

Chapter One:

Introduction

Why? It is legitimate to ask me, "Why? Didn't you say you were through with the Masonic issue in the SBC? Then, why are you writing The Southern Baptist Convention and Freemasonry, Volume III?" In the Spring of 1993, I wrote an article entitled, "Initiation and Consummation: A Personal Perspective on the SBC Study of Freemasonry", which was published in the Indiana Baptist. The complete text of that article is printed in Appendix A of this volume. In that article, I thought about my response to the potential for the SBC establishing a "lukewarm and mediocre" stand on Freemasonry.

At no time did I believe the HMB had done a thorough, scholarly study of Freemasonry. I only hoped that the trustees would force the HMB of the SBC to bring a report which would not be embarrassing to the SBC. Yet, conservatives, who had fought for years to control the Convention, finding their own level of discomfort, seemed to begin to employ the same techniques to maintain control of the Convention to which they had objected so strenuously when those methods were employed by moderates and liberals.

That article concluded with the statement:

"There is no more that I can do, but more importantly, it is my conviction, that there is no more that I should do. There is much that the leadership of the SBC, the HMB staff and the HMB trustees can do. More importantly, there is much more that they should do. Confident of the sovereignty of God, and hopeful of the sincerity of His people, I must now trust, that in time, they will do it...."

With this statement, I believed I had completed my work on the SBC and the Masonic Lodge. This still being true, and not disowning any part of it, "Why Volume III?" Essentially, there are four reasons:

1. A new word from the Lord.
2. The actions of the Masonic Lodge.
3. New revelations from the HMB about A Study Of Freemasonry.

4. Dr. Larry Lewis' persistent endorsement of Dr. Leazer's study with words such as, "I believe the HMB has provided the SBC, as well as the public at large, with a 'Study of Freemasonry' which is both fair and accurate and has yet to be seriously challenged."

A New Word From The Lord

Briefly stated, I believe that I obeyed God in "laying down" the issue of Freemasonry after the SBC in Houston. I did not speak to the issue at the Convention and did not give interviews afterward to comment on the matter. I wrote no trustee or HMB staff person after the Convention. Yet, now, I believe, the Lord has said, "Respond to A Study Of Freemasonry and to 'A Report On Freemasonry'".

The Bible is replete with illustrations of this concept. Abraham was told by God to sacrifice his son. Yet, while Abraham obeyed God, he continued to listen for the voice of God! If he had not, he would have missed God's best. The Lord's will did not change, but Abraham's understanding of that will was progressive. His responsibility was to obey God at each step of his pilgrimage. There may have been those who criticized Abraham, and said, "But, I thought you said God told you to sacrifice your son?"

If Abraham had wanted to avoid criticism, he would have had to disobey God. If Abraham had been prideful, he might have said, "But, Lord, I've already told everyone that You sent me here to sacrifice Isaac. If I don't, then they will think that You did not speak to me the first time." Abraham's pride could have had the nation of Israel bleeding to death on Mount Moriah. Some would never accept that Abraham had heard from God correctly both times. Yet, Abraham's only responsibility was to obey God. I am not Abraham, but the principle is the same for every believer: while you are obeying the Lord, continue to listen to His voice.

Similarly, God told Moses to lay his staff down, because there was a snake in it. Moses' staff was to be a tool of God, but it had to be surrendered first. It could not be under the control of Moses; it had to be under the control of God. When Moses showed his willingness to surrender his power to God, God could trust him. Would God tell Moses to pick up his staff in direct contradiction to what He had previously told the man of God? Yes, He would, and He did! When God told me to lay the issue of Freemasonry down, I did. When He told me to pick it up, He had removed all of the danger from it. I am not Moses, but the principle is the same for

every believer: God will often ask us to lay something down so that He can prove our hearts and prepare us for more effective sacrifice.

