

MASONIC RITES AND WRONGS

AN EXAMINATION OF FREEMASONRY

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CHAPTER 1

IS FREEMASONRY A RELIGION?

*“The fact that so many clergymen of different denominations can be Masons and **find** no conflict in carrying on their duties is proof enough that Freemasonry is not a religion.” -Alphonse Cerza, “Let There Be Light”:
A Study in Anti-Masonry*

It is the proverbial sixty-four-thousand-dollar question: Is Freemasonry a religion or isn't it? Though a few Masons believe that Freemasonry is a religion, the overwhelming majority of Masons do not. This chapter demonstrates that Freemasonry is indeed a religion. To do so we must define *religion*, note the essential characteristics of a religion, and then, using Blue Lodge rituals from the United States, Canada, and Europe, show how Freemasonry meets these criteria for being a religion. Blue Lodge (or Symbolic Lodge) rituals will be cited because every Mason, whether he later proceeds to Scottish Rite or York Rite, must pass through Blue Lodge.² The first section, however, will feature the opinions of various Masons.³

What Do Masons Say?

Most Masons say that their Craft is not a religion but simply a fraternal order dedicated to performing good deeds of service and to making good men better. For example, the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts states,

Though religious in character, Masonry is not a religion, nor a substitute for one. It fosters belief in a Supreme Being—this being a prerequisite for membership. Freemasonry accepts good men who are found to be worthy, regardless of their religious convictions, and strives to make better men of them by emphasizing a firm belief in the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man, and the immortality of the Soul.⁴

Jim Tresner, a Masonic apologist and a thirty-third-degree Mason with a Ph.D. in business communications, argues that it all depends on how you define *religion*.

No, not by the definitions most people use. Religion, as the term is commonly used, implies several things: a plan of salvation or path by which one reaches the afterlife; a theology which attempts to define the nature of God; and the description of ways or practices by which a man or woman may need to communicate with God. Masonry does none of those things. ... **Have some Masonic writers said that Masonry is a religion? Yes**, and again, it's a matter of definition. If, as some writers have, you define religion as "man's urge to venerate the beautiful, serve the good and see God in everything," you can say that Masonry subscribes to a religion. But that, surely, is not in conflict with Christianity or any other faith.⁵

Note that Tresner admits that some Masonic writers have called Freemasonry a religion when *religion* is defined a certain way.

Masonic apologist John Robinson asserts,

Usually, the allegation that Masonry is a separate religion is helped along by one or more blatant falsehoods—for example, the charge that Masonry has its own path to salvation, through the performance of good works. I never met a Mason who believed that, or who would be able to understand how anyone could ever draw such a conclusion. ... Clearly, one can easily assert that Freemasonry is not a separate religion. It promotes no heaven, no hell, and no means of salvation?

Robinson's logic, however, is flawed: Whether Freemasonry is a religion depends not on what Masons consciously believe, but on what Masonic ritual actually means. The proof lies in the ritual itself, concerning which-

remember-many Masons are uninformed. Moreover, although it is true that Freemasonry promotes no hell, it most surely promotes heaven and a means of salvation.

Another method of Masonic defense is the evidence from its membership. U.S. presidents and other popular figures who were Masons are typically cited. The *Scottish Rite Journal* dedicated its May 1993 issue to Freemasonry's compatibility with Christianity, in response to the Southern Baptist Convention's investigation into the subject.⁷ The issue had a portrait of Harry S. Truman on the front cover and a picture of Jimmy Carter on the back. In an article titled "Closing Ranks: The Buck Stops Here," Grand Commander Francis G. Paul said of Truman: "He was a Baptist. He was a Mason. He was the President of the United States. And He was'proud of all three."⁸ Some Masons conclude that because certain presidents were members of both the Craft and a church, that validates membership in the organization.

Clergy who are Masons are also cited as evidence that Freemasonry is not a religion. Paul Harasim quotes Norman Vincent Peale as saying that "Freemasonry has no dogma or theology. . . . It teaches that it is important for every man to have a religion of his choice and to be faithful to it. . . . A good Mason is made even more faithful to the tenets of his faith by membership."⁹ One of the more popular addresses on this issue was made by Thomas S. Roy, D.D., Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts in 1952.

We have none of the marks of a religion. We have no creed, and no confession of faith in a doctrinal statement. We have no theology. We have no ritual of worship. We have no symbols that are religious in the sense of the symbols found in church and synagogue. Our symbols are related to the development of the character of the relationship of man to man. They are working tools to be used in the building of a life. Our purpose is not that of a religion. We are not primarily interested in the redemption of man. We seek no converts. We solicit no new members. We raise no money for religious purposes. By any definition of religion accepted by our critics, we cannot qualify as a religion. . . . And there is nothing in Freemasonry that is opposed to the religion he brings with him into the lodge.¹⁰

Though the majority of Masons worldwide believe that the Craft is not a religion, there are exceptions. Albert G. Mackey (1807-81) was a Masonic historian, ritualist, and symbologist.¹¹ A thirty-third-degree Mason and prolific Masonic writer, he has been surpassed by few, if any, with regard to his

research and scholarship in Craft studies, and his *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry* is a landmark work for the institution. Concerning the “Religion of Freemasonry” Mackey writes,

There has been a needless expenditure of ingenuity and talent, by a large number of Masonic orators and essayists, in the endeavor to prove that Freemasonry is not a religion. . . . On the contrary, we contend, without any sort of hesitation, that Freemasonry is, in every sense of the word, except one, and that its least philosophical, an eminently religious institution—that it is indebted solely to the religious element it contains for its origin as well as its continued existence, and that without this religious element it would scarcely be worthy of cultivation by the wise and good. . . . We open and close our Lodges with prayer; we invoke the blessing of the Most High upon all our labors; we demand of our neophytes a profession of trusting belief in the existence and the superintending care of God; and we teach them to bow with humility and reverence at His awful name, while His Holy Law is widely opened upon our altars. Freemasonry is thus identified with religion.¹²

Mackey goes on to list *Webster’s* definitions of religion, arguing that, “closely and accurately examined, it [Freemasonry] will be found to answer to any one of the requirements of either of these three definitions.”¹³ It is worth noting that Mackey was a student of religion, especially the ancient Mystery Religions¹⁴ of Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Since he was a premier Masonic ritualist, he was in a good position to see how Freemasonry lived up to the designation of a religion.

