

## FREEMASONRY AND THE CHRISTIAN

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*Recently the largest Protestant denomination has ruled that membership in the Lodge is up to one's individual conscience. This position is contrary to a traditional Christian view of Freemasonry. Freemasonry is a fraternal order that advocates development of virtue and character among its members, as the authors can attest through their own past membership in it. The soteriology of Freemasonry is strongly antibiblical, as several of its teachings indicate—teachings associated with the Lambskin Apron, how to prepare for heaven, the Perfect Ashlar, the Common Gavel, and how to live a worthwhile life. Christian membership in the Lodge is, therefore, impossible to justify in light of Scriptural teachings.*

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### RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In 1992, Southern Baptist James Holly requested that the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) conduct an investigation of Freemasonry. The SBC agreed and in June of 1993 approved a study of Freemasonry<sup>2</sup> which, though stating that some of Freemasonry is

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<sup>2</sup>*A Study of Freemasonry* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1993). See also *A Report on Freemasonry* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1993).

incompatible with Christianity, concluded that membership in the Lodge is a matter of individual conscience.<sup>3</sup> This evaluation by the SBC has served as an endorsement of the Lodge.<sup>4</sup> In *The Scottish Rite Journal*, a Masonic periodical, one Mason has written,

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<sup>3</sup>Report 6.

<sup>4</sup>Joe Maxwell, "Baptist Battle over Freemasonry Erupts Anew," *Christian Research Journal* 16/2 (Fall 1993):41; John Weldon, "The Masonic Lodge and the Christian Conscience," *Christian Research Journal* 16/3 (Winter 1994):21.

Because of your support, the vote of the Southern Baptist Convention is a historic and positive turning point for Freemasonry. Basically, it is a vitalization of our Fraternity by America's largest Protestant denomination after nearly a year of thorough, scholarly study. At the same time, it is a call to renewed effort on the part of all Freemasons today to re-energize our Fraternity and move forward to fulfilling its mission as the world's foremost proponent of the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God.<sup>5</sup>

The conclusion of the SBC surprised many who believe that the essential tenets of Freemasonry are contrary to those of Christianity. An overwhelming number of Christian denominations have condemned Freemasonry, including the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist Church of England, the Wesleyan Methodist Church, the Russian Orthodox Church, the Synod Anglican Church of England, the Assemblies of God, the Church of the Nazarene, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Christian Reformed Church in America, the Evangelical Mennonite Church, the Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland, General Association of Regular Baptist Churches, Grace Brethren, Independent Fundamentalist Churches of America, The Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the Baptist Union of Scotland, The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and the Presbyterian Church in America.<sup>6</sup> Also, many prominent Christians have denounced the Lodge, including D. L. Moody, Jonathan Blanchard, Charles Blanchard, Alva McClain, Walter Martin, and Charles Finney.<sup>7</sup> So the Southern Baptist Convention is not in agreement with other Christians concerning the teachings of Masonry and Christian participation in it.<sup>8</sup> Christian membership in the Masonic Lodge is an issue that many churches must face and one that

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<sup>5</sup>*The Scottish Rite Journal* (August 1993), cited by Weldon, "Masonic Lodge" 21.

<sup>6</sup>Maxwell, "Baptist Battle" 42; Dale A. Byers, *I Left the Lodge* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1988) 114-18.

<sup>7</sup>Jack Harris, *Freemasonry: The Invisible Cult In Our Midst* (Chattanooga, TN: Global Publishers, 1983) 111-12; Maxwell, "Masonic Lodge" 41; Alva J. McClain, *Freemasonry and Christianity* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1951) 32.

<sup>8</sup>This disagreement is possibly traceable to the great number of Masons in the SBC (see Weldon, "Masonic Lodge" 39). Holly estimates the number to be between 500,000 and 1.3 million (Maxwell, "Baptist Battle" 42).

the SBC's *Report* has clouded.<sup>9</sup>

This essay will explain the Lodge, tell of the authors' involvement in it, and their reasons for leaving it.

