

Ron Rhodes:
Reasoning from the
Scriptures with Masons

A Review by
David S. Julian

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The author of the book

On the book's back cover, Ron Rhodes, Th.D., correctly states that "*Masons establish and maintain Children's Hospitals, provide free medical treatment to needy children, work actively in their communities, and promote high moral standards.*" The author is identified as the President of Reasoning from the Scriptures Ministries, whose own website describes itself as a "*nonprofit corporation.*" But nothing on the RSM website even remotely resembles the generosity of Freemasonry quoted above. The website actually appears to be nothing more than an online bookstore for Rhodes' books and newsletter, run out of a P.O. Box in Frisco, TX, a north Dallas suburb. According to the book, however, RSM is run out of a P.O. Box in Rancho Santa Margarita, CA, a south Los Angeles suburb near Mission Viejo. The book's cover also identifies Rhodes as a "*noted researcher and Bible scholar*" but most of his premises turn out to be just another recycling of the same anti-everybody-but-us phoney-baloney from Harvest House, the publishing arm of the John Ankerberg Show.

To get the potential book-buyer's attention, the back cover displays the usual "secret name for God", "Baal and Osiris", "occultic", and "hidden rituals" buzzwords. The back cover also claims there is an "*easy to follow guide ... you can use to lead Masons back to Biblical Christianity,*" as if Christian Freemasons, who use the *Holy Bible* -- in my jurisdiction it's the *King James Version* -- as the rule and guide of their faith, ever left.

The author of this review

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A brief word from the reviewer

Originally this was to be a short book report for one of the Elders of the church that I regularly attend and of which I am a member. But at the suggestion of my wife, I decided to answer some of the questions put forward by Ron Rhodes, not only to solidify my own knowledge about the compatibility of Christianity and Freemasonry, but to provide solid Bible-based answers for use by unsuspecting Christian Freemasons against this onslaught of legalistic, separatist Neofundamentalism that has been gaining momentum in some Christian circles in recent years.

I owe Ron Rhodes a sincere apology. There were some times and places in the book where I found his unfounded and unchristian attacks to be so inflammatory that it took all the effort I could muster to circumscribe my passion within due bounds and to not respond in kind. My apology is for those times when I failed.

The Masonic Lodge

The book begins on the top of page 7 by making an egregious mockery of scholarship when Ron Rhodes says, *"Masonry is a centuries-old fraternal order and secret society that is deeply entrenched in symbolism, secret oaths, and secret rituals."*

So how is it, then, that Rhodes can know anything about Freemasonry if it is a "secret society," and especially, how could he know if any of the "very famous people" he lists were actually Freemasons? And if it is a "secret society", why is every Freemason's Lodge identified by a great big sign that says "Masonic Lodge" and has a Square and Compasses emblem prominently displayed? And if it is a "secret society", why are there 47 Lodges listed in the Dallas Metro phone book and 9 Lodges listed near Mission Viejo (the two locations where Rhodes has Post Office Boxes to hide the secret locations of his homes and offices) where the members openly wear hats, jackets, ties, rings, watches, and lapel pins; prominently display bumper stickers, car emblems, newsletters, and magazines -- all with Masonic emblems prominently displayed on them; and post public notices with the times, dates, and locations of their meetings? And which one of the Three Degrees of the Blue Lodge, 4th Degrees and up of the Scottish Rite and York Rite, all of which are fully explained in the *Holy Bible, King James Version with Masonic References*, published by Heirloom Publishers of Wichita, KS, that is available at any bookstore or public library -- *and from which Rhodes himself actually quotes* -- are being kept secret?

The whole idea of "secret societies" is nonsense anyway to anyone who truly believes in an omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent God. It certainly would be presupposed that someone claiming to be a "noted researcher and Bible scholar" and the author of a book called *The Complete Book of Bible Answers* would have at least stumbled upon this Bible passage:

Jeremiah 23:23-24 Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.

So if Freemasonry is not secret from the community, not secret from God, and not secret from the millions of Masons themselves, then exactly from whom is it secret?

I describe people like Rhodes as "fire-builders." What they do is pour gasoline on the surface of a neighbor's swimming pool, set fire to it, then rush in and try to sell the rest of the neighborhood on the emergent need for pool-side fire extinguishers -- a large supply of which they just happen to have on hand -- *for a reasonable price*, of course.

Rhodes starts pouring on the gasoline on the first page by listing several famous Freemasons from history, and then stating: *"Many people have assumed that with such intelligent and respectable people joining a Masonic Lodge, there must not be anything wrong with such membership."* If you go to the web site *masonicinfo.com* you'll find a list of thousands of the most prominent and famous Freemasons of both yesterday *and today*. These men, whom Rhodes tries to trivialize as merely "intelligent and respectable" turn out to be the cream of the crop in virtually every walk of life -- *including Christian ministry!*

Rhodes goes on to say, *"Today, millions of people are involved in the various orders within Freemasonry. There are approximately 3 million Masons in the Blue Lodge, over a quarter of a million in the York Rite, close to a million in the Scottish Rite, and perhaps another million in the various other orders."* So let's add them up: 3,000,000 + 250,000 + 900,000 + 1,000,000 = approximately 5,150,000 Masons, right?

Every Mason reading this knows that's not right. The Blue Lodge degrees are the first three degrees of the York Rite, and 4th degree Scottish Rite and York Rite members have to be Blue Lodge members (3rd Degree Master Masons) first.

And that last million, would that include such "various other orders" as Eastern Star (for women) and Job's Daughters, Rainbow, and DeMolay (for children). Would the millions of recipients of free medical treatment, community services, and the thousands of other Masonic charitable causes be included in "*those involved in the various orders within Freemasonry*"? Even his first number of 3 million is skewed, because in Most Grand Lodge jurisdictions, a Mason can belong to many different Lodges at the same time (I belong to four myself).

Rhodes apparently doesn't realize that he contradicts himself on the following page when he quotes a source claiming 4 million Masons in the US alone! At the exact time I am writing this, the US Census Bureau lists the population of the US as 293,919,709. What Rhodes calls "*such staggering statistics*" turns out to be just a shade over 1%.

It's easy to see why Rhodes might be confused by these "*staggering statistics*." Does he get his numbers from the Masonic Information Service or the various Grand Lodges around the country that would have provided him exact membership demographics? No, he cites as his primary sources, John Ankerberg and John Weldon, who, along with Harvest House (their, and not coincidentally Rhodes' own, publisher) are currently being sued for libel for \$136 million dollars. By the Freemasons? No -- *by a Christian denomination!* You can read the whole sordid story online at these web addresses:

www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/002/13.24.html

www.contendingforthefaitth.com/libel-litigations/harvest-house-et-al/progress.html

According to the Southern Baptist Convention's "A Report on Freemasonry" we find the following:

In 1991, the Home Mission Board submitted questions concerning Freemasonry in the SBC to Baptist VIEWpoll. Baptist VIEWpoll is a survey by the Corporate Market Research Department of the Sunday School Board, SBC, of 1,433 Southern Baptists (283 pastors, 430 ministers of education, 247 directors of missions, 202 deacon chairmen, and 271 church clerks). Of the 1,433 who received the questionnaire, 997 responded.

When asked if the issue of Freemasonry ever caused a problem in their churches or associations, the vast majority of each group responded that their churches or associations had never dealt with the issue of Freemasonry. Of those responding, 14 percent of the pastors, 5 percent of the ministers of education, 13 percent of the directors of missions, 18 percent of the deacon chairmen, and 12 percent of the church clerks identified themselves as Masons or Eastern Star (the women's auxiliary). VIEWpoll estimated that 400,000 - 500,000 Southern Baptist men are Masons.

Now those really are "*staggering statistics*"! 14% of the pastors and 18% of the deacon chairmen of the largest Protestant Christian denomination in the USA and nearly half a million other Southern Baptist men find no conflict between their Christianity and their Freemasonry!

On the bottom of the next page (p. 8) Rhodes says: "*People seek membership in a Masonic Lodge for a variety of reasons.*" Then he goes on to list "*belonging to a secret society where they are privileged to learn secret mysteries rooted in ancient times*", "*fascinated by all the rich symbolism*", emphasize the universal "*brotherhood of man and the accompanying humanitarianism*", "*because they think it is a good place to network and make business contacts.*"

Then he quotes researcher Ron Campbell, who completely contradicts the previous paragraph when he states, "*In fact, most men know little about the Lodge when they join.*" So which is it? They join because they know all about it, or they join because they know almost nothing about it?

Rhodes finally gets it right when he says, "*Still others join simply because a relative or acquaintance they know and respect is a Mason.*" Except it's not just "*a relative or acquaintance*". They join because many of the most significant men in their lives, men they know personally and fervently respect -- the true heroes and champions they look up to and want to emulate -- *are Freemasons!*

In my jurisdiction (the State of Washington), the first two questions asked of a candidate for the degrees of Freemasonry are:

1. *Do you seriously declare, upon your honor, that unbiased by the improper solicitation of friends and uninfluenced by mercenary motives, you freely and voluntarily offer yourself a candidate for the mysteries of Freemasonry?*

2. *Do you seriously declare, upon your honor, that you are prompted to solicit the privileges of Freemasonry by a favorable opinion conceived of the Institution, a desire for knowledge, and a sincere wish to be of service to your fellow creatures?*

"*Improper solicitation of friends*" means you were not coerced, convinced, or even asked to join; "*uninfluenced by mercenary motives*" means no business contacts or business networking -- no financial benefits whatsoever; "*a favorable opinion conceived of the Institution*" means that Freemasonry (who the Masons are, what they do, and what they stand for) is no secret to you; "*desire for knowledge*" means you are seeking the ultimate truth, not propaganda, vain repetitions, dogmatic credos, or a substitute religion; "*a sincere wish to be of service to your fellow creatures*" means you have to be ready, willing, and able to walk the walk, not just talk the talk, of doing everything you can for the less fortunate. I think that unequivocally demonstrates that both "*noted researcher*" Ron Rhodes and "*researcher*" Ron Campbell literally don't know the first thing about Freemasonry.