Masonic scholar Henry W. Coil, 33rd, also considered Freemasonry a religion. Born in 1885 and eventually a holder of many high Masonic offices, Coil is best known for his *Masonic Encyclopedia*, another must for the serious student of the Craft. In it he states,

Some attempt to avoid the issue by saying that Freemasonry is not a religion but is religious,¹⁵ seeming to believe that the substitution of an adjective for a noun makes a fundamental difference. . . . The oft repeated aphorism: “Freemasonry is not a religion, but is most emphatically religion’s handmaid,” has been challenged as meaningless, which it seems, to be. . . . Freemasonry certainly requires a belief in the existence of, and man’s dependence upon, a Supreme Being to whom he is responsible. What can a church add to that,

except to bring into one fellowship those who have like feelings? That is exactly what the lodge does. . . . Does Freemasonry have a *creed* (I believe) or *tenet* (he holds) or *dogma* (I think) to which all members must adhere? Does Freemasonry continually teach and insist upon a creed, tenet, and dogma? Does it have meetings characterized by the practice of rites and ceremonies in and by which its creed, tenet, and dogma are illustrated by myths, symbols, and allegories? If Freemasonry were not religion, what would have to be done to make it such? . . . The difference between a lodge and a church is one of degree and not of kind. . . . Freemasonry has a religious service to commit the body of a deceased brother to the dust whence it came and to speed the liberated spirit back to the Great Source of Light? . . . Many Freemasons make this flight with no other, guarantee of a safe landing than their belief in the religion of Freemasonry. If that is a false hope; the Fraternity should abandon funeral services and devote its attention to activities where it is sure of its ground and its authority?

Masonic scholar Robert Macoy (1815-95) was another prolific Masonic writer and ritualist. He is well known for his contribution to the Order of the Eastern Star, supervising the formation of the Supreme Grand Chapter in New York City in 1868.¹⁸ Macoy begins his entry under “Religion” in his *Dictionary of Freemasonry* with a quotation from Blue Lodge ritual.

“Speculative Masonry is so far interwoven with religion as to lay us under obligations to pay that rational homage to the Deity which at once constitutes our duty and our happiness. It leads the contemplative mind to view with reverence and admiration the glorious works of creation, and inspires him with the most exalted ideas of the perfection of his divine Creator.” That Freemasonry should be spoken of as a religious institution, or as imparting religious instruction, undoubtedly sounds strange to those who think religion must necessarily be confined to a particular set of theological dogmas, or, in other words, be sectarian. But, why, should it be thought necessary to make religion traverse simply the narrow circle of sectarian ideas? Is it not a degradation to confine it to so limited a sphere?¹⁹

Macoy goes on to cite Masonic lectures and lessons in ritual that speak of the Deity and describe His infinite and mighty power and His glorious creation.²⁰

Mackey and Coil do the same, appealing to the most authoritative sources of Freemasonry, the rituals, to build their case that Freemasonry is religion.

Other well-known Masonic writers assert that Freemasonry is religion. Joseph Fort Newton, 33rd (1880-1950), Past Grand, Chaplain of the Grand Lodge of Iowa, states that “it is true that. Masonry is not *a* religion, but it is Religion, a worship in which all good men may unite, that each may share the faith of all.”²¹ Newton offers much food for thought by distinguishing between *a* religion and Religion. By “Religion” Newton means that Freemasonry provides the framework in which men of differing religious persuasions may meet under the canopy of an eclectic institution and worship the “God” who is known by various definitions.²² And yet, I would argue that there is still every reason to call Freemasonry *a* religion.. One religion that has this eclectic theme is Sufism, which teaches that the true God is known by different names and designations.²³ While I agree that religion can demonstrate the eclectic traits that Freemasonry exhibits, I will show why I believe that Freemasonry can be called *a* religion. Nevertheless, Newton was most likely referring to *Andersdn’s Constitutions*, which lists six “Charges” of a Freemason. Under the charge “Concerning God and Religion” we read,

A Mason is obliged, by his Tenure, to obey the moral Law; and if he rightly understands the Art, he will never be a stupid atheist, nor an irreligious Libertine. But though in ancient Times Masons were charged in every Country to be of the Religion of that Country or Nation, whatever it was, yet tis now thought more expedient only to oblige them to that Religion in which all Men agree, leaving their particular Opinions to themselves; that is, to be good Men and true, or Men of Honour and Honesty, by whatever Denominations or Persuasions they may be distinguished; whereby Masonry becomes the Center of Union, and the Means of conciliating true Friendship among Persons that must have remained at a perpetual Distance.²⁴

This is the prevailing opinion among Masons today. Interestingly enough, when we compare the previous quotation by Roy with the following from Melvin M. Johnson; Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, we see a tension between these two men. I believe that Johnson is more on the mark concerning our question of ‘whether Freemasonry is a religion, and more in keeping with the spirit of Anderson and his *Constitutions*. Before the Grand Lodge of Indiana in May 1948, Johnson addressed the Masonic prohibition against discussing religion in the Lodge.

Those things about which we can differ in religion were forbidden to be discussed within the Lodge but there is nothing in Anderson's Constitutions, if you consult the dictionaries of that day and the oldest one is the dictionary of Samuel Johnson, which was being prepared at about the time that Anderson's Constitutions were written—if you consult that, you will find the definition of general religion, which is a thing we not only may discuss within the Lodge but you never attended a Masonic Lodge where it wasn't discussed. You never attended a Masonic Lodge, which wasn't either opened by a declaration to the glory of the Grand Architect of the Universe, or by prayer to Him that He would guide us in our deliberations, or both. There isn't a degree in symbolic Freemasonry that isn't based upon belief in one single, powerful, dominating, loving Father, who is the Creator and God of us all. We certainly are not forbidden by Anderson's Constitutions to discuss that kind of religion and if we omit that there will be no ritual left.²⁵

The Reverend Forrest D. Haggard, D.D., seems to agree with Newton's thesis, saying that Freemasonry "is, man's grasp towards Divinity both internal and external" and that "Masonry is a basic religion but it is not, nor has it been at least since 1717, in any sense of the word an 'organized religion.'"²⁶

Having seen a sampling of Masonic opinion concerning the relationship between Freemasonry and religion, let us now define what religion is.²⁷

What Is Religion?

The word *religion* comes from the Latin *religare*, which means "to bind back."²⁸ The question now arises as to the subject and the object of the phrase. In one sense the Deity (or deities) is the subject, taking the initiative of drawing the object, which is humanity, to Him-/Her-/Itself. In another sense humanity may be the subject, which, through various means, attempts to bind itself back to the Deity (or deities). We may say that through a belief system a group of "believers" are bound together, since without this common faith they would remain spiritually estranged from one another. Thus, the binding together takes place horizontally (person to person) and vertically (person/people to God, or gods)." The horizontal expression of religion also takes place from believer to unbeliever, according to the dictates of me particular religious worldview. In addition, usually religions are concerned with a be-

lief in God (or gods or power[s]), moral behavior that stems from divine sanction, and some form of an afterlife.

Webster's Dictionary gives a rather extensive definition of religion.

