

# H11

## STATEMENT ON SECRET SOCIETIES/MASONRY

In 2008, the Board of Directors assigned a committee who was tasked with providing a statement on how to lead church members out of secret societies and provide teaching on the dangers of secret societies. The committee's report, which follows, was adopted in February 2009. An important contributing document to the discussion was the "Committee on Freemasonry Report," which was adopted by the Board of Directors (BOD) March 1, 2007, and follows this report below. After several pages of insightful review and analysis, the report concludes as follows:

The Committee's opinion is that Masons need to be told that they cannot be at once members of the Lodge (which ignores Christ) and members of the Church (which confesses Him as Lord). At the same time, our responsibility is to do everything we can to win Masons to an undivided commitment to Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church.

Having considered the report, the BOD resolved that any official statement on this matter should be inclusive of all "secret societies" and not limited only to Masonry. The BOD adopted the position "that it is biblically inconsistent for any member of the C&MA to maintain an active membership in any secret society that is deistical, antagonistic to Christianity, and tends to loosen moral ties." Furthermore, the BOD recommended the development of a pastoral statement that provides counsel as to:

1. The most appropriate ways to walk local church members out of membership in secret societies as called for by General Council 2007, and
2. The best way to inform local church members about secret societies in the area so that they are not taken in as members of these societies.

It was the desire of the Board that any such statement be brief and convey sensitivity and a caring attitude in addressing these issues. We want to encourage pastors to shepherd these members and lead them into the deeper walk of a Spirit-filled life. We encourage pastors to exhibit grace and truth and to disciple these members. We suggest that the church provide teaching on the dangers of secret societies. To this end, the following Pastoral Statement is provided:

### **PASTORAL STATEMENT**

It is the position of the C&MA that membership in a "secret society" is not compatible with confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. First, the very nature of such membership (i.e.

the secrecy of the allegiance) conflicts with the practice of the Lord Himself, who did all things openly and in the full view of others. Second, our entire devotion must be to Christ Jesus and to Him alone, so much so that we are called “slaves” of Christ. Third, such societies invariably require loyalties to earthly entities that rival our loyalty to the Lord above.

In many instances, of course, membership in such societies is a matter of ignorance or innocence rather than overt disobedience to God’s Word or rebellion against divine authority. Indeed, members often cite the good works of such groups as a reason for belonging, and fail to discern the elements of membership that are inconsistent with Christian faith and practice. For this reason, sensitivity must be shown when leading local church members out of such allegiances.

It is recommended that the church acquire a few resources (books or other materials) that can be provided to individuals who are members of secret societies. When it is known that a local fellowship has a mature believer who once belonged to a secret society, that person might be made available to speak of his or her exodus from that group. Where a member of the local church is not inclined to forsake membership in a secret society, it is recommended that the church membership be preserved but that the person be informed that they will not be considered for elected or appointed office in the church unless or until they leave the secret society. This must be conveyed in gentleness and love. Such a person should be challenged to consider how much greater their service to the Lord would be if they would make devotion to Him their chief and sole priority.

Secret societies constitute an open menace to the health and advance of the local church when loyalties to each clash, or when members of the secret society seek to insinuate that society’s governance style or philosophies into church life. This is a greater danger in some regions than in others. In those communities where the influence of a secret society is stronger, the local church might find it necessary to take a more aggressive approach in teaching on these matters, exposing the non-scriptural and sometimes occultic roots of that society’s practices and warning believers to have nothing to do with such organizations. Even in such instances, it is necessary to exhibit Christian charity and to exercise patience with those who do not immediately perceive the danger.

Without question, this is an area in which it is challenging to do anything, and dangerous to do nothing. Pastors and church leaders are advised to be sensitive and caring in their treatment of those who are involved in secret societies, but not to be deterred from teaching and modeling the evidences of a deeper life relationship with Christ Jesus which will of itself stand in contrast to the errant teachings and practices of the secret society. In all things, grace and truth must be championed and must operate as guiding principles in the exercise of appropriate church leadership.



**ADDENDUM**

The Board offers the following addendum to the Pastoral Statement. These are some suggested questions to be considered in counseling individuals involved in secret societies. This list of questions is not to be considered exhaustive in nature.

Does loyalty to the secret society in any way take precedence over the bond of fellowship in the Body of Christ?

Have you thoroughly investigated the teachings and practices of the secret society? Are they in any way inconsistent with biblical doctrine?

Is the teaching of the secret society consistent with the biblical view of the one true God? (Isaiah 45:22)

Is the teaching consistent with the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity?

Does the society teach that the Holy Spirit is actually a person or is He presented as some kind of impersonal force?

