

Chapter Nineteen:

Anti-Freemasonry Movements Among Baptists

Dr. Leazer's final paragraph in A Study Of Freemasonry states, in part:

"The Home Mission Board Interfaith Witness Department staff agree (sic) with Charleston Southern Baptists, who in 1798, advised that the matter of Southern Baptist membership in freemasonry 'be left with the judgment of the individual.'" (A Study Of Freemasonry, p. 71)

Dr. Leazer's source for this information was Robert G. Torbet's A History Of Baptists published by The Judson Press, Valley Forge in 1963. The original copyright date of this book was 1950 and an eighth printing was released in 1973.

Earlier, we reported Dr. Leazer's comment about a quote given by Ankerberg and Weldon. Leazer said: "The quote actually states." (A Study Of Freemasonry, p. 48) Reviewing Torbet, "the quote actually states":

"...When the (Masonic) Order was incorporated in South Carolina in 1791, the question of membership of Baptists in Masonic lodges troubled all of the churches in the Charleston Association." (Torbet, p. 276)

The first Masonic Lodge in America was in Charleston, South Carolina. Today, the influence of Masonry is still strongly felt in the churches in the surrounding areas. Torbet continued:

"In 1798 the Association found only one fault with the Order which would militate against 'serious Christians' joining it, and that was the vow of secrecy; yet it advised that the matter be left with the judgment of the individual. Not all churches adopted so tolerant a view, for there were cases in other parts of the state, especially in 1793 and 1801, where membership in the lodge brought church discipline." (Torbet, pp. 276-277)

Continuing to review the history of "anti-Masonic" movements among Baptists, particularly in the years 1822-1840, Torbet concludes:

"Actually, there was no unanimity of action among Baptist churches." (Torbet, p. 177)

This is a different impression than that which Dr. Leazer gave in A Study Of Freemasonry.

Charlton Southern Baptists In 1798?

Why wouldn't Dr. Leazer give Southern Baptists the opportunity to know that the opinion of the Charleston Association was not unanimous? Why would a scholar confuse the issue of who made this decision? Dr. Leazer said:

"The HMB IFW staff agree (sic) with Charleston Southern Baptists, who in 1798, advised that the matter of Southern Baptist membership in freemasonry 'be left with the judgment of the individual.'" (A Study Of Freemasonry, p. 71)

The Southern Baptist Convention was founded in 1845. The Baptist Convention of South Carolina was formed in 1821, and was the first state convention in Baptist life. (Baptist Theologians, Edited by Timothy George and David S. Dockery, Broadman Press, 1990, p. 143) One is left to wonder what Dr. Leazer refers to when he says, "Charleston Southern Baptists...in 1798". In reality, there were no "Southern Baptists" in 1798. Neither were there members of the Baptist Convention of South Carolina, for it would not be formed for 23 more years.

The Charleston Association was functioning from before 1757, and in 1773 it adopted The "Summary of Church Discipline". Richard Furman was the pastor of First Baptist Church in Charleston, South Carolina from 1787 until his death in August of 1825. For Dr. Leazer to state that Southern Baptists made a decision in 1798 is to ignore the facts.

Robert Torbet did not make this mistake; for he does not identify the Charleston Association as "Southern Baptists". Why would Dr. Leazer add this to Torbet's history and report it to Southern Baptists as fact? Why would Dr. Lewis, Dr. Robinson, the General Administrative Committee, and the entire board of trustees of the HMB not realize that Dr. Leazer's flawed report was not factual? If this were the only error in A Study Of Freemasonry, or

if A Study Of Freemasonry were not so totally biased, this error would be humorous. But, in light of Dr. Leazer's prejudice, one must wonder if this were not an intentional attempt to further influence Southern Baptists to "bless the Lodge."

The Kehukee Baptist Association Said NO!

One of the classics of Christian church history is Cushing Biggs Hassell's History Of The Church Of God From the Creation To A.D. 1885; Including Especially The History Of The Kehukee Primitive Baptist Association. Originally published in 1886, this volume contains a wealth of information about Baptists during the Colonial years and the early years of the newly founded Republic. While the roots of Southern Baptists are not in the Primitive Baptist tradition, the events which Hassell documents are instructive as to how churches dealt with Freemasonry about the same time that Dr. Leazer reports that "Charleston Southern Baptists" decided to do nothing about the Lodge.