On page 9, Rhodes says, "*The origin of Freemasonry is shrouded in deep mystery and wild legends. Some Masons...*" then he goes on to list some of the wildest and craziest ideas that "*Some Masons*" have "*claimed.*" Then he states "*Contrary to such claims, history reveals that Masonry formally began in London, England in 1717 due to the efforts of James Anderson, George Payne, and Theophilus Desaugliers.*" I belong to the Walter F. Meier Lodge of Research, and in all my years in Masonry I have never ever heard anyone espouse any origin of the Freemasonry that is practiced in the US today from any source other than that alliance formed in the Goose & Gridiron Tavern in London in 1717 between the Reverend James Anderson, D.D.; Reverend John Theophilous Desaugliers, L.L.D., F.R.S.; and the United Kingdom's first Grand Master, George Payne.

(It should be noted here that they weren't drunks meeting in a bar. The Goose & Gridiron was actually located in the church yard of St. Paul's, and in the early part of the 18th-century, taverns and inns were the only public meeting places available for such secular purposes. There were no "public eateries" or restaurants until the 1760's.)

The only "wild legends" are some of the speculations about how and when the stonemason guilds (operative masonry) that were the forerunners of Freemasonry (speculative masonry) actually started. From Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem, to the Great Pyramid of Giza, to the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, to the Statue of Zeus in Olympia, the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus, the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, the Colossus of Rhodes, the Lighthouse at Alexandria, on to the ancient edifices of Greece and Rome, to the Gothic cathedrals of medieval Europe, certain architectural "secrets" were preserved so that the builders could freely travel between countries to use their unique skills. The origins of some of the geometry and engineering knowledge that was required to erect some of these structures still baffles historians and engineers today.

Masonry (building by laying units of substantial material like stone or bricks) obviously did not start in London in 1717. Freemasonry, as we know it today, did. Someone who describes himself as a "*noted researcher*" should know that in a work like this, it is important to carefully delineate the difference between a Mason and a Freemason. The only "*deep mystery*" here is why Freemasonry came into being in the first place - and why Rhodes completely ignores this most significant piece of vital information.

In the early 1700's England was in a turmoil. Scotland, England, and Wales had just become The United Kingdom and the Hanoverian (German) dynasty of Kings and Queens had just started with George I. George didn't like the British Isles much, so he left it without much supervision much of the time. The Church of England, being fully based on the prior licentiousness of Henry VIII, had deteriorated to the point where it operated alehouses and other houses of ill-repute which were called "nunneries," places where widowed women could find "employment" after thousands of their husbands committed suicide after losing their life savings in a nationwide, wildly speculative pyramid scheme. The resulting orphaned children were put in church-sponsored "orphanages" which were scarcely more than slave labor for the burgeoning Industrial Revolution.

On the mainland, Christianity fared no better, as the extravagance of the Pope in Rome far exceeded his income. What was left of the once "Catholic" (meaning universal) Church was forced to extort money from its extensive flock in France, Spain, and Portugal, and to begin the colonization and subsequent exploitation of North America, South America, and Africa. To keep the flock in line, the Pope used the Inquisition, which had the power to torture and even kill "heretics" (meaning dissenters), and which continues to this day as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (presumably without the torture and murder). Freemasonry came to America along with all the rest of the people trying to escape the merciless persecution of European Christianity.

On page 10 Rhodes says, "*...it is a fact that within Masonry, no one Mason speaks for another.*" Then he contradicts himself in the very next paragraph, stating, "*Yet, Freemasonry ... acknowledges certain leaders within the movement whose writings are viewed as representative.*" He then goes on to list some of them: Henry Wilson Coil, Joseph Fort Newton, Albert G. Mackey, and Albert Pike. It's important to note here that back on Page 8 Rhodes stated that 20,000 Masonic books had been published in America. Yet a keyword search of "Freemasonry" lists less than 2000 references at the Library of Congress. With nearly 2000 different sources, why do you think these anti-everyone-but-us writers like Rhodes keep quoting from the same handful of authors?

In my jurisdiction, there are only three books that represent the official beliefs of Freemasons in Washington: (1) *the Holy Bible, King James Version*, (2) *the Washington Masonic Monitor and Freemason's Guide*, and (3) *the Washington Masonic Code*. To my knowledge, none of the four authors listed above (or the 1,995 others listed at the Library of Congress) had anything directly to do with the writing of any of them.

Rhodes identifies Rev. Joseph Fort Newton, a Baptist Minister and Freemason, as one of the "*certain leaders within the movement whose writings are viewed as representative*," yet Reverend Newton passed away back in 1950. Has he been leading Freemasonry from the grave for the last 54 years? Or how about Albert Pike and Albert G. Mackey? Each of them died more than a hundred years ago! In fact none of those Rhodes calls "*leaders within the movement*" are still alive today. Although it is true that each of them wrote extensively about their own personal relationships with Freemasonry, are their writings really "*viewed as representative*?"

Lets look at Albert Pike, for two reasons. First, because his *magnum opus* about Freemasonry called *Morals and Dogma* is the work most often misquoted, distorted, and outright-lied-about by the Harvest House anti-everyone-but-us crowd; and second, because I just happen to have it handy.

On the fourth page of the preface to *Morals and Dogma*, Albert Pike makes this statement (my emphasis):

The teachings of these readings are not sacramental, so far as they go beyond the realm of Morality into those other domains of Thought and Truth. The Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite uses the word 'Dogma' in its true sense, of doctrine, or teaching; and is not dogmatic in the odious sense of that term.

Everyone is entirely free to reject and dissent from whatever herein may seem to him to be untrue and unsound. It is only required of him that he shall weigh what is taught, and give it fair hearing and unprejudiced judgment. *Of course the ancient theosophic and philosophic speculations are not embodied as part of the doctrines of the Rite;* but because it is of interest and profit to know what the Ancient Intellect thought about these subjects, and because nothing so conclusively proves the radical difference between our human and the animal nature, as the capacity of the human mind to entertain such speculations in regard to itself and the Deity.

So let's see: Pike says his book is a collection of "ancient theosophic and philosophic speculations" and they are neither "sacraments" nor "not embodied as part of the doctrines of the Rite." And "everyone is entirely free to reject" whatever "seems to be untrue or unsound." It doesn't take a Doctorate in Theology to understand what Pike is really saying: The book is a collection of Pike's own ideas; that those ideas aren't part of the doctrines of the Scottish Rite; and nobody has to believe a single word of them -- *not to mention that they are more than a century out of date!*

On Page 11, Rhodes says, "*Masons certainly do not like it when 'fundamentalist' Christians criticize their movement.*" Actually Freemasons really appreciate constructive criticism. It helps us to grow, and especially helps us to pay more attention to the specific needs of the people we help. Rhodes goes on, "*They feel they are misrepresented and misunderstood.*" No, Freemasons don't "*feel... misrepresented and misunderstood.*" Christian Freemasons are systematically being slandered, libeled, marginalized, trivialized, defamed, maligned, slandered, vilified -- even *demonized* -- by other Christians.

The title of this book is *Reasoning from the Scriptures with Masons*, but it is not until the bottom of Page 11 when Rhodes cites his first scriptural references, which he uses to prove his statements that "*Jesus is also the divine judge of humankind,*" that He took "*an unbending stand against false prophets and false Christs,*" and that "*He spoke harshly against false religious leaders.*" No Christian Freemason would deny any of that. Is Rhodes intimating here that Freemasons are "false prophets", "false Christs", and "false religious leaders"? Is he saying that it is the duty of all "real" Christians to judge them as such? I sincerely hope that is not his message because the Bible is very clear about this:

Matthew 7:1-5 Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

James 4:11-12 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

Romans 2:1-13 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

Romans 14:1-12 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Rhodes continues, "And Scripture assures us that Jesus will one day come again and separate the sheep from the goats, inviting the sheep (true Christians) into His kingdom but dooming the goats (unbelievers) to suffer eternally in hell (Matthew 25:31-46)." Here is the entire narrative:

Matthew 25:31-46 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

What is most significant about this narrative is that Jesus clearly spells out the criteria for judgment as a sheep or a goat: it's what you *did* or *did not do* for "one of the least of these" that makes the difference, not what you say you believe. In fact verses 37-39 and 44 clearly indicate that those selected have no idea that what they had been doing (or not doing) for "the least of these" had anything to do with Jesus at all. This narrative is a reiteration of what Jesus emphasized earlier in Chapter 7:

Matthew 7:21-23 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

How much clearer can Jesus be? Are Christians supposed to be spending their time providing for "the least of these" like the Freemasons, other service oriented-fraternal organizations, and legitimate Christian ministries? Or are they supposed to spend their time looking for demons to cast out from Freemason's Lodges or even from their own churches?

On the next page (Page 12) Rhodes states "*In this book, Scripture will be the measuring stick-- our 'barometer of truth' -- for testing the claims of Freemasonry.*" Then he proceeds to denigrate Christian Freemasons by referring to them as "'Christian' Masons" (in quotes) or "*a Mason who claims to be a Christian,*" without a single Scripture reference to back up his allegations.

Matthew 5:21-22 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Rhodes goes on: "*Of course, in the case of the 'Christian' Mason, the goal is first to make sure the person is a Christian according to the biblical definition, then provide substantive reasons why the 'Christian' Mason should no longer be affiliated with the Masonic Lodge.*" Once again Rhodes still again fails to cite a single reference where the Bible says Christians are supposed to spend their valuable ministry time doing this. And just exactly what is "a Christian according to the biblical definition"?

I submit that each of the more than 1000 distinct Christian denominations in North America has a different, yet equally biblical answer to that question, and liberally sprinkled among them are millions of Freemasons, many of which are the Pastors, elders, and deacons -- *the very pillars of their churches!*

After being told explicitly not to judge each other (because God/Christ is the only judge and lawgiver), Christians are then forewarned about the futility of trying to make judgments about the whole body by comparing the individual parts:

1 Corinthians 12:12-27 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

Rhodes has a Doctorate in Theology, but I suspect, like most separatist Neofundamentalists (the academic term for the anti-everyone-but-us crowd), a substantial part of the Bible is invisible to him, especially the parts about not judging, not criticizing, not demonizing, not being divisive, not arguing about disputable matters, not denigrating, not slandering, gossiping, backbiting -- and especially *not bearing false witness* -- against other Christians who have a perspective that differs from his own. Apparently he doesn't believe the Bible when it says that "...God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him", or "That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another."

