

Chapter Twenty:

"A Report On Freemasonry"

Dr. Lewis never spoke truer words than when he said, "Dr. Leazer's conduct was inappropriate... throughout this affair." (Florida Baptist Witness, November 25, 1993) The preceding chapters have indicated what an understatement Dr. Lewis' assessment of Leazer's conduct was.

In his November letter, Dr. Lewis indicated that at least by February of 1993, he had determined that Dr. Leazer's conduct had been "inaappropriate...throughout this affair", yet, Dr. Lewis continued to use Dr. Leazer's study as a basis for preparing "A Report On Freemasonry" for the SBC.

In chapter two (see p. 25), we reviewed Dr. Lewis' April 13, 1993 letter in which he 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' letter further stated:

"...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."

The difficult thing for Southern Baptists now is to determine how the President of the Home Mission Board, having determined that Dr. Leazer's conduct had been inappropriate, prepared a valid report to the Convention, based on the flawed document, A Study Of Freemasonry. What is even more important for the Convention to determine is how the President of the Home Mission Board, having determined that Dr. Leazer's conduct had been inappropriate throughout his preparation of A Study Of Freemasonry, could now continue to promote this document as having "provided the SBC, as well as the public at large, with a 'A Study Of Freemasonry' which is both fair and accurate and has yet to be seriously challenged." It is also important for the SBC to ask the

President of the HMB why it was necessary for a "serious challenge" to be raised to A Study Of Freemasonry before the HMB staff and trustees would admit the obvious: the study is non-scholarly, inadequate and flawed from its design to its decision.

Everyone Saw A Study Of Freemasonry No One Objected To It

Dr. Lewis began "A Report On Freemasonry" with a recitation of the motion presented at the Convention. He then said:

"We report That the Interfaith Witness Department of the Home Mission Board (HMB) has completed a study of Freemasonry and its various branches, as directed by the Convention, with special attention given to the compatibility of Freemasonry with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine. The study has been reviewed by the HMB Executive Council (president and vice presidents), by the Board of Directors' Administrative Committee (officers and committee chairmen) and by the Board of Directors of the HMB. The study has now been published as a 75-page document and is available for purchase on a cost-recovery basis from the Home Mission Board and/or Baptist Book Stores." ("A Report On Freemasonry", p. 1)

After reading the first nineteen chapters of this critique, these words may prove to be embarrassing to all those who supposedly did such a thorough job of reviewing Dr. Leazer's work. It particularly should be embarrassing to the President of the Board who had determined in February of 1993 that Leazer was "inappropriate...throughout this affair", and who continued into late 1993 praising the product of Leazer's inappropriate conduct, i.e., A Study Of Freemasonry.

Special Attention Given To The Compatibility Of Freemasonry With Christianity

Dr. Lewis reported that the HMB had done a study with "special attention given to the compatibility of Freemasonry with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine." In reality, that should have been the entire study, not just the "special attention", among

other issues discussed. The design of Dr. Leazer's study has been an issue from the beginning, as I have documented. The flawed design resulted in a faulty document.

Dr. Lewis stated in his November, 1993 letter to the Florida Baptist Witness:

"The study was to focus on the beliefs and teachings of Freemasonry, not on what individuals claimed about Freemasonry."

This is what the Convention commissioned; this is not what Dr. Leazer produced, and it should have been obvious to Dr. Lewis at least as early as February of 1993.

Events Leading Up To the Trustees Voting On "A Report On Freemasonry"

Dr. Lewis went on to say:

"We further report That the Administrative Committee of the Board of Directors has prepared this printed report to the Convention and that it has been reviewed and approved by action of the Board of Directors, meeting March 17, 1993, in Atlanta, Ga."

This meeting took place after Dr. Lewis had determined that Dr. Leazer's conduct had been "inappropriate...throughout this affair." Elsewhere Dr. Lewis declared that the Administrative Committee spent the "larger part of a day" going over this report, "line-by-line", yet they didn't even object to Dr. Leazer's stating that there were Southern Baptists in Charleston, South Carolina in 1798!