1. belief in a divine or superhuman power or powers to be obeyed and worshipped as the creator(s) and ruler(s) of the universe. 2. expression of this belief in conduct and ritual. 3. (a) any specific system of belief, worship, conduct, etc., often involving a code of ethics and a philosophy; as, the Christian religion, the Buddhist religion, etc.; (b) loosely, any system of beliefs, practices, ethical values, etc. resembling, suggestive of, or likened to such a system; as, humanism is his religion. 4. a state of mind or way of life expressing love for and trust in God, and one's will and effort to act according to the will of God, especially within a monastic order or community; as, he achieved religion. 5. any object of conscientious regard and pursuit; as, cleanliness was a religion to him. 6. (a) the practice of religious observances or rites; (b) [pl.] religious rites [Obs.] 7. a religious order or state; a monastery [Obs.]³⁰

Though cautious in their definitions of religion, scholars are willing to suggest a number of essential characteristics. Stanley A. Cook states, "The term 'religion' whatever its best definition, clearly refers to certain characteristic types of data (beliefs, practices, feelings, moods, attitudes, etc.)."³¹ Vergilius Ferm says, "A religion is a set of meanings and behaviors having reference to individuals who are or were or could be religious."³² The word *religious*, in Ferm's use, means "effect[ing] in some way and in some measure a vital adjustment (however tentative and incomplete) to whatever is reacted to or regarded implicitly or explicitly as worthy of serious and ulterior concern."³³

Our Working Definition

We will work from the following definition of religion, noting how Masonic ritual fulfills the criteria of a religion. Keep in mind, however, that even the above definitions may be fulfilled in this same way.

In *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, William P. Alston lists nine "religion-making characteristics."

1. Belief in supernatural beings (gods).
2. A distinction between sacred and profane objects.

3. Ritual acts focused on sacred objects.
4. A moral code believed to be sanctioned by the gods.
5. Characteristically religious feelings (awe, sense of mystery, sense of guilt, adoration), which tend to be aroused in the presence of sacred objects and during the practice of ritual, and which are connected in idea with the gods.
6. Prayer and other forms of communication with gods.
7. A world view, or a general picture of the world as a whole and the place of the individual therein. This picture contains some specification of an over-all purpose or 'point of the world and an indication of how the individual fits into it.
8. A more or less total organization of one's life based on the world view.
9. A social group bound together by the above.³⁴

Alston later states that "when enough of these characteristics are present to a sufficient degree, we have a religion."³⁵ I will show how Freemasonry sufficiently manifests all nine characteristics.

If Masons suspect that I have selected only those definitions that describe Freemasonry, I offer this simple challenge: Find another definition of religion, or create one, that meets with scholarly consensus, and see whether you come to a different conclusion.

With our working definition in mind, we now turn to Blue Lodge rituals to demonstrate our point.

The Religious Character of Blue Lodge Ritual

(Note: In this chapter, only teachings common to the greatest number of Grand Lodges are cited, so as to make the scope of the demonstration as broad as possible. This will also eliminate numerous note citations of Blue Lodge ritual sources, since what may be found in, let us say, New Hampshire, may also be found in England, Ireland, etc.)

1. *Belief in a supernatural being.* The most basic requirement of Freemasonry is that each candidate believe in the existence of a Supreme Being. A man may be accepted as a candidate regardless of whether he is a Muslim, a Jew, a Buddhist, a Hindu, a Christian, a Unitarian, etc.

The first degree (Entered Apprentice) involves a question and 'answer period. The following questions and answers are cited as they appear in the

Massachusetts Blue Lodge ritual so that the reader can get a feel for the secrecy of Masonic ritual. They are then decoded:

Q: Af re th be of pr, wh we yo as?

A: In wh I pu my tr. Q: Yor an? A: In Go.³⁶

[Decoded]

Q: After receiving the benefit of prayer, what were you asked?

A: In whom I put my trust. Q: Your answer? A: In God.

This portion of ritual suggests that Freemasonry *as an institution* mandates that candidates for the Craft put their trust in God. Theologically, trust is synonymous with faith, which is ‘a required component of religion. Although Freemasonry does not ask its candidates to name or define their God, as elaborated upon earlier, that does not exclude Masonry from being a religion (see n. 23). Like some religions, Freemasonry provides a canopy under which men of differing religious persuasions may bring their particular conceptions of God. Thus, corporately Freemasonry believes in God, and individual Masons do as well. To illustrate this corporate aspect, Masonic scholars Coil and Mackey note how Lodge meetings are opened and closed with prayer. Masons the world over will recognize the following prayer from Entered Apprentice Blue Lodge ritual:

Vouchsafe Thine aid, Almighty Father of the Universe, to this our present convention, and grant that this candidate for Freemasonry may dedicate and devote his life to Thy service, and become a true and faithful brother among us. Endue him with a competency of Thy Divine Wisdom, that he may be the better enabled to display the beauties of holiness, to the honour of Thy Holy Name. Amen.³⁷

Here Freemasonry provides the candidate with a prayer that covers both the vertical and the horizontal dimensions of faith: dedication and service unto God and to his brethren. And all this is to bring honor to God’s holy name. The closing of a Lodge features a statement offered by the Worshipful Master.³⁸

adnwmathblohvrsupu,adalrgMn!Mabrlypr,adevmoadso
vt cm u.³⁹

[Decoded]

and now may the blessing of heaven rest upon us, and all regular

Masons! May brotherly love prevail, and every moral and social virtue cement us.

The Emulation Ritual of London has different wording, though the meaning is essentially the same.

Brethren, before we close the Lodge, let us with all reverence and humility express our gratitude to the Great Architect of the Universe⁴⁰ for favors already received;. may He continue. to preserve the Order by cementing and adorning it with every moral and social virtue.⁴¹

The most basic and essential characteristic of most religions is a belief in a Deity or deities or power(s). As has been stated, it is possible for a religion to provide only a canopy designation for God-the Absolute, the Almighty, the One, God, the Supreme (or Great) Architect of the Universe, etc. Freemasonry clearly fulfills this first characteristic in the way of a canopy designation. It may even be argued, that when one reads Masonic ritual, with its frequent allusions and prayers to the Deity, the designation "Great Architect of the Universe" can become more than a canopy term to a Mason who has no religion outside the Lodge.⁴²

2. *A distinction between sacred and profane objects.* "Sacred" means holy, as with an object set apart for religious use. The object, may even be said to be set apart for God (or gods) and/or to be venerated (or worshiped). "Profane"? means connected with the secular, or nonreligious. It may also denote an object in direct contrast to a sacred object. In Christianity a sacred object would be the cross, as it symbolizes the crucifixion of Christ and reminds Christians of the price Jesus paid on the cross for their. sins. A profane object, would be a, pornographic magazine,. which depicts: fornication, a sin that separates humankind from Christ and thus stands in direct opposition to the cross. Profane objects remind religious people of the state they once were in: they were unenlightened, immoral, concerned with the things. of the world, etc.

