

Chapter Five:

Meeting With Interfaith Witness Department

On September 17, 1992, Pastor Charles Burchett, Dr. Bill High, Mr. Ron Sutherland and I met with Dr. Leazer and the IFW. We presented each participant with a three-inch, three-ring binder with over 630 pages of documentation about the nature of the Masonic Lodge. An audio cassette record of that meeting was made. Four hours were spent in going over the material. A healthy dialogue took place. Dr. Leazer and his staff treated us graciously and attentively.

Two events are notable from that conference. When I quoted the Orthodox Catholic Church's statement, "no Christian church which has seriously investigated the religious teachings of Freemasonry has failed to condemn it", Dr. Lewis asked: "Larry (Holly) is that true? Can they legitimately make such a statement?" I responded:

"My research and that of many others affirms this statement, but the real support comes from the Masonic Lodge. If any Christian organization of any denomination had ever blessed or approved of the Lodge, who would be heralding that from the roof tops? Obviously, the Masonic Lodge in their silence, affirms that no Christian denomination has ever blessed or approved of the Lodge."

Dr. Lewis responded: "I've never thought of that. That is true!"

At the conclusion of the day, I asked Dr. Gary Leazer, in the presence of numerous witness: "Do you understand that there is a serious problem for Christians with the Masonic Lodge?" Without hesitation, he responded, "Yes, I do!" (This dialogue is on the tape recording which the HMB made of that meeting.) This is in agreement with his private conversation with Mr. Ron Sutherland of Atlanta, Georgia in March of 1992, and again in March of 1993, in which Dr. Leazer said, "Masonry is an abomination." Yet, it is in contradiction to everything which he has said publicly. One is left to wonder which Dr. Leazer is to be believed.

Anyone listening to those tape recordings would draw the conclusion that Dr. Leazer and the IFW were in agreement with the presentation which we made to them.

Critical Critique Commissioned of SBC Freemasonry Vol. I

For lunch on September 17, 1992, Dr. Darrell Robinson, Vice-President of the HMB, head of the Evangelism Division, and immediate supervisor of Dr. Leazer as director of the IFW, hosted Pastor Burchett, Dr. High, Mr. Sutherland and me. He invited IFW's regional representative, Dr. William Gordon to accompany us. During lunch, Dr. Gordon indicated that he had been commissioned by Dr. Leazer to write a critique of my booklet, The SBC and Freemasonry, Volume I. He volunteered that his critique would not be favorable. I asked him what his objections were, and he shared four areas of concern with me. I subsequently wrote a detailed response to Dr. Gordon answering his objections.

In that Dr. Leazer quotes from Dr. Gordon's critique in A Study Of Freemasonry, and in that Dr. Lewis distributed that critique to all of the trustees of the HMB, under rather unusual circumstances, it will be dealt with in Appendix B (see pp. 319ff). For now, it is enough to observe that the appearance is that the assignment was another part of the design of this study to make "anti-Masons" the issue rather than Masons. On several occasions, it has been noted by staff of the HMB that Dr. Gordon is a graduate of Criswell College in Dallas, and is a friend of Dr. Paige Patterson. The implication in this comment seemed to be, "Here is a 'conservative' who opposes 'anti-Masons', also."

Larry Lewis Will Determine Nature of Study On Freemasonry

Following the September 17 meeting with the IFW, I wrote Dr. Lewis on September 21, 1992, and thanked him for attending the meeting of the IFW's Task Force on Freemasonry. I indicated that his personal concern about Freemasonry and his willingness for the HMB to produce a strong report against the Lodge, would go a long way toward the successful conclusion of this task. I restated my belief that the report brought by the HMB must and will condemn the Masonic Lodge. The evidence is overwhelming as to the occultic, religious and anti-Christian nature of the Masonic Order. Therefore, the only legitimate question before the

HMB is, "How can a report be brought which accomplishes the goals envisioned by the motion passed at the Convention, and which is constructive in the Convention?"

My September 21, 1992 letter acknowledged Dr. Lewis' desire to resolve this question as peacefully as possible. I said:

"...may I humbly remind both of us that peace is not our responsibility. Peace is God's responsibility, and that through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our responsibility is to 'lift up the Lord Jesus Christ, and His Truth.'"

