

Chapter Two:

Conclusions About A Study Of Freemasonry

Normally, conclusions appear at the end of a work. In this case, they are placed at the beginning, in the hope that Southern Baptists will be motivated to invest the time and effort in reviewing the evidence that A Study Of Freemasonry, published by the HMB is not scholarly, is biased, and is an inadequate examination of the Masonic Lodge. It is my hope and prayer that literally thousands of Southern Baptists will demand that the HMB leadership renounce the Study, remove it from circulation and reject the overtures being offered by the Masonic Lodge that Southern Baptists and Masons are partners.

What Were The Goals Of A Study Of Freemasonry?

Following a meeting with the IFW of the HMB on September 17, 1992, I wrote Dr. Lewis on September 21, 1992, and reviewed what I believed to be the goals of the study on Freemasonry. The following discussion is virtually a verbatim recitation of that letter. First, revival: God will not bless nor sanctify the flesh. One of the principle reasons Southern Baptists have not seen revival, and have therefore modified their expectations to be content with "church growth strategies", is that God will not allow His Spirit to be poured out upon a "mixed multitude."

This is no argument for trying to separate the "wheat" from the "tares". It is an argument not to cultivate and nurture tares by endorsing and blessing one of the things which will blind men to the truth of the Gospel, i.e., the occultism of the Masonic Lodge. It was to this issue Dr. Stephen Olford spoke, when he said:

"I consider Freemasonry to be one of Satan's most subtle forms of intrusion into the life of the church... Masonry is unbiblical, attacks the person and work of Christ and is a satanic deterrent in keeping able men from being and doing what they should in the life of the church."

Second, Truth: The inerrancy of Scripture is a valid position to hold only when we are willing to apply Scripture unerringly to all circumstances and to all people in our communion. We have

harbored in our midst for one-hundred and fifty years an organization which, in almost every document it publishes, contradicts the teachings of the Word of God. Why have we done this? Mostly, it has been fear. But, why do we fear men rather than God? Mostly, because we do not live what we preach.

Third, Faithfulness: Southern Baptist ministers are being destroyed by the rebelliousness of church members; some of those who are attacking ministers are motivated by the spirit of the Masonic Lodge. When leaders of the SBC stand by and do nothing, because they are not personally threatened by this evil, or so they think, the Devil laughs at the puny efforts and plans which we make to grow "the greatest churches since Pentecost."

Fourth, Worship: The most effective worship we offer to God is obedience to His truth. The only obedience to His truth which is real is obedience which is costly. Our only command upon this earth is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ through evangelizing and discipling others. This cannot be done through compromise of the truth, as we harbor within our midst men who blaspheme the Name of Jesus Christ at the altar of the Masonic Lodge.

These are honorable goals. They were worthy of an honest study by the HMB. The reality is that the SBC did not get an objective, scholarly study. The following chapters will document what this chapter has alleged in outline.

Leazer and Robinson Promise Scholarly Study

In a July 13, 1992 letter, Dr. Gary Leazer said:

"...I want to assure you that my staff and I are trained researchers. Three of us have Ph.D or Th.D. degrees from fully accredited seminaries...All of our dissertations were done in an interfaith witness area. We have produced thousands of pages of material and have led hundreds of conferences across our convention and no one has ever questioned our scholarship, integrity, honesty or commitment to the Bible...As a scholar, I have no bias for or against Freemasonry, but will seek to present both sides of the issue fairly and accurately."

In a July 16, 1992 letter, Dr. Leazer's immediate supervisor, Dr. Darrell Robinson, echoed the same scholarly commitment; he said:

"Southern Baptists, by making the assignment, have affirmed the integrity, scholastic ability, and analytical expertise of the IFW. Our desire and commitment is to move under the Lordship of Christ, the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the direction of the Scripture, and faithfulness to the Southern Baptist assignment."

With this assurance of intent to do a scholarly study, and with this testimony of scholastic expertise by Dr. Leazer, the SBC can expect A Study Of Freemasonry to be scholarly.

What Marks A Study As Scholarly?

Normally, a work is labeled "scholarly" because of:

1. The extent and amount of research which is done.
2. The seriousness of the questions which are examined.
3. The clarity with which the issues being addressed are defined.
4. The willingness to examine all sides of a question.
5. The use of primary sources.

