# THE NEWSLETTER

## OF THE COMMITTEE

## ON MASONIC EDUCATION

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**Size of Articles:** Material submitted for The Newsletter should reflect consideration of both the physical size of the publication, and the readability of the piece. Our pages run 300-325 words per page, so a maximum of about 1200-1300 words is the limit. Articles can also be one-paragraph notes of interest, or any length in between. Longer articles of special merit should be printed in sections over several issues.

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An Invitation: The Newsletter is published by The Grand Lodge Committee on Masonic Education. We welcome responses from all our readers. If any of our contributors or subscribers have access to historical information about their District, or Lodge, or special individuals, please forward it to the editor. Much of our Masonic History is also linked to the history of our country through members who have been community, business, professional, religious or political leaders. Careful research of material made available should provide some interesting information for newsletter readers. It would also help to educate us all about the contributions of individual members, Lodges and Districts ....to the history of our country, provinces, and our villages, towns and cities. We need to know more about each other and about the part that Canadian Masons have played in our history. Can you help?

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### LONDON, ONTARIO NEW 5.11

### **EDITORIAL COMMENTS**

The most recent and vicious attack by anti-Masonic factions came to a head in July 1993 in Houston, Texas after a build-up of several years and a formal motion in 1992 by the largest Protestant denomination in the U.S.A. -to research and expose Masonry as a satanic cult and to report back to the 1993 convention.

Much has already been written and more will be produced, I'm sure, about this attack on our gentle craft by a radical faction of the Southern Baptist Convention. This issue of The Newsletter and the next, offers a collection of some of the commentary from within and without the craft to provide an overview of what has transpired.

It is to be hoped that our craft will treat this latest attack as a wake-up call. The truth easily sets aside all of the hateful accusations offered by our detractors. They are made blind by their zeal, even as we are rendered dumb by our ignorance of the facts that expose their falsehoods. Their lies are almost as old as our craft and it makes sense that the information that exposes each of them should be distributed throughout our fraternity that we all may feel comfortable in reassuring our brethren, friends and families about the noble and enduring purposes of Freemasonry.

Perhaps we learn from all of this that we need to refocus on the simple mission of Masonry-to make good men better and become better ourselves in the process. Perhaps if every member, and every lodge, every district and jurisdiction kept this in mind we would all worry less about the lodge roof leaking and focus on what must be done to equip and educate each member and every candidate to appreciate fully the great challenges and the pleasures of being a true craftsman in our gentle craft. If this were carefully done everywhere Masonry exists, our detractors would always be met with the quiet confidence of a brother who knows his craft well, who can set the misguided and misinformed straight, and silence the zeal of the radical and the fanatic. With this renewed vigour and purpose our craft can again begin to grow and continue to champion the nobility of the soul which can be so badly battered in today's world.

John Robinson sounded the wake-up call. The Centre for Masonic Information is a good start on helping us all understand what our detractors are using to attack the Craft. As individuals we must each accept the challenge to equip ourselves and our brethren for our next century of service.

R.A.B.

### THE FUNDAMENTALIST FURY

As set out in the book THE PILGRIM'S PATH by John J. Robinson pub. Evans, N. Y.

John J. Robinson, the respected author of BORN IN BLOOD sounds a 'wake-up' call to Masons everywhere in his new book A PILGRIM'S PATH regarding the storm created by a hard core of conservative fundamentalists under the leadership of Dr. James J. Holly, a Fundamentalist author and self described 'fanatic' and leader of a faction of right wing Baptist fundamentalists who have effectively seized a controlling position, after years of trying, in the largest Protestant denomination in the United States, the Southern Baptist Convention. This faction, under the leadership of Dr. Holly, has initiated an assault on Freemasonry which has the potential of being the most dangerous of all the assaults by anyone or anything yet attempted.

under which they allegedly act. Still, the danger to Masonry has not been defeated, only deflected. The eternal watchword is VIGILANCE.

Besides being an excellent book for every Mason to read, mark, and learn from, it is an outstanding book written to expose a sickness that has an agenda best described by paraphrasing the saying "First we take Manhattan, then we take New York".

Francis Dowe, F.C.O.F. Chm. -Masonic Education Centennial Lodge #684 G.R.C.

### FREEMASONRY: DEFENDER OF PERSONAL CONSCIENCE

By: Dr. John W. Boettjer Managing Editor of The Scottish Rite Journal

Bro. and Dr. Boettjer is a member of Cypress Lodge No.295 of Naples, FI. He is the managing editor of The Scottish Rite Journal and was invited to address the editors association of the Baptist Press in June, 1993 at the Southern Baptist Convention in Houston, Texas. The following STB is a portion of that address. While the remarks were directed to a Baptist audience, the issues raised and the answers given are clearly significantly important in discussing Freemasonry with ANY religious group!

### Editor

My thesis is that Freemasonry has been misunderstood and then, for whatever reason, demonized and vilified, sometimes by members of churches, to the extent that a response to the critics of Freemasonry was and still remains necessary.

