

Chapter Four:

Is Dr. Gary Leazer Biased?

When the HMB of the SBC was assigned the study of Freemasonry by the 1992 Convention in Indianapolis, Dr. Gary Leazer was the director of the IFW of the Evangelism Division of the HMB. Dr. Leazer went to work for the IFW in 1979, became director in 1986, and was part of the HMB which received the 1985 SBC's Committee on Resolutions' referral of a resolution entitled, "Freemasonry Not Compatible with Baptist Faith and Message, Bold Mission Thrust, or Cooperative Program". (See The SBC and Freemasonry, Volume I, pp. 55ff for the text of that resolution.)

In 1986, the IFW declared: "Freemasonry is not a religion and the SBC should take a stand neither for nor against Freemasonry." In a January 17, 1993 letter to a Mason in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Leazer said of the 1992 HMB study of Freemasonry, "I am affirming our department's 1986 position on Freemasonry." This reflected Dr. Leazer's lack of understanding of the 1992 SBC motion, for it did not address the question as to whether Freemasonry is a religion or not. The motion in Indianapolis authorized a study as to whether Freemasonry and Christianity are compatible.

Motion To 1992 Convention Designed To Avoid IFW

At its March, 1992 Board of Trustees meeting, in response to a motion made at the 1991 SBC, the HMB again voted not to study Freemasonry. Because of the history of the HMB's reluctance to deal with Freemasonry, and because of the decision the IFW had made that Freemasonry was not a religion, the motion introduced in 1992 recommended an ad hoc committee appointed by the President of the SBC, and the motion did not require that comment be made as to whether Freemasonry is a religion, only whether it is compatible with Christianity.

The amendment to the motion at the Indianapolis Convention, which referred this question to the IFW, essentially emasculated the effort for Southern Baptists to declare the truth about the Masonic Lodge, because the Department had already declared its position. The IFW had already made a decision about Freemasonry. Time would demonstrate that the study performed by Dr. Leazer apparently was designed and carried out with the intention of re-affirming the 1986 decision.

It is one thing if Dr. Leazer had arrived at an objective, scholarly decision that Freemasonry is not a religion, and therefore not a

proper subject for the IFW. It is another if he was actually biased in favor of the Lodge. This is a pivotal question. If evidence is available to suggest or to prove that Dr. Leazer undertook the study of Freemasonry having already made up his mind about the nature of the Lodge, and/or having a bias in favor of Freemasonry, his research, and any conclusions drawn, are invalidated. The question of Leazer's bias in favor of Freemasonry will first be examined by reviewing the sequence of events following the Indianapolis Convention, and then by examining A Study Of Freemasonry.

Dr. Leazer Declares His Conclusion

Apparently, Dr. Leazer had already made up his mind about Freemasonry before the assignment ever came to the HMB. In an August 3, 1992 letter, he said to me:

"I have talked with some of the most conservative Southern Baptist pastors and laypeople who are Masons. I find it difficult to believe they all have been deceived by Satan or have bowed their knees to him."

Such a statement would disqualify a person as an objective witness in a court of law. Dr. Leazer's incredulity was not the subject of the study. If Dr. Leazer's research established that what Freemasonry stands for, teaches and practices are anti-Christian, and if he believes these Masonic Southern Baptist pastors and laypeople are Christians, then he would have to assume that they were deceived. In that God would not deceive them, he would have to assume that Satan deceived them. We shall document in chapter eight that Albert Pike denied the existence of the Devil. (See p. 117) Surely Dr. Leazer does not doubt the Devil's existence or his influence over men who submit to his devices?

In that Dr. Leazer started his study from the premise that he found it difficult to believe that these people were deceived, and in that he believed they were Christian, he had no choice but to prove that Masonry is not a problem for Christians. Leazer's presupposition, i.e., these men and women are not deceived, resulted in a faulty design, which resulted in a defective study, which resulted in a false conclusion.

Dr. Leazer's premise — "I find it difficult to believe they all have been deceived by Satan" — is not a scholarly basis upon which to initiate a study of any group. It should have disqualified him as the head of this study. Why would Dr. Leazer agree to prepare a study, which he contends will be scholarly and objective, when he

has already decided one side is right and the other is wrong? Why would Dr. Larry Lewis continue to support the leadership of a person whose prejudice is as easy to determine as simply to examine his own words or confession? Only Drs. Lewis and Leazer can answer these questions, but answers can be suggested by their statements and behavior.