The truth is that the Board of Directors were given approximately one hour, in an unofficial, and therefore unrecorded, discussion session to address A Study Of Freemasonry and "A Report On Freemasonry". The truth is that the Board of Directors only received this 75-page study and 6-page report a few days before their meeting, hardly enough time to consider it seriously. Later, we will discuss the significant change made in the report and recommendation, after several trustees indicated in this discussion that the document was unacceptable.

The truth is that when the motion to accept "A Report On Freemasonry" was presented to the Board of Directors officially at the HMB trustee board meeting, the following events took place:

1. The motion was made.
2. Without discussion, a call for the question was made.
3. The vote was taken and the motion was passed.

According to several trustees, approximately sixteen trustees had their hands in the air, when a trustee came to the microphone, instantly upon the motion's introduction, and called for the question. The chairman of the board, Dr. Ron Phillips, accepted the call for the question, discussion was not allowed, and the motion passed.

As a matter of parliamentary procedure, a call for the question, before a reasonable time for discussion has been allowed, is out of order and should have been so moved by Dr. Phillips. One is left to wonder why the Chairman of the Trustees, the President of the HMB, and the trustee who made the motion allowed such a high-handed and illegal motion to be voted upon?

It is left for us to wonder how the Convention would have responded to "A Report On Freemasonry" if they had known of these dynamics in its "acceptance" by the trustees.

Charities Commended

Dr. Lewis' next paragraph stated:

"We commend The Masonic Order for its many charitable endeavors such as the operation of 22 Shriners hospitals, 19 orthopedic hospitals, and 3 burns institutes with noteworthy success in treatment, research, and education, often providing free treatment to children under 18 years of age. Also, we commend support of the Foundation for the Prevention of Drug and Alcohol Abuse Among Children and the Eastern Star sponsorship of Masonic Homes for the Aged. These, with many other charitable and benevolent endeavors, are commendable." ("A Report On Freemasonry", pp. 1-2)

Dr. Lewis was obviously greatly influenced by A Study Of Freemasonry, as Dr. Leazer was not able to look beyond the "good works" of the Masons to see the incompatibility of the Lodge with Christianity. What possible relevance does this have to the commission of the Convention? Why does Dr. Lewis feel the need to ingratiate himself to the Lodge? Is he still concerned, as he stated June 18, 1992:

"Any position we take — either pro-Masons or against Masons or neutral — will generate a certain amount of ire and wrath and thus hurt missions." (Arkansas Baptist NewsMagazine, June 18, 1992, p. 15)

If Masons believe that "good works" are necessary to save them — the Trestle-Board of their life — aren't these charities further evidence of the incompatibility of the Lodge with Christianity?

Dr. Leazer, and thus, Dr. Lewis were greatly influenced by Jim Tresner. In Perspectives, Responses & Reflections, Tresner said:

"Shriners raise funds for the philanthropies with football games, the Shrine Circus, rodeos, and parades. Shriners bear the entire cost of their costumes and equipment themselves. All funds raised are given to the charitable projects." (p. 12)

How truthful is this statement? Why didn't Drs. Leazer and Lewis investigate the questions about the Shrine charities which were raised in The SBC and Freemasonry, Volume II, which stated, on page 115:

"...The Shrine was founded in September, 1872 by several men in New York 'dedicated to fun and fellowship.' In 1920, many Shriners had become concerned about their 'playboys and jesters' image and suggested that they do something to improve their press. They founded the first Shriners Hospital in 1922." (Orlando Sentinel, June, 1986)

Apparently, the motivation for all of the Shriners' charities was originally to rehabilitate the image of the "drunken Shriners." Perhaps not much has changed, as the same Orlando Sentinel article related:

"In 1984, 76 Shrine Temples had a total income of \$39.8 million and expenditures of \$35.4 million. Based on I.R.S. reports filed by those temples it is estimated the Shrine's network of 185 temples had a total income of about \$97 million and spent \$86.3 million. Of that an estimated \$15 million was spent on conventions and parties and \$12 million went to the Shrine hospitals."

The lack of altruism of the Lodge may be reflected by the lack of generosity of the Shrine. The Shrine is apparently much more

generous with itself for parties than it is with crippled children. The Orlando Sentinel article concluded with a comment about how much money a Mason spends in order to get elected an officer in the Shrine. It said:

"A Shriner may spend \$180,000 to get elected to the Imperial Divan, the organization's national board of directors. Once elected, however, years of perks help make up for the cost."