We all cringe at the words of some Masons, even well respected writers, and, in particular when anti-Masonic writers select quotations from supposed Masonic authorities when there is no accepted Masonic authority except for the Grand Master of each Grand Lodge or state and then he is only an authority within his jurisdiction and only for the year or years of his term in office Worse yet, Freemasonry's critics tend to twist whatever juicy quotations they have found, taking them out of context, editing them, and so slanting them that they say just about anything the anti-Mason wishes the quotations to say.

First a bit of history. Freemasonry has, by tradition and, in some cases, by rule, not responded to its critics. This silence has been misinterpreted by many. They presume that silence gives consent or that Masons do not have the facts to refute attacks and, therefore, remain silent. Somewhat over a year ago, however, the attacks on Freemasonry became so virulent that we felt a response was necessary. Please understand, we do not object to differences of opinion or reasoned criticisms. Freemasonry is not perfect. There are many things to correct or improve. We are working to resolve many of these problems and thus improve Freemasonry.

Historically, the right to private judgement is as much a part of Freemasonry as it is of the Southern Baptist tradition. As early as 1798, Charleston, South Carolina Southern Baptists advised the matter of Southern Baptist membership in Freemasonry, "be left with the judgement of the individual". Similarly, George W. Truett, one of the greatest leaders of Southern Baptists, and a Freemason, said: "The right to private judgement is the crown jewel of humanity, and for any person or institution to date to come between the soul and God is a blasphemous impertinence and a defamation of the crown-rights of the Son of God."

Let me say this clearly and emphatically: Freemasonry is NOT a religion. It is a fraternity based on moral principles and dedicated to the overall ethical and educational improvement of its members. If it has any relation to religion at all, it is as a complement to faith. We often say, "Masonry makes good men better." Many, many new Masons become more active in their church AFTER becoming Masons. Why? Because Freemasonry stresses values central to most churches and to our nation. Freemasonry was a crusader for "family values" before the term became politically *correct*. Freemasonry has been a defender of personal conscience, political freedom, and individual liberty long before George Washington and Benjamin Franklin took Masonic vows to support and extend the Masonic ideals of Brotherhood, Relief, and Truth.

Because Freemasonry stands squarely for the Constitution and all the fundamental freedoms bequeathed to us by the writers of that great document, 13 of the 39 signers being Freemasons, Freemasonry has always been attacked by those who would limit liberty. Freemasons were among the first to be persecuted by Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, Stalin, and the Ayatollah Khomeni. And so it has always been. Freedom is the lifeblood of Freemasonry. That is why Freemasons were central to the creation of these United States and why tyrants and dictators of every sort, upon coming to power, immediately stigmatize Freemasonry and persecute its members. today, as in. the past, Freemasons are defenders of First Amendment rights and the concept of liberty. We are not opposed to differences of opinion, but we are opposed to lies and deliberate manipulations of the truth.

We believe the attacks on Freemasonry have come to malicious slander and the unjustified and unconscionable tearing down of one's neighbor rather than the building, with him, of bridges of understanding and cooperation. Undoubtedly, some of the anti- Masons are sincere. Possibly, they cannot see beyond the misconceptions foisted on them by those who promote themselves at the expense of others. Freemasons are saddened to see this exploitation.

We are outraged, however, when men of God promote what they must know to be falsehood. What excuse can one offer, for instance, for Rev. Pat Robertson's *The New World Order?* Despite the ready assistance of a research staff, Robertson trucks out, with no qualifications at all, what we Scottish Rite Masons call "the lie that will not die", the assertion that Albert Pike, a late 19th-century leader of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, advocated a, quote, "Luciferian doctrine" advising Masons to worship the Father of Lies, Lucifer.

Pike *never* wrote these words. They come from a notorious atheist and pornographer, Gabriel Jogand-Pages, who wrote under the pen name of Leo Taxil. Taxil wrote some bogus "Instructions" to Scottish Rite Masons, supposedly from Pike, as a device to expose the credulity of the Catholic Church, an institution he hated as much as the Masonic Lodge that had, with good sense, rejected his application for membership.

Taxil publicly exposed his own hoax on April 19, 1897, but the hoax lives on, savored by anti-Masons who never tire of trundling out this hoary story though even the slightest of research efforts would reveal it was unmasked by its inventor and disproved nearly a century ago!

Similarly, Rev. Ron Carlson of Eden Prairie, Minnesota, in one of his broadcast sermons quotes Albert Pike's *Morals and Dogma*. (Ironically, Pike is read by more of Masonry's foes than by Masons!) Rev. Carlson in what must be the 10,000th expose of S0- called Masonic secrets, quotes Pike as saying on page 545 of *Morals and Dogma*:

"All the mysteries (meaning Masonic mysteries) should be kept concealed, guarded by faithful silence, lest it should be inconsiderately divulged to the ears of the Profane. He sins against God who divulges to the unworthy the Mysteries confided to him. The danger is not merely in violating the truth, but in telling the truth".

