



A Closer Look at Freemasonry

During the annual session of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), June 15-17, 1993, the messengers overwhelmingly approved a report on Freemasonry. This action recognized the many charitable endeavors of Freemasonry. It also acknowledged that “many outstanding Christians and Southern Baptists now are, and in the past have been Masons.”¹ For the first time in the history of the SBC, however, the Convention concluded, “many tenets and teachings of Freemasonry are not compatible with Christianity or Southern Baptist doctrine.”² The report accepted by the Convention identified eight tenets and teachings of Freemasonry that it concluded were not compatible with Christianity.³

First Incompatibility: *The prevalent use of offensive concepts, titles, and terms such as “Worshipful Master” for the leader of a lodge; references to their buildings as “mosques,” “shrines,” or “temples”; and the use of words such as “Abaddon” and “Jah-Bul-On,”⁴ the so-called secret name of God. To many, these terms are not only offensive but sacrilegious.*

Biblical Response: The so-called secret name of God illustrates the offensive nature of the above terms for Christians. Albert Pike, one of the most influential Masonic writers, explained the first two syllables of the secret name in his discussion of the old French rituals of Freemasonry:

This is probably Jabulum, incorrectly copied; which, as I have shown, meant ‘the product of, that which proceeded, issued or emanated from Om.’

If correctly written, it is compounded of ... Yu or Yah-u, ... Baal or Bal or Bel, and Om, thus combining the names of the

Hebrew, Phoenician and Hindu Deities, to indicate that they are in reality the same. In some old rituals it is Jabulum.⁵

Many leaders of Freemasonry confuse pagan deities with the true God of the Bible. The Christian Scriptures never represent pagan deities as simply different representations of the one true God. The Bible rejects all pagan deities as false gods and goddesses. Exodus 20:4-5 states: "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me." The Bible also rejects the idea that idolaters worship the true God but know Him by a different name. Israel used the correct personal name for God, yet God rejected their worship because of their use of an idol.

He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt." When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD." So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'"

"I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people. Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation" (Ex. 32:4-10).⁶

Non-Christian religions recognize many different gods and goddesses, but none of these are a representation of the true God of the Bible. All pagan deities are false gods and must be rejected by Christians. The gods and goddesses of the non-Christian religions are different in nature and character from the biblical God. The differences are far greater and more significant than the terminology or name used to refer to God. No Christian

should have any part in a ritual that honors or glorifies a pagan deity.

The 31st degree of the Scottish Rite Southern Jurisdiction is especially troubling for Christians because of the honor and glory it attributes to Egyptian deities. The following quotes are from the official Masonic commentary on the Scottish Rite degrees:

The second section takes place in a re-creation of the Court of the Dead in Egyptian mythology, a place where judgment is rendered on the worthiness of a recently deceased man to enter into the kingdom of the gods. This section of the ritual relies heavily on *The Book of the Dead*.

The candidate is brought into the Court of the Dead to be judged for actions while living and to determine if he deserves to dwell among the gods. His escort is Horus. Isis, Horus' mother, speaks first, inquiring whose ka has come to be judged.

Through Horus, the candidate claims to have led the most virtuous of lives. The gods express their hope that he speaks the truth. They ask him to approach the balance and stand near the body that was his in life.

Isis now directs the candidate to the altar of the great god Khem, the source of life. Here she inquires about the honesty of the deceased through six questions. Thoth again records the answers.

The answers to all of the specific questions before the altars of various deities are now thrown upon the balance, making the pans nearly equal.

Osiris, having once been a man and subject to the passions and weaknesses of human existence, knows that the other gods cannot appreciate human fallibility. He renders the final judgment—this man is worthy of admittance into the realm of everlasting light and rest and peace.⁷

The above reference to the Egyptian god Osiris goes so far as to attribute to him the same qualities and preeminence that the Bible assigns to Christ Jesus.⁸ Any participation by Christians in such rituals (even by proxy) is inexcusable. Joshua 23:7 states: "Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them."