Did Jim Tresner tell Dr. Leazer the truth about the Shriners? The Orlando Sentinel says, "No!" The end does not justify the means in Christian ethics, and neither is the act divorced from its motive. The spirit of Freemasonry is not seen in its charity, but in its incompatibility with the Christian faith..

Dr. Lewis Declares Many Tenets and Teachings Of Some Grand Lodges Compatible With Christianity

Dr. Lewis' next paragraph stated:

"We recognize That many of the tenets and teachings of some of the Grand Lodges could be considered compatible with, and even supportive of, Christian faith and practice, such as the strong emphasis on honesty, integrity, industry, and character and the insistence that every member believe in God. Some Grand Lodges have written into their monitors, guidelines, and rituals explicit references to Christian faith, including exact quotes from the Bible, such as in the ritual constituting a new lodge in the Monitor of the Lodge of the Grand Lodge of Texas:

'I now solemnly consecrate this lodge to the honor and glory of Jehovah, the Grand Architect of the Universe.'"

Who would want to call this statement an "explicit reference to the Christian faith" by the Texas Grand Lodge? It is disappointing to see Dr. Lewis quote eight extraneous statements from thousands of pages of Masonic literature, and conclude therefrom that Masonry has "many tenets and teachings which could be considered compatible with Christianity."

Be Ye Moral or Be Ye Holy

It is also disappointing to see Dr. Lewis associate morality, i.e., honesty, integrity, industry and character, as the essential dynamic of the Christian faith, such that Masonry's call for morality causes him to find a point of agreement between Freemasonry and Christianity.

The Bible does not say, "Be ye moral for the Lord your God is moral"; the Bible commands, "Be ye holy for the Lord your God is holy." Holiness will always be manifested in human behavior by morality, but morality, pursued as an initial and primary goal, will never result in holiness. Rather than being a point of compatibility, Dr. Lewis' statement demonstrates one of the principle points of incompatibility between Freemasonry and the Christian faith. There are remarkable differences between holiness and morality; each difference further clarifies this point.

Dr. Lewis, The Scottish Rite and the 18th Degree

It is enough to demonstrate the inadequacy of Dr. Lewis' summary of the "Christian character of Freemasonry" by examining only one of his quotes. On page three of "A Report On Freemasonry", Dr. Lewis said:

"...Or that found in the Scottish Rite 18th degree:
Wherein they [older forms of religion] were deficient
[Masonry] found in the New Law of Love, preached
by Jesus of Nazareth, and which He sealed with His
blood."

Dr. Lewis references an unpublished manuscript, also used by Dr. Leazer, entitled, Ritual of the 15th Degree to the 18th Degree of the Scottish Rite. This is a direct quote from page eighty-six of Jim Tresner's Perspectives, Responses & Reflections! It is also almost a direct quote from Morals and Dogma in which Albert Pike said:

"Jesus of Nazareth, the 'Son of man,' is the expounder
of the new Law of Love...The Gospel of Love
He sealed with His life..." (Morals and Dogma,
pp. 309-310)

This quote appears almost at the conclusion of the lecture on the eighteenth degree of Scottish Rite Masonry. Perhaps the SBC would like to hear more of the conclusion of Pike's lecture on that degree:

"Dying thus, He bequeathed His teachings to man as an inestimable inheritance. Perverted and corrupted, they have served as a basis for many creeds, and been even made the warrant for intolerance and persecution. We here teach them in their purity. They are our Masonry; for to them good men of all creeds can subscribe.

...We, like (Philo, the Greek Jew), recognize all Initiates as our Brothers. We belong to no one creed or school. In all religions there is a basis of Truth; in all there is pure Morality. All that teach the cardinal tenets of Masonry we respect; all teachers and reformers of mankind we admire and revere.