#### AN OVERVIEW OF FREEMASONRY

No formal definition of Freemasonry exists in its official literature,<sup>10</sup> but several descriptions are available elsewhere. For example, the *Monitor* says this of Freemasonry: "It is an institution having for its foundation the practice of the social and moral virtues."<sup>11</sup> It also makes the following statement:

By speculative Masonry we learn to subdue the passions, act upon the Square, keep a tongue of good report, maintain secrecy, and practice charity. It is so far interwoven with religion as to lay us under obligations to pay that rational homage to the Deity which at once constitutes our duty and our happiness.<sup>12</sup>

Another statement reveals more about the nature of Freemasonry:

Masonry is a progressive moral science, divided into different degrees; and, as its principles and mystic ceremonies are regularly developed and illustrated, it is intended and hoped that they will make a deep and lasting impression upon your mind.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Weldon, "Masonic Lodge" 22.

<sup>10</sup>*The Monitor and Officers' Manual* is the official textbook of the Lodge (*The Monitor and Officers' Manual*, rev. ed. [n.p.: Grand Lodge of California, 1985] 35). It contains *verbatim* extractions of teachings from the secret degree work (i.e., initiation ceremonies). The extractions printed in the *Monitor* become non-secret in the process of being so reproduced. This is important because a Mason will not discuss secret teachings with non-Masons. For this reason this analysis in most cases refers to the *Monitor*. Some Masons refuse to discuss the teachings of even the *Monitor*, considering them to be secret. They are not, however. The teachings published in the *Monitor* are open for discussion by any Mason.

Each candidate learns these doctrines at the initiation ceremonies. He receives a copy of the *Monitor* and must memorize selections.

The present discussion refers to the California *Monitor*, and though it is typical of those in other jurisdictions, the content of the *Monitor* may vary slightly from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. The essential doctrine remains the same, however.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 27.

The *Monitor* also says,

The Trowel is an instrument made use of by operative Masons to spread the cement which unites the building into one common mass; but we, as Free and Accepted Masons, are taught to make free use of it for the more noble and glorious purpose of spreading the cement of brotherly love and affection; that cement which unites us into one sacred band or society of friends and brothers, among whom no contention should exist, but that noble contention, or rather emulation, of who can work and best agree.<sup>14</sup>

The Lodge is a fraternal order or brotherhood that teaches its members to develop virtue and character. It distinguishes between the "operative" and the "speculative" mason. The operative mason is the literal mason who builds with stone and brick.<sup>15</sup> The speculative Mason is a member of the Masonic Lodge. The Lodge has adopted the symbols of stonemasonry related to temple-building because speculative Masons are also building a temple.<sup>16</sup> The teaching given to Masons is that they are building a spiritual temple in heaven. It instructs each Mason regardless of his religion and by his own efforts to fashion himself into a perfect living stone to fit into the spiritual temple being constructed in heaven. An explanation of this will come below.

Masons also refer to the Masonic Lodge as "the Blue Lodge." Individual Lodges are governed by a Grand Lodge. Nearly every state in the United States has a Grand Lodge, with many others existing throughout the world.

Requisite to being a Mason is belief in a deity. This may be any deity, meaning that a Mason may adhere to any religion. The details of a Mason's religious faith are irrelevant as pertains to membership in the Lodge. It is only necessary that he affirm a deity. So the Lodge includes Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and followers of other religions.

Upon approval of the application of a candidate for Masonic membership (i.e., an "initiate"), he must participate in three secret initiation ceremonies, called "degrees." After completion of the First Degree, the candidate becomes an "Entered Apprentice Mason." After completion of the Second Degree, he is a "Fellow Craft Mason." With

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 30-31.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 19-20.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 20.

completion of the third degree, he is a "Master Mason." This makes him a full member worldwide. The Master Mason can join other Masonic organizations such as Scottish Rite, York Rite, and the Shrine. Many Masons do not join these organizations and may know little about them.

#### THE AUTHORS' BACKGROUNDS IN FREEMASONRY

Eddy D. Field II (hereafter Mr. Field) was a member of the Blue Lodge and related organizations for twenty-five years. He was an officer of the Lodge for two of those years. He was a 32° Mason, a Royal Arch Mason, and an officer in his chapter. He held office in the Cryptic Council and was a Knight Templar and a Shriner. He also held membership in Eastern Star, Grotto, High 12, Amaranth, and White Shrine of Jerusalem.

Mr. Field's grandfather and father are both past Masters of the Lodge, with many of his family members being leaders of the various Masonic organizations. Mr. Field's son, co-author of this article, was a member of the Order of DeMolay, a fraternity for males aged 13-21, founded and supervised by Masons.

