and to defend the same with perfect purity, it is against the Church that the rage and attack of the enemies are principally directed.<sup>7</sup>

Catholicism and Freemasonry are therefore essentially opposed. If either were to terminate its opposition to the other, it would by that very fact become something essentially different from what it previously was; it would in effect cease to exist as itself. For Catholicism is essentially a revealed religion; it is essentially *supernatural*, both in its destiny and in its resources. Beyond all natural fulfillment, it tends toward an eternity of ineffable union with God in Himself; and beyond all natural resources, it begins that union here and now in the sacramental life of the Church.

Masonry, on the other hand, is essentially a religion of "reason." With an insistence and a consistency matching Catholicism's self-definition, Masonry promises perfection in the natural order as its only destiny — as indeed the highest destiny there is. And it provides for this perfectibility with its resources: the accumulated sum of purely human values, subsumed under the logo of "reason."

Literally a logo, the Masonic compass and square are the symbol of a Rationalism that claims to be identified with all that is "natural." The consequent syncretism, blending all the strands of human experience — from the cabalistic mysteries of an immemorial Orient to the technological manipulations of a post-modern West — is the basis for Masonry's claim to be not just a religion but

the religion: the "natural" Religion of Man. That is why its claim to date from the beginning of history — its calendar numbers the "Years of Light" (from the first day of Creation) or the "Years of the World" — is no mere jest on its part. And that is why its opposition to the Catholic Church antedates the Catholic Church's opposition to it. For it cannot abide the Church's claim to be the One True Church, and the consequent refusal by the Church to be relegated to the status of a "sect" which Masonry would have it be.

Since the Church's claim to be the One



Foto Marinho

Artur de Oliveira Santos, the administrator of Ourem, who imprisoned Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco and threatened them with death, was a Mason.

True Church is ultimately founded and validated on the reality of the One True God, the opposing Masonic claim must ultimately derive from a perception of God that diametrically opposes the Church's faith. And so it does. Although Pope Leo does not explicitly speak of this essential opposition between Catholicism and Masonry in terms of the First Commandment of God — "I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt not have strange gods before me" — surely the most radical and simplest way of situating this opposition is to say just this. The Masonic "God" is an idol. What the Masons really worship is *Man* — or the Spirit who

has deceived man from the beginning: the masked Spirit of Evil. This is the one primal reason why the Catholic Church has condemned, and will always condemn, Freemasonry. It is clearly sufficient to stand by itself as the *only* reason — and in a most fundamental sense, as Leo XIII seems to imply, that is the only reason in fact.

### Gravely Evil Misuse of Oaths

We can, however, give a second reason for the Church's opposition to Masonry. Not strictly independent of the first reason, based as that reason is on the First Commandment, we can yet distinguish a second reason — based on the Second Commandment. Some ten years earlier than *Humanum Genus*, there appeared (even in English translation) a brief (barely more than pamphlet-sized) but penetrating work, *A Study of Freemasonry*, by the great bishop of Orleans, Felix Dupanloup.<sup>1</sup> All the more impressive because of his "liberal" credentials, Dupanloup duly notes the facts, and the gravity, of the Masonic conspiracy. But what he stresses, besides the same primary point subsequently stressed by Leo XIII, viz., the Masonic violation of the First Commandment, is its violation of the Second Commandment by its gravely evil misuse of oaths. The famous (or, rather, infamous) oaths that run through the entire ritual of Masonic initiation are more than mere promises based on personal honor. They formally invoke the Deity, and have for their object a man's total commitment to a cause under the direst sanctions. The Catholic Church sees in such oaths an inescapable grave evil. Either the oaths mean what they say or they do not. If they mean what they say, then God is being called to invert by his witness loyalties (viz., to Church and to State) already sanctioned by Him. If the oaths are merely fictitious, then God is being called to witness to a joke.

It is not the secrecy of what goes on "behind the lodge door" that elicits and justifies the Church's condemnation of Masonry. It is rather the formal violation of the Second Commandment which these proceedings inescapably entail. The vaunted Masonic secrets, moreover, are scarcely that secret any longer. There is in fact a frequent Masonic plea to the effect that there are no secrets in Masonry — that all is open to a truly open mind. On this point we may take the

Mason at his word: he is speaking more truly than he knows!

The case for the Catholic Church's condemnation of Freemasonry is open and clear. By its very nature as formulated in its philosophical statements and as lived in its historical experience, Masonry violates the First and Second Commandments of God. It worships not the One True God of revelation — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — but a false god, symbolically transcendent but really immanent: the "god" called "Reason." And it invokes without adequate cause the Name of the One True God. After such a case as this, to cite the secrets of initiation and the further secrets of machination called "conspiracy" is not only anti-climactic, it is beside the point.

To conclude: we Catholics should now see the Masons more clearly for what they essentially are. They are the heirs (unwitting or otherwise is irrelevant) of a religion which purports to be the one religion of the one "God" — and therefore the enemy, intrinsically and implacably so, of Catholicism. Freemasonry in its modern mode is "modernity" in the deepest (i.e., the philosophical and religious) sense of that term. It is, in a word, "Counterfeit Catholicism." For its "God" is the "Counterfeit God": the one who would be as God, the one who is the prince of this world, the one who is the Father of Lies.

### Notes

1. "Complures Episcopi," *Notiziario CEI* (1974) 191. (From *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, No. 563, pp. 350-51.)
2. "S. Congregation pro Doctrina Fidelis," *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 73 (1981) 240-41. (From *EV*, No. 1137, pp. 1036-39)
3. "Quaestum est," *AAS* 76 (1984) 300. (From *EV*, No. 553, pp. 482-87)
4. A summary of this documentation was made available in this country by the American Bishops' Committee for Pastoral Research and Practice, in a report entitled "Masonry and Naturalistic Religion," published in *Origins*, 15 (June 27, 1985), pp. 83-84.
5. *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 16 (1883 sic) 420.
6. For an excellent recent survey, with emphasis on the American scene, see Paul Fisher's *Behind the Lodge Door: Church, State and Freemasonry in America* (Bowie, MD: Shild, 1988).
7. *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 16 (1883 sic) 421. The English version used here is from a Paulist pamphlet first published in 1944 and reprinted by TAN (Rockford, IL: 1987), pp. 8-7.
8. The English edition which I used was published in Philadelphia in 1858.

had asked for Ms. Hale's nomination to be considered in open session. "I knew the volatility of the situation. I invited any of the black constituency to come."

In a rancorous session, black clergymen accused the denomination of racism and said their recommendation had not been followed. Black spokesmen said that Ms. Hale has not had pastoral experience, which they consider an essential qualification for the post.

The Rev. Thomas J. Griffin of Indianapolis called the nomination "a return to the plantation mentality in which the great white father is telling us who we will have as our leader. The nominee knows little about the total black constituency. No doubt she could work well with national staff, but she will have a hell of a time out on the field."

The Rev. Robert E. Brown of Oklahoma City said the violation of procedures was his main concern. Mr. Brown told RNS that the 1970 black-white merger agreement calls for "advice and counsel" on the appointment by a six-member committee of black church people. Mr. Brown said that even before Mr. Humbert met with the committee, Ms. Hale's name had been "widely circulated all over the country as the person he (Mr. Humbert) wanted."

Another person was "overwhelmingly supported" by the black advisory group, said Mr. Brown. "That person was felt to be better qualified but was not interviewed." He declined to name the other person but acknowledged that the person was a male minister.

The black advisory group's objection to Ms. Hale was not that she was young or female, he said, but that she was "inexperienced and did not have pastoral experience in a local-church setting." He also said she lacked proper knowledge of the working of the National Convocation (the national Disciples black fellowship).

Mr. Humbert told RNS that he had followed proper consultation procedures and that Ms. Hale's name was one of five on a list approved by the black advisory panel, which was appointed by the Rev. Charles L. Faulkner of Houston, president of the black fellowship. "At that point," said Mr. Humbert, "it is the responsibility of the GMP (general minister and president) to make the selection and be back in touch with them."

Asked whether the panel approved of his final choice, he said, "There was some concurrence and some dissent. I felt there was a principle involved of inclusiveness on which I must stand. I stood on my convictions about the element of female leadership."

He declined to say whether he thought Ms. Hale would eventually be confirmed but said, "I am still committed to inclusiveness, but we must work through the process. There have been misunderstandings from my side and their side."

Mr. Humbert, shaken by the unexpected turbulence that initiated his term as head of the Disciples, said he planned right after the assembly to go on retreat and spend time "praying and thinking, spending time in the library and chapel at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis and in the woods and the backyard."

08-09-85

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## British Methodists' report on Masons creates furor in U.S.

By Jean Caffey Lyles

Religious News Service Associate Editor

(Editor's Note: Herbert Williams, RNS correspondent in Great Britain, contributed to this report.)

NEW YORK (RNS) — A report by the British Methodist Conference advising church members to reject Freemasonry as inconsistent with commitment to Christianity has touched off criticisms from United Methodists in the United States.

Stephen Swecker, associate editor of the Dallas-based United Methodist Reporter, which has a national circulation of more than 500,000, said letters to the editor responding to an

article on the British Methodist action were almost all negative. The editors had received 30 letters, he said, more than most items in the paper generate, "and they're still coming in. There was only one positive letter, and one phone call that applauded it."

Wrote one reader, John E. Muir of Watseka, Ill.: "When I consider all the issues that are of concern to the church, it greatly disturbs me to see the church creating a disturbance over something as insignificant as the religious teachings of Freemasons."

Referring to Islamic elements in the Shriners, a branch of Freemasonry, Mr. Muir wrote: "I'm not disturbed by Islamic symbols any more than it bothers me to cheer for Chief Illiniwek representing the spirit of the University of Illinois or to hear Illinois Wesleyan students cry, 'Oh Zeus' because they happen to be called the Titans." He said he believed "we are making a terrible mistake by taking on another organization that has done many fine things in the name of charity in this country and abroad."

Another reader, Robert E. House of Lake Charles, La., identifying himself as a lifetime Methodist and a more than 50-year Master Mason, said he resented both the British action and the U.S. Methodist paper's "reprinting such false propaganda and untruths." He said that "gossip and false attacks on a person or organization that cause untold harm are about as easily retracted as gathering up feathers released in a high wind."

The report is also being debated in the pages of the British church press. In a letter published in the Methodist Recorder, an independent Methodist weekly in London, Frank Thewlis, a Sheffield layman, wrote: "May I appeal to all Freemasons not to leave us, even though you may feel you have been downgraded by the Conference decision as both Methodists and Christians. Try not to feel hurt. Don't give way to those who seem determined to turn Methodism into an exclusive minor sect."

Mr. Thewlis recalled that the British Methodist Conference has over the years given other advice to its members, and if one were to accept it all, one would have to conclude that to be a "good Methodist," a member should be a 100 percent abstainer from alcohol; should never buy a raffle ticket, however worthy the cause; should believe the Bible wrong in saying homosexuality is sinful; should approve of a doctor's prescribing oral contraceptives to a teenager without her parents' consent; should abhor boxing and wrestling; and should be a pacifist favoring unilateral disarmament.

"We all know that if these things were mandatory 95 percent of our members would have to resign tomorrow," wrote Mr. Thewlis. "So hang in there, brethren . . . We don't want to lose you."

Another British reader, the wife of a Mason, wrote that she had stayed away from Sunday worship for the first time in her memory because she felt the conference had called her husband's integrity into question. "We do not wish to leave Methodism, but it seems as though we must if we are not to compromise our beliefs . . . Thankfully our faith has not diminished, but where do we worship?" she asked.

"The Freemasonry Report" of the British Methodist Conference has been published as a six-page booklet by the (British) Methodist Publishing House. It is available for 15 pence (about 21 cents U.S.) from the publisher, whose address is Wellington Road, Wimbledon, London SW 19, 8EU.

The British report said Freemasonry has been condemned by some on the grounds that it is discriminatory. "Membership is restricted to men who must be of good repute, and has financial implications which cannot be met by all," it said. "Other forms of discrimination are alleged; for example, discrimination against the handicapped. This includes handicapped members and men of different races and religions."

"It has been alleged," said the report, "that some church business, including that relating to the stationing of ministers, has been discussed and decided informally at lodge meetings. Such practices, if they occur, are to be condemned. The business of the church must

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be done by the duly elected committees of the church . . . and should not be settled, however informally, anywhere else.

"For Christians the secrecy practiced by Freemasons poses a problem in that secrecy of any kind is destructive of fellowship . . . . The secrecy of Freemasonry is protected by the oaths sworn by members at different stages. These oaths are of an extravagant nature and include bloodcurdling penalties for those who break their oaths."

A spokeswoman for the publishing house told RNS that 4,000 copies of the report had been printed and that about a thousand orders had already been placed.

The Rev. Ronald Gibbins, superintendent minister of Wesley's Chapel in London, the "mother church of world Methodism," said in a telephone interview that he views British Freemasonry as quite different from its American counterpart. "In Europe and Britain, the order is a secret society," he said. "My understanding is that in the U.S. it isn't so secret." For that reason, he said, the British report is more likely to be misunderstood in the United States than in Britain.

He stressed that the Methodist action does not bar members from belonging to Masonic lodges but advises them to examine their consciences on the question of whether Freemasonry and Christian faith are compatible.

He added: "I personally don't see that it (Masonic membership) matters, provided their primary loyalty is to Jesus Christ and his church. Then people can belong to all sorts of other things." He characterized the furor as "a lot of fuss over nothing."

Dr. Gibbins said he had been asked by the Methodist Recorder what his congregation intends to do about a stained-glass window in Wesley's Chapel donated by the Freemasons. The window will stay, he said, explaining, "We're quite happy with the window. It was given by the Freemasons in memory of all British Methodists who gave their lives for the Empire in the 'Great War' — World War I — in land, sea or air. It depicts Jesus holding in his arms a young World War I infantryman, in a loving sort of way."

08-09-85

1384

## Knights of Columbus condemn abortion, urge tax credits

By George Jaksa  
Special to Religious News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS) — Spurred by strong support from Catholic Church and federal government officials, delegates to the annual Knights of Columbus convention here Aug. 6-8 unanimously approved resolutions condemning legalized abortion and backing tax credits for non-public school students.

Before adopting the resolutions at the closing session, delegates and their wives heard Cardinal John O'Connor of New York declare that the law must be changed on legalized abortion.

The following day U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese III drew a standing ovation at an open session when he noted that the Reagan administration has urged that the 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision legalizing abortion in the United States should be reversed.

Mr. Meese followed U.S. Secretary of Education William J. Bennett to the rostrum at a meeting that attracted heavy media coverage, along with a crowd of 2,100 delegates and guests.

Mr. Bennett said a disdain for religious values is being fostered by recent Supreme Court decisions, reflecting an entanglement of the Judeo-Christian tradition upon which American history and fundamentals have been shaped.

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# Masonry or Christ?

(Including the position of Orthodox Christianity  
regarding Freemasonry.)

BY

THE REVEREND FATHER  
VLADIMIR S. BORICHEVSKY

AND

THE REVEREND FATHER  
STEPHEN N. JULA

SPONSORED BY  
THE CHICAGO DEANERY  
OF THE  
RUSSIAN ORTHODOX  
GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH

3rd Edition

*Vladimir Borichevsky*  
**Masonry or Christ ?**

PREFACE

This booklet is written for the benefit of all Christians and, especially, to be distributed as widely as possible within the Orthodox Catholic Church.

The authors, Vladimir S. Borichevsky and Stephen N. Jula, priests of the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of North America, appeal to the reader to study the organization of Freemasonry in the Light and Truth of Christianity

This booklet has been motivated by a sincere desire to fight for the integrity of the Christian Faith.

His Eminence, Metropolitan Leonty, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of North America, has requested the publication of this booklet for the edification of the Faithful.

The authors are thankful to the Clergy of the Chicago District and also the Alumni Federation of Orthodox Catholic Seminaries in North America for their spiritual and moral support.

Special thanks are due to those individuals and organizations who have volunteered financial support to help defray expenses of publishing and distributing this booklet.

We are thankful to all those who have helped in any way. We pray that our efforts have not been in vain, but unto the Glory of God.

## CHAPTER I

### *Can a True Christian Become a Mason?*

The Orthodox Catholic Church is convinced and has always taught that Masonry is an unchristian, indeed an antichristian organization, and as such, cannot be tolerated within the Orthodox Catholic Church.

It has become increasingly evident, that there are Orthodox Christians who have joined, are joining, or are about to join, the organization of Freemasonry. Most of these Christians have not studied the organization of Freemasonry, and in their innocence, are not aware that Freemasonry is incompatible with the Orthodox Catholic Faith. A true Christian will not join Masonry, or having joined it, but afterwards learning of its true nature, will leave it.

We must warn all good Christians that Masonry in reality is a religion. It is a false religion which is both pagan and anti-christian. This can very easily be verified if one but studies some of the statements and writings of authoritative Masons. Masonry claims to reveal to its initiates a spiritual and esoteric light. Masonry believes in immortality, but not immortality in Christ. The True God in Masonry is rejected for the lowest-common-denominator god — so as not to be offensive to Jew, Christian, Mohammedan, Hindu, etc. Masonry accepts men of any religion as long as the person believes in a deity. However, even the devil believes in God and trembles before Him.

The Christian Faith is an exclusive Faith. Christianity was revealed by God to man and is not a system worked out by man himself. God came into the world in Christ Jesus in order to lift man up to Him. For a true Christian, Christ means everything! A true Christian will never deny Christ! A Christian is saved through the Blood of Christ. There is no salvation except in the name of Christ. Any worship which excludes Christ is unchristian.

These are some of the differences of the Masonic religion and the Christian Faith.

Some claim that Masonry is not a religion but the ethical and charitable handmaid to the Church. Masonry itself accepts no such subordinate position. Masonry teaches salvation by works and not through the Blood of Christ. This is false salvation and will only lead to perdition. Salvation is within the Church and not in Masonry.

The Church does not worship the god that is worshipped in the Masonic temples. A Christian who worships in a Masonic temple defies the authority of the Church and does it *in secret*. How can a true believer in the Holy Trinity claim to have found a true worship of God in Masonry? The god of Masonry excludes Christ, our Divine Redeemer. A Christian has "put on Christ" in Holy Baptism. How can he become a Mason where he must deny and *take off* Christ, his Redeemer?

In the first degree, God is referred to as a "Great Architect". This is derogatory to the True Gods creative omnipotence. An architect only puts together from materials already at hand. *God creates from nothing!* This Masonic conception is frankly deistic, that is—based upon reason only, disbelieving in revelation and the supernatural Truths of Christianity. "Grand Geometrician" is even worse, because it implies some of the outmoded symbolical mathematics of the Kabbala, the mystic theosophy of the Hebrews. But it is in the Royal Arch degree that very grave difficulties arise. The word *Jah-bul-on* is made up of the Hebrew Jahweh coupled with the Assyrian Baal and the Egyptian On or Osiris. This is the name that Masons claim to be the "sacred and mysterious name of the true and living God Most High". It is a most terrible mixture which certainly does not spell God. Masonry is a prechristian religion, a mystery religion quite different, separate and alien to the Christian Faith. The Christian religion exalts faith above all and is dependent on Supernatural Grace. Masonry has only natural truths and does not depend upon faith. It brings knowledge to its initiates through reason alone.

Although Masonry does in a sense represent religion at a pre-Christian level, it also claims to impart a light, spiritual and moral, which shines nowhere else. It claims to have secrets which add to a man's sense of spiritual value and improve his character. It claims the exclusive possession of certain truths, one of which is the sacred and mysterious name of God. It claims to have found the worship of God!

In other words, Masonry claims to be a "super-religion" and its great mission is to embrace within itself all religions. To do this, the unique message of Christ the Redeemer and his Church must be neutralized in order to be compatible with Masonic teachings.

Freemasonry is not compatible with Christianity inasmuch as it is a secret organization, acting and teaching in secret and deifying rationalism. It is not lawful to belong to Christ and at the same time, to search for redemption and moral perfection outside of Him.

Masonry has been condemned by the Orthodox Catholic Church. Indeed, no Christian church which has seriously investigated the religious teachings of Freemasonry has failed to condemn it.

It is shameful and illogical for a Christian to admit that he is in a state of darkness and is seeking *light* through Masonry. To bind oneself by oath to secrets which will not be revealed until afterwards, is also foolish and dangerous, and it is contrary to moral law. The Orthodox Christian who is a Mason must consider the sin that he commits when he denies Christ. He must come to realize that Masonry is in opposition to the Christian Faith even though superficially it may seem to be a Christian organization.

Some join the ranks of Masonry because of its religiousness. Others join for the advantages it offers in business and certain professions, or for the fellowship it offers. Still others join for the secrecy with which Masonry clouds its true self.

None of these reasons can justify a Christian becoming a Mason. In fact, they are reasons for not joining!

Masonry is a syncretic religion which tries to unite within itself the conflicting beliefs of many religions. It is a natural religion which has no authority except

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natural theology in which man is a law to himself. This, in addition to the indifferentism within Freemasonry, are the deadly enemies of the Church today, just as they were in the Early Church.

Every clergyman should study Masonry in order that he might understand the effects it has upon the souls of those contaminated with this disastrous cancer. It must be fought and destroyed within the Church.

Masonry is a spiritual disease and is a rival of the Church as a moral guide. It declares that it is not a religion and yet it claims to be religious. If church members are receiving moral instruction and precepts from an outside source, the Church has both the right and duty to investigate.

"But even if we, or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed." (Gal. I,8).

## CHAPTER II

### *Masonry Speaks for Itself*

In our past chapter, we discussed the idea of Freemasonry as a religion. In order to clarify the position of Masonry to religion in general, let us examine a few statements by Masons of authority.

Mackey says: "As Masons we are taught never to commence any great or important undertaking without first invoking the blessing and protection of Deity, and this is because Masonry is a religious institution." (Masonic Ritualist, p. 44)

"Masonry is a religious institution, its ceremonies are part of a really religious worship." (Encyclopedia, p. 60)

Pierson says: "The system of Masonry, as in its original inception, still claims to be a system of religion in which all men can unite." (Pierson: Traditions, p. 372)

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Albert Pike says: "Masonry is a religion, for every man before becoming a Mason, must express his belief in deity, and in the continued existence of the intellectual portion after death. The trouble with ministers of religion is that they want us to believe too much, while the Ingersolls want us to believe too little". (Address at Harpers Ferry, Sept. 11, 1879)

Grand Inspector Cunningham says: "Masonry is a pure religion".

Clymer says: "Masonry is the universal religion only because and only so long as it embraces all religions. For this reason, and this alone, it is universal and eternal". (Ancient Mystic Oriental Masonry, p. 59)—"Masonry is not only a universal science, but a *World-Wide Religion*, and owes allegiance to no one creed, and can adopt no sectarian dogma, as such without ceasing thereby to be Masonic . . . Many degrees have been Christianized only to perish: as every degree eventually will if circumscribed by narrow creeds, and dwarfed to the apprehension, so as to exclude good men of any other communion". (p. 58)—"Without any reference to forms and modes of faith, it furnishes a series of indirect evidences which silently operate to establish the great and general principles of religion, and points to that triumphant system which was the object of all preceding dispensations, and must ultimately *Be The Sole Religion of the Human Race*". (p. 118)

Albert G. Mackey is considered by many to be the greatest authority in America.

In his Encyclopedia, (p. 617 - 1916 ed.) he writes: "There has been a needless expenditure of ingenuity and talent by a large number of Masonic orators and essayists in the needless endeavor to prove that Masonry is not a religion."

Further on he writes: "But the religion of Masonry is not sectarian. It admits men of every religious creed within its hospitable bosom, rejecting none and approving none for his particular faith. It is not Judaism, though there is nothing in it to offend a Jew. It is not Christianity, but there is nothing in it repugnant to the faith of a Christian". (p. 619)

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One of the most authoritative publications of the order is the Quarterly Bulletin of the Masonic Library at Cedar Rapids, Iowa. In an article which protests against "Christianizing" the order, we read: "When a man becomes a Mason and takes upon himself the solemn vow that binds us all in bonds of fraternal love, it does not in any way interfere with his belief in God or his religion, no matter what his belief may be. He need not cease to be Mohammedan, Buddhist, Hindu, Jew, Christian, or (a member) of any other denomination. If he will but earnestly study the esoteric teachings of ancient Masonry as taught in our beloved fraternity, he will gain a far deeper insight into his own faith and a far clearer conception of his own creed, which will enable him better to understand its sublime teachings and spiritual truths. He will recognize the fact that all religions must have emanated from a common source; that everyone originated from the same great fountain, whose eternal verities are to be found in all teachings in all religions". (January, 1917 issue)

These are the fundamental teachings of Masonry on religion. Every distinction between true and false religion is wiped out. The claim of Christianity, that it is the only true Faith possessing the Saving Truth is *denied*. But Jesus says He is the *only* Way and Truth and Life! Freemasonry says that *all* religions have that Truth and all have the same origin. Its position is plainly opposed to that of Christianity.

There is little wonder that an Orthodox Christian is told by a Mason that one will learn of true Orthodoxy through Masonry. To say this is to show one's total ignorance of Orthodoxy or to be deliberately false. The True Faith is to be found in its fulness only in the Orthodox Catholic Faith. Only the Orthodox Catholic Church is ordained to teach the Truth in all purity and fullness. The Holy Scripture declares that the Church is "the pillar and ground of truth". The Church, the

Mystical Body of Christ, is the only institution free from error for in it the Holy Ghost abides and witnesses to the Truth. Outside the Church there is darkness. It is only in the Church that we can find the *fellowship* necessary for true happiness. It is only through the Passion, Suffering, Death and the Glorious Resurrection of Jesus Christ that we can be saved. It is only through Christ and in His Church that we can find the Truth.

Does Holy Scripture teach the Masonic idea of placing all religions on an equal basis?

Listen to Our Lord Jesus Christ Who says: "I am the door. By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." (John, 10:9) "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John, 14:6) "He that hath not the Son of God hath not Life." (I John, 5:12) "He that believeth not the Son shall not see Life". (John, 3:36)

Without Christ we have no God! We have no salvation! For a Christian there can be no agreement or compromise between Christ and Masonry.

Masonry ignores the Truth that Christ suffered for all. It was not in vain that St. Paul said, "The word of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God." (I Cor. 1:18)

The Christian makes a total sacrifice of the True Faith when he becomes a Mason. When he puts on his little Masonic apron, he abandons Christ implicitly and explicitly.