Leazer Challenged To Examine His Conscience

Responding to Dr. Leazer's August 3, 1993 letter, I wrote him August 12, 1992, and said:

"Dr. Leazer, each of these statements add to my concern as to whether or not you have a preconceived notion that Freemasonry is just an innocent past time of a few old men. A scholarly study cannot begin from a prejudiced position of 'I find it difficult to believe...'. The issue is not what you find difficult to believe. The issue is, 'What is Christianity?', and 'What is the Lodge?'. I believe we have a consensus on the former. Your study should establish the latter. Of course, your study will be re-inventing the wheel if you ignore the research which has been done by others.

A scholarly, objective, balanced study would then set Christianity and Freemasonry side by side, and decide if they are compatible."

In this August 12, 1992 letter, I asked Dr. Leazer to examine his own conscience as to whether he could do an objective study:

"...Dr. Leazer, I implore you to examine your own conscience as to whether you can do an objective study. Are you so committed to the premise that the Baptist men you know who are Masons have not been deceived, that you are unable to bring an objective report? I implore you to examine your own commitment to establishing for Southern Baptists, once and for all, the true nature of Freemasonry. Are you so committed to trying to bring a peaceful resolution to this matter that you are unable to declare straightforwardly that Freemasonry is incompatible with Christianity and that Southern Baptists should not be involved in the Lodge?"

Subsequent events would strongly suggest that Dr. Leazer had made up his mind, was biased, and could not bring an objective study. The HMB's president's refusal to acknowledge Leazer's bias, would not only embarrass the HMB, but has done harm to pastors and churches which are being harassed by Masons. At a time when the SBC needed courageous leadership, they did not get it.

Dr. Lewis' Attitude Toward Study

Dr. Lewis' attitude toward this study has already been reviewed in chapter two. His attitude was further indicated in an August 20, 1992 letter to a Southern Baptist church staff member; he said:

"This is a controversial and volatile issue of great concern to many Southern Baptists. Many are adamantly opposed to Freemasonry, while probably just as many (or more) strongly support the organization and are willing and anxious to defend it against all foes. Another group, probably larger than either of the others, are simply neutral and feel strongly that Southern Baptists should simply not get involved either favoring or opposing Freemasonry."

Dr. Lewis seems to suggest that if one adds together the pro-Masons and those whom Dr. Lewis says "just don't care", the majority opinion would be against "anti-Masons". Is this how Dr. Lewis is resolving his dilemma about losing money for missions? If so, it is not the first time that a Christian leader would count nickels and noses before deciding an issue. If that is what Dr. Lewis is suggesting he is doing, it will have the same disastrous results as such compromise has had in the past for Southern Baptist leaders.

Dr. Leazer Feels Pressured and Evidences Prejudice Against "Anti-Masons"

Dr. Leazer's lack of objectivity was further suggested by a letter which he wrote to a non-Southern Baptist August 21, 1992, in which he said:

"By far, the most pressure on me is coming from anti-Masons. I get the distinct feeling they don't want a

scholarly study...I intend to be objective enough to examine recent Masonic writers."

This letter was written on HMB stationary, over Dr. Leazer's signature as the director of the IFW of the Evangelism Division of the HMB. This was an official, convention-supported activity of Dr. Leazer. One wonders what Dr. Leazer means by "pressure" from "anti-Masons". In reality, he is simply referring to the fact that many "anti-Masons" had written him and sent him materials developed over the many years during which the Christian church has condemned the Masonic Lodge.

The condescending statement, "I get the distinct feeling they don't want a scholarly study", confirms Leazer's prejudice. How does he conclude this simply on the basis of the fervor of those who believe Freemasonry is a scourge upon the Kingdom of God? Why does he impugn the integrity of others, after objecting to what he perceived as others impugning his own integrity? Why does he not conclude that Masons do not want a scholarly study? As we shall see, Dr. Leazer had made his mind up about Masonry many years before, and this study would only provide the opportunity for him to restate officially his admiration of, affection for and approval of, Freemasonry.