For Mr. Field, the main appeal of the Lodge was a strong family tradition. This tradition helped bind his family together and instill in it a sense of pride. Another attraction to Masonry was a practical one. At the time, Freemasons exerted great social, political, and business influence.<sup>17</sup> Many politicians and businessmen were Masons. Since Masons tend to favor each other, it was sometimes easier for a man to advance his career if he was a Masonic "brother." A third feature that attracted Mr. Field to the Lodge was the mystique associated with it. The Lodge claims to be an ancient brotherhood that holds many secrets. This "gnostic" quality also drew him to Masonry.

After his conversion to Christ, Mr. Field carefully examined the origin and nature of the Lodge and discovered many grave problems with it. He compared the religious teachings of Freemasonry with those of Christianity and found them to be opposite. Therefore, he felt compelled to leave the Lodge. The following discussion will detail some results of his comparison.

#### THE SOTERIOLOGY OF FREEMASONRY

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<sup>17</sup>Recently, though, membership in the Lodge has declined by two to three percent annually (Maxwell, "Baptist Battle" 41-44).

It is unnecessary and beyond the scope of this investigation to probe whether or not Masonry is a religion; most Masons deny that it is. Yet the Lodge explicitly teaches, "It is so far interwoven with religion as to lay us under obligations to pay that rational homage to the Deity which at once constitutes our duty and our happiness."<sup>18</sup> Religion or not, a comparison of the Lodge's religious teachings with Scripture is inevitable. The results of such a comparison make it clear that Freemasonry denies the teachings of Christianity. A theologian, who caused quite a stir with his critique of Freemasonry,<sup>19</sup> offered this evaluation:

The actual secrets *are* for the most part trivial, and the esoteric moral symbolisms of geometry, astronomy, architecture, and the working tools of the operative stone-mason, seem to the brethren to be in no way incompatible with, but rather supplementary to (though all too often they are substitutes for), a belief in the Christian Gospel. It is not difficult to show, however, that Freemasonry, in so far as it has a consistent teaching, is formally heretical.<sup>20</sup>

The Lodge teaches that every Mason should learn and obey its teachings, including its soteriology, though the Lodge does not necessarily discipline anyone who does not. In the Third Degree, under "The Charge," the *Monitor* states,

Duty and honor now alike bind you to be faithful to every trust; to support the dignity of your character on all occasions; and strenuously to enforce, by precept and example, a steady obedience to the tenets of Freemasonry.<sup>21</sup>

This applies to a Christian Mason as much as anyone.

Masonry teaches on many religious subjects, but of particular relevance to the present discussion is its soteriology. What follows is an analysis of five statements selected from the *Monitor* that expound the soteriology of the Lodge.

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<sup>18</sup>*Monitor* 20.

<sup>19</sup>The opinion of Paul M. Bretscher, "The Masonic Apostasy from Christ," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 26 (February 1955):97.

<sup>20</sup>Walton Hannah, "Should a Christian be a Mason?" *Theology* 54 (January 1951):4.

<sup>21</sup>*Monitor* 36.

### *The Lambskin Apron*

The First Degree includes a discussion of "The Lambskin Apron." As the Lambskin Apron is the most important emblem in the Freemasonry,<sup>22</sup> it is in order to discuss it first. Each candidate receives an apron in the First Degree. The *Monitor* says this about the apron:

The Lamb, in all ages has been deemed an emblem of innocence. He, therefore, who wears the lambskin as the badge of a Mason, is continually reminded of that purity of life and conduct so essentially necessary to his gaining admission into the Celestial Lodge above, where the Supreme Architect of the Universe presides.<sup>23</sup>

The "Celestial Lodge above" refers, of course, to heaven, and "the Supreme Architect of the Universe" is one of the names Masonry has for its god. The statement speaks of "gaining" admission into the Celestial Lodge. By the use of "gaining," the Lodge teaches that one earns or merits entrance into heaven on his own. That is, it is a matter of human effort. The statement also says that a person gains entrance into heaven by "purity of life and conduct." With this the Lodge teaches the achievement of salvation on the basis of human good works. This selection from the *Monitor* clearly states, then, that a person earns admission into heaven by living a pure life. As Masonry accepts any theist, the teaching on the Lambskin Apron holds true for anyone, regardless of that person's god or religion.