Masonry also has her mission to perform. With her traditions reaching back to the earliest times, and here symbols dating further back than even the monumental history of Egypt extends, she invites all men of all religions to enlist under her banners and to war against evil, ignorance, and wrong. You are now her knight, and to her service your sword is consecrated. May you prove a worthy soldier in a worthy cause." (Morals and Dogma, pp. 310-311)

Jesus Christ is a "teacher or reformer" whom Pike admires and reveres? Dr. Lewis doesn't agree with that. Why wouldn't he hold the Masons accountable for it. There is no mention of Christ's resurrection — without doubt the pivotal doctrine in the Christian faith — only His "dying thus." Religions that are favored by Freemasonry are the ones that teach "the cardinal tenets of Masonry." Once again, we see that it is the belief of Masonry that religion came from Masonry, not Masonry from religion!

What Else Does Pike Say In 18th Degree?

Perhaps Southern Baptist would like to hear more of the "Christian" teaching in the 18th Scottish Rite Degree:

"Chrishna, the Hindoo Redeemer, was cradled and educated among Shepherds. A Tyrant, at the time of his birth, ordered all the male children to be slain. He performed miracles, say his legends, even raising the dead. He washed the feet of the Brahmins, and was meek and lowly of spirit. He was born of a Virgin;

descended to Hell, rose again, ascended to Heaven, charged his disciples to teach his doctrines, and gave them the gift of miracles." (Morals and Dogma, p. 272)

This passage is quoted in the Scottish Rite publication, The Bible in *Morals and Dogma* (pp. 87, 88) as an example of how Pike used the Bible. What Southern Baptist would agree that this quote is evidence of positive regard for the Bible? Why wouldn't Dr. Lewis share this quote from the Scottish Rite's 18th Degree, as he did the one suggested by Jim Tresner?

These thoughts are not reported by Pike as what others believe; they are reported by Pike as fact, with a disclaimer attached only to the claim of miracles.

The name of this degree is Knight Rose Croix. This is the same name in A Bridge To Light, Morals and Dogma, and Scotch Rite Masonry Illustrated. Because the name of the degree bears the word "cross", surely this refers to the Christian cross, since Dr. Lewis assures us that this is one of the Scottish Rite degrees that demonstrates the support of Christianity by Freemasonry. What does Pike say?

"The Cross has been a sacred symbol from the earliest Antiquity....But its peculiar meaning in this Degree, is that given to it by the Ancient Egyptians..." (Morals and Dogma, p. 290, emphasis in original)

But, surely, even though the cross does not have unique or even significant Christian meanings, the degree speaks highly of the Christian faith. What does Pike say?

"The Religion of Love (Christianity) proved to be, for seventeen long centuries, as much the Religion of Hate, and infinitely more the Religion of Persecution, than Mahometanism, its unconquerable rival." (Morals and Dogma, p. 294, emphasis added)

But, surely the fundamental nature of God as light is affirmed by this "Christian" degree. Remember, Masonic Light, according to Dr. Leazer (A Study Of Freemasonry, p. 54) simply means a search for truth. What does Pike say?

"According to the Kabalah, as according to the doctrines of Zoroaster, everything that exists has emanated from a source of infinite light...The world was

His Revelation, God revealed; and subsisted only in Him ...You see, my brother, what is the meaning of Masonic 'light'... (Morals and Dogma, pp. 286-287, emphasis added)

"Masonic Light" is not so innocent, as the lecture of the 18th Degree demonstrates.

Wait! What Does A Bridge To Light Say?

"But, wait!", Drs. Lewis and Leazer exclaim, "that's Morals and Dogma. What does A Bridge To Light have to say about the 18th Degree, Knight of the Rose Croix?" A Bridge To Light states:

"This degree sets forth the coming of the New Law, the Law of Love, proclaimed in unmistakable terms by Jesus of Nazareth after centuries of spiritual and intellectual darkness in the world when the Sacred Word was again lost. The supreme message brought to the world at that time was the proclamation of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. This proclamation, though presented by a specific historical figure, is not to be taken as an advocacy of a particular religious belief." (A Bridge To Light, p. 143, emphasis added)

The intent of the 18th Degree of Scottish Rite Masonry is not, as Dr. Lewis suggests, to support the Christian faith; it is to support the Masonic faith. Dr. Lewis didn't know that, because he relied upon Dr. Leazer's research, and Dr. Leazer's research left Dr. Lewis in the lurch! Would Southern Baptists agree that Jesus of Nazareth, not Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, brought a message which is properly characterized by the Masonic ideals of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man? There is no mention of worship, of sacrifice. There is no mention of grace, of mercy, of atonement.

