

VICTORIA LODGE OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH
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UNDERSTANDING THE ANTI-MASONIC MINDSET

by Bro. the Rev. Dr. Gary Leazer

(The following is the text of the address presented at Britannia Lodge No.73, B.C.R. on October 14, 1999.)

I am very pleased to be with you tonight in this beautiful building. I bring you greetings from my lodge in Georgia, Clarkston Lodge No.492 and from the Grand Lodge of Georgia.

This is my third trip to Canada in the last three years. I was in Alberta in 1987, in Kananaskis, and last year I had the great pleasure to be in Kamloops. Tonight, I am especially honored to be here at the Victoria Lodge of Education and Research.

I still have to pinch myself whenever I am asked to speak to a Masonic group because it was not very many years ago that Freemasonry was one of the last things on my mind. Even though I am the son of a Master Mason, the grandson of a 32° Scottish Rite Mason, and although I had been married to his daughter for over twenty years, I learned that I am the son-in-law of a Master Mason who was, until his death this past January, a Southern Baptist minister. He did not tell me that he was a Mason until the assignment was given me to conduct the investigation of your fraternity.

I was not a Mason at that time and knew almost nothing about the fraternity. Although I did not want the assignment, I was determined to conduct as accurate a study as anyone could possibly do. I set about this task in 1992. It took about 6 months to examine the negative accusations about Freemasonry as well as responses from Masons concerning their fraternity.

This issue arose in the Southern Baptist Convention when a medical doctor in Beaumont, Texas, named James Larry Holly. Dr. Holly had been a critic of Freemasonry for many years. In 1985, he introduced a similar resolution at the Southern Baptist Convention in which he sought to condemn Freemasonry as a false and Satanic religion. The response in the following year from my department was that Freemasonry was not a religion and that we should not take a position for nor against it. That response was accepted by the Convention in 1985 and it was hoped the issue had been decided.

However, Dr. Holly brought the issue up at the annual meeting of the Convention in 1992. In 1992, I was the director of the Interfaith program for the Convention and was given the assignment to conduct another, more thorough, investigation, because, obviously, it was felt that the man who did the investigation in 1985-86 did not arrive at the right answer.

Dr. Holly found a number of problems with Freemasonry. His desire was that:

- no Mason should be allowed to serve as a leader in any Southern Baptist church, either as a deacon, Sunday School teacher or committee member.

- no Mason should be called as a pastor unless he publicly renounces Freemasonry and burns his apron and other Masonic paraphernalia.
- converts should be counseled about the incompatibility of membership in Freemasonry and membership in a Baptist church.
- no pastor should participate in a funeral service conducted by Masons.
- churches with cornerstones dedicated by Masons should hold public ceremonies of repentance and prayer.

These points, Holly said, would be "a start."

One of the first decisions I made was to fly Dr. Holly and two of his associates from Beaumont to Atlanta to meet with my staff and me for a full day. I must admit that Dr. Holly did a very good job presenting his argument. If I had stopped my investigation with his presentation, I would have agreed with him. But, as I continued to study Freemasonry, I found that Dr. Holly's conclusion was on illogical arguments, misinformation and misinterpretation. I arrive at a different conclusion than he wanted.

Dr. Holly is one of a number of people in the Southern Baptist Convention who would like to see Freemasonry condemned.

One type of these people is a religious zealot. These individuals begin with these assumptions: Freemasonry is a religion. An analogy is found in Geometry. It is a false, Satanic religion that worships a different God. It has its own plan of salvation which a Mason receives as he rises through the various degrees. In Geometry, it is a "given" that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. It does not have to be proven. It is a "given." To prove their case, they began a circular argument with an assumption which they then made their conclusion. Dr. Holly calls this a scientific conclusion.

He is the author of three books on Freemasonry, entitled The Southern Baptist Convention and Freemasonry, Vol. I, II, and III. He sent his books to thousands of Southern Baptist pastors seeking to influence votes on the issue when it came up at the Convention.