As to Dr. Leazer's claims to scholarship, that will await the evaluation of his product. He is right in examining "recent Masonic writers." Yet, it will be seen that he only examined the aspects of the work of "recent Masonic writers" which supported his prejudice for the Masonic Lodge. Dr. Leazer's partial quotation from modern Masonic writers enabled him to maintain the fiction that Masons have no beliefs or practices which are inimical with Christianity.

Dr. Leazer Quotes Selectively From Modern Masonic Writers

One illustration of this is found on page 13 of A Study Of Freemasonry, in which Leazer said:

"Anti-Masons typically assume that Freemasonry is based on the writings of one person...Albert Pike...One Scottish Rite Mason estimated that fewer than 1 in 1,000 Masons had read (Pike's) Morals and Dogma...A Bridge to Light, by Rex R. Hutchens, was published in 1988 to replace Morals and Dogma and to encourage Scottish Rite Masons to 'investigate more fully the

profound teachings of the Rite and learn how to apply them to their daily lives.'" (A Study Of Freemasonry, p. 13, emphasis added)

Dr. Leazer's condescending attitude toward "anti-Masons" is revealed here. I know of no "anti-Mason" who believes that Albert Pike is single-handedly responsible for Masonry. Nonetheless, by the admission of numerous Masons, he is one of two or three of their most important writers. (See The SBC and Freemasonry, Volume II, chapter Seven, "Research About Masonry and the Lodge's Esteem of Albert Pike", pp. 69ff)

Once again, Leazer makes a statement and offers no support. If something is typical of "anti-Masonic" writers, Leazer should have no difficulty quoting sources which prove his point. In the absence of such sources, we are forced to conclude that Dr. Leazer is not proving a point about "anti-Masons"; he is only proving his own prejudice.

Leazer's willingness to accept unsupported, speculative and non-scholarly anecdotes, such as "fewer than 1 in 1,000 Masons had read (Pike)", seems to relate to whether they are favorable to his argument are not. Who is this Mason who speculates on how many Masons have read Morals and Dogma? We would like to voidire him, to examine his qualifications for making such a statement, and we would like to see his evidence for such a statement. But, alas, Dr. Leazer, in his apologetic for the Masonic Lodge, regales us with opinion, for which he offers no documentation or support.

A Bridge To Light Replaces Morals And Dogma? No!!

Dr. Leazer stated: "A Bridge to Light...was...to replace Morals and Dogma."

 (A Study Of Freemasonry, p. 13) Who told him this? Upon what basis does he make such a speculative statement? On page 57 of his study, Dr. Leazer criticizes an "anti-Mason" for making a statement without supporting references. Unfortunately for Dr. Leazer, not only does he not have supporting references, the references he provides contradict what he claims.

Let's examine the evidence. In the Foreword to A Bridge to Light, C. Fred Kleinknecht, Sovereign Grand Commander of the Southern Jurisdiction of Supreme Council, 33rd Degree, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry of the United States of America, stated:

"The apex of our teachings has been the rituals of our degrees and Morals and Dogma, written by our beloved Sovereign Grand Commander Albert Pike. The latter, once widely read, has become less so today...many come to Morals and Dogma sadly deficient in the foundation Pike rightly expected his readers to have..." (A Bridge To Light, p. vii)

This statement, by one of the leaders of a "general society" of Freemasons, which even Dr. Leazer says "the Lodge tends to follow" (See A Study Of Freemasonry, p. 5), hardly sounds like a denunciation of Albert Pike and Morals and Dogma. "Sovereign Grand Commander" Kleinknecht continued in the Foreword to A Bridge To Light:

"A Bridge to Light seeks to overcome this difficulty by presenting passages from Morals and Dogma which best reinforce the teachings of the rituals of the degrees. It is hoped that these degree summaries and the accompanying citations from Morals and Dogma will encourage our members to investigate more fully the profound teachings of the Rite and learn how to apply them in their daily lives." (p. vii, emphasis added)

The highlighted phrase is that which is quoted by Dr. Leazer in A Study Of Freemasonry (See p. 13). The purpose of A Bridge to Light is to encourage Masons to examine Morals and Dogma, and to make Pike's esoteric and difficult-to-read tome more accessible to modern Masons. The "light" to which Hutchens' work is to provide a "bridge" is the light of Albert Pike's Morals and Dogma.