Does the society teach that Jesus Christ is the incarnation of God in the flesh? (1 John 4:2–3)

Does the society teach that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father? (Philippians 2:11)

Does the society teach that Jesus Christ alone is the light of the world? (John 8:12)

Does the society teach that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Jesus Christ? (Colossians 2:3)

Does the society teach that salvation can be found in anyone other than Christ? (Acts 4:12)

Does the society teach the lostness and depravity of man, or that human beings are innately good? (Romans 3:9–10)

Does the society teach the necessity of the New Birth? (John 3:3)

Is the teaching of this society a different gospel than the one revealed in Scripture? (Galatians 1:8–9)

**FREEMASONRY REPORT**

As noted above, the following report was adopted by the Board on March 1, 2007.

Freemasonry goes by many names (Masonry [the name that will be used often in this overview], the Scottish Rite, Blue Lodge, Eastern Star [for women], and Shriners). Many people, even those who belong to the organization, incorrectly believe that freemasonry is merely a fraternal order, like the Rotary, Elks Club, or Lions Club. It is not. Masons deny that what they belong to is a religion. It is.

Christian leaders who have spoken against Masonry include Dwight L. Moody, Charles Finney, Jonathan Blanchard, Charles Blanchard, John Ankerberg, and Walter Martin. Among the Christian denominations that have statements opposing and/or condemning Masonry are:

Assemblies of God	Church of the Nazarene
Grace Brethren	Wesleyan Methodist
Evangelical Mennonite	Orthodox Presbyterian
Christian Reformed Church	Reformed Presbyterian
Evangelical Lutheran	Missouri Synod Lutheran
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod	Presbyterian Church in America
Methodist Church of England	Church of Scotland
Baptist Union of Scotland	Roman Catholic Church
General Association of Regular Baptist	Russian Orthodox Church
Independent Fundamentalist Churches of America	

In 1992 James Holly, a Southern Baptist medical doctor, requested that the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) conduct a study of Freemasonry. It was agreed, and Dr. Holly wrote a 70+ page article that summarized his investigation: “Freemasonry Watch: The Southern Baptist Convention and Freemasonry.” Setting aside the study that was done, the SBC published its report on Freemasonry in 1993, noting SBC leaders who were also Masons, points of agreement between Freemasonry and Christianity, and areas of disagreement between the two. At that Convention the following recommendation was approved:

“In light of the fact that many tenets and teachings of Freemasonry are not compatible with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine, while others are compatible with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine, **we therefore recommend that consistent with our denomination’s deep convictions regarding the priesthood of the believer and the autonomy of the local church, membership in a Masonic Order be a matter of personal conscience.** Therefore, we exhort Southern Baptists to prayerfully and carefully evaluate Freemasonry in the light of the Lordship of Christ, the teachings of the Scripture, and the findings of this report, as led by the Holy Spirit of God.”

The Masons responded by publishing the following:

“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 Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God” (*The Scottish Rite Journal*, Aug. 1993).

How should you and I respond to these seemingly contradictory views? The beliefs and practices of the Masons are difficult to evaluate. Numerous books and articles have been written on the subject. In addition to the study done by James Holly, an article published in *The Master’s Seminary Journal* (5/2, Fall 1994) by Eddy D. Field II and Eddy D. Field III, and “The Masonic Lodge and the Christian Conscience,” an article written by John Weldon and published by Christian Research Institute (founded by Walter Martin), is a book jointly authored by John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *The Secret Teachings of the Masonic Lodge* (1990 copyright). Using those resources plus *Is It True What They Say About Freemasonry?*, written by Arturo de Hoyos and S. Brent Morris defending the Masons, we would like to present the results of our study. The work done and assistance given by David Janssen, pastor of the Alliance Church in State College Pennsylvania, contributed to our conclusions.

A summary statement of his findings is made by John Weldon in the article mentioned above:

“The Masonic Lodge in America is a highly influential organization claiming some four million members. Masonic leaders argue the lodge is not a religion but merely a fraternal body that seeks to better society and also assist the Christian church. It does this, they claim, by helping Christians become better members of their own faith.

“The truth is that Masonry is a distinct religion that espouses teachings incompatible with Christian faith in the areas of God, salvation, and other important doctrines. It is therefore inconsistent for any Christian to swear the oaths of Masonry to uphold and support the Lodge when Masonry’s own ritual, doctrines, and impact in history have denied and opposed biblical teaching.

“This is so despite the 1993 recommendation of the Southern Baptists at their annual convention that membership in the Lodge can be left to the Christian’s individual conscience.”