(Then Carlson continues saying,) "Albert Pike says it is a sin to divulge the truth. Now how different this is from what we read in God's word".

Ironically, the truth is that Rev. Carlson is not quoting Albert Pike. Here is what Pike actually wrote in *Morals and Dogma*. Previous to the quotation noted above are the words. "St. Ambrose, Archbishop of Milan, who was born in 340, and died in 394, says in his work *De Mysteriis*". In fact, the words Carlson attributes to Pike are actually the words of St. Ambrose. Pike was quoting St.

Ambrose on what that Christian Father taught regarding the Christian Mysteries, NOT any alleged Masonic mystery.

This is what we object to: not differences of opinion or open, fact-supported discussions, but the fabrication of slanted truth, half truth, and outright untruth. I do not know if the intent of such anti-Masonic authors as Robertson and Holly (whose fathers are Masons) and Carlson may be to deceive the gullible or if they themselves are deceived by their biased view of Freemasonry.

Most certainly, Freemasonry is not about paganism or devil worship. Most certainly it is not un-Christian or anti-Christian. Most certainly it is not "secretive" or "closed". All men of good character who believe in God are welcomed to Freemasonry.

Then, through a series of Masonic lessons, what we call "Degrees", moral principles are taught that support a man's personal faith, whatever his denomination; that enhance his dedication to his family and country; that encourage his participation in the life of his community in a variety of civic and philanthropic ways.

Masons, for instance, are justifiably well-known for the support of orthopedic hospitals, bum centers, childhood language disorders clinics, Alzheimer's and schizophrenia research, programs for the unsighted, and many, many other charities. Masonic philanthropy today extends more than \$525 million per year or \$1.4 million per day to charity, and 58% of this goes to members of the general public, *all totally free*. Nor do we claim this Masonic philanthropic outreach as any means of personal salvation, any way by which a Mason might believe he is paving his way to Heaven. Salvation, grace, and faith are within the province of the Church. Freemasonry, as a fraternity, has nothing to say about salvation. The Bible is guide enough for every individual when it says faith without works is dead.

Clearly, faith without understanding or toleration can only divide people. Religions, transformed into single- minded zealotry, become fiercely competitive. Many claim for themselves the exclusive mandate to speak and act for God. In contrast, Masonry believes religious differences between human beings are how we respond to God, the Father of all, who is continually pouring His love and His blessings on us. The Masonic Fraternity has its deepest roots in Christianity and therefore espouses the central teaching of the "New Law" as taught by our Lord Jesus Christ, "to love one another". Freemasonry is dedicated to helping men of

every faith to live by principles fundamental to Christianity. The attacks on Freemasonry, in my opinion, display little of the love, joy, and peace of Christ. Instead of love, they offer hate; instead of knowledge they offer bias; instead of the joy of spiritual self-fulfillment, they offer a thirst for battle; instead of peace and harmony, they offer violent verbal attacks.

If I may be so bold as to offer my voice as that of all Freemasons and Americans as well as the voice of the many thousands of spirit-filled, Biblebelieving, Church-supporting Southern Baptists who are also Lodge-attending and Lodge-supporting Masons, I again offer the truth so well stated by that great Southern Baptist and Freemason, George W. Truett: "The right to private judgement is the crown jewel of humanity, and for any person or institution to dare to come between the soul and God is a blasphemous impertinence and a defamation of the crown-rights of the Son of God".

Our thanks to R. W. Bro. Runciman for sending this Masonic Service Association -Short Talk Bulletin.

## **BAPTIST VOTE VITALIZES MASONRY**

Reprinted from The Scottish Rite Journal-Aug. 1993.

The temperature was nearing 100 degrees outside Houston's George R. Brown Convention Center on June 16, 1993, the day the messengers (delegates) to the Southern Baptist Convention were meeting and deciding on acceptance or rejection of the Convention's Home Missions Board report/recommendation on Freemasonry.

For nearly a year, the Interfaith Witness Department of the Home Mission Board had studied Freemasonry. More money (\$111,000) had been spent on this study than on any other study ever undertaken by the Board. According to the Home Mission Board's President, Dr. Larry L. Lewis, the result is an "accurate, fair report and recommendation that I believe most Baptists would want to live with. I don't think most Baptists want us to condemn Freemasonry. We don't win people to Christ by condemning them. With the world all around us lost and going to hell, I'm not sure the large expenditure of time and resources on this issue was justified".

Some messengers, however, thought otherwise and voiced their opposition to Freemasonry and the Board's conciliatory report when the resolution to approve or disapprove the report/recommendation came up for vote. Reflecting the heat outside the Convention hall, diehard extremists still denounced Freemasonry and its teachings.

In rebuttal to a resolution amendment condemning Freemasonry, Dr. Brad Allen, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Home Mission Board, asserted rejection of the report would "strike two of the dearest things to the Baptist heart", the priesthood of the believer and the autonomy of the local church. Dr. Allen continued saying, "If we can't trust the soul competence of the believer in Jesus Christ to do the right thing, we're sunk".