Since Masonry rejects the Divinity of Jesus Christ and places Him on an equal level with founders of other religions, every Christian should stop and realize the implications of Masonry to his Christian Faith. Masonry eliminates the name of Christ from Bible passages read in the lodge and omits His Name in the prayers of the lodge. This should make a Christian realize that he is guilty of participation in heretical proceedings. The

Christian has but one alternative. If he has already joined a lodge he is to "come out and be separate". (2 Cor. 6:17)

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." (Ephesians 5:11-12)

### CHAPTER III

#### *The Masonic Oath*

If someone were to ask you to sign a document without first permitting you to read it, you would object! And no one would say that you acted unwisely. When joining a Masonic organization this is precisely what you are asked to do. For example, the first oath, the Entered Apprentice Obligation, reads as follows:

"I (name), of my own free will and accord, in the presence of Almighty God and this Worshipful Lodge, erected to Him and dedicated to the Holy Saints John, do hereby and hereon most solemnly and sincerely promise and swear: that I will always hail, *ever conceal and never reveal* any of the secret arts, parts, or points of the hidden mysteries of Ancient Freemasonry which have been heretofore, may at this time or *shall at any future period be communicated to me as such*, to any person or persons whomsoever, except it be to a true and lawful brother Mason, or within a regularly constituted lodge of Masons: and neither unto him nor them until by strict trial due examination or legal information, I shall have found him or them as lawfully entitled to the same as I myself."

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The italicized words indicate clearly that one swears to keep secret not only that which has been revealed, but even that which is yet to be revealed. No person in his right mind would agree to this in any other phase of life, yet this is the normal procedure in all Masonic ritual. Jesus, however, said: "I have spoken openly to the world — I have said nothing secretly." (John 18:20) He expects all who follow Him in Truth to do likewise.

Furthermore, a Mason solemnly swears to allow the Masonic Order to punish and even to destroy him if he reveals any of its secrets. This is what he swears:

"To all of this, I most solemnly and sincerely promise and swear, with a firm and steadfast resolution to keep and perform the same, without any equivocation, mental reservation, or secret evasion of mind whatever, *"binding myself under no less a penalty than that of having my throat cut across, my tongue torn out by its roots, and buried in the rough sands of the sea at low-water mark, where the tide ebbs and flows twice in twenty-four hours,* should I ever knowingly or willingly violate this my solemn oath and obligation as an Entered Apprentice Mason. So *help me God,* and keep me steadfast in the due performance of the same."

Here a Mason asks the help of God to violate God's own commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." This is not Christian ethics! Indeed there are many pagan religions whose ethical standards are far superior. Some will say that this is but a meaningless ritual or symbolism; but in the oath we read that this promise is made solemnly and without any "mental reservation or secret evasion of mind whatever." In short, a Mason signs away his judgment and free will by taking this oath. He promises to take it literally and seriously. And for what reason?

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Now let us consider what some of the Presidents of the United States had to say about this blasphemous and unethical oath.

The sixth President of the United States, John Quincy Adams, said, "I am prepared to complete the demonstration before God and man that the Masonic oath, obligations, and penalties cannot by any possibility be reconciled to the laws of morality, of Christianity, or of the land."

President Ulysses S. Grant said, "All secret oath-bound political parties are dangerous to any nation, no matter how pure or how patriotic the motives and principles which first bring them together."

We would remind those who say that the oaths and obligations of a Mason are not taken seriously or literally, of one incident in the history of American Masonry which reveals its ever-present danger. After Captain William Morgan abandoned Masonry and exposed the first three degrees he was abducted and murdered by Masons who took their oaths literally and seriously to the sorrow and regret of those who did not. When this occurred in 1826, 1500 lodges surrendered their charters and 45,000 out of 50,000 Masons in the northern jurisdiction seceded from the order. The circumstances which were then present in Masonry have not changed in substance, and are present today with all their potential danger.

Many Masons will deny that they ever took the oath which we have quoted in part, but the reason for their denial is self-evident—the oath itself forbids. The authenticity of the oath which we have quoted has never been disproven. There are undoubtedly many Masons who were and are unaware of the full impact and implications of this oath and their Masonic obligations. But when they are exposed to the Light and Truth of Christ, their evil becomes clearly visible to all but the spiritually blind or callously indifferent.

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The Masonic oath is, in fact, an extra-judicial oath! The lodges have no authority from God or the State to administer oaths. Since this oath cannot be binding upon a Christian, it should be rejected and repented of, if it has been taken. No Christian can take an oath which obligates him to break the Law of God. Either the oath means exactly what it says or it does not! Either the initiate is consenting to murder or he is blaspheming God and using His Name in vain!

The Bible tells us what to do if we have unwittingly committed this sin: "If a soul swear, pronouncing with his lips to do evil, or to do good, whatsoever it be that a man shall pronounce with an oath, *and it be hid from him*; when he knoweth of it, then he shall be guilty in one of these. And it shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these things, that he shall confess that he hath sinned in that thing . . . and the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his sin." (Leviticus 5:4-6)

It is evident from even this brief analysis of the Masonic oath of the first degree—and this is even more true of the other degrees — that Masonry cannot be a handmaid of the Church as some claim. The ethical ideals of Freemasonry are directly opposed to those of Christianity.

It is also clear that no one can be a *true* Mason and at the same time a *true* Christian. We would remind those who say that Masonry is a charitable and good organization, that good actions are truly good only if they spring from good intent and a good heart. As Christians, we are required to be charitable to all people and to be impartial in all things. Masonic oaths require partial benevolence. Strictly speaking, Masonic charity is not Christian charity.

"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And

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if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies and do good, and lend, *expecting nothing in return*; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful even as your Father is merciful." (Luke 6:-32-36.) In Christian charity everything is given "in the name of Christ."

In the words of St. John, the Church calls to all Christians, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God; every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist, of which you heard that it was coming, and now it is in the world already. Little children, you are of God, and have overcome them; for He Who is in you is greater than he who is in the world, and the world listens to them. We are of God. Whoever knows God listens to us and he who is not of God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." (1 John 4:1-6)



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## CHAPTER IV

### *Why Join a Secret Society?*

Is there a good reason in the world for joining a secret society? Why must there be secretive organizations? Do secret societies benefit or hinder the Christian Church?

These are questions which should interest every God-loving person.

In John 3:19-21 we read, "And this is the condemnation that light is come into the world and *men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light that his deeds may be made manifest that they were wrought in God."

We believe sincerely that there is no reason under the name of God that would justify the membership of a true Christian in any secret society.

Secretism is an enemy of liberty and was the most unpopular thing in America between the years 1826-1840.

There is no need for secret organizations in a country blessed with liberty and justice for all. A secret society will always be tempted toward evil and to become lawless and disrespectful towards the rights of other people.

A secret organization can be useful and commendable while it is engaged in necessary work of a temporary nature. An example of this is the Early Church which was persecuted under despotic and tyrannical governments and for its salvation and continuance a certain secrecy was required. However, in a free and democratic land, a secret organization is not only unnecessary, but harmful.

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Notwithstanding, we live in an age of secret organizations. Secretism is the chain that binds these organizations into a unity. Masonry is the root of secretism. Secret societies are certainly not the work of Our Living God, Who is the Truth, the Light and the Life. On the other hand, secret societies acknowledge the god of falsehood, darkness and death.

That Masonry is a threat to the Christian Church is evident beyond doubt. If Masonry should ever become universal, as it claims it will, Christ The Son of God will no longer be heard of. Masonry is indeed the Antichrist in sheep's clothing and can have no place in the Church of Christ. "Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered."

Jesus spoke out against organized secrecy and also commanded His disciples to speak openly.

He said: "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in the light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops." (Matt. 10:27)

It is clear that a Christian should reveal whatever is good and profitable for the human race and should not keep his light under a bushel, but on a candlestick so that it "may give light unto all that are in the house." (Matt. 5:15)

Any organization that claims to have secrets that could benefit mankind and does not reveal them to the world is certainly immoral and cannot be classified as a good institution. If it has no secrets, it should not pretend!

All the secrets of Masonry have been revealed and they have not benefited mankind. *The only secret in Masonry is that there is no secret!*

Masonry is nothing but a counterfeit of the Church. It antagonizes Christian life and growth. Men are fooled by the camouflage of Christianity permitted to a certain extent in this un-Christian society. These Christians are doing Satan's work and don't know it! Once they are caught in the snares of the wicked one they become weak Christians and will bear no fruit.

If all Christians within the lodge would "come out and be separate", the lodges would cease to exist! Isn't this a pitiful situation?

## CHAPTER V

### *Pronouncements of the Orthodox Catholic Church Against Masonry*

The Orthodox Catholic Church has made clear Her attitude towards Masonry on many occasions, and every time She has declared that it is incompatible with the Christian Faith.

In recent times, the late and prominent Metropolitan Anthony of Kiev and Galicia, warned all Orthodox Catholics in no uncertain terms of the dangers of Masonry to the Christian Faith.

He said in his stand against Masonry, "... It is forbidden to all Orthodox Christians to become Freemasons. All Clergy are duty-bound to question those who come to Confession whether they are members of Masonic Orders, and in case it will appear that they are Masons and believe and share Masonic teachings, they should be informed that membership in the Masonic organization is incompatible with Orthodox Christianity, and that such should immediately resign from Masonry, otherwise they will be deemed unworthy to receive the Holy Communion and their further impenitency will bring them excommunication from the Orthodox Church."

The Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church in North America, during a Great Council of Bishops held from the 19th to the 27th of October, 1949, in New York City, passed a resolution condemning Masonry in response to a special report made by the then Archbishop of Chicago, Leonty. The resolution reads:

"After a lengthy discussion of the question of Masonry, the Sobor of Bishops decreed: (a) To warn the members of the Russian Orthodox Church of America, in particular Her pastors—concerning the incompatibility of being in the bosom of the Saving Church of

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Christ, and simultaneously continuing within the falsehoods of Masonry. Masonry is in fact a mixture of paganism and other religions containing certain secret "initiations" as established in the ritual of the order; (b) To explain to the Faithful that our Church agrees with the teachings of the Greek Orthodox Church. She accepts the testament as expressed by Chrysostom, the Metropolitan of Athens, and the 66 members of the Hellenic Church which was formulated during a Council in Athens, on the 12th of October, 1933, in the following declarations:

First: That the Faithful sons of the Church must avoid Masonry, staunchly believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Possessing the Truth which was revealed through Him and His Apostles, and in the partaking of Holy Communion by which we are sanctified, they must not fall away from the Grace of Christ by becoming participants in strange mysteries. It is absolutely impossible for one to belong to Christ and at the same time and seek salvation and moral perfection outside of Him;

Secondly: Whoever has perchance become involved in the initiations of the Masonic mysteries, must immediately leave this organization. In the future he must refrain from all association with the Masonic lodges and their workings. In this way he may have full assurance that he will renew his bond with the Lord and Saviour, which was broken either through ignorance or an incorrect understanding of the things involved.

(c) To explain the undeniable fact, that Divine Judgment has touched those who have broken their bond with Christ, especially in the case of the priesthood—for they have already been punished from On High with their dismissal by higher authority from performing their priestly functions in our churches. They have lost integrity of life and in the midst of disease they have inherited death.

(d) To repeat the call of the entire Eastern Greek Catholic Church to those who have thoughtlessly joined

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the Masonic Fraternity not realizing that they passed into another religion similar to the ancient gnostic sects of Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, Persia and Greece; To assure them that the Church awaits with great love their repentance in their unwillful abandonment of Christ. She calls all the Faithful to pray, that our Lord Jesus Christ—"The Way, The Truth and The Life"—will enlighten them, returning them to the Truth of the Gospel and will re-establish them in faithfulness to the Holy Catholic Apostolic Orthodox Faith and Church.

(e) To give warning to all the Faithful and especially to the growing youth to take to heart the instructions of our Episcopate concerning Masonry, in order that the Blessings of God may constantly abide with their parents, their relations and all their church organizations, which are now benefiting from the mercies from Above for their faithfulness to the Orthodox Faith of their forefathers.

Finally: To bring this decision immediately to the attention of all individuals involved and, in general, to inform and give guidance to all the Faithful by publishing it in the official organ of the Metropolitanate and, if possible, in separate brochures."

†Humble Theophilus, Metropolitan of All America and Canada.

†Leonty, Archbishop of Chicago and Minneapolis.

†John, Bishop of Sitka and All Alaska.

†John, Bishop of Detroit and Cleveland.

†Dionisy, Bishop of Pittsburgh and West Virginia.

†John, Bishop of Brooklyn.

†Bishop Dimitry.

(Translated from The Russian American Orthodox Messenger, March, 1950, pages 33-34.) †††

The conclusions of the Council of the Greek Orthodox Church to which these resolutions refer, is given here in full for the edification of all. It is clear from what is said in this statement that not only the Greek Church, but indeed all the autocephalous Orthodox Churches are in agreement concerning Masonry.

*The Statement—pp. 70-74, "Darkness Visible"*

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The Bishops of the Church of Greece in their session of October 12, 1933, concerned themselves with the study and examination of the secret international organization, Freemasonry. They heard with attention the introductory exposition of the Commission of four Bishops appointed by the Holy Synod at its last session; also the opinion of the Theological Faculty of the University of Athens, and the particular opinion of Prof. Panag Bratsiotis which was appended thereto. They also took into consideration publications on this question in Greece and abroad. After a discussion they arrived at the following conclusions, accepted unanimously by all the Bishops.

"Freemasonry is not simply a philanthropic union or a philosophical school, but constitutes a mystagogical system which reminds us of the *ancient heathen mystery-religions* and cults — from which it descends and is their continuation and regeneration. This is not only admitted by prominent teachers in the lodges, but they decalre it with pride, affirming literally:—'Freemasonry is the only survival of the ancient mysteries and can be called the guardian of them'; Freemasonry is a direct offspring of the Egyptian mysteries; 'the humble workshop of the Masonic Lodge is nothing else than the caves and the darkness of the cedars of India and the unknown depths of the Pyramids and the crypts of the magnificent temples of Isis'; 'the Greek mysteries of Freemasonry, having passed along the luminous roads of knowledge under the mysteriarchs Prometheus, Dionysus and Orpheus, formulated the eternal laws of the Universe!

"Such a link between Freemasonry and the ancient idoaltrous mysteries is also manifested by all that is enacted and performed at the initiations. As in the rites of the ancient idolatrous mysteries the drama of the labours and death of the mystery god was repeated, and in the imitative repetition of this drama the initiate dies together with the patron of the mystery religion, who was always a mythical person symbolising the Sun of nature which dies in winter and is regenerated in spring, so it is also, in the initiation of

the third degree, of the patron of Freemasonry Hiram and a kind of repetition of his death, in which the initiate suffers with him, struck by the same instruments and on the same parts of the body as Hiram. According to the confession of a prominent teacher of Freemasonry Hiram is 'as Osiris, as Mithra and as Bacchus, one of the personifications of the Sun'.

"Thus Freemasonry is, as granted, a mystery-religion, quite different, separate, and alien to the Christian faith. This is shown without any doubt by the fact that it possesses its own temples with altars, which are characterised by prominent teachers as 'workshops which cannot have less history and holiness than the Church' and as temples of virtue and wisdom where the Supreme Being is worshipped and the truth is taught. It possesses its own religious ceremonies, such as the ceremony of adoption or the masonic baptism, the ceremony of conjugal acknowledgement or the masonic marriage, the masonic memorial service, the consecration of the masonic temple, and so on. It possesses its own initiations, its own ceremonial ritual, its own hierarchical order and a definite discipline. As may be concluded from the masonic *agapes* and from the feasting of the winter and summer solstices with religious meals and general rejoicings, it is a physiocratic religion.

"It is true that it may seem at first that Freemasonry can be reconciled with every other religion, because it is not interested directly in the religion to which its initiates belong. This is, however, explained by its syncretistic character and proves that in this point also it is an offspring and a continuation of ancient idolatrous mysteries which accepted for initiation worshippers of all gods. But as the mystery religions, in spite of the apparent spirit of tolerance and acceptance of foreign gods, lead to a syncretism which undermined and gradually shook confidence in other religions, thus Freemasonry today, which seeks to embrace in itself gradually all mankind and which promises to give moral perfection and knowledge of truth, is lifting itself to the position of a kind of super-religion, looking on all religions (without excepting

Christianity) as inferior to itself. Thus it develops in its initiates the idea that only in masonic lodges is performed the shaping and the smoothing of the unsmoothed and unhewn stone. And the fact alone that Freemasonry creates a brotherhood excluding all other brotherhoods outside it (which are considered by Freemasonry as 'uninstructed' even when they are Christian) proves clearly its pretensions to be a super-religion. This means that by masonic initiation a Christian becomes a brother of the Muslim, the Buddhist, or any kind of rationalist, while the Christian not initiated in Freemasonry becomes to him an outsider.

"On the other hand, Freemasonry in prominently exalting knowledge and in helping free research as 'putting no limit in the search of truth' (according to its rituals and constitution), and more than this by adopting the so-called natural ethic, shows itself in this sense to be in sharp contradiction with the Christian religion. For the Christian religion exalts faith above all, confining human reason to the limits traced by Divine Revelation and leading to holiness through the supernatural action of grace. In other words, while Christianity, as a religion of Revelation, possessing its rational and superrational dogmas and truths, asks for faith first, and grounds its moral structure on the super-natural Divine Grace, Freemasonry has only natural truth and brings to the knowledge of its initiates free thinking and investigation through reason only. It bases its moral structure only on the natural forces of man, and has only natural aims.

"Thus, the incompatible contradiction between Christianity and Freemasonry is quite clear. It is natural that various Churches of other denominations have taken a stand against Freemasonry. Not only has the Western Church branded for its own reasons the masonic movement by numerous Papal encyclicals, but Lutheran, Methodist and Presbyterian communities have also declared it to be incompatible with Christianity. Much more has the Orthodox Catholic

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Church, maintaining in its integrity the treasure of Christian faith proclaimed against it every time that the question of Freemasonry has been raised. Recently, the Interorthodox Commission which met on Mount Athos and in which the representatives of all the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches took part, has characterised Freemasonry as a 'false and anti-Christian system'."

The assembly of the Bishops of the Church of Greece in the above mentioned session heard with relief and accepted the following conclusions which were drawn from the investigations and discussions by its President His Grace Archbishop Chrysostom of Athens:—

"Freemasonry cannot be at all compatible with Christianity as far as it is a secret organization, acting and teaching in mystery and secret and deifying rationalism. Freemasonry accepts as its members not only Christians, but also Jews and Muslims. Consequently clergymen cannot be permitted to take part in this association. I consider as worthy of degradation every clergyman who does so. It is necessary to urge upon all who entered it without due thought and without examining what Freemasonry is, to sever all connections with it, for Christianity alone is the religion which teaches absolute truth and fulfils the religious and moral needs of men. Unanimously and with one voice all the Bishops of the Church of Greece have approved what was said, and we declare that all the faithful children of the Church must stand apart from Freemasonry. With unshaken faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ 'in whom we have our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of His Grace, whereby He abounds to us in all wisdom and prudence' (Ephes. 1, 7-9) possessing the truth revealed by Him and preached by the Apostles, 'not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in the manifestation of the Spirit of power' (1 Cor. 2, 4); partaking in the Divine Sacraments through which we are sanctified and saved by eternal life, we must not fall from the grace of Christ by becoming partakers of

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other mysteries. It is not lawful to belong at the same time to Christ and to search for redemption and moral perfection outside Him. For these reasons true Christianity is incompatible with Freemasonry.

"Therefore, all who have become involved in the initiations of masonic mysteries must from this moment sever all relations with masonic lodges and activities, being sure that they are thereby of a certainty renewing their links with our one Lord and Saviour which were weakened by ignorance and by a wrong sense of values. The Assembly of the Bishops of the Church of Greece expects this particularly and with love from the initiates of the lodges, being convinced that most of them have received masonic initiation not realizing that by it they were passing into another religion, but on the contrary from ignorance, thinking that they had done nothing contrary to the faith of their fathers. Recommending them to the sympathy, and in no wise to the hostility or hatred of the faithful children of the Church, the Assembly of the Bishops calls them to pray with her from the heart in Christian love, that the one Lord Jesus Christ 'the way, the truth and the life' may illumine and return to the truth those who in ignorance have gone astray".

(We are indebted to Father Krivoshein, an Orthodox priest at Oxford and also Walton Hannah, the author of "Darkness Visible" for this statement of the Greek Orthodox Church).

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## CHAPTER VI

### *Resolution Regarding Freemasonry to be Presented to the Ninth All-American Church Sobor on Behalf of the Chicago Deanery*

## PREFACE

The Great Sobor of Bishops held in October of 1949 after hearing a report by Archbishop Leonty, resolved that Freemasonry cannot be tolerated in any of its many forms within the Body of Christ, His Church. In times past, Freemasonry has been rejected and condemned by the Holy Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church as an esoteric, syncretic, and secretive organization or cult. Such cults claim for themselves the right to impart and teach to their initiates spiritual, dogmatic, and moral "truths" which contradict, annul, or supersede the Truths of the "Faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3.) The Holy Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church affirms that She alone "is the Church of the Living God, the pillar and bulwark of the Truth." (Timothy iii, 14.)

## NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

(1) That this, the Ninth All-American Sobor of the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of North America, gathered under the guidance and protection of the Holy Spirit in the Pro-Cathedral of the Holy Protection of the Most Holy Mother of God in the city of New York on this the 10th day of November in the Year of our Lord 1955, accepts, approves, and fully supports the resolutions on Freemasonry of the Great Sobor of Bishops of October 1949.

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(2) That these resolutions shall be effected with the greatest possible vigor and zeal in the Church by all its true members whether they be Bishops, Clergy, or Laity; each according to the rights, duties, and responsibilities of his office at all levels and in all phases of the life of the Church.

(3) That all Orthodox Catholic Christians are reminded that loyalty to Christ and unity with the Life of His Body, the Church, obligates each and every one of them to avoid all esoteric, syncretic, or secretive cults which like Freemasonry claim that they are custodians of certain esoteric, spiritual, dogmatic, and ethical "truths" which they alone possess and impart to their initiates. When an Orthodox Catholic Christian becomes a member of such an organization knowingly or unknowingly, through ignorance or indifference, he in fact acknowledges that the Truth and the Light of Christ the Son of God is not sufficient for salvation. Thus he denies the Savior who said, "All things have been delivered to me by My Father," (Luke x, 22) for "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one can come to the Father, but by me." (John xiv, 6.) The Church has always affirmed that the Fullness of the Truth is only within the Body of Christ. The Church alone teaches and imparts spiritual, dogmatic, and ethical Truths to her members under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. She neither concedes, nor shares, nor gives this Her God-given right and duty to any organization, institution, or individual outside the Lifegiving Body of Christ.

(4) That any Orthodox Catholic Christian who because of ignorance of the facts or for any other reason, may have joined any esoteric, syncretic, or secretive organization must repent of his sin before the Church. He must immediately break all ties that bind him to that organization if he is to be reconciled to the Fullness of the Truth that is within the Lifegiving Body of Christ.

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(5) That any Orthodox Catholic Christian whether he be a Bishop, Priest, Deacon, or Layman loses all the rights, honors, and privileges of his membership and of his office in the Church when he joins any esoteric, syncretic, or secretive organization. If he keeps his membership secret, the simple fact of such membership whether it is known to the Church or not, is sufficient to cut him off from the Lifegiving Vine of Christ. If he partakes of the Mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ while keeping secret in his heart the fact of this membership, he "eats and drinks without discerning the Body eats and drinks judgment upon himself" (1 Cor. xi, 29) not unto salvation but unto condemnation.

(6) That it is the duty and obligation of every member of the Holy Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church to expose and combat the evil darkness and the secret "truths" of all esoteric, syncretic, and secretive cults with the Light and Truth of Christ. Our Lord said, "I have spoken openly to the world . . . I have said nothing secretly." (John xviii, 20.) The Church of Christ demands and expects from each and every member full and unqualified love, loyalty, and devotion to Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of the World. Therefore, no man can swear secret love, loyalty, and devotion to the false god of Masonry, and at the same time confess and serve the "Father, and the Son and Holy Spirit, the Trinity, One in Essence and Undivided." (From the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom).

Glory be to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

## RESOLUTION ON MASONRY

The Ninth All American Church Sobor of the Russian Orthodox Church of North America held in New York City, New York from the 8th to the 11th of November 1955, heard with great interest the decision of the Great Sobor of Bishops, held in October of 1949. It contained the following statements:

"Freemasonry, in any of its forms, can not be tolerated within the Body of Christ, His Church. In times past, Freemasonry has been rejected and condemned by the Holy Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church as an esoteric, syncretic and secretive organization or cult.

Such cults claim for themselves the right to impart and teach to their initiates spiritual, dogmatic and moral "truths" which contradict, annul or supersede the Truths of the Faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. (Jude 1,3)

The Holy Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church affirms that She alone "is the Church of the Living God, the pillar and bulwark of the Truth." (Tim. 3, 14)

"After hearing this decision of the Great Sobor of Bishops, the All American Sobor resolved: To consider this action of the Bishops' Sobor obligatory for the Metropolia and to accept it into practice with unfailing fulfillment".

The above statements have been reprinted from the Russian text as it appeared in the official organ of the Church, "The Russian American Orthodox Messenger," in December, 1955.



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## NOTICE

For those who wish to know more concerning the Church's attitude toward Masonry, the following pamphlets are available and recommended by the Church authorities:

"Christian-Orthodox Light on Speculative Freemasonry" by Archpriest Peter G. Kohanik.

Order From:

The Rt. Rev. Father Peter Kohanik  
136 Hamilton Ave.,  
Passaic, N. J.

— and —

"Freemasonry," by Apostolos Makrakis.

Order From:

Mr. K. Andronis  
1956 Henderson Ave.,  
Chicago, Illinois.

### *To the Reader*

Your financial assistance for the furtherance of this good work is solicited and will be appreciated.

Mail all donations to either of the following addresses:

The Rev. Father Vladimir S. Borichevsky  
1625 5th St., N. E.,  
Minneapolis, Minn.

— or —

The Rev. Father Stephen N. Julia  
5549 "B" Street  
Philadelphia 20, Pa.

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# Model CONSTITUTION and BYLAWS

for Congregations  
of the  
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

NORTHWESTERN PUBLISHING HOUSE  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
ISBN 0-8100-0145-4

to both and are thereby led to inconsistencies which they do not discern.... All who see conditions as they really are should count it a privilege to help clear the atmosphere and bring about a MORE CONSISTENT COURSE."

In Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14 we read: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: FEAR GOD, AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS; for this is the whole duty of man. For GOD SHALL BRING EVERY WORK INTO JUDGMENT, WITH EVERY SECRET THING, WHETHER IT BE GOOD OR WHETHER IT BE EVIL." It remains for us as loyal Christians constantly to walk in the fear of God, following in the paths of righteousness as defined by the Commandments, which serve as a rule for godly living. We dare never flirt with the works of darkness. It is unthinkable that we should be willing to silence our confession of Christ as our Savior and to dilute the truth which we have learned from God's inerrant, divinely inspired Scriptures. We can never afford to compromise our Christian ethics with the materialistic, pleasure-seeking life of the world in which we live. To those who hesitate God speaks firmly in the momentous question the Prophet Elijah once put to wavering Israel: "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Our blessed Lord, He of the crown of thorns and the nail-pierced hands, admonishes us: "No man can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. YE CANNOT SERVE GOD AND MAMMON" (Matt. 6:24). On another occasion He warned, "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad" (Matt. 12:30).