The book of Jeremiah is filled with the phrase, "Now the Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the second time." Any believer who truly wants to walk with God, must, while he is obeying, continue to hear from God the second time. I believe that God told me to lay down the issue of Freemasonry. Now, I believe that God wants me to write The SBC and Freemasonry, Volume III.

The Actions Of The Masonic Lodge

On September 30, 1993, I addressed the Masonic issue for the first time since "laying it down" in the Spring of 1993. The reason was an article entitled, "Soul Competence and the SBC", published in the August, 1993, issue of the Scottish Rite Journal, in which C. Fred Kleinknecht, "Sovereign Grand Commander", stated:

"Appropriately Masonry's view of civil liberty, church autonomy, and the central importance of personal conscience was confirmed by overwhelming vote of the ...(SBC) on June 16, 1993...Dr. Brad Allen ...(opposed) an amendment to brand Masonic teachings as a 'mixture of paganism and Christianity.' Allen asserted such an anti-Masonic amendment would 'strike two of the dearest things to the Baptist heart.' The priesthood of the believer and the autonomy of the local church. He continued saying, 'If we can't trust the soul competence of the believer in Jesus Christ to do the right thing, we're sunk.'

...the SBC...joined Freemasonry in its elevation of individual conscience as the final guide to personal belief and action. (emphasis added)

...Brothers, the Convention's vote is truly a historic and significant milestone for our Craft."

Why would Brad Allen see the priesthood of the believer and the autonomy of the local church as impediments to the speaking of the truth? Why would it encumber each man's access to God, i.e., the priesthood of the believer, and why would it encumber the local church's responsibility to follow God, i.e., the autonomy of the local church, for the SBC to declare the evil of Freemasonry? Truth is never an encumbrance to soul liberty. The only encumbrance to liberty is a self-imposed ignorance which is born of fear.

"Masonry's Winning Moments — 1993"

The January, 1994 Scottish Rite Journal contains an article by Kleinknecht, entitled, "Masonry's Winning Moments— 1993". He states:

"On April (sic) 16, for instance, the delegate/ messengers attending the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in Houston, Texas, voted 9-to-1 to support a resolution declaring membership in any Masonic organization to be a matter of personal conscience — just what Freemasonry has always said it was! This vote quashed a vocal extremist splinter group within the SBC which claimed Freemasonry was 'incompatible with Baptist doctrine.'

Both Scottish Rites, Southern and Northern Masonic Jurisdictions, led other Masonic groups in responding to this anti-Masonic faction. The February and May issues of the Scottish Rite Journal, for instance, focused on the theme of 'Freemasonry and Religion' and provided over 50 effective essays, many of them, such as the article by Norman Vincent Peale, by ministers who are Freemasons. The April (sic) 16 vote of the Southern Baptist Convention was truly a 'Winning Moment' for all of Freemasonry." (p. 5)

This issue of the Scottish Rite Journal also includes the complete text of Dr. Gary Leazer's August 6, 1993 keynote address, before the Southeast Masonic Conference, which was entitled, "Opportunities for the Future". Dr. Leazer's address is dealt with in chapter six of this volume (see pp. 83ff). The Lodge's continuing effort to pretend that the SBC is now the ally of the Lodge and the refusal of the HMB trustees to correct that impression requires that a "serious challenge" to A Study Of Freemasonry be written.

Individual Conscience Subordinate To The Word of God

In a September 30, 1993 letter to the trustees, I asked if this were true? Are we now allied with the Masonic Lodge? Is this what the HMB's trustees intended? Have Southern Baptists abandoned the Word of God and made "individual conscience" the supreme rule of faith? Can we now believe anything, teach anything, do anything that we wish to do, and still be Southern Baptist? Is it now,



as it was in the days of the Judges, "Everyman doing what is right in his own eyes"?

"The Baptist Faith and Message" opposes the Masonic Lodge in stating:

"The Holy Bible...is...the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ."