Rhodes then says "*In the case of the non-Christian Mason, the goal is first evangelism (leading him to faith in Christ for salvation) and then 'exit counseling' -- helping the person see why he should leave the Lodge and become active in a good, Bible-believing church.*" Once again Rhodes fails to offer up even one Scripture reference to justify his unsupportable, and irrational belief that a man cannot be a Christian and a Freemason at the same time, and must therefore "*leave the Lodge*" before he can become "*active in a good, Bible-believing church.*"

Using the Bible as the "*measuring stick*" Rhodes has already come up short. For example, he apparently missed the whole point of the mote and the beam in Matthew 7:3, *i.e.*, that it is Rhodes' need to remove what he considers a speck from his brother's eye that *is* the beam in his own eye. Using the Bible as the "*barometer of truth*" we have already seen Rhodes trip over his own tongue by double-talk, by repeatedly contradicting himself, and by making millennialist, dispensationalist, separatist, Neofundamentalist theological generalities that are obviously negated by verse after verse of Holy Scripture.

Matthew 7:18-20 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

The Bible clearly says that "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." Rhodes continuously tries to portray Freemasonry as a "corrupt" tree, by making such provocative, slanderous accusations as "*there is also a spiritual cyanide being disseminated on a massive level by Freemasonry*" -- once again without any scriptural support or any proof that Freemasons are doing any damage to individual Christians or the Body of Christ in general. In fact, throughout his book Rhodes is forced to acknowledge that "*Masons do many good things*", that they are "*highly patriotic*", that they "*place a high premium on morality*", that they are "*very generous in their charitable giving.*" So let's see how the "fruit" of Freemasonry lines up with Scripture.

Doing good...

Galations 6:10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Hebrews 13:15-16 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

1 Peter 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

Patriotism...

Romans 13:1-7 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Morality...

Romans 13:9-10 Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Ephesians 4:22-24 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Gal 5:13-14 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Charity

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. 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. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

Colossians 3:14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

1 Timothy 1:5 Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned

1 Timothy 4:12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Titus 2:1-2 But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.

1 Peter 4:8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

2 Peter 1:5-7 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

There are a few places in the Bible that talk about the separation, divisiveness, and contentiousness that Rhodes is promoting. How does what Rhodes is attempting to do measure up with Scripture?

Romans 16:17-19 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

1 Corinthians 1:10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Titus 3:8-9 This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.

Gal 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

So lets recap. So far we have discerned that Rhodes:

- doesn't know what "secret" means
- is trying to create an artificial emergency
- is using deception to try to inflate the demographics of Freemasonry
- is trying to trivialize the spectacular contribution of some of Americas greatest Christians
- is citing authors that are biased at best and libelous at worst as his primary sources
- doesn't know the first thing about Freemasonry, literally
- is intentionally omitting key information about Freemasonry
- fails to identify key Freemasons as Christian clergymen
- is intentionally misrepresenting the expressed personal opinions of some extraordinary individuals as if they represented Freemasons in general, knowing full-well they do not
- has a separatist Neofundamentalist interpretation of the Bible that is out of touch with mainstream Christianity

And we haven't even made it to the first chapter yet! I submit that before anyone reading this book considers "*speaking with Masons*" to "*warn them of the dangers of Freemasonry*," they had better take a long, hard look at what happens to those who "bear false witness" and "cast out demons" for the wrong reasons.

1. Dialoguing with Masons

On Page 14 Rhodes suggests that you "Get to Know Masons on a Personal Level." I think that's a great idea. In fact you could start by asking around if anyone in your immediate family is or was a Freemason. The best place to start is with veterans of the Armed Forces, especially from WW II and Korea. Next ask around in your church, clubs, or other social circles if they know of anyone who received any free services from Masonic charities. Then you can make arrangements to meet the men who sponsored the recipients.

Ask the parents of a child who was saved from a life of permanent disability or disfigurement by Masonic-sponsored charities what they think of the Freemasons. (And don't forget to ask them what they think of separatist, Neofundamentalist antimasons like Ron Rhodes!)

On Page 15 Rhodes uses an interesting example about finding "*common ground*," which is the primary reason why neither sectarian religion nor partisan politics may be discussed in the Lodge room. The Lodge room becomes a sanctuary for all men, where they can put aside their differences and find the common ground to work together in harmony to overcome the real enemies of mankind: poverty, disease, hunger, terror -- regardless of their religious or political persuasions. This is the narrative:

Acts 17:22-29 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

St. Paul found common ground with the men at the Areopagus, a holy place dedicated to Ares, the Greek god of war. This is that common ground: that there is one God that created the entire world and everything in it, that He gives life and breath to all living things, and -- most significantly -- he has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell upon the face of the earth. Or to put it in the language of Freemasonry, all men are in the Brotherhood of Man (one blood), and under the Fatherhood of God (who is the Creator of all).

On Pages 17 and 18 there is an interesting juxtaposition of two more contradictory concepts. On Page 18, in order to "*Disarm the 'Ignorance' Accusation*," Rhodes quotes Walton Hannah, who says "*how utterly without foundation is the Masonic parrot-cry that no one who is not a Mason can possibly form any opinion of Masonic teachings or come to an understanding of what it all means*." Of course anyone can "*form any opinion*" or "*come to an understanding*" about the teachings of Freemasonry. Obviously the only "*ignorance*" issue here is where you get the information on which you form your opinion or come to your understanding.

If you want to "*form an opinion*" or "*come to an understanding*" about the Democratic Party, do you go to a the Democratic Party caucus, attend candidate forums and town hall meetings, and speak to the candidates personally at public appearances and call-in shows? Or do you get all your information from Sean Hannity, the Fox "News" Network, the 700 Club, and the supermarket tabloids?

If you want to form an honest opinion about Freemasonry, then attend (better still, ask to help with) some of the many fundraising events put on by the Freemasons in your community. Ask to speak to the District Deputy or other Grand Lodge officers also in attendance.

Read Art deHoyos' book *Is It True What They Say About Freemasonry?* that can be found at this web site: <http://www.srmason-sj.org/web/SRpublications/DeHoyos.htm> and my own book *David vs. Goliath?* at <http://www.dayjewel.com>. Both are available as free downloads from the Internet. In addition, for both pro and con perspectives, check out <http://www.masonicinfo.com> After that, most of your basic questions about Freemasonry will be answered, but you'll be left with one, final, nagging question: *If all that evidence refuting these false claims about Freemasonry was out there all along, what was the real reason Ron Rhodes wrote this book anyway?*

On the previous page (Page 17) Rhodes says, "*Many low-level Masons are unaware of what is taught in the advanced degrees in Freemasonry. In fact, many Masons in the Blue Lodge are purposely kept in ignorance; certain teachings are reserved only for the more advanced degrees.*" So which is it? Low-level (Blue Lodge) Freemasons must forever remain ignorant about "*certain teachings*" that are "*reserved only for the more advanced degrees*" or, you don't even have to be a Freemason to "*come to an understanding of what it all means*"? Have we heard this before somewhere? One of the common denominators of false accusations is that the accusers can't keep their stories straight from one minute (or one page) to the next:

Mark 14:55-59 And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none. For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together.

Another common denominator of false accusers is their use of "modifiers." This book is riddled with them. "*Many people...*", "*Some like...*", "*Some are...*", "*Some people...*", "*Some Masons...*", "*Other Masons ...*", etc. Rhodes has to do this because he is forced in several places to acknowledge that "*no one Mason speaks for another*" and "*not all Masons believe alike*".

Still another common denominator of false accusers is their need to make false presumptions. On Page 18, for example, Rhodes says "*It is important not to push for a decision for Christ until you have shown the Mason the differences between the Masonic god and the biblical God, between the Masonic Jesus and the biblical Jesus, between the Masonic gospel and the biblical gospel.*"

In my jurisdiction, The Grand Lodge of Washington, the fourth question posed to a possible candidate is this:

4. Do you believe in the existence of one ever-living and true God, and in a transition to a future life?

Lodges in Washington are all dedicated to St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist, the harbinger of the Messiah and the identifier of the Messiah. The "Great Light" or "Volume of the Sacred Law" is the *Holy Bible, King James Version*, which is described like this in the First Degree Charge:

As a Mason, you are to regard the volume of the Sacred Law as the Great Light in your profession; to consider it as the unerring standard of truth and justice; to regulate your actions by the divine precepts it contains. In it you will learn the important duties which you owe to God, your neighbor and yourself:

To God, by never mentioning His name but with the awe and reverence which are due from the creature to his Creator; by imploring His aid in all laudable undertakings, and by looking up to Him in every emergency for comfort and support;

To your neighbor, by acting with him upon the square; by rendering him every kind office which justice or mercy may require; by relieving his distresses, and soothing his afflictions; and by doing to him as, in similar cases, you would that he should do unto you:

And *to yourself*, by such a prudent and well-regulated course of discipline as may best conduce to the preservation of your corporeal and mental faculties in their fullest energy; thereby enabling you to exert the talents wherewith God has blest you, as well to His glory as to the welfare of your fellow-creatures.

There is only one God, one Jesus, one source of the Gospel. *Masonic god, Masonic Jesus, and Masonic gospel* are all figments of a fertile imagination and concepts completely foreign to Christian Freemasons -- just buzzwords used by Rhodes in lieu of any real substance.

Rhodes continues, "*Remember, it is only the true God and the true Jesus and the true gospel of the Bible that can bring true salvation.*" That's absolutely right. *And every Christian Freemason already knows this!*

At the bottom of Page 19, Rhodes states his purpose for the book: "*If all goes well, the Lord may bless you with the wonderful privilege of leading a Mason to faith in Christ or leading a 'Christian Mason' out of the Masonic Lodge.*"

It truly is a wonderful thing when you can participate in the reawakening of the Holy Spirit that helps someone return to the path of true salvation in Jesus Christ. But why do you think Rhodes would want a man to leave a fraternal organization that teaches faith in the one, true, and living God of the *King James Bible*; hope in immortality, and charity for all mankind, as in "*the greatest of these...*", that Rhodes himself is forced to admit "*do many good things*", are "*highly patriotic*", "*place a high premium on morality*", and they are "*very generous in their charitable giving*," all of which, as indicated earlier, are right in line with the Bible?