Second Incompatibility: *The use of archaic, offensive rituals and so-called “bloody oaths” or “obligations,” among these being that promised by the Entered Apprentice:*

“All this I most solemnly and sincerely promise and swear, ... binding myself under no less penalty than that of having my throat cut from ear to ear, my tongue torn out by its roots, and buried in the sands of the sea, at low water mark, where the tide ebbs and flows twice in twenty-five hours, should I, in the least, knowingly or wittingly violate or transgress this my Entered Apprentice obligation.”

Or that of the Fellow Craft degree:

“All this I most solemnly and sincerely promise and swear, ... binding myself under no less penalty than that of having my left breast torn open, my heart plucked from thence, and given to the beast of the field and the birds of the air as prey, should I, in the least, knowingly or wittingly, violate or transgress this my Fellow Craft obligation.”

Or that of the Master Mason:

“All this I most solemnly and sincerely promise and swear, ... binding myself under no less penalty than that of having my body severed in two, my bowels torn from thence and burned to ashes, and these scattered before the four winds of heaven, that no more remembrance might be had among men or Masons of so vile a wretch as I should be, should I, in the least, knowingly or wittingly violate or transgress this my Master Mason obligation. So help me God and keep me steadfast.”

Or that of other advanced degrees with required rituals considered by many to be pagan and incompatible with Christian faith and practice.

Even though these oaths, obligations, and rituals may or may not be taken seriously by the initiate, it is inappropriate for a Christian to “sincerely promise and swear,” with a hand on the Holy Bible, any such promises or oaths, or to participate in any such pagan rituals.⁹

Biblical Response: Both Jesus and the apostle James taught that Christians should avoid the kind of extravagant oaths found in the rituals of Freemasonry. Christians should simply let their “yes” be “yes,” and their “no” mean “no.” In Matthew 5:34-37, Jesus taught the following:

But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

Likewise, in his epistle, James wrote: "Above all, my brothers, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned" (Jas. 5:12).

The oaths required by Freemasonry are far worse than the examples the New Testament warns its readers against making. The Entered Apprentice swears under no fewer penalties than that of having his "throat cut from ear to ear," and his "tongue torn out by its roots, and buried in the sands of the sea." In the Fellow Craft degree, he swears under no less penalty than that of having his "left breast torn open," his "heart plucked from thence" and "given to the beast of the field and the birds of the air as prey." The candidate for the Mason degree swears under no fewer penalties than that of having his "bowels torn from thence and burned to ashes, and these scattered before the four winds of heaven."

Some Masons claim that the candidates for the degrees do not take these oaths seriously and, therefore, the oaths are compatible with Christian teaching. However, the Bible warns that oaths should be taken seriously and not given rashly. Leviticus 5:4 says, "Or if a person thoughtlessly takes an oath to do anything, whether good or evil—in any matter one might carelessly swear about—even though he is unaware of it, in any case when he learns of it he will be guilty."

Third Incompatibility: *The recommended readings, in pursuance of advanced degrees, of religions and philosophies, which are undeniably pagan and/or occultic, such as much of the writings of Albert Pike, Albert Mackey, Manly Hall, Rex Hutchens, W.L. Wilmshurst, and other such authors; along with their works, such as *Morals and Dogma*, *A Bridge to Light*, *An Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry*, and *The Meaning of Masonry*.*

Biblical Response: Several of these Masonic writers deny the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. For example, Rex Hutchens wrote:

The purpose of teaching the concept of a Messiah in Freemasonry is to point out its near universality in the

well-developed religions of the ancient world. We see references to Dionysius of the Greeks, Sosiosch of the Persians, Krishna of the Hindus, Osiris of the Egyptians, Jesus of the Christians. The purpose of these varying cultures' messiahs was to find in human form a source of intercession with Deity; in particular one who, as a human, had been tempted and suffered the daily pangs of life and so could be expected to possess a particular sympathy and understanding; in a word, the messiahs expressed hope.¹⁰

In addition, some of these writers confuse false pagan beliefs with the teaching of Christianity. Albert Pike, in the following quote, confused the Christian Trinity with the Hindu Universal Soul: "Behold the True Masonic Trinity; the Universal Soul, the Thought in the Soul, the Word, or Thought expressed; the Three In One, of a Trinitarian Ecossais."¹¹