To which of these two classes do you belong? Show your loyalty to Him who declared: "I spake openly to the world . . . and in secret have I said nothing" (John 18:20). Prove your loyalty by refusing to have any traffic with an organization which stifles your Christian confessions, dims the light of the eternal truth you have received from Holy Scripture, and compromises your Christian way of life to the point of making it indistinguishable from the way of the world.

*The extensive research into Masonic literature by the Rev. H. Paul Boehne and Chaplain Delvin E. Ressel and the excerpts from Masonic sources provided by them proved invaluable for the preparation of this tract.*

- C. Our God has given us the privilege and responsibility of being managers over a certain portion of his estate and assures us he will graciously bless such faithful management (2 Corinthians 9:6). Therefore members of his church will under grace
- 1) Continually remember that all their possessions, time and abilities are really a trust from God.
  - 2) Cheerfully decide in their heart (2 Corinthians 9:7) the portion of their possessions and time and abilities which they will regularly devote to the Lord for use in carrying out that which the congregation has made its concern, not omitting the work of the synod (Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 9:14; 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-11; 1 Peter 4:10).
  - 3) If eligible, become voting members and regularly attend the voters' meeting and lend the congregation their counsel and aid.
- D. Our God has implanted within us who are Christians the new man, who desires to live righteously (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:24). Consequently, members of his church will
- 1) Not live in obvious acts of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:19-21), but lead a Christian life (Galatians 5:22-25).
  - 2) When they have erred, permit themselves to be fraternally admonished and corrected according to Matthew 18:15-18.
  - 3) Refuse to hold membership in any organization whose teachings and practices conflict with the Word of God (e.g. lodges). (John 5:23; 8:31,32; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
Pastoral Theology Textbook entitled  
THE SHEPHERD UNDER CHRIST - Pub. by  
Northwestern Publishing House,  
Milwaukee, Wi. - 1974

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## The Shepherd and Organizations

*"For brethren to dwell  
together in unity"*

(Ps 133:1)

The congregation, its members, and the pastor will become involved with various types of organizations. Some are limited to the congregation, others have wider connections with members from other congregations of the Synod, still others are not church-related but do seek to enlist members from among the church's ranks. The pastor's responsibility will vary according to the type of organization involved.

### I. ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE CHURCH

Various types of organizations may be found within a congregation. Most common are women's guilds, men's clubs, youth organizations, and church choirs. There may be a couples' club, a parent-teacher society, and an altar guild. Although many types of organizations are found within congregations, the pastor need not consider it his responsibility to organize every type within his particular congregation so that one is available to every age level and for every purpose. Organizations should develop because of a need for them that is felt by both the people and the pastor.

Some church organizations have ties beyond the congregational bounds. Youth groups may seek contact with those of other congregations within a circuit or conference. A women's mission guild may be a part of a synodical mission society.<sup>1</sup> A local Lutheran Pioneers train<sup>2</sup> has connections with the national organization.

The pastor will recognize that the organizational life of the church is an adiaphoron as long as it does not violate good order or involve itself with anything contrary to Scripture.

### *Role in the Congregation*

Organizations serve an auxiliary rôle in the congregation. They do not exist to replace the congregation in any way. Attendance at organizational functions should not be made a matter of conscience. Primary is attendance at divine services where the Word is preached and the sacraments are dispensed. To insist that a family is more Christian when all its members attend all and sundry organizations of the church may in fact prove disruptive of family life. Nevertheless, an organization may provide opportunity for further spiritual growth and the practice of one's Christian faith together with fellow Christians. It can assist the congregation in organizing programs of service helpful to the church.

Any organization within a congregation should be brought into existence through a congregational resolution, is responsible to the congregation, and can be dissolved by the congregation. This is true also of organizations with ties beyond the congregation. They, too, must remain under the supervision of the congregation. The pastor most often is the link between the congregation and its organizations. Periodic reports to the congregation from each organization can preserve the sense of accountability both within the organization and the congregation as such.

1. The women of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod are organized in a national organization, the "Lutheran Women's Missionary Society." The address at which information about this society is available is found in the *Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Yearbook* under "Church Related Organizations."
2. See the *Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Yearbook* under "Church Related Organizations" for the address of the central office of the Lutheran Pioneers.

## THE SHEPHERD AND ORGANIZATIONS

### *Objectives*

An important objective of the church's organizations is growth in Christian knowledge. Although the various organizations are not considered a direct part of the congregation's educational program, they can serve an important educational function. At most meetings time can be allotted to the discussion of a topic of interest. The type of organization, its specific functions, the age level of its members and their particular concerns, problems facing the church and its members as pilgrims in the world, will suggest topics that can profitably be discussed in the light of Scripture. The members may be asked for topic suggestions. The presentation should not be permitted to become monotonously long and is best kept informal. It is better to speak freely from notes than to read the presentation. Time for questions and discussion is important. The pastor will find it helpful to plan the program and topics of the various organizations for a year at a time. In this way he can work ahead and need not search before each meeting for a suitable topic. In some organizations guest lecturers are in place. Growth in Christian knowledge must remain an important objective of the church's organizations.

### *Christian Fellowship*

Christians will be drawn to one another by their common faith in Christ. Having experienced the riches of God's love through the redemption purchased with Jesus' blood, they will recognize the truth of what John writes: "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 Jn 4:11). John points out that we cannot claim to love the unseen God if we do not love our fellow Christians whom we see about us in the world. "This commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 Jn 4:21).

The congregation's organizations can provide opportunity for Christians to be with one another and experience Christian fellowship. Through the church and particularly through contacts within its organizations Christians may form friendships that carry over into their social life in general. The organizations through their activities may provide opportunity also for the entire congregation's membership to assemble for Christian fellowship.

Care must, however, be exercised lest the Christian fellowship enjoyed in an organization degenerate into cliques and factions

within the congregation. Fellowship within a particular organization should not be viewed as establishing an elite group, thus fostering a pharisaical spirit.

### *Christian Service*

The third objective of the congregation's organizations is to provide opportunity for Christian service. The pastor can direct this service into proper channels by suggestions that will avoid commercializing motives and serve a useful purpose. To provide for the church's sick and shut-ins, to assist in its divine services, to care for its property and implement its programs, Christian service of various types is called for and can be rendered according to ability. Organizations can undertake projects that benefit the church at large, that assist its missionaries, that show concern for the needy in the world. The heart in which Christ dwells by faith looks for opportunities to serve the Lord Jesus by reaching out to the need of even the least of His brothers (cf Mt 25:34-40).

These three objectives will not be present in all organizations in the same way. The altar guild will have service as its major objective while the couples' club may provide especially for Christian fellowship. Some may give more opportunity for growth in Christian knowledge than others, although this objective always deserves special emphasis. That an organization must be eliminated if all three objectives are not met cannot be said. However, the pastor will hold these objectives before each organization lest all three are lost and the organization no longer has reason to bear the name of the church.

The extent to which an organization needs formal structuring to keep its purpose and objectives in effect will vary with the type of organization and the congregation's traditions and locality. A society of the congregation, whether formally structured or not, should not be allowed to become a mere club for the community with no church-oriented objectives. Persons who are not members of the congregation ought not be permitted to become members of any of its organizations, though they may attend as guests.

### *The Pastor's Role*

The broad scope of the pastor's call includes involvement with the congregation's organizations. The pastor will demonstrate his interest by active participation, in most cases by personal attendance. While a children's group like the Lutheran Pioneers re-

quires active lay counselors with the pastor's participation less in evidence, the pastor should not absent himself from the ladies' guild or the young people's society lest his ministry give the impression of haphazard interest and planning. He will welcome the opportunity for contact with members which organizations give him and the rapport such contact can develop.

The pastor has the particular responsibility of providing for inspiration and growth in Christian knowledge through the opening devotions and the discussion topics. Neglect in this area can lead to an organization's deterioration and failure in meeting all of its objectives.

The leadership that is expected of the pastor expresses itself best in the organizations by providing guidance without ostentation. The members can assume the direct leadership as much as possible, the pastor serving as guide and counselor. In this way the organizations are useful also in developing a solid core of competent lay leadership that can serve the congregation well. Bad practices and faulty objectives (for example, that of raising money for the church) can be avoided or overcome by guidance and instruction, and by constructive suggestions in line with the objectives previously outlined.

Although the organizations require the pastor's interest, participation, and guidance, they must not be allowed to presume too much on the pastor's time. They must not rob him of the time needed for thorough sermon preparation. The Sunday service, where the means of grace are dispensed to the entire congregation, dare not become subordinate to the organizations in its demand on the pastor's time. At the same time, the sick, the troubled, the delinquent should not be neglected in favor of attendance during the social part of an organizational meeting. Our Savior's parable of the shepherd leaving the flock to go after the one lost sheep shows the importance of the pastor's work also with individuals. When there are conflicts, the pastor will have to determine what has priority on his time. It will not necessarily be the organizations.

The pastor's responsibility toward the congregation's organizations is not shared by his wife. Some organizations may look to her for leadership because she is the pastor's wife, as though his call from the congregation extends in some respects also to her. But she is the pastor's wife, not a called worker of the church. Her close relationship to the pastor will, in fact, most often make it

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desirable for her not to serve as president or chairman of organizations whose meetings she chooses to attend. Let her be an example of a faithful wife, a good mother, and a consecrated church member, and who as such becomes involved in organizations.

*Summary:* Various types of organizations can serve an auxiliary purpose in the life of a Christian congregation. They should remain under the control of the congregation that has called them into being. To provide opportunity for growth in Christian knowledge, for Christian fellowship, and for Christian service are three objectives that can make such organizations serve a useful purpose. The pastor will attend meetings, provide for devotions and inspire spiritual growth through discussion topics, and give guidance and direction to the organizations without taking over their direct leadership. A congregation must guard against letting the organizations preempt that part of the pastor's time which should be allotted to other necessary pastoral work.

## II. ORGANIZATIONS OUTSIDE THE CONGREGATION

The twentieth century society abounds in organizational life. Almost every type of endeavor, every area of life, every social, cultural, religious, economic, political, educational, professional concern results in organizations that bring people of like interests together. The members of a Christian congregation, as well as the pastor, will be confronted with numerous decisions about membership in organizations that are part of the society in which the church and the individual Christian find themselves. The pastor must be in a position to counsel with a member as to the possibility or advisability of being a member in one or the other of such organizations. It is not the purpose here to catalog the many organizations outside the congregation that may appeal to the Christian for membership and to express an opinion on each of them. The purpose is rather to examine the scriptural principles that need application in determining the Christian's possible involvement.

### *Two Types of Organizations*

For purposes of evaluation, organizations can be grouped into two categories. The one consists of such organizations that have antichristian or unscriptural principles, policies, or programs as

an intrinsic part of the organization. The very existence of the organization depends on principles that are hostile to Christianity. The Masonic order, for example, cannot exist without the anti-christian features that become evident in its rituals, prayers, and symbolism. Salvation by character is part and parcel of Masonic thought and teaching. Any society for the promotion of "a woman's right to abortion" exists for a purpose that is intrinsically contrary to Scripture. The Christian dare not compromise his faith by becoming identified with such organizations.

The other category consists of such organizations which in themselves have no inherent principles and purposes that make membership impossible. They may, however, at times have incidental adjuncts, like promiscuous prayers or doubtful activities, which are not an essential part of the organization. Frequently organizations may inject religious elements that are to give the organization respectability or the appearance of piety. Political conventions, for example, call in a pastor, priest, or rabbi to open their meetings with prayer even though religion is in no way a part of the organization's purpose. The Congress of the United States does not exist for religious purposes, and the opening prayers at its sessions are only incidental and not an intrinsic part of its existence. Many organizations are in this category, and membership in them cannot categorically be ruled out even when undesirable features attach themselves in an incidental way. The Christian may be able to divorce himself from the undesirable or unscriptural adjunct while remaining a member of the organization. His influence may, in fact, help avoid or eliminate such objectionable nonessential additions.

The above distinction and its application will become clearer by examining several groups of organizations in both categories which most often confront the Christian in the world.

#### *Lodges*

The constitution of a Lutheran congregation will have a statement in the article on Church Membership that reads something like this: "... a member of His Church will ... refuse to hold membership in any organization whose teachings and practices conflict with the Word of God (lodges, etc.). John 5:23; John 8:31, 32; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18."<sup>3</sup> Lodges are specifically mentioned as

3. *Constitution and Bylaws* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1968), p 7.

organizations that have objectionable religious elements which make membership in them incompatible with Christianity. There are certain typical objectionable elements that have found their way into lodges or similar organizations to a greater or lesser degree.

*A false view of Scripture.* The religious concepts and teachings of these organizations are not based on Scripture as the only revealed Word of God. Scripture is viewed as a source of religious truth, but only as one among many. In Freemasonry,<sup>4</sup> for example, the Bible is used "as a symbol of the will of God, however it may be expressed."<sup>5</sup> In fact, "whatever to any people expresses that will may be used as a substitute for the Bible in a Masonic Lodge."<sup>6</sup> Hence one of the Landmarks of the Masonic Order reads as follows:

It is a Landmark, that a "Book of the Law" shall constitute an indispensable part of the furniture of every Lodge. I say advisedly, a book of the Law, because it is not absolutely required that everywhere the Old and New Testaments shall be used. The "Book of the Law" is that volume which, by the religion of the country, is believed to contain the revealed will of the Grand Architect of the Universe.<sup>7</sup>

This means that, in fact, reason and nature are the source of religious truth, and this truth is something that is common to all men and all religions. "Its (Freemasonry's) religion is that general one of nature and primitive revelation — handed down to us from some ancient Patriarchal Priesthood — in which all men may agree and in which no man can differ."<sup>8</sup> This rules out Scripture as the special, necessary revelation of God, as the inspired, infallible Word of God which it claims to be. The fact that organizations with this principle will be satisfied to have the Bible present as a symbol of God's will and as a source of religious truth must not prevent the Christian from recognizing its true naturalistic basis. The mere presence of Scripture does not assure its proper

4. The Order of Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons is the oldest and largest of the lodges and can serve as an example of the kind of religious elements that may be found at least in part in other lodges also.
5. Albert Gallatin Mackey, *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry* (Chicago: 1946), I, 133.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Acimnos Ceihpr* (Oshkosh: W. W. Daggett Publishing Co., 1922), p 174.
8. Mackey, *Encyclopedia*, II, 847f.

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use. For the Christian, Scripture is in a category all by itself as the revealed will of God, divinely inspired and infallible, and must be the sole basis for religious faith and life. Cf 2 Timothy 3:16,17; 1 Corinthians 2:12,13; 2 Peter 1:20,21; John 17:17; Psalm 119:105; Luke 16:29; 1 Peter 4:11.

*A false view of God.* Masonry makes belief in a god a requisite for membership. Organizations that base their religious views on nature and reason will speak of God in vague, general terms. They require recognition of a god, but do not define Him in the specific manner in which He reveals Himself in Scripture. God is called the "Grand Architect of the Universe," the "Divine Artist," the "Supreme Grand Master," the "Nameless One of a hundred names," etc. Anything, however, that goes beyond such a general concept of God may not be introduced into Masonry. "The religion, then, of Masonry is pure theism on which its different members engraft their own peculiar opinions; but they are not permitted to introduce them into the lodge, or to connect their truth or falsehood with the truth of Masonry."<sup>9</sup> That the one true God has revealed Himself as triune and that Jesus, of necessity, must be recognized as the second person of this Trinity, true God from eternity, is according to Masonry a peculiarly Christian opinion concerning whose truth or error the lodge does not want to concern itself. The concept of god held by the Muslim or the Jew, the Brahman and the Buddhist, is equally acceptable to Masonry. According to the Bible, however, any view of God that does not specifically acknowledge the Trinity revealed in Scripture and Jesus as true God is false and thus idolatry. What do you think of Christ? Whose Son is He? These questions must be asked of lodges and similar organizations, for it is in their view of Christ that their denial of the true God most often becomes evident. Cf Matthew 28:19; John 17:3; John 5:23; 1 John 2:23; 2 John 9; Matthew 4:10.

*A false view of the way of salvation.* Naturalistic, rationalistic religions with their false view of God and their rejection of Jesus will inevitably teach work-righteousness. Whatever they say about man's hope for a happy hereafter will be a form of salvation by character. That this is the very heart of Freemasonry is evident from its symbolical interpretation of the various tools the operative mason uses in building. The speculative Mason uses

9. Mackey, *Lexicon*, p 404.

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these in building his "Temple" of character. He wears a lambskin apron so that by it "the Mason is reminded of that purity of life and rectitude of conduct which is so essentially necessary to his gaining admission into the Celestial Lodge above, where the Supreme Architect of the Universe forever presides."<sup>10</sup> Thus all tools, the square, the plumb, the level, etc., are interpreted in moralistic terms. The "pass" that assures admission to the Celestial Lodge above is "a pure and blameless life."<sup>11</sup> If an organization expresses this work-righteousness less clearly in its general rites and rituals, it can be expected to express it more explicitly in the funeral ritual, especially in the prayers. Any organization that has work-righteousness as an intrinsic part of its teaching is inimical to Christianity. The Christian may have no part in it because his hope for salvation rests alone in the vicarious atonement of Christ through which he by grace through faith has the full remission of sin. Cf Ephesians 2:8,9; Romans 3:23,24; 1 John 1:8,9; John 14:6; Acts 4:12.

*False prayers.* The prayers in organizations with naturalistic, rationalistic religious views will address themselves to a god in general, will eliminate any reference to Christ. They are unchristian prayers and idolatrous and have no promise of fulfillment. Cf 1 John 2:23; John 5:23; John 15:16; 14:13; 16:23.

*An ungodly fellowship.* A lodge establishes a brotherhood. It brings its members into a fraternal fellowship. We are concerned here with organizations whose brotherhood has religious elements, as is so evident in Freemasonry. They share secrets, recognize one another by their handshake, unite in rituals and prayers, and show special consideration to one another in all of life's contacts. It is a brotherhood in which men are united on the basis of general religious views that can be held in common by all religions. That such a fellowship is ungodly and sinful is the clear testimony of Scripture. Cf 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Romans 16:17, 18.

Many of these organizations have other intrinsic features that are objectionable. It may be their secrecy. It may be their oath. They may set up their own moral standards and in fact allow immoral actions. Since not all organizations have all of the same objectionable elements, each organization must be examined and

10. Markey, *Encyclopedia*, I, 95f.

11. *Acimnos Ceihpr*, pp 197f.

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the implications of membership determined. The five points discussed above are so basic that any examination needs to watch for these in particular.

### *The Boy Scouts of America*

Among organizations for children and adolescents which have intrinsic elements contrary to Scripture, besides those associated with lodges, the Boy Scouts of America is the most prominent. Although it insists that all religious teaching should be left to the church, its purpose, aim, and program inherently conflict with biblical truth. The purpose of the organization is character training. Its aim, according to the Scout Oath, is that the Scout may do his duty to God and his country; help other people at all times; and keep himself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight. Its program has to do not merely with teaching certain skills, especially such as involve camping and the outdoors, but centers in the Scout Law. It must be noted that the Scout Oath (also called the Promise) and the Scout Law are necessary parts of Scouting. Without them no Scout troop may exist, even if it is sponsored by a Christian congregation. They are considered essential to the spirit of Scouting.

This calls for a careful examination of the role of the Scout Oath and Law in the character training of Scouting. While the aim of doing one's duty to God and country are shared by Christianity, the manner of attaining them differs completely. An examination of the Scout Law in the light of Scripture shows that it subverts the function of God's law, Christian sanctification, and the way of salvation.<sup>12</sup> To promise "on my honor" to do one's duty to God hardly accords with the Scriptural confession that "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Php 4:13). The spirit of Scouting builds self-righteousness and is hostile to Christianity. Its type of character training conflicts with Christian character training, based on Holy Scripture.<sup>13</sup> These objectionable elements of Scouting are not mere adjuncts that may attach themselves to a particular troop but are essential to its existence.

12. Cf Jerald J. Plitzuweit, "The Scout Law in the Light of Scripture," a series of three articles in *The Northwestern Lutheran*, LVII (1970), 60f, 90f, 127.

13. Cf Carl Lawrenz, "Natural Knowledge of God, Civic Righteousness, and Their Application to the Boy Scout Question," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, LXIX (April 1972), 67-79.

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It is an organization with which the church and its members may not become identified.<sup>14</sup>

### *Service Organizations*

Professional and business men may find themselves attracted to membership in the Rotary, Kiwanis, or Lions clubs. These are not secret fraternal societies or lodges. They are service clubs, having the goal of improving business and professional ethics and of working for social betterment and the general welfare of the community. While membership cannot be considered impossible because of the inherent nature of the organizations, it will be necessary to warn against religious elements and doubtful programs with which the Christian will not want to become associated. Examples of such are unionistic prayers and sponsoring of a Boy Scout troop. The church member in such an organization should consider it his responsibility to keep the organization from adding such nonessential elements that conflict with his religious principles.

The pastor may be invited to join one or the other of these clubs. Remembering that membership makes him responsible for all that the organization does, the pastor will decline the invitation. All his talents, his time and resources, have been called into the service of the gospel; time devoted to these organizations could raise the question of wise stewardship. His association with an organization for social betterment could give a wrong emphasis to his ministry and be misunderstood by people. His presence could encourage religious practices that should not become part of the organization or its meetings. Any seeming advantages through the contacts made in such organizations are outweighed by the reasons advanced against membership.

### *Veterans' Organizations*

Veterans' organizations, among which the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars are most prominent, cannot be classed as lodges. Although they provide for the office of a chaplain and certain rituals and prayers, these religious features are not mandatory nor necessary for the existence of the organization. They often are omitted at the local post. The burial rite is

14. Cf Armin W. Schuetze, "Can We Make Use of the Boy Scout Organization," in *Guidance From God's Word* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1967), pp 116-119.

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available upon request. Members of the congregation affiliated with these organizations will need to recognize that they must resist the use of such optional religious practices. In the case of the funeral of a veteran, his military service may be acknowledged by the presence of a flag and possibly a military honor guard. These may be provided locally through the veterans' organization.

Although there may be no religious elements that prohibit membership, the pastor may see the need to warn against the general spirit and some of the activities of these organizations. The members will always have to ask themselves whether they as Christians feel completely at home in such organizations. The answer will differ according to the nature of the local post.

### *Labor Unions*

Labor unions do not have a religious purpose. This is generally true also of railway brotherhoods or farm organizations. Although some of these provide for rituals and prayers, these religious elements are generally optional, not part of the essence of the organization. If his job forces him to be a member of a particular union, the church member will avoid participating in religious practices and use his influence to eliminate them.

A warning is in place against the materialistic spirit that can easily attach itself to these organizations. It should be self-evident that no Christian will condone the use of violence and destruction of property. He must remember both the positive and the negative elements of the Seventh Commandment.

### *Fraternities — Sororities*

Young people attending a college or university may be confronted with the decision to join a fraternity or sorority. Membership in these organizations is sought or encouraged for social reasons and has no direct religious implications. However, the Christian may need to ask whether the program, activities, and reputation of the organization are such that he can conscientiously identify himself with them. The above naturally does not apply to honorary or professional societies as, for example, Phi Beta Kappa.

### *Pastoral Practice*

It is not enough to have a "lodge clause" in the congregation's constitution; the pastor must show the congregation the full signi-

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ficance and application of it. This involves a general instruction of the congregation concerning the various types of organizations, the implications of membership, and the church's objections either to membership in them or to certain possible adjuncts that must be opposed. This instruction should be a part of the confirmation instruction course both for children and for adults. The pastor must, however, be certain that the necessary basis in Bible doctrine has been laid for an understanding of the objectionable elements in the organization, for example, in a lodge or in Scouting. Such instruction can continue in Bible classes and in the church's organizations. This instruction may concern itself with classes of organizations without going into depth on each of them in particular. If, however, a specific organization is prominent in a community, a more detailed analysis of its objectionable features is called for.

The use of the Sunday sermon for such instruction is questionable. Unless the sermon lays the necessary biblical basis and can enter into the objections to a particular organization in sufficient detail so that the reasons for the objections are very clear, it is advisable to reserve such instruction for a forum where questions can be asked and discussion can take place. Merely to mention the name of an objectionable organization in a sermon without further explanation will inform members only that the church opposes it and may confront mission prospects with questions for which they are not sufficiently prepared. The result may be that they turn away from the church without further discussion.

When a member joins an antichristian lodge or organization, the pastor will take this up personally with that individual. In preparation, the pastor must acquaint himself as well as he can with that specific organization.<sup>15</sup> He must guard against drawing sweeping conclusions that he cannot verify with clear evidence. In cases where a member appreciates the pastor's concern, it may be possible to study the organization jointly on the basis of materials the member has received. In any case, it is more helpful to be able to study the organization on the basis of its own writings and rituals than merely on the basis of articles and pamphlets written about them. The latter can, however, be useful when they do quote from the literature of the objectionable organization and examine it in the light of Scripture.

15. See the bibliography for materials that can be used for such a study.

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In his study the pastor must find the answers to certain questions about the organization. What kind of organization is this? Does it have religious elements that are part of its essential character or is it basically social, political, professional, etc.? It must be noted that some organizations that began as lodges with objectionable rituals dropped these and continued only as social organizations or life insurance companies, retaining a kind of fraternal status for tax purposes. What are implications of membership? A membership that binds the individual to a religious ritual must be viewed differently from one in which religious elements are purely incidental and optional. Sometimes various kinds of membership are possible, not all of them equally objectionable. In such cases the further question arises: Will such distinctions be fully understood by the entire congregation, or could a permissible type of membership still cause offense?

In dealing with the member, the pastor's responsibility is first of all that of a teacher. He must instruct the member regarding the objections to the organization and the biblical reasons for them. In this he will be patient, firm, and evangelical.

### *Patient*

To be patient means not to confront a member simply with an ultimatum. It means allowing adequate time for the needed instruction to be given and to take effect. How long patience should be extended will depend to a great extent on the reaction of the member. One can bear much longer with a person who has honest difficulties understanding certain points than with one who obviously has a closed mind and desires no instruction. At what point congregational discipline is called for will vary from individual to individual. Patience is a virtue, but not when it becomes procrastination.

### *Firm*

Patience does not eliminate firmness. While one can patiently instruct, the instruction must remain firm in its application of the Word of God. If something is contrary to God's Word, the pastor may not ignore this fact in his practice. For a pastor and a congregation to delay taking a firm stand in the hope that the problem can be resolved at a later time is unscriptural practice. To

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build a mission congregation on a lax lodge and Scouting practice in the expectation that the practice can become a firm one as the congregation grows is laying the foundation for future trouble. Where a certain practice is called for by Holy Scripture, the pastor has no choice but to be firm, even if he will show patience in carrying out the necessary instruction.