First is the extent and amount of research which is done. A scholarly study will examine a large number of documents concerning the subject under study. That research will limit the study in order to make it manageable, but will extend the study to make it important. Dr. Leazer's A Study of Freemasonry will be shown to be non-scholarly, because it did not deal to any significant depth or extent with Freemasonry, but only superficially addressed issues which had been raised by others. Not one single new concept or question was raised by Dr. Leazer's study, which had not previously been raised by others. A scholarly and objective study will be known by the questions which it asks, as much as by the answers which it gives. This critique will demonstrate that Dr. Leazer doesn't seem to have many questions **FOR** Masons, and seems to have many questions **ABOUT** "anti-Masons".

Second is the seriousness of the questions which are examined. A scholarly study will not address frivolous or unimportant matters. Often the seriousness of the questions asked will be judged by their applications and/or implications in the lives of the group to which the study is directed. Dr. Leazer's study will be shown not to be scholarly, because he often begs the question. He does not seem to comprehend the importance of the issue he has

been assigned. He understood the potential professional dangers, but he never seemed to understand the gravity of the issue for the mission of the HMB, and ultimately, for the propagation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His handling of grave matters, in what appears to be a cavalier and trivial manner, reflects the lack of his seriousness about the questions raised by "anti-Masons", and the lack of the seriousness of the questions which he raises about "anti-Masons".

Third, a scholarly study will be known by the clarity with which the issue which is being addressed is defined. Dr. Leazer's study will be shown not to be scholarly by his lack of understanding of what he was asked to do. His supervisors will need to answer for themselves why they did not re-direct his attentions when his lack of definition was repeatedly pointed out during the course of this study. The HMB and Dr. Leazer were assigned the responsibility of determining if Freemasonry and Christianity are compatible, yet he spends most of his time trying to prove that Freemasonry is not a religion.

No one asked the question, "Is Freemasonry a religion?" While that question has been raised before, and while Dr. Leazer has answered it previously, it was not asked by the SBC this time. Also, Dr. Leazer was assigned the responsibility to examine the Masonic Order, yet he spends most of his time examining the writings and works of so-called "anti-Masons". This is not scholarship. Dr. Leazer's lack of definition and design in A Study Of Freemasonry is one of the most fundamental weaknesses of the HMB effort in studying the Lodge. Because "A Report On Freemasonry" was developed entirely upon the evidence and findings of A Study Of Freemasonry, it has the same fundamental flaws.

Fourth, a scholarly study will be known by its willingness to examine all sides of a question. Scholarship does not require that a person not have an opinion or even a conviction about the questions to be examined. It only requires that the person be willing to examine the facts honestly, and to evaluate those facts in the light of other facts. Dr. Leazer's willingness to accept Masonic opinions, and his virtual rejection of any arguments put forth by "anti-Masons", suggests that he is unwilling to examine both sides of this issue objectively.

Fifth, a scholar normally does not use secondary sources, i.e., he normally does not examine what someone else has said about a matter and then quote as evidence for his conclusion evidence which was quoted by someone else. Normally in a serious scholarly work the investigator goes to the primary sources. There are several reasons for this. Examining primary sources allows the

scholar to verify that the reference exists. It allows the scholar to verify that the complete statement of the original source is quoted, and that it is quoted in context. It protects the investigator from the prejudice of the writer of a secondary source. It gives the investigator an opportunity to make a significant and new contribution to the subject, rather than simply re-hashing what others have said. Dr. Leazer will be seen to violate each one of these principles.

A Study Of Freemasonry Is Not Scholarly

In A Study Of Freemasonry, Dr. Leazer heavily depends upon secondary sources written by Masons. Evidence will repeatedly be presented in which Dr. Leazer violates these principles of scholarship. For example:

1. On page 45 of A Study Of Freemasonry, Dr. Leazer quotes a secondary source in an attempt to prove that Albert Mackey denies the relationship between the Ancient Mystery religions and the Masonic Lodge. That secondary source, which is a Masonic journal, quotes a primary source, which doesn't tell the whole truth about Freemasonry, Albert Mackey and the Ancient Mystery Religions.
2. The secondary source which Dr. Leazer employs above is written by S. Brent Morris. Morris' credibility was brought into question by other Masons of the Black Lodges who hold his work on the racism of the Caucasian Lodges in contempt. (See chapter seven of The SBC and Freemasonry, Volume III, p. 99)
3. On page 22 of A Study Of Freemasonry, Dr. Leazer states that Albert Pike and Albert Mackey "hurt Freemasonry by their zeal to link Freemasonry with antiquity." As demonstrated on page 45, Leazer said that Mackey denied such a relationship. He can't have it both ways. One or the other is in error. A scholarly study would have resolved such an obvious contradiction.
4. Dr. Leazer continued to use secondary sources as he quoted from Robert Morey's The Origins And Teachings of Freemasonry, which did not accurately deal with the primary sources upon which Morey established his theory of the Christian origins of the Lodge. (See pp. 63ff) Yet, Dr. Leazer