Freemasonry also distinguishes between sacred' and profane objects. The Rough Ashlar and the Perfect Ashlar are two examples. "By the Rough Ashlar we are reminded of our rude and imperfect. state by nature; by the Perfect Ashlar, of that state of perfection at which we hope to arrive, by, a *virtuous* education, our own endeavors,.and the blessing of God."⁴³ The "Hoodwink," or Blindfold, is another profane object. In .the Entered Apprentice degree the candidate begins his initiation by being led blindfolded into the

Lodge room. The candidate's conductor (who guides the candidate around the Lodge) is asked, "Who comes here?" He answers, "[The candidate's name], who is in darkness and wishes for light, to have and receive a part of the rights and benefits of this Worshipful Lodge, erected to God and dedicated to the holy Saints John [the Baptist 'and the apostle]."⁴⁴

What does the blindfold symbolize? The answer is not difficult-darkness. But what *kind* of darkness is it? As the initiation ceremony continues, the candidate is led around the Lodge room to the Masonic altar, which has upon it the "Three Great Lights" of Freemasonry: the VSL (Volume of the Sacred Law), the Square, and the Compass (or Compasses).⁴⁵ The symbolism and lessons given on the Three Great Lights help us to determine what "darkness" symbolizes. The candidate is asked, "What do you most desire?" He answers, "Light." Once the Hoodwink is removed, the Three Great Lights are introduced: "The Bible [or other sacred writings; see n. ⁴⁵] we take to be the rule and guide of our faith; the Square to square our actions; and the Compass to circumscribe our desires and keep our passions within due bounds with all mankind, more especially with our Brethren in Freemasonry."⁴⁶

So, the darkness that the candidate was in is both moral and spiritual: moral because of the squaring of actions and the circumscribing of passions; spiritual because, upon answering that he desires light, the candidate is led to the VSL, "the rule and guide of our faith."

Soon the candidate is presented with a white leather, or Lambskin, Apron. This is an important symbol to the Craft.

I now invest you with the distinguishing Badge of a Mason. It is more ancient than the Roman Eagle or any other ancient Badge or ensign. It is more honourable than the Garter, the Golden Fleece, or any other Noble Order which has ever existed. It is the Badge of Innocence and Friendship, and I strongly exhort you ever to wear and value it as such.⁴⁷

Further elaboration on this symbol indicates that it is viewed as a sacred object of the Craft.

The Lamb has in all ages been deemed an emblem of innocence; he, therefore, who wears the Lamb Skin as a badge of Masonry is thereby continually reminded of that purity of life and conduct which is essentially necessary to his gaining admission into the Celestial Lodge above, where the Supreme Architect of the Universe presides.⁴⁸

In light of the symbolism of the Rough and Perfect Ashlars, the Hoodwink, and the Lambskin Apron, we may conclude that Freemasonry distinguishes between sacred and profane objects. This symbolism is filled with allusions to the present state of humanity and a hope of perfection in an after-life.

3. *Ritual acts focused on sacred objects.* As we have seen in the distinction between sacred and profane objects, some ritual acts illustrate this distinction. The Rough and Perfect Ashlars, the Hoodwink, and the Lambskin Apron are all introduced in ritual. Thus, with these we have ritual acts focused on sacred objects.

In Freemasonry, the VSL is a sacred object upon which ritual acts are focused. In all three degrees of Blue Lodge Masonry-Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason-the candidates approach the Masonic altar, on which are laid the VSL, the Square, and the Compass. They then place their hands (using different positions for different degrees) on and/or under the VSL and swear an oath of secrecy.

I, [name], in the presence of The Great Architect of the Universe,⁴⁹ and of this worthy and Worshipful Lodge of Ancient, Free, and accepted Masons, regularly held, assembled, and properly dedicated, of my own free will and accord, do hereby, and hereon most solemnly and sincerely swear, that I will always helo,⁵⁰ conceal and never willfully reveal any part or parts, point or points, of the secrets or mysteries of or belonging to Ancient Freemasonry, which may heretofore have been known by, shall now, or may at any future time be communicated to me, to any one in the world, unless it be a true and lawful Brother or Brethren. . . . So help me God, and keep me steadfast in this my great and solemn Oath, being that of an Entered Apprentice Freemason?

Upon swearing the oath, the candidate is instructed to kiss the VSL. This is a distinctly ritualistic act focused on a sacred object.

Blue Lodge ritual includes a lesson on the letter "G." The insignia of a "G" enclosed between a level and a compass is usually on the outside of a Masonic Lodge and can also be seen on car bumpers and license plates. Ritual teaches that the Level (the Compass has already been treated) is to remind the Mason "that we are travelling upon the Level of time 'to that undiscovered country, from whose boume no traveller returns? The candidate is given a lecture on the letter G and is told that it refers to the noble

science of Geometry. Moments later the Worshipful Master relates,

But, my Brother, the letter G has a still further and more solemn allusion. It alludes to the sacred name of God,⁵³ to whom should we all, from the youngest Entered Apprentice who stands in the north-east comer of the Lodge to the Worshipful Master who presides in the East, most humbly and reverently bow.⁵⁴ [Here the Brethren perform some ritualistic procedure such as bowing, crossing the arms—another ritualistic act focused on a sacred object.]

The Common Gavel is another spiritual and sacred object of the Craft. During the initiation ceremony of the first degree the candidate is taught,

The Common Gavel is an instrument used by operative Masons, to break off the rough and superfluous parts of stones, the better to fit them for the builder's use. But we, as Free and Accepted Masons, are taught to use it for the more noble and glorious purpose of divesting our hearts and consciences of the vices and superfluities of life, thereby fitting our minds as living stones for that spiritual building, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.⁵⁵

Freemasonry can thus be said to fulfill our third characteristic.

4. A moral code sanctioned by God. Since Freemasonry is a system of morality, it should not be difficult to document whether it fulfills our fourth characteristic. Is this system of morality sanctioned by God? Again, Freemasonry provides the canopy framework for each of its initiates to study and apply the Craft's moral lessons in the light of their particular VSL. This is not uncommon for an eclectic, or syncretistic, religion such as Freemasonry, just as it is not uncommon for the religion of Sufism or the pluralistic religious framework of the New Age Movement.

Third degree (Master Mason) ritual features several objects that portray certain moral traits. If these are fulfilled by the Mason, a reward from the Deity follows. We see this in the symbolism of the Sword and the All-Seeing Eye:

The Sword Pointing to a Naked Heart demonstrates that justice, will sooner or later overtake us, and although our thoughts, words, and actions may be hidden from the eyes of man, yet that All-seeing Eye,

whom the Sun, Moon, and Stars obey, and under whose watchful care even comets perform their stupendous revolutions, pervades the inmost recesses of the human heart, and will reward us according to our merits?