Dr. Lewis quoted the ceremony of the 18th Degree as evidence:

"That many of the tenets and teachings of some of the Grand Lodges could be considered compatible with, and even supportive of, Christian faith and practice, such as the strong emphasis on honesty, integrity, industry, and character and the insistence that every member believe in God. Some Grand Lodges have

written into their monitors, guidelines, and rituals explicit references to Christian faith, including exact quotes from the Bible..." ("A Report On Freemasonry", p. 2)

The 18th Degree and Dr. Lewis' quote from it certainly does not qualify for something that is "supportive of, Christian faith and practice", according to A Bridge To Light. But, then, Dr. Lewis' report was written with Dr. Leazer's A Study Of Freemasonry as its basis. We should expect Dr. Lewis to make the same mistakes which Dr. Leazer made. He does! (See A Study Of Freemasonry, pp. 45-46)

18th Degree Teaches Man Is Own Saviour

To make the point about the 18th Degree, and about the nature of Freemasonry "crystal clear", read the following statements from A Bridge To Light's discussion of that degree:

"...we are led through a myriad of examples from the many and diverse beliefs of the ancients which teach us that neither the cross as a symbol nor the notion of a messiah are uniquely Christian. They are manifestations of religious truths appropriate to the people who perceived them....The instructions on the concept of a messiah are suggestive only and are not to be taken as official doctrine or dogma of Freemasonry in general, or the Scottish Rite in particular..." (A Bridge To Light, pp. 143-144, emphasis added)

The beliefs of other religions are taught as facts, but the beliefs of Christianity are trivialized.

"...Man has made not only God, but the Devil, in his own image." (A Bridge To Light, p. 144, emphasis added)

Man made God and the Devil in man's image? This is Christian? Why didn't Jim Tresner, Gary Leazer and Larry Lewis tell this to the SBC?

"The hope of immortality is the beginning of religion. We see its evidence in the earliest cultures. All the major religions of the world promise immortality in the presence of God to justify virtue and the threat of immortality without God to inhibit vice. We teach

that immortality is a natural consequence of the character of the soul itself." (A Bridge To Light, p. 146, emphasis added)

What does it mean, "We teach that immortality is a natural consequence of the character of the soul itself"? It means that man saves himself through his good works!

The Cross and A Bridge To Light

What does A Bridge To Light say about the symbol of the cross?

"The ancient manifestations of this symbol are, in general, reviewed by Pike in the lecture in Morals and Dogma and so we need not be detained by repetition. We might add, however, to Pike's observation that the cross was a sign of the Persian deity Mithra, that the mercenaries who revered this god were thus able to fight in the Christian emperor Constantine's army under a standard bearing this symbol since to them it represented light. We should also add to Pike's review in the lecture for this degree that the equal-armed cross was a symbol of the medieval alchemists for whom it represent the four elements: air, earth, fire and water...The cross in Masonry is a statement of infinity..." (A Bridge To Light, pp. 148-149, emphasis added)

Thus, we find that the inadequate A Study of Freemasonry found its way into "A Report On Freemasonry", because Dr. Lewis accepted the research of a man whose conduct had been "inappropriate...throughout this affair." He also adopted, unknowingly I suspect, Dr. Leazer's dependency upon Jim Tresner. The eight statements quoted by Dr. Lewis are not evidences of the compatibility of Freemasonry with Christianity; they are evidences of the capability of men of God to ignore the truth.

Dr. Lewis' Report Mistaken

Dr. Lewis concludes the section on the praise of the Lodge with the statement:

"To be sure, not all Grand Lodges affirm Christian doctrine, and many do not declare Jesus as the unique

Son of God; but many do, and for this we commend them." ("A Report On Freemasonry", page 4, emphasis added)

It will be recalled from chapter one (see p. 7), that this statement provided part of the third reason for writing this critique. In early September, 1993, I received a copy of a letter written to Dr. Larry Lewis which said:

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

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

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

This admission undercuts the objectivity of Dr. Lewis' "A Report On Freemasonry". Not only was it based on bad information, i.e., A Study Of Freemasonry, but it also went further than even Dr. Leazer went. It went so far as to affirm positive things about the Lodge which are not factual.