Leazer quotes Sovereign Grand Commander Kleinknecht's Foreword to A Bridge to Light, without attribution and out of context, when he stated that the purpose of the book is to lead Masons to "investigate more fully the profound teachings of the Rite and learn how to apply them to their daily lives." What Kleinknecht is recommending is not the abandonment of Morals and Dogma, but its reading by Masons. Leazer partially quotes a Masonic document, extracting it from its context, to make it appear to support his argument in favor of the Masonic Lodge. Why?

Abandon Albert Pike? Never!

In an article entitled, "Albert Pike: Debit or Credit?", in the November, 1992 issue of the Scottish Rite Journal, Kleinknecht said:

"Correctly understood, Albert Pike's Morals and Dogma provides our Brethren a stimulus to thought, a source of inspiration, and even an aid to Scottish Rite growth. Pike's great work is not a book of an hour, a decade, or a century. It is a book for all time...so long as we remember the great books and the great men who created them, books are forever, immortal landmarks guiding us to new life and greater accomplishments.

Abandon Morals and Dogma? Never!" (pp. 5-6, emphasis added)

Does this sound like Kleinknecht is endorsing Leazer's statement that A Bridge To Light is to replace Morals and Dogma? Why would Leazer attempt to convince unknowing and unwitting Southern Baptists that the Lodge is divesting itself of occultism as evidenced by distancing themselves from Morals and Dogma, when just the opposite is true?

"Masonry's Winning Moments — 1993"

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

"Just as every Mason's heart lifted at this 'Winning Moment' in 1993 for our Fraternity. Scottish Rite Masons can be proud of three substantive advances in Masonic scholarship in 1993: The Supreme Council's publication of Cornerstones of Freemason: A Masonic Tradition by Dr. S. Brent Morris, 33rd Degree; The Bible in Albert Pike's Morals and Dogma; and A Glossary of 'Morals and Dogma' by Dr. Rex R. Hutchens, 33rd degree, author of A Bridge To Light...The two books by... Hutchens are meant to assist in understanding Pike's great work, Morals and Dogma. While presenting Pike as the scholar he was,

these books also reveal him as a champion of social progress, religious toleration, and the moral improvement of the individual." (p. 4)

The Scottish Rite is not disowning Pike. It is aggressively encouraging Masons to honor, to study and to emulate Pike.

Author Of A Bridge To Light and Albert Pike

In the Preface to A Bridge To Light, the author, Rex R. Hutchens, stated:

"This work was prepared using the published rituals of the degrees as written by Albert Pike...Unless otherwise noted, all page references are to Morals and Dogma." (p. xi)

In the Introduction, Hutchens, said:

"All Scottish Rite Masons have seen, and many have read, the results of this great effort (the writing of Morals and Dogma) and all the world has seen the fruit of this labor." (p. 2)

Which anecdote is correct: Dr. Leazer's unquestioned and undocumented quoting of a Mason that "1 in a 1000 have read Morals and Dogma" (See A Study Of Freemasonry, p. 13), or Rex Hutchens' that "all Scottish Rite Masons have seen it and many have read (it)"? One is left to wonder. Hutchen continued:

"...after 1974 (Morals and Dogma) was no longer given to the candidates. This was...an unfortunate decision." (A Bridge To Light, p. 20)

"No man can be perfect but he can strive toward perfection and so constantly improve his nature. Pike expresses this idea in Morals and Dogma..." (A Bridge To Light, p. 3)

"A Bridge To Light was designed to act as a bridge between the ceremonies of the degrees and their lectures in Morals and Dogma...There may be the same need for repetition in studying the lectures in Morals and Dogma." (A Bridge To Light, p. 4)

Bridge Is A Bridge To Light; Light Is Morals And Dogma

Don't miss the point, as Dr. Leazer did! If Dr. Leazer ever looked at A Bridge To Light, rather than simply accepting the unquestioned word of Masons, he missed this point. The "bridge" is Hutchen's book; the "light" is Pike's Morals and Dogma. A Bridge To Light was prepared by the Masonic Lodge to facilitate Masons' use of Morals and Dogma. Hutchen continued in his affirmation of Morals and Dogma:

"Following the discussion of the ceremony, the lecture in Morals and Dogma is explained. Each summary concludes with a review of the duties and lessons of that particular degree contained in Morals and Dogma." (A Bridge To Light, p. 5)

Nowhere does the Committee on Rituals and Ceremonial Forms, which authorized the publication of this book for the Scottish Rite, the writer of the Foreword, or the author suggest that this book is to replace Morals and Dogma. In fact, just the opposite is true. This book is an attempt to make the teachings of Morals and Dogma more accessible to the modern Masons. Why would Dr. Leazer attempt to sell the distortion — "A Bridge To Light...was published...to replace Morals and Dogma — to Southern Baptists? Does Dr. Leazer really believe that, or was his research so inadequate as not to discover the truth about Freemasonry?

Clausen's Commentaries On Morals and Dogma

If Dr. Leazer had wanted to understand, and wanted to accurately portray the place of Morals and Dogma in today's Lodge, he would have also consulted Clausen's Commentaries On Morals and Dogma by Henry C. Clausen, 33rd Degree, Sovereign Grand Commander, The Supreme Council, 33rd Degree, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry Southern Jurisdiction, U.S.A. This book was copyrighted in 1974 by The Supreme Council (Mother Council of the World) of the Inspectors General Knights Commander of the House of the Temple of Solomon of the Thirty-third Degree of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry of the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States of America. In the Introduction, Clausen stated:

"There is need for a more modern discussion of the actions and thoughts of Sovereign Grand Commander Albert Pike's Morals and Dogma and for a concise interpretation of its significance. The monumental work was published in 1871, over 100 years ago. It was an inspired and classical compilation of Pike's own research and the writings of others, but that now should be related to our language and style and setting in time." (p. xvii)

Clausen wanted to provide Morals And Dogma in modern language. Clausen's admiration of Pike was fulsome; he said:

"Morals and Dogma, combined with our rituals, provides Initiates, members and students with spiritual lessons of tremendous value, philosophies of the ages and down-to-earth basic truths that can enrich and activate human behavior." (p. xix)

This non-religion, Freemasonry, through Morals and Dogma teaches "Initiates...spiritual lessons of tremendous value." Is Dr. Leazer correct? Does the Lodge intend to replace Morals and Dogma with A Bridge to Light or with any other publication? This modern Mason leader said, "No!". Clausen specifically contradicts Leazer's conclusion; he said:

"These summaries and commentaries are designed to increase the participation and input of our members — not to supplant Morals and Dogma — but to stimulate its research as a source of knowledge and inspiration." (emphasis added, p. xix)

Clausen's Commentary, like A Bridge To Light, was prepared to "stimulate" and enable Masons to read and understand Morals and Dogma. But, If Clausen's 1974 book is not "modern" enough to be used in confronting Masons about the use of Morals and Dogma, why didn't Leazer examine the 1992 publication of the Supreme Council entitled, The Bible in Albert Pike's Morals and Dogma, which was another attempt to rehabilitate, not reject, the occultism of Albert Pike. (For a discussion of this book see, The SBC and Freemasonry, Volume II, pp. 42-43) Masons are not relenting on Pike's views, they are relentlessly pursuing them. Unfortunately, that fact does not fit Dr. Leazer's preconceived ideas; therefore, he obscures the facts.

If Dr. Leazer obscures the facts to fit his prejudice in this instance, and/or if he gives only the part of the facts which seem to fit his case, can we expect him to do it again? If Dr. Leazer ignores readily available evidence which supports the arguments of "anti-Masons" and which discredits his apologetic for Masonry, can we expect him to do it again? We will not be disappointed. Dr. Leazer's prejudice is obvious throughout the study on Freemasonry.

In A Study Of Freemasonry, Dr. Leazer stated that Masons told him (there is no documentation of who or how many they were) that the only books which are written authorities in Freemasonry are "monitors and other books approved and published by the various Grand Lodges or other official bodies." (p. 14) A Bridge To Light, Clausen's Commentary on Morals and Dogma, and The Bible in Albert Pike's Morals and Dogma are all such official publications. Why didn't Dr. Leazer analyze these "authoritative writings" in order to help the SBC understand what the Lodge believes and practices?