### *Evangelical*

An evangelical practice also does not conflict with firmness. To be evangelical does not mean to be lax. It means not being legalistic. To demand that a member give up the Masonic lodge, for example, because the congregation's constitution requires this is legalism. Evangelical practice finds its motivation in the gospel and its guidance in Holy Scripture. To apply this with firmness is to be evangelical. To operate simply with laws and rules is legalism. The pastor must be evangelical.

Should a child that remains a member of the Scouting organization be confirmed and become a communicant member of the church? To continue voluntarily in an association prohibited by Scripture and at the same time to profess full acceptance of Scripture is a contradiction. One cannot ask a child to make such a confession until the contradiction is eliminated. If, however, his membership in the Scouts is beyond his control, demanded by his parents or guardians, the child cannot be held responsible. It is to be hoped that the parents may be brought to permit the child to make his own decision in such cases.

When a person who is already a member of the congregation joins an antichristian organization, instruction, admonition, and discipline will proceed while he retains his membership. It should be understood that he will refrain from communion while he is being dealt with. Persistent refusal to follow the admonition and heed the discipline ultimately leads to a termination of his membership in the congregation. If those who are seeking to join the congregation are found to be associated with an antichristian organization, their membership in it must be terminated prior to their reception into the fellowship of the church.

*Summary:* Two types of organizations outside the congregation require the church's attention. The one type has objectionable re-

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ligious elements as an intrinsic part of the organization, making affiliation on the part of church members impossible. The other type may have objectionable adjuncts that are not an essential part of the organization. While membership in such organizations cannot be forbidden, the members must be warned against participation in the organization's objectionable elements and encouraged to work for the elimination of those that are optional. Antichristian lodges, like the Freemasons, have a false view of Scripture, God, and the way of salvation and involve their members in false prayers and an ungodly fellowship. Service and veterans' organizations as well as labor unions generally have no intrinsic religious elements, whatever rituals and prayers they provide being optional. In dealing with members who have joined antichristian organizations the pastor will by patient, firm and evangelical instruction and admonition seek to lead them to renounce their sinful affiliation lest their persistent refusal lead to termination of their congregational membership and even eternal damnation. In the case of those seeking membership in the congregation, all antichristian affiliations must be terminated before reception into the congregation may take place.

### For Additional Reading

Acimnos Ceihpr. Oshkosh: W. W. Daggett Publishing Co., 1922.

A Masonic handbook, containing the ritual in code. With a little practice one can learn to read the code of the ritual. The volume also contains a listing of the Masonic Landmarks, which are not in code.

Coil, Elijah Alfred. *The Liberal Churches and the Fraternal Orders*. Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1916.

A Unitarian minister shows that it is inconsistent to be a Freemason and a Trinitarian Christian at the same time. A Freemason should consistently also be a Unitarian.

Fritz, John H. C. "The Ladies' Society," chapter 24 in *Pastoral Theology*. St. Louis: Concordia, 1945. pp 326-328.

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Graebner, Theodore. *A Handbook of Organizations*. St. Louis: Concordia, 1948.

A volume that is still useful although in some cases it will be necessary to supplement the information from more recent materials. The discussion on the Boy Scouts of America is useful only for information on the reasoning that led to the 1944 resolutions on Scouting by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The conclusions are unacceptable.

Graumann, William. *The Christian Degrees of Masonry and the Bible*. St. Louis: Concordia, 1962.

The two so-called "Christian" degrees in the Scottish and York rites that go beyond the three basic degrees of the Blue Lodge are examined and exposed as no departure from nor improvement on the errors of the Blue Lodge.

Kowalke, E. E. "The Church and Its Youth," in the *Theologische Quartalschrift (Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly)*, XXXIV (Oct, 1937), 246-263.

This synodical essay is still timely in its sane approach to the church's ministry to its youth. Its value lies particularly in the theological basis that provides a proper scriptural perspective for work among the youth as well as in all of the congregation's organizations.

Krueger, Ottomar. "Societies in the Congregation," chapter XXII in *The Pastor at Work*. St. Louis: Concordia, 1960. pp 374-383.

A general discussion of societies, showing their possible dangers and how to make them useful in the church.

Mackey, Albert G. *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*. Revised and enlarged by Robert I. Clegg. 3 vols. Chicago: Masonic History Co., 1946.

An authoritative source of information for all questions about Freemasonry. Will readily yield quotations showing the "salvation by character" nature of Freemasonry.

Maier, Walter A., Jr. *Should I Join a Fraternal Society?* St. Louis: Concordia, 1961.

Useful for distribution. The pamphlet examines especially the Masonic order.

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*Masonry in the Light of the Bible.* St. Louis: Concordia, 1954.

A pamphlet, in its tenth printing in 1969, that lists what "Scripture teaches" and what "Masonry says" in two columns on the same page. The numerous quotations from Masonic literature on six topics make the pamphlet very useful.

Pike, Albert. *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry.* Richmond, Va.: L. H. Jenkins, Inc., 1871.

This work was prepared and published by authority of the Supreme Council of the Thirty-third Degree for the Southern Jurisdiction of the U.S. by its Grand Commander, Albert Pike. Its copyright was renewed in 1906, and it has been republished since.

Preuss, Arthur. *Dictionary of Secret and other Societies.* St. Louis: Herder, 1924.

A Catholic work on fraternal societies that together with Stevens' Cyclopedia is frequently quoted as an authoritative source.

Stevens, Albert C. *Cyclopedia of Fraternities.* New York: E. B. Tread and Co., 1907.

A work frequently cited in critical studies of fraternal societies.

Whalen, William J. *Christianity and American Freemasonry.* Milwaukee: Bruce, 1958.

This volume by a Roman Catholic author contains a chapter on "Protestant Criticism of Masonry." Included is also reference to the Lutheran and WELS rejection of Masonry.

Whalen, William J. *Handbook of Secret Organizations.* Milwaukee: Bruce, 1966.

Although this handbook was written by a Roman Catholic, it provides much information on the various organizations that can serve to supplement and update the Graebner Handbook.

Zuck, G. Irving and Roy B. Zuck. *Youth and the Church.* Chicago: Moody Press, 1968.

This volume of over 400 pages consists of 28 chapters written by various authors. It contains a wealth of practical material to give

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the pastor ideas for his youth program. The theology of the various authors is one that begins with the acceptance of Scripture as the inspired Word of God.

Zuck, Roy B. and Gene A. Getz. *Adult Education in the Church*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1970.

A number of chapters contain practical suggestions that may be adopted or adapted in various church organizations. Since its background is Reformed, discretion is in place even though the general theological approach is evangelical, viewing Scripture as authoritative. The chapter on "Instructional Methodology for Adults" provides an explanation of many different methods that may be useful in carrying out an educational program in connection with organizations.

... who are being taught the word of God in its truth and purity. It is an encouragement for them to go forward with added zeal.

Our visit to Nigeria lasted one hour. We wished to close at that point since many were sitting on hard benches, others on cold cement floors, and still others had no place to sit. Disagreement came from every corner. We were begged to continue.

Now we brought them back to Lusaka. A year ago the Queen Mother visited the Federation. During her short stay we had an opportunity to take slides of the decorations, the festivities, and especially the Queen Mother herself. Many of the Africans had not seen these preparations. Very few of them had so much as caught a glimpse of the woman who was once co-ruler of their country. Our pictures brought them face to face with her. Their excitement was overwhelming. Two hours passed without their eyes

leaving the canvas which we use for a screen. Still there were cries for more. We could have sat for many more hours.

Such is the joy which your gifts have brought to the empty lives of our people. May our Lord richly bless every individual and each organization for contributing so generously to the cause of foreign missions. We pray that the Lord will open the hearts of many more to this great work.

#### WHERE IS RHODA?

Time and again we visited the Semes to ask why Rhoda was not in Sunday school. Each time we received a different excuse. Finally, the truth came out. Rhoda was ashamed to come. She had only rags to put on.

Such is the case with the great majority of our children and grown-ups as well. They are clothed, but so pitifully — oversized shirts with parts of the sleeves missing, with

rips and tears in front and back; undershirts with gaping holes; dresses in shreds and tatters; shoes without soles and usually no shoes at all.

So touched were we by these sights and by the constant pleas of the people that when we returned home we searched our hearts and our closets. We did not find rags, wornout shoes or things that we wanted to throw away. But we did find clothes which were not needed.

Today when we go to church we see those ties which hung on our rack; shirts which were seldom worn; dresses which we can do without. That is our thanks. But our greatest thanks is to see Rhoda attending Sunday school in a dress which once belonged to Debbie.

Have you searched your hearts and your closets lately? Do you have any clothes that you can do without? Will the Lord be able to say to you, "I was naked and ye clothed me"?



Topic: What is Wrong  
With the Lodge?

#### I.

You ask this question because the constitution of every congregation in our Synod has a clause in it reading something like this: Only such can be and remain members of this congregation who do not hold membership in any ungodly or Christless organizations, such as lodges. Why is that in the congregation's constitution? You have heard of charitable work which is carried on by lodges. You hear that they stress brotherhood and love among men. Why should membership in such organizations be prohibited? Is that only a "rule" of the congregation?

In answering this question we shall not be able to touch upon all objections that can be raised against lodge membership. We shall in this article and the one following, however, enter in upon two basic Scriptural objections. We shall also not be able to study all the various lodges individually but will limit ourselves to the lodge perhaps most frequently encountered, the Masonic Lodge. What is said of it applies to a greater or lesser degree also to other lodges.

#### Not Merely A Social Organization

Freemasonry is not merely a social organization, as is sometimes thought, but teaches religion. We quote from Mackey, who is considered an authority by Masonry.

He writes about the Landmarks (unwritten, unchangeable laws) of Masonry. We read: "A belief in the existence of God as the Grand Architect of the Universe is one of the most important Landmarks of the Order." Another Landmark is that the order exists "for purposes of religious and moral teaching." Masonry insists that you must believe in a god before you can become a member, and it wants to teach you about religion and morals. It exists for that purpose. So never let anyone tell you that it is a purely social organization.

#### What Kind of God?

Who is the god in whom Masonry wants you to believe and about whom it teaches? We quote again from Mackey: "The religion of Freemasonry is cosmopolitan, universal. . . . 'Be assured,' says Godfrey Higgins, 'that God is equally present with the pious Hindu in the temple, the Jew in the synagogue, the Mohammedan in the mosque, and the Christian in church.'" The god of Masonry is some kind of general god, present in all religions, honored and worshiped by all, Mohammedan, Hindu, Christian, and Jew alike.

#### An Imaginary God

But what does the Bible say about this kind of god? Is every god of all the various heathen people also the

true God? "For all the gods of the people are idols: but the Lord made the heavens" (I Chron. 16:26). The gods believed on in the heathen religions are idols, false gods. There is only one true God who is the creator and the Lord of heaven and earth. He is the God who has revealed Himself in the Bible, the Triune God, whom we can know and worship only through Jesus Christ. The Scriptures say: "He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent him" (John 5:23). "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (I John 2:23). Whoever, then, claims to know and worship God as Father but denies, rejects, ignores Jesus Christ as the Son of God, as equal with the Father, as the second Person of the Trinity, he is actually not worshiping the true God. That means his god is nothing but an imaginary god, a god created by his own mind, an idol. That must surely be said of the god whom Masonry acknowledges and teaches. The true God, the God of the Bible, is not equally present in all religions, is not worshiped by all men. The kind of "Supreme Architect of the Universe" Masonry conceives of is the creation of man's reason and nothing but an idol.

#### Here Is Idolatry!

Masonry, then, is guilty of idolatry. Its worship and prayers are idol worship. The Masons may not with their hands have made an idol out of gold, silver, wood, or stone, but they have created one with their mind and reason out of purely human thoughts and ideas. The latter is an idol no less than the former.

But perhaps someone tells you: You can think of your God and of Jesus Christ when you are praying those prayers in the lodge. Even though others are

worshiping another god, you can worship the God whom you consider to be the true one.

#### Prayer With Idolaters?

What would you say if a heathen invited you to kneel with him in front of his golden image, his idol? Would you say: I'll kneel with him and pray with him, but while he prays to his idol I'll think of the true God. Would not that be considered the grossest hypocrisy? The Children of Israel made a golden calf. They said of it: "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Exod. 32:4). Aaron built an altar before the calf and said: "Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord" (Exod. 32:5). But even though Aaron spoke of worshiping the Lord when they sacrificed to the calf, it was no less idolatrous. You cannot kneel down to an idol, whether that is a golden calf, an image made of wood or stone, or an idol created by human reason, and still claim to be worshiping the true God. You cannot join the Masons in praying to their false god and still claim to be worshiping the true God in your own mind.

God tells us what we must do over against those who do not worship the true God and so must be considered unbelievers. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath right with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? . . . Wherefore come out from among them" (II Cor. 6:14-17).

A. SCHUETZE.

## A Report on the Synodical Conference Convention August 5-8, 1958

ENLARGE the place of thy tent . . . and strengthen thy stakes." With these words of Isaiah (54:2) one of the delegates described the work of the Synodical Conference Convention in Lakewood, Ohio, August 5-8. Mission expansion, but above all, the desire to strengthen our doctrinal stand and our doctrinal unity characterized the work of our sessions.

#### The Essay

In his essay, "The Relation of Pure Doctrine to the Church's Worldwide Task," Prof. Elmer Kiessling, Watertown, Wisconsin, emphasized this two-sided function not only of the Synodical Conference, but of any church-related group or individual. We ought not go to either extreme in religious work. We have the greatest need of the "contemplative man," who immerses himself in the study of knowledge and of doctrine. But great dangers await the one who

stops there. We also have need of the "activist," the one who busies himself with the outward functions of the Church. But here even greater dangers await him who stops with this. Tensions will exist in trying to establish and maintain the proper balance between these two in the individual and in the church. But such a happy balance must be attained.

#### Doctrinal Matters

This happy balance seemed evident at our Synodical Conference Convention. The doctrinal matters naturally captured the first concern of the delegates. The Joint Union Committee reported its progress on the study of doctrinal matters disturbing the Synodical Conference and its attempts to draw up a common doctrinal statement. The result thus far has been the preparation of a unanimously adopted Statement on Scripture. With minor emendations

this Statement was adopted by the Convention and will be submitted to the constituent Synods for study and adoption. The excellence and completeness of this statement was praised by many. Dr. W. M. Oesch, of the Ev. Lutheran Free Church of Germany, commended the Committee for making provision in the anti-theses not only for past errors, but also for falsehood just rearing their heads in European theological circles.

The Floor Committee took note of the long and faithful work evidenced in the Statement on Scripture and urged continuance of this work. It also urged the establishment of a Committee to explore the possibilities of inviting into the Synodical Conference other church bodies in the world in agreement with us in doctrine and practice.

All delegates rejoiced at this progress. Other items of progress which were reported to the convention were these: all but the final

# A Lantern to Our Footsteps

Topic: What is Wrong  
With the Lodge?

## II

You were promised a second answer to that question. We take up a second basic objection Christianity must have to lodges. We continue to use Freemasonry as an example.

It was pointed out that Masonry teaches religion. That is one of the purposes of the organization. What we want to know, then, is: What kind of religion does it teach? In judging any religion or religious teaching no question is more important than this one: What does it teach about getting to heaven? What does it tell me about how I am saved? The answer to that question is all-important and will soon reveal whether a religious teaching can be accepted or not.

### The Bible Way

The answer of the Bible, the answer you as a Christian have learned, is clear and simple. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). You are saved through faith in Christ because "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). You also know that salvation comes to you completely as a gift of God's grace and mercy in Christ: that your own good works in no way earn that salvation. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8,9). That is the only way of salvation (Acts 4:12). That is the only acceptable answer to the question: How am I saved? Any answer that does not agree with this must be rejected by a Christian.

### The Masonic Way

What does the Masonic religion teach about the way of salvation? What gives a man assurance that he will go to heaven? This is the way the Masons express it in their manual. They are speaking of the time when we shall "go from our labors on earth to everlasting refreshments in the Paradise of God." They say about that: "Then, by the benefit of the pass — a pure and blameless life — with a firm reliance on Divine Providence, shall we gain ready admission into that Celestial Lodge above." They hope to get to heaven because of their own good works. In the "Charge to the Lodge" this is what is said: "And now, my brethren, let us see to it, and so regulate our lives by the plumb-line of justice, ever squaring our actions by the square of virtue, that when the Grand Warden of Heaven may call for us, we may be found ready." What has made a man ready for death and eternity? His own good life. The Lodge teaches salvation by character.

### The "Emblem of Innocence and Purity"

All the symbolism of the Masonic Order is to remind the brother that he must build a pure and upright life in order to be acceptable to God. You have, no doubt, noticed the small, white apron that is worn by a Mason on certain occasions. It is called the "badge of a Mason" and of it we read: "There is no one of the symbols of Speculative Freemasonry more important in its teaching, or more interesting in its history, than the lambskin, or white leather apron." And what does this apron teach? What does it symbolize? This apron must be white as "an emblem of innocence and purity." It must be made of lambskin "that by the lambskin the Mason is reminded of that purity of life and rectitude of conduct which is so essentially necessary to his gaining admission into the Celestial Lodge above, where the Supreme Architect of the Universe forever presides." That little white apron is to be a constant reminder that a man must earn his way into heaven with his good works. In the same way other symbols are used and explained.

### The Head-on Clash

So the way of salvation that is taught in the lodge is the direct contradiction to the way of salvation that God has prepared for us in Christ and has revealed to us in the Bible. Certainly no one can believe that we are saved by the grace of God without the works of the Law and at the same time believe that we are saved by our own good works. The one excludes the other.

### God's Verdict on the "Gospel" of the Lodge

There is no false teaching that more completely robs us of our eternal salvation than does the teaching of salvation by character. False teachers had come to the congregation at Galatia, telling the people that for salvation it was necessary to perform certain good works, to observe certain laws. St. Paul then wrote to them: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4). Whoever believes that he is saved by his own good works has lost Christ and with Him his salvation. St. Paul warned the Galatians against anyone who came to them with another "gospel," another way of salvation besides the one they had learned from him. He wrote: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8). The Bible leaves little doubt about God's attitude toward those who teach a "gospel" according to which you are saved by your own good works. And that is the "gospel" of the lodge.

### Your Congregation and the Lodge

There is then a very good reason why your congregation has a so-called "lodge clause" in its constitution. That is not based on human prejudice. It is not just a "rule" which the congregation has decided to follow. It is because your congregation recognizes the false religion, the Christian "gospel," of the lodge and, recognizing it, is obedient to the Word of God when it says: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the

doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (II John 9-11). The lodge does not acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Son of God and our Savior from sin. We cannot make common cause with them and become partakers of their evil deeds.

A. SCHUETZ.

## School Visitors Attend Workshop at Dr. Martin Luther College



1958 School Visitors Workshop at D.M.L.C., New Ulm, Minnesota

THE second annual workshop for school visitors was conducted at Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, July 28 to August 1, 1958.

The objectives of the workshop are to better equip the school visitors for the position to which they have been appointed: 1) in subject matter, 2) in methods, 3) in classroom procedure, 4) in school administration.

The areas covered this year were: The Teaching of Arithmetic and Arithmetic Textbook Evaluation. Six committees, consisting of from seven to eight members, studied the present trends in teaching arithmetic in the primary schools, including an evaluation of the materials to be taught, grade placement, and the

best methods to be followed in the classroom procedure. The seventh committee spent all its time on reviewing and evaluating arithmetic textbooks.

The first half-hour on Monday morning was set aside for the opening devotion and words of welcome delivered by Prof. C. Schweppe. He based his address on Matthew 16:15: "But whom say ye that I am?" He stressed the importance of the work the Christian day school teachers are doing and reminded them that the imparting of the knowledge that Jesus Christ is the Savior is the most important duty of all teachers in our parochial schools. All other learning is secondary and must serve to

support the Christian principles of our educational system. Succeeding devotions were conducted by members of the faculty.

Following the Monday morning opening devotion, Prof. John Oldfield delivered a paper entitled "Our Number System." Then followed a brief orientation and organization period in which Mr. A. Fehlauer, the general chairman of the workshop, explained the procedure to be followed by the committees in compiling their reports.

Following the devotions on Tuesday and Wednesday, the College faculty presented the curricula of Dr. Martin Luther College. This afforded the visitors an opportunity

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Topic: Why Do We Object  
To Lodge  
Membership?



A reader requests: "Kindly give simple reasons for our Synod's attitude toward the lodge." Another reader tells of a lady who knew that it was wrong to belong to the lodge but belonged to a congregation that had many lodge members in it. She "excused" her attendance at the Lord's Table with lodge members by saying: "I have noticed the buttons in their lapels, but when I go to Communion with them, I have my faith, and they have theirs. If they attend meetings where Christ is not tolerated (Masonic lodge meetings), I can well disassociate myself from that and keep on believing as I have learned." Why is our Synod opposed to lodge membership? Can we knowingly join in Holy Communion with lodge members? In answering these questions, we shall quote from the writings of the Masonic order. Other lodges generally have similar features to a greater or lesser degree.

#### Christ Not Recognized as the Savior

Masonry is a religion that fails to recognize the need to worship Christ as the Son of God. In the *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry* by Dr. Mackey, an accepted authority on Masonry, we are told that the "religion of Masonry is not sectarian. It admits men of every creed within its hospitable bosom, rejecting none and approving none for his peculiar faith. It is not Judaism, though there is nothing in it to offend a Jew: it is not Christianity, but there is nothing in it repugnant to the faith of a Christian. Its religion is that general one of nature and primitive revelation — handed down to us from some ancient and patriarchal priesthood — in which all men may agree and none may differ." In accordance with this, any "Book of the Law," whether it be the Bible, or only the Old Testament, or the Koran of the Mohammedan, is acceptable as "an exemplar of the revealed will of God." To Masonry, Christ and the Scriptures that proclaim Him are not necessary for acceptable worship of God. To worship God through Christ is considered no more acceptable than to worship God as does the Mohammedan, the Hindu, the Buddhist, or the devotee of whatever religion might be named.

Is this something that will not be "repugnant to the faith of the Christian" as Masonry claims? The Scriptures must answer that question. We read in the Gospel of John the words of Jesus: "He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent him" (John 5:23). Again we read in the same Gospel: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). That is clear language: except through Christ you cannot approach or honor the Father. That is the direct opposite of what Masonry teaches. Masonry's failure to see the need to approach God alone through Christ is indeed highly repugnant to the Christian.

#### Salvation by Works Taught:

Masonry, in line with its failure to recognize Christ, teaches salvation by works. What is the "pass" that will assure the Mason entrance into the "Celestial Lodge above"? This is what they say: "Then, by the benefit of the pass — a pure and blameless life — with a firm reliance on Divine Providence, shall we gain ready admission into that Celestial Lodge above" (emphasis added). Every true Christian will recognize this to be the direct opposite to what Scripture says: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8,9). "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). Masonry's teaching of salvation by works is completely repugnant to the Christian, for if he will follow it, he will lose the very salvation he hopes to merit.

Other objectionable features might be referred to, but the two mentioned are basic. They undermine the very heart of the Gospel. They are a direct denial of the Lord Jesus, who sacrificed Himself that we might have life forever with Him.

#### "Be Not Unequally Yoked . . ."

Can a Christian say: I shall join the organization, but I will not accept those features that are objectionable? That is not what God's Word tells us to do. God speaks as follows: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (II Cor. 6:14.)

#### Strengthening Another in His Error

But what about joining a congregation that as a matter of accepted policy receives lodge members to the Lord's Table? Can a Christian say: Although I know the denial of Christ in which a Mason is involved, I disassociate myself from his wrong? Can a Christian say: I know he is doing wrong by being a member of the Masons, but that is his business and does not concern me?

Joint communion is a joint confessional act. By approaching the Lord's Table to receive the Body and Blood of Christ with others, we are giving evidence of having a common faith in the Lord Jesus. But can I do that with someone of whom I know that he is involved with an organization that denies the Lord Jesus and the salvation He has gained through His precious Body and Blood? Will I not become guilty of strengthening the lodge member in his error? Will I not give him every reason to believe that I don't consider his membership in the lodge as a sinful association? Will a Christian knowingly have a part in strengthening a man in his sin and error? Will he not thereby become "partaker of his evil deeds" (II John 11)? Remember, it wasn't Christ, but ungodly Cain who tried to disassociate himself from responsibility for his brother by saying: "Am I my brother's keeper?"

ARMIN SCHUEITZE

Walk Together, extends over a four-week cultivation period. During these four weeks, the Sundays remind the members what it means to walk together. They walk together in joy. They are concerned about the needs of other people. They train the young and old. They share the Gospel so dear to them. These are the four hallmarks of Christian walking together.

The four weeks close with a corps of visiting stewards calling upon their brothers and sisters in Christ, giving them a personal opportunity "to prove the sincerity of their love." There can be many variations of this format. But the motions will always be the same: plan, objectives, organization, cultivation, and an opportunity for personal commitment. These five steps are implicit in any good stewardship program.

#### Wrong Impressions

Two wrong impressions must be avoided. One — that the program is an end in itself. The program must always be explicitly related to the great objective of Christ's Church: to tell the Good News of Jesus Christ to people everywhere. It is that which is always at stake, not the success or failure of a stewardship program. The second wrong impression — that emphasis on living a responsible life before God is confined to a week or month in fall and then dies for another year. (The same wrong impression can accompany an annual mission festival or an annual thanksgiving day.) No one wants to give that impression and deliberate steps must be taken to avoid it.

All of us, walking together in the Synod, have before us endless opportunities to confess Jesus

Christ of the Holy Scriptures. In the Lutheran Confessions since the Reformation, Lutheranism throughout the world is entering a twilight zone and could easily deploy twice the resources we have and still not exhaust our opportunities to witness to the changeless Christ. Placed by the grace in this strategic position, we pray God for the further grace to grasp the opportunity, mindful that all of us shall stand before Him to give account of our stewardship of the Gospel. Which is what life is all about!

Rev. James P. Schafer  
Stewardship Counselor

Pictured on the front cover is a sampling of materials available for fall stewardship programs in the local church. The Walk Together program includes poster, banners, stationery, giving plan cards, church appeal brochure, and a 16-mm. full-color filmstrip. Tracts are also available for a year-round stewardship program. The blanks are available from the Synod's Stewardship Office.

NWL, vol 38, #23, (Nov. 7, 1971)

## The Lodges and Social Membership

"Look, Fred, if you want to get ahead in this town, you'll just have to join the local lodge. Besides, we have a wonderful bunch of guys. Some of the best characters in town already belong. You'll fit right in."

That type of invitation has been received by many of our Synod's members. The invitation is loaded; the implications are numerous. If Fred doesn't join, business might suffer. If Fred doesn't join, he might miss out on some good times. If Fred doesn't join, he isn't one of the best characters in town. If Fred doesn't join, he isn't "with it."

But let's not feel too sorry for Fred. Many a successful individual within our Synod will readily acknowledge that he has gotten along very well without the lodge. God still is up in heaven, and He still watches over His children. The Christian recognizes that even if he isn't successful in the eyes of the world, in the eyes of God he is a jewel.