apparently did not check those primary sources. Dr. Leazer's reliance upon secondary sources undermines the objectivity of his study.

5. Dr. Leazer quotes only part of the statements of Freemasons, as demonstrated when he quoted only part of a sentence from the Foreword by Sovereign Grand Commander Kleinknecht in A Bridge To Light, changing the intent and meaning of Kleinknecht's statement. Dr. Leazer's attempt to distance the Lodge from Morals and Dogma is based upon partial quotations of a primary source. (See pp. 51ff) His repeated partial quoting of primary sources, undermines the objectivity of A Study Of Freemasonry.
6. Dr. Leazer's willingness to accept the anecdotal testimony of Masons concerning critical issues in his study, without any documentation, undermines the value of A Study Of Freemasonry. This is illustrated in chapter seven where Leazer accepts the testimony of his friend, Jim Tresner, whose testimony is contradicted by others whom Leazer did not interview. (See pp. 98ff) Leazer's reliance upon Tresner is one of the most important issues facing the HMB. Dr. Leazer's reliance upon the undocumented opinion of Masons, undermines the objectivity of his study.
7. Dr. Leazer criticizes "anti-Masons" for making statements without documentation. Leazer criticizes Larry Kunk for making the statement "Morals and Dogma is 'often called the Bible' of Freemasonry." (see A Study Of Freemasonry, p. 57) Leazer says, "(Kunk) does not cite any Masonic sources to support his conclusion." Yet, as will be demonstrated again and again, Leazer will quote "unnamed" Masonic sources as the basis for his "scholarly study." Leazer's holding of so called "anti-Masons" to one standard, and his practicing of another undermines the value of A Study Of Freemasonry.
8. Dr. Leazer misquotes "anti-Mason" author, Mr. Larry Kunk, putting words and ideas into his mouth which did not belong to Kunk. (See chapter nine, pp. 123ff) As will be shown, Dr. Leazer repeatedly attempts to discredit or undermine confidence in

"anti-Masons". He never does this to Masons or their supporters. Dr. Leazer's attempts to discredit "anti-Masons", and yet never to question the veracity of Masons, undermines the objectivity of his study.

9. In chapter ten, we will examine Dr. Leazer's usage of another secondary source, written by a Mason, which attempts to discredit an "anti-Mason". (See pp. 143ff) An examination of the primary document shows that the Mason distorts the truth. Unfortunately, for Southern Baptists, Dr. Leazer apparently did not examine the primary document, but only accepted the Freemason's testimony. Here, Dr. Leazer combines several of the deficiencies of his study. He accepts the word of a Mason in a secondary source and does not examine the primary document himself; this undermines the objectivity of his study.
10. Leazer accepts as fact the "racial reconciliation" efforts of Caucasian Freemasonry, and never interviews Black Freemasonry leaders to see if they agree with the opinions of white Freemasons. The evidence demonstrates that they don't.
11. In chapter seventeen, we deal with Leazer's quoting of another secondary source, which totally changes the impression of the primary source. (See pp. 247ff) Rather than examine Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia himself, Leazer simply read what someone else said, and quoted that. This caused him to miss the whole point.
12. In chapter fourteen, we deal with Dr. Leazer's partial quotation of the 26th Degree of Scottish Rite Freemasonry, but his neglecting to tell the SBC about Masonic baptism and communion. (See pp. 208ff)
13. In chapter seventeen, we deal with Dr. Leazer's quoting of Albert Pike, but neglecting to challenge the rationalism of Pike's philosophy which undercuts revelation. (See pp. 256ff)

During this critique we will give many other illustrations of poor research, faulty attribution, partial quotations, prejudiced opinions, secondary sources, and other violations of scholarly

methodology committed in A Study Of Freemasonry. The only conclusion available is that Drs. Leazer's and Robinson's stated commitment to scholarship was not fulfilled by this study.