2 Timothy 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

So lets have another short recap. Now we know Rhodes

- gives example after example where he contradicts himself
- can't keep his story straight from one page to the next
- uses buzzwords instead of substantive arguments
- is promoting dissension, division, and slander
- is inciting other Christians to do likewise
- has a separatist Neofundamentalist interpretation of the Bible that is out of touch with mainstream Christianity

2. Masonic Families

On Page 21 Rhodes says, "*There are families of masons, each with distinctive characteristics.*" Here is a brief list of their true "distinctive characteristics":

Blue Lodge -- provides direct community involvement, scholarship programs, reading programs, food bank donations, homeless feeding programs, Habitat for Humanity, Sea Scouts, Boy Scouts, visitation to hospitals (especially veterans' hospitals), university medical research funding, providing medicines for the elderly and low-income families, Masonic youth groups, Masonic Retirement Centers, etc.

Scottish Rite -- supports regional Childhood Language Disorders Clinics, Abbot Scholarships, Schizophrenia Research Fellowships, Scottish Rite Children's Medical Center, etc.

York Rite -- Knights Templar Eye Foundation, Center for Central Auditory Research (CAPD), CMM Medical Research Foundation (arteriosclerosis), Knights Templar Educational Foundation (scholarships), etc., -- *and here's a real eye-opener* -- the Knights Templar Holy Land Pilgrimage (that sends Christian ministers on all-expenses-paid trips to the Holy Land.)

Grotto -- specializes in providing free dentistry for the disabled

Shrine -- the Shrine Burn Centers and Orthopedic Hospitals for Children are world-renown.

Eastern Star (as in "Star of the East, O Bethlehem's star") -- OES Cancer Research Project, Heart Fund, orphanages, etc., plus support for all the other charitable causes above.

In an attempt to play the "race card," on Page 22 Rhodes informs us "*Membership in the Blue Lodge has been, in years past, restricted to white males 21 years of age or older.*" Then he at least has the courtesy of adding this footnote: "*Although most Masonic Lodges and organizations now embrace an official nondiscrimination policy, a defacto [sic] segregation seems to be promoted in some lodges...*"

Once again it's "*most Masonic Lodges*", and "*some lodges.*" It should be noted here that racial segregation was the national policy of the USA, the law in many states, and the custom of nearly all Christian churches until M.W. Harry S Truman, President of the US and Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Missouri, ordered the desegregation of the Military Services just prior to the Korean Conflict in 1948. While I cannot defend the actions of unspecified "*some lodges*," I can certainly defend the Grand Lodge of Washington from this allegation. In the Early 1900's, long before it was fashionable, Grand Master William H. Upton recommended the full recognition of Prince Hall Lodges by the Grand Lodge of Washington. Both Grand Lodge of Washington and the Prince Hall Grand Lodge recently participated in special joint centennial ceremony commemorating this. (Upton has the unusual distinction of having both a GLW and PHA lodge named after him.) Currently the Washington Grand Lodge line of elected and appointed (statewide) officers is represented by the following ethnic groups:

Grand Master -- Satoru Tashiro, Japanese American

Senior Grand Deacon -- G. Santy Lascano, Filipino American

Grand Standard Bearer -- Al Mungin, African American

Grand Bible Bearer -- Tee Squant Nee Jackson, Native American

Deputy of the Grand Master in District 13 -- Jim Mendoza, Hispanic American

Rhodes concludes this footnote by saying "*...the fact remains that the vast majority of Masons are Caucasians.*" One would think that someone with a Doctorate in Theology would be aware that *the vast majority of all Americans are Caucasians!*

Further down the page, Rhodes alleges, "*One is initially required to bow down before the 'Worshipful Master' and say something to this effect, 'I am lost in darkness, and I am seeking the light of Freemasonry.'*" Let's get a definition straight right now: "worshipful" means "*full of worship*" *not* "*one to be worshipped or bowed down to.*" I've been a Freemason for 21 years, through the 3 degrees of the Blue Lodge, through 28 of the 29 degrees of the Scottish Rite, initiated into the Shrine, and I have been appointed a Grand Lodge "collared" officer 5 times -- and I have never been required to "*bow down*" before any man, Worshipful Master or otherwise. During the first part of the initiation the candidate is blindfolded. He is then asked what he most desires. His answer, of course, is that he'd like the blindfold removed.

On Page 25, Rhodes states, "*An example of a well-known 33rd-degree Mason is 'positive thinking' author Norman Vincent Peale.*" Although Dr. Peale is universally recognized as "*one of the three most influential clergymen of the 20th Century,*" once again Rhodes neglects to even mention in passing that Dr. Peale was another lifelong Christian Minister who found no conflict between Christianity and Freemasonry.

Freemasonry is a system of morality. It is a way of recognizing and reinforcing God's universal truths. It is not a religion nor an alternate path to salvation. And though God is certainly revered and highly respected in the Lodge, He is not worshipped there. That system of morality is taught by allegorical plays and skits, called "Degrees." Like any other allegorical plays, the participants pretend to be characters from history involved in fictional scenes and dialogues that teach a moral lesson.

On Page 26 Rhodes himself uses words like these to describe those moral lessons: "*fidelity*", "*respect*", "*zealousness*", "*faithfulness*", "*justice*", "*equity*", "*impartiality*", "*charity*", "*compassion*", "*honesty*", "*sincerity*", "*virtue*", "*humility*", "*generosity*", "*temperance*", and "*honor*". It should be obvious to any Christian that these principles are the same ones taught in the Sermon on the Mount, especially in the Beatitudes. Masonic symbols are used to represent these moral attributes. The square, for example, represents *virtue*, which is defined as: manly strength and courage to do the right thing. The compasses represent temperance, keeping the passions restrained within the due bounds of decency.

3. Understanding Freemasonry

On Page 31 Rhodes begins this chapter with this statement: "*Freemasonry is not easy to define -- something that even Masons recognize.*" On Page 21 of the *Washington Monitor and Freemason's Guide*, obtainable by anyone from the Grand Lodge office in Tacoma, WA, you'll find "*that fitting and appropriate definition 'Freemasonry is a system of morality, veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols.'*" I don't think you need a Doctorate in Theology to understand that.

On Page 33, Rhodes says, "*These allegories and symbols are not necessarily interpreted in a uniform fashion. Masons of different religious persuasions may understand them differently. It is in view of this that a Mason using the name Vindex wrote that 'Freemasonry, having no background of credal dogmas, is a system of allegory and symbolism ... into which the brethren can read any aspect of the universal religious truths they represent. This gives to Masonic symbolism a richness and depth.'*" It is important to note here and now that what Vindex wrote is entirely his own opinion and not the official policy of the Grand Lodge of Washington or even the Grand Lodge of England. That being said, I personally completely agree with that statement. The key omission here is that once again, Rhodes has failed to disclose that Vindex was a pseudonym (pen name) of an Anglican minister and Freemason who wrote a book in answer to a scathing book written by another Anglican minister and anti-Mason, Walton Hannah. Kessinger Publishing, a republisher of rare and out-of-print books describes Vindex's one-and-only book, *Light Invisible: The Freemasonry Answer to Darkness Visible* like this:

In 1952, a pseudonymous response to Walton Hannah's anti-Masonic work, *Darkness Visible*, appeared in England. The author, who called himself 'Vindex,' was an Episcopal clergyman and a Freemason, who would not be bullied by its detractors. Written with insight, a stinging wit, and sincerity, this work, long out of print is now available again in a corrected, new edition. Vindex succinctly corrects the distorted view of Masonry presented in *Darkness Visible*, and reveals that the Craft does indeed have an important role in the world today.

The story does not end there. This is the reason Hannah wrote his book, as reported to Tony Pope and the late Peter Lott of the South Australian Lodge of Research:

Hannah says that he appealed to several Bishops whom he knew to be Freemasons, and sought their answers to his problems concerning Freemasonry and Christianity. He describes their replies as "evasive" but, reading between the lines, it is clear that at least one Brother Bishop gave him a straight answer: "*Nonsense!*" Then Hannah began to air his views more publicly. In January 1951 the magazine *Theology*, published by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, included his article "Should a Christian be a Freemason." Several national newspapers got hold of it and gave it the treatment. One headline read: CHURCH OF ENGLAND SENSATION -- KING MAY ACT IN ROW OVER FREEMASONRY. Whatever else might be said of Mr. Hannah, the fact that he had been brought to the notice of his Sovereign and his Archbishop, both Freemasons, did not deter him. He confidently expected the theological controversy he had raised to be debated before the Church of England Canterbury Convocation in May 1951. It was not, and Hannah blamed the Suffragan Bishop of Reading, another Freemason. The controversy did come before the Church Assembly the following month. A motion was tabled that a Commission be appointed to report on Fr. Hannah's article. The motion was debated, and several prelates rose to defend the Craft, including the Archbishop of York, a non-Mason. The motion was put and, having gained only a single vote, was lost.

So we see that Vindex's book was a response to a misguided book of nonsense written by a disgruntled former Anglican priest who simply refused to submit to his own church leadership, which included Suffragan Bishops, Diocesan Bishops and Archbishops who were Freemasons themselves and therefore knew the truth about Freemasonry firsthand -- and again, none of which found any incompatibility between their Christianity and their Freemasonry.

Also on Page 33, Rhodes has a section called "*The Beginnings of Freemasonry*" that is simply a reiteration of the same disinformation that was in the section of the preface called "*The Origin of Freemasonry*." Apparently forgetting he already had, he proceeds to list some of the same preposterous claims made by "*Some Masons...*" You'll remember back in the preface Rhodes said that "*history reveals that Masonry formally began in London, England in 1717.*" Here is a claim by Gary H. Kah, a devotee of Anthony Grigor-Scott, at biblebelievers.org.au another anti-Mason Christian pastor.

As a result of my research, I finally came to conclude that a careful history of the occult had been maintained by the ancient priests wherever the mysteries were practiced. This information was probably initially passed along chiefly by word of mouth and possibly assisted by the use of hieroglyphics and other forms of primitive writing developed among the ancient civilizations. However, as time progressed, this knowledge of the secret rituals, beliefs and practices of the occult priesthood, was put into writing on manuscripts, providing a permanent record of these Luciferic activities.

Much of this ancient knowledge was allegedly first recorded by some of the Greek and Roman philosophers, whose philosophical societies existed as special extensions of the occult priesthood. According to Masonic sources, this information has been miraculously preserved ever since, having been passed from one generation to the next through an unbroken line of occult priests. The Masonic Order claims to be the latest in a succession of occult orders who have served as the guardians of this ancient knowledge.