#### Objections to Membership

In articles which have preceded this present installment, we have already heard of Scripture-based objections to the lodge. These are some of the objections we have noted: the lodge is not ready to accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God; the lodge teaches that there are

numerous ways of reaching heaven; the lodge doesn't know or confess the Triune God. In view of these obvious departures from God's Word, we have but one course of action open to us. Scripture passage after Scripture passage tells us, "You can't belong and be true to your faith." The well-known Romans 16:17 sums up the matter. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." A committed Christian will not in any way compromise his faith.

It is interesting to note that objections have also been raised against the lodge, which are not at all religious in nature. From time to time it has been pointed out that the lodge has often been guilty of racial discrimination. At times it engages in undemocratic procedures in selecting its members. The exclusiveness of many lodges in catering to the socially elite is also a consideration which the Christian must weigh as he considers membership. Scripture has spoken out on these matters. Haven't we all learned that everyone is our neighbor?

#### Charges — Fact or Fiction?

The usual countercharge goes like this: "How dare you attack the lodge! You don't know what the lodge is

about, for... a mem... can be... Some year... questions abo... to the... copies of... not c... of the spirit... of the fi... August 5... these herew... later stated... of our conf... is no... corresponde... later... raised abou... The pair... information... is no group... Any individ... check on a

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and on the other hand, for it is a secret organization. Have you ever seen a member?" The fallacy of this type of argumentation can be demonstrated rather quickly.

Some years ago the writer of these lines had some questions about several lodge-type organizations. He wrote letters to the headquarters of two organizations requesting copies of their constitutions. The replies were interesting, not only because of their content but also because of the spirit in which they were made. The General Council of the first group replied, "I appreciate your inquiry of August 5, concerning our group. I'm very glad to enclose herewith its constitution and by laws." The second letter stated, "The purpose for which you desire a copy of our constitution or a brochure describing our organization is not set forth in your letter of August 5." The respondent then denied the request. Suspicions — which later proved to be correct — were immediately aroused about the second organization.

The point in mentioning these letters is simply that information about any organization is available. There is no group, for example, which has never had a defector. Any individual can secure the information necessary to check on a group's principles or teachings.

#### Simple Social Membership

From time to time, it is true, some of the lodges or lodge-type organizations have undergone organizational changes. Some groups have instituted so-called "social memberships." These groups make the lodge rituals optional for the local chapter and for the individual applicant. Some groups are willing to excuse members from participation in and responsibility for the ritual. May a Christian apply for membership under such circumstances?

At this point, let's go back to Fred and to the first portion of this article for an observation. The objections to membership mentioned there very definitely apply to organizations like the Masons which have not changed, but continue to promote their anti-Christian principles.

But what if Fred received the following type of invitation: "Fred, why don't you join our group? I know you have objections to some of our prayers and our ritual. You won't have to subscribe to anything which you find objectionable. We've made a lot of changes."

Before Fred says, "Yes, I'll join," he had better do some closer checking. Many an individual has joined an organization with enthusiasm only to find out later on that the changes weren't what they were represented to be. This also holds true when we speak of the lodge. Some of the changes which have been made by some of the organizations have been fine; unfortunately, many groups still retain objectionable features, so that Christians joining them would put themselves into situations compromising their faith. Fred has to do some careful checking, for as the old cliché says, "It all depends on what we're talking about."

#### The Easy Solution?

The easy solution to the problem of "social membership" would simply be to ask, "Why doesn't Fred join the men's club at his church; why doesn't Fred volunteer his services to the church council to work on some special project? Then Fred would be so busy caught up in doing the Lord's work that he wouldn't have time, nor feel the need, to join outside organizations." We certainly hope Fred is busy at his church, but we're also realistic.

Fred may have many interests. His church may come first in his life — but he may also be a fisherman. No one would ever question Fred's right to go fishing. No one would ever question Fred's right to join any organization which is not contrary to Scripture. Fred, of course, may at times even refrain from joining some organization because some people might be offended. So, there's just no easy solution. At any rate, Fred will make sure that everyone understands why he has joined a certain group and that he is not being involved in anything that compromises the principles of God's Word.

#### Insurance

Though this was an issue in years past, it seldom happens today that someone feels he must join a lodge in order to benefit from insurance programs which the lodge may offer. Careful shopping will show that insurance programs are available which are comparable to the programs offered by any lodge. Members who leave the lodge are in most cases able to retain their insurance benefits without loss.

#### Summary

We live in an age of doctrinal and spiritual indifference. It's considered impolite and almost indecent to charge anyone with heresy. It's not considered good taste to speak out against any organization, unless we can say that the organization is loaded with Communists or dope addicts.

As true Christians, however, we must speak out whenever deviations from the Word of God are sanctioned. If an individual or an organization does not "teach all things whatsoever I have commanded you," we should be on our guard. But when we speak out, it should always be with love, that is, with the prayer that the deviation be erased and that the Word of God reign in its truth and purity.

These are some of the truths involved when a Christian considers membership, even social membership, in a lodge. Be his name Fred or Harry, be her name Sue or Mary, the committed Christian will remain true to his or her convictions no matter how great the pressures. And with the help of God, it isn't as difficult as many people believe.

God give us the wisdom ever to know His will! God give us the strength to remain true to Him! God give us the will ever to follow Him!

Pastor Gerhardt Cares

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From Bible Study  
by Mark E. Brown  
1988

Pub. Board for Parish  
Education Wisconsin Ev.  
Lutheran Synod.

# Dislodging

the

# Lodge

The Bible says that Christian faith is not only a matter of what you believe but also where you stand. Jesus said, "Whoever will confess me before other people, him will I confess before my Father in heaven. Whoever will deny me before others, him will I deny before my Father in heaven" (Matthew 10:32,33). Paul said, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

To show people where we stand, the Wisconsin Synod has often had to work at *dislodging the lodge*.

The outstanding example of the lodge movement is Freemasonry, but there are dozens of similar lodges and fraternal organizations. Exhaustive research could be offered about the distinctive policies and practices of these many groups. At bottom, however, is a basic question: Can a person take his stand as a Christian and still belong to a lodge?

Christians believe there is "one God" (1 Timothy 2:5) who has revealed himself as "the Father . . . the Son . . . and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). Christians believe "there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 8:6), who is true God, equal to the Father. Can a Christian then join an organization which calls God "the Nameless One of a hundred names" or "the Grand Warden of Heaven"? Can Christians agree with the philosophy expressed in this poem?

The one great God looked down and smiled  
And counted each his loving child,  
For Turk and Brahman, Monk and Jew  
Had reached him through the God they knew.

Christians believe that human beings are sinners destined to spend an eternity separated from God, if left to themselves. But the Son of God took on a human body and lived and died as the perfect substitute for all humanity. Salvation is not something men and women can earn or bargain for; it is a gift from God through faith in Jesus. Does a Christian show where he stands if he also becomes a member of a lodge which announces that it "does not teach salvation by faith, nor the vicarious atonement. . . . Boldly do I claim that this doctrine does not make Christians, but it does make criminals" — by making sinning easy.

Christians believe God wants us to "preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15), to "proclaim [the message] from the housetops" (Matthew 10:27), to "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks" (1 Peter 3:15). Can a Christian in good conscience belong as well to a fraternal society that requires that its rites and rituals be shrouded in secrecy? Can a Christian willingly take an oath that if he reveals any of the secrets of his lodge, he is prepared to "have [his] throat cut from ear to ear, [his] tongue torn out by its roots, . . . [his] left breast torn open, [his] heart plucked out . . . , [his] body severed in twain, [his] bowels taken from thence and burned to ashes, the ashes scattered to the four winds of heaven"?

The battle of *dislodging the lodges* is not a battle the Wisconsin Synod must fight alone. LCMS Prof. Walter A. Maier, Jr., in a tract entitled, *Should I Join a Fraternal Society?* wrote, "It should go without saying . . . that no consecrated follower of Christ ought to join the Masonic lodge and associate himself with the tenets of the 'primitive' Masonic faith." The Roman Catholic Church recently renewed its historic stand against Masonry. The Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore*, on February 22, 1985, reported, "Christianity and Masonry are essentially incompatible, so that joining one means to separate oneself from the other." Last summer the British Methodist Conference stated, "There is a danger that the Christian who becomes a Freemason will find himself compromising his Christian beliefs or his allegiance to Christ, perhaps without realizing it."

In reply, Robert L. Dillard, Jr., a high official of the Scottish Rite of Masons in Dallas, said, "A lot of Methodist bishops and pastors are Masons, [as well as] Baptist preachers. We have Disciples of Christ ministers, Church of Christ, and Presbyterians."

How can Christian ministers preach on Sunday that "salvation is found in no one else" than Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12) yet belong to an organization which says it "invites to its altars men of all faiths, knowing that, if they use different names . . . they are yet praying to the one God and Father of all"? How can Christians proclaim that we are saved "by grace . . . through faith . . . not by works" (Ephesians 2:8,9), yet hold membership in a society that says, "Every soul must work out his own salvation"? How can Christian ministers take two such contradictory stands at the same time?

You'll have to ask them.

# FREEMASONRY IS CHRISTIANITY

HIGH ANGLICAN CHURCH OF ENGLAND

*Are they compatible?*

*A contribution to discussion*

*Prepared by the Working Group established by  
the Standing Committee of the General Synod  
of the Church of England*

## Errata

### *Freemasonry and Christianity: Are they compatible?*

Paragraph 11 on page 3 is missing from the printed text.  
It reads as follows:

11 Replying to the debate on his motion, Mr Meredith urged its rejection, declaring that it had always been his intention to do so, but that he believed that a debate would clear the air 'and then finish with the matter' (ibid., p.244). The success of Mr Clark's Motion thirty-four years later, after a debate of only half-an-hour, was to prove him mistaken.

On page 43, line 4, the words [Sweden only] should be deleted.

## APPENDIX R

THE REPORT OF THE AD-INTERIM COMMITTEE TO STUDY  
FREEMASONRY

- This study committee was formed to carry out the instructions of Overture 36 to the 13th General Assembly. The Overture is as follows:

**Overture 36: From Westminster Presbytery**

Whereas, several denominations such as the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Christian Reformed Church, and the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod have all officially declared Freemasonry as completely incompatible with Christianity and,

Whereas, these denominations have noted that Freemasonry denies many historic Christian doctrines such as the inerrancy and sole sufficiency of the Bible, the Biblical view of God's attributes, the existence of the Christian Trinity, salvation by grace through Jesus Christ, the deity of Jesus Christ, the Biblical teaching of a man's sinful nature, the personal existence of Satan, and

Whereas, Masonry teaches the universal brotherhood of Man and that all mankind will be saved eventually, that a man is saved by his own works, and that it (Masonry) also is the one immutable religion upon which all of mankind's religions are built, including Christianity, and

Whereas, it has been noted that Masonry's secrecy and destructive oaths are contrary to Scripture;

Therefore be it resolved that Westminster Presbytery strongly urges and overtures the 13th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, to appoint a study committee to bring back its recommendations to the Fourteenth General Assembly.

We have studied the following in carrying out our assignment:

1. The Scriptures
2. The Westminster Standards and PCA *Book of Church Order*
3. The documents of other denominations referred to in the overture
4. The writings of members of Freemasonry
5. The charges made against Freemasonry by other writers, some former members of the order
6. The writings in defense of Freemasonry by members and non-members of the order
7. Letters from members of the PCA both in favor of and opposed to Freemasonry
8. Personal interviews with PCA members active in Freemasonry and members who are opposed to it
9. Various current news items, television presentations and periodical articles relating to Freemasonry and the matters we are dealing with.

We find that:

1. A study of the historical documents of the RPC/ES and the findings of other denominations studied (The British Methodist Church; The Christian Reformed Church; The Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod; The Orthodox Presbyterian Church) raise many concerns regarding Freemasonry. Some of these denominations conclude that it is totally incompatible with church membership; some stop short of this conclusion. (See our *Topical Summary of Document Sources*: section 2 "Charges against Freemasonry" and section 5, "Recommendations regarding Freemasonry").

A brief summary of the conclusions and recommendations of these denominations follows:

a. The Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod

Based on 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 and other Scriptures dealing with separation of believers from unbelievers, all RPC/ES members were advised to separate from any unholy alliance with oath-bound societies. The Publication Committee was to make available materials on this subject, ruling and teaching elders were to study the whole matter, ministers were to inform their congregations about such societies, and the matter was to come before the Synod as an appeal from lower judicatories.

b. The British Methodist Church

The report listed twenty-four points for its members to consider. Within these points it noted that complaints directed against Freemasonry could be directed against other societies as well. It raised serious questions for Christians about Freemasonry's syncretism and replacement of Christian essentials. It rejected Freemasonry's claim not to be a religion and saw it as a strong competitor against Christianity. It spoke of compromise as a danger for any Christian involved in Freemasonry. It advised its members not to become Freemasons and urged those who are to study the report and reconsider their alliance with that organization.

c. The Christian Reformed Church

This church, since its inception, has taken a clear position concerning lodge membership. It claims in its reports that the Masonic lodge denies the Trinity and deity of Christ and is universalistic in its view of salvation. It further claims that Freemasonry denies the vicarious atonement by Christ and teaches salvation by good works, and that Freemasonry sees the Bible as only one of many sources of truth about God and religion.

The CRC sees the roots of Freemasonry in the philosophy of Plato and the theology of Gnosticism, borrowing its rituals from the pagan mystery religions. It calls for commitment to a religion which is un- and anti-Christian.

From all this, the CRC concludes that one cannot be a member of the Freemasons and at the same time a member of the church of Jesus Christ. All Freemasons are to be refused membership in the church and all who join Freemasonry while members of the CRC are to be excommunicated if they do not withdraw from that society.

d. The Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod

This denomination, after study of Freemasonry, called on pastors and laymen alike to avoid membership or participation in any organization that is inimical to the Gospel of Jesus Christ or the faith and life of the Christian church by its objectives, ceremonies or practices.

Pastors are to instruct their people concerning the sinfulness of such organizations (including Freemasonry) which deny the holy Trinity, deity of Christ or vicarious atonement, promise spiritual light apart from the Holy Scriptures, attach salvation to the works or virtues of men or embrace teachings that clearly violate the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.

Neither Holy Communion nor membership in the church is to be offered to any who, after instruction, refuse to sever their affiliations with such organizations, based on Matthew 10:33; 1 Corinthians 10:16,17; 11:25.

e. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church

The OPC summarized its perspective of the Masonic lodge in the pamphlet entitled "Christ Or the Lodge," published by Great Commission Publications. Its findings were not different from the CRC and Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod. It declared incompatibility between Christianity and the Masonic lodge but did not discuss what implications this should have for simultaneous membership in both.

2. Some writers seeking to speak for Freemasonry make statements which are totally incompatible with Christianity (See *Topical Summary of Document Sources*: section 3, "Defense of Freemasonry" and section 4, "Evidences against Freemasonry").

Our committee studied many primary sources (books, pamphlets and magazines) written by Freemasons. We conclude that several writers who claim to speak for Freemasonry make statements totally incompatible with Christianity. Many Freemasons dismiss the writings of prominent figures in the history of Freemasonry as expressing personal opinions which are not to be construed as authoritative in any sense. Though the committee was very sensitive to this contention by Masonic advocates, we are convinced that accurate information is available in print and that certain men and books are considered authoritative. Such writers and their works are frequently quoted in Masonic publications.

There are two major Masonic publishing houses which make available books to interested persons. Ezra A. Cook Publications, 7056 W. Higgins Rd. Chicago, IL 60656 and Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Co., Inc., P.O. Box 9759 3011 Dumbarton Rd. Richmond, VA 23228.

Any individual can order books explaining the rituals in the lodge. Many are considered "authoritative." John Ankerberg (A Christian T.V. talk show host who deals primarily with cults) sent a letter to the Grand Masters of all of the 50 Grand Lodges in America. He asked the question: "As an

official Masonic leader, which books and authors do you recommend as being authoritative on the subject of Freemasonry?"

Twenty-five lodges responded as follows: Coil's *Masonic Encyclopedia*, 44%, Newton's *The Builders* 36% and Mackey's *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, 32%. Other books mentioned were *Introduction to Freemasonry*, by Carl Claudy, *The Newly-Made Mason*, by H.L. Haywood, *A Masonic Readers Guide*, by Alphonse Cerza, *A History of Freemasonry*, by Robert Gould and *Morals and Dogma*, by Albert Pike.

Your study committee concludes that there are authoritative writers in Freemasonry. We found remarkable similarities of ideas expressed from various sources. There is a pattern of consistency in what we read in books written by Masons and the ideas expressed by those presently in the lodge which we interviewed and by those who once were in the lodge and left.

The authors and works which we cite to demonstrate the apparent incompatibility of Freemasonry with Christianity are some of the most prolific authoritative writers in the history of Freemasonry.

We will point to a few primary sources in each pertinent area. For a fuller treatment of the issue, consult our *Topical Summary of Document Sources*. The CRC report contains many more such quotations and we recommend that you obtain a copy or refer to our copy.

In the first place, *their statements are incompatible with Christianity because they hold that Freemasonry is another religion.*

Scripture teaches that there is no other true religion and no other way than through Jesus Christ: "Jesus says to him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one comes unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6) "In none other [than Jesus Christ] is there salvation; for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

In our study of Freemasonry's promotional literature, through personal interviews with Masons, and by letters received from Masons, we were told that Freemasonry is not a religion. However, a close scrutiny of the ritual of the lodge and books written by authoritative Masons points to the contrary.

Some Masons have stated that Freemasonry has no creed, no confession of faith in a doctrinal statement, no theology, no ritual of worship, etc. It is interesting that the prominent writers in Masonic books, however, clearly affirm the religious nature of Freemasonry.

Masons meet in "temples" where "prayers" to a "deity" are made. They kneel at their "sacred altar" to make their "sacred oaths." They are to be in subjection to the leader of the lodge who is called a "Worshipful Master" who has hanging over his head a large letter "G" which symbolizes the Masonic concept of deity. On the "sacred altar" is placed a "Bible," a "Koran," or other sacred book depending on the particular religious faith of the candidate. One cannot join the lodge without swearing belief in "a Supreme Being." Moreover, the candidate in the rituals is "taught" the immortality of his soul.

Some Masons have contended that there is no theology in the lodge. This statement is not borne out by the evidence. Theology means "a study of God." Freemasonry clearly speaks of a god, demands a belief in God, instructs the candidate how to pray and informs the candidate of God's true name. The theology of Freemasonry is acted out in various ceremonies of its degrees. An examination of the meanings of the ceremonies and the symbols demonstrates the particular theology of the lodge.

We quote Albert G. Mackey, "...We contend, without any sort of hesitation, that Freemasonry is, in every sense of the word, except one, and that its least philosophical, an eminently religious institution—that it is indebted solely to the religious element it contains... it would scarcely be worthy of cultivation by the wise and good (Mackey, *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, Vol. 2, p. 847)

In his *Masonic Encyclopedia*, Henry Wilson Coil says under the topic of religion, "Some attempt to avoid the issue by saying that Freemasonry is not a religion but is religious...It would be as sensible to say that man had no intellect but was intellectual or that he had no honor but was honorable... Freemasonry certainly requires a belief in the existence of, and man's dependence upon, a Supreme Being to whom he is responsible. What can a church add to that, except to bring into one fellowship those who have like feelings? That is exactly what the lodge does."

In his book, *The Builder*, Joseph Fort Newton said, "Masonry...is religion, a worship in which all good men may unite, that each may share the faith of all."

When some Masonic authorities say Freemasonry is not a religion they mean it is not a particular faith, creed, denomination, or sect. One of the basic tenets of Freemasonry is its universalism where all religious faiths are equal. Pike says that Masonry is not a religion, meaning in the sense of the religion of the Brahmin, Jew, Mohammedan, Catholic or Protestant, but still affirms, "Masonry teaches, and has preserved in their purity, the cardinal tenets of the old primitive faith, which underlie and are the foundation of all religions...Masonry is a worship, but one in which all civilized men can unite; for it

does not undertake to explain or dogmatically to settle those great mysteries, that are above the feeble comprehension of our human intellect (Pike, *Morals and Dogma*, pp. 161, 526).

Thus, its most renowned writers declare it to be a religion. But what kind of religion is it?

Pike calls it that universal religion taught by Nature and by Reason. It reiterates the precepts of morality of all religion.

Freemasonry clearly appears to be a religious institution. It has all the ingredients of a religion. But what are the roots of Freemasonry's religion? Some of its strongest advocates declare that it is based on the ancient pagan mystery religions of antiquity.

Mackey has said, "These mysteries existed in every country of heathendom, in each under a different name, and to some extent under a different form, but always and everywhere with the same design of inculcating, by allegorical and symbolical teachings, the great Masonic doctrines of the unity of God and the immortality of the soul" (Mackey, *Symbolism of Freemasonry*, p. 15).

As we look at the ritual of Freemasonry we see that in that ritual the Masonic relationship to the mysteries is taught. For example:

*The Ceremony of the Purging of the Lodge*-In this ceremony, the Worshipful Master declares that any person who cannot be vouched for by some well known brother in the Lodge must depart. Mackey explains that this is because the ancient mysteries forbade any profane person from being in their ceremonies (*Manual of the Lodge*, p. 12).

*The Ceremony of the Tying of the Lodge*-The Lodge having been purged in the manner described, places the Tyler outside the door to keep out cowans and eaves-droppers. Why?

A.T. Pierson said it was because the mysteries performed in caves were guarded by a Janitor armed with a drawn sword to prevent unlawful intrusion (Pierson, *Traditions of Freemasonry*, p. 31)

*The Preparation of the Candidates*-He must be initiated in darkness. Mackey explains this is because in the Ancient Mysteries the candidate was always kept for a certain period in a condition of darkness. Darkness became the symbol of initiation (*Manual of the Lodge*, p. 38)

In a similar way, all of the other ceremonies in the Masonic Lodge have been explained by Mackey, Pierson, Oliver, Sickles and other spokesmen for Freemasonry. Such comments from Masonic authorities would indicate that Freemasonry does have a relationship with the ancient pagan mystery religions.

In the second place, *their statements are incompatible with Christianity because their concept of God is degrading to the God of Scripture.*

God's Word teaches that the Lord (Yahveh) is God and that he will not share that name nor allow his glory to another. "I am the Lord, that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise unto graven images." (Isaiah 42:8).

The term that is used in Freemasonry for God is "The Great Architect Of the Universe" which is often abbreviated G.A.O.T.U. Many of Masonry's symbols are representative of God, but the important question is: is the God of Masonry the same as the God of the Bible and of the Christian?

Freemasonry affirms the existence of one God, but Masonry's concept of the unity of God is not Christian. Masonry's one God is a syncretizing of the names of deities of several monotheistic religions in the world. Albert Pike has said, "God is free because we are; but he is not free as we are. He is at once everything that we are, and nothing that we are. He possesses the same attributes as we, but extended to infinity. As we assign to God that liberty which is the basis of our existence, so also we transfer to his character, from our own, justice and charity. In man they are virtues; in God, His attributes...and if man, a limited being, has the power to go out of himself, to forget his own person, to love another like himself, and devote himself to his happiness, dignity, and perfection, the perfect Being must have in an infinite degree, that disinterested tenderness, that charity, the Supreme Virtue of the human person (Pike, *Morals and Dogma*, p. 704).

We see that Masonry's approach is essentially Humanistic. It begins with man and projects God. God is simply one who possesses the eternal qualities that man has.

Albert Mackey has said, "The religion of Freemasonry is cosmopolitan, universal, but the required belief in God is not incompatible with this universality for it is the belief of all peoples. 'Be assured,' says Godfrey Higgins, 'that God is equally present with the pious Hindoo in the temple, the Jew in the synagogue, the Mohammedan in the mosque and the Christian in the church.' There never has been a

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time since the revival of Freemasonry, when this belief in God as a superintending power did not form a part of the system (*Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, pp. 409,410)

Some Masons identify God with His creation. Masonic authority J.D. Buck has said, "God never manifested himself to be seen of men. Creation is his manifestation...The whole manifestation of nature is the uttered word of divinity." (Buck, *Mystic Masonry*, p.113).

In the third place, *their statements are incompatible with Christianity because their concept of the Bible is contrary to what Scripture teaches about itself.*

The Scriptures teach us that there is but one Word: God's written word which he has taught. All Scripture and only the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are therefore allowable as the basis for all we believe and teach: "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits and unto the wizards, that chirp and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? on behalf of the living unto the dead? To the law and to the testimony! if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them." (Isaiah 8:19,20) "But you abide in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them; and that from a babe you have known the sacred writings which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." (2 Timothy 3:14-17)

Freemasonry does not see the Bible as the sole written revelation of God to man. The Bible contains only parts of the Truth. In the lodge the Bible is one of three great lights on the altar. The other two being the square and the compass. The Bible is only seen as a symbol of God's will to man. Albert Mackey has said, "The Bible is properly called a greater light of Freemasonry, from the center of the Lodge it pours forth upon the East, the West, and the South its refulgent rays of Divine truth. The Bible is used among Freemasonry as a symbol of the will of God however it may be expressed. Therefore, whatever to any people expresses that will may be used as a substitute for the Bible in a Masonic Lodge." (i.e. The Koran, Old Testament, the Vedas) (Mackey's *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, Vol. I, p. 133).

H.W. Coil says, "The prevailing Masonic opinion is that the Bible is only a symbol of divine will, law, or revelation, and not that its contents are divine law, inspired, or revealed. So far, no responsible authority has held that a Freemason must believe the Bible or any part of it (Coil, *Masonic Encyclopedia*, p. 520).

When the Bible is used and quoted it is often seriously altered to leave out any reference to Jesus Christ so as not to offend non-Christians in the lodge. For example, in some Masonic ritual which uses 1 Peter 2:3-5, the words "Jesus Christ" are deliberately deleted.

In 2 Corinthians 5:1, where it says, "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," Masonic ritual uses this to refer to the perfected character that the Mason builds for himself as he diligently subscribes to the teachings of the lodge; thereby, he earns entrance into the Celestial lodge.

In the fourth place, *their statements are incompatible with Christianity because their concept of Jesus Christ is blasphemous.*

The Bible teaches that only Jesus is the redeemer of men and that he is the same one who created the world and is the heir of all things: "On the morrow he [John the Baptist] sees Jesus coming to him, and says, Behold the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) "God...has at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds." (Hebrews 1:1,2)

Masonic authority Albert Pike has said, "It (Masonry) reverences all the great reformers. It sees in Moses, the lawgiver of the Jews, in Confucius and Zoroaster, in Jesus of Nazareth and in the Arabian Iconoclast, Great Teachers of Morality, and Eminent Reformers, if no more, and allows every brother of the order to assign to each such higher and even Divine Character as his Creed and truth require...It is not the providence of Masonry to determine how the ultimate triumph of light and truth and good, over darkness and error and evil, is to be achieved: nor whether the Redeemer, looked and longed for by all nations, hath appeared in Judea, or is yet to come." (*Morals and Dogma*, p. 525).