Kehukee Baptist Association Excludes Masons in 1786

Chapter XX is entitled, "History of the Kehukee Primitive Baptists Association, and of the Primitive Baptists Of America from 1765 to 1802". On May 20, 1786 the Association met:

"At this Association it was held to be disorderly to hold communion with a church member who frequented a Free Mason Lodge. Thus it appears, that at this early period of her history, before Fullerism, Missionism, and the numerous modern auxiliaries to the church were known among Baptists, the Kehukee Association put her veto against mixing up her members with the secret societies of the world. When she reaffirmed this principle in 1827, about which there was such a hue and cry among missionaries and free-willers all over the land, it was no new thing with the Kehukee, for she had placed herself on that foundation forty-one years before!" (p. 706)

The Kehukee Baptist Association took the courageous stand, which the SBC should have taken. In 1822, the following entry is made concerning the October meeting of the Association:

"At this session of the Association it was represented that a practice prevailed, calculated to injure the feelings of the truly pious, by members of the Baptist Churches joining the Masonic Society and frequenting their lodges. The Association was then called on to advise the churches how to act in such cases. Whereupon the following select committee was appointed to draft an answer of advice." (p. 733)

This is all my motion at the 1992 SBC asked for, i.e., that churches be given guidance as to how to respond to the Lodge. Unlike the IFW, the Kehukee Baptist Association's select committee reported the following resolution:

'We, your committee appointed to draft an answer to advice to the churches relative to the above query, would recommend to the churches to admonish such persons thus acting to desist from attending Masonic Lodges, which we think is calculated to injure the feelings of the truly pious; and should they refuse to submit to such admonition, that it would be disorder in them, for which they should be dealt with accordingly.'

The Association concurred with the report, and ordered the same be spread on her Minutes. This was the second rebuke given by the Association to this practice, the first having been given in 1786." (pp. 733-734, emphasis added)

Kehukee Reaffirms Forty-One Year Old Decision

Chapter XXI continued, concerning matters in 1826 it states:

"Matters were now becoming so unsatisfactory to many of the churches and brethren in regard to...Masonic Lodges, Secret Societies generally, etc., etc., that it seemed necessary to take a decided stand against them, and thereby no longer tolerate these innovations..." (pp. 735-736)

A paper entitled, "Declaration of the Reformed Baptist Churches of North Carolina" was issued and circulated. It was brought up for discussion and adoption at the 1827 Association meeting. It was accepted, and stated in part:

"We further do unanimously agree that should any of the members of our churches join the fraternity of Masons, or being members, continue to visit the lodges and parades, we will not invite them to preach in our pulpits, believing them to be guilty of such practices; and we declare non-fellowship with them and such practices altogether." (p. 737, emphasis added)

The Association minutes reported, "In adopting this resolution there was not a dissenting voice. It was unanimous." (p. 737, emphasis added) Unlike the Charleston Association, the Kehukee Baptists' vote was unanimous.

Queries About Masonic Membership

In chapter XXIV, entitled, "Queries", states:

"It appears that Queries have been common among Baptists for a long period and have appeared in the proceedings of their Association, Union Meetings and monthly church meetings...The first we notice was submitted in the year 1777..." (p. 829)

In 1786, the following "query" appeared:

"Query 25: Is it orderly for a church to hold communion with a member who frequents the Free Mason Lodge? Answer: We think it disorderly." (p. 831)

Life Of Minister Threatened Over Freemasonry

In chapter XXVI, the following appears:

"The good feeling existing in this church was at length destroyed for a season. About the year 1826 or 1827 serious threats were made against Elder Lawrence's life; and he was warned by two or three messages in one week not to go to town on the succeeding Saturday to his appointment, as his life would be in danger...The difficulties arose in this church somewhat in this wise: Some of the members and also some of the visiting ministers frequented Masonic Lodges...to the grief of those who were opposed to such things..." (p. 877)

Churches Leave Associations Over Freemasonry Membership

Chapter XXVII states:

"Cadron Regular Predestinarian Baptist Association. — This association was organized in 1872, composed of six churches, five of which came from the Point Remove Association. They left the Point Remove Association because that body permitted her members to belong to and visit Masonic Lodges." (p. 889, emphasis added)

There has already been one report of a church in the Northeast disassociating with the SBC because of our compromising stand on Freemasonry.