Many Tenets And Teachings Of Freemasonry Not Compatible With Christianity

Dr. Lewis then said:

We conclude That Many tenets and teachings of Freemasonry are not compatible with Christianity or Southern Baptist doctrine:

1. The prevalent use of offensive concepts, titles, and terms such as 'Worshipful Master' for the leader of a lodge; references to their buildings as 'mosques,' 'shrines,' or 'temples'; and the use of words such

as 'Abaddon' and 'Jah-Bul-On,' the so-called secret name of God. To many, these terms are not only offensive but sacriligious." ("A Report On Freemasonry", p. 4)

Dr. Leazer's influence re-emerges. Dr. Lewis said, "To many, these terms are not only offensive but sacriligious." Southern Baptists want to know the conclusion of the HMB and its President. It is legitimate to ask, "What think ye, Dr. Lewis?" Why aren't these ideas offensive and sacriligious to a leader among Southern Baptists?

Oaths and Obligations Sincerely Taken

Dr. Lewis continued:

"2. The use of archaic, offensive rituals and so-called 'bloody oaths' or 'obligations,' among these being that promised by the Entered Apprentice....Or that of the Fellow Craft degree....Or that of other advanced degrees with required rituals considered by man to be pagan and incompatible with Christian faith and practice.

Even though these oaths, obligations, and rituals may or may not be taken seriously by the initiate, it is inappropriate for a Christian to 'sincerely promise and swear,' with a hand on the Holy Bible, any such promises or oaths, or to participate in any such pagan rituals.'" ("A Report On Freemasonry", pp. 4-5)

"Inappropriate" may be a correct term for Dr. Leazer's conduct of this study, as Dr. Lewis pointed out in the Florida Baptist Witness, but it is hardly adequate to express the revulsion any believer, and particularly a Christian leader, ought to have to this obvious violation of the Word of God. It seems that Dr. Lewis has also adopted Dr. Leazer's habit of understatement to attempt to conceal the sin of belonging to the Masonic Lodge.

Occultic and Pagan Writings of Masonic Leaders

Dr. Lewis continued with a review of the third incompatibility of Freemasonry and Christianity:

- "3. The recommended readings, in pursuance of advanced degrees, of religions and philosophies, which are undeniably pagan and/or occultic, such as much of the writings of Albert Pike, Albert Mackey, Manly Hall, Rex Hutchins, W. L. Wilmshurst, and other such authors; along with their works, such as Morals and Dogma, A Bridge To Light, An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, and The Meaning of Masonry." ("A Report On Freemasonry", p. 5)

It is refreshing to know that Dr. Lewis is aware of these books' existence. Why did he not instruct Dr. Leazer to summarize these books for A Study Of Freemasonry? Or, when he read A Study Of Freemasonry line-by-line, why didn't he raise any objections to the obvious contradictions which were there? Knowing these books exist and knowing their nature to be incompatibility with Christianity, should have been sufficient basis for Dr. Lewis raising serious questions about A Study Of Freemasonry. Yet, he didn't! Why?

Place Of the Bible In Freemasonry

Dr. Lewis continued with the fourth point of incompatibility:

- "4. The reference to the Bible placed on the altar of the Lodge as the 'furniture of the lodge,' comparing it to the square and compass rather than giving it the supreme place in the lodge." ("A Report On Freemasonry", p. 5)

To get so upset about the Bible being called a piece of furniture and to ignore the contemptuous manner in which the Scriptures are used by Masons seems to make one guilty of straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel!

Some May Understand Light As Salvation

Dr. Lewis continued with the fifth point of incompatibility:

"5. The prevalent use of the term 'light,' which some may understand as a reference to salvation rather than knowledge or truth." ("A Report On Freemasonry", p. 5)

Totally influenced by Dr. Leazer's study, Dr. Lewis adopts his technique. It doesn't make any difference what "some may understand." What do the Masons say? What does "light" mean to Masons? If Dr. Lewis wants to know, he only has to read this critique.

