

**The Charismatic Issue in Bedford County, Tennessee**  
**A Biblical Response**  
**(Delivered 9/28/03 at Shelbyville Mills Baptist Church by Pastor Jonathan Sims)**

Due to the recent turmoil at FBC Shelbyville over Charismatic / Pentecostal practices, and due to the fact that so many people are repeatedly asking me questions concerning charismatic teaching, and due to the fact that my job as pastor is to *"speak...the things which become sound doctrine"* (*Titus 2:1*), the Lord has laid it upon my heart to bring to you a short doctrinal position on what I believe to be the major charismatic doctrines now circulating throughout our county and our Baptist churches.

The following is certainly not an exhaustive treatment of all Charismatic issues.\* I wanted to address the main points very briefly and simply so that the average lay person could have a basic understanding of how the Bible addresses this issue.

It is my prayer that this short study would help you *"...be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive"* (*Eph 4:14*). Here are the main issues that need to be addressed:

**1. The Scriptures:** We affirm the Baptist Faith and Message *"That the sole authority for faith and practice among Baptists is the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments."* (BF&M 2000 – pg. 5). *"sole authority"* means that only the sixty-six books of the Bible are the Word of God. The canon of Scripture is closed. The Bible is God's complete and final revelation of Himself to man. Therefore, we cannot agree with extra-biblical revelation such as "words of knowledge;" "prophetic utterances;" etc. which claim to speak the Word of God.

**"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."** (*Rev 22:18-19*)

*"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."* (*Jude 1:3*)

**"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;"** (*Heb 1:1-2*)

**"Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."** (*Prov. 30:5-6*)

*"LAMED. For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven."* (*Psa. 119:89*)

**2. Apostles:** Apostles were men hand-picked by the Lord Jesus Christ to receive the Scripture and to lay the foundation for the New Testament Church. (See *Eph.2:20* and *2 Peter 3:15-16* as examples). The office of apostle ceased to exist once that foundation was laid and the Scripture received. Today none can claim the authority of an apostle in the church. Today none can claim to receive inspired Scripture directly from God.

When a person claims to be an apostle they can also claim that they have received “*revelation*” from God and impose it upon the church. This is how cultic groups and heresies are spawned. Again, we affirm “*That the sole authority for faith and practice among Baptists is the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*” (BF&M 2000 – pg. 5).

(A) The church was founded upon the apostles: “*And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;*” (Eph 2:20) Once the foundation of the New Testament Church was laid, the foundational office of apostle ceased to exist. (see 1 Cor.4:9)

(B) A qualification of being a New Testament apostle was to be an eye-witness of the resurrected Christ. (See Acts 1:2-3, 15-26) “Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?” (1 Cor. 9:1)

“*After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.*” (1 Cor. 15:7-8) Today there are no eye-witnesses of the resurrection of Christ.

(C) Apostles were chosen personally by Jesus: (Matt.10:1-4, Luke 6:12-16)

(D) Only 12 apostles are honored by the Lord in the New Jerusalem: “*And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*” (Rev 21:14) This signifies that Christ recognizes no one beyond the twelve He picked as apostles.

(E) There is no Scriptural evidence to support the ongoing appointment of men to the office of apostle beyond Paul and Matthias (Acts 1:23-26; 1 Cor.9:1-2). Though Barnabas is referred to as an “apostle” (Acts 14:14) it is in the general sense of a missionary being “*sent*” out from the church.

**3. Speaking in Tongues:** One of the most divisive issues in all of Christianity has been speaking in tongues. That alone should be a solemn warning to all churches. No gift was given to produce strife in the body of Christ. The following is a biblical explanation of the gift of tongues:

(A) The use of the gift of tongues was severely restricted by the Apostle Paul in the New Testament (1 Cor.14:22-39). No other gift has so many restrictions placed upon it. Few (if any) modern day so-called “manifestations” of tongues follow this stringent list of restrictions:

- i. No more than three tongues speakers per service (14:27)
- ii. They must speak in turn...not at the same time (14:27b)
- iii. No tongues without interpretation (14:27b-28)
- iv. Confusion or disorder was an indication of error in the practice (14:33,40)
- v. Women were forbidden from speaking in tongues in church (14:34)
- vi. These restrictions were the “*commandments*” of God (14:37)
- vii. Five understandable words are better than 10,000 in tongues (14:19)

(B) Tongues will cease: “*Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.*” (1 Cor. 13:8) There is sufficient evidence to conclude that tongues as a gift have ceased today:

i. Tongues was a warning sign to unbelieving Israel to repent and receive Jesus Christ as the Messiah (Cp. 1 Cor.14:21-22 and Joel 2:28-32) Tongues, along with signs and wonders, affirmed Jesus as the Messiah and His gospel the truth to Israel. That is now a finished work.

ii. Tongues are mentioned only in the earliest of New Testament writings. Paul wrote at least twelve epistles and never mentions tongues after 1 Corinthians (among the earliest epistles). Peter never mentions tongues in any of his epistles. James, John, and Jude never mention tongues in their writings. Tongues is mentioned only briefly in Acts and 1 Corinthians as the Gospel message spread. Once the church was established, tongues were not mentioned again by any New Testament writer.