In this symbolism a moral lesson is put forth, and the teaching implies strongly a sanctioning by the Deity with a reward for individual merit.

The importance of the VSL in Freemasonry should not be minimized. It is considered sacred because it is, in the Lodge's view, inspired by God. This charge is given to the new Entered Apprentice:

As a Freemason, I would first recommend to your most serious contemplation the volume of the Sacred Law, charging you to consider it as the unerring standard of Truth and Justice, and to regulate your actions by the Divine precepts it contains; as therein you will be taught the important duties you owe to God, to your neighbor, and to yourself.⁵⁷

Obviously, if a VSL contains "Divine precepts," then it comes from Deity. And Freemasonry provides the authoritative charge to regulate the vertical and the horizontal aspects (which characterize religions) contained in 'any particular VSL; the vertical is the duty we owe to Deity; the horizontal the duty we owe to humanity. Thus, Freemasonry fulfills our fourth characteristic of a religion.

5. *Religious feelings (awe, guilt, etc.)*. Here we enter into the realm of the subjective. That is to say, the feelings experienced during ritual or in the presence of sacred objects are personal, depending on multiple reasons as to why one person may have feelings aroused, and why another person, in the same service, may not have any feelings aroused. Obviously, because we are dealing with feelings that are by nature personal, we are not likely to find, in a religious service or ritual, commands or suggestions to feel awe or guilt or adoration. Rather, we should examine certain religious services or rituals to see if they have the *potential* to arouse characteristically religious feelings or if they *express* religious feelings through certain prayers or language.

Emotions such as awe, guilt, and adoration are aroused in ritual. Think of your experience in watching television documentaries or observing certain kinds of religious services. These same feelings are aroused in connection with the Deity, or deities, of any religion. Is this the case with the Lodge? In

the following example from Blue Lodge ritual, characteristically religious feelings are described:

By Speculative Masonry [Freemasonry] we learn to subdue the passions, act upon the square, keep a tongue of good report, maintain secrecy, and practice charity. It is so far interwoven with religion as to lay us under obligations to pay that rational homage to Deity which at once constitutes our duty and our happiness. It leads the contemplative to view with reverence and admiration the glorious works of creation, and inspires him with the most exalted ideas of the perfections of his Divine Creator?

This lesson to the initiate of the Fellow Craft teaches that Freemasonry leads and inspires a man to experience reverence, admiration, and other exalted ideas of his Creator. These are characteristically religious feelings.

Religious feelings have the great potential to be aroused during Masonic prayers. The following prayer is offered in the Master Mason degree:

Thou, O God, knowest our down-sitting and our up-rising, and understandest our thoughts afar off. Shield and defend us from the evil intentions of our enemies, and support us under the trials and afflictions we are destined to endure, while travelling through this vale of tears. . . . For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. But man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? . . . Yet, O Lord! have compassion on the children of Thy creation; administer them comfort in time of trouble, and save them with an everlasting salvation. Amen.⁵⁹

The Worshipful Master also utters this prayer at the beginning of the Master Mason degree:

Almighty and Eternal God, great Architect and Ruler of the Universe, at whose creative fiat all things first were made, we, the frail creatures of Thy providence, humbly implore Thee to pour down on this Convocation, assembled in Thy Holy Name, the continual dew of Thy blessing. More especially we beseech Thee to impart Thy grace to this Thy servant, who now seeks to participate with us in the mysterious Secrets of a Master Mason. Endue him with such fortitude, that in the hour of trial he fail not, but passing safely under Thy

protection through the valley of the shadow of death, he may finally arise from the tomb of transgression to shine as the stars for ever and ever?

Thus is our fifth characteristic fulfilled.

6. *Prayer and other forms of communication with God.* For examples, see those already cited for the previous characteristics.

7. *A worldview and how the **individual** fits into it.* As defined above, a worldview is a general understanding of the world as a whole. It is usually accompanied by a view of the universe and its way of coming into existence and by some view of an afterlife. Since a worldview includes an understanding of the place of individuals, it is not surprising that religions help to define what *type* of afterlife the individual receives. One form of Hinduism, for example, stresses that the material world is an illusion, and that attachment to the seeming material world keeps one's soul from being liberated. A person must see the world as an illusion and be enlightened to the fact that Brahman is the only reality. Thus, detachment from the world means liberation. Upon the person's seeming death the soul is absorbed into Brahman. This school of thought is known as nondualism.

Christianity teaches a completely different worldview. God is absolutely good and holy, but there is also evil in the world. Evil is a reality, as is the material world. Salvation occurs through faith in Jesus Christ, whose Spirit indwells those who believe in Him. The Holy Spirit then brings to fruition the Christian's lifestyle, thereby glorifying God, and at death the individual enjoys God's presence forever.

Worldviews determine how we interpret events, the people and things around us, and our part in the world. Every religion, including Freemasonry, has a worldview, which it teaches to its initiates. Since it promotes belief in a Supreme Being, Freemasonry's worldview resembles those of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism (among others) insofar as it subscribes to belief in a Creator, some sort of moral law that is sanctioned by the Creator, and an afterlife based on one's experience in the world and one's relationship to the Deity. We may observe the first two components in the symbolism of the Master Mason emblem, The Pot of Incense.

The Pot of Incense is an emblem of a pure heart, which is always an acceptable sacrifice to the Deity; and as this glows with fervent heat, so should our hearts continually glow with gratitude to the great and

beneficent Author of our existence, for the manifold blessings and comforts we enjoy?

In the *Emulation Ritual* of England, the symbolism of the Covering of the Lodge teaches belief in a Deity, moral precepts laid out by the Deity, and an afterlife based on a moral life.

The Covering of a Freemasons' Lodge is a celestial canopy of diverse colours even the Heavens. The way by which we, as Masons, hope to arrive there is by the assistance of a ladder, in Scripture called Jacob's ladder. It is composed of many staves or rounds, which point out as many moral virtues, but three principle ones, which are Faith, Hope and Charity: Faith in the Great Architect of the Universe, Hope in Salvation, and to be in charity with all men. It reaches to the Heavens, and rests on the VSL, because, by the doctrines contained in that Holy Book, we are taught to believe in the dispensations of Divine Providence, which belief strengthens our Faith, and enables us to ascend the first step; this Faith naturally creates in us a Hope of becoming partakers of the blessed promises therein recorded, which Hope enables us to ascend the second step; but the third and last, being Charity, comprehends the whole, and the Mason who is possessed of this virtue in its most ample sense may justly be deemed to have attained the summit of his profession; figuratively speaking, an Ethereal Mansion veiled from mortal eyes by the starry firmament.⁶²

Similar content is found in the symbolism of the Three Steps of the Master Mason degree. Here we find how the individual is to fit into the world, with the ultimate purpose of dying in the hope of a glorious immortality.