Either Jesus Christ is divine and the only means of salvation for mankind (John 14:6; Acts 4:12) or he is a liar and a fraud. One can never leave it to individual choice as to whether Jesus was more than a good moral teacher. In essence, Freemasonry says that Jesus' divinity and his death on the cross for redemption is up for grabs, depending on one's own inclinations. The Bible never relegates Jesus Christ and his atoning work as an option for one to choose. All other so called ways to God are false (John 10:1-3; 14:6). In the Blue Lodge (the first three degrees, the essence of Freemasonry) Jesus Christ is not mentioned in the ritual whatsoever. The Lordship of Christ is thereby denied.

In the fifth place, *their statements are incompatible with Christianity because their concept of salvation is opposed to what the Bible teaches and our standards affirm.*

Scripture teaches that we are not saved by our works nor can we be, all our works being evil, none good. We are saved solely by God's grace, through faith in Jesus Christ: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They have all turned aside, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not so much as one." (Romans 3:10-12) "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Freemasonry clearly insinuates a salvation by works. This is seen in the rituals of the lodge. Masonry denies the biblical concept of "original sin." Man is not totally depraved--incapable by his own ability to reach God. This does not mean that Masonry believes man to be free of sin; it believes that he is polluted. The purpose of Masonry is to enable man to rid his nature of sin's pollution...but without Jesus Christ!

We are told by Masons that Masonry's purpose is to enable "good men to be better." Masonry, in the meaning of its symbols and in the performance of its ceremonies, denies the Bible's concept of original sin. Masonry emphatically declares that men can, by their own good works, achieve eternal salvation. Masonic authority J.S.M. Ward has said, "Freemasonry has taught that each man can, by himself, work out his own conception of God and thereby achieve salvation" (Ward, *Freemasonry: Its Aims and Ideals*, p. 187).

The *Louisiana Masonic Monitor* has the Worshipful Master reciting to the candidate for the Master Mason Degree these words: "And now, my brethren, let us see to it, and so regulate our lives by the plumb-line of justice, ever squaring our actions by the square of virtue, that when the Grand Warden of Heaven shall call for us, we may be found ready" (p. 132).

Freemasonry teaches the doctrine of Universalism. T.S. Webb says: "So broad is the religion of Masonry, and so carefully are all the sectarian tenets excluded from the system, that the Christian, the Jew, and the Mohammedan, in all their numberless sects and divisions, may and do harmoniously combine in its moral and intellectual work, with the Buddhist, the Parsee, the Confucian, and the worshipper of Deity under every form" (*Masonic Monitor*, p. 285).

Concerning Masonry's universalism, Mackey has said, "If Masonry were simply a Christian institution, the Jew and Moslem, the Brahman and the Buddhist, could not conscientiously partake of its illumination; but its universality is its boast. In its language, citizens of every nation may converse; at its altars men of all religions may kneel to its creed, disciples of every faith may subscribe (*Mackey's Symbolism of Freemasonry*, pp. 237,238).

One past Grand Chaplain of the lodge in Virginia, in the fall of 1983, wrote in the *Virginia Masonic Herald*, "Freemasonry and my faith have been the strength of my life!...There is no place in my religious faith for a narrow sectarianism that excludes those who do not happen to see God as I see Him nor for the kind of religious bigotry that blinds me to the good and precious in other people's faiths. I am grateful for a faith that enables me to embrace all men who believe in God regardless of their clime, creed, or color." (September 1983, p.6).

The Masonic burial service conveys the hope of eternal salvation for the departed brother regardless of his religious belief. From Macoy's *Masonic Burial Services*: "As we mourn the departure of a brother beloved from the circle of our Fraternity, may we trust that he hath entered into a higher brotherhood, to engage in nobler duties and in heavenly work, to find rest from earthly labor, and refreshment from earthly care. May thy peace abide with us, to keep us from all evil! Make us grateful for present benefits, and crown us with immortal life and honor" (p. 12).

Practically all Masonic promotional literature affirms what it calls the great truths of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. These two doctrines as understood by Masons are not the Scriptural view. From *Freemasonry-a Simple Religious Faith*, Royal Arch Mason, we quote: "God is reverently spoken of as the Great Architect of the Universe...Upon this foundation stone we construct a simple religious faith-the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man, and the Immortality of the Soul-simple, but all-efficient. By reason of this simple creed, Freemasonry has been able to attract and accept as members of the Fraternity adherents of every religious faith in the world-Christians, Jews, Hindoos, Mohammedans, Pharisees, Buddhists, and others- atheists alone being excluded" (Vol. V, No. 9, March 1957).

They propose that God is the spiritual Father of good men regardless of their religious faith. But in the Bible, spiritual brotherhood is restricted to those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Matt. 12:48,49; Phil. 2:25; Col. 1:1; Philemon 16; Rom. 8:29; Heb. 3:1; Jas. 2:1). It is unthinkable in the light

of Scripture, that a man of another religious faith is a spiritual brother with a Christian; however this is what Freemasonry declares.

Your committee wishes to make it clear that we do not impute the above teachings to all members of Freemasonry or suggest that they all hold to such teachings. But we do feel that some members of the PCA, who, of their own volition, are associated with Freemasonry, by their membership in Freemasonry are involuntarily endorsing such doctrines.

3. The writings of most who oppose Freemasonry (former members and others) largely support the findings of the above mentioned denominations (See *Topical Summary of Document Sources*, section 2).

Anti-Masonry books and literature have been published for over a century and a half in the United States alone. One of the first books concerning the lodge was written by a former Mason, Captain William Morgan in 1827. His book was entitled *Freemasonry Exposed*, which revealed the signs, grips, emblems and ritual of the lodge.

Dr. John R. Rice published a book against Masonry entitled *Lodges Examined By The Bible*. Other notable books against Masonry are: Martin L. Wagner's *Freemasonry-An Interpretation*, published in 1912; *Should A Christian Be A Mason*, by E.M. Storms, with a forward by a former 33rd degree Mason named James Shaw (who has corresponded with the committee); *The Masonic Report*, by C.F. McQuaig; *Blue Lodge and Chapter Masonry* and *The Master's Carpet*, both by Edmond Ronayne, at the turn of the century.

Recently (1985,86) "The John Ankerberg Show," based in Chattanooga, Tennessee, aired two six-part series on the subject of Freemasonry. The first series featured a debate between Walter Martin, renown authority and author on the cults and William Mankin, a 32nd degree Mason from Idaho. The second series featured former Worshipful Master, Jack Harris, who demonstrated and explained the ritual of Freemasonry and pointed out its anti-Christian characteristics.

Numerous letters from those both inside and outside the PCA expressed to the committee views in opposition to Freemasonry, similar to those in the books mentioned above. Many of those who wrote us were writing from years of experience in Freemasonry before leaving it. These letters are also on file with the study committee.

4. The writings of some interpreting and defending Freemasonry actually support the evidence that Freemasonry is incompatible with Christianity. (See *Topical Summary of Document Sources*, # 4). The following examples are representative:

a. A tract, *Freemasonry: What Is It?*, authorized by the Grand Lodge of Virginia states: "It is religious in character, but is not a religion. It is founded upon the basic principle of the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God, and everyone who comes into its Lodges must express a belief in God. No one is asked to express a particular belief about God, for this is the privilege of each individual and is not infringed by our Fraternity."

b. A tract, *This Is Masonry: Builder of Society*, published by the International Headquarters, Imperial Council, in Chicago, IL.: "Masonry strives to make good men better- to teach its members to be better than themselves. It accepts only men of high moral character.

c. A tract, *Masonic Etiquette and Conduct*, published by the Grand Lodge of Tennessee: "Freemasonry requires only that a Mason believe in the existence of a Supreme Being or God, and this makes it possible for Christians, Hebrews, and others to join in prayer acceptable to all and disliked by none."

d. Another tract by the same publisher, *What is Freemasonry*: "The second charge, that of being a religion, is equally ridiculous. It is true, however, that we often call our buildings 'Temples' or 'Masonic Temples.' It is true that all regular lodges have altars upon which the Holy Bible is displayed. It is also a fact that Masonic meetings are always opened and closed with prayer...The importance of the apron may be shown by quoting from the funeral or Memorial Service for a deceased brother in good standing- 'the lambskin is an emblem of innocence, and is esteemed the peculiar badge of a Mason.'"

e. A tract titled, *Masonry: An Explanation to the Non-Member*: "In fact, religion and politics are two subjects which are strictly prohibited from being discussed in a Lodge meeting. The reason is that these subjects are so divisive by nature. A man, however, must profess a belief in the Deity, and in the immortality of the soul. In other words, a Mason must be religious; whether he be Jewish, Christian, Mohammedan, or whatever is strictly up to him."

f. An excerpt from a magazine called *The High Twelvian*, written by a Chaplain of Freemasonry, Phil W. Barrett, D.D.:

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"As we took our degrees, we acknowledged that we put our trust in God. In all references to the deity, we use the designation of God, or 'Supreme Grand Master of the Universe' or 'Great Architect of the Universe.' Thus, when we close our prayers, it would seem appropriate that we continue such designations. As a Christian Minister I do not find these suggestions in any way compromising my own faith or belief or religion. In the true spirit of ecumenicity (and Masonry is a good example of this) we need to have respect as to how our Masonic brethren may feel. Suggestions: Do not use an ending at all, simply say 'Amen' when you have finished the prayer..." Note that the problem he was dealing with was that of avoiding the use of Jesus' name in closing prayer.

g. An article from the *New Age* magazine, December, 1985: "Masonry is tolerant and universal, embracing all men and all religions with a belief in God. We therefore welcome a Christian, a Jew, a Buddhist, or a Mohammedan. Our members are free to deify their great spiritual leaders...Many a member of the clergy who graced a pulpit has felt he was a better man and a better minister or priest because of his Masonry."

The committee wonders why those who sent us such materials to defend Freemasonry were not aware of the problems with the literature they sent.

5. Letters received by this committee from members of the PCA in support of and opposed to Freemasonry are about evenly divided. The arguments of those opposed generally support the findings of the denominations noted earlier (see *Topical Summary of Document Sources*, section 2). The arguments of those in support of Freemasonry reject the denominations' findings and contend that there is no authoritative spokesman for Freemasonry or its teachings. They affirm both their faith in Jesus Christ and their right to membership in Freemasonry, citing positive things done in and through their membership there (see *Topical Summary of Document Sources*, section 3). They insist that they have freedom to express their faith both inside and outside the Masonic Lodge.

6. Personal interviews with Freemasons and with those formerly members but who have withdrawn (all of whom are members--and many officers in PCA churches) fall along the same lines as the findings in point 5 above. Some who left Freemasonry among those interviewed did so not for doctrinal reasons but for convenience or because of no interest in Freemasonry today.

7. Current news in the media regarding Freemasonry reflects both the findings of many denominations, including those mentioned above, and the defenses by members of Freemasonry. Recently, the Roman Catholics have reaffirmed their historic opposition to Freemasonry as being a naturalistic religion. The British Methodist Church recently encouraged its members not to join the lodge. There have been attempts in the Southern Baptist Convention to discuss the issue, but these have failed to get serious attention.

8. The Westminster Standards are not compatible with many teachings from self-appointed spokesmen for Freemasonry. The conflict of Freemasonry with the Confession is seen in chapter 21 of the Confession:

a. "But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture" (21:1).

b. Religious worship is to be given to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and to Him alone...nor in the mediation of any other but of Christ alone." (21:2)

c. "Prayer...that it may be accepted, is to be made in the name of the Son..." (21:3)

In the Larger Catechism, the answer to question 108: "The duties required in the second commandment are, the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath instituted in his word; particularly prayer and thanksgiving in the name of Christ...as also the disapproving, detesting, opposing, all false worship, and according to each one's place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry."

Larger Catechism answer to question 109 reads: "The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising, counselling, using, and any wise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God himself...all superstitious devices, corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, or taking

from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves, or received by traditions from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretense whatsoever..."

9. The *Book of Church Order* says: "Communing members are those who have made a profession of faith in Christ, have been baptized, and have been admitted by the Session to the Lord's Table." (BCO 6-2)

When our BCO requires a profession of faith much is assumed. The assumption is that the profession of faith does not contradict Scriptural evidence of saving faith. Membership in other organizations is not restricted by our BCO unless involvement in them is incompatible with one's Christian witness. Dual membership in the PCA and the Masonic lodge must be examined in light of Freemasonry's doctrine and practices.

One of the most important duties of the church session is to safeguard the purity of the church: "The church session is charged with maintaining the spiritual government of the church, for which purpose it has power to inquire into the knowledge, principles and Christian conduct of the church members under its care; to censure those found delinquent..." (BCO 12-5).

10. The Scriptures describe a Christian as one who confesses with his mouth Jesus is Lord (God) and believes in his heart that God raised him from the dead (Rom. 10:9-11). A church member is one who repents and believes in Jesus Christ, is baptized in the name of Christ, responds to the call to be saved and continues steadfastly in the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers (Acts 2:38-42). The question is: Can one be a member of Freemasonry and remain in the apostles' teaching (the written Word of God), the sacraments declaring the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and prayers that are always to be lifted in the name of Christ only?

11. Secrecy in segments of society is not prohibited by Scripture; secrecy in the church and its message is. Perhaps a better word for secrecy in some situation is the term "confidential." Our committee sees no problem with organizations who choose not to divulge some information under certain circumstances. This is often done by the practice of executive session. Some information, because of its sensitive nature, should be kept confidential. Matthew 18 would indicate that in dealing with sin situations, information should be restricted to the parties involved and to those needed to help rectify the problem to God's glory.

The use of secrecy in the military for national defense and material in the area of crime prevention can be legitimately classified as confidential.

But the pertinent issue for our purposes is whether "secrecy" is legitimate in dealing with truth about God and man's spiritual need. Truth is never to be hidden (Matt. 5:14-16). The Gospel of Christ is the good news to be preached to all persons. Jesus insisted that his teaching was not in secret, but it was open for all to see (John 18:19-21)

Freemasonry, while claiming that its secrets contain truth good for all men, are to be in secret so that the profane not be privileged to it. The stationing of the Tyler outside the door of the lodge symbolizes the restriction of Masonry's mysteries to its initiates only. Pike has declared: "Secrecy is indispensable in a Mason of whatever Degree. It is the first and almost the only lesson taught to the Entered Apprentice." (*Morals and Dogma*, p. 109).

If Freemasonry is the basis of all religion, as some of its spokesmen affirm, if it is in constant search for the truth, and if those who are not initiated into its mysteries are considered profane and have walked in darkness (including non-Masonic Christians!) prior to being enlightened with Masonic truth, then why should Freemasonry conceal such important truth from the world? Is such a message to be hid from the world?

12. Oaths such as those required in Freemasonry are not approved by Scripture or the Westminster Standards and ought not to be taken by Christians.

All Masons are required to take sacred oaths never to reveal Masonic secrets, and they bind themselves under blood curdling penalties if they dishonor this oath. It should be noted that one cannot participate in the lodge in any way apart from taking these oaths; they are mandatory. The oath taken by one in the first degree, Entered Apprentice, is:

"I \_\_\_\_\_, of my own free will and accord in presence of Almighty God and this right worshipful Lodge erected to Him and dedicated to the Holy Saints John, do hereby and here on, solemnly and sincerely promise and swear I will always hail, forever conceal and never reveal any of the secret arts, parts or points of the mysteries of Freemasonry which have been, may now or shall hereafter be communicated to me in Charge as such, to any person in the world, except it be to a true and lawful brother free Mason.....To all of which I solemnly and sincerely promise and swear to keep and perform

the same, without any equivocation, mental reservation or secret evasion of mind in me whatever, binding myself under no less a penalty than that of having my throat cut from ear to ear, my tongue torn out by its roots, and with my body buried in the rough sands of the sea, a cable's length from shore, where the tide ebbs and flows twice in twenty-four hours, should I ever knowingly or willingly violate this, my most solemn obligation as an entered apprentice, so help me God and keep me steadfast in the due performance of the same."

Some Masonic authorities argue that the penalties sworn to are not to be understood literally. Even if this is the case, is it not folly and sinful to use the name of God to swear to such things? This is clearly in direct opposition to the Westminster Standards as is seen in the Confession of Faith, 22:1-4.

Moreover, the Masonic oath brings one into fraternal unity with all members of the lodge, world wide. Since the lodge boasts of its universality (men of all religious faiths are in such a brotherhood) the oath yokes a professing Christian with non-believers. This is in direct violation of 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 and other passages regarding separation from sinful associations. The fact that a Christian swears an oath to such a communion with unbelievers is a serious matter.

Furthermore, the Masonic oath is taken before one even receives the secrets that he is swearing never to reveal. We must be fully aware what we are swearing to, lest we be guilty of rashness. The Masonic oath violates Scripture in this regard too (Gen. 25:33; Josh. 9:19; Mark 6:23; Acts 23:21; Lev. 5:4,5).

Finally, one cannot separate the oath from implicit involvement in the religious teaching of the lodge. If an oath means anything it is full identification of a person with the group to which the oath has bound him. Masonic authorities and the ritual do not take oaths lightly; the Bible doesn't either. Christians who take Masonic oaths cannot be excused due to ignorance or with the excuse, "I didn't mean it."

In conclusion, Your committee finds that much connected with membership in Freemasonry is a cause of great concern:

- a) In our view, joining the Masons requires actions and vows out of accord with Scripture.
- b) In our view, participation in Masonry seriously compromises the Christian faith and testimony.
- c) In our view membership in Masonry and activity in its ritual lead to a diluting of commitment to Christ and His Kingdom. The Scripture is emphatic that a Christian cannot have two masters (Matt. 6:24; Jas. 1:8; 1 Cor. 10:21; Zeph. 1:4,5; 2 Kings 17:33; 1 Kings 18:21; 1 Sam. 7:3)

We are deeply concerned for our brethren, members and officers in the PCA, who are also members of Freemasonry. As we have pursued the assignment given us by the General Assembly and learned more about Freemasonry, one Scripture passage has come to the fore: 2 Timothy 2:24-26 "And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will." (N.I.V.)

We therefore recommend the following:

- (1) that the 15th General Assembly exhort all members of Freemasonry and those considering membership in Freemasonry, who are also members of the PCA, to reconsider their relationship with that organization in the light of the evidence given in this report and the Topical Summary of Document Sources and particularly in the light of such passages as 1 Thessalonians 5:21,22 and Matthew 6:22-24.
- (2) that the report presented to this assembly (and the accompanying documents) be received as evidence and for study and education of the entire membership of the PCA, throughout the coming year. Copies of pertinent portions of the evidence sources to be provided upon request to the CE&P staff, at a cost to be determined by them.
- (3) that members of Freemasonry who are members of the PCA, and others desiring to respond to the report be given, individually and/or corporately, opportunity to respond in writing to the study committee by January 1, 1988.
- (4) that the committee then bring final recommendations to the 16th General Assembly. At the time of the committee's report, adequate time beyond the usual restrictions for debate would be docketed for discussion pro and con of the committee's final recommendations.

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The committee would further express its opinion that the desire of some Christians to be members of Freemasonry is symptomatic of a deeper problem in the church:

- The problem of lack of commitment to Jesus Christ alone
- The problem of lack of commitment to his church, to serve him
- The problem of the church's failure to adequately challenge members to this commitment and to show the full-orbed Christian life within the church's life and ministry.

This is a problem not only in Freemasonry but with Christians in all walks of life. There is a lack of commitment to Christ and his church on the part of many and a consequent seeking of other ways to have meaningful lives. The church must address this issue and its own failure to challenge and guide its people rightly in this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

RE John T. Clark

RE John Spencer

TE John M. Otis

TE Jack B. Scott, Chairman

## APPENDIX R

REPORT OF THE AD-INTERIM COMMITTEE  
TO STUDY FREEMASONRY

To the 16th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, meeting on June 6, 1988, in Knoxville, Tennessee

This Committee reported its findings to the 15th General Assembly meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in June of 1987, in accord with the Assembly's decision at the 13th General Assembly to answer Overture 36, from Westminster Presbytery, in the affirmative.

Your committee went to a variety of sources both supportive of and in opposition to Freemasonry. A compilation of the documents and information gained was made, summarized and reproduced as part of our evidence.

We then sought to examine all we found in the light of God's written Word, The Westminster Standards and our *Book of Church Order*.

The Committee reported, with documentation, its findings, including the following:

1. Some writers seeking to speak for Freemasonry make statements which are totally incompatible with Christianity.
2. The writings of most who oppose Freemasonry (former members and others) largely support the findings of the denominations which have reported on Freemasonry.
3. The writings of some, interpreting and defending Freemasonry, actually appear to support the evidence that Freemasonry is not in accord with Christianity.
4. Current news in the media regarding Freemasonry reflects both the findings of the denominations and the defenses of Freemasons.
5. The Bible, the Westminster Standards and the *Book of Church Order* all raise serious questions about the compatibility of the teachings and practices of Freemasonry with the teachings and position of the PCA.

In the light of these findings, the Committee expressed serious concerns connected with membership in Freemasonry: Joining Freemasonry requires actions and vows out of accord with Scripture; participation in Masonry seriously compromises the Christian faith and testimony and may lead to a diluting of commitment to Christ and His Kingdom.

The committee felt that its findings ought to be distributed to the church and studied by its members, allowing an opportunity for any individual, church or Presbytery to express its own opinion about the findings of the Committee and any support of or opposition to those findings.

The General Assembly adopted the recommendations of the Committee including an exhortation to members in Freemasonry to reconsider their relationship with Freemasonry.

In the time that has elapsed since the last General Assembly, your committee, together with the Committee for Christian Education and Publications, has sought to distribute all study materials requested by any individual, church or Presbytery. We have received and compiled the varied responses and summarized them below. Most responses have come from members of the PCA who are presently active in Freemasonry.

Some responses were very general, calling the study a waste of time, divisive, biased, picking on one organization among many, none of the church's business, and calling on the committee and the denomination to drop the whole matter and apologize to all Freemasons.

Others were more specific:

- We failed to mention the good works of Freemasonry
- The quotes used from writers on Freemasonry were not representative of the views of all members of Freemasonry
- We are seeking to bind the consciences of church members
- Masonry is not a religion
- The failure to use the name of Jesus is of no real consequence
- The committee report hurts many people and will lead some to leave the church

One other common complaint was that the committee itself had no Freemason in its membership.

We sincerely regret we left the impression with anyone that we are biased, divisive or picking on one organization. This committee was made up of men appointed either directly by the court or by the moderator of the General Assembly. Our study was specifically directed, by the overture, to do certain

things and then bring in our conclusions and recommendations. All was done in accord with that directive.

Regarding the matter of whether the study was a waste of time, the Book of Church Order clearly states that such matters are the business of the church: "Every court has the right to resolve questions of doctrine and discipline seriously and reasonably proposed, and in general to maintain truth and righteousness, condemning erroneous opinions and practices which tend to the injury of the peace, purity, or progress of the church." (BCO, ch. 11, sect. 11-4).

In regard to the more specific objections to the report we respond as follows:

1. We did not mention the good works of Freemasonry but we do recognize their many charitable and philanthropic accomplishments, such as building and operating hospitals and other deeds of charity. We recognize the common grace of God by which he causes, through many means, provision to be made for the needy. All praise is therefore due the Lord alone.

Jesus makes very clear, however, that he will not tolerate a careless use of the term "good" (Matt. 19:16,17). Scripture teaches that only works done through the power of and in the name of Jesus Christ can properly be called good. Doing good works is the result of our being created in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:8-10).

2. Regarding the quotations from Masonic writers used in our report, we specifically stated in our report that we do not maintain that all members of the PCA, who are Freemasons, hold these views.

3. We are aware that the church is not to bind the conscience of its members: "The jurisdiction of the Church courts...can make no laws binding the conscience; but may frame symbols of faith, bear testimony against error in doctrine and immorality in practice, within or without the Church, and decide cases of conscience" (BCO, Sect. 11-2).

Our report did not seek to present any new law for the church's adoption. We sought, in accord with our assignment, to study the actual teachings of Freemasonry in the light of God's Word and our denomination's existing standards and then make certain observations and express certain concerns.

4. Our stance on the question of whether or not Freemasonry is a religion is that the literature of Freemasonry and some of its spokesmen have taught that Freemasonry is a way of life and that a way of life is essentially a religion. There are, of course, other views of what constitutes a religion.

5. In regard to the use of the name of Jesus or its omission, Scripture teaches that we should pray in the name of Jesus and that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. The question is not whether this or that statement from Freemasonry contains or omits the name of Jesus, but whether there is a deliberate effort in Freemasonry to omit the name of Jesus. We believe that the evidence presented shows that there is clearly an effort in Freemasonry to omit the name of Jesus.

6. Finally, the committee grieves for any sorrow it has caused members of Freemasonry, however, we recall the words of Paul to the church in Corinth: "For though I made you sorry with my epistle, I do not regret it...I now rejoice, not that you were made sorry...for you were made sorry after a godly sort...For godly sorrow works repentance unto salvation, which brings no regret; but the sorrow of the world works death." (2 Cor. 7:8-10).

Our underlying motivation and concern from the start, in all that we have done as a committee, has been to ascertain what the Scriptures say about this subject and to present accurate information as to where enlightenment is needed to bring about understanding and where repentance is needed. We pray that the Holy Spirit will use this report to bring about such change of heart and mind as His Word requires.

One thing has become increasingly evident as we have progressed with our study and moved toward our conclusions and recommendations. Whatever decisions are made in this matter will affect many members, families and churches of the PCA. It is no small matter. We must remember that these members and their families began with us in the PCA with their membership in Freemasonry not being a factor at all. Many of them have served the church well over the years.

Another thing equally clear is that among PCA members who are also in Freemasonry, as well as among members of the PCA in general, a period of education regarding Freemasonry is needed. It is far from clear, to many, that membership in Freemasonry constitutes serious compromise or endangers the testimony of those who belong to the Masons.

Your committee believes that our denomination should adopt a policy of correcting those who are involved in such organizations, with gentleness, that God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth (2 Tim. 2:24-25; Gal. 6:1; Matt. 13:28-30; Jude 22,23)

At the same time, we believe that the denomination, now that it has considered the matter, cannot ignore its responsibility to warn those who have ventured into Freemasonry and exhort them to examine their lives and commitments anew in the light of God's Word (2 Cor. 4:2; Heb. 13:8,9; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Thess. 5:21-22; Matt. 6:22-24; Jas. 1:8).

In this instruction, such books of the Bible as Galatians and 1 John afford a good basis for warnings of dangers or pitfalls that lurk in membership in such organizations.

In addition, the Westminster Standards afford ample bases for such instruction, stating clearly the way of proper worship taught in Scripture (*WCF*, ch. XXI), the use of the name of God in swearing and in oaths (*WCF*, ch. XXII), and the nature of idolatry (*LC Q* 105, 108, 109, 112; *SC Q* 47, 50, 51, 54).