In Southern Baptist life, individual conscience is subordinate to the Word of God. The priesthood of the believer means that everyone in Christ has direct access to God through Christ; it does not mean that everyone can believe or practice whatever he will. The doctrine does mean that the church will not use coercive methods to require individuals to accept the truth. It also does not mean that the church will fail to declare the whole counsel of God, in the face of which individuals will make personal choices. The doctrine does mean that every man is accountable to God directly for his own sins; it also means that we are accountable for the sins of others, if we do not clearly warn them of their sin."

Masonic Offensive Against SBC Churches

The Masonic Lodge declared an offensive against Southern Baptist churches. In the same August, 1993, Scottish Rite Journal the Sovereign Grand Commander stated:

"If any Freemason you know is not yet aware of the historic vote of the SBC...press this issue...into his hands...No Mason must remain unaware of this significant turning point for modern Freemasonry."

Can Southern Baptists allow Masonic distortions of Baptist doctrine to stand without challenging those distortions? Can Southern Baptist allow this Masonic decision to try to influence local churches to stand without challenging it? Can we allow the assertion that Southern Baptists have blessed the Masonic Lodge to go unchallenged? The implied answer to these rhetorical questions is a decisive, "No, we cannot allow this to go unchallenged." Events will reveal, however, that the trustees did not agree. They would allow this to go unchallenged.

Original Intent Of Studying Freemasonry

The original intent of the motion to study Freemasonry was for the Convention to establish the truth about the Masonic Lodge in order to assist pastors who are being attacked and oppressed by Masons. Have we instead given Masons a loaded gun with which to press their attack against pastors who wish to see their churches unfettered from the shackles of the occult? The SBC, unwittingly I hope, has accomplished the very opposite of what was intended. It was the intention of the motion that Southern Baptists join every other Christian denomination which has addressed Freemasonry, in exposing the true nature of the Masonic Lodge, and that we would do it in the context of our unique ecclesiology.

Enemy Of Truth — Lust For Success

I have prayed that Southern Baptists would not sacrifice the truth for growth and prosperity. I concluded the appeal in my September 30, 1993 letter to the trustees with the following from Dr. Dwight L. Moody; he said:

"I do not see how any Christian, most of all a Christian minister, can go into these lodges with unbelievers. They say they can have more influence for good, but I say they can have more influence for good by staying out of them and then reproving their evil deeds. You can never reform anything by unequally yoking yourself with ungodly men. True reformers separate themselves from the world. But, some say to me, if you talk that way you will drive all the members of secret societies out of your meetings and out of your churches. But what if I did? Better men will take their places. Give them the truth anyway and if they would rather leave their churches than their lodges, the sooner they get out of the churches the better. I would rather have ten members who are separated from the world than a thousand such members. Come out from the lodge. Better one with God than a thousand without Him. We must walk with God and if only one or two go with us, it is all right. Do not let down the standard to suit men who love their secret lodges or have some darling sin they will not give up." (Emphasis added)

With this plea, I asked the trustees:

"...to issue a statement correcting the lie that Southern Baptists are in alliance with the Masonic Lodge, and emphasizing the cautions contained in the concluding statement of your recommendation to the Convention, which states: 'In light of the fact that many tenets and teachings of Freemasonry are not compatible with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine....we exhort Southern Baptists to prayerfully and carefully evaluate Freemasonry in light of the Lordship of Christ, the teachings of Scripture, and the findings of this report, as led by the Holy Spirit of God.'"

If the trustees had acted, there would have been no need to write a critique. But, when the October, 1993 trustee meeting took place, and no mention was even made of this issue, the conviction to write a critique of A Study of Freemasonry grew.