The Three Steps delineated on the Master's Carpet are emblematical of the three principal stages of human life,-Youth, Manhood, and Age. They also allude to the three degrees in Freemasonry,-Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason. In Youth, as Entered Apprentices, we ought industriously to occupy our minds in the attainment of useful knowledge; in Manhood, as Fellow Crafts, we should apply that knowledge to the discharge of our respective duties to God, our neighbor, and ourselves; so that in Age, as Master Masons, we may enjoy the happy reflection consequent on a well-spent life, and die in the hope of a glorious immortality.⁶³

From the preceding examples we must conclude that Freemasonry provides Masons with a general perspective on the world as a whole and the place of the individual therein. Within the Craft's rituals we also find an overall purpose for the world and lessons on how the Mason is to fit into the world.⁶⁴

Worldviews are vital to understanding people, their religions, and their actions. A worldview is the springboard for both the collective actions of a particular religious sect and the individual actions of its followers. Many Masons defend Freemasonry by pointing to the good works that the institution accomplishes. These good deeds, I submit, are the outgrowth of Freemasonry's worldview, in which good works merit the reward of a glorious afterlife? The Sovereign Grand Commander of the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite, C. Fred Kleinknecht, agrees. "The performance of meRitual, the conferring of Degrees, is the only real business of Masonry. All the rest-the charities, the educational programs, the fun and fellowship-are *outgrowths* of the lessons taught in those Rituals."⁶⁶

If Masonic good deeds are motivated by the "real business of Masonry" —the rituals—and the rituals can be shown to be incompatible with Christianity, we must not be hasty in praising the Lodge for its good works. Motives, after all, are extremely important. When the Freemason points to the good things Masons do for society, we would do well to ask *why* members of the Lodge perform those good works.

8. A more or less total organization of one's life based on the worldview. Because our worldview determines how we view the world and how we should fit into it, the natural outcome of this is to organize our lives according to that view. Freemasonry establishes through its lessons and symbols a definite scheme of moral behavior that 'stems from divine sanction and promises the hope of immortality. This is best illustrated in the concluding address of the Master Mason degree in a Scottish Blue Lodge.ritual:

I now present you with the working tools of a Master Mason, which are, the Skirret,. the Pencil,and the Compasses;;, [Ritual then defines the use of these three in an operative sense-as by actual stone masons.] ... Not meeting as Operative Masons, but as Brethren engaged in speculative or symbolic Freemasonry, we apply these tools to our Morals. In this sense-the Skirret points out to us that straight and undeviating line of conduct laid down for our pursuit in the V. of the S.L. The Pencil teaches us that all our words and actions are observed and recorded by the Most High, to whom we must give an account of our conduct through life. And the Compasses remind us

of His unerring and impartial justice in having accurately defined for our instruction the limits of good and evil,⁶⁷ and that He will either reward or punish us according as we have obeyed or disregarded His divine commands. Thus the working tools of a Master Mason teach us to bear in mind, and to act according to, the Laws of the Divine Creator, so that, when we shall be summoned from this sublunary abode, we may hope to ascend to that Grand Lodge above, where the World's great Architect lives and reigns forever.⁶⁸

The lesson of the Trestle-Board (where, in operative masonry, building plans are laid out) is to organize one's life according to the Masonic world-view.

By the Trestle-Board, we are reminded, that as the operative workman erects his temporal building agreeably to the rules and designs laid down by the Master on his Trestle-Board, so should we, both Operative and Speculative, endeavor to erect our spiritual building agreeably to the rules and designs laid down by the Supreme Architect of the Universe in the Book of Life,⁶⁹ which is our Spiritual Trestle-Board.⁷⁰

Note that the organization of one's life is based upon divinely sanctioned precepts, a fulfillment of characteristic number 4 above.

Finally, let us consider the symbolism of the twenty-four-inch Gauge, which stresses how the Entered Apprentice is to spend each of his twenty-four-hour days on earth, and the Common Gavel, which stresses that he restrain his thoughts in order to please the Deity..

In this sense [that is, applying these working tools of an Operative Mason in a speculative or symbolic sense to morals], the twenty-four-inch gauge represents the twenty-four hours of the day; part to be spent in prayer to Almighty God; part in labor and refreshment; and part in serving a friend or Brother in time of need, without detriment to ourselves or connections. The common gavel represents the force of conscience, which should keep down all vain and unbecoming thoughts which might obtrude during any of the aforementioned periods, so that our words and actions may ascend unpolluted to the Throne of Grace.⁷¹

The examples noted demonstrate that Freemasonry manifests the eighth characteristic of a religion..

9. *A social group bound together by the above.* Freemasonry prides itself in being a fraternal organization and having social interactions. It prides itself in that men of different religious persuasions may unite as brethren under the Four Cardinal Virtues of Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence, and Justice.⁷² If it were not for Freemasonry, these men would have remained separated. Freemasonry is a social group, as Masons themselves will. And we have seen that the Lodge is bound together by the characteristics that make up the essence of religion.

The symbolism of the Trowel officially portrays the Masonic Lodge as a social group with a glorious purpose.

The *Trowel* is an instrument used by Operative Masons to spread the cement which unites the building into one common mass; but we, as Free and Accepted Masons, are taught to use it for the more noble and glorious purpose of spreading the cement of brotherly love and affection,-that cement which unites us into one sacred band, or society of friends and brothers, among whom no contention should ever exist, save that noble contention, or rather emulation, of who can best work and best agree.⁷⁴

Thus, ritual shows that Freemasonry is a “sacred band, or society of friends” united in a glorious purpose. Our final characteristic has been met.

Conclusion

Freemasonry is not only a religious institution, but a religion. Its Blue Lodge ritual fulfills the essential characteristics of a religion. What remains for us is to examine the theological tenets of the Craft to see if they are compatible with the essentials of the Christian faith. If they are not, then it is imperative that Christians who are Masons exit the Lodge, for there can be no allegiance with a non-Christian religion. Denominations proclaiming that Jesus is Lord need to study the Craft to understand why members of their churches should not be joined with the religion of Freemasonry.

Notes

1. After receiving the first three degrees of Blue Lodge Masonry (Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason), the Mason may enter either or both of these rites. The Scottish Rite offers an additional twenty-nine degrees, with an additional honorary degree. The York Rite offers an additional ten degrees.