Confronting Lewis With Leazer's Prejudice

Quoting from Dr. Leazer's August 3, 1992 letter, I wrote Dr. Larry Lewis on August 26, 1992, stating:

"...I am more than concerned, I am alarmed at the potential for a compromising report being produced by the HMB. Dr. Leazer's prejudice is overwhelming."

Responding to Dr. Leazer's accusation that he was receiving "pressure" from "anti-Masons", I said to Dr. Lewis:

"Why does Dr. Leazer want to re-invent the wheel? I have sent him a great deal of material and have made no threats or demand. Why is this pressure? Why am I labeled as an 'anti-Mason'? In fact, I believe, that I am the best friend Masons have. They are going to face a holy God, and they are going to do it with the blood of the occultic upon their hands. If we say nothing, and if we do nothing, we will be judged by God for our silence.

Why are we not characterized as those who stand for the truth? Dr. Leazer's prejudice in labeling us 'anti-Masons' is like the liberal establishment labeling Christians as anti-abortion. We are not anti-abortion; we

are pro-life. Likewise, we are not 'anti-Masons'; we are pro-truth!"

In his August 21, 1992, letter to a non-Southern Baptist, Dr. Leazer also said, "I feel like a sacrificial lamb", to which I responded in my August 26, 1992, letter to Dr. Lewis:

"Dr. Leazer's assignment is to discover the Truth about the Masonic Lodge. His modus operandi should be to find the facts, examine the facts, and then prepare the report. He can only be a sacrificial lamb, if he is having his life or job threatened by the Masons. I assure you, Dr. Lewis, I want the truth to come out. If Dr. Leazer brings a report which is wrong, I will attack the report, not Dr. Leazer.

However, with his emotional distress, I think it is unlikely that he can do an objective, scholarly study. He should resign, or he should be removed (as head of this study)."

At this time, Dr. Larry Lewis defended Dr. Leazer and retained him as head of the study. Events will demonstrate that Dr. Leazer essentially did the study by himself, and that his prejudice imprinted this study with a strong bias in favor of the Masonic Lodge. It was irresponsible, I believe, for Dr. Lewis not to remove Dr. Leazer from this study. Once again, no call was ever made by me to have Dr. Leazer fired from his job at the HMB, although after his August 6, 1993 speech to the Southeast Masonic Conference, I agreed that his resignation was necessary.

In Dr. Lewis' November, 1993 letter to the Florida Baptist Witness, he stated that Dr. Leazer's conduct had been inappropriate throughout the study. The obvious question is, "In that that is the case, why are we still promoting this study as objective, scholarly and valid?"

Leazer's Prejudice Proved

Dr. Leazer's prejudice is obvious at this point from:

1. His labeling of those who wish to expose the Masonic Lodge as "anti-Masons", a pejorative term at best, and overtly derogatory at worst.
2. His design of the study to simply compare the arguments of Masons and "anti-Masons". A scholarly, objective study would begin with a data base of facts about the teaching and practice of the Lodge, not with the commentary of those who oppose the Lodge or of those who support the Lodge. Nowhere in the study does Dr. Leazer establish a body of facts about the Lodge. In fact, to hear him tell it, the Lodge is a nebulous goo which no one can intelligently know anything about or comment upon knowledgeably.
3. His stated inability to believe that Masons are deceived. If they are not deceived, then they must be right. Dr. Leazer has already drawn his conclusion. He will proceed to select data to support his conclusions. This is the very accusation which he lodges against the "anti-Masons", whom he holds in such contempt.
4. His use of Masonic materials, from which he selectively quotes, in order to support his position that there is nothing wrong with the Masonic Lodge.
5. Leazer's refusal to examine materials which Masons told him were authoritative for their Craft.
6. Leazer's naive acceptance of what Masons have told him and his naive belief that they have told him everything.

The right response to this would have been to remove Dr. Leazer as the head of this study, to adopt a design which would have addressed the question given by the Convention to the HMB, and to examine primary Masonic documents to determine if Freemasonry is compatible with Christianity. This was not done, and the result is an embarrassment and reproach to the SBC and to its HMB.