Implication Salvation Obtained By Good Works

Dr. Lewis identified the sixth area of incompatibility:

"6. The implication that salvation may be attained by any one's good works, implicit in the statement found in some Masonic writings that 'Masonry is continually reminded of that purity of life and conduct which is necessary to obtain admittance into the Celestial Lodge above where the Supreme Architect of the Universe presides.' Even though many Masons understand the 'purity of life and conduct' can only be achieved through faith in Jesus Christ, others may be led to believe they can earn salvation by living a pure life with good conduct." ("A Report On Freemasonry", pp. 5-6)

Here Dr. Lewis directly contradicts Dr. Leazer. Yet, the works righteousness doctrine of the Lodge is not an "implication." It is an overt belief. And, Dr. Lewis falls under Dr. Leazer's influence, because he accepts Dr. Leazer's adding to the words of Masons when he said:

"Even though many Masons understand the 'purity of life and conduct' can only be achieved through faith in Jesus Christ..."

As with Dr. Leazer, I would ask Dr. Lewis to quote the official Masonic sources, i.e., Grand Lodge or general society of Masons, which declares this. There are none.

Heresy Of Universalism

The seventh point of incompatibility, identified by Dr. Lewis is:

"7. The heresy of universalism (the belief all people will eventually be saved), which permeates the writings of many Masonic authors, which is a doctrine inconsistent with New Testament teaching." ("A Report on Freemasonry", p. 5)

At last, Dr. Lewis makes an affirmative statement, negative in implication about the Lodge, and does not try to modify it into meaninglessness. He is right; the Lodge does teach this heresy, and we have proved it.

Racism In the Lodge

The eighth point of incompatibility is:

"8. The refusal of most lodges (although not all) to admit for membership African-Americans." ("A Report On Freemasonry", p. 5)

There is no misunderstanding that "most" does not mean all; therefore, Dr. Lewis' redundant statement "most lodges (although not all)" seems to reflect a degree of discomfort with telling the truth about the Masonic Lodge. The Lodge is racist. That is obvious to any objective scholar.

There were actually three documents on Freemasonry prepared by the HMB for the SBC. The first was A Study Of Freemasonry. Much more could be said about this document than has been said, but enough has been said for now. The second is "A Report On Freemasonry". This brief critique of that document demonstrates how totally influenced it was by the defective A Study Of Freemasonry. Both documents are flawed and should be rejected by Southern Baptists.

Recommendation To The Southern Baptist Convention

The third document is a document within a document; it is the recommendation to the SBC by the HMB. It is contained in Dr. Lewis' report's concluding paragraph, which states:

"IN SUMMARY In light of the fact that many tenets and teachings of Freemasonry are not compatible

with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine, while others are compatible with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine, we therefore recommend that consistent with our denomination's deep convictions regarding the priesthood of the believer and the autonomy of the local church, membership in a Masonic Order be a matter of personal conscience. Therefore, we exhort Southern Baptists to prayerfully and carefully evaluate Freemasonry in light of the Lordship of Christ, the teachings of the Scripture, and the findings of this report, as led by the Holy Spirit of God." ("A Report On Freemasonry", p. 5)

Each statement in this recommendation will be discussed separately:

1. **"In light of the fact that many tenets and teachings of Freemasonry are not compatible with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine..."**

As Dr. Lewis originally wrote this statement, it stated, "In light of the fact that many tenets and teachings of Freemasonry are compatible with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine...". Dr. Lewis indicated he sensed the direct leadership of the Lord, while writing this report. But, when the informal trustee discussion took place, several trustees indicated that this was unacceptable and argued that it represented an endorsement of the Lodge. Therefore, the General Administrative Committee met that same night and changed the wording to read as it was reported to the Convention. Had it not been for the courage of two or three trustees, the Convention would have faced Dr. Lewis' original statement. Based on the evidence in this volume, it is inconceivable to this author that God would lead a Christian leader to endorse the Masonic Lodge as compatible with the faith of Jesus Christ.

2. **"...while others are compatible with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine..."**

This has not been proved. Dr. Leazer has alleged such, and Dr. Lewis has repeated that assertion. But, it has never been proved that the Masonic Lodge in its teaching and practice, at any point, is compatible with Christianity.