2. The third degree (Master Mason) is said to be the pinnacle of Freemasonry. It is the Sublime Degree of the Craft because of the great lessons it inculcates. All later degrees are to be taken not as higher but as concentric circles branching out from the pinnacle degree.
3. Masons often state that no one person can speak for Freemasonry. See Jim Tresner, "Riding the Semantic Merry-Go-Round," *The Scottish Rite Journal* (Washington, D.C.: The Supreme Council, 33rd, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry of the Southern Jurisdiction, USA, May 1993): 14. Does Tresner speak for Freemasonry when he makes this statement?
4. *Freemasonry: A Way of Life* (The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1983), 6.
5. *Conscience and the Craft* (Masonic Grand Lodge of New Mexico, 1992), 2-3.
6. John J. Robinson, *A Pilgrim's Path* (New York: M. Evans and Co., 1993); 34-35.
7. In 1992 James Holly, M.D., spearheaded the fight to have the Southern Baptist Convention take a denominational stand against Freemasonry. He is the author of *The Southern Baptist Convention and Freemasonry*, 3 vols. (Beaumont, Tex.: Mission and Ministry to Men, n.d.).
8. Francis G. Paul, "The Buck Stops Here," *Scottish Rite Journal* (May 1993): 4. This form of argumentation begs the question. Additionally, one might offer the example of a former president who was an outspoken anti-Mason: John Quincy Adams published letters debunking the Craft. See *Letters on the Masonic Institution*, by John Quincy Adams (1831-33).
9. Paul Harasim, "Calling Masons Satanic Is Folly," *The Scottish Rite Journal* (May 1993): 24.
10. Cited in Alphonse Cerza, *Let There Be Light: A Study in Anti-Masonry* (Silver Spring, Md.: The Masonic Service' Association, 1983), 41. Roy's further remarks are most alarming in light of orthodox Christian doctrine: "It is the glory of Masonry that a man who believes implicitly in the deity of Christ, and a man who says he cannot go that far, can meet as brothers in their acknowledgement of the sovereignty of the Supreme Being, the Maker of Heaven and earth, and in acknowledgment of their duty to love Him with heart and mind and soul and strength. . . . Freemasonry rightfully conceived and practised will enhance every worthy loyalty in man's life. It will not weaken a man's loyalty to his church, but will strengthen it by the increased sense of responsibility to God and dependence on God taught in our ritual" (pp. 43-44).

First, this statement is alarming because anyone who rejects the deity of Christ cannot be a Christian (John 8:24 states, "If you should deny that I am, you will die in your sins." Here the "I am" saying of Jesus is seen in light of the Septuagint's rendering of Deut. 32:39; Isa. 41:4; 43:10, where Yahweh states, "Ego eimi," as does Christ in John's gospel). Consequently, anyone denying Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh (this phrase in 1 John 4:2-3 should be interpreted with John's gospel prologue in view, where the eternal Son of God

is shown to have united Himself with perfect humanity and thus to be fully God and fully human) is not of God and in reality is denying both the Father and the Son (1 John 2:22-23). Thus a person “who says he cannot go that far” denies the Father. How, then, can this person and a Christian “meet as brothers in their acknowledgment of the Sovereignty of the Supreme Being”?

Second, if, as Roy says, the Lodge has no theology, then what is this “dependence on God” that is taught in ritual? Dependence is “faith,” which is a necessary component of all theological systems.

Simply because a man possesses the title of “Reverend,” this does not automatically qualify him to be a Christian. A person making a statement such as Roy’s is either sincerely ignorant of Christian theology or not a Christian. Sadly, it is possible to be ordained in many Christian denominations while denying the essentials of Christian theology.

11. Henry W. Coil, *Coil’s Masonic Encyclopedia* (New York Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Co., 1961), 389.
12. Albert G. Mackey, *Mackey’s Revised Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, rev. ed., 2 vols. (Richmond, Va.: Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Co., 1966), 2:846-47.
13. *Ibid.*, 847. Webster actually lists four definitions, three of which Mackey says Freemasonry fulfills.
14. These will be treated in chap. 3.
15. The idea that Freemasonry is religious but is not a religion was established by John A. Mirt in an article for the Masonic *Temple Topics* (cited in Cerza, *Let There Be Light*, 41). This is a very popular notion among those in the Craft.
16. The Masonic Funeral Service will be examined in chap. 4.
17. *Coil’s Masonic Encyclopedia*, 512. Coil does a good and thorough job in his entry (s.v., “Religion,” 5 1 1-22).
18. *Ibid.*, 391.
19. Robert Macoy, *A Dictionary of Freemasonry* (New York: Bell Publishing Co., 1989), 324.
20. *Ibid.*, 325.
21. Joseph Fort Newton, *The Builders* (Lexington, Mass.: The Supreme Council, 33rd, Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, 1973), 233.
22. *Ibid.*, 236-39. It appears that Newton knew well the *Secret Doctrine* revealed in Scottish Rite ritual. See chap. 9.
23. See Hazrat Inayat Khan, *The Unity of Religious Ideals* (New Lebanon, N.Y.: Sufi Order Publications, 1979), 90-91: “It is true, too, that as many conceptions there are, so many gods are there. And yet many gods mean many conceptions of the One Only God. . . . If one could only see how marvellously, in the diversity of the conception of the Divine Ideal, wisdom has played its part, guiding the souls of all grades of evolution towards the same goal, which in the end becomes spiritual attainment!”

24. *Anderson's Constitutions of 1723*, in *Little Masonic Library*, 5 vols. (Richmond, Va.: Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Co., 1977), 1:233.
25. Taken from the *Standard Manual* (Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M. of Oregon, revised April 13, 1991), 93. This manual is quite correct in stating that "the charges [in *Anderson's Constitutions*] say . . . and if he rightly understands the Art, he will never be a stupid atheist nor an irreligious libertine.' How is he to attain this true understanding of the Art that he may avoid these pitfalls if nothing of a religious character can be mentioned?" (p. 94).
26. Forrest D. Haggard, *The Clergy and the Craft* (Missouri: Missouri Lodge of Research, 1970), 18-19. These statements were made in response to Joseph Fort Newton's argument.
27. It is debatable whether or not *early* Freemasonry was a religion, or, if it was, whether it rivaled Christianity. For a treatment on this subject, see Henry W. Coil, *Conversations on Freemasonry* (Richmond, Va.: Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Co., 1976), 163-83. Though this is debated, for our purposes we are concerned with *current* Freemasonry.
28. *Webster's New Twentieth-Century Dictionary, Unabridged* (New York: The Publisher's Guild, 1965), 1527.
29. I am aware that some religions do not fit the definition. For example, Hinayana Buddhism offers no belief in a god or gods and is chiefly concerned with a system of ethical behavior. The same may be said of humanism. This, however, does not excuse Freemasonry. If Hinayana is said to be a religion, how much more should that be said of Masonry, which most certainly requires of its initiates a trusting belief in a Deity?
30. *Webster's New Twentieth-Century Dictionary, 1527*. "Obs." means obsolete or no longer in use.
31. James Hastings, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919), 10:662.
32. Vergilius Ferm, *Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1945), 647. See Ferm's caution concerning the etymological approach (which I use) of citing the Latin *religare* and working from its meaning (p. 646).
33. *Ibid.*, 646.
34. William P. Alston, "Religion," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 8 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 7: 141-42.
35. *Ibid.*, 142.
36. *Official Ciphher* (Boston: Grand Lodge of Masons in Massachusetts, 1978), 55-56.
37. *The Ceremonies of Craft Masonry*, rev. ed. (New Brunswick, Canada: The Grand Lodge of New Brunswick, 1954), 8.
38. The term "Worshipful Master" should not be construed as bestowing to a man that which should only be said of God. The term comes from old English tradition and is simply a term of respect.
39. *Official Ciphher* (The Grand Lodge of Minnesota, n.d.), 39.