**What theological positions are held by Freemasonry?** All who join the Masons affirm their

belief in a deity, but upon investigation it is discovered that a Mason can believe in any deity, whether it be the God of the Bible, Buddha, Allah, or any other god. This means that the Lodge includes Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and followers of other religions.

There are thirty-three degrees to Freemasonry. A majority of those who join never proceed beyond the third degree. When a person applies for membership in the Masons he becomes an “initiate.” He then must participate in three secret initiation ceremonies, called “degrees.” After completing the First Degree the candidate becomes an “Entered Apprentice Mason.” After completion of the Second Degree, he is a “Fellow Craft Mason.” With completion of the third degree, he is a “Master Mason.” This makes him a full member worldwide.

The First Degree includes the prospective member receiving “The Lambskin Apron,” the most important emblem in Freemasonry. Concerning the apron, *The Monitor and Officer’s Manual* (the official textbook of the Lodge) says (p. 5):

“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.”

Note from that description, as Weldon points out, that the “Celestial Lodge above” refers 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 the word “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,” teaching the achievement of salvation on the basis of human good works.

Scripture contradicts that teaching. In 1 Peter 1:18-19, we read, *It is not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.* In Ephesians 2:8-9 we’re told, *It is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not of works, so that no one can boast.*

In Masonic lore the chief character is “the Grand Master Hiram Abiff.” According to *The Monitor* (pp. 35-36), from the Third Degree one finds:

“Hence, my brother, how important it is that we should endeavor to imitate Grand Master Hiram Abiff 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.”

Again, as in the previous quotation, the teaching seems to be that one attains entrance into heaven by living a virtuous life. On the other hand, the apostle Paul wrote that God *has saved us and called us to a holy life – not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel* (2 Timothy 1:9-10).

When writing to the Christians in Galatia Paul made it clear that *even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned* (Galatians 1:8). It appears to us that the Masons are preaching another gospel with regard to salvation!

It also needs to be pointed out that oaths are taken by the Masons. In the First, Second, and Third Degrees, a Mason swears oaths to God, under penalty of death, to fulfill certain obligations. He swears to this oath on a book considered by his Grand Lodge to be sacred. The book varies depending on the dominant religion of the area. It may be the Bible, the Koran, or the Bhagavad Gita, depending on where it occurs. 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 (according to *The Monitor*, pp. 23, 83, 138), 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.” 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 twofold tie.” 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.” These three statements illustrate the serious bond between Masons. Thus, by solemn oath the mason binds himself as a brother to every other mason, regardless of his god or religion.

Beyond that, in the Second Degree, the candidate bows in reverence to the god of Freemasonry, called “G.A.O.T.U.” (Great Architect of the Universe). 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 [at that point the Worshipful Master raps a gavel three times; the raps instruct all present to rise]. It is the initial of the name of the Supreme Being, before whom all Masons, from the youngest Entered Apprentice in the northeast corner of the Lodge to the Worshipful Master in the east, should with reverence bow [all bow as the gavel is rapped a fourth time].

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.

In 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 Paul discussed the relationship of believers to unbelievers. In verses 14-16a of that passage it says, *Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols?*

Second Corinthians 6:14 prohibits believers from joining in any activity that forms a covenant-like bond with pagans and their idols. Paul’s counsel in such a situation was to abandon the relationship. A believer must not join himself to any unbeliever so as to associate himself with the unbeliever’s idolatry.

In *The Masonic Lodge and the Christian Conscience* (p. 39), John Weldon wrote:

“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 Corinthians 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 participate in this organization.”

After a lengthy study on Freemasonry, the Christian Reformed Church concluded:

“There is an irreconcilable conflict between the teachings and practices of the lodge and those of biblical Christianity and therefore simultaneous membership in the lodge and in the Church of Jesus Christ is incompatible with and contrary to Scripture.”

Paul Bretscher summarized an 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” (*The Masonic Apostasy from Christ, Concordia Theological Monthly* 26 [February 1955], p. 97).

John Weldon said, “Masonry ... claims to be a friend of Christianity, and yet it contains doctrines that are contrary to biblical teaching. As unpleasant as it may be, it is the obligation of the discerning Christian to point this out, both for the sake of the hundreds of thousands of Christian Masons and for those who might yet become Masons” (*The Masonic Lodge and the Christian Conscience*, p. 1).

**What does all this mean for The Christian and Missionary Alliance?** The Committee’s opinion is that Masons need to be told that they cannot be at once members of the Lodge (which ignores Christ) and members of the church (which confesses him as Lord). At the same time, our responsibility is to do everything we can to win Masons to an undivided commitment to Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church.