New revelations from the HMB about the Study

The third reason for writing this critique came as the HMB staff admitted that "A Report On Freemasonry" was flawed. In early September, I received a copy of a letter written to Dr. Larry Lewis which said:

"I noticed that you pointed out some lodges that mention Jesus Christ but I didn't see any that 'declare Jesus as the unique Son of God' as you mentioned...(in) your report. I'd like to know which lodges do declare Jesus as the unique Son of God." (emphasis added)

The actual wording of the HMB report to the SBC is:

"To be sure, not all Grand Lodges affirm Christian doctrine, and many do not declare Jesus as the unique Son of God; but many do, and for this we commend them." (A Report On Freemasonry, p. 4; emphasis added)

Dr. Tal Davis, Interim Department Director of the IFW, responded "on Dr. Lewis' behalf." In a September 15, 1993, letter, He said:



"Our research did not find any local Masonic lodge nor any Grand Lodge which have (sic) taken a position for or against the biblical teaching affirming the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the Son of God....The sentence you cited from the report might have been stated more clearly, '...but many [Masons] do, and for this we commend them.'" (emphasis added)

This admission contributed to my writing the trustees of the HMB on September 30, 1993. The reality that the President of the HMB wrote this six-page report, and the contempt for having had to do a study of Freemasonry, which his March 18, 1993 statement in the Atlanta Constitution (see p. 30) suggested, created new doubts about A Study Of Freemasonry. Therefore, I asked the trustees of the HMB, "...How much more of the report would be corrected if the facts about Freemasonry were not read through the filter of fear of losing numbers and money?"

Yet, the biggest problem with the Freemasonry study awaited a further revelation to be known. It will be dealt with in great detail in chapter six (see pp. 83ff). On August 6, 1993, Dr. Gary Leazer was the keynote speaker at the Southeast Masonic Conference. The text of his speech forever removes any doubt about the prejudice which seemed to guide the production of A Study Of Freemasonry.

Dr. Lewis' persistent endorsement of Dr. Leazer's study

If a sense of God's new direction, if the Masonic Lodge's distortions of the SBC position, and if the new revelations from the staff of the HMB, were not enough to motivate a critique of — a serious challenge to — A Study of Freemasonry, Dr. Lewis' persistent praise of this document supplied the final push.

In my December 8, 1993 letter to the trustees, I addressed Dr. Lewis' statement that "the HMB has provided the SBC, as well as the public at large, with a 'Study of Freemasonry' which is both fair and accurate and has yet to be seriously challenged." At that time, I declared my intention to write a critique of A Study Of Freemasonry, and on that date ordered two copies from the HMB.

Yet, even before deciding to write this critique, I asked Dr. Lewis to reconsider his endorsement of the study. On October 27, 1993 I challenged Dr. Larry Lewis, "in the face of recent revelations", to stop saying that this was a credible study. I suggested that Dr. Tal Davis' admission that the HMB's own research does

not support the conclusions reported to the SBC, and Dr. Leaser's keynote address, entitled "Opportunities for the Future", before the Southeast Masonic Conference, seriously challenged this study.

I expressed disbelief that the leadership of the HMB will not repudiate what are obviously a flawed study and report. Apparently, the study and report at every juncture in development were under the direct supervision either of masons, of Masonic sympathizers or of those who were fearful of the power of the Masonic membership.

I then declared to Dr. Lewis:

"Dr. Lewis, you continue to say that both the study and report have been approved by both sides of this controversy. As the principle representative of those who wish to see Masons warned about the occultic alliance into which they have entered, let me declare without reservation, I withdraw any support and/or any endorsement of these two statements which may have been implied by my attempt to be irenic in regard to the HMB's study."

In an October 28, 1993 letter, Dr. Lewis said, "It is my opinion ... that the study and report are fair, objective and credible documents. To date, no one, including yourself, has identified significant error in either."

Summary Of Events Leading To Critique

The following summarizes the events which brought me to the point of addressing the Masonic issue again, a summary which I included in my October 27, 1993 letter to Dr. Lewis.