Similarly, during floor debate David Norman, of Lakeside Baptist Church in New Braunfels, Texas, defended Masons as supporters of religious expression: "We would have been far worse off as Baptists in Texas had it not been for Freemasons", he said, adding that the first Baptist Sunday School in Dallas once met in a Masonic hall.

Ralph Douglas, messenger from the First Baptist Church of Pine Bluff, Arkansas, a former pastor, summarized what appeared to be the sentiment of the Convention: "It breaks my heart to see these kinds of things come before us and divide us again and again and again. Let's settle this once and for all".

And that is exactly what the Convention did. By a show of ballots, the messengers voted overwhelmingly to approve the Home Mission Board's report to view membership in Masonry as "a matter of personal conscience". This is, of course, what Freemasonry has been saying all along.

How overwhelming was the vote? In a news conference immediately following the vote, Dr. Larry L. Lewis, President of the Home Mission Board, estimated it was 3 to 1 (about 800/0 to 200/0) in favor of the HMB's report/recommendation.

Some Masons present at the Convention suggest a larger margin, 9 to 1, and this estimate was confirmed by J. Walter Carpenter, editor of the *Southern Baptist Watchman*, a periodical whose masthead reads, "An independent Source of News and Opinion for Southern Baptists".

At the same time, Mr. Carpenter cautioned in his 1993 Convention issue of the Southern Baptist Watchman that Freemasonry had "dodged the bullet" at this moment, but Masons must be aware of the criticisms of the Home Mission Board report, giving them close attention and action, if Freemasonry is to avoid attacks from religious groups, including Southern Baptists, in the future. "The ball is in your court, and I hope at long last you will do something with it", he wrote.

The Board's report, along with its several commendations of Freemasonry, contains eight specific criticisms of the Craft. Many Masons believe the criticisms are based on misunderstandings and do not represent valid or significant critiques of Freemasonry. Nevertheless, the report and the 75-page study on which it is based are must reading for all Freemasons who wish to understand the present situation and desire to work to improve and advance our Fraternity.

Copies of the report and study may be obtained by calling the toll-free number 1-800-634-2462 and asking for the "Freemasonry Kit", product 511-37P. You will be billed, on a cost-recovery basis, by the SBC for \$6.00 plus \$1.56 (U.S.) S/H. Written orders may be mailed *to:* Home Mission Board Customer Services, 1350 Spring St., NW, Atlanta, GA 30367-5601.

Congratulations, Brothers. 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 to move forward to fulfilling its mission as the world's foremost proponent of Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God.

Let us be about that work-today!

Our thanks to the Editor of the Scottish Rite Journal, Dr. John Boettjer, for permission to reprint this article, and other articles of interest from the Journal.

## SOUL COMPETENCE AND THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

"Frankly Speaking" C. Fred Kleinknecht, 33° -Grand Commander The Scottish of Freemasonry Southern Jurisdiction.

No Mason must remain unaware of this significant turning point for modern Freemasonry. After nearly a year of careful, scholarly study, America's largest Protestant denomination (over 15 million members) has officially declared membership in Freemasonry must remain what it has always been, "a matter of personal conscience".

Unfortunately, the last year has seen virulent attacks on our gentle Craft. Anti-Masons have accused Freemasonry and Freemasons of everything from "secular humanism" and "heresy" to "devil worship" and "Satanism". Freemasonry, despite its heritage of silence in the face of attack, could not help but respond.

Imagine if your neighbor erected a billboard in front of his home. On it a huge arrow points to your home and sign's text declares "Satanist!" Imagine your neighbor making scurrilous charges calling you a "cultist" and "occultist" in newspapers across the country. Do you have the right to respond? Of course you do! And that is exactly what the Scottish Rite did. The February and May issues of the *Scottish Rite Journal* were dedicated to over 50 quietly reasoned, authoritive responses. Many articles were by noted clergymen who are also Masons and Southern Baptists.

Then the Scottish Rite cooperated fully with the newly organized Center for Masonic Information. Initiated by Bro. John J. Robinson, 32°, and supported by income generously donated by Brother Robinson from the sale of his excellent book *A Pilgrim's Path: One Man's Road to the Masonic Lodge*, the Center held organizational meetings, developed a brochure titled "Facts About Freemasonry", placed full-page ads in the *Houston Post* and *Houston Chronicle* on June 15, and financed a comfortable hospitality/media center suite within easy walking distance of the Southern Baptist Convention in Houston hosted by our Managing Editor, Dr. John W. Boettjer, 33°.

The Scottish Rite fully supported all of these efforts and, assisted by the cooperation of the Grand Lodges of Texas and Arkansas, placed thousands of pieces of Masonic literature at the doors of the George R. Brown Convention

Center in Houston. Scottish Rite Masons can take pride in these initiatives of our Order, and every Mason in the world should be grateful to Bro. John J. Robinson for his early, unflagging, and effective leadership of the movement to rebut the critics of Freemasonry. Bro. Robinson, we salute you and remain eternally grateful for all you have contributed to our Craft as a speaker, author, Mason, and a defender of freedom!