The statement about the Lambskin Apron creates several problems. It says that "purity of life and conduct" is necessary for admittance into heaven. If this means absolute purity, no one can in reality qualify. If it means relative purity, then what is the basis of measurement and how can one know if he has qualified? In fact, Christ is the Lamb of God who, by virtue of his purity, qualified as the sacrifice for the sins of the world (cf. John 1:29). In 1 Pet 1:18-19, the apostle writes to believers,

You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver and gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.<sup>24</sup>

The Masonic teaching contradicts the gospel of Jesus Christ which says

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>24</sup>All biblical quotations are from the New American Standard Bible.

that salvation is through God's grace, being received through faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>25</sup> The *locus classicus* in this regard is Eph 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast."<sup>26</sup>

Thus, the lesson taught with the most important symbol in the Lodge directly opposes the Christian gospel.

### *Preparation for Heaven*

From the Third Degree of the *Monitor* comes another statement delineating the soteriology of the Lodge:

Hence, my brother, how important it is that we should endeavor to imitate \*\*\* in his truly exalted and exemplary character, in his unfeigned piety to God, and in his inflexible fidelity to his trust, that we may be prepared to welcome death, not as a grim tyrant, but as a kind of messenger sent to translate us from this imperfect to that all perfect, glorious, and celestial Lodge above, where the Supreme Grand Master of the Universe forever presides.<sup>27</sup>

The three asterisks in the quotation stand in place of the words "the Grand Master Hiram Abiff." This is the chief character in Masonic lore. The exhortation to the candidate is to imitate three virtues of Hiram Abiff: his character, his devotion to god, and his trustworthiness. The reason that this imitation is so important is that it enables the Mason to be translated to heaven. As with the previous example of the Lambskin Apron, this excerpt demonstrates the Lodge's teaching that one attains entrance into heaven by living a virtuous life, regardless of religious orientation.

The Scriptures do not teach that a person goes to heaven by imitating even Christ Himself, much less anyone else. Salvation is a gift of God's grace. Paul writes in 2 Tim 1:9-10 that God

has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted

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<sup>25</sup>John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *The Secret Teachings of the Masonic Lodge* (Chicago: Moody, 1989, 1990) 78-79; Jim Shaw and Tom McKinney, *The Deadly Deception* (Lafayette, LA: Huntington House, 1988) 132; L. James Rongstad, *How to Respond to the Lodge* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1977) 11, 18; Ron Carlson and Ed Decker, *Fast Facts on False Teachings* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1994) 85; Harris, *Freemasonry* 22-23.

<sup>26</sup>Cf. Rom 4:5; 6:23; 10:9-10; Tit 3:5-7.

<sup>27</sup>*Monitor* 35-36.

us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Unlike a Mason, a Christian does not fear death because Christ has overcome it (1 Cor 15:54-57).

### *The Perfect Ashlar*

Part of the First Degree in the *Monitor* has a statement about "The Perfect Ashlar." Masonry calls a perfect stone a "Perfect Ashlar." The following describes the teaching symbolized by the Ashlar:

The Rough Ashlar is a stone as taken from the quarry in its rude and natural state. The Perfect Ashlar is a stone made ready by the hands of the workman, to be adjusted by the working tools of the Fellow Craft. By the Rough Ashlar, we are reminded of our rude and imperfect state by nature; by the Perfect Ashlar, of that state of perfection at which we hope to arrive by a virtuous education, our own endeavors, and the blessing of God.<sup>28</sup>

As explained below under a discussion of "The Common Gavel," a Mason intends to fashion himself from a rough stone to a perfect stone, for the purpose of fitting himself into the spiritual temple in heaven. The statement here means that the Mason can take himself from an imperfect state to a state of perfection by satisfying three requirements. First, he must obtain a virtuous education, which the Lodge claims to give. Second, he must apply in his life the knowledge gained. He accomplishes this by his own endeavors. Third, he must receive the blessing of his god, whatever that god may be. This statement plainly teaches that the Mason strives to achieve perfection by his own efforts.<sup>29</sup> By doing this he fits himself into the temple in heaven.

First Pet 2:5 teaches the opposite regarding Christians when it says that Christians "as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." God, not believers themselves, is the builder of believers, of course.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>29</sup>Harris, *Freemasonry* 45-46.