40. This is Freemasonry's designation for the Deity. I see *the Great Architect of the Universe* as a "Canopy Deity," because it covers all the different candidates' individual ideas of Deity and includes these ideas within it.
41. *Emulation Ritual* (London: Lewis Masonic Publishers, 1986), 58.
42. Coil makes the assertion that, for some Masons, the Craft is all the religion they have (*Encyclopedia*, 5 12).
43. *Official Cipher* (1960; reprint, New Hampshire: Grand Lodge of New Hampshire, F. & A.M., 1975), 24.
44. *Official Cipher*, Massachusetts, 26, decoded.
45. Though some Grand Lodges use the Bible as their VSL, it is only because the predominant religion in their part of the world is Christianity. In a Muslim country we find the Koran (or Qur'an) on the altar; in India, perhaps the Bhagavad Gita; in a Jewish Lodge, the Pentateuch; etc. Freemasonry as an institution does not recognize the Bible to the exclusion of other holy books; if a Muslim candidate wishes to be initiated in a Lodge that usually has the Bible on its altar, it is replaced by (or joined with) the Koran. This is why some Grand Lodges use the term "VSL," instead of "The Holy Bible." Technically, such Lodges are more in keeping with the spirit of Masonry.
46. *Official Cipher*, Massachusetts, 30, decoded.
47. *The Irish Workings of Craft Masonry in the Three Symbolic Degrees* (London: Lewis Masonic Publishers, 1957), 62.
48. *Official Cipher*, Minnesota, 28, decoded.
49. Rituals differ in the designation used. Some read "Supreme Architect of the Universe," others read "Almighty God," etc.
50. This word is old Saxon, meaning to cover or hide.
51. *The Oxford Ritual of Craft Freemasonry* (London: Lewis Masonic, 1988), 39-41. Many (not all) Blue Lodge ritual workings have removed the penalties of having the throat cut, the heart torn out, and the bowels ripped open. Therefore, these penalties will not be mentioned in the text of this work.
52. *Official Cipher*, Massachusetts, 111.
53. One wonders just what this "sacred name" is. Christians who write against the teachings of Freemasonry have been criticized by John Robinson for stating that Freemasonry's name for God is T.G.A.O.T.U. (the Great Architect of the Universe). Robinson says that it is not a name but a designation (*A Pilgrim's Path*, 35-36). If we take "of" in the phrase "name of God" to be appellative (and thus "of" means "which is"), ritual here disagrees with Robinson. There is the possibility, however, that "name" means "authority."
54. *Official Cipher*, Massachusetts, 104, decoded.
55. *Official Cipher*, New Brunswick, 19.
56. *Official Cipher*, Minnesota, 126, decoded.
57. Viscount Valentia, *Ritus Oxoniensis: Being the Ritual of Craft Freemasonry as Antiently Practised in the Province of Oxfordshire and Elsewhere* (London: Lewis Masonic, 1988), 55-56.

58. *Official Cipher*, Massachusetts, 94-95.
59. *Ibid.*, 163-64.
60. *The Standard Ceremonies of Craft Masonry: As Taught in the Stability Lodge of Instruction* (sometimes known as the *Muggeridge Working*) (London: Lewis Masonic Publishers, n.d.), 124-25.
61. *The Ceremonies of Craft Masonry*, New Brunswick, 106-7.
62. *Emulation Ritual*, 243-44.
63. *Official Cipher*, Massachusetts, 169.
64. *The Indiana Monitor and Freemason's Guide* (The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Indiana, 1975) perhaps recognizes this conclusion. It states that "behind the ceremonies of all Masonic degrees lies a fundamental conception of this world in which we live and man's place in it" (p. 40).
65. Note the symbolism of the Lambskin Apron, where "purity of life and conduct are essentially necessary to gaining admission to the Celestial Lodge above," the All-Seeing Eye, which "will reward us according to our merits," the Three Steps, the Common Gavel, and the Rough Ashlar;
66. C. Fred Kleinknecht, "Reality and Ritual," *Scottish Rite Journal* (February 1995): 6, emphasis added.
67. This is another ingredient in the worldview of Freemasonry.
68. *The Scottish Workings of Craft Masonry* (London: Lewis Masonic, 1982), 124-25. Recall also the various citations from rituals that fulfill the previous characteristics of a religion. Take the Square, Level, Common Gavel, etc., and apply them to this characteristic.
69. Some rituals have "great books of Nature and Revelation" instead of "Book of Life."
70. *Official Cipher*, Minnesota, 32, decoded. Some rituals end with "which is our spiritual, moral, and Masonic Trestle-Board."
71. *The Sussex Ritual of Craft Freemasonry* (London: Lewis Masonic, 1989), 67-68.
72. See the *Official Cipher*, Massachusetts, 48-50.
73. "It is an Institution having for its foundation the practice of the moral and social virtues" *Official Cipher*, New Brunswick, 34).
74. *Ibid.*, 83-84.

MASONIC RITES AND WRONGS

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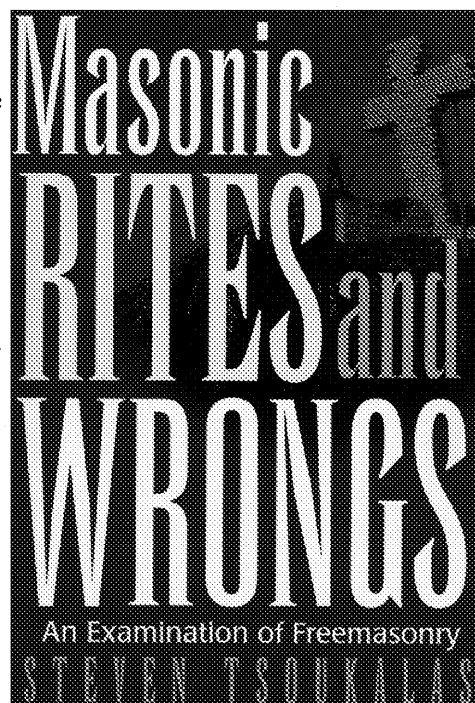
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