I wouldn't put too much stock in this portrayal, however. Not only is this a description of the infamous long-since-exposed Luciferian Doctrine hoax perpetrated against the Roman Catholic Church by French pornographer Leo Taxil, but in email correspondence with me (documented in *David vs. Goliath?*), Grigor-Scott assured me (concerning Freemasons) that "*...not a single one of them is a Christian, including the pastors and ministers. They are for the most part Trinitarians, and the Trinity is of the Devil...*" How does that statement square with the "*measuring stick*" and "*barometer of truth*" of Scripture? Even Rhodes himself is forced to admit (Page 34) that "*It is not true that there is a direct, unbroken historic line of development between these ancient religions and modern Masonry. Those who suggest such a thing are dishing out a revisionist version of Masonic history.*"

Mark 14:56 ... but their witness agreed not together

So let's get to the questions... but first a few notes on the way it will be presented.

Subchapter headings are larger font, bold faced, and left margin with no indent, similar to the way they are in Rhodes' book.

Since *Masonic View* represents Ron Rhodes' perception of the Masonic perspective, and is not necessarily the official "view" of Freemasonry as presented by the *Washington Monitor and Freemason's Guide*, it is abbreviated as *RRMV* for Ron Rhodes' Masonic View.

Since *Biblical View* represents Ron Rhodes' separatist Neofundamentalist perspective as presented in his book and does not necessarily represent the theology of current or mainstream Christianity, it is abbreviated *RRBV* for Ron Rhodes' Biblical View.

"Ask..." in bold face type precedes the bulleted questions that the reader is supposed to ask the Freemason. Sometimes the bullets precede questions, sometimes they precede statements that are supposed to support the not-so-subtle messages Rhodes uses to shore up his separatist Neofundamentalist theology.

Freemason's Response represents the answers to the questions that I would give. As with all responses by Freemasons, these answers are my own opinions and do not necessarily represent the official policy of the Grand Lodge of Washington or any other Masonic organization, Masonic group, or individual; likewise my theological or religious opinions do not necessarily represent the official view of any denomination, church or any other faith group I am currently a member of, regularly attend, or in any way, am or have ever been, affiliated with in the past or present, abbreviated *FR* for Freemason's Response.

Genesis 3:7: Masonry in Adam and Eve's Time

Ron Rhodes' Masonic View: "...some Masons..." I can't answer for "some Masons." I can only answer for myself.

Ron Rhodes' Biblical View: "It is highly telling that a number of recent Masonic leaders have acknowledged their utter embarrassment that some earlier Masons ever suggested this Adam and Eve theory."

Ask...

- *Would you please read Genesis 3:7 aloud?*

Freemason's Response: Genesis 3:7 *And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.*

- *Doesn't this verse make it clear that fig leaves had the sole purpose of covering Adam and Eve's nakedness?*

Freemason's Response: Tip your head slightly to the left or right, slowly shake your head from side to side, and look at your questioner with a look of pity.

- *Do you see any indication of Masonic rituals in this verse?*

Freemason's Response: Nothing other than the word "aprons."

- *Are you familiar with the term eisogesis?*

Freemason's Response: Of course I am. Eisogesis is when you read something into a text that isn't there. For example, lets look at the text you asked me to read. Only lets also look at the verse preceding it. I'm going to read you Genesis 3:6-7.

Genesis 3:6-7 *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.*

Do we agree that we are talking about the fruit of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" mentioned in Genesis 2:9? Do we agree that Adam and Eve were in heaven at the time they ate the fruit?

Do we also agree that the Bible contains the exact words of God, that each word was carefully selected by God to convey the exact message he wanted to impart, and therefore that it is really important to understand the meaning of each word?

What is the significance of Adam and Eve using fig leaves to make the aprons instead of the leaves from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Who taught them how to sew? Why an apron instead of a loincloth or tunic? Do the Hebrew words for "tree", "fig", "fruit", "wisdom", "leaves", "sew", and "apron" have any other Biblical significance or meaning?

Genesis 2:25 says "...they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." When did Adam and Eve become man and wife? And if Adam and Eve's eyes were not opened until after they ate the fruit, were they physically blind before that?

Getting back to the definition of eisogesis: Genesis 3:7 says after they ate the fruit "...the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew they were naked and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. Where exactly does it say they sewed fig leaves together to make themselves aprons to cover up the shame of their nakedness?

Now let's clear up any misconceptions you might have about the "apron" and Freemasonry. This is the Apron Lecture from the Entered Apprentice Degree in it's entirety, taken directly from the *Washington Monitor and Freemason's Guide*:

[My brother, I now present you with this] lambskin or white leather apron. It is an emblem of innocence and the badge of a Mason; more ancient than the Golden Fleece or Roman Eagle; and, when worthily worn, more honorable than the Star and Garter, or any other order that could be conferred upon you, at this time, or at any future period, by King, Prince, Potentate, or any other person, except he be a Mason. It is hoped that you will wear this emblem with equal pleasure to yourself and honor to the Fraternity.

[Optional:] It is yours to wear throughout an honorable life and, at your death, to be placed upon the coffin that shall contain your mortal remains, and be with them laid in their final resting place. Let its pure and spotless surface be to you an ever-present reminder of a purity of life and rectitude of conduct, a never-ending inspiration for nobler deeds, for higher thoughts, for greater achievements; and when at last your weary feet shall have come to the end of life's toilsome journey, may the record of your life and actions be as pure and spotless as this fair emblem.

Did you hear any reference to a fig-leaf apron or Adam and Eve? Was the "white leather or lambskin" apron really "more ancient than the Golden Fleece or Roman Eagle?" One only has to look at ancient statues and carvings to see the importance of aprons in early cultures and civilizations. For example, initiates of the proto-Christian Essenes, Mithras, and Saduccees of Jesus' day wore aprons, as did the ancient initiates of early Chinese societies, Mayans, Incas, and Aztecs. More recent civilizations such as the Hopi, Vikings, and Zulus wore aprons as emblems of high office. Aprons frequently adorn the statues of Greek, Roman, and Egyptian Gods. The Ancient Persians also used the apron as a national emblem. Therefore the apron as a symbol of "work" or "labor" is almost as old as time itself.

Can we agree that nothing in Genesis 3:7 has anything to do with the "lambskin or white leather" apron that is the Freemasonic symbol of purity of life and rectitude of conduct? And finally, *do any of these questions about aprons, yours or mine, really have any bearing on salvation by the grace of God?*

Genesis 1:1-3: Masonry founded by God?

RRMV: "In Genesis 1:1-3 we read, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light."

"Some Masons..." this time turns out to be one alleged Freemason, one Jonathan Blanchard, from book published in the 1890's called *Scotch Rite Masonry Illustrated* which is mislabeled *Scottish Rite Masonry Illustrated* by "noted researcher" Ron Rhodes (and others).

If you have already read Chapter Three of *Is It True What They Say About Freemasonry?* by Art deHoyos listed above, then you already know that Rev. Blanchard's outdated book was actually an exposure of Cerneauism, an illegitimate, pseudo-Masonic organization founded by Joseph Cerneau in the 1800's.

Anti-Masons Rev. John Ankerberg and Dr. John Weldon, in pre-1993 editions of their book *The Secret Teachings of the Masonic Lodge*, claimed Rev. Blanchard was "a former Sovereign Grand Commander and a 33rd Degree Mason." The Sovereign Grand Commander is the presiding officer of a Scottish Rite Supreme Council and the Thirty-third Degree is the highest degree of the Rite. The truth of the matter is that Rev. Jonathan Blanchard was never a Mason, not even a Cerneau Mason, much less a Sovereign Grand Commander. After the exposure of this reality in 1992, Ankerberg and Weldon were forced to correct their book but they continue to conceal this from the readers of more current editions. Art deHoyos says that they "continue to quote from *Scotch Rite Masonry Illustrated* as if it were an authentic ritual text, even though they now know better." Any legitimate or "noted researcher" would know this, and would not continue to cite Blanchard as a Freemason.

RRBV: Ron Rhodes states, "it is impossible that the God of the Bible could be the source of Freemasonry. The reality is that 'biblical light' radically contradicts 'Masonic light' in many ways; they cannot have the same source." Once again, what is supposed to be a "Biblical View" is Ron Rhodes opinion, once again it is not supported by a single Scripture reference.

Ask...

- Please read aloud from Genesis 1:1-3.

FR: Genesis 1:1-3 In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

- Isn't it clear from the context that the reference to "light" in this passage is literal, physical light -- not the light of Masonry?

FR: Once again, tip your head slightly to the left or right, slowly shake your head from side to side, and look at your questioner with a look of pity.

- Is there even the slightest clue in this passage that Masonic light is being referred to?

FR: Since the Great Light of Masonry is the *Holy Bible, King James Version*, I don't see how it could be. But then again, I don't see it necessarily referring to "literal, visible light" either. The kind of light that lights the earth isn't created until the Fourth Day.

Genesis 1:14-18 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.

- Since Masonry contradicts the Bible on major doctrines (teaching, for example that Jesus is just one of many ways to salvation), is it not clear that "biblical light" contradicts "Masonic light"? This being the case, is it not impossible to say that "biblical light" and "Masonic light" come from the same source?

FR: There is only one, and therefore the same, source of light, no matter how you want to define it. You prefaced your question by stating that Freemasonry contradicts the Bible on major doctrines, giving the example of "teaching... that Jesus is just one of the many ways to salvation."

Would it surprise you to know that the only Masonic teaching concerning salvation is the "hope" that a Mason might achieve immortality, but that sectarian religious doctrines, including any specific methods of salvation, are forbidden from discussion in Masonic lodges?

Now I would like to ask you a favor, and I'm going to ask this in the kindest, gentlest, most loving manner I can: I am more than happy to answer all of your questions about Freemasonry and how it relates to certain Christian principles, but would you please try to limit your questions to the real doctrines of Freemasonry as practiced today? I'm very active in both the Church and the Lodge, and I really don't have the time to waste answering questions about phony Freemasonry or the personal views of some 19th-Century Theosophists who also happened to be Freemasons.