His "little books," as they came to be called because they are not very long, soon became the subject of controversy themselves. When his "little books" became the subject of intense scrutiny by myself and others, he responded, "Whether my booklet is factual or erroneous is irrelevant." In other words, he said it didn't make any difference whether his books were accurate or not. He simply used whatever argument he could find to justify condemnation of the fraternity.

He used partial quotations. He would take a quote from Albert Pike's Morals and Dogma from a page for the first part of a quote. He used an ellipsis - the three little dots that tell the reader that a word or words have been left out of the quote. However, Dr. Holly left out over 200 words and completed his quote with a part of a sentence two pages later. He made the quote say something Albert Pike did not intend to say.

Another type of Masonic critics are conspiracists. Conspiracies are very popular today. For example, in the United States, we wonder who killed John F. Kennedy -

or is he really dead? I have seen headlines in supermarket tabloids that claimed Kennedy was not killed, but is living in a retirement home in Massachusetts. Other conspiracies, point to Lee Harvey Oswald, the FBI, the Mafia, politicians, and Freemasons. All have been accused of being behind this conspiracy.

Texe Marrs, who lives in Austin, Texas, is one of the leading conspiracists today. A person reading his newsletter, Flashpoint, could conclude that the whole world is involved in one Satanic conspiracy. Only Texe Marrs, it seems, is standing firm against Satanic forces all around us. He tells repeatedly of his "own extensive research and investigation" which turns up "facts" no one else outside his little organization can find. In a recent newsletter, he asks about UFOs. That is a very popular topic in the United States with "reports" that the U.S. government is hiding a captured alien ship. He sees this as a part of a wider
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conspiracy involving the government, which he insists, is under the control of Freemasons, the Illuminati, the United Nations and many other organizations. These organizations are hiding the truth from you and I. This type of thinking helps drive anti-Masonry today.

A third type of critic are those for whom Freemasonry is a money-making topic. It sells books, videos, and pamphlets. It's like putting a scantily clad woman on the cover of a paperback book. The woman helps sell more books than if the cover showed a photo of a man in a tuxedo.

It is interesting that people like John Ankerberg of Chattanooga, Tennessee, a leading critic of our fraternity, offers about 20 different books, videos, and offsets attacking Freemasonry for sale on his Web site. I am on his mailing list. Most of what he sends me is in the form of appeals for money. Recently, he sent a mailout to me announcing that he was \$170,000 behind in receipts. If his supporters would not send him money immediately, he would be forced to stop his TV programs and the "enemy," meaning the Masons and others, would win.

I also receive a magazine called Watchman Expositor. One of the directors of this organization, Bob Anderson, recommended anti-Masonic books by leading critics, including Ankerberg, in a recent appeal for money. On the opposite side of the flyer, he appealed for individuals to become "cult busters." The word "cult" is a hot-button word in the United States. It draws attention and a group. People are fascinated by the word and also afraid of any group called a "cult." Anderson asked his readers to become "cult busters" by sending him \$25 per month. There is money to be made attacking Freemasonry.

There is fourth type of Masonic critic. The fourth type is a person who believes the end of the world is at hand and that Jesus Christ will soon return to begin a reign of one thousand years on Earth. In the Book of Revelation, it is said the Church is the Bride of Christ. It must be a pure bride, a virgin. To make the Church a pure bride, all unbelievers, compromisers and liberals must be expelled. Freemasons, as Holly insists, are part of the unbelievers and compromisers in the church. Masons must either repent or be expelled. This is a very strong belief among our leading critics. I have listed four types, but understand that most critics fit easily into two or more of the types.

In light of this criticism, what must we do? Masonry must be not visible only within the Lodge room. Masonry which stops at the Tyler's station is not much use to anyone. It must be even more visible in the ordinary activities of the world. Our Masonry must be visible in the way we treat a clerk in a store, in

the way we treat our employees or serve our employer, in the way we play a game or drive a car, in the daily language we use, in the books we read and in the movies we watch. A Mason must be just as much a Mason in a factory, office building, schoolroom, golf course and ball park as he is in a tiled Lodge meeting. Your neighbor ought to be able to look at you and wonder what makes you different.