We further believe that the *Book of Church Order* clearly determines that the local session is the court of original jurisdiction and has the responsibility for examining prospects for membership and for disciplining members who may err in doctrine and life, and that it is to make such determinations on the basis of what is already written in the Word of God and the standards of our church (*BCO* section 12-5). We do not think that the denomination as a whole should take any kind of action against all Masons among its membership or establish new or different criteria for church membership. If anyone is found in error in doctrine or life, adequate means are already in place in God's word and in our standards to deal with such problems.

We therefore recommend the following:

1. That the 16th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America call on all of its members and courts to study this and the former report, in the light of God's Word and the other standards of the church.
2. That the individuals, churches and courts of the denomination institute programs of education and instruction regarding Freemasonry and what we consider to be its perils for Christians who belong to it.
3. That any actions of any court of the church that might proceed from this matter be taken only after thorough study and continued exhortation and instruction in the local churches. Let the session be, as it is authorized to be, the court of original jurisdiction. Let it proceed with gentleness and compassion, recognizing the gravity of the matter and the counsel of Scripture in dealing with problems in the church--it is better to teach, instruct, exhort and plead than to threaten--:" The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged. With gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth." (2 Timothy 2:24-25).
4. That all the papers and reports of this committee together with its original sources be deposited with the Committee for Christian Education and Publications of the PCA and copies of these materials be made available to any who desire them, at a cost to be determined by the CE/P Committee.
5. That this report be adopted by the General Assembly and distributed, together with the former report, as a pastoral letter to all sessions of the PCA and made available for any others who may desire it.
6. That this ad interim study committee be dismissed.

Respectfully Submitted:

RE John T. Clark

RE John Spencer

TE John M. Otis

TE Jack B. Scott, Chairman

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11. That synod declare that the above recommendations constitute its answer to Overtures 15, 19, 21, and Communication 13. —*Adopted*

12. That synod discharge the study committee and thank them for their work. —*Adopted*

The afternoon session is closed with prayer.

## WEDNESDAY EVENING, JUNE 22, 1977

### Eighteenth Session

#### ARTICLE 69

The session is opened with devotions.

A letter is received in which the following persons indicate their acceptance of their appointments or reappointments to positions in the Education Department of the Board of Publications:

Mr. A. James Heynen, Executive Director

Mr. Robert Rozema, Pedagogical Editor

Dr. Harvey Smit, Theological Editor

Mr. Paul Stoub, Art Editor

Mrs. Ruth Vander Hart, Journalistic Editor

#### ARTICLE 70

Advisory Committee 1, *Appeals*, the Rev. M. Greidanus reporting, presents the following: (The Report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued from Article 47.)

#### THE DUTTON APPEAL AND RELATED MATTERS

##### A. *Materials*:

1. Overture 4.
2. Overture 23.
3. Printed Appeal 2.
4. Printed Appeal 3.
5. Printed Appeal 4.
6. Communication 7.
7. Communication 8.
8. Communication 11.
9. Communication 15.
10. Informative Communications.

B. *History*: An appeal from the Dutton CRC came to synod in 1976. This consistory appealed the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East to approve the ordination of candidate Allen Verhey (Acts, 1976, p. 685).

Synod did not sustain this appeal, but it did "remind the appellants that if they remain convinced that the position of Dr. Verhey brings him into conflict with the confessions they must follow the procedures outlined in the Form of Subscription and the Church Order" (Acts, 1976, Art. 84, I, E, 2, p. 95).

The Dutton consistory then studied Dr. Verhey's thesis and articles, summed up their findings in a letter to him, and met with him in December 1976 for a discussion. On March 1, 1977, the Dutton consistory

## REPORT 38

THE LODGE OATH AND CHURCH MEMBERSHIP  
(Art. 68)

## MANDATE

Your committee was appointed pursuant to the adoption by Synod of 1975 of the following recommendations of the advisory committee regarding the lodge and church membership:

1. That synod accede to the request of Classis Lake Erie and appoint a new study committee to research the content, confessional character, and function of the oath in the relationship of lodge members to their oath bound societies.

*Grounds:*

- a. Reports 37 (1974) and 45 (1975) do not address themselves sufficiently to this question.
  - b. The answer to this question is crucial in the evaluation of the expressed desire of lodge members to become members in our churches.
  - c. Reports 37 (1974) and 45 (1975) argue from the religious pretentiousness of some lodge literature and practice to the religious character of the member's commitment. This is contestable reasoning that needs demonstration.
  - d. The church must guard the integrity of its God-given gospel of reconciliation, and witness to it by speaking truth about the inquirer.
2. That synod withhold action on Report 45, refer it to the new study committee above referred to for inclusion in its findings, and for reporting in 1977.

*Grounds:*

- a. Report 45 assumes what needs demonstration "concerning the content, confessional character, and function of the oath in the relationship of lodge members to their oath bound societies" referred to in recommendation 1 above.
- b. Conclusions of Report 45 almost exclusively draw on the *teachings of one lodge* but claim to speak also to the *practices of many lodges*.
3. That synod refer Overture 29 re cartoon illustrations to the study committee.
4. That synod ask Classis Columbia and Tri-Cities (Kennewick) CRC to stay their respective actions pending action of synod on report of study committee above.

Report 37 (1974), alluded to in the recommendation, is the very comprehensive statement drawn up in response to the request of the Synod of 1972 that there be formulated a current statement of the position of the Christian Reformed Church. Synod accepted Report 37 as a resource document for the guidance of the churches but felt the need of a more concise summary pamphlet containing the stand of the church in the light of the study committee's report, with a view to its adoption as the official witness of the Christian Reformed Church's position regarding the lodge and church membership. This summary

pamphlet is what is alluded to as Report 45 (1975). As to Overture 29, it was a request from Classis Grandville that cartoons be omitted from the summary pamphlet, the claim being that they do not contribute to the value of the proposed pamphlet.

#### BACKGROUND

The present stand of the church is the same as it has been from the beginning of our denominational existence. The church has always excluded members of secret societies. Already in 1867 position was taken against membership in secret, oath-bound societies when it was declared that Free Masons had to quit the lodge or be excommunicated (Minutes, Feb. 20, 1867). Soon thereafter the same position was taken with respect to secret societies in general. (See Minutes, June 10, 1868, Art. 17; Acts 1873, Art. 24; General Rules of 1881, Art. 55.)

In the report on secret societies (Acts of Synod 1900, pp. 96-101) and reprinted in Acts of Synod 1958 (pp. 416-422), which synod adopted, a secret society was defined as follows: "A secret society is such an organization which requires of every one who becomes a member unconditional concealment of all that pertains to the lodge, without officially informing the candidate of the contents of what must remain a secret; and which at the same time obligates its members to unrestricted, or at least insufficiently restricted, assistance and obedience."

A consensus has been developing through recent years that it is not the secrecy that is our main objection to the lodges but rather the pseudo-religious character of the lodges. The debate that has been disturbing the church in recent years has had to do primarily with the question of lodge religion. The position that the lodges' teaching and scriptural teaching are incompatible and that this incompatibility is the main reason for the continued exclusion of lodge members are what lie behind a basic paragraph in synod's reaffirmation of the traditional stand (Acts of Synod 1974, Art. 65, B,3,f):

"The lodge member who desires to become a member of the church must be kindly but firmly shown that membership in the lodge and in the church of Jesus Christ involves a double commitment which our Lord himself does not tolerate. Those in the church who affiliate with the lodge must be shown the error of their way, and if they refuse to repent must be placed under the censure of the church."

We need not develop this point at length, since it has been fully set forth in Report 37 (1974). But we do well at least to list the religious positions which appear to be held either explicitly or implicitly by most lodges:

1. The denial of the trinity and of the deity of Christ and the holding of a universalist-unitarian position on the doctrine of God and salvation.
2. The denial of the vicarious atonement by Christ and a positing of good works as a sufficient ground for salvation, and
3. The promises of spiritual enlightenment from many sources, of

which the Bible is only one, and the holding of all the historic religions as equally acceptable in the sight of God.

Your committee is persuaded that the adhering to all or some of these religious positions and practices is more determinative of contraband character of the lodge for the Christian than the secrecy which has heretofore been the main defining factor of all prohibited memberships. We believe that the church should define a particular prohibitive involvement in these terms rather than in relation to mere secrecy.

The focusing upon the oath in our mandate was occasioned by the argument of Classis Lake Erie that many lodge members have *not*, by virtue of their oath at their initiation into a lodge, committed themselves to the false religion of the lodge. Classis argues that whatever of false religion there is in the literature and ceremonies of the lodge, mere membership as such does not necessarily involve a commitment to the religious position of the lodge. Though the classis accepts the position of the church regarding the false religious character of the lodge, it is persuaded that all the declarations adopted so far by our synods have failed to come to grips with the possibility that membership does not necessarily imply religious commitment. Classis believes that all that the member commits himself to in his oath are such things as secrecy, fraternal loyalty, and benevolence. "While there are highly offensive aspects to these commitments as they are spelled out in the Masonic oath, they do not appear to add up to any doctrinal or confessional commitment" (Acts of Synod 1975, p. 635).

Your committee sought to fulfill its mandate by giving attention to the following:

1. The content, confessional character, and function of the lodge oaths, with a view to discovering whether or not the lodge member has by means of the oath committed himself to the religious teachings of the lodge,
2. The reformulation of the summary, conformably to our findings, including the determination of the advisability of using cartoons.

#### I. THE CONTENT, CONFESSIONAL CHARACTER, AND FUNCTION OF THE LODGE OATH

Note: Your committee sought to fulfill this part of our mandate by (1) the use of questionnaires addressed to lodge leaders, lodge members who have sought entrance into our churches, and consistories; (2) a limited number of interviews with lodge members and leaders and an interview with a pastor deeply involved with the issue (other concerned pastors addressed letters to us); and (3) the exploration of lodge literature and literature evaluating various lodges. (Much help was gained by the correspondence with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Commission on Organizations.)

##### *A. The Content of the Lodge Oaths*

We present the following quotations from the lodges' own literature giving the content of their oaths:

### MASONIC LODGE

"I, ....., of my own free will and accord, in the presence of Almighty God and this Worshipful Lodge, erected to him and dedicated to the holy Saint John, do hereby and hereon most solemnly and sincerely promise and swear:

1. That I will always hail, ever conceal and never reveal any of the secret arts, part or points of the hidden mysteries of ancient Freemasonry, which have been heretofore, may at this time or shall at any future period be communicated to me as such, to any person or persons whatsoever, except it be to a true and lawful brother Mason, or within a regularly constituted lodge of Masons; and neither unto him nor them until by strict trial, due examination or legal information, I shall have found him or them as lawfully entitled to the same as I am myself.

2. I further solemnly promise and swear that I will not write, print, paint, stamp, stain, carve, mark or engrave them, or cause the same to be done, upon anything movable or immovable capable of receiving the least impression of a word, syllable, letter or character, whereby the same may become legible or intelligible to myself or to any person under the whole canopy of heaven, and the secrets of Freemasonry be thereby unlawfully obtained through my unworthiness.

3. To all of this I most solemnly and sincerely promise and swear, with a firm and steadfast resolution to keep and perform the same, without any equivocation, mental reservation, or secret evasion of mind whatever.

Binding myself under no less a penalty than that of having my throat cut across, my tongue torn out by its roots, and buried in the rough sands of the sea at low water mark, where the tide ebbs and flows twice in twenty-four hours, should I ever knowingly or willingly violate this my solemn oath and obligation as an Entered Apprentice Mason. So help me God, and keep me steadfast in the due performance of the same."

### ORDER OF THE EASTERN STAR (Men)

"Brother ..... it is with pleasure that I welcome you into the Order, and especially as a member of this Chapter. The grand purposes of the Order are beneficent and social; its lessons are scriptural, its teachings are moral; its obligations are mutual to all its members, and are based upon the universal principle that, whatever benefits are due by the Masonic Fraternity to the wives, mothers, widows, daughters and sisters of Masons, corresponding benefits are due from them to the Brotherhood. To enable us to properly apply these purposes to the best advantage, we make use of certain signs and ceremonies, by means of which we recognize those who belong to and have a just claim upon us, and mutually bind ourselves by an obligation, not only to secrecy, but to the faithful performance of the duties that devolve upon us as members of this Order.

With this knowledge of its aims and purposes, are you willing to assume the obligations and responsibilities appertaining to this Order? (Candidate assents)"

### ORDER OF THE EASTERN STAR (Women)

"You will carefully preserve in sacred and inviolable secrecy, and under no circumstances improperly divulge any of the ceremonies, signs or passes belonging to the Order of the Eastern Star.

You will cheerfully obey the constitution and all the rules and regulations of the Supreme Grand Chapter and the by-laws of the Chapter of which you may be a member.

You will, so far as in your power, liberally dispense to your Sisters advice in their troubles, sympathy in their sorrows, and aid in their misfortunes.

You will cautiously avoid speaking evil of your sisters, or performing any acts of injustice or unkindness to them.

Do you to all these pledges covenant your honor as a woman?

Candidate: I do."

### KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS

Rank of Page: "I solemnly promise that I will never reveal the password, grip, signs or any other secret or mystery of this rank, except in a lodge of this order,

recognized by, and under the control of the Supreme Lodge Knights of Pythias of the World, or when being examined by the proper officers of a lodge, or by one whom I know to be a member of this rank.

I further promise that I will not become a member of, recognize or countenance any organization using the name of this order or any derivative thereof, which is not recognized by, and under the control of the Supreme Lodge Knights of Pythias of the World.

I further promise that I will obey the laws and, so far as possible, comply with the requirements of that order.

I further promise that I will heed the teachings of this rank, and seek to profit thereby, and, as I meet the members of this order, I will endeavor to exemplify, in my conduct and my demeanor toward them, the principles of friendship embodied in the lesson of tonight.

To the faithful observance of this obligation I pledge my sacred word of honor. So help me God—and may he keep me steadfast.”

(There are similar pledges required to attain the rank of Esquire and Knight.)

#### INDEPENDENT ORDER OF ODD FELLOWS

“I, \_\_\_\_\_, in the presence of the members of the Order here assembled, do solemnly promise that I will never communicate to any one, unless directed to do so by a legal lodge, the signs, tokens, or grips, the term, traveling, or other passwords belonging to the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. Nor will I expose or lend any of the books or papers, relating to the records or secret work of the Order to any person or persons, except to one specially authorized to receive them. That I will never reveal any private business which may be transacted in my presence in this or any other lodge. I also promise, that I will abide by the laws, rules, and regulations of this lodge, of the Grand Lodge of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows of \_\_\_\_\_, or any other Grand or working lodge to which I may be attached.

I further promise, that I will never wrong a subordinate or Grand Lodge to the value of anything. Nor will I take part or share, directly or indirectly, in any illegal distribution of the funds or other property of the lodge; but will, to the best of my ability, endeavor to prevent the same; and I hereby pledge myself to help and support my afflicted and persecuted brother, and warn him of approaching danger, whether it be from his own imprudence, or from the evil designs of others, or from some accidental cause. I will point out his advantage and interest, where they do not conflict with the rights of others, if it should be in my power so to do. Should I be expelled or voluntarily leave the Order, I will consider this promise as binding out of it as in it. To the faithful performance of all which, I pledge my sacred honor.”

#### THE REBEKAH LODGE (Women)

“I, \_\_\_\_\_, in the presence of the members of the Rebekah Degree of the Independent Order of Odd-Fellows here assembled do solemnly promise that I will never reveal to any one the Mysteries of this Degree, or the Passwords and Signs belonging to it, and now about to be entrusted to me, except to a member of this Degree, whom I may find, on due trial, to be in possession of them, or when in the discharge of official duties within the Lodge. I furthermore promise to abide by the Laws, Rules, and regulations of the Sovereign Grand Lodge and of the Grand Lodge to which my Lodge may be subordinate, and of this Lodge or any Rebekah Lodge of which I may become a member. To all secrecy and obedience in this respect, I hereby pledge my sacred word of honor, without any mental reservation, and with a full determination to preserve my plighted faith inviolate until the end of life.”

#### ORDER OF PATRONS OF HUSBANDRY (National Grange)

“In the presence of our Heavenly Father and these witnesses, I do hereby pledge my sacred honor that, whether in or out of the Order, I will never reveal any of the secrets of this Order, nor communicate them, not any part of them, to any person in the world, unless I am satisfied by strict test, or in some legal manner that they are lawfully entitled to receive them; that I will conform

to and abide by the laws of my state and nation, the constitution, rules and regulations of the National Grange, and of the State Grange under whose jurisdiction I may be, and of the Subordinate Grange to which I may be attached; that I will never propose for membership in the Order, nor sanction the admission of anyone I have reason to believe an improper person; nor will I oppose the admission of anyone solely on the grounds of a personal prejudice or difficulty. I will recognize and answer all lawful signs given me by a brother or sister of the Order, and will render them such assistance as may be needed, so far as I may be able and the interests of my family will permit. I will not knowingly wrong or defraud a brother or sister of the Order in word or deed; nor will I permit it to be done by another if in my power to prevent it. Should I knowingly or willingly violate this pledge, I invoke upon myself suspension or expulsion from the Order, and thus be disgraced among those who were my brothers and sisters."

#### BENEVOLENT AND PROTECTIVE ORDER OF ELKS

"I, \_\_\_\_\_, in the presence of God and this lodge of Elks, do solemnly promise and swear that I will never reveal any of the confidential matters of this Order which have been, or may hereafter be, committed to my charge and keeping.

I will support the Constitution, and obey the statutes, rules and regulations of the Grand Lodge of this Order, and the by-laws of \_\_\_\_\_ Lodge, No. \_\_\_\_\_, and those of any other lodge of which I may hereafter become a member.

I will uphold the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America.

I will propose no one for membership in this Order whom I do not sincerely believe to be worthy thereof.

I will ballot for a worthy candidate and against an unworthy candidate when proposed by another.

I will not permit any political, sectarian or personal prejudice to influence me in the slightest degree in the exercise of my right of franchise in the Order.

I will obey any lawful summons sent me by any competent authority of the Order.

I will never apply to the courts for redress in any matter concerning the Order, without first appealing to the councils of the Order.

I will never reveal to anyone not an Elk, the name of a brother asking or receiving aid or relief from the Order.

I will not, directly or indirectly, use my membership in this Order, nor any emblem, insignia or sign thereof, for business or commercial purposes.

I will never introduce into the Order anything of a political or sectarian character, nor in any way by my conduct bring reproach upon it.

I will always protect a brother, his good name and his family; and I will always respect and defend the purity and sanctity of his home and fireside.

If I break this obligation, may I wander through the world forsaken; may I be pointed out as a being bereft of decency and manhood, unfit to hold communion with true and upright men. And may God help me, and keep me steadfast in this my solemn and binding obligation in the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the United States of America. Amen."

#### LOYAL ORDER OF MOOSE

"In the presence of Almighty God and those here assembled, I do most solemnly promise that I will obey the Laws of the Supreme Lodge of the World, Loyal Order of Moose and the By-Laws of the lodge of which I am to become a member.

I will not become a member of any organization using the word "Moose" as part of its name, unless such organization is under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Lodge of the World, Loyal Order of Moose.

I will not appeal to any civic authority in matters pertaining to this Order, until I have exhausted all means of redress provided by this Order.

I will extend the hand of fellowship and brotherhood to any loyal Moose with whom my relationship may become estranged.

I will never propose an unqualified person for membership in this Order, nor will I oppose the admission of any eligible applicant without cause.

I will endeavor to aid and assist any loyal Moose and warn him of any danger which threatens him and his family.

I will cherish and support our beloved Mooseheart and Moosehaven to the extent of my ability, and give of my substance for the help of children and aged there.

I ..... of my own free will and without reservation accept this obligation binding me to the Loyal Order of Moose. And may God keep me steadfast, in this my solemn pledge. Amen.

#### FRATERNAL ORDER OF EAGLES

"Before God, and on my honor, I promise that I will never make known to anyone the Rituals of this Order, except to Eagles in good standing, and then only if I am authorized to do so.

I promise never to aid or join an Aerie, or any organization of alleged Eagles, that is not approved by the Grand Aerie.

I will abide by and obey the laws, rules and regulations of the Grand Aerie.

I promise never to propose for admission into the Order a man whom I know to be unworthy; never to use the blackball unless I have conscientious reason for doing so; and never to permit the religious opinions of an applicant, his nationality, or his membership in any other organization to influence my ballot.

I promise never to take unfair advantage of an Eagle in business matters, and never to let him suffer loss of any kind if I can prevent.

I promise to further, at all times, the patriotic, the humanitarian, and the fraternal teachings of this Order.

I promise to try, steadfastly, to make my home the abiding place of thoughts and acts that are wholesome and righteous.

I promise to give our Country the devoted loyalty of a patriot.

Before this Altar my attention is particularly directed to the following vows, and I give my pledge to observe them:

If I cannot speak well of an Eagle, I will not speak ill of him.

I promise at all times to respect the sanctity of his home and family.

I understand the meaning of these pledges and I ask God and my Brothers to help me keep them.

I acknowledge that the wilful violation of any of them is just cause for expulsion from the Order.

(The Worthy President has read these words while the candidates have their right hand raised, and now says 'My friends, if you accept these vows and are willing to give your solemn pledge to observe them, you will now repeat after me.')

I do accept them and I will observe them, so help me God."

Classis Lake Erie has summarized the content of the oaths under the trio "secrecy, fraternal loyalty, and benevolence." We add as applicable to several lodges: obedience, exclusion of political or sectarian considerations, receiving and promoting the teachings, invoking of harsh sanctions, and the invoking of the presence and help of the Deity. These additions to the list, except at a couple of points, do not do much to undercut the statement by Classis Lake Erie that the contents of the oath do not add up to a doctrinal or confessional commitment. Granted the right of a group of generally law abiding people to form a close and exclusive association with one another, the requirements for the most part are such as would be drawn up to reinforce that kind of association.

But other matters enter the picture:

1. The binding of a Christian into a close social and mutually supportive organization with non-Christians, in which fidelity to one

another is of such a type as would violate the scriptural injunction "Be not mismated with unbelievers. . . ."

2. The use of God's name to bind Christian and non-Christian into this close union.

3. The use of the name of God in a setting in which only an unscriptural concept of God can be testified to.

4. In the case of certain lodges, the use of an oath which involves a calling upon God to witness to the extreme seriousness of one's promise and a calling down upon the person extreme punishment for any infraction of a promise that can hardly be said to require so heavy a sanction.

#### *B. The confessional character of the lodge oath*

Having surveyed the contents of the lodge oaths, we come now to the question whether the lodge members are necessarily committed to the religious teachings of the lodge by the mere fact of membership, that is, by their having taken the oath which admitted them to membership. This is what Classis Lake Erie feels we must establish if the present prohibition of lodge membership by the church is to continue to be defensible. Classis admits the pseudo-religious character of the lodge but questions whether mere entrance into membership by means of the oath commits a person to this false religion.

If the oath content be taken by itself, separated from the obvious religious aspects of the lodge (to which the oath contents possibly may not explicitly commit the candidate) even then the concepts in the oath are not without religious implications which are contradictory to our Christian faith. Taking only those concepts secrecy, fraternal loyalty, and benevolence, we maintain that these bear something of a confessional character. They may seem to the casual observer merely ethical concepts. But ethics have a doctrinal foundation. And there is no doctrinal position unless these doctrines are confessed.

Let us concentrate for a moment on the commitment to *fraternal loyalty*. It implies the assumption that all members of the lodge are my brothers. By requiring that this be stated and confirmed in an oath or pledge this assumption is elevated to a doctrinal statement. And taking this oath or making this pledge can, for one who does so, only be defined in terms of a personal confessional commitment to this doctrine. As such this pledge stands in one line with the confessional statement of the Christian believer, "I believe in the communion of the saints." That *fraternal loyalty* is required proves that this profession is supposed to be more than a word of the mouth and that it should be practiced as well. The fact that this pledge is made in some lodges with the hand on the Bible or with an invoking of the name of God emphasizes the more the doctrinal and confessional nature of this pledge.

As to *secrecy*, this aspect of the oath is not in itself wrong. But when a person commits himself to secrecy regarding matters not yet revealed to him, he may be compromising the priority of God's claim over his conscience regarding matters that must *not* be kept secret. In Leviticus 5:4-5 we read: "Or if anyone utters with his lips a rash oath to

do evil or to do good, any sort of rash oath that men swear, and it is hidden from him, when he comes to know it he shall in any of these be guilty. When a man is guilty in any of these, he shall confess the sin he has committed." Some of the secrets may be harmless enough, as those pertaining to secret signs, handshakes, and passwords. But the compromise of conscience that there may be in keeping secret what one knows of the records and secret work of an order, "mysteries," and even in certain orders the prosecutable crimes of a fellow member should be subject to a more critical evaluation.

As to *benevolence*, the chief criticism must be that the benevolence promoted by the lodge is seen as gaining heavenly rewards which are based on merit. Salvation itself is linked to deeds without saving faith entering the picture. The Christian should also be concerned about the true nature of good works—that they are rooted in true faith and are done according to *God's* commands and for his glory. It is true that all of us perform good works in company with the non-Christian population in community programs. But we are not subjected in our well-doing to being docile learners of a particular theory of the good. The lodge member is prevented by the policies of most lodges from intruding what would be interpreted as a sectarian consideration.

Whether, in every instance, the actual content of the oath or pledge reveals a clear case of confessional commitment to the lodge's pseudo-religious positions may be reasonably disputed. The several lodges differ from one another in a number of respects, even as to what such things as secrecy, fraternal loyalty, and benevolence entail. The very reprehensible sanctions in one group may be completely absent from another. Some oaths commit the initiate to be the willing learner of all the lodge's teachings, while others do not.

To judge from the content alone of the oath or pledge as to whether a personal commitment of the initiate at the time of his initiation has been made is beyond man, who cannot search the human heart. We readily have to accept the assertion of a lodge member that he did not commit himself confessionally at the time of his entrance into the lodge. However, we are dealing now with someone who is ready to confess that his only comfort is that he belongs to Jesus Christ. It is at this juncture that the important question arise: How does he, or should he, *now* see his oath or pledge made in the past?

Although we realize that comparisons are never perfect, the following may serve to make our point clear. When David ordered to have the people of Israel counted there was no evidence that he explicitly denied that his trust was in God alone (II Samuel 24). A different evaluation of this act, however, follows when the Lord gave his view of the matter, and when David had to confess, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done." It was very likely without any scruples that Saul took care of the clothes of those who stoned Stephen. But this act was certainly included when after his conversion he confessed that he persecuted the church of God (I Corinthians 15:9).

If it is true that there are confessional elements in the oath or pledge as stated above, then anyone who wants to become a member of the

unique community, the body of Christ, has to come to the conclusion that by the act of initiation into a lodge he has identified himself with teachings which cannot stand in the light of Scripture.