There is a great distinction between being a "peace lover" and being a "peace maker". The latter is blessed of God; the former results in compromise and the dilution of the Gospel.

Can't The Lodge Change To Make It Acceptable?

During our September 17, 1992 conference at the HMB, Dr. Lewis repeatedly questioned whether or not it was possible to encourage the Masonic Lodge simply to reform itself; therefore, in my September 21, 1992 letter I addressed this question:

"Repeatedly, you have asked the question, 'Can't we change the Lodge to make it acceptable?' Larry, that is like asking, 'Can't we change Mormonism or Jehovah Witness, to make them acceptable to Christianity?' Our responsibility is to expose them, not to transform them. Christians don't need the Lodge in order to be what God wants His people to be! No matter how you change the Lodge, you will not make it acceptable to a Holy God Who has commanded, 'Come ye out from among them...'. "

Later we will discuss the Masonic Renewal Committees' statement that it is interested in 'renewal', not 'reform'. Also, we will discuss that one of the unchangeable landmarks of Freemasonry is that none of the ritual can be changed. Dr. Lewis' question may be irenic, and it may be admirable, but it is naive in the face of the true nature of Freemasonry, and in face of the fundamentally anti-Christian nature of the Lodge.

Robert Morey: Masonry Started As Christian Organization

Drs. Lewis and Leazer "latched on" to Dr. Robert Morey's thesis in The Origins and Teachings of Freemasonry (Southbridge, Mass.: Crown Publications, Inc., 1990). The book has been republished by Harvest House Publishers under the title The Truth About Masons. Dr. Morey contends that the origins of Freemasonry are Christian; he said:

"It may come as a surprise to many Masons to discover that from the very beginning, Freemasonry was viewed as a Christian institution and its symbols, degrees and ceremonies were all interpreted according to fundamental Christian doctrines....The Christian interpretation of Freemasonry was the accepted norm until the later (sic) half of the 19th century." (The Origins and Teachings of Freemasonry, p. 17)

In support of this assertion, Morey quotes Albert Mackey's History of Freemasonry, published by the Masonic History Company in New York in 1898. His footnote shows a page reference to Volume I, page 136. Dr. Morey's quotation is accurate, but, as we shall see, the implication he draws from it is not.

Dr. Leazer quotes Morey's book on pages 11, 16, 58 and 69 in A Study Of Freemasonry. But more than a basis of documentation for his work, Leazer seemed to use Morey's work as a "framework" in which to consider his approach to the study of Freemasonry. Morey's book seemed to provide the framework both for Leazer's and Lewis' hostility to "anti-Masons" and for their attraction to efforts to "change the Lodge" to make it compatible with Christianity.

Lewis Echoes Morey's Conclusion

Dr. Morey's conclusion was:

"May we be so bold as to offer a suggestion? Why not call for a conference with Anti-masonic leaders to discuss what exactly offends them in Freemasonry and what can be done to remove those offensives. Why cannot Freemasonry change its rituals to accommodate the feelings of Christians just (sic) it did for Jews, Muslims and Hindus?" (The Origins and Teachings of Freemasonry, p. 116)

Dr. Lewis repeatedly echoed that conclusion, without any question of Morey's premise. Morey's conclusion is grounded upon his premise that Freemasonry was Christian in its origin. Dr. Lewis' sincere desire to avoid a confrontation with Masons caused him to grasp Morey's proposal, almost like a man clutching for a life-raft, only to discover that it was a steel beam, which would drag him down, also.

Mackey's Revised History of Freemasonry

In 1898, The Masonic History Company published 33rd Degree Mason, Robert Ingham Clegg's Mackey's Revised History of Freemasonry. The page opposite the dedication contains this statement:

"Standard and only fully authorized works are published by The Masonic History Company on the subject of Freemasonry. This History is the First Book of the Series."

Clegg's Preface affirms his devotion to Mackey and his desire to proceed in his steps. Only new discoveries and new information resulted in the issuance of this revised edition under the scrutiny of numerous Masonic leaders, Clegg said.