Appropriately, Masonry's view of civil liberty, church autonomy, and the central importance of personal conscience was confirmed by an overwhelming vote of the over 17,800 messengers (delegates) to the Southern Baptist Convention on June 16, 1993. First, a heated floor debate aired all sides of the issue. Resolutions and amendments for and against Freemasonry were received but ruled out of order. The main issue was to accept or reject, without a word changed, the Home Mission Board's report/recommendation. Despite the unprecedented amount of time and money expended to complete the report (\$111,000 by SBC accounts), anti-Masons saw it as a "whitewash" and a Masonic "takeover" of the Convention. In contrast, some Masons saw it as a compromise that, while commending Freemasonry in several ways, included unjustified criticisms of the Fraternity and its tenets.

Yet one thing stood out loud and clear: only personal conscience, not church authority, should be the guide to membership in Freemasonry. Dr. Brad Allen, chairman of the directors of the Home Mission Board, put the issue squarely to the Convention. Opposing 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",

Appropriately, the anti-Masonic amendment did not pass and the Southern Baptist Convention did not "sink". Rather, it joined Freemasonry in its elevation of individual conscience as the final guide to personal belief and action. Freemasonry, while emphatically not a religion, fully supports this spiritual "soul competence", this right of every person to exercise his God-given right to freedom of thought and will.

By overwhelming vote (estimated as high as 9 to 1), the over 17,800 messenger/delegates to the Southern Baptist Convention rejected bigotry for truth and denominational tyranny for individual freedom.

Brothers, the Convention's vote is truly a historic and significant milestone for our Craft. Yet, although it is a step back from the stigmatizing and condemning of Freemasonry, it is still not a step forward toward Masonic renewal and expansion. That step is up to us- each of us. I can't help but think that Freemasonry is poised for the greatest increase in membership in its history if we are willing, if we are ready, and if we keep our "Light" shining brightly.

If we do not learn from the year-long anguish of being confronted by the outrageous charges of religious extremists, we will have profited nothing. If we, however, understand the issues that generated these attacks and learn to remedy the matters pointed out by valid criticisms, Freemasonry will have become better by having been tried.

Then, tested by passing through the fires of persecution, we will be able to move forward into the 21st century a better and stronger Fraternity rededicated to Freemasonry and, in particular, to the Scottish Rite Creed: "Human progress is our cause, liberty of thought our supreme wish, freedom of conscience our mission, and the guarantee of equal rights to all people everywhere our ultimate goal".

Reprinted from the Scottish Rite Journal Washington, D.C., U.S.A.

### THE CENTRE FOR MASONIC INFORMATION

### WHAT ARE WE?

The Centre for Masonic Information (CMI), a branch of the Masonic Service Association (MSA), is a central source of accurate information about Freemasonry. It provides this information to the general public, directly and through national and local media; responds to criticism of the Masonic Fraternity; and assists Masonic Grand Lodges and their members in disseminating factual information about Freemasonry both within and without the Craft.

### WHO ARE WE?

We are the brainchild of the late Bro. John J. Robinson, author of three highly-successful books, "Born In Blood", "Dungeon, Fire and Sword", and "A Pilgrim's Path: One Man's Road to the Masonic Temple". The CMI was organized in the Spring of 1993. Although Bro. Robinson's deteriorating health prevented him from taking a personal role, he saw his "child" successfully launched in the defense of Masonry before the Southern Baptist Convention, when the SBC's membership voted overwhelmingly in 1993 (after a year's study) to affirm that a Southern Baptist's decision to be a Freemason was a matter of "personal conscience".

Bro. Robinson died in September, 1993. His active support of Masonry in the previous four years, even while not yet a member (he joined just before his death), his advocacy of the establishment of the CMI, and his strong financial support of its initial work, all helped to focus the efforts of the Masonic Fraternity in correcting inaccurate and unwarranted attacks on this 400-year-old organization.

A Steering Committee directs the affairs of the CMI.

### WHAT NEXT?

There are many projects afoot, but three will see the light of day quickly. They are:

Publication of a new book, entitled "Is It True what They Say About Freemasonry -The Methods of Anti- Masons", by S. Brent Morris and Art deHoyos;

Preparation of a draft statement on "Freemasonry and Religion", to be sent to all U.S. and Canadian Grand Lodges for their consideration. (Several Grand Lodges have expressed an interest in adopting a statement similar to the one approved by the United Grand Lodge of England).

A revised version of the popular CMI folder, "Facts About Freemasonry". Each of the above is slated for publication in early 1994.

The above reprinted from a communication of The Masonic Service Association of the U.S.A.