3. "...we therefore recommend that consistent with our denomination's deep convictions regarding the priesthood of the believer and the autonomy of the local church..."

The Conservatives now run the SBC. When they were in the wings of the Convention, they often lamented the use of the priesthood of the believer as an escape hatch for every liberal distortion of the Gospel which anyone proposed. Now the Conservatives do the same thing.

The question of the compatibility of Freemasonry and Christianity has nothing to do with the priesthood of the believer. Once the Convention declares that Freemasonry is incompatibility with Christianity, then every believer has the priestly right and responsibility to apply the truth to his or her own life. But, the leadership of the Convention cannot legitimately distort this doctrine in order to avoid its responsibility to declare the truth.

The same is true of local church autonomy. No one imagines, least of all this author, that the SBC would dictate to any local church what to do about Freemasonry. The preface to The SBC and Freemasonry, Volume I clearly enunciates Southern Baptist ecclesiology in this matter. One has to wonder if the HMB only used this as a shibboleth in which to hide their fear of the Lodge. It certainly has nothing to do with an objective determination of the incompatibility of Freemasonry and Christianity.

The Scottish Rite Journal reported in August of 1993:

"...Dr. Brad Allen...(opposed) an amendment to brand Masonic teachings as a 'mixture of paganism and Christianity.' Allen asserted such an anti-Masonic amendment would 'strike two of the dearest things to the Baptist heart.' The priesthood of the believer and the autonomy of the local church. He continued saying, 'If we can't trust the soul competence of the believer in Jesus Christ to do the right thing, we're sunk.'"

In chapter one of this volume, I asked:

"Why would Brad Allen see the priesthood of the believer and the autonomy of the local church as impediments to the speaking of the truth? Why would it encumber each man's access to God, i.e., the priesthood of the believer, and why would it encumber the local church's responsibility to follow God, i.e.,

the autonomy of the local church, for the SBC to declare the evil of Freemasonry? Truth is never an encumbrance to soul liberty. The only encumbrance to liberty is a self-imposed ignorance which is born of fear."

4. "....membership in a Masonic Order be a matter of personal conscience..."

How completely Masonic, as Dr. Leazer would say. This is what Mason George W. Truett said, and this was the conclusion of the Masonic Lodge. Recall from chapter one, C. Fred Kleinknecht's article entitled, "Soul Competence and the SBC", published in the August, 1993, issue of the Scottish Rite Journal; he said:

"Appropriately Masonry's view of civil liberty, church autonomy, and the central importance of personal conscience was confirmed by overwhelming vote of the ...(SBC) on June 16, 1993..."

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

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

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

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

Are we now allied with the Masonic Lodge? Is this what the HMB's trustees intended? Have Southern Baptists abandoned the Word of God and made "individual conscience" the supreme rule of faith? Can we now believe anything, teach anything, do

anything that we wish to do, and still be Southern Baptist? Is it now, as it was in the days of the Judges, "Everyman doing what is right in his own eyes"?

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

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

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

The SBC would do well to follow the example of the Kehukee Baptist Association, rather than the Charleston Association.

- 5. "Therefore, we exhort Southern Baptists to prayerfully and carefully evaluate Freemasonry in light of the Lordship of Christ, the teachings of the Scripture, and the findings of this report, as led by the Holy Spirit of God."**

This is a good statement. Anything, other than active involvement in a church of baptized believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, falls short, when evaluated in light of:

- a. The Lordship of Christ**
- b. The teachings of the Scripture**
- c. And the findings of this report, as led by the Holy Spirit of God.**

If Dr. Lewis were emphasizing the eight points of the incompatibility of Freemasonry and Christianity, as weakly as they are stated, and if he were emphasizing the recommendation of the "many tenets and teachings of Freemasonry which are incompatible with Christianity", and if he were emphasizing this final

statement of how each individual was to evaluate their decisions about the Lodge, **there would be little confusion.** But, as Dr. Lewis praises Dr. Leazer's study, he creates confusion, because as Dr. Leazer said to the Southeast Masonic Conference, his study does not support Dr. Lewis' report to the Convention, and as we have shown, **the facts do not support the weak report which Dr. Lewis wrote.**