Dr. Morey's documentary support of the Christian origins of Freemasonry is an article in Mackey's History of Freemasonry, entitled "The Hutchinsonian Theory". Mackey's Revised History of Freemasonry states:

"The Third or Master's degree made Christian in type, that is the meaning of its symbols referring to Christ and to Christian dogmas, is not peculiar to, nor original with, Hutchinson. It was the accepted belief of almost all the authorities of his time..." (Volume 1, p. 144)

There is no question that the 18th Century ministers who embraced Freemasonry attempted to make it compatible with their faith. But read Mackey's words. He did not say the Master (Mason) degree was "Christian in type"; Mackey said, the Christian ministers "made (it) Christian in type." To support the Christian origins of the Lodge, Morey changed Mackey's words to imply that the Master Mason degree was Christian. Mackey's Revised History states:

"Freemasonry is thus made by him to assume in this third stage of its growth a purely Christian character."
(p. 142)

It is clear from this statement that as far as Mackey was concerned Hutchinson imposed a Christian interpretation upon an otherwise non-Christian ritual. Mackey said Hutchinson made Freemasonry "to assume" a "purely Christian character". The implications, expressed by Mackey, is that Hutchinson imposed something upon the Craft which was not part of its nature.

Christian Interpretation Of Symbols Of Freemasonry

In the original edition of Mackey's History of Freemasonry, and the one which Morey quotes, Mackey stated:

"The interpretation of the symbols of Freemasonry from a Christian point of view was, therefore, at the period when Hutchison advanced his theory, neither novel to the Craft nor peculiar to him." (p. 137)

Mackey does not say that the origins of Freemasonry's symbols were Christian. He says that the 18th century ministers "interpreted them...from a Christian point of view." This is significantly different from what Morey's theory suggests from its use of Mackey's History. With the modern revival of Freemasonry in 1717, an attempt was made by many Christian ministers to make Freemasonry a Christian organization. It is not surprising that the men who were attempting to change Masonry into a Christian organization were clergymen in that they were among the few who could read, and among the few who had access to books.

Mackey's Judgment Of Hutchinson's Theory

Mackey gives the following judgment of Hutchinson's theory:

"This theory, in which all connection between operative and speculative Masonry is completely dis-served, and in which, in fact the former is entirely ignored, is peculiar to Hutchinson. No other writer, no matter to what source he may have attributed the original rise of speculative Masonry, has denied that there was some period in the history of the progress when it was more or less intimately connected with the operative art. While, therefore, it is plain that the

opinion of Hutchinson is in opposition to that of all other Masonic writers, it is equally evident that it contradicts all the well-established facts of history.

But besides these opinions concerning the non-operative character of the Institution, Hutchinson has been scarcely less peculiar in his other views in respect to the rise and progress of Freemasonry and its relations to other associations of antiquity." (p. 129, emphasis added)

What does this mean? Mackey, not wishing to overtly deny Christian origins for Freemasonry, cryptically states that "(Hutchinson's) other views in respect to the rise and progress of Freemasonry" are no more peculiar than those advanced by others. What are "Hutchinson's other views?" It is the contention, along with many other authorities at this time, that Freemasonry is a Christian organization. There is no question Hutchinson and many others tried to Christianize Freemasonry. There is no question that they failed. There is no question that Mackey thought Hutchinson's ideas of the origins of Freemasonry were "peculiar". His only affirmation of them was to say that they were no more peculiar than the ideas of some others as to the origins of the Craft.

Mackey's History Of Freemasonry Doesn't Support Morey's Theory

Of Hutchinson's theory, Mackey said:

"Such is the Hutchinson theory of the origin and progress of Masonry. It is *sui generis* — peculiar to Hutchinson — and has been advanced or maintained by no other Masonic writer before or since." (Mackey's History of Freemasonry, Volume 1, p. 140)

Is Morey's theory valid? Mackey said, "No!" Is Hutchinson's theory the accepted Masonic theory; Mackey said, "No!" On page 139, Mackey stated: "Here again Hutchinson differs from all the writers who preceded or who have followed him." On page 138 of the same article, Mackey said: "If I rightly understand the language of Hutchinson, which, it must be admitted, is sometimes confused and the ideas are not plainly expressed..." On page 128 of the same article, Mackey said:

"Of all the Masonic writers of the 18th century, Hutchinson was undoubtedly the most learned. And yet the theory that he has propounded as to the origin of the Masonic Institution is altogether untenable and indeed, in many of its details, absurd." (emphasis added)

While Mackey admits that many Christian ministers attempted to interpret the Masonic ritual in Christian terms, he does not say this was the origins of those rituals; it was the preachers' attempts to make Masonry acceptable to themselves. This does not address the true origins of Freemasonry as Mackey's History clearly declares. Mackey's History only confirms the desire by the preachers to justify Lodge membership for the believer. It in no way establishes the Lodge as a Christian organization.

Morey: Hemming Tried To De-Christianize Freemasonry

Continuing to propose the Christian origins of Freemasonry, Morey said: "The first attempt to de-christianize the Craft was by Hemming in 1813." (The Origins and Teachings of Freemasonry, p. 19) His source is Mackey's History of Freemasonry, p. 137. However, an examination of Mackey's History does not support Morey's interpretation. Mackey's History said:

"It was not, indeed, until the rewriting of the lectures by Dr. Samuel Hemming, in 1813, that nearly all the references in them to Christianity were taken out." (Mackey's History of Freemasonry, p. 137; also stated in Mackey's Revised History of Freemasonry, p. 144)

According to Mackey, this was not "an attempt to remove Christianity", as suggested by Morey; it was a fait accompli. The removing of the Christian references simply returned the rituals to their original meaning and intent. The footnote in Mackey's Revised History states:

"Dr. Hemming was Worshipful Master of the Lodge of Reconciliation, formed in 1813 by the United Grand Lodge of England to bring about uniform ritualistic work drawn from 'Modern' and 'Ancient' sources." (p. 144)

Hemming acted officially for the Lodge, not as an a maverick occultist who tried to distort Freemasonry. If there were those

who distorted Freemasonry, they were the preachers who tried, and failed, to Christianize the Lodge. The sequence is critical. Preachers tried to make a non-Christian organization Christian. They failed; therefore, all of the Christian references in Freemasonry which had been added in this Christianizing attempt, were removed.

The Theory of Hutchinson

In an article entitled, "The Theory of Hutchinson", Clegg's Mackey's Revised History of Freemasonry stated:

"...the theory that he has set up as to the origin of the Masonic institution is altogether too weak to hold its ground and indeed in many items, discredited because of its absurd claims." (Volume I, p. 135)

"...it is plain that the opinion of Hutchinson is against that of all other Masonic writers, it is equally evident that it contradicts all the well-founded facts of history." (pp. 136-137)

"Hutchinson's theory may, indeed, be regarded as especially and entirely his own. It is, therefore, worthy of study and criticism, rather in reference to the novelty of his ideas than in respect to anything of great historical value in the claims that he has advanced." (p. 137)

"Notwithstanding that the Grand Lodge of England had authoritatively declared in the year 1723 that Masonry required a belief only in that religion in which all men agree, the tendency among all our early writers after the revival of 1717 was to Christianize the institution." (p. 144)

"Such is the theory of Hutchinson as to the origin and progress of Speculative Freemasonry. That it has been accepted as a whole by no other writer, is not surprising. Not only is it unsupported by the facts of history but is actually contradicted by every Masonic document known to us to be in existence." (p. 149)

Mackey clearly states: "...the tendency among all our early writers after the revival of 1717 was to Christianize the institution." That which is Christian in its origin does not have to be

Christianized. These preachers were obviously trying to do something which was alien to the nature of Freemasonry. It is obvious because they failed.

Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia's Judgment of Christian Origins Of Freemasonry

Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia (Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Company, New York, 1961, Henry Wilson Coil, 33rd Degree Scottish Rite Mason) makes the following comment on Hutchinson's theory:

"(Hutchinson's) The Spirit of Masonry went into subsequent editions in 1795, 1802, 1913, 1814, 1815, together with several subsequent reprintings in England and the United States...I was of a highly religious and Christian character, the Third Degree representing the Third or Christian dispensation. It clearly adopted the Patriarchal or Solomonic theory of the origin of Freemasonry and seems to have formed the foundation for most of Dr. Oliver's writings, although the latter developed a multitude of variations. The book was entirely religio-philosophic and devoid of any serious effort realistically to detect the origin and early evolvement of Freemasonry...." (p. 316, emphasis added)

Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia rejects Hutchinson's theory of the Christian origins of Freemasonry. Coil's further states, in its article on "religion":

"One serious incongruity in the relation of the Bible to Freemasonry is that the Fraternity originated among Christians and was propagated and spread at first principally by and among Christians and yet has attempted to adhere to an exclusively Solomonic or Judaic doctrine both secular and religious. While one set of Masons has tried to preserve the purity of a ritual based on the building of Solomon's Temple about 1000 B.C., others have been equally active in insinuating anachronistic Christian doctrine and symbolsthere has been and still is a great deal of proselyting for the creeds of various denominations in the Society and certainly a great deal for the Bible, especially a type of book called the Masonic Bible,

often containing unauthorized additions, explanations, fictitious Masonic history and doctrine, but generally leading up to the conclusion that Freemasonry and the Bible are the same! An example of this forcing of Freemasonry into a religious mould or what might be called Established Church Freemasonry..." (Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia, pp. 511-522, emphasis added)

Coil's says that the attempts to Christianize the Lodge are "insinuating anachronistic Christian doctrine and symbols". Christians have tried to make the Lodge acceptable to their faith, but the Lodge did not come from Christianity.

Leazer's Use Of Morey's Ideas Alarming

Morey selectively quoted from Mackey's History of Freemasonry, which in its original form, and in its revised edition, contradicts Morey's theory. There was an attempt to Christianize Freemasonry; that attempt failed because of the spirit of the Craft, which is the spirit of anti-Christ.

Morey's obscuring of the pagan and occultic origins of Freemasonry by misusing Mackey's History is objectionable, but Dr. Leazer's readiness to utilize such a source in his study is more objectionable. Repeatedly, as will be pointed out, Leazer utilized secondary sources which prove to be erroneous. Equally alarming, is Dr. Lewis' attraction to a proposal which is so obviously based upon faulty research, and which holds the promise of nothing but disaster for the SBC.

Dr. George Oliver: Christian Minister And Freemason

Albert Mackey's review of the history of the Craft in the 18th and 19th centuries included the story of Dr. George Oliver, a Christian minister, who in the middle of the 19th century adopted Hutchinson's theory. Mackey's History reports that Oliver said:

"...if he had not been fully convinced that Freemasonry is a system of Christian ethics — that it gives its aid to point the way to the Grand Lodge above, through the Cross of Christ — he should never have been found among the number of its advocates." (Quoted from Antiquities of Masonry, chapter vi, p. 166, note, in Mackey's Revised History of Freemasonry, p. 144)

Does this support Morey's theory of the Christian origins of Freemasonry? In Mackey's Revised History of Freemasonry, in an article entitled, "The Theory of Oliver", Mackey stated of Dr. George Oliver:

"No longer could men say that Freemasonry was merely a club of good fellows. Oliver proved that it was a school of inquirers after truth...He showed plainly that Freemasonry was engaged in making known to its initiates the deep and difficult subjects in religion and philosophy in a method by which it surpassed every other human plan for teaching such knowledge." (p. 151, emphasis added)

If anyone needs to understand how non-Christian Freemasonry is, they only need to read this statement. This Christian minister admits that the search of Masonry is for truth, which by nature is the quest of a religion. Amazingly, Freemason Oliver discovered a method for teaching the truth which the Apostle Paul had overlooked. Paul, in his unenlightened, non-Masonic way, said that it was by the preaching of the Cross that men would learn the truth. The Bible declares that it is not through esoteric rituals and occultic symbolism, but through the Word of God that men will learn the truth. But, Christian minister Oliver adopts the occultic, initiatory rites of the Greco-Roman mystery religions as a "new" method of discovering and imparting truth. (See chapter 17, pp. 256ff, for further discussion of the Mason concept of truth and method of learning truth.)