Johann Wolfgang Goethe was the last of the so-called "universal men." This means in one lifetime he managed to become competent in every significant branch of human knowledge. He was a historian, a philosopher, a poet, a dramatist, and a scientist. As he lay dying, his biographer reported that he sat bolt upright in bed and cried out with passion, "Light, light, more light!" and with that fell back dead. No words could have summarized the thrust of his life more accurately. His consuming passion had been to learn more and more - ever to enlarge the circle of his understanding. He was the epitome of man as knower, perceiver, comprehender. Years later, the great Spanish philosopher, Miguel de Unamuno was reading this biographer, and when he came to the passage about Goethe's death, he put down the book and said to his wife: "For all the wisdom, Goethe was mistaken here. Instead of crying for light, light, more light, what lie should have cried for was 'Warmth, warmth, more warmth.' Human beings do not die of the darkness, they die of the cold." (John Claypool, "Life and Warmth - God's Gift," 30 November 1980)

I believe both men were right. Light is an important need of human nature. To walk around in darkness is a dangerous way to do life. We should, like Goethe, up to our dying hours, be concerned for "Light! Light! More Light!."

But Unamuno is also correct. In addition to perceiving truth correctly, I very much need to feel that I am cherished and valued and that I belong somewhere. I need to feel that what happens to me does make a difference to at least some other human beings and to the universe itself.

Leslie Weatherhead served as an air raid warden during the terrible days of the London blitz. He recounts that one night after a particular heavy bombing, he was making his way through the smoking rubble and heard the soft cry of a child. He went around the corner and found a nine-year-old boy sobbing his heart out. He went up to him and said, "Where is your father, son?" and the boy answered: "He is in service overseas. 'What about your mother?' Weatherhead asked. "She was killed last week during an air raid." "Where are your brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts?" he went on. "I don't know," shrugged the little boy, "We've all gotten separated." With that, Weatherhead knelt before the lad and put both hands on his shoulders and said, "Tell me my son, who are you?" At which the little boy began to sob even more compulsively and then said, "Mister, I ain't nobody's nothing." Weatherhead reported that if he lived to be a hundred, he could never forget the pathos of those five words. To feel yourself orphaned, alone, disconnected where no one cared - what could be worse? To survive and to be fullfilled does call for warmth as well as light. (Claypool, *ibid*)

I am first of all a theologian. I concentrated in the study of theology, both Christian and non-Christian, during my more than 6 years of graduate studies. I am also a churchman. For more than 20 years, I have been involved in church growth and studying why some churches grow and some die. I see many parallels between church growth and growth within the fraternity. The main reasons churches grow can be summed up in two points: they move outside the walls of the church building to where people are and, second, they meet the needs of the people with whom they come into contact.

The primary reason churches die is they turn inward and forget their purpose for existence. In my opinion, Masons must take their light out into the world to let people know we exist and why we exist. Our survival absolutely depends on you and me doing what we as Masons must do in our world.

Potpourri.

The following quotation taken from "The Origin and Antiquity of Masonry." and published in Volume 1 of British Masonic Miscellany supplies us with the origin of the Junior Warden's final utterance at the closing of a Lodge. It is admitted that in some of the rituals in practice the wording has been changed slightly but its origin was from the following source:-

"In the closing of the Fellow-craft's (sic) Lodge the Junior Warden uses these words:-

'Happy have we met, Happy may we part, and Happy meet again.'

This is an adaptation of one of the oldest songs in the English language, which runs somewhat as follows:-

"Merry have we met, Merry have we been,
Merry may we part, and merry meet again;
With our merry sing-song, happy, gay and free,
And a merry ding dong, happy let us be."

So when the Junior Warden recites the familiar words, we may be reminded that the sentiment expressed therein comes from mediaeval times."