1 Kings 5: Origin in Solomon's Temple? (See also 2 Chronicles 2:3-16)

RRMV: "Without question, the most popular theory for the origin of Freemasonry relates to Solomon's Temple." Didn't we already agree that the origin of Freemasonry was in London in 1717. Rhodes quotes "Arthur Edward Waite, author of A New Encyclopedia of Freemasonry..." Waite was a bizarre character in London at the turn of the century -- that's the previous century -- and a dabbler in the occult, pseudoscientific magic, mysticism, and alas, Freemasonry. Although he became a legitimate Freemason in 1902, that same year he also entered the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (SRIA) and the Golden Dawn. He was one of the founding members of the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, which definitely should not to be confused with the Rose Croix of the Scottish Rite. Regardless of his questionable reliability, Rhodes quotes him saying "*the ritual of the Blue Lodge is structured around the story of the building of King Solomon's Temple and the murder by ruffians of Hiram Abif of Tyre, the chief architect and master of all the stonemasons in the construction of the temple.*"

RRBV: I'm not going to bore you by following along with the entire biblical accounts of the construction of the temple as Ron Rhodes did. What I am going to say is that some of the ritual of the Blue Lodge is structured around the story as described.

Ask...

- Where is there evidence for the existence of a Masonic fraternity in 1 Kings 5? Please be specific.

FR: There is none, and no claim is ever made that there ever was.

- Doesn't a plain reading of the text indicate that one king is helping another king in a building project?

FR: One more time, tip your head slightly to the left or right, slowly shake your head from side to side, and this time look at your questioner with a look of complete disbelief.

- Do you recall what the term eisogesis means? How does it relate to this situation?

FR: The word "eisogesis" does not apply to this situation at all. The word that does apply is "allegory." My Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines "allegory" as "(1) the expression by means of symbolic fictional figures and actions of truths or generalizations about human existence; and (2) a symbolic representation. That's why the second section of the Third Degree is appropriately called the "Drama." It is a completely fictional account. The imagery has to do with each Freemason building a personal temple, using the tools, building blocks, and pillars that the symbols represent. The narratives from the Bible concerning the construction of the temple are not read at any time during the Blue Lodge degrees.

On Page 39, Rhodes correctly states, speaking of Solomon's temple, "*It has come to symbolize, in a allegorical fashion, the perfect development of mind in character and virtue. Just as the ancient stonemasons sought perfection in the building in the building of the physical temple of Solomon, so Masons today seek perfection in the building of character and virtue in their own lives.*" Even Rhodes has to admit here that this is a "worthy goal."

On Page 42, Rhodes quotes Harold Voorhis, a very famous African-American Freemason (not a Prince Hall Mason), who states *his own opinion* that the primary purposes of Freemasonry are "*to enlighten the mind, arouse the conscience, and stimulate the noble and generous impulses of the human heart. It seeks to promote the best kind of manhood based upon the practice of Brotherly Love and the Golden Rule. In short, to make good men better.*"

Rhodes continues, "*They are thus compelled to aid, support, and protect each other. Toward this end, 'Masonry unites men of every country, sect, and opinion.'* Masons believe there is biblical support for this practice." As always, it's "Masons believe..." I know for a fact that Masonry unites men of every country, sect, and opinion. I also know for a fact that God's universal principles are God's universal principles, regardless of what men choose to believe. God's Golden Rule is God's Golden Rule, whether it comes out of the mouth of Jesus Christ, Confucius, or even Ron Rhodes. The following passage came directly out of the mouth of Jesus Christ:

Matthew 5:43-48 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Jesus says Love your enemies, bless those that slander you, do good to those who hate you by maligning you for no good reason, and pray for those who, in the name of God, write books that are vicious, unprovoked attacks on people they don't even know, so that you can truly be the children of God. What reward do you expect if you just love your fellow separatist Neofundamentalist Christians? And if you only show respect to other separatist Neofundamentalist Christians, how are you acting differently than the rest of the world? Jesus said love God, love your enemies, love your neighbors, and love one another. *Who else is there to love?* This is the Closing Charge, instruction given to all the Masons at the close of each meeting:

We are now about to quit this sacred retreat of friendship and virtue, to mingle again with the outer world. Amid its concerns and employments, forget not the duties which you have heard so frequently inculcated and so forcefully recommended, in this Lodge. Be diligent, prudent, temperate, discreet. Remember that at this altar you have promised to befriend and relieve every Brother who shall need your assistance. You have been enjoined to remind a Brother in the most friendly manner of his fault, to endeavor to aid his reformation, and to defend his character. These generous principles extend further, for every human being has a claim upon your kind offices. Do good unto all. Finally, my Brethren, be ye of one mind, live in peace, and may the God of Love and Peace delight to dwell with you and bless you.

You'd have to stretch pretty far afield to find anything incompatible with Christianity in that!

Earlier I mentioned some of the ways to discern false accusers. Here is another: *they hide their sources*. This book, just like many similar books, has endnotes. After 244 pages of text, this book has a full 18 pages of endnotes. Endnotes differ from footnotes in that footnotes go at the bottom of the page where they can easily be seen without too much disruption of the reader's train of thought. For endnotes, however, the reader has to go to the end of the book, find the right page and chapter in the list, and then skim down the page to the correct endnote number. Instead of citing his sources right in the text or using footnotes, from Page 36 on, with a few notable exceptions, Rhodes uses endnotes at the end of quotations, so that the serious reader will have to skip back and forth between them. In the notes for Chapter Two, for example, there are 28 endnotes, on Pages 268-9. How many of those endnotes refer to different authors or works that have not been previously cited in Chapter One or earlier in Chapter Two? I counted 4.

Rhodes is trying to give the book the appearance of a scholarly work by having hundreds of endnotes, while hiding the fact that he is using a relatively small number of sources. Ultimately he is hoping the reader will simply get tired of skipping back and forth, and simply start to take his quotations at face value without taking the time to look up the sources, which are, as we have already discerned, as likely as not to be impostors, authors with ideas more than a century out-of-date, and even some sources that are currently being sued for libel.

Exodus 23:4: Masonry's "Biblical" Support for Their Fraternity.

RRMV: "In Exodus 23:4 we read, 'If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to take it back to him.' Masons sometimes cite this verse in support of their emphasis on brotherly love."

RRBV: "And Christians can agree that Exodus 23:4 communicates brotherly love in action. What Masons often forget, and what evangelical Christians stress, is that this injunction is found in the Law of Moses, which not only speaks of brotherly love, but also speaks of the requirements of worshipping the only true God of Israel and not worshipping the false gods of paganism."

Ask...

- Did you know the gods of Hinduism and Islam are false gods, inasmuch as they are portrayed in terms contradictory of the Bible? (Point out that the god of Islam is nontrine, and that Islam involves a concept of a god named Allah that cannot have a son, In Hinduism there are virtually millions of gods who are considered extensions of an all-pervasive deity known as Brahman. Such ideas are entirely at odds with the Christian triune view of God.)

FR: How many God's (with a capital "G") are there? Can we agree there is only one true "God the Father, maker of heaven and earth?" Do you know what an "oxymoron" is? An oxymoron is a figure of speech where something is described using a combination of contradictory or incongruous words, like using "bitter sweet" to describe a kind of chocolate. "False God" is an oxymoron. If the object of your worship is false, then can it be God? If the object of your worship is God, then can it be false? Of course not!

Did you know that Christians, Jews, and Moslems all recognize the same "God the Father, maker of heaven and earth" and are all descended from Abraham? I really can't answer for the "concepts" of other religions because they don't apply to me. I can only answer for myself: I believe in God the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. And there is absolutely nothing in Freemasonry, as practiced in the Grand Lodge of Washington today, that would require me to ever deny that belief.

- Do you see any inconsistency in choosing to follow the command in Exodus 23:4 regarding brotherly love, but choosing to ignore God's command not to worship false gods in Exodus 20:3-5.

FR: Once again, tip your head slightly to the left or right, slowly shake your head from side to side, and look at your questioner with a look of sadness, then speak: First of all, Exodus 23:4 is not even about brotherly love, it's about loving your enemy and the Golden Rule. And no, I don't see any connection between that and worshipping false gods at all. Masonic Lodges are part of a great philanthropic fraternity, not a religion of its own, and although highly respected and revered, God, by any specific name or concept, is not worshipped there.

Do you know what a "red herring" is? A "red herring" is a fish with a very strong odor that is used to confuse and distract hunting dogs, and also means something that is used to distract one from the real issue at hand. Ron Rhodes' book is supposed to be about *Reasoning from the Scriptures with Masons*, but it also has a hidden, not-so-subtle message. This question is supposed to be about "'Biblical' Support for Their Fraternity" but it actually doesn't address that at all. Rhodes used a Bible verse that doesn't even relate to the topic, and uses his "Biblical View" to go off on a tangent about "false gods" that doesn't even relate to Freemasonry. Then at the end, he introduces his own opinion, saying "*There can be no true spiritual brotherhood among Christians, Hindus, and Moslems within the confines of a Masonic Lodge.*" As always, Rhodes fails to define what he means by "true spiritual brotherhood" and fails to indicate even one source where Freemasonry is supposed to be a "spiritual" brotherhood to begin with. I don't know how many ways I have to say this before it sinks in: Freemasonry is not a "spiritual" or faith group -- it's a philanthropic fraternity.

Finally, Rhodes concludes this section with this statement of his own separatist Neofundamentalist theology. "*In fact, Scripture calls believers in the one true God to come out from them and separate (2 Corinthians 6:17).*"

2 Corinthians 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

Second Corinthians is Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth applauding them for all the improvements they had made since his first letter of chastisement. This is the context of that statement:

2 Corinthians 6 1-18 We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.) Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged. Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

Paul says in Verse 2 that "now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." I think that pretty well negates the millennialist concept that some things only apply to an "End Time" somewhere in the future. In Verse 3, Paul says that it is important that Christians (especially Christian ministers) give "*no offense in any thing that the ministry not be blamed.*" Then Paul proceeds to list all the struggles that ministers go through. Beginning with verse 14, Paul spells out what has become the creed of the separatist Neofundamentalists: (1) don't be yoked together with unbelievers, (2) come out from among them and be separate, (3) don't touch anything impure; (4) then God will receive us, (5) He will become a Father to us, and (6) then and only then we will become His sons and daughters. Sounds reasonable doesn't it? But there are some things wrong with this picture.