### C. *The Function of the Lodge Oath*

There is another aspect of our mandate, namely the function of the oath. In studying this aspect of the oath we again are pressed to a conclusion which is not favorable to the admission into the church of members of oath-bound societies.

The Christian surely should know how any oath, quite apart from anything that may appertain thereto, must function. Even if a lodge seldom would remind a member of his oath, seldom constrain him to conform his behavior to his oath, never discipline him for breaking his oath—if, in other words, the oath functions rather weakly and minimally in the member's ongoing connection with the lodge, should we say then that we need not draw very much attention to the oath in our evaluation of lodge membership and its relationship to church membership? No! The oath remains a very serious thing. It has to function in a large way in the life of the oath taker. Under no circumstances can an oath be taken lightly, for it is a calling upon God to witness our words and to punish us if we fail to keep our pledge.

But now, getting more directly to the matter of function, we are convinced that whether with full awareness of what he is doing or with a minimum of awareness, the candidate by his oath has *identified* himself with the teachings, including the religious teachings, of the lodge. We recognize that there are many who did not make a heart commitment in joining the lodge, did not then or have not since been subscribers to the religion of the lodge. *But we are convinced that in no way can the oath be separated from implicit involvement in the life and teaching of the lodge.* Considering the full picture of the language and actions associated with the initiation ritual, it appears incredible that the lodge itself would ever admit that a person can justifiably take the oath but deny part of the lodge teaching. Certainly in no case we have heard of has a part of the lodge involvement been allowed to be waived for conscience's sake. We believe that the oath fully identifies the candidates with the whole life and teaching of the lodge. What can more fully establish a man's unqualified and unreserved identification with a group and its life and teaching than an oath? Any procedure less than an oath may allow for a limited involvement. But if an oath means anything, it means a full identification of a person with that group to which his oath has bound him.

In this connection, the matter of social memberships should be mentioned. There exists in various local lodges (not including the Masonic orders) the practice of granting memberships that allow a person to use the lodge's social and recreational advantages without involving them in the ritual of initiation and the obligation to attend meetings. Sometimes this is done by circumvention of the lodge's official and traditional rules, as by allowing one member to present a list of people who are admitted without being present. However, the higher judicatories

of the lodges have renounced the whole concept of social memberships and the outlawing of such memberships has been upheld in civil courts. There is an obvious kind of deception in this practice that is certainly not worthy of the Christian. Policies that violate an organization's own constitution can hardly be taken advantage of in good conscience by the Christian.

We have inserted this statement about social memberships to support our conclusion that there is no proper way by which a person can be a member of the lodge and not be identified with it and with what it stands for.

We believe that this identification with all that the lodge is in its formal statements about itself and its beliefs is a fact, whether one has subjectively made a commitment to the whole thing or not. Suppose a person is seeking admission to the Christian Reformed Church while on the rolls of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. And suppose he says: "I did not accept all of Mormonism's teachings, but it was necessary for me to involve myself at least partially with that group in order to fit into the business and social structure of the community where I lived." Do we then say: "We see that you only identified with some harmless elements of Mormonism and so we will not ask you to renounce and resign from the Mormon church"? No! This person would be asked to renounce the whole affiliation because by virtue of his entering officially the Mormon Church he *identified* with the totality of Mormonism's official teachings and practices, with what he did not know much about as well as with what he knew well. A person in taking the lodge oath does not identify with only as much of it as he cares to receive or as much as he might be fully informed about. Everything about the initiation implies a full commitment to all that the lodge officially is. Nothing we have read allows for the possibility that the lodge itself permits any reservations on the part of the candidate—any more than the Mormon church would honor less than a full commitment to Mormonism on the part of the candidate for membership.

One may try to argue that there are other organizations and occasions in which religion plays a part and yet do not involve the members or participants in an identification with that religious expression. One can think of a Rotary Club, a patriotic mass meeting, an inter-scholastic contest, in all of which some regard for religion may be expressed, as by an opening prayer. However, these are a far cry from the lodge, with its officially adopted statements and rituals, with which an oath of necessity identifies one as he, by his oath, enters upon a willing submission to the lodge's instruction in matters of religion along with the rest of the package. One does not, by belonging to a service club, for instance, have to accept the prayer of a visiting religious figure. The man's prayer is his own. No non-church organization we know of makes binding religious statements and rituals in the way a lodge does. And no non-church organization we know of requires the members to identify with its religious statements and rituals as a lodge does. It is one thing for an organization to recognize the existence of God. It is quite another thing for an organization to set up a prescribed worship

of God with exact wording and prescribed rituals. These things represent the "establishment of religion" for all who are within the membership.

If identification with all that the lodge officially is and teaches is established by oath, as we maintain, then a person has become by his membership a confessor of the lodge's religion. His very membership is a witness to those around him to the "truth" of lodgism. He cannot nullify that witness unless he renounces it. If without renouncing it he wants at the same time to be a witness to Christ by public profession of faith and a life of Christian witness, that Christian witness becomes a divided witness. Suppose a lodge member—church member goes out to visit people to win them to Christ and the church, telling people that Christ provides the only way of salvation. What answer must he give to the man who asks him, "How can you tell me *that* when you belong to a lodge which doesn't allow a reference to Christ as Savior and says that all religions are acceptable to God?" Whether he is openly espousing the lodge stand or not, his confessional commitment by virtue of his oath has constituted him a witness to a religion that is diametrically opposed to his Christian witness. He needs to hear Elijah's words: "How long do you go limping between two sides?"

When a Christian is persuaded of this unavoidable identification, let him be willing to avoid or forsake such an organization, even though thereby he forfeits some business, social, or recreational advantage. Our faith must govern all of life. "Whether therefore you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." We may not keep our religion out of some areas of our life or keep it from judging certain areas. The prospect of affiliating with an organization that denies basic Bible teaching must be met head on with the question: Lord, what will you have me do? Scripture warns us against becoming identified with anything that compromises Christian truth and our commitment to it. Any movement which claims to lead men to God but excludes Jesus Christ must be avoided. "He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him" (John 5:23).

## II. THE REFORMULATION OF THE SUMMARY

The following summary is presented as a fulfillment of part two of our mandate. It is designed to present the stand of the church on lodge membership in the light of Report 37 (1974) and to serve as the official witness of the Christian Reformed Church's position on this matter.

### CHURCH MEMBER—LODGE MEMBER CAN A CHRISTIAN BE BOTH?

Can a person be a member of the church of Christ and at the same time be a member of a lodge?

Does this question surprise you? Perhaps you know several people whom you regard as good Christians who are Masons, or Elks, or Odd Fellows. Or possibly you are a Christian yourself and belong to a lodge. Many people maintain that as long as a Christian is a faithful member

of the church to which he belongs, it is a matter of his own personal concern if he also wishes to join other organizations such as a lodge.

There are Christian churches which do not agree with this position. Among these is the Christian Reformed Church, which declared in 1974 that

“there is an irreconcilable conflict between the teachings and practices of the lodge and biblical Christianity, and that therefore simultaneous membership in the lodge and in the church of Jesus Christ is incompatible and contrary to Scripture.”

Since its founding in 1857, the Christian Reformed Church has maintained this position. Is this just a matter of tradition? Not at all! The matter has been reviewed in recent years, and this church is convinced that this position is biblical.

### THE CHURCH

The Christian church is made up of the redeemed people of God. It includes those people of all races throughout the world who sincerely believe and confess that they are sinners before God and cannot save themselves, that Jesus Christ in his sacrificial death on the cross is their only salvation, and that they give themselves to Christ in wholehearted gratitude to serve him with their whole lives.

Christians receive salvation through no merit of their own. Paul writes in Ephesians 2:8-10, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

All believers in Christ form the body of Christ, the church, and they must live their lives under the terms of this divine arrangement, namely, of grace and faith and obedience. At every point the Christian's life must be one of covenant fellowship with God in Christ, under the direction of his Word and Spirit.

The Christian is told in I Corinthians 6:19, 20 “You are not your own; you were bought with a price.” He confesses this when he echoes Paul's words of Philippians 1:21 “For me to live is Christ.” The Christian's allegiance is to Christ, and ultimately only to Christ. Therefore any allegiance under which the Christian cannot honor Christ as the Savior and Lord of his life is unbearable to him!

### *The Church as Institution*

The Apostles' Creed speaks of believing “a holy, catholic church.” This church is universal, transcending nation, ethnic and denominational boundaries. When we speak of the church in this sense, we refer to the invisible aspect of the church. This description implies that in the final analysis only God knows who are true members of this body.

There is another side to the church. It is also a visible church. The Christian is not only a member of this body in its spiritual and hidden character, but he is also a member of a particular church located at some specific time and place in history. The New Testament speaks not

only of the mystical body of Christ; it also speaks of local churches where there are responsible officers and where certain activities take place. When we speak of the Christian being a "church member," we are referring to the church as an institution. The visible church, the church as institution, has been given a task that involves mainly a threefold responsibility—to preach and teach the Word faithfully, to administer the holy sacraments properly, and to exercise spiritual care over the members of this flock. This responsibility rests primarily on the officers of the church. It is their solemn task to remind the members of Christ's body that they are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (I Peter 2:9). And in the fulfillment of that unique place in this world, God's people must be told, "Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?" (II Corinthians 6:14).

The Bible is very clear in warning against associations with persons, and involvement in movements which are—because of their fundamental religious direction and purpose—opposed to the will of God and the coming of Christ's kingdom.

### THE LODGE

It is not easy to define the "lodge." There are many different organizations which fall under that general category, and each differs in certain respects from others. The largest and best known lodge is the Masonic order. Many others are patterned after this order, such as the Elks, Moose, Eagles, Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, Red Men, National Grange and the like.

Historically, these organizations have been described as "oath bound societies" or "secret organizations." They use more or less elaborate rituals, and have a very definite religious character. Most lodges encourage moral living and patriotism, and promote benevolent projects. All demand the acknowledgment of the existence of God, without which the oath of loyalty would be meaningless.

Why would any church take exception to such organizations? Is the taking of an oath wrong, when Scripture even speaks of God taking an oath? Is an organization not permitted to have secrets, matters which ought to be kept in confidence by its membership? Ritual too is not evil, for almost every organization has some order which it follows in the conduct of its business. And surely the church takes no exception in the fact that lodges demand recognition of the existence of God.

Can there then be any objection to a Christian belonging to such organizations?

Three matters will be considered which lodges have in common: the oath or solemn promise, secrecy, and the religious character of these organizations.

#### *The Oath*

The oath or pledge which is taken upon entry into lodge membership is generally concerned with maintaining secrecy and securing fra-

ternal loyalty to the organization and its membership. The following excerpts indicate something of the nature of oaths which are taken: "I will always hail, ever conceal and never reveal any of the secret arts, parts or points of the hidden mysteries of ancient Freemasonry . . . except it be to a true and lawful brother Mason. . ." (Masons); "I further promise that I will obey the laws, and so far as possible, comply with the requirements of the order. . ." (Knights of Pythias); "I also promise that I will abide by the laws, rules, and regulations of this lodge. . ." (Odd Fellows); "To all secrecy and obedience in this respect, I hereby pledge my sacred word of honor without any mental reservation, and with a full determination to preserve my plighted faith inviolate until the end of life" (Rebekah); "In the presence of our Heavenly Father and these witnesses, I do hereby pledge my sacred honor that, whether in or out of this Order, I will never reveal any of the secrets of the Order, . . . that I will conform to and abide by the laws of my state and nation, the constitution, rules and regulations of the National Grange. . ." (National Grange); "I will not permit any political, sectarian, or personal prejudice to influence me in the slightest degree in the exercise of my right of franchise in the Order. . . I will never introduce into the Order anything of a political or sectarian character. . . If I break this obligation, may I wander through the world forsaken; may I be pointed out as being bereft of decency and manhood, unfit to hold communion with true and upright men. . ." (Elks); "I, of my own free will and without reservation, accept this obligation binding me to the Loyal Order of Moose. . ." (Moose); "I will abide by and obey the laws, rules and regulations of the Grand Aerie. . ." (Eagles).

Notice that by a solemn oath promises have been made to obey rules and regulations which have not as yet been made known to the applicant. But that which is far more serious is the fact that by this oath the new lodge member has *identified* himself with the organization. He has become part of the body, a participant in its activities. Note the commitment of the Moose: "I . . . accept this obligation binding me to the Loyal Order of Moose."

It is often said by a member of a lodge: "The oath is only a form which you have to go through"; "I didn't really take the oath seriously"; "I wasn't aware at the time of what was involved in the teachings of the lodge, and I do not subscribe to many of the things which the lodge stands for"; I took the oath and joined the lodge because there were certain social advantages that I desired. That's all it means to me."

There can be no doubt that many who have become lodge members and took the required oath did so without giving serious thought to the significance of that act. But may anyone, and especially a Christian, ever use an oath in that fashion? May we call upon God to witness to the sincerity of our promise, a pledge to loyalty, commitment and secrecy, when we are not serious about the oath which we are taking? And may we bind ourselves in this solemn fashion to a system which is unknown to us prior to the taking of the oath? Are we being true

to God, who is the source of truth and utterly dependable in His declarations and promises, when we use the oath in that fashion? For that matter, is a man even being fair to the lodge which he joins when he takes an oath with tongue in cheek?

Moreover, if someone has taken the oath or solemn promise before he was a Christian, does not his conversion by the Spirit of Jesus Christ imply that he is now ashamed of what he has done in ignorance? And does not the renewal by the same Spirit require a radical disassociation from any affiliation that is in conflict with his profession of Jesus Christ as his only Master?

### *Secrecy*

There may have been a day when the rituals and "mysteries" of various lodges were really secrets. This is hardly true today. Copies of rituals, signs and passwords of almost every lodge are available today to the person seeking such information. *The Commission on Organizations, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*, has a library of over four hundred rituals, as well as fifteen thousand other reports relating to these organizations.

We do not take exception to an organization keeping certain matters confidential. In that sense secrecy need not be condemned. There is another aspect to the secrecy of the lodge which is objectionable, however. The "mysteries" which are revealed only to the initiates suggest that light is given to those who have joined the lodge, and that before this time they were walking in darkness. For example, in the Masonic ritual, the candidate is required to wear a blindfold, called a Hoodwink. He is introduced as "Mr. ...., who has long lived in darkness, and now seeks to be brought to light, and to receive a part in the rights and benefits of this worshipful lodge, erected to God and dedicated to the holy Saint John, as all brothers and fellows have done before." Similarly, the ritual of the Odd Fellows Lodge requires a candidate to enter blindfolded and in chains, so that he may be led to "primary truth."

A Christian cannot agree that he has been living in darkness, and now that he has become a member of the lodge he will see the light and be led into the truth. For Christ insists "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12), and "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

### *Religion*

Lodges are religious. This is not to say that the lodge is a religion in the sense that it has a formal creed, or that it requires a formal confession of faith of its membership. Lodges do not claim to be churches, but it is very apparent that all lodges have certain religious elements. Ritual prayers are prescribed, in which God is acknowledged as the "Great Architect of the Universe" (Masons), the "Father of us all" (Eagles), the "Supreme Governor of the Universe" (Moose), "Omnipotence" (Odd Fellows), "Great Ruler of the Universe" (Elks), "In-

finite Father of us all" (Royal Neighbors of America), and the "Supreme Being" (Grange). Note that there is no reference to God as being triune, and references to Jesus Christ are carefully avoided in all lodge ritual prayers.

That this avoidance is intentional can be seen in the way in which familiar hymns and Scripture references are changed so that Christ is never mentioned. The Moose sing "Blest be the tie that binds, our hearts in brother's love." In the fourth degree ritual, Masons are told, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God." This text from I Peter 2:5 actually concludes with the words "through Jesus Christ," but they have been eliminated. The words "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Corinthians 5:1) are often used in Masonic ritual to refer to the perfect character that the Mason builds for himself as he earns entrance into the Celestial Lodge, but in Scripture these words clearly speak of the house as a "building from God," and therefore not something built by human effort.

Many lodges meet in "temples" and most contain altars on which lie a Bible, a Koran or other religious book. The leaders are given names with religious connotations such as Worshipful Master. The Elks call the one who is in charge of their meeting the "Exalted Ruler," and in their prayers refer to God as the "Grand Exalted Ruler."

Funeral services are provided by Masons, Elks, Odd Fellows, Moose, Eagles, Royal Neighbors of America, and others. It is especially in these funeral services that the religious character of the lodge becomes evident. The Masons pray that "after our departure hence in peace and in thy favor, we may be received into thine everlasting kingdom, to enjoy, in union with the souls of our departed friends, the just reward of a pious and virtuous life." The Eagles pray, "Help us to realize that the parting is only for a short season, and that we shall meet again in the Grand Aerie beyond, where the faults and frailties of this earthly life are forgotten, and all become perfect in the love of an infinite God." At the Moose memorial service the Governor asks "and we can but pray that he who watcheth over us will forgive our mistakes and transgressions, and that he will, because of the love that builded it, find our circle worthy." The Eagles declare "Hope dries our tears, and with the eyes of faith we may see those whom we loved and lost awhile, faring on through a better land, awaiting the day when the chain of fraternal love shall be reunited forevermore."

Fundamental to the assurance given in these phrases is the view that man is able through right living to attain to eternal life. Salvation through the blood of Christ is never mentioned. Attainment to a "great lodge above" is possible through human effort. This good works ethic is stressed particularly in Masonry, but is present in almost every lodge. This is the reason why such great emphasis is placed on fraternity, charitable work and morality.

No one would fault the cultivation of virtues such as brotherly love, truth, fortitude, prudence, justice, fidelity, industry, learning, wisdom, and the like, as these are promoted by the rituals of the lodge.

But is this the way by which a man attains eternal life in fellowship with God? The Bible is diametrically opposed to this position!

### AN IRRECONCILABLE CONFLICT!

Many lodges assure those who seek admission that nothing in the lodge will conflict with the applicant's religious position. For example, the Moose require a candidate to "take an obligation which will not conflict with any religious, political, or social obligation which you now have, and will not conflict with your duty to your family, your country, or your God."

With such assurance, how can there be any "irreconcilable conflict" between church membership and lodge membership? Need anyone hesitate joining a lodge which makes such a promise?

Simply declaring that there is no conflict does not mean that a conflict doesn't exist! A test must be applied to any organization before a Christian in good conscience can become a member, or remain a part of the organization if he is already a member.

- The Christian cannot identify himself with an organization which
- denies the God of the Scriptures, and fails to recognize the deity of Jesus Christ, or which
  - rejects the gospel of salvation by Christ alone, and offers eternal rewards for human efforts and deeds, or which
  - considers the Bible as one among many sacred writings, and offers spiritual enlightenment to its members while ignoring the express teachings of God's Word.

Note how lodges compare to these standards.

### *The God of the Scriptures*

Lodges recognize a supreme being. But so do Unitarians, Mohammedans, Buddhists, and other religious groups in the world. However, recognition of a supreme being is not the same as the acknowledgment of the only true God, the God of the Scriptures. In the Bible, God is revealed as triune, and the only way in which a man may know and enter into fellowship with this God is through Jesus Christ. Jesus said "No one comes to the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

The Bible demands that we recognize this God as the one who calls all men to account for their lives, and who through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit reclaims his fallen creation and redeems his people. The Bible further reveals him as the one who through Christ will return to judge all men and establish the new heaven and earth.

Over against this position, the lodge is founded on the idea that there is a common religion or religious foundation upon which all religions, Hinduism, Mohammedanism, Buddhism, Christianity, and all others, can stand. It is for that reason that a lodge can assert that "nothing will conflict with your religious opinions," since the "god" of the lodge is so abstract that he is being confessed in the religions of all men. It is also for that reason that any references to Jesus Christ as the Son of God are forbidden in the lodge ritual, since that would be "sectarian."

Who is the god of the lodge? He is whoever each member desires

to worship. But it is to that god that prayers are offered. It is before that god that oaths are taken. He is not the God of the Scriptures!

### *The Gospel of Salvation*

Can a man earn a place in heaven by virtuous living? At this point the conflict between the position of the lodge and the position of the Bible is clearly seen. Lodges promise their members "the just reward of a pious and virtuous life." Their members possess the ability to attain to a place in heaven by living in such a fashion that they will be acceptable to God, and after death will enter into eternal fellowship with God.

This is in direct contradiction to the Bible, which declares, "For no human being will be justified in his sight by the works of the law, since through the law comes the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). It declares man's inability to merit heaven, but also shows the God-ordained way of salvation: "since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith" (Romans 3:23-25).

Is it possible for the Christian, as a member of Christ's church, to confess on Sunday that he is saved by grace alone, and on Monday to agree by his silence at the meeting of the lodge that salvation by Christ isn't really necessary because a man can attain to fellowship with God by being a good lodge member and living a virtuous life? He can choose one way or the other, but not both. By his tacit agreement, as a member of an organization which acknowledges the merit of good works, he is denying the plain teaching of the Bible: "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

### *The Authority of the Bible*

Implicit in this contradiction about the way of salvation is a rejection by the lodge of the authority of God's Word. Masons acknowledge this when they place the Bible as one of the three great lights on the altar. The Bible shares this position with the Square and the Compasses. But even this shared position is the case only in "Christian lands." In countries where religions other than Christianity dominate, the Bible is removed, and another "Holy Book", such as the Koran, is put in its place. When the Bible is used, it is grossly misused and misquoted. In the process it is often used to support unbiblical concepts. This is equally true in other lodges which use the Bible as a source of light, and then offer light through their ritual which contradicts the teachings of God's Word.

The Christian cannot tolerate such a view of the Scriptures. The Bible teaches and the Christian believes that the Scriptures are the one and only reliable revelation of God's plan of redemption and his will for man (II Timothy 3:16, 17). Nor can the Christian tolerate the Bible being used to support unbiblical concepts. To use God's Word to sup-

port what is contrary to that Word is to use God's name and Word to verify falsehood. This is obvious and utter blasphemy.

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It is specifically the religious aspect of the lodge which makes it incompatible with Christianity. There are many other organizations which have worthy benevolent purposes. They are to be commended, and a Christian would have no problem in becoming a part of these organizations.

But what then about the person who specifically rejects the religious positions of the lodge while remaining a member? Many Christians have joined lodges simply for the social and recreational advantages which a lodge provides. As long as he does not subscribe to the wrong concept of God, the way of salvation by good works, and the other things which are contrary to Scripture, can he not simply make use of those things related to the lodge which are desirable? Surely many Christians who belong to lodges are doing that.

But what does this involve?

The lodge member has taken an oath in order to become part of an organization which dishonors God and holds positions clearly contrary to the Word of God. And if he has done this for certain material benefits, what value is he placing on these advantages? Will he compromise his position and witness as one who belongs to Christ for material gain?

The lodge member has identified himself as part of an organization which is correctly described in II Timothy 3:5 as "holding the form of religion, but denying the power of it." The Bible says "Avoid such people." Even though he may not personally believe what his lodge teaches, he expresses tacit agreement by continuing to belong to it. Within the lodge he may not assert his own position, because that would be "sectarian." Can he continue to make this compromise?

What should the Christian do who is a lodge member? He should renounce his relationship to the lodge. He need not break that aspect of the oath in which he promised to keep the secrets of the lodge, but he must confess that it was wrong to be bound to an organization which is anti-Christian.

Can a Christian be both a church member and a lodge member? It is the judgment of the Christian Reformed Church that he can not, for there is an irreconcilable conflict between the two!

The Scripture says in II Corinthians 6:14-18:

"Do not be mised with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said,

'I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Therefore come out from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty'."

RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. That our reporter, the Rev. John Petersen, be given the privilege of the floor when synod deals with this report.

B. That synod recognize the fact that many who took an oath or pledge in order to become members of a lodge did so without any conscious commitment to the religious positions which are basic to the lodge system.

*Grounds:*

1. Many present and former lodge members declare that this is the case with respect to their own position.

2. The church must accept this declaration and may not impugn the statement of lodge members unless there is clear evidence that their assertion is false.

C. That synod, in maintaining its position that "there is an irreconcilable conflict between the teachings and practices of the lodge and biblical Christianity, and that therefore simultaneous membership in the lodge and in the church of Jesus Christ is incompatible and contrary to Scripture" (Acts of Synod 1974, Art. 65), define such organizations as objectionable which hold the unitarian-universalist concept of God, the meritorious character of good works, and the denial of Scripture and of Jesus Christ as the ultimate source of light and truth.

*Grounds:*

1. An organization or brotherhood may not call itself a lodge and yet because of its religious position should be considered to belong to the same category.

2. The possibility exists that an organization which calls itself a lodge may simply offer insurance benefits or social benefits without adhering to these religious positions and without in any other way being objectionable to a Christian.

D. That synod declare that any member of a lodge, by means of the oath or pledge, has made an implicit confessional commitment to the false religion of the lodge, and that therefore even formal membership is incompatible with membership in a Christian Reformed Church.

*Grounds:*

1. Whenever in the context of the lodge rituals the name of God and/or the Bible is used with the oath or pledge, it should be considered a violation of the third commandment and as such requires repentance.

2. The contents of the oath or pledge to which the candidate must give his assent involves him in at least a tacit identification with the religious position of the lodge. It involves him more explicitly in those oath or pledges which

a. call for recognition and practice of a brotherly relationship that

contradicts the unique relationship established by becoming a member of the body of Christ,

b. enforce a commitment to secrecy regarding matters undisclosed to the candidate and therefore hold the possibility of forbidding a Christian to reveal matters the Word of God may require him to reveal,

c. call the member to practice a benevolence based upon a concept of good works that is in conflict with the scriptural teaching.

3. Though the oath or pledge may have been made without a conscious confessional commitment, the instruction in the Scriptures at the time of seeking membership in the church should lead him to realize that this oath or pledge did in fact involve him in an implicit commitment to the religious position of the lodge.

4 It is the function of the oath or pledge to enforce an identification of the candidate with the official teaching and testimony of the organization. That the candidate at the time of making the oath or pledge was ignorant of its sinful implications does not exclude him from the call to repentance after having been enlightened by the Word and Spirit (cf. Acts 3:17-19, 17:29, 30, Eph. 4:17, 18, I Peter 1:14, 15).

E. That synod approve for publication the summary statement submitted in this report as the witness of the Christian Reformed Church's position on the lodge and church membership.

*Grounds:*

1. The basic thrust of the report submitted to the Synod of 1975 has been retained.

2. Emphasis has been placed upon the content, confessional character, and function of the oath as requested by the Synod of 1975.

3. The statement has been revised so that it speaks to the teachings and practices of many lodges.

F. That synod approve the deletion of the cartoons from the summary statement.

*Ground:* Cartoons are not appropriate when addressing the inquirer on this serious matter.

G. That synod discharge the committee since its mandate has been fulfilled.

Committee on the Lodge Oath  
and Church Membership

P. M. Jonker, chairman

J. Petersen, reporter

L. Dykstra

H. De Jong

C. Zeilstra

1980