According to Hutchens, the following pagan deities are mentioned in the ritual of the 31st degree of Scottish Rite Freemasonry, Southern Jurisdiction. (31st degree) "The Egyptian deities present in the hall are: (1) Osiris: the Lord and Judge of the dead; (2) Atum: called the 'Father of Souls'; (3) Ma: goddess of Truth and Justice whose image weighs upon one side of the balance; (4) Thoth: Scribe of the gods; (5) Anubis: Conductor of Souls; son of Osiris by his sister Nephthys; (6) Horus: son of Osiris, who presents the deceased to his father; (7) Isis: wife and sister of Osiris, mother of Horus; (8) Nephthys: sister of Isis and Osiris, mother of Anubis by Osiris; (9) Four sons of Horus: Kebhsenuf, Tua-mutef, Hapi and Amset."¹²

Pike even compared the Bible with the occultic Kabalah, which he apparently considered superior to the Bible.

All truly dogmatic religions have issued from the Kabalah and return to it: everything scientific and grand in the religious dreams of all the illuminati, Jacob Boehme, Swedenborg, Saint-Martin, and others, is borrowed from the Kabalah; all the Masonic associations owe to it their Secrets and their Symbols.

The Kabalah alone consecrates the alliance of the Universal Reason and the Divine Word; it establishes, by the counterpoises of two forces apparently opposite, the eternal balance of being; it alone reconciles Reason with Faith, Power with Liberty, Science with Mystery; it has the keys of the Present, the Past, and the Future.

The Bible, with all the allegories it contains, expresses, in an

incomplete and veiled manner only, the religious science of the Hebrews.¹³

The SBC Report on Freemasonry correctly identifies these “recommended readings” as “undeniably pagan and/or occultic.”¹⁴

Fourth Incompatibility: *The reference to the Bible placed on the altar of the lodge as the “furniture of the lodge,” comparing it to the square and compass rather than giving it the supreme place in the lodge.*

Biblical Response: Albert Pike identified the Bible as part of the furniture of the lodge in his book *Morals And Dogma Of The Ancient And Accepted Scottish Rite Of Freemasonry*. He wrote:

The *Holy Bible*, Square, and Compasses, are not only styled the Great Lights in Masonry, but they are also technically called the Furniture of the Lodge; and, as you have seen, it is held that there is no Lodge without them. This has sometimes been made a pretext for excluding Jews from our Lodges, because they cannot regard the New Testament as a holy book. The Bible is an indispensable part of the furniture of a *Christian* Lodge, only because it is the sacred book of the Christian religion. The Hebrew Pentateuch in a Hebrew Lodge, and the Koran in a Mohammedan one, belong on the Altar; and one of these, and the Square and Compass, properly understood, are the Great Lights by which a Mason must walk and work.¹⁵

Freemasonry has no commitment to the Bible as the unique Word of God. It happily substitutes non-Christian scriptures when Christians are not the majority of a lodge.

Fifth Incompatibility: *The prevalent use of the term “light,” which some may understand as a reference to salvation rather than knowledge or truth.*

Biblical Response: In commenting on the Christian interpretation of the Blue degrees in Freemasonry, Pike wrote:

Notwithstanding the death of the Redeemer, man can be saved only by faith, repentance, and *reformation*.

Having repented and *reformed*, and bound himself to the service of God by a firm promise and obligation, the light of Christian hope shines down into the darkness of the heart of the humble penitent, and blazes upon his pathway to

Heaven. And this is symbolized by the candidate's being brought to light, after he is obligated, by the Worshipful Master, who in that is a symbol of the Redeemer, and so brings him the light, with the help of the brethren, as He taught the Word with the aid of the Apostles.¹⁶

In the above quote, the concepts of light and salvation are closely related. This quote also reveals that many Masonic writers include reformation (good works) as one of the requirements for salvation. However, the Bible clearly states that good works are not a requirement for salvation.¹⁷