<sup>30</sup>The context indicates that *okodomesue* (*oikodomeisthe*, "you are being built up") is passive indicative with God as the implied agent (cf. v. 9; see D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter*

*The Common Gavel*

A fourth statement in the First Degree portion of the *Monitor* reveals more of the Lodge's plan of salvation. As stated previously, Masons are building a spiritual temple in heaven. The instruction to each Mason is to fashion himself into a perfect living stone to fit into the spiritual temple in heaven. "The Common Gavel" symbolizes this concept:

The common gavel is an instrument used by operative Masons to break off the rough and superfluous parts of stones, the better to fit them for the builder's use. But we, as Free and Accepted Masons, are taught to make use of it for the more noble and glorious purpose of divesting our hearts and consciences of all the vices and superfluities of life: thereby fitting our minds as living stones for that spiritual building, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.<sup>31</sup>

For the operative mason, a gavel is a hammer used to shape stones. The speculative Mason is figuratively an imperfect stone with rough edges that he strives to break off with the gavel. This paragraph just quoted is quite clear in stating that the Mason makes himself fit for heaven by bettering himself through eliminating unwanted qualities.<sup>32</sup> This holds true for any Mason, regardless of his god or religious persuasion.

As the Common Gavel closely relates to the Perfect Ashlar, the criticism of the Perfect Ashlar applies to it. No one can make himself fit for heaven; only God can do this through Christ.<sup>33</sup>

*The Well-spent Life*

A final example will aid in explaining the soteriology of the Lodge:

In youth, as Entered Apprentices, we ought industriously to occupy our minds in the attainments of useful knowledge; in manhood, as Fellow Crafts, we should apply our knowledge to the discharge of our respective duties to God, our neighbor, and ourselves; that so, in age, as

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[Chicago: Moody, 1984, 1992] 132; J. N. D. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and Jude* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1969] 89).

<sup>31</sup>*Monitor* 5.

<sup>32</sup>Harris, *Freemasonry* 17-18.

<sup>33</sup>McClain, *Freemasonry* 31-32.

Master Masons, we may enjoy the happy reflection consequent on a well-spent life, and die in the hope of a glorious immortality.<sup>34</sup>

The "attainments of useful knowledge" here include the virtuous education to which the above discussion of "The Perfect Ashlar" referred. The "discharge of our respective duties" relates to applying that knowledge by one's own endeavors, as also indicated under "The Perfect Ashlar." This extraction indicates that the Mason's hope of eternal life hinges upon having lived a worthy life.

This contrasts directly with Christian teaching, according to which the hope of eternal life is Christ. In Col 1:27, Paul writes that God has made known to Christians "what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." The Lodge offers hope of eternal life apart from Christ. This hope for immortality is false, though, and a false hope for immortality is a false gospel.

#### CHRISTIAN MEMBERSHIP IN THE LODGE

The above five statements from the *Monitor* suffice to show the soteriology of the Lodge. A serious conflict exists between this soteriology and that of Christianity. The two are, in fact, contradictory. Freemasonry teaches that one may gain entrance into heaven through his good works, no matter who is his god and what is his religious affiliation. Christianity teaches that one gains entrance into heaven through Christ's work on the cross, appropriated by faith.

From this analysis of the five statements, the god of Masonry, often called "The Great Architect of the Universe," is identifiable. This god is one that will accept someone into heaven on the basis of works, regardless of religion. This is a false god, not the God of the Bible.<sup>35</sup>

#### *A Biblical Appraisal of Masonic Soteriology*

Paul was unequivocal in responding to anyone proclaiming a "gospel" contrary to<sup>36</sup> the true gospel:

<sup>34</sup>*Monitor* 38.

<sup>35</sup>Ankerberg, *Secret Teachings* 176; McClain, *Freemasonry* 18-19. See Ankerberg, *Secret Teachings*, chap. 8, for a further development of this point.

<sup>36</sup>Though it is preferable to render *par'* (*par' ho*) as "besides that which" or "in addition to that which" (see J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957] 75), the adopted rendering—"contrary to"—is the more common

But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed (Gal 1:8, 9).

Paul petitions that anyone distorting the gospel of Christ (v. 7) be cursed, that is, left outside of God's grace and subject to his disfavor.<sup>37</sup> This imprecation against anyone compromising the gospel is extremely strong.

As documented above, Freemasonry advocates a plan of salvation contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul's curse would apply to proponents of the soteriology of Freemasonry.<sup>38</sup>

#### *A Biblical Appraisal of Masonic Membership*

In light of the foregoing, a Christian's participation in the Lodge is a significant issue. Masons consider themselves "one sacred band or society of friends and brothers."<sup>39</sup> In the First, Second, and Third Degrees, a Mason swears oaths to God, under penalty of death, to fulfill certain obligations.<sup>40</sup> He swears to this oath on a book considered by his Grand Lodge to be sacred. Thus, the book varies depending on the dominant religion of the area. So, it may be the Bible, the Koran, or the Bhagavad Gita, depending on where it occurs.