1. The Masonic Lodge's intention to try to influence Southern Baptist churches and pastors with their Masonic literature,
2. The Masonic Lodge's distortion of Southern Baptist belief, declaring that we have joined the Lodge in establishing individual conscience as the ultimate judge of belief and action,
3. Dr. Tal Davis's admission that the conclusions of the HMB report were not supported by the HMB study,
4. Dr. Leazer's address to the Southeast Masonic Conference revealed to the world that the HMB

study was principally the fabrication of an advocate for the Masonic Lodge.

Without these events, I would not have re-opened the discussion of Freemasonry in the SBC. If these events had not taken place, I indicated to Dr. Lewis, I would not have written him this letter. My October 27, 1993 letter to Dr. Lewis concluded with the comment:

"...failing does not make us failures. The only thing which can make us failures is pride, which prevents us from humbling ourselves, admitting our failure, and then making restitution. The HMB's restitution would be to provide the SBC with an honest and objective study of one of the scourges on the Kingdom of God. It would be the public admission that fear caused us to compromise, but that we will tell the truth now."

This letter was sent to Dr. Lewis with a note indicating that it would not be released until he and I had had an opportunity to discuss it. He chose to release my October 27, 1993 letter to the press on October 28, 1993. On October 29, 1993, Dr. Lewis faxed me a copy of his response to my letter, two hours after Baptist Press called for my comment. On November 3, 1993, I wrote Dr. Lewis.

"It has taken several days to consider how to respond to your letter of October 28, 1993. I received that letter by FAX two hours after Baptist Press called to get my response to it. It was from Baptist Press that I learned you had chosen to release my letter without discussing it with me."

A Study Of Freemasonry Not A Good Study No Matter How The President of the HMB Praises It

It saddened me that an effort to deal with this issue in a peaceable way had been rejected by the President of the HMB. My letter went on to say:

"Larry (Lewis), your statement 'the study and Report are fair, objective and credible documents' is being questioned by many, including your trustees..."

Dr. Lewis' persistence in endorsing this document even after the admissions by his staff and the exposure of Dr. Leazer, began

to make it apparent that a "serious challenge to A Study of Freemasonry" was going to be necessary. I then tried to find some common ground with Dr. Lewis; I said:

"Larry (Lewis), I do not think that our goals are different. If we will only tell the truth, God will take care of the consequences. At present, I understand there is no stomach among Southern Baptist leaders for another study on Freemasonry."

Finally, I made three requests of Dr. Lewis:

1. Withdraw from circulation the study done by Dr. Leazer.
2. Renounce the Masonic Lodge's official characterization of the Southern Baptist position in which they say we have exalted individual conscience as the supreme authority in belief and action.
3. Widely circulate the eight problem areas which even your report admitted exists with Freemasonry. Accentuate the truthful statement that "Many tenets and teachings of Freemasonry are incompatible with Christianity and with Southern Baptist doctrine."

HMB's A Study Of Freemasonry Hurt Rather Than Helped

Dr. Lewis did not respond to this letter. I wrote Dr. Lewis again on November 26, 1993. That letter was provoked by several things. One, I received a letter from a Texas Baptist, who is not a Mason, but who admires Masons and Masonry. Two, I discovered that the pastor and deacons of a church in North Carolina were being sued by members of the church, at the root of which was Freemasonry. (The first week in January, 1994, that Lawsuit was dropped. But, another church in North Carolina has been threatened with a lawsuit by a Mason, after the church decided not to allow Masons to be deacons.) Therefore, I wrote Dr. Lewis, and said:

"By the time you receive this letter, the events which are described will have taken place. On December 1, 1993, a pastor and the deacons of a church in North Carolina must appear in court to answer a lawsuit filed by members of church, several of whom are Masons...

...The reality, Dr. Lewis, is that you have only transferred the problem to the local church without giving the local pastor any help in defending the Body of Christ against the Antichrist imposter. That may 'save your professional life', and it may keep the funding of the HMB up to levels which make you look successful, but it does nothing for the advancement of the Kingdom of God."

Because many Southern Baptists are still confused about the issue of Freemasonry and because the attack upon the church by the occultic is growing, a critique of the HMB's A Study Of Freemasonry became necessary.