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

Biblical Response: According to Pike, the 25th degree "... teaches the necessity of reformation as well as repentance, as a means of obtaining mercy and forgiveness, ..." ¹⁸ In his commentary on the 27th degree, Hutchens wrote: "Constans refuses the monk's arguments, trusting in a God of love who will recognize his honor and service to others as a noble path of salvation." ¹⁹ Likewise, in concerning the 31st degree, Hutchens stated: "The candidate is brought into the Court of the Dead to be judged for actions while living and to determine if he deserves to dwell among the gods. His escort is Horus. Isis, Horus' mother, speaks first, inquiring whose *ka* has come to be judged." ²⁰

The teaching that meritorious deeds can make one acceptable to God is common in many false religions. The Bible, however, warns that there is no deed that can make a sinner acceptable to God. Only the grace of God that comes through faith in Jesus Christ can save those under the judgment of sin. The addition of works to faith as a requirement of salvation is contrary to the teaching of the Bible. The following Scriptures illustrate this: Romans 3:28: "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law." Romans 4:4-5: "Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God

who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.” Romans 11:6: “And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.” Ephesians 2:8-9: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” Titus 3:5: “He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.”

Seventh Incompatibility: *The heresy of universalism (the belief all people will eventually be saved), which permeates the writings of many Masonic authors, which is a doctrine inconsistent with New Testament teaching.*

Biblical Response: Many Masonic writings can be interpreted as endorsing universalism. Pike wrote, “It is the fine dream of the greatest of the Poets, that Hell, become useless, is to be closed at length, by the aggrandizement of Heaven; that the problem of Evil is to receive its final solution, and Good alone, necessary and triumphant, is to reign in Eternity.”²¹

Even more prominent in Freemasonry is the false teaching of inclusivism, the belief that followers of non-Christian religions will also be saved. Freemasonry holds out the promise of salvation to all worthy Masons regardless of the deity they worship. The Muslim or Hindu member of the lodge is on the same spiritual level as the believer in Jesus Christ. According to Hutchens, “Masonry is tolerant, even supportive, of the most diverse religious beliefs.”²²

Pike likewise argued that no religion can claim to have exclusivity to the truth, nor can any religion claim to be superior to another.

Toleration, holding that every other man has the same right to his opinion and faith that we have to ours; liberality, holding that as no human being can with certainty say, in the clash and conflict of hostile faiths and creeds, what is truth, or that *he* is *surely* in possession of it, so every one should feel that it is quite possible that another equally honest and sincere with himself, and yet holding the contrary opinion, may himself be in possession of the truth, and that whatever one firmly and conscientiously believes, *is* truth, *to him*.”²³

Inclusivism denies the teaching of the New Testament that only those who place their faith in Jesus Christ will be saved. The following passages teach this biblical truth: John 3:36: “Whoever

believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." John 14:6: "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" Acts 4:12: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." First Corinthians 3:11: "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." First Timothy 2:5: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." First John 5:12: "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."

Eighth Incompatibility. *The refusal of most lodges (although not all) to admit for membership African-Americans.*

Biblical Response: The Bible teaches that all men and women are created in the image of God. Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." According to Genesis 9-11, all the races of humanity scattered throughout the world are made in the image of God. For example, Genesis 9:6 states, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man." The context (Genesis 10-11) reveals that this prohibition applies to all of the races of humanity scattered throughout the world.

The New Testament reveals that Jesus rejected the racism of His day. John 4:9 indicates that Jesus discarded the racial prejudices of the Jews towards the Samaritans. "The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?' (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)" The apostle Peter, who struggled with the sin of racism throughout his life, stated in Acts 10:28, "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean." Racism should be rejected wherever it is found, whether it is discovered in the lodge or in the church.

Summary Statement on Freemasonry

There are eight major concerns that the Southern Baptist Convention has expressed about the teachings and practices of Freemasonry. These are:

- (1) Freemasonry uses offensive, non-biblical, and blasphemous terms relating to God.