Authority In The Masonic Lodge

In A Study Of Freemasonry, Dr. Leazer spends a great deal of time trying to establish that it is impossible to know the truth about Masonry because there are no documents which are authoritative for Masonry. In support of this, Leazer quotes a Mason's testimony; he said:

"Haffner reminds us that 'there is very little that is official or authoritative (about the Lodge)'..." (A Study Of Freemasonry, p. 15)

There is no examination of this Mason's claims; they are simply accepted by Dr. Leazer as fact. Yet, on page 14 of A Study Of Freemasonry, Dr. Leazer said:

"Masons insist that the only written authorities in Freemasonry are monitors and other books approved and published by the various Grand Lodges or other official bodies."

Even so, Dr. Leazer makes no attempt to prepare a summary of these "authoritative" writings for Southern Baptists to use in determining the truth about the Masonic Lodge. There is other evidence in A Study Of Freemasonry which demonstrates that there is a body of evidence which can be examined to determine the true nature of the Masonic Lodge. The lack of Dr. Leazer's presenting Southern Baptists with an objective summary of that data base is further evidence of the lack of scholarship of his study. In A Study Of Freemasonry, Dr. Leazer said:

1. "There can only be one Grand Lodge per state..." (A Study Of Freemasonry, p. 5) With only one Grand Lodge in each state, it seems that it would be easy to establish what each Grand Lodge stands for. It does seem a simple task to write each of these Grand Lodges and pose a list of inquiries about the nature of Freemasonry. Dr. Leazer said elsewhere, "The Committee found that Masons were open to providing information requested." (A Study Of Freemasonry, p. 19) Masons have

already affirmed that the monitors of the Lodge are authoritative; why didn't Dr. Leazer ask each Grand Lodge for a copy of its monitor? He regales us elsewhere with the fact that the Masonic Lodge does not "really have any secrets", so what have they got to hide.

2. "The Lodge tends to follow the lead of the general society..." (A Study of Freemasonry, p. 5) If this doesn't mean that there are truths about Freemasonry which can be known and that there are authorities in Freemasonry which speak officially, then what does it mean? Why didn't Dr. Leazer identify this "general society", and inquire of it as to the truth about Freemasonry? If there is no authority in Freemasonry such that Masons can be held accountable for their teaching, then why does Leazer affirm, and upon what authority does he affirm, that Masons tend to follow the leadership of the general society (of Masons)?
3. "Masons are not allowed to ask others to join, but this prohibition is sometimes abused." (A Study Of Freemasonry, p. 6) If there is a prohibition for which all Masons may be held accountable, and about which it may be said they abuse Freemasonry if they violate this prohibition — who established it? If such a prohibition exists, upon whose authority was it established, and how is it enforced? Dr. Leazer makes the statement, but he doesn't ask any of the questions implied by it. Why? Repeatedly, Dr. Leazer discovers patterns of practice and teaching within the Masonic organization. This suggests that there are practices and teachings for which all Masons can be held accountable, yet Dr. Leazer resists holding them accountable. Why?
4. "The 'secrets' of Freemasonry have long been known to anyone taking time to read any number of books representing them verbatim." (A Study of Freemasonry, p. 70) Why didn't Dr. Leazer present any of this material in an objective study? Why do Southern Baptists not have a study which details for them what these secrets are?