Dr. Lewis Declares That Dr. Leazer Acted Inappropriately Throughout "This Affair"

On December 8, 1993, in order to distribute several pieces of material to the trustees, including copies of recent correspondence with Dr. Lewis, I wrote all of the trustees. My letter enclosed the Letters to the Editor in the November 25, 1993, Florida Baptist Witness in which Dr. Lewis' letter stated:

"(Leazer's) inappropriate actions throughout this affair (emphasis added) proved ample cause to suspect additional occasions of such actions, and the review did uncover such correspondence."

When did Dr. Lewis come to believe that Dr. Leazer's conduct was 'inappropriate...throughout this affair?' Was it when Dr. Leazer's objectivity was challenged in August of 1992? Was it when Dr. Leazer's prejudice was proved in February of 1993? Was it when Dr. Leazer addressed the Masonic Lodge in August of 1993, teaching them how to manipulate the SBC? Or, was it only when Leazer publicly criticized Dr. Lewis' leadership in the Fall of 1993? I asked the trustees:

"If Dr. Leazer's actions were inappropriate throughout this affair, why was any of his contribution to the study utilized in your final report? Why were you, as a trustee, willing to press upon the SBC a subjective, prejudiced report of an HMB employee sympathetic to the error which he was to examine?"

The original acceptance of Dr. Leazer's research was a mistake. The continuing promotion of A Study Of Freemasonry is unconscionable. The SBC has the right to ask Dr. Lewis and the trustees to release the evidence of "additional occasions of such (inappropriate) actions" by Dr. Leazer. Such evidence would further corroborate the charges of prejudice made in this critique, and the charges that the Study and "Report" are flawed.

Home Mission Board Had No Choice?

In his Florida Baptist Witness letter, Dr. Lewis said: "...the HMB...had no choice" but to write a report on Freemasonry. That is not the case. At the 1992 SBC, on Tuesday, June 9, I personally asked Dr. Lewis to speak to the Convention in support of the motion for an ad hoc committee to study Freemasonry when it came up for discussion on Wednesday, June 10.

This was consistent with Dr. Lewis' April 23, 1992 letter to me in which he said, "Larry, I personally feel it is time for the SBC to face the issue of Freemasonry and determine by vote of the Convention itself what action should be taken." In my conversation with Dr. Lewis, I said, "If you will support an ad hoc committee, the Convention will not give this back to the HMB."

For his own reasons, Dr. Lewis chose not to address the issue, until it was obvious that it would be given back to the HMB. Then it was too late. The truth is that the HMB did have a choice. But that choice would have required courageous leadership by the President of the HMB.

Throughout the development of this study, the HMB had a choice. It had a choice to do an excellent, objective and scholarly study, but that would have taken courageous leadership. The HMB has a choice now, but the right decision will require courageousness on the part of the leadership of the HMB. The right choice is:

1. to admit that the HMB made a mistake and SBC pastors are paying for it now.
2. to correct the impression that the leadership of the SBC and of the HMB does not care what Masons do to pastors.
3. for the trustees of the HMB to call upon the President:
 - a. to invalidate the study done by Dr. Leazer,
 - b. to withdraw it from circulation,

- c. to clarify the position of the SBC, emphasizing the eight points of absolute incompatibility between Christianity and the Masonic Lodge already adopted by the Convention, which make it obvious that membership in a Masonic Lodge is unacceptable for a Christian,
- 4. to acknowledge that the resolution adopted at the Indianapolis SBC entitled, "On Christian Witness and Voluntary Associations" applies to Freemasonry, and
- 5. to "urge all Southern Baptists to refrain from participation or membership in "the Masonic Lodge."

When the trustees decided to do nothing, and as Dr. Lewis continues to claim A Study Of Freemasonry is what it is not, I was compelled to write a "serious challenge" to A Study Of Freemasonry.