- (2) Freemasonry insists on the use of “bloody oaths” or obligations, which are strictly forbidden by the Bible (cf. Matt. 5:34-37).
- (3) Freemasonry urges that occultic and/or pagan readings be used, and that their teachings be appropriated in interpreting such concepts as the Trinity.
- (4) Freemasonry includes the Bible as part of the “furniture of the lodge,” but only as an equal with non-Christian symbols and writings.
- (5) Freemasonry misuses the term “light” to refer to moral “reformation” as a means to salvation.
- (6) Freemasonry teaches that salvation may be attained by “good works” and not through faith in Christ alone.
- (7) Freemasonry advocates in many of its writings the non-biblical teachings of universalism.
- (8) In some of its lodges, Freemasonry discriminates against non-whites.

While it is clear that some Christians, moral persons, and outstanding government leaders have been and are members of the Freemasonic movement, several points of the lodge’s teachings are non-biblical and non-Christian. And, while Freemasonry encourages and supports charitable activities, it contains both multireligious and inclusivistic teachings that are not Christian in its religious instruction.

Taking the above into consideration, and being consistent with our denomination’s historic deep conviction regarding both the priesthood of the believer and the autonomy of the local church, we recommend that each individual Baptist, as well as each congregation, carefully review the issues of the teachings and practices of Freemasonry. Since, in the final analysis, the Bible alone is the only guide for faith and practice, issues related to Freemasonry and any other fraternal organization, especially secret societies, must be evaluated only in light of the plumb line of Scripture. The divinity and lordship of Christ, the substitutionary atonement of Christ, and salvation by grace through faith are foundational and nonnegotiable doctrines and the teachings of any organization or society in contradiction to such biblical tenets must be evaluated accordingly. It is, therefore, the duty of every Christian to resist and avoid false teachings to speak the truth in love and to embrace only those doctrines which are revealed in the inerrant Scripture, the Bible (see Matt. 7:24-27; 2 John 7-10; 1 Cor. 10:14; Jude 3).

All Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission.

Notes

1. *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1993* (Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, 1993), p. 224.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 225.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 225-227 lists the following eight tenets of incompatibility.
4. This word has several alternative spellings.
5. Albert Pike, *The Book of the Words* (Kila, Mont.: Kessinger Publishing Co., n.d.), p. 151. While some Masons may disagree with Pike's explanation of the secret name for God they cannot deny the tremendous influence of Pike upon Freemasonry in the United States. A reading of *A Bridge To Light* (an official publication of the Scottish Rite, Southern Jurisdiction) reveals that many modern Masonic leaders also confuse the God of the Bible with pagan deities. See *A Bridge To Light*, pp. 31, 120, 139.
6. The use of the word LORD with all capital letters indicates that the personal name of the God of Israel is used in the Hebrew text.
7. Rex R. Hutchens, *A Bridge To Light* (Washington, D.C.: The Supreme Council, 1988), p. 299-302.
8. See Hebrews 4:15.
9. *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1993*, p. 226.
10. Hutchens, *A Bridge To Light*, pp. 112-113.
11. Albert Pike, *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry* (Richmond, Va.: L.H. Jenkins, Inc., 1942), p. 575.
12. Hutchens, *A Bridge To Light*, p. 300.
13. Pike, *Morals and Dogma*, p. 744.
14. *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1993*, p. 226.
15. Pike, *Morals and Dogma*, p. 11.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 639, emphasis added.
17. See Romans 3:28; 4:4-5; 11:6; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5. Also see the discussion in the biblical response concerning the sixth incompatibility.
18. Pike, *Morals and Dogma*, p. 435.
19. Hutchens, *A Bridge To Light*, p. 243.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 300-01.
21. Pike, *Morals and Dogma*, p. 847.
22. Hutchens, *A Bridge To Light*, p. 67.
23. Pike, *Morals and Dogma*, p. 160.



4200 North Point Pkwy.
Alpharetta, GA 30022-4176

A Southern Baptist Convention agency supported by the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering®

For general information, call (770) 410-6000, or visit www.namb.net; to order materials, call Customer Service Center, 1 800 448-8032, or fax, (615) 251-5983

e-mail: interfaith@namb.net

Web site: www.namb.net