### **RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**

Let us as Masons continue to acknowledge the right of every human being to seek hls own relationship with God

By Charles H. Alexander Junior Grand Warden, G.L. of California

The issue of Freemasonry and religion has been very much in the news in recent months. The action of the Southern Baptist Convention, affirming that denominations' long-standing position of freedom of individual conscience regarding Masonic or other memberships was a relief to the Masonic Fraternity.

We should not relax, however, in our efforts to communicate the basic tenets of Freemasonry.ltwould be a great surprise if the Convention action silenced Dr. James Holly, John Ankerberg, Pat Robertson, or some of the other vitriolic critics of Freemasonry. I suspect what we shall soon hear is that the action of the Southern Baptists Convention is a convincing proof of the awesome power and influence of Freemasonry, rather than a rebuff to their extreme points of view.

Hostility between organized religion and Freemasonry is most certainly not new. However, when one compares, for example, the charges made against Freemasonry by Pope Leo XIII in 1884, we find a striking difference. Pope Leo charged Freemasonry, among other things, with supporting secular education, asserting the right of the people to choose their own leaders, and that all men are "perfectly equal in condition" and that no man has a right to command others. These doctrines were offensive to the church because it challenged its secular authority, which had recently lost substantial property holdings and secular authority in Italy because of the unification movement led by Freemason Garibaldi. However, they were substantially true, and to those charges most Masons would have to plead guilt, and proudly so.

However, the charges that are being made against Masonry today are so farfetched as to be ludricrous, and to the point that most Masons do not take them seriously. We could not believe that people would be so gullible as to be taken in by such drivel. Let's ponder a moment on the other side of the coin. Let's apply an equally inane interpretation of a very basic belief of Southern Baptists. Southern Baptists, as do most fundamentalists, believe that salvation comes only from the grace of God by faith in Jesus Christ, and not from law. Indeed, the report of the Home Mission Board to the Southern Baptists Convention, is mildly critical of Freemasonry because there is an "implication" in some Masonic writings that salvation may be obtained by good works, rather than through faith in Jesus Christ.

Now it is certainly true that most Southern Baptists and other fundamentalists concede that the Ten Commandments are good guides to rule one's conduct, even if they are not the only means of salvation.

But supposing you opened the newspaper to the religious section and read the following headline: "Southern Baptists Approve of Stealing, Endorse Adultery, Imply that Abuse of Elderly Parents is Acceptable". As you went on to read the article, you found that the author had read into that basic statement that salvation came only from faith in Jesus Christ, that the Baptists had rejected the Ten Commandments or the "Law". Every Southern Baptist would be fully justified in feeling that their church had been slandered by such conclusions.

It would also be possible to go back to 19th Century Southern Baptist sermons and conclude that Southern Baptists believe in slavery and quote scripture to prove the validity of the institution. This is basically what some of our critics do in putting forth Albert Pike as spokesman for present day Freemasonry.

As Masons, would we be so mean spirited as to ridicule the honest beliefs of millions of good people? Would we attempt to twist every facet of their faith by placing upon it the most strained interpretation of what they believe and what they stand for? Would we distort the honest beliefs of that denomination? Certainly not! As Masons we respect the beliefs of all.

However, if one reads Dr. Holly's diatribe against Freemasonry, *The Southern Baptist Convention and Freemasonry*, he is found tp engage in the tactic of applying the most strained and outrageous interpretations of various parts of our ritual and degrees. An example of such interpretation is that because we accept non-Christians into our ranks we reject Jesus Christ. Dr. Holly quotes a prayer, allegedly from the Scottish Rite 30th degree, which concludes, "May your kingdom come at last, and with it the end of all fanaticism, intolerance, imposture and superstition". This, according to Dr. Holly, means that masons are indicating their "hatred of Christianity". What logic!

Let us as Masons continue to acknowledge the right of every human being to seek his own relationship with God. Let us be tolerant, even to those who are intolerant.

### I HEARD THE MUSIC AGAIN

The Southern Baptist Convention A Personal Response By Jim Tresner, 33° Director, Masonic Leadership Institute

Toleration won, bigotry lost. That's about all could think of for a few moments. As Masonic observers of the Southern Baptist Convention, we had been in Houston, Texas, for three days: Dr. John Boettjer, Editor of the *Scottish Rite Journal;* Dick Curtis, Editor of *The Northern Light;* Bob Davis, General Secretary of the Guthrie Scottish Rite Bodies and a member of the National Masonic Renewal Committee; T. Max Tatum, Grand Master of Oklahoma. We were joined by Blake Rider, Director of Work of the Houston Scottish Rite Temple, and Pete Normand, Editor of the *American Masonic Review*.

Brothers Boettjer, Curtis, and Normand had press credentials and spent much time in the press room. The rest of us walked the floor or the halls, talking, listening, trying to find the "pulse" of the assembled messengers (delegates) to the Convention.

There were a little more than 50 Baptist Masons present from my home state of Oklahoma, 50 out of more than 17,780 official Messengers.

The fifteenth of June was not a good day. Every time an anti-Mason sentiment was voiced by some speaker, it was greeted with a roar of applause. Pro-Masonic sentiments were received with a silence like that of the tomb.