Furthermore, while Morey, Lewis and Leazer will propagate the Masonic dogma that Masons know nothing for which they can be held accountable, Oliver clearly states that they not only quest for truth, but they have found truth in the Lodge as well.

Mackey's Judgment Of Oliver's Theory

But, what did Mackey and his Masonic brethren think of Oliver's theory? Mackey's article continued:

"...it must be confessed that there were two defects in his character that materially affect the value of his authority as an historian.

One fault was, that as a clergyman of the Church of England he was controlled by that clerical association or comradeship which inclined him to make every opinion give way to the views of his own sect. Thus,

he gave to every symbol, every myth, and every allegory, the explanation of a theologian rather than of a philosopher. (Mackey's Revised History of Freemasonry, p. 151, emphasis added)

Oliver did not find the "explanation of a theologian" in the Lodge; he "gave" — he added the explanation of the theologian, i.e., the Christian interpretation of the occultism of the Lodge, to that which he found in the Lodge — "to every symbol, every myth, and every allegory...". Mackey does not contend that Masonry was Christian in its origins; he only contends that Oliver and others tried to find Christianity in the Lodge. They failed for it is not there, and, indeed, it cannot be there.

Conclusion Concerning Christian Origins of Craft

Mackey continued in his appraisal of Oliver's work:

"The other defect, a far more important one, was that he gave way to a belief on slight evidence, that led him to freely accept the errors of tradition as the truths of history." (Mackey's Revised History of Freemasonry, p. 151, emphasis added)

The gentle and subtle, but definite rejection by Mackey of Oliver's Christianized version of the origins of the Lodge is obvious. The "errors of tradition" of course are the errors of the Christian church, which Mackey rejects as truth. Mackey concludes the article on Oliver with the statement:

"...this appears to be the theory that was held by this learned but too easily convinced scholar." (IBID., p. 157)

There is no question that Christians have been trying to make Masonry acceptable for centuries. There is no question that many Christians, including Christian leaders, have either been blind to or have ignored the occultic origins of the Craft, but Morey does not prove his point. Southern Baptists should not involve themselves in another ill-advised and certainly to be ill-fated attempt to accomplish what failed before. Southern Baptists simply need to declare the truth about the Lodge and be done with it.

The answer to Dr. Lewis' question, "Can't we change Freemasonry?", is categorically, "No!" It has been tried by good and, apparently, godly men. They failed, and so will the SBC.

Masons Want Renewal Not Reform

The real question in this matter for Dr. Lewis is, "What does the Lodge want?" In his speech to the Southeast Masonic Conference in August of 1993, Dr. Gary Leazer said:

"There are a number of positive steps you can take immediately...Your very survival as a fraternity depends upon it...I find that The Masonic Renewal Committee of North America is on target..."

In A Study Of Freemasonry, Dr. Leazer said:

"The Masonic Renewal Committee of North America has held four strategic Planning conferences with leaders from 31 Grand Lodges to produce 'Blueprint 2000,' outlining the future needs of the fraternity."
(p. 19)

This committee was organized to develop strategies for advancing the membership and the influence of Masonry. In a July 4, 1992 article, entitled, "Masons aiming to modernize to increase membership rolls", published in the Chattanooga Times, Karl Sooder, a member of the Renewal Committee said:

"The spirit of the renewal effort...is to pursue a course of renewal and not a course of reform. Reform would have as its subject the theoretical total remodeling of the Masonic concept. Renewal is more focused on identifying those historical roots that have served the organization well over history and then creatively identifying ways to nurture those roots for modern society. It is no huge departure, but a blending and melding with modern approaches."
(emphasis added)

Masons are not interested in reform, and apparently, Dr. Leazer is encouraging them not to be. Why would a Christian employee of the HMB, no longer the head of the IFW, but still an employee of the HMB at that time, encourage the Masonic Lodge to renew, but not reform? Dr. Lewis' desire simply to reform the Lodge must yield, not only to the reality of the nature of the Lodge, but to the expressed intent of the Lodge not to reform.

Time For SBC To Face 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..." (emphasis added) In my September 21, 1992 letter to Dr. Lewis, I concluded by addressing the fact that neither one of us wanted the HMB to do this study. I addressed the fact that more than any other man, you will personally determine the strength or weakness of the position adopted by the IFW. If you want a courageous report, it will be direct and straightforward. If you fear what the Lodge may do to the budget of the HMB, it will be a weak and compromising report.