Chapter XXVII further states:

"...Their reason for withdrawing from the Mount Pisgah Association, having been drawn up, were read and adopted. Those reasons were because the Mount Pisgah had embraced the numerous isms of the day. The Bethany held her regular sessions till 1850 inclusive, in harmony and love, nothing special transpired, except that she signified her disapprobation of her members unity with Free Masons or visiting their Lodges." (p. 902, emphasis added)

Chapter XXVII also relates the forming of the Mississippi Convention of Primitive Baptists in 1839. Hassell relates the following:

"This Association declared against the practice of church members visiting Masonic Lodges." (p. 903)

Chapter XXVII also relates the forming of the Little River Association near Raleigh, North Carolina in 1926. They gave some of the reasons for withdrawing from the Raleigh Association:

"...Also for continuing to fellowship, without reproof, those of her members who have joined themselves to and attend the Free Mason Lodges, which we believe to be contrary to Scripture." (p. 907-908, emphasis added)

The point of all of this, beyond the fascinating history of part of the church in America, is that there has been a tradition among conservative Christians of opposition to the Masonic Lodge. Dr. Leazer selectively addressed this matter, distorting the facts to support his conclusion, which, in fact, is only his preconception and his prejudice.

Mason George W. Truett Affirms Scottish Rite Position

The remaining half of Leazer's last paragraph in A Study Of Freemasonry states:

"They (the staff of the IFW) agree with George W. Truett who said, 'The right to private judgment is the crown jewel of humanity, and for any person or institution to dare to come between the soul and God is blasphemous impertinence and a defamation of the crown-rights of the Son of God.'" (A Study Of Freemasonry, p. 71)

Dr. Truett was an honored Mason. His statement is not from the Word of God; it is Masonic. It sounds like it came straight from Albert Pike's mouth or the Grand Lodge of Louisiana; both of whom said:

"...No man is entitled positively to assert that he is right, where other men, equally intelligent and equally well-informed, hold directly the opposite opinion." (A Study Of Freemasonry, p. 59, quoted from Morals and Dogma, p. 165, emphasis in original)

"No man truly obeys the Masonic law who merely tolerates those whose religious opinions are opposed to his own. ...The Mason's creed goes further than that..." (Morals and Dogma, p. 167)

George Truett could have written the Louisiana Grand Lodge's statement which said:

"When is a Man a Mason?....When he finds good in every faith that helps any man to lay hold of higher things, and to see majestic meanings in life, whatever the name of that faith may be." (Your Search For

Masonic Light: Master Mason Degree, Prepared by
the Committee on Masonic Education of The Grand
Lodge of the State of Louisiana F. & A. M., 1978, p. 41)

Masonic tolerance is founded on Masonic teaching that all faiths have equal value and that no faith is superior or absolutely true. How could Truett agree with this?

Furthermore, Truett's concept of "the crown jewel of humanity" is offensive. This is humanism. Humanity has no crown, and therefore has no crown jewel. Humanity rebelled against holy God, and forfeited the sinless state in which God created man. Why would Truett attempt to exalt man to the position of royalty?

Truett's statement, "to dare to come between the soul and God is blasphemous impertinence and a defamation of the crown-rights of the Son of God", is ridiculous when applied to membership in the Masonic Lodge. Applied to the right and responsibility of every man to know God and to read the Word of God, Truett's statement is true. But, the Southern Baptist Convention's declaration that the Masonic Lodge is incompatible with Christianity, that Southern Baptists should avoid membership in the Lodge, and that churches should not include Masons in the Leadership of their churches, does not abridge the "crown rights of the Son of God"!! Such declarations bring honor and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul Would Not Have Made A Good Mason

Paul said:

"...that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith; so do." (I Timothy 1:3b-4)

"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions, and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness; from such withdraw thyself." (I Timothy 6:3-5)

The Apostle Paul believed that Jesus Christ is God! He believed that the Word of God is absolute truth! He believed that truth was revealed by God, and not discovered by man. He believed this so strongly, the Bible said:

“...when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.”
(Acts 19:9)

He could not have been a member of the Lodge, but he would have preached the truth to them. The Apostle Paul would have preached and witnessed in a Masonic Lodge, until they spoke evil of “the Way”, which is the Way, the Truth, and the Life of Jesus Christ. The Masonic Lodge has spoken evil of Jesus Christ. Any and everyone who loves Jesus Christ, as evidenced by their obeying His commandments, should separate from the Masonic Lodge.

As for me, Dr. Lewis, I will stand with the Apostle Paul and the Word of God, rather than with Mason George Truett.