5. "...the texts of the obligations (of Masons) have been well-known for decades by anyone taking time to read them." (A Study Of Freemasonry, p. 31) Why didn't Dr. Leazer make a summary of these obligations available in this scholarly work?
6. Dr. Leazer's acceptance of some modern Masonic writers and his rejection of others seems to be based upon whether their materials support his thesis or not. In his speech to the Southeast Masonic Conference in August of 1993, Dr. Leazer said: "In my opinion, Jim Tresner, is the most knowledgeable and articulate Masonic writer today..." Dr. Leazer's standard for accepting information about the Lodge will appear to be: whatever is positive about the Lodge is true; whatever is negative about the Lodge is false. Dr. Leazer's acceptance of Jim Tresner as a valid source of information about all Masons and about all of Freemasonry suggests that there are other valid sources as well. In contradiction of what Dr. Leazer will say elsewhere, there are men who speak for the Masonic Lodge, and the Lodge can be held accountable for their teaching.
7. "... not all Masons believe the same thing ... Each of the 110 Grand Lodges around the world is completely independent of the others." (A Study Of Freemasonry, p. 15) The Scottish Rite and the York Rite accept Masons from all Grand Lodges of Caucasian Freemasonry. None are required to take refresher courses or supplementary degrees. This alone argues for the uniformity among the Grand Lodges as to their basic teachings and practices. In addition, a Mason can move from the jurisdiction of one Grand Lodge to another, and be accepted into a Lodge founded by the new Grand Lodge upon demonstrating that he is in good standing with the former Lodge. If there are such differences among the Grand Lodges, why is this the case? (See The Laws Of The Grand Lodge Of Texas A.F. & A.M., Containing The Corporate Charter, the Constitution and Ancient Charges, the Statutes, and Masonic Forms, 1982, Title III, Degrees, Chapter 7 — Title III, Affiliation, Article 392. (429),

pp. 164-166, Prepared and Published by authority of The Grand Lodge.) Dr. Leazer did not address this important point.

Study, "Report," and "Recommendation"

The HMB produced three documents in response to the Convention's assignment to study Freemasonry. The first is entitled, A Study Of Freemasonry. This is the 75-page staff study which was principally prepared by Dr. Leazer. The second is the six-page report, entitled, "A Report On Freemasonry". This was principally prepared by Dr. Lewis and the Administrative Committee of the Board of Trustees of the HMB. The third document is contained in the second and is known as "A Recommendation on Freemasonry." In an April 13, 1993 letter, Dr. Lewis said:

"...I was primarily responsible for drafting the six-page report approved by the board of directors...an Ad Hoc Committee I had appointed (composed of the HMB officers, Darrell Robinson and Dr. Lewis) suggested a few minor changes..."

Dr. Lewis indicated in his letter:

"...I felt a strong leadership of the Lord as I drafted the report on the return trip from California. The fact that the Ad Hoc Committee, the Administrative Committee, and the full board endorsed it with only a few minor changes affirms, in my mind, that the Lord was in it."

This statement will be examined later in the light of the fact that the original draft of the concluding paragraph of "A Report on Freemasonry" began with the statement, "In that many tenets and teachings of Freemasonry ARE compatible with Christianity." (emphasis added) This writer finds it inconceivable that the Lord God Almighty would motivate such a statement about an organization which is antithetical to the Lordship of His Only Begotten Son.

This statement will also be examined in the light of the fact that the HMB Board meeting at which this motion was acted upon allowed absolutely no discussion of the matter. Immediately, upon the motion being made, the question was called, the vote was taken, and the next item of business was undertaken. This was

hardly an endorsement of anything, but the ability of the administration of a Southern Baptist agency head to "get what it wants."

Who Wrote A Study Of Freemasonry?

The question of who wrote "A Report On Freemasonry" is straightforward. Dr. Lewis did. The question of who wrote A Study Of Freemasonry is more complicated. In Dr. Leazer's July 17, 1992 letter, he said, "I plan to do most of the research myself." In a July, 1992 press release, Dr. Darrell Robinson, Leazer's supervisor, indicated that Leazer would have the option as to whether or not to involve others in the study. In a January 17, 1993 letter to a Mason in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Dr. Leazer said, "I am affirming our 1986 opinion." Leazer did not say, "We are affirming"; he did not say the HMB is affirming; he did not say the IFW is affirming. He said, "I am affirming." A Study Of Freemasonry was essentially the work of Dr. Gary Leazer and no one else.

The reality that Dr. Leazer wrote the study is confirmed by a letter from Dr. Gary Leazer in the December 16, 1993, Florida Baptist Witness; Dr. Leazer said:

"Dr. Lewis stated that the 'inclusion of my name as author of the first draft was improper.' I, alone, was paid for writing the study per HMB staff manual guidelines. The administrative committee also voted to give me an additional two weeks vacation because of the extra hours I put into the research and writing of the study. None of the other department staff received this compensation. If my name on the draft was 'improper,' why was I, alone, given this compensation?"

Over a year before this, Dr. Lewis had attempted to assuage my concerns about Dr. Leazer's prejudice and bias by assuring me that many others would be involved in the study other than Dr. Leazer. In a September 11, 1992 letter, Dr. Lewis stated:

"I received your letter requesting that Dr. Gary Leazer be removed from the study of Freemasonry ordered by the (SBC)...I have discussed your request with Dr. Darrell Robinson...and with Dr. Ron Phillips (then Chairman of the Trustees of the HMB)..."