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translation. The point is the same in either case, because the Masonic teaching on salvation fits either rendering. It is both "contrary to" and "in addition to" the Christian gospel.

<sup>37</sup>Ernest De Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, n.d.) 28.

<sup>38</sup>Byers, *I Left* 81.

<sup>39</sup>*Monitor* 30-31.

<sup>40</sup>*King Solomon and His Followers*, rev. Calif. ed. (Richmond, VA: Allen, 1989) 22-23, 81-83, 135-38, respectively. This book contains the current secret ritual of the Lodge in code. The statements in this paper result from a decoding of the code-book. The earlier edition of the code-book is *King Solomon's Temple*. Those unable to use the code-book may consult Malcom C. Duncan, *Duncan's Masonic Ritual and Monitor*, 3rd ed. with add. and corr. (New York: David McKay, n.d.). This work contains the complete secret Masonic ritual (the three Degrees) in English. Because it is an older version it is somewhat different from the current edition, but the differences do not alter the present discussion.

The older code-books and older English-language ritual manuals containing all the secrets for the Lodge and related organizations are obtainable from Ezra A. Cook Publishers, 6604 West Irving Park Road, Chicago, IL 60634.

Also, candidates take their oaths at the altar of the Masonic god, the same altar at which they all kneel, regardless of their religious persuasions.

At the end of each oath, the Worshipful Master (the local Lodge head) informs the Mason that he is bound to all Masons. After the First Degree, the Worshipful Master says, "Brother Senior Warden, release the candidate from the cable-tow, his being now bound to us by a stronger tie."<sup>41</sup> After the Second Degree, the Worshipful Master says, "Brother Senior Warden, release the candidate from the cable-tow, it being twice around his naked right arm, is to signify to him that he is now bound to the fraternity by a two fold tie."<sup>42</sup> After the Third Degree, the Worshipful Master says, "Brother Senior Warden, release the candidate from the cable-tow, it being thrice around his naked body, is to signify to him that he is now bound to the fraternity by a threefold tie."<sup>43</sup> These three statements illustrate the serious bond between Masons. As a further example of the extent of this bond, in the Third Degree each Mason swears to keep secret, if asked, the crimes committed by a fellow-Mason. Murder and treason are the only exceptions. The oath reads, "Furthermore, that I will keep the secrets of a Master Mason as my own, when given to me in charge as such, murder and treason excepted."<sup>44</sup> Thus, by solemn oath the Mason binds himself as a brother to every other Mason, regardless of his god or religion.

Beyond this, though, in the Second Degree the candidate bows in reverence to the god of Freemasonry, called G.A.O.T.U.<sup>45</sup> He does this after the Worshipful Master utters the following call:

I will again call your attention to the letter G for a more important purpose: \*\*\* (*Right hand, uncovers.*) It is the initial of the name of the Supreme Being, before whom all Masons, from the youngest Entered Apprentice in the north-east corner of the Lodge to the Worshipful Master in the east, should with reverence bow. (All bow.)<sup>\*46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 83.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 138.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 136.

<sup>45</sup>This is an acronym for "Great Architect of the Universe."

<sup>46</sup>*King Solomon* 100-101. The asterisks represent raps of the gavel by the Worshipful Master. The first three raps instruct all present to rise, the last tells all to be seated.

After this, all present bow toward the letter "G" suspended above the Worshipful Master in the East. Masons thereby pay homage to the false god of the Masonic Lodge. For a Christian to conceive that he is bowing to the true God does not mitigate this act of homage to a false god, because he is bowing to god as defined by the Lodge. One scholar has written the following to soften the offense of such worship:

The uninstructed layman may in all good faith be unable to draw this distinction; to him God is God, whether addressed as the Great Architect or Grand Geometrician of the Universe, or as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. But the position of the Masonic priest or bishop appears to be far less defensible.<sup>47</sup>

He means that a Christian Mason uninstructed in Freemasonry may not realize he is bowing to a false god. Yet an informed Christian Mason has no excuse. The only explanation is that a Mason bows before and pays homage to the Masonic idol.

