

Weighing the Counsel of Charles Finney and Dwight L. Moody

19th Century Evangelists

The issue of Freemasonry is not new to the church. During the 19th century, churches from many denominations took a strong stand against Free-masonry. This was due primarily to two factors. First, a man named Captain William Morgan, renounced Freemasonry and entered into an agreement with a publisher to expose the teachings of Freemasonry. Freemasons went to work quickly to prevent their secrets from being exposed. They kidnapped and murdered Captain Morgan. He was most probably drowned in Lake Niagara, yet his body was never recovered. What we know of the facts surrounding his death are based on the deathbed confession of one of the Masons who murdered him. Secondly, as a result of the exposure of some of Masonry's secrets, the church had knowledge upon which to evaluate the compatibility of Christianity and Freemasonry. There was a tremendous public outcry over the murder of Captain Morgan and since part of the nature of Freemasonry had been revealed, many in the church began to speak out against it. The two major issues upon which their objections were based were the taking of oaths, in which each Mason agreed to suffer a hideous

death if he should reveal the teachings of Freemasonry, and the fact that a Christian who joined the lodge would be yoked with unbelievers. The position adopted in many churches was that a member of the church could not be a Freemason. If any members were lodge members, they were required to renounce or they were disfellowshipped. The result was quite good; three quarters of the lodges were closed, due to the great numbers of men who renounced Freemasonry. God blessed the bold stand the church had taken; a great revival broke out and spread across the land.

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Before Finney became a Christian, he was a Master Mason.

Since the time of Captain Morgan and Charles Finney, some additional information con-

cerning the nature of Freemasonry has become known.

When men are raised to Master Mason, each candidate is required to portray Hiram Abiff. In the ritual of the third degree, the candidate as Hiram Abiff, is unjustly killed, buried and then raised from the dead. At the conclusion of the degree, the candidate is given the following summary of the meaning of the ritual:

Then, finally my brethren, let us imitate our Grand Master, Hiram Abiff, in his virtuous conduct, his unfeigned piety to God, and his inflexible fidelity to his trust; that, like him, we may welcome the grim tyrant, Death, and receive him as a kind messenger sent by our Supreme Grand Master, to translate us from this imperfect to that all-perfect, glorious, and celestial Lodge above, where the Supreme Architect of the Universe presides¹

The meaning of the ritual is clearly explained: Why are Masons to imitate Hiram Abiff? According to the ritual, Masons are to imitate Hiram Abiff that they may welcome death and be translated into heaven.

Who is Hiram Abiff?

When a man is raised to Master Mason, he is given a small book called a monitor. Monitors are produced for each jurisdiction and

are distributed at the direction of the authorities of Freemasonry, the Grand Lodges. The Grand Lodge of Kentucky revealed the identity of Hiram Abiff in a discussion of various religions:

All believed in a future life, to be attained by purification and trials; in a state or successive states of reward and punishment; and in a Mediator or Redeemer, by whom the Evil Principle was to be overcome and the Supreme Deity reconciled to His creatures. The belief was general that He was to be born of a virgin and suffer a painful death. The Hindus called him Krishna; the Chinese, Kiountse; the Persians, Sosiosch; the Chaldeans, Dhouvanai; the Egyptians, Horus; Plato, Love; the Scandinavians, Balder; the **Christians, Jesus; Masons, Hiram.**²

The meaning is perfectly clear. Masonry teaches that Jesus is not unique. Jesus is a savior for Christians, while Hiram Abiff is a savior for Masons. Lynn Perkins, clarifies the teaching:

Therefore Masonry teaches that redemption and salvation are both the power and the responsibility of the individual Mason. Saviors like Hiram Abiff can and do show the way, but men must always follow and demonstrate, each for himself, his power to save himself, to build his own spiritual fabric in his own time and way. Every man in essence is his own savior and redeemer; for if he does not save himself, he will not be saved. The reader who succeeds in getting back to the real teachings of the masters, including Jesus of Nazareth, will find unanimity of thinking on this matter.³

The fact that Masonry teaches redemption and salvation is also

documented by The Grand Lodge of South Carolina:

It was the single object of all the ancient rites and mysteries practiced in the very bosom of pagan darkness. . .to teach the immortality of the Soul. *This is still the great design of the third degree of Masonry. This is the scope and aim of its ritual.* The Master Mason represents man, when youth, manhood, old age, and life itself have passed away as fleeting shadows, yet raised from the grave of iniquity, and quickened into another and better existence. By its legend and all its ritual, **it is implied that we have been redeemed from the death of sin and the sepulchre of pollution. . .** .and the conclusion we arrive at is, that youth, properly directed, leads us to honorable and virtuous maturity, and that the life of man, regulated by morality, faith, and justice, will be rewarded at its closing hour by the prospect of eternal bliss. . . The important design of the degree is to symbolize the great doctrines of the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul; and hence it has been remarked by a learned writer of our Order, that **the Master Mason represents a man saved from the grave of iniquity, and raised to the faith of salvation.**⁴

Those words, or most of them, are reproduced in the monitors of several states. The Grand Lodge of Indiana includes that teaching in the monitor issued to Indiana Masons in the section explaining the meaning of the LEGEND OF THE THIRD DEGREE.⁵ The Indiana Monitor confirms the universality of the Hiramic Legend in Masonry:

The Legend of the Third Degree. This is the most important and

significant of the legendary symbols of Free-masonry. It has descended from age to age by oral tradition, and has been preserved in every Masonic rite, practiced in any country or language, with no essential alteration.⁶

The Hiramic Legend is the glory of Freemasonry. . .⁷

Freemasonry has a savior named Hiram Abiff. Freemasonry teaches that Master Masons have been redeemed from the death of sin and represent those raised to the faith of salvation. Each and every Mason has portrayed Hiram Abiff in a ritual in which he was murdered, buried and raised from the dead. That ritual mocks the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The ritual of the third degree directly states that by imitating Hiram Abiff, Master Masons may get into heaven.

The Counsel of Charles Finney

Charles Finney renounced Freemasonry. As an evangelist who knew something of Freemasonry, he understood the responsibility of the church on the matter. Finney wrote:

We are now prepared to consider the question of the relation of Freemasonry to the Church of Christ. On this question I remark:

God holds the church and every branch of it, responsible for its opinion and action in accordance with the best light, which, in his providence, is afforded them. . . If any particular branch of the church has better means of information, and therefore more light on moral questions, than another branch, its responsibility is greater, in proportion to its greater means of information. Such a branch of the

church is bound to take a higher and more advanced position in Christian life and duty, to bear a fuller and lighter testimony against every form of iniquity, than that required by less favored and less informed branches of the church. They are not to wait till other branches of the church have received their light, before they bear a testimony and pursue a course in accordance with their own degree of information.

While Masonry was a secret, the church had no light, and no responsibility respecting it. Although individual members of the church were Freemasons, as a body, she knew nothing of Masonry; therefore she could say nothing. . .

But the state of the case is now greatly changed. Freemasonry is now revealed. It is no longer a secret to any who wish to be informed..... Now, since these revelations are made, and both the church and the world are aware of what Masonry really is, God demands, and the world has a right to expect, that the church will take *due action and bear a truthful testimony in respect to this institution*. She can not now innocently hold her peace. The light has come. Fidelity to God, and to the souls of men, require that the church, which is the light of the world, should speak out, and should take such action as will

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plainly reveal her views of the compatibility or incompatibility of Freemasonry with the Christian religion. As God's witnesses, as the pillar and ground of the truth, the church is bound to give the trumpet no uncertain sound, upon this question, that all men may know, whether, in her judgment, an intelligent embracing and determinate adhering to Freemasonry are compatible with a truthful profession of religion.

Every local branch of the Church of Christ is bound to examine this subject, and pronounce upon this institution, according to the best light they can get. God does not allow individuals, or churches, to withhold action, and the expression of their opinion, until other churches are as enlightened as themselves. We are bound to act up to our own light, and to go as far in advance of others as we have better means of information than they. We have no right to say to God that we will act according to our own convictions, when others become so enlightened that our action will be popular and meet their approval.

Again: Those individuals and churches, who have had the best means of information, owe it to other branches of the church, and to the whole world, to take action and to pronounce upon the unchristian character of Freemasonry, as the most influential means within their reach of arousing the whole church and the world to an examination of the character and claims of Freemasonry. If churches who are known to have examined the subject withhold their testimony; if they continue to receive persistent and intelligent Freemasons; if they leave the public to infer that they see nothing in Freemasonry inconsistent with a creditable profession of the Christian religion, it will justly be inferred by other

branches of the church, and by the world, that there is nothing in it so bad, so dangerous and unchristian as to call for their examination, action, or testimony. Before the publishing of Morgan's book, the Baptist denomination, especially, in that part of the country, had been greatly carried away by Freemasonry. A large proportion of its eldership and membership were Freemasons. A considerable number of ministers and members of other branches of the Christian Church had also fallen into the snare. The murder of Wm. Morgan, and the publication of Masonry consequent thereupon in the books I have named, broke upon the church - fast asleep on this subject - like a clap of thunder from a clear sky.