Since Dr. Leazer is director...it is his responsibility to lead the department in this endeavor. However, I

have met with Dr. Robinson and Dr. Leazer and insisted that the entire staff of the IFW be involved in this study, not just Dr. Leazer himself. I have insisted that at every stage the staff participate and that the entire staff be involved in the writing of the report. I personally intend to be involved at appropriate points to assure that the study, at least from my perspective, the report is honest, thorough, and fair."

Events will suggest that the only "significant" participation of other IFW Staff was William Gordon's writing of a critique of the SBC and Freemasonry Volume I.

Dr. Lewis Details Development Of A Study Of Freemasonry

After Dr. Leazer was removed from the study in February of 1993, Dr. Lewis wrote me on April 13, 1993 and said:

"The IFW study on Freemasonry was drafted by Dr. Leazer, assisted by some of the IFW staff. Dr. Darrell Robinson and I suggested some revisions when it was first presented to us. Then this revised edition was shared with the Administrative Committee of the board of directors for their input. They spent the large part of an entire day going over the study line-by-line and making further suggested revisions. It was then printed and sent to the board members the week prior to our March 17 board meeting."

If Dr. Lewis "insisted in his September, 1992 meeting with Dr. Leazer" that the entire staff of the IFW department be involved in the study, why was he only "assisted by some of the IFW staff?" Were the September, 1992 assurances only window dressing to conceal what Dr. Leazer later revealed, i.e., Leazer prepared the study virtually alone?

In his February 22, 1993 press release explaining Dr. Leazer's removal as head of the study, Dr. Lewis even suggests that Dr. Leazer did the study. Dr. Lewis said:

"Due to the controversial nature of his involvement and to the fact that his work is completed..."

What is "his work"? The obvious implication is that it is A Study Of Freemasonry, which Dr. Lewis said is "his work", meaning Leazer's.

Dr. Lewis' Contention Is Contradicted

Dr. Lewis' contention that others significantly participated in the Freemasonry study is contradicted by Dr. Leazer's testimony, by the fact that there seems to have been little administrative supervision of the study until it was completed, and by the consistent prejudice which is seen in the selection of materials and in the interpretation of those materials in the study. The SBC would have been spared a great deal of distress over this issue, if Dr. Lewis would have acknowledged the prejudice of Dr. Leazer, which was pointed out to him early on in the study, and if Dr. Lewis had assigned the responsibility to someone who could objectively study Freemasonry.

The Disjunction Between The Study and The Report

Addressing the study and the report, on March 25, 1993, I wrote the trustees of the HMB and said that the problem for the HMB, and thusly for Southern Baptists, is that the trustees have drawn one conclusion and the staff is driving for another. This was based on the fact that the staff study concluded there is essentially no incompatibility between Freemasonry and Christianity, but the trustee report identified areas of serious concern.

A Study Of Freemasonry concludes with the comment:

"What better opportunities (for evangelism) present themselves than those where they have become friends in Freemasonry." (A Study Of Freemasonry, pp. 70-71)

Would the HMB approve of single Christians going to bars, and making "drinking buddies", in order to witness to those with whom they have become friends in the bar? Would the HMB encourage the "flirty fishing" techniques of David Moses' Children of God? Of course not!! Then, why? Why? In the Name of all that is holy, why, would the HMB staff be so insensitive to the truth of God in suggesting that membership in the Masonic Lodge can be a Continuous Witness Training program?

On the other hand, "A Report On Freemasonry", after pressure from a few faithful trustees, concluded that "many tenets and teachings of Freemasonry are not compatible with Christianity." ("A Report On Freemasonry," p. 6) How could Dr. Leazer encourage Christians to involve themselves in an organization which has "many tenets and teachings which are incompatible with Christianity"? Has James 3:11-12 been re-written? Can "sweet water

and bitter" come from the same fountain? Does a little leaven, leaven the whole loaf? If many tenets and teachings are incompatible with Christianity, doesn't that make the whole thing incompatible? To use a phrase which Dr. Leazer will employ, of course it does!