In 2 Cor 6:14-18, Paul discussed the relationship of believers to unbelievers.<sup>48</sup> In 6:14-16a he wrote,

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols?

Though it is not clear precisely what relationship to unbelievers Paul referred to in this context, it is apparently some intimate association with them and their false gods.<sup>49</sup> Webb summarizes,

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<sup>47</sup>Hannah, "Should a Christian" 5.

<sup>48</sup>The interpretation of *πίστοι* (*apistoi*) as "unbelievers" is debatable, but has the best support (see William J. Webb, "Who Are the Unbelievers [*apistoi*] in 2 Corinthians 6:14?" *BSac* 149 [January-March 1992]:27-44).

<sup>49</sup>Webb offers three reasons why 2 Cor 6:16 refers to literal, rather than metaphorical, idolatry: "That Paul intended literal idols in 2 Corinthians 6:16 is more likely in light of the living God—idols contrast, his pattern of clarifying metaphorical intent when referring to idolatry, and the major problem at Corinth with literal idols. Any references related to metaphorical idolatry, therefore, should probably be rejected" (William J. Webb, "What is the Unequal Yoke [*terozygontew*] in 2 Corinthians 6:14?" *BSac* 149 [April-June 1992]:170-71).

In conclusion, 2 Corinthians 6:14 prohibits believers from joining in any activity that forms a covenantlike [*sic*] bond with pagans and their idols (either through literal-physical or metonymical idolatry) and seriously violates the believer's covenant with God.<sup>50</sup>

Paul's counsel in such a situation was to abandon the relationship. In 6:14, the command "do not be bound together" calls for the readers to cease initiating relationships.<sup>51</sup> That such relationships already existed is confirmed by 2 Cor 6:17 where Paul counsels, "come out from their midst and be separate." The injunction of 2 Cor 7:1 also proves the pre-existence of these relationships: "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."<sup>52</sup> Paul taught that a believer must not join himself to any unbeliever so as to associate himself with the unbeliever's idolatry. If he already had such a relationship, Paul insisted that he sever it. This has a direct application to Christian membership in the Lodge.<sup>53</sup>

#### INCOMPATIBILITY OF CHRISTIANITY AND FREEMASONRY

The Lodge teaches clearly that one may earn admittance into heaven on the basis of works, regardless of religion. This is a false gospel, which places those who advocate such a doctrine under Paul's imprecation. If this is not enough to convince a Christian not to involve himself in Masonry, it should be enough that a Christian Mason binds himself by oath to all other Masons in a way that associates him with their idolatry. In 2 Cor 6:14 Paul forbids such a relationship. The activity of a Christian Mason is even more unbiblical, though, when he kneels at the altar of the false god of the Lodge and pays homage to its deity. These facts demonstrate that Christian participation in the Lodge is more than a matter of individual Christian conscience. It is imperative that Christians not

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 179.

<sup>51</sup>A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1931) 4:236.

<sup>52</sup>Webb, "Unequal Yoke" 170-71.

<sup>53</sup>Ankerberg, *Secret Teachings* 91-92, 191; Byers, *I Left* 81; Harris, *Freemasonry* 36; McClain, *Freemasonry* 36; R. A. Torrey, *Practical and Perplexing Questions Answered* (Chicago: Revell, 1908, 1909) 112.

participate in this organization.<sup>54</sup>

One writer summarizes the church's appropriate response to Christian Masons:

[The church can] make painstaking efforts when dealing with lodge members to have them realize the incompatibility of membership in a society which ignores or even denies Jesus Christ and in a society which confesses and worships Him as the Savior of lost mankind and as the King of kings and Lord of lords.<sup>55</sup>

This entails telling Masons that they cannot be at once members of the Lodge which denies Christ and members of the church which confesses him as Lord.<sup>56</sup> The authors of this essay wish to communicate this message in the hope that Christian Masons will "come out from their midst and be separate."

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<sup>54</sup>Weldon, "Masonic Lodge" 39.

<sup>55</sup>Bretscher, "Masonic Apostasy" 114.

<sup>56</sup>R. A. Torrey said, "The name of Jesus Christ is cut out of passages in which it occurs in the Bible so as not to offend Jews and other non-Christians. How a Christian can retain membership in a society that thus handles deceitfully the Word of God, and above all cuts out the name of his Lord and Master, I cannot understand" (*Perplexing Questions* 112).