The facts were such, the revelations were so clear, that the Baptist denomination backed down, and took the lead in renouncing and denouncing the institution. Their elders and associated churches, almost universally, passed resolutions disfellowshipping adhering Masons. The denomination, to a considerable extent, took the same course. Throughout the Northern States, at that time, I believe it was almost universally conceded that persistent Freemasons, who continued to adhere and co-operate with them, ought not to be admitted to Christian churches. Now it is worthy of all consideration and remembrance, that God set the seal of His approbation upon the action taken by those churches at that time, by pouring out His Spirit upon them. Great revivals immediately followed over that whole region. . .

And should the question be asked, 'What shall be done with the great number of professed Christians who are Freemasons?' I answer, Let them have no more to do with

it. Again, let Christian men labor with them, plead with them, and endeavor to make them see it to be their duty to abandon it. . . Let them be distinctly asked whether they intend still to aid and abet the administration and taking of these oaths, if they still intend to countenance the false and hypocritical teachings of Masonry, if they mean to countenance the profanity of their ceremonies, and practice the partiality they have sworn to practice. If so, surely they should not be allowed their places in the church.⁸

Charles Finney was only one of many voices condemning Freemasonry during the 19th century. Another evangelist of the period was Dwight L. Moody. Moody spoke clearly on the issue as well:

I do not see how any Christian, most of all a Christian minister, can go into these lodges with unbelievers. They say they can have more influence for good, but I say they can have more influence for good by staying out of them and then reproving their evil deeds. You can never reform anything by unequally yoking yourself with ungodly men. True reformers separate themselves from the world. But, some say to me, if you talk that way you will drive all the members of secret societies out of your meetings and out of your churches. But what if I did? Better men will take their places. Give them the truth anyway and if they would rather leave their churches than their lodges, the sooner they get out of the churches the better. I would rather have ten members who are separated from the world than a thousand such members. Come out from the lodge. Better one with God than a thousand without Him.

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We must walk with God and if only one or two go with us, it is all right. Do not let down the standard to suit men who love their secret lodges or have some darling sin they will not give up.⁹

Since the 1st century, Christians have opposed false gospels. Paul wrote:

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel--which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! Gal 1:6-8

As the return of Christ draws near, what should we do concerning Freemasonry? Our generation is the first generation to know that Freemasonry teaches salvation on the basis of another savior. Can we fail to denounce the institution of Freemasonry without standing before God with blood on our hands? (See Ezek 33:1-9) Can we continue to allow Free-masons to use our congregations as a cover? Will we allow them to point to Masonic members in our congregations to support their

false claim that Free-masonry is compatible with Christianity?

What will Jesus do if He returns to find us standing shoulder to shoulder with Freemasons? Will He spew us out of His mouth because we are neither hot nor cold? Pray for church leadership. Ask God to remove the scales from their eyes. Will Christians ever meet in secret to teach salvation on the basis of another savior? Why then should we consider the man who will not renounce Freemasonry a Christian? Demand integrity and a call to repentance from leadership. Real leaders won't compromise on these issues.

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1. **MASONIC RITUAL.** Ritual is supposedly never written down. However, text virtually identical to this portion of ritual can be found on page 152 of the 1946 edition of **THE KENTUCKY MONITOR.** G.M.H.A. has been substituted for Grand Master Hiram Abiff.
 2. **THE KENTUCKY MONITOR,** issued by Grand Lodge of Kentucky, pages XIV-XV, 1946 edition.
 3. **THE MEANING OF MASONRY,** 1960, 1971 - CSA Press, page 95.
 4. **AHIMAN REZON,** 1947 edition, Grand Lodge of South Carolina, pages 141-142.
 5. **INDIANA MONITOR AND FREEMASON'S GUIDE,** 1993, Grand Lodge of Indiana, page 154.
 6. *Ibid*, page 41.
 7. *Ibid*, page 158.
 8. *Character, Claims, and Practical Workings of Freemasonry,* National Christian Association.
 9. Dwight L. Moody, *Moody Bible Seminary.*