The study, written by Dr. Leazer, and the report, written by Dr. Lewis, sound like documents written by two opposing forces. Dr. Leazer admitted that the conclusions of the report could not be derived from his study. Dr. Lewis' report was modified by the trustees. The Convention voted to adopt the report, but not the study. Now Dr. Lewis keeps saying the study is a valid document, and the Convention's attention seems to be being directed toward the study rather than the report. Why?

Dr. Leazer Acknowledges the Disjunction Between the Study and The Report

Dr. Lewis repeatedly denied any disjunction between the study and the report. Once again, his employee, Dr. Leazer disagrees with him. In his address to the Southeast Masonic Conference in August of 1993, Dr. Leazer acknowledged the truth. His Study, although being promoted by Dr. Lewis as a major contribution to the Christian community, is not the official position of the SBC. That position is the six-page report which was voted on at the 1993, SBC in Houston. However, Leazer distanced himself from the report when he stated:

"My study (Leazer) does not agree with the conclusions in the Home Mission Board report, but the report, not my study, is the official position of the Southern Baptist Convention." (emphasis added)

The SBC is in the unenviable position of having voted on one document — the report — which contradicts another document — the study — which Dr. Lewis is still promoting as a major contribution to Christian apologetics.

Dr. Lewis' Apparent Contempt For Any Study Of Freemasonry

In an April 23, 1992 letter to me, Dr. Lewis had said, "...it is time for the Southern Baptist Convention to face the issue of Freemasonry...". Yet, in a May 15, 1992, Baptist Press release, he is quoted as saying:

"I personally feel our convention should act on (Freemasonry) one way or another. It's going to plague us forever until there's some kind of closure to it."

The tragedy is that the "plague" which the President of the HMB seems to refer to is not the influence of the Masonic Lodge. The "plague" is that some Southern Baptists believe a Christian denomination should take a stand against this evil. Certainly the inference of the April letter and the May news release seem different.

Then Dr. Lewis, who wrote "A Report On Freemasonry" virtually by himself, said in a statement, published in the March 18, 1993, Atlanta Constitution:

"I believe Freemasonry is a lodge, a fraternal organization, not a sect or a cult or a religion...I wonder where the end to it is—should we now study the Elks and the Moose and the Oddfellows? The Boy Scouts have signs and oaths. Should we now study the Boy Scouts?"

When did Dr. Lewis draw these conclusions about Freemasonry? Why does Dr. Lewis ridicule the actions of the Convention which he serves? The SBC overwhelmingly commissioned the study of Freemasonry. Now, Dr. Lewis, seemingly mocks the Convention and says, "...should we now study the Elks and the Moose and the Odd Fellows?...Should we now study the Boy Scouts?" This language sounds very much like the words of Dr. Gary Leazer in A Study Of Freemasonry. And, Dr. Leazer's words sound very much like Jim Tresner's Perspectives, Responses & Reflections.

In February of 1993, Dr. Lewis determined that Leazer's "actions were inappropriate throughout this affair". Why would he adopt Dr. Leazer's rhetoric with which to ridicule the SBC? If Dr. Leazer's actions were inappropriate throughout, why is the product of these actions being promoted by Dr. Lewis? Taken in series:

1. Dr. Lewis' initial favorable response to me privately about a study of Freemasonry,
2. His subsequent characterization of the study of Freemasonry as a "plague",
3. His "no-win" comment at the Indianapolis Convention,
4. His March, 1993 interview in the Atlanta Constitution,

5. And now his seemingly exaggerated support of A Study Of Freemasonry,

leaves little wonder why the SBC has such a compromising position on this critical matter. It seems that Dr. Leazer's contempt for the study of Freemasonry may only have been reflecting Dr. Lewis' contempt for the study.

Trustees Should Act To Discredit A Study Of Freemasonry

The trustees' decision — the report — is not consistent with those of the staff — the study. In my March 25, 1993 letter to the trustees of the HMB, based on the disjunction between A Study Of Freemasonry and "The Report On Freemasonry", I suggested several options.

1. Do nothing and allow Southern Baptists to experience the embarrassment and confusion of conflicting reports from the HMB, thus allowing Masons to quote from the staff study, making Southern Baptists the first denomination to ever "bless the Masonic Lodge."
2. Instruct the HMB staff that A Study Of Freemasonry not be circulated as the official HMB position, requiring that a disclaimer be attached indicating that it is only Drs. Leazer, Lewis and McCall's positions.
3. Stop the circulation of A Study Of Freemasonry completely and archive it as an interesting, but inaccurate and unacceptable, staff report.