I reminded Dr. Lewis of Mordecai's words to Esther, "Perhaps for such a day as this you were born." I challenged him with my belief that no other single act will more directly effect what he had been called to do, than his bringing a strong, direct and final condemnation of Freemasonry.

I encouraged him to temper that report, as the Presbyterian Church of America did, with the acknowledgment that few Southern Baptists who are Masons believe what the Lodge stands for, but do not temporize about the nature, the spirit or the goals of the Masonic Lodge.

Letter To Administrative Committee of Trustees

In a September 23, 1992, letter to each member of the Administrative Committee of the Board of Trustees of the HMB, I acknowledged their pivotal role in the entire process. Dr. Lewis indicated in his statement, reported by Baptist Press and in a personal letter to me, that the Administrative Committee would review and approve the final report on Freemasonry before it went to the trustees for approval.

As will be seen later, the timing of the release of the study and of the report, which was to be voted on by the SBC, was such that the trustees had little or no time to carefully read the document. They had absolutely no time to question the documents upon the basis of which the study was prepared.

My September 23, 1992 letter to the Administrative Committee acknowledged each member of the committee as being in "a key position to evaluate this report before it is presented to the Convention." I said to them:

"I believe this is one of the most critical issues which has come before the SBC in recent years. Because of the impact of the Masonic Lodge on the spiritual

purity and vitality of Southern Baptists, few things will promote revival among us as a strong stand for the glory of the Lord through rejecting the leavening influence of the occultism of the Lodge."

Each member of the Administrative Committee would play a critical role in the entire process of the study on Freemasonry, therefore I sent each one of them a copy of the 630-page report which we delivered to the IFW on September 17, 1993. I said:

"It is my hope that careful review of this material will prepare you to evaluate the final report prepared for the Convention."

At no time did we ever attempt to influence the SBC's study of Freemasonry with anything but careful documentation. If the documents were examined the truth would come out. One can only wonder what the Administrative Committee did with the expensive and extensive documents sent to them.

My letter concluded with an appeal for the members of the Committee to do their duty:

"...I am confident that if you have all of the facts, that you will be prepared to bring a strong statement to the Convention condemning Freemasonry."

At this time, I did not know how few facts about Freemasonry the Administrative Committee would receive in A Study Of Freemasonry. In partial defense of them, they were not served well by the staff of the HMB. However, each of them did have the 630-page report which I had submitted to the IFW, September 17, 1992. If any Southern Baptist wanted to know the truth about the Masonic Lodge, the impediment to that desire was not the lack of information.

No Critique Of 630-Page Report To IFW

While Dr. Leazer commissioned a critique of my 64-page booklet, he never commented on the 630-page report which presented thirteen categories of materials about the Lodge. He never mentioned the hundreds of pages of documents he received from a Roman Catholic physician as to the positions of dozens of other denominations who condemned the Lodge. Why?

I encouraged the Administrative Committee to consider the "spiritual warfare" implications of this study; I encouraged them to balance mercy and truth. The goal of studying Freemasonry

was always compassionately to warn Southern Baptists who are Masons, about what they have pledged their souls to, but courageously to condemn the Lodge.

Freemasonry is no different than the occultic practices which Israel faced. God's commandment to Israel was to tear down and destroy the high places — the places of false worship — which were in Israel. Freemasonry is a "high place" which has been constructed within our camp. We must 'pull it down' and restore the pure worship of Holy God in our midst.

My letter to the Administrative Committee concluded with:

"God bless you, as you seek the Lord's guidance in this critical matter. For His divine and providential purposes God chose you to be in this pivotal position at this very important time. Nothing could be more satisfying than to be trusted by God with such an important task."

Once again, there is no threat — only the challenge to do what is right. There is no desire to condemn Masons, but only to warn them about what they are doing. Condemnation is for Masonry, not Masons, because most of them are ignorant of the truth about the Lodge. Our desire is not to condemn ignorance, but to replace that ignorance with the truth.