Strange looks were darted at our Square and Compasses pins. A minister stopped Bob Davis in the hall and asked him if he had prayed to know God's will about his Masonic membership. Bob told him he had when he became a Mason. The minister told him he

### DR. JOHN BOETT JER, Managing Editor, Scottish Rite Journal

I am pleased the Southern Baptist Convention has not embarrassed itself by yielding to an extremist, splinter group whose demands run so counter to the

Convention's traditional support of the freedom of each Southern Baptist's personal conscience and the autonomy of each local Baptist church.

### PETE NORMAND, Editor, American Masonic Review

Now that this issue has been settled, the alarming aspect of the Southern Baptist Convention' "study" of the Masonic fraternity is that the nation's largest Protestant denomination has come perilously close to allying itself with the traditional enemies of Freemasonry, among whom are the Spanish Inquisition, Hitler's Third Reich, Mussolini's Fascists, and Stalin's Russia.

### ROBERT DAVID, Member, Masonic Renewal Committee of North America

I wish to congratulate the messengers of the Southern Baptist Convention for their endorsement of the Report of their Home Mission Board. As the world's largest fraternity looks toward the future in building a better, stronger, more tolerant America, we applaud the foresight of the world's largest Protestant denomination in upholding, even in an environment of tolerance, the age-old principle of brotherly love which is so essential to human progress.

### DICK CURTIS, Editor, The Northern Light

Southern Baptists who are Masons realize there is no conflict between their church and their fraternity. Unfortunately, many non-Masons are still confused by the occasional misstatements and false innuendos that continue to circulate. Our greatest task is to let the world know the truth about Freemasonry.

A quick stop by the hospitality room in the Four Seasons Hotel sustained our morale. The ample hospitality suite, just a short walk across a park from the Convention, was made possible by the generosity of Brother John J. Robinson, 32°, who donated \$5.00 from the purchase of each copy of his newest book, A *Pilgrim's Path: One Man's Road to the Masonic Lodge*. With the Convention over, the Center for Masonic Information will continue as an information resource to the general and fraternal public and as a means of meeting new challenges to our Craft. To date, Bro. Robinson's support has helped finance formation of The Masonic Information Center, production of the brochure "Facts About Freemasonry", Masonic representation at the Southern Baptist Convention, and the hospitality/media information suite at Houston's Four Seasons Hotel.

There, Mason Messengers who had been emotionally trampled on the Convention floor could spend a little time in fellowship with Brothers to revive. Bless The Center for Masonic Information for that!

Then there was the phone call that night from Brothers at home. "Keep the faith, fight the fight, and no matter what happens, we love you".

Next morning, we're there at 8:00 a.m. Debate will start on the Masonic resolution at 10:25. The others go to the floor. I go to the press room to be ready for an interview.

I can only hear part of the floor debate, but, at the beginning, it doesn't sound good.

Then a man arises and speaks common sense. Why are we fighting this? We have much to do, we have souls to save. Let us put this behind us.

They cheer him, and cheer him! And they vote to adopt the report. And something I didn't even know was tight inside lets loose.

And there are news conferences and interviews. And it's over, for a while.

And I got my faith back. "Surely, Lord", I had prayed, "surely nearly 18,000 people will not vote to hate. Surely we have learned something from the Inquisition and from Auschwitz. Surely they cannot believe that You are served by suspicion and distrust and prejudice and bigotry".

And they didn't!

Oh, there is still hatred and suspicion in the world. They recognize Freemasonry as their natural enemy, and they are right.

But men and women, given the chance. will prefer light to darkness.

And, although the Convention's choir was not singing, I heard the music again.

### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE (PART 1)**

Keynote Address to the Southeast Masonic Conference Aug. 6, 1993 By Gary Leazer, Ph.D., Centre for Interfaith Studies

EDITORIAL NOTE: Gary Leazer, assistant director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's Interfaith Witness Department, resigned on October 22, 1993, following publication of this speech which he gave to the Southeastern Masonic Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, on August 6, 1993. Leazer's address to the Conference and the publication of this address in the October issue of *The Masonic Messenger* of Georgia was characterized as "gross insubordination" by Larry Lewis, President of the Home Mission Board, who claims he "directed (Leazer) to refrain from any and all involvement in the Freemasonry issue". Leazer says he does not remember being given this instruction.

A headline in the *Florida Baptist Witness* of November 4, 1993, reads "Only half of story told, Leazer says of firing. "Exactly so. Leazer has been under heavy fire from a small faction of fervid anti-Masons in the SBC since he was assigned the task, despite his declared reluctance for the job, of studying Freemasonry and deciding if it is compatible with Christianity and Baptist doctrine. Among Leazer's most heated detractors was Dr. Larry Holly, a Beaumont, Texas physician who now indicts not only Leazer but also Dr. Lewis and the Home Mission Board for not providing "the SBC with an honest and objective study of one of the scourges (meaning Freemasonry) of the Kingdom of God". "This statement characterizes the intent of this anti-Masonic faction's determination to condemn Freemasonry.