The decision always belonged to the Trustees of the HMB. They were elected by Southern Baptists to represent the interests of the Convention at the HMB. They alone will be held accountable by Southern Baptists and by God as to how they discharged those obligations. Their choices were clear and the choices were theirs. The trustees opted for no decision.

Masonic Practices Offensive To Many Christians

Throughout A Study Of Freemasonry, Dr. Leazer states: "The use of...are especially offensive to many Christians." (A Study Of Freemasonry, p. 33) Then he fills in the Masonic teaching or practice that is offensive in word or deed to "many Christians."

Yet, a careful examination of this study does not reveal one single example where Dr. Leazer judged that any practice, teaching or ritual of the Masonic Lodge is offensive to the IFW's Director. Why? Repeatedly, Dr. Leazer suggests that there are things which the Masonic Lodge should change, but nowhere does he suggest that such things make Freemasonry incompatible with Christianity, even, it is implied, if they don't follow his recommendations for change. Why?

A Study Of Freemasonry Focuses Upon "Anti-Masons"

Dr. Leazer's preoccupation with what "anti-Masons" have charged, keeps him from undertaking a serious study of the Lodge. At the center of the problem with A Study Of Freemasonry is the absence of a scholarly and objective data base about the beliefs and practices of the Masonic Lodge. Until that is established, all other comment is premature. Yet, even when Masons identify for Dr. Leazer the materials which they said were authoritative, he resisted providing Southern Baptists with the one thing they commissioned, an objective, substantive and scholarly study of Freemasonry. Why?

Design Of A Study Of Freemasonry Flawed

In A Study Of Freemasonry, Dr. Leazer said:

"If someone believes that Freemasonry is a religion, he can find numerous quotes to support his paradigm. If someone believes that Freemasonry is not a religion, he can also find numerous quotes to support his paradigm." (A Study Of Freemasonry, p. 11)

The motion passed at the SBC said nothing about determining if Freemasonry is a religion; the motion directed the IFW to determine if Freemasonry is compatible with Christianity. If Dr. Leazer's study is directed toward answering the question, "Is Freemasonry a religion?", he, in fact, is answering a question which no one has asked. Whether Freemasonry is a religion or not is irrelevant; the only question before the HMB is, "Is Freemasonry compatible with Christianity?"

Leazer Claims Variations Among Lodges Invalidates Charges Against Freemasonry

Repeatedly, Dr. Leazer will claim that no definitive comment upon Freemasonry is possible because all Masons do not agree. That is like saying that no definitive comment can be made about Christianity because all Christians do not agree. Nevertheless, one of Leazer's sources, Dr. Robert Morey in The Origins and Teachings of Freemasonry states:

"For every masonic writer who says that Freemasonry is not a religion, there are five masonic writers who claim that it is a pagan religion. While they may disagree as to which pagan religion, they all agree that Christianity is wrong and its teachings must not be allowed in the Lodge." (p. 115, emphasis added)

Often Dr. Leazer's sources contradict his conclusions, but the SBC would never know that, because of Dr. Leazer selectively quotes from his sources, obscuring that fact. An important point is made by Dr. Morey which Dr. Leazer would have been well advised to understand. Dr. Leazer argues that because there is not universal agreement among Masons, no opinion is possible about the nature of Masonic teaching.

The fact is: there is more similarity in Masonic teaching than there is dissimilarity. The similarity is as Dr. Morey states: "While they may disagree as to which pagan religion (Masonry comes from), they all agree that Christianity is wrong and its teachings must not be allowed in the Lodge." It is possible to "know the truth about the Masonic Lodge". What is impossible, is to know that truth by reading Dr. Leazer's A Study Of Freemasonry.

The SBC Must Repudiate A Study Of Freemasonry

It is imperative that Southern Baptists repudiate A Study Of Freemasonry, that they implore Dr. Lewis to stop promoting this biased and totally inadequate document, that Southern Baptists deny that they are in league with the Masonic Lodge, and that the SBC publicize the eight critical areas of concern about the incompatibility of the Masonic Lodge and Christianity already voted on by the SBC. Whether the Convention will find it necessary to do an objective and scholarly study of Freemasonry in the future, will await future conventions to determine.