iii. Chrysostom <sup>1</sup> and Augustine <sup>2</sup>(the greatest theologians of the eastern and western churches) both considered tongues obsolete. The Scripture is definitive that tongues “*shall cease*” (1 Cor.13:8). My conviction is that tongues ceased with the end of the apostolic era. Tongues have been more of a detriment than a blessing to the church since the first century...and were trouble even in the first century! (See the church at Corinth – 1 Cor.12-14)

**4. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit:** The Baptist Faith and Message says, “*At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the body of Christ*” (BF&M 2000 – pg.9). The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is synonymous with conversion. It means to be saved. At conversion, the Holy Spirit of God baptizes us into the family of God (1 Cor.12:13). This is a once for all act which is never repeated again in the life of the believer (Eph.4:5). A believer, however, is commanded to be filled continually by the Holy Spirit (Eph.5:18). This happens many times after conversion. Filling with the Holy Spirit simply means to come under the control of the Spirit’s leadership, which produces obedience to the written Word of God and submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

**5. Slain in the Spirit:** This experience is reported by Charismatics to be a state in which the Spirit comes upon a person causing them to lose control, lose consciousness, and fall to the floor. There is absolutely no Biblical justification for such an experience. The fruit of the Spirit is “*temperance*” (Gal.5:23) which means self control...not loss of control.

It needs to be said that the test of all experience must be the Bible. Experience does not define our understanding of Scripture...Scripture defines our understanding of experience. (Read 2 Peter 1:16-21) Scripture is a “*more sure word of prophecy*” than any experience we may have.

**6. Signs and Wonders:** Preoccupation with signs and wonders is something Jesus spoke very candidly about: “*A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.*” (Mat 16:4)

Signs and wonders were used of God to bear authenticity to the office of apostle and to give validity to the Gospel of Jesus Christ: “*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?*” (Heb 2:3-4) (See also Acts 4:29-30; 5:12; 14:3; Rom.15:18-19; 2 Cor.12:12)

Now that the Word of God has been completed, signs and wonders are not necessary for God to bear witness to His Son or to the Word of God. (1 Cor.13:10) The preaching of the Gospel is what God uses to accomplish His work! It is the “*sign of Jonas*” and no other sign will be given to this generation. (See 1 Cor.1:18, 21; Rom.1:16; 10:13-15; Rom.16:25; 2 Tim.4:17; Titus 1:3)

**7. Miracles and Healing:** God is still a miracle working God! He heals people every day. But the gift of healing through men ceased with the apostolic era. The gift of healing was not used simply to keep Christians healthy...but to bear witness to the authenticity of the gospel. Once the New Testament was completed, the sign gifts passed off the scene. See Phil.2:25-27 (Epaphroditus left sick) and 2 Tim.4:20 (Trophimus left sick). See also 1 Tim.5:23 and 2 Cor.12:7. These verses seem to indicate that even in Paul's day the gift of healing had ceased. Certainly these verses prove that it is not God's will for everyone to be healed.

**Conclusion:** Our passion as Baptists has always been to be "*a people of the book*"...the Word of God! The test of our faith is not what we experience, but rather, "*what saith the Scriptures*" (Romans 4:3). This is a call for Shelbyville Mills Baptist Church to stick with sound Bible doctrine and not be caught up in Charismatic error which can divide and destroy the unity of our local church.

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\* Note: I highly recommend that every believer read "Charismatic Chaos," John F. MacArthur, Jr. (Zondervan Publishing House).

<sup>1</sup> Chrysostom, "Homilies in First Corinthians," Philip Schaff, ed., *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol.12 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 168.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, "Ten Homilies on the First Epistle of John," Philip Schaff, ed., *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol.7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 497.

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# 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.” 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.” The report accepted by the Convention identified eight tenets and teachings of Freemasonry that it concluded were not compatible with Christianity.

**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,”<sup>4</sup> 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. 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

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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).

Non-Christian religions recognize many different gods and goddesses, but none of these are a representation of the true God 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.

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. 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*

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*oaths, or to participate in any such pagan rituals.*

**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 Encyclopedia 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.

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.”

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.<sup>12</sup> 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

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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.<sup>13</sup> The SBC Report on Freemasonry correctly identifies these “recommended readings” as “undeniably pagan and/or occultic.”

**Fourth Incompatibility:** *The reference to the Bible placed on the altar of the lodge as the “furniture of the lodge,” comparing 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.

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.

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.

**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, . . .” 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.”

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.”<sup>20</sup> 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

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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."

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."

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*."

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 3:16: "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

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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 nonwhites.

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; 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**

01. *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1993* (Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, 1993), p. 224.
02. *Ibid.*, p. 225.
03. *Ibid.*, pp. 225-227 lists the following eight tenets of incompatibility.
04. This word has several alternative spellings.
05. 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.
06. 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..0
07. Rex R. Hutchens, *A Bridge To Light* (Washington, D.C.:The Supreme Council, 1988), p. 299-302.
08. See Hebrews 4:15.

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09. *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.
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