Dr. Leazer's professional objectivity was impugned, and he was removed to a field position. Subsequently, the Board's report was anonymously rewritten by Home Mission Board administrators. Dr. Leazer claimed the revised version was so altered and given "a more negative spin...that I requested my name not be attached to the study". Even after heavy editing and rewriting, the report ultimately declared Masonic membership to be a matter of "personal conscience", exactly what Freemasonry has always said it was.

The dismissal of Dr. Leazer underlines the unreasoning anti-Masonic tenor of a small faction within the Southern Baptist Convention. Clearly, Freemasonry must continue educating the general public and its own members on the true nature of our Craft, a moral Fraternity dedicated to making good men better through education and ethical standards.

It is indeed an honor to receive your kind invitation to speak to you this morning. This is not an invitation I would ever have expected to receive. A year ago, I knew little about a fraternity known as Freemasonry.

Then, I was given an assignment which I neither asked for nor wanted, but one which, when given, I was determined to complete as fairly and objectively as was humanly possible. I knew the assignment was a no-win assignment from the very beginning because there were and still are very powerful voices within my denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention, calling for the complete condemnation of Freemasonry. That became clear from the very beginning when a letter I wrote in August 1992 to Craig Branch, director of the Birmingham, Alabama, office of Watchman Fellowship, an anti-cult ministry, was forwarded to James Larry Holly. Branch, a member of the Presbyterian Church of America, recently coauthored a book with John Ankerberg so that should help you place him. James Larry Holly, the Beaumont, Texas, physician who has been instrumental in the attempts to have the Southern Baptist Convention condemn Freemasonry on two occasions, immediately called for my replacement claiming, in a nine-page letter to Home Mission Board president Larry L. Lewis, that I was too prejudiced towards those opposed to Freemasonry. Lewis declined at that time to replace me stating that the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Indianapolis in June 1992 directed the Interfaith Witness Department to do the study. My impression of Holly's action then was his realization after reading the contents of my letter to Branch that he would have no influence in the direction of my research. Holly has been quoted as being very disappointed that an ad hoc committee was not appointed by the messengers at the June 1992 Southern Baptist Convention and to which he could be appointed.

Another letter, which no doubt you have all heard about if you have not read it, was the catalyst for my removal from the Freemasonry study i3.nd eventually my move to a field staff position. This letter was written to a Southern Baptist Mason in January 1993 after I had completed my study but before I had submitted it to Larry Lewis. I summarized my conclusions and recommendations in the letter. Somehow, this letter also ended up in Holly's possession. I received a phone call at 12:45 a.m. while I was at a meeting in Lexington, Kentucky, from Darrell Robinson, vice-president or the Home Mission Board evangelism section and my immediate supervisor, informing me that I was being removed from further work on the assignment. Later, Holly claimed to have learned of another letter I had written to a Mason and was trying to get a copy. As a result of that claim, two Home Mission Board staff came to my home and removed two boxes of letters and

research notes from my home office. In those boxes, they found three other letters which they said cast doubt on my objectivity. As a result of this, I was given the opportunity to request a demotion and transfer to a field staff position rather than risk an attempt by the Home Mission Board trustees to fire me. I requested a field staff position.

None of my supervisors asked me for my side of the story concerning my actions during my research and writing of the study. I was criticized for allowing two Masons to read advance copies of the study. This was unusual, but not unique, given the controversial nature of the assignment. I have asked for critiques of my research from persons representing groups I was writing about on at least two other occasions, one an article on the visit of the Pope to this country several years ago and another on an article about the Later-day Saint Church. John Ankerberg, Ed Decker, and other anti-Masons would have much more accurate books if they would only talk with people they are writing about, rather than depending on their own vivid imaginations. While I was criticized for allowing two Masons to read the advance copy, no one criticized me for allowing three non-Masons to read advance copies.

The study which I submitted to Lewis in January was subsequently revised so much-twenty-five percent of the text was removed-and a more negative spin was given to the text that I requested that my name not be attached to the study. In spite of these changes, I still believe the study is the most accurate and fair of any done by a non-Mason.

The Home Mission Board report adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention was written after I was removed from the process, and I had absolutely nothing to do with its content. An associate, Bill Gordon, who was Paige Patterson's grader while a student at Criswell Bible College in Dallas, was asked for input. The curriculum at Criswell Bible College includes a study of Freemasonry in its course of religious cults. Patterson, formerly president of Criswell Bible College, is now the president of the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in North Carolina. He is generally regarded as one of the two primary architects of the conservative resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention, and is a well-known anti-Mason.

I know many of you feel relief that the Southern Baptist Convention did not condemn Freemasonry, but you should not be satisfied with the report adopted by the Convention. You cannot agree with the eight points critical of Freemasonry

which are found in the report. I hope you will respond clearly and quickly to each of these points.

To be continued, next issue Vol. 13, No.2

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