First of all Paul is referring to the "*temple of the living God,*" as in "*And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?* What Paul is talking about is the Corinthian church, which was once divided by factions and full of overtly sinful behavior, that by the time of the writing of this "Second Epistle to the Corinthians," had spiritually cleansed itself to the core. "*Ye are straightened in your own bowels.*" What does it mean to be "unequally yoked" with unbelievers?

1 Corinthians 8:7-10 But not everyone knows this. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat such food they think of it as having been sacrificed to an idol, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do. Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols?

One part of that sinful behavior had to do with some members of the church entering the temple of Diana and engaging in the temple worship -- participating in the pagan feasts and having sex with the temple prostitutes. Being "unequally yoked" referred directly to the Old Testament prohibition and image of trying to accomplish something by yoking an ox and an ass together, expecting each to pull with equal weight. The Corinthians were lauded by Paul for not permitting themselves to be spiritually yoked with those who worshipped in more than one temple. These verses have nothing whatever to do with separating oneself physically from any contact with unbelievers at all. Christians are called to be *in* the world but not *of* the world and lead exemplary lives among the pagans.

John 17:15-18 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

1 Peter 2:12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

I find it ironic that it is not the pagans who speak against Christian Freemasons as evildoers, but some of their less informed Christian brethren. Paul's admonition to "touch not the unclean thing" does not mean don't touch anything in the world. It means don't do anything spiritually that does not line up with your faith or might cause your Christian brother to stumble, for example, don't have a glass of wine with dinner if your dinner guest is an alcoholic. Or don't serve pork roast to one who is a vegetarian out of religious conviction.

Romans 14:2-3 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

For some mature Christians, including many Christian Freemasons, exposure to other religions, cultures, and spiritual concepts is no threat to their faith; in fact, it is an opportunity to witness to them by the example of their own lives that actually enhances their Christian walk. For other Christians, especially those weak in the faith who might easily be diverted from the Way, the Truth, and the Life by that kind of exposure, then Freemasonry might not a good choice for them.

Deuteronomy 10:19

RRMV: "In Deuteronomy 10:19 we read, 'And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourself were aliens in Egypt.' Masons sometimes cite this verse in support of their emphasis on brotherly love."

RRBV: Rhodes says "Christians agree that this verse points to the need for brotherly love in dealing with people we don't know." Then he heads out on another tangent that he calls "Masonry's Connection to Paganism and the Mystery Religions" that he will discuss in Chapter 8. So we'll also be patient and discuss it when we get there.

Ask...

- I commend the Masonic Lodge for its brotherly love, a quality reflected in Deuteronomy 10:19.

*FR: Thank you. The three main tenets of a Freemason's profession are Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth. You've already acknowledged the many ways Freemasons show Relief to the less fortunate, especially children; now you are acknowledging their commitment to Brotherly Love. Now if I can just get you to see their equally significant dedication to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God, perhaps you'll begin to see what's really behind Ron Rhodes' smokescreen. Let's look at the real Freemasons view of these tenets, as quoted directly from Page 34 of the *Washington Monitor and Freemason's Guide*:*

*By the exercise of *Brotherly Love* we are taught to regard the whole human race as one family -- the high and the low, the rich and the poor; who, created by one Almighty Parent and inhabitants of the same planet, ought to aid, support and protect each other. On this principle, Masonry unites men of every country, sect and opinion, and conciliates true friendship among those who might otherwise remain perpetually at a distance.*

Relief of the Distressed is a duty incumbent upon all men, but more particularly upon Masons, who are linked together by an indissoluble chain of sincere affection. To soothe the unhappy, to compassionate their miseries, and to restore peace to the troubled mind, is the grand aim we have in view. On this basis we form our friendships and establish our connections.

Truth is a divine attribute and the foundation of every virtue. To be a good man and true is the first lesson taught in Masonry. On this theme we contemplate, and by its dictates endeavor to regulate our conduct; hence, while influenced by this principle, hypocrisy and deceit are unknown among us, sincerity and plain-dealing distinguish us, and heart and tongue join in promoting each other's welfare and rejoicing in each other's prosperity.

- But what about the rest of Deuteronomy 10 (especially verse 17) which speaks of worshipping only the God of the Bible, and not pagan deities such as those affiliated with Hinduism and Islam?

- (If the Mason argues that the gods of various religions involve different names for the same deity, see chapter 7-- "God: The Great Architect of the Universe" for how to respond.)

FR: Once again, tip your head slightly to the left or right, slowly shake your head from side to side, but this time look at your questioner and sigh softly. Then speak: I thought I already made it perfectly clear from my previous answers that that Masonic Lodge meetings are business meetings or allegorical plays called degrees -- not worship services. Please don't continue to waste my time by asking me to respond to the same false accusation repeated over and over.

1 Peter 2:17

RRMV: "Albert Mackey holds that the apostle Peter illustrated the type of brotherhood that Masonry stands for in 1 Peter 2:17 when he commanded, 'Love the brotherhood'... then he goes on to quote several paragraphs from Mackey's 1920 *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*.

RRBV: "The brotherhood of which Scripture speaks is one that results from a group of people who have personally trusted in Jesus as Savior. Unlike the Masonic view, Jesus taught that He alone was mankind's means of coming into a right relationship with God."

Ask...

- Please read aloud Jesus' words in John 14:6.

FR: John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

- Please read aloud Peter's words in Acts 4:12

FR: Acts 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

- Isn't it clear from these verses that Jesus and Peter viewed faith in Christ as the *only* means of salvation?

FR: Of course. And every Christian Freemason already knows that.

- Doesn't Peter's reference to "brotherhood" in 1 Peter 2:17 refer not to the world of humanity at large, or to those in the Masonic Lodge, but to spiritual brothers and sisters who trust in Christ for salvation?

FR: First let's read the verse in its entire context.

1 Peter 2:13-17 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

This passage is clearly talking about the duty of a Christian to obey man's law as well as Jesus' commandments, whether they are from the king or other governors. In so obeying man's law, the Christian lives his life in a manner that makes his critics look ridiculous. Since as Christians, we are free from the Mosaic law, that does not mean that can be used as an excuse for licentious behavior. Along with loving God and the brotherhood of Christians, we are also to "honour all men".

- Since faith in Christ is the only means by which one is adopted into God's forever family (Ephesians 1:5), can Christians be in a true "brotherhood" with Hindus and Muslims, who do not trust in Christ?

FR: Once again, tip your head slightly to the left or right, slowly shake your head from side to side, sigh, and look at your questioner with a look of sadness. Then read:

Ephesians 1:3-6 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

You must remember that I don't speak with any authority except my own. To my knowledge, this is not the official position of the Grand Lodge of Washington or any other Grand Lodge of Freemasons, nor any Lodge of Freemasons, nor of Freemasonry in general, nor any other Freemason in particular. This is my own opinion about what I think is the Christian Freemason's world view:

First, you start with a point which represents the individual Freemason. You put the point of the compasses on that point and draw a small circle. That small circle represents the individual and his personal responsibilities to himself and to God (Love God).

Then using the same point draw a concentric circle with a slightly larger radius. This second area represents his duties and responsibilities to his immediate family, including his siblings, representing a unique kind of filial brotherhood.

Now using the same point, draw another concentric circle with a radius larger than the second circle. This third area represents his unique relationship, duties and responsibilities of the spiritual brotherhood known as the Church, the body of believers, or the Bride of Christ (Love one another).

Using that same point again, draw another concentric circle with a radius larger than the third. This area represents his neighborhood, typically his street, block, neighborhood, city, county and state, and country. This is where he is drawn into a special brotherhood of patriotism and civic responsibility often learned by defending his country while in the Military Services (Love thy neighbor).

Draw one more concentric circle with the largest radius possible. This next area represents the greater family of man and transcends the boundaries of countries, races, religions, politics, creeds, colors, national origins and the like. This is where the Freemason recognizes that all men are created in the image and likeness of God, and all men are brothers, descended from a common ancestor: Adam -- even if their country, race, religion, political persuasion, creed, color, or national origin might be perceived as his enemy (Love thine enemy). So the Christian Freemason has a number of unique brotherhoods, none of which is mutually exclusive of the others. He is first and foremost a brother of Christ; he is a brother to his siblings; he is a brother in the Church, he is a brother to his fellow countrymen, and he is even a brother to his enemies.

Ron Rhodes apparently has some bizarre idea that a person can only belong to one "true brotherhood" at a time. Or to put it more bluntly, he seems to lack the wisdom, balance, maturity, common sense, or whatever else you'd like to call it, to be able understand that an individual can love God, love his siblings (in the flesh or in Christ), love his neighbors, and love his enemies -- all at the same time .

Hebrews 13:1

RRMV: "In Hebrews 13:1 we read, 'Keep on loving each other as brothers'. Masons sometimes..."

RRBV: Rhodes asks, "What 'brothers' are being referred to in Hebrews 13:1? Is it Masonic Christians, Muslims, and Hindus worshipping together under the same roof?"

And later answers, "*Again contextually, the benevolent brothers in Hebrews 13:1 are Christian brothers, not Christian/Muslim/Hindu brothers in Masonic Lodges.*"

Ask...

- Do you know that in the context of the book of Hebrews, the word "brothers" refers to Christian brothers, not Christian/Moslem/Hindu brothers? (Be ready to review Hebrews 2:11; 3:1,12; 10:19-22.)

FR: How many times to you have to be given an answer before you will hear it? Masonic Lodges have nothing to do with worship at all, never mind "*worshipping together under the same roof*" with Hindus or Moslems. Although the Masonic brotherhood world wide includes men of different religious persuasions, in my jurisdiction, the Grand Lodge of Washington, *The Holy Bible, King James Version* is the Volume of the Sacred Law, Great Light of Freemasonry, and the Rule and Guide of our Faith. From it the Freemason learns his duties to God, his family, his neighbors, his country, and his enemies, and himself. My spiritual Christian brotherhood is a model for Masonic brotherhood, not the other way around. I live my life as a Christian first and a Freemason second; and I think that's a great way to witness for Christ to my non-Christian Freemason brothers.

- Did you know that according to the book of Hebrews, a person becomes a "Christian brother" by faith in Christ alone (Hebrews 4:14, 10:19-23; 12:2)?
-

Hebrews 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

FR: Hebrews 4:14 doesn't even relate to brotherhood at all.

Hebrews 10:19-23 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

FR: This passage ends in a semicolon which means it is incomplete. Let's finish the passage including Verses 24 and 25.

Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Here we see a great example of just how far this separatist Neofundamentalist will go to distort the true meaning of the Bible. Nothing in this passage relates to "becoming" anything. The author of the Epistle to Hebrews is telling the brethren assembled to be bold about "the profession of our faith," i.e. not to be shy about acting like a Christian in whatever circumstances. *The intentionally omitted verses 24 and 25 indicate that the purpose of being bold in your Christian walk is not to separate yourself from those less bold, but to be such an example that it might encourage them to be more charitable to others.*

Hebrews 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

FR: Once again, this passage doesn't have anything to do with brotherhood at all.

- Would you like to become a Christian brother? (Be ready to share the gospel. See appendix A: "An Invitation to Believe.")

FR: Thank you for the offer, but I'm already a Christian brother. I was sprinkle baptized as an infant in the Church of England in England; I was submersion baptized in a Baptist Church in Alexandria, VA as a preteen during Vacation Bible School; I'm currently very active in my church, I've taught Sunday School, I am on the Worship Team, and I am currently involved in Prodigals and Prison ministries.

Romans 12:9 - 13:2

RRMV: Rhodes says, "*Mason Richard Thorn cites Romans 12:9 - 13:2 and argues that this passage reflects key principles of Freemasonry.*" Then on the next page, "*Based on this passage Thorn derives 17 principles the Bible has in common with Masonry.*" Rhodes then lists them:

1. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love
2. Honor one another above yourselves
3. Keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord
4. Be joyful in hope, faithful in prayer
5. Share with God's people who are in need
6. Practice Hospitality
7. Bless and do not curse
8. Rejoice with those who rejoice, mourn with those who mourn
9. Live in harmony with one another
10. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position
11. Do not repay anyone evil for evil
12. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody
13. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live in peace with everyone
14. Do not take revenge
15. If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink
16. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good
17. Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities

RRBV: Rhodes says, "*Though Thorn cites the apostle Paul's words in Romans 12:9 - 13:2 to show parallels with Freemasonry, other words spoken by Paul clearly refute key Masonic doctrines.*"

If that statement is true, why isn't Rhodes quoting those so-called "Masonic doctrines" and using the Scripture that show that? These 17 principles are just more examples of God's universal truths. Truth is truth, no matter out of whose mouth it comes. Since the *Holy Bible, King James Version* is the rule and guide of our faith, is it any wonder the principles of Freemasonry parallel Christian principles? Unable to refute Thorn, a Medical Doctor, Christian, and former missionary to Zaire, Rhodes again goes off on a series of tangents that are nothing more than an expose of his own separatist Neofundamentalist theology. These tangents include *biblical inerrancy*, "*Trinity*" (that Rhodes falsely claims Freemasonry denies), *deity of Jesus* (that Rhodes also falsely claims "*Masonry typically denies*"), "*good works have nothing to do with salvation*" (which Rhodes falsely claims is "*contrary to Masonry's philosophy*"), and *only by trusting in Jesus as Savior can a person be saved and live forever with the one true God* (which Rhodes, to his credit, *does not* claim Freemasonry denies). He then lists a series of scriptures as proof texts to support his theology, but which have nothing to do with Romans 12:9-13:2, which was supposed to be the topic for this section.

Rhodes ends the section using the example of 2 Corinthians 6:14 he quotes as "*Do not be yoked with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?*" He concludes by saying, "*This verse alone shows that in Paul's mind, Christians, Hindus, and Muslims are not spiritual brothers*" -- as if anyone except antimasons ever claimed they were!

Ask...

- Would you please read aloud the apostle Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 6:14.

FR: 2 Corinthians 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

- Since Muslims and Hindus hold an entirely different view on God, Jesus, sin, and salvation than Christianity, wouldn't "yoking together" with Muslims and Hindus violate Paul's injunction? (If the Mason denies that Hindus, Moslems, and Christians hold to different views on these issues, see chapters 7, 9, 10, and 11 for information on how to respond.)

FR: I see that you have failed to mention the word "unequally" as in "unequally yoked" even once. Do you know the context of this passage? Let's read 2 Corinthians 6:16: And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

What Paul is actually saying is that the Corinthians (and therefore all Christians) cannot continue to behave badly one minute and righteously the next and still claim to be temples "of the living God" and expect Him to dwell within them. Most significantly, none of this has anything at all to do with Freemasonry.

Rhodes concludes this chapter by saying, "*In the next chapter I will further illustrate that the Masonic 'brotherhood' is based not on spiritual unity but on extravagant rituals and bizarre oaths.*" It wasn't too hard to illustrate that Freemasonry is not based on "spiritual unity" because only Rhodes, not Freemasonry, is making that assertion.

4. *Becoming a Mason*

On Page 53 Rhodes lists so many inaccuracies in a single sentence I hardly know where to begin to refute them. He begins this chapter stating, "*Freemasons often make much of the fact that men regularly take the initiative to apply for Masonic Lodge membership, despite the fact that the Lodge does not seek converts, does not engage in any kind of publicity, does not distribute literature in public, and does not engage in public demonstrations or public meetings.*" What planet is Rhodes living on? Masonic Lodges do not seek "converts," but we are always seeking men of good character to become new members. The Publicity Committee of the Grand Lodge of Washington puts out press releases that often result in newspaper and magazine articles about Lodge activities, such as the laying of cornerstones for libraries, schools and churches. Masonic Lodges sponsor Child ID programs and community fair booths where thousands of pamphlets are distributed to the general public. The Grand Lodge has an award-winning float that appears in parades all over the state. And annual installations of officers, scholarship programs, and other awards programs are almost always open to the public. The only private meetings are the "stated" business meetings and "special" meetings where the allegorical plays of the degrees are performed.

Rhodes continues, "*I should note at the onset, however that not every Masonic ritual in every state in the United States is identical ... However the ritual is, for all practical purposes, essentially the same in the various Lodges.*" I have attended Lodges in Colorado, California, Washington, and British Columbia, and I can assure you that the best they are is somewhat similar. For example, Rhodes says, "*Immediately after the opening of a typical Lodge session, Psalm 133:1-3 is quoted...*" In the Grand Lodge of Washington, Psalm 133:1-3 is only read during the allegorical play of the Second Degree.

On the top of Page 54 Rhodes quotes from Bernard Jones' *Freemason's Guide and Compendium*. This book is another long-out-of-print tome about turn-of-the-century British Freemasonry. On the bottom of the page he quotes from *Duncan's Masonic Ritual and Monitor*, another 19th-Century volume that was outdated even in its day. Why is "noted researcher" Ron Rhodes misrepresenting these as examples of modern-day Freemasonry?

On Page 55 Rhodes describes the ritual of the Entered Apprentice (1st) Degree by quoting an elaborate description by "one researcher." That "one researcher" turns out to be two, Ron Carlson and John Edward Decker. Dr. Richard Thorne's book, *The Boy Who Cried Wolf* cited earlier is a point-by-point refutation of Carlson's false allegations. And if you did your homework and read my book, *David vs. Goliath?* then you already know Decker is a proven liar and con man who makes his living "exposing" Mormons by selling tapes and seminars using phony "experts" who turn out to have credentials from nonexistent or mail order Bible colleges. After the Mormons exposed him, he decided to focus his attention on the lucrative cottage industry of anti-masonry, an action for which his Freemason father apologized before the Masonic College of Washington shortly before his death.

Decker says "*At this time he is required to take a blood initiation oath.*" Rhodes parrots this statement by saying, "*Swearing a blood oath is required not just for the Entered Apprentice degree, but for the other degrees of Freemasonry as well.*" This is a deliberate misrepresentation, not an accidental misreading, of the symbolic penalties in the "obligation" parts of the allegorical plays known as degrees. If these symbolic penalties pointed to anything else, none of the hundreds of Christian pastors, ministers, and deacon chairmen who are Freemasons would have joined or remained in the Fraternity.

On Page 59 Rhodes says of the apron, "*This emblem of innocence is said to point to the purity of life necessary for one who seeks entrance into the Celestial Lodge Above (heaven).*" Back on Page 24 of this report you read the Apron Lecture in its entirety. Just as there was no mention of Adam and Eve, there is likewise no mention of a "*Celestial Lodge Above*".

Rhodes continues, "*At this point the candidate feels around in his pockets and becomes confused... and the candidate becomes even more confused.*" The candidate does not become confused. He is simply asked to make a contribution and realizes he has nothing to give. He is then instructed that if he happens to meet a friend or brother Mason in like condition he is to contribute to his relief as far as his ability permits. One of the lessons of this allegorical play is to teach the importance of charity, as in "the greatest of these is charity."

Genesis 1:1-3: The Need for Masonic Light

RRMV: Rhodes says "*Masons believe that darkness is a symbol of ignorance, while light is a symbol of enlightenment. True enlightenment is said to come through Freemasonry.*" The endnote marker here indicates the source of these statements as "Holy Bible, Deluxe Reference Edition, Heirloom Bible Publishers, Wichita Kansas, 1988, p. 39." My Bible, the *Holy Bible, King James or Authorized Version*, Master Reference Edition, also of Heirloom Bible Publishers has the same entry on the same page:

DARKNESS TO LIGHT --

Q. What is the emblematic significance of these terms?

A. In Freemasonry, even as in the system of Jewish and Christian Religion, darkness is a symbol of ignorance; while light is the symbol of enlightenment and knowledge. It is a principle of Freemasonry that the natural eye cannot perceive of the mysteries of the Order until the heart has embraced the deep spiritual and mystic meanings of those sublime mysteries. Hence all applicants for the Degrees of Freemasonry are required to enter the Lodge in total darkness, this darkness is preparatory and preliminary to his to his receiving the light he desires and searches.

Darkness and chaos precedes the coming of light: Gen. 1:1-3, 2 Cor. 4:6

Darkness dispelled by coming into the light of truth: John 8:12, 2 Pet. 1:4-9

RRBV: Rhodes repeats himself, "*I noted in the previous chapter that the light mentioned in Genesis 1 is literal, physical light, not Masonic light. Masons are reading their own meaning into this Scripture text.*" I guess Rhodes figures if he repeats this falsehood often enough it will become true. There is nothing at all anywhere in the Bible to indicate that the light created on Day One was "*literal, physical light.*" Light, as we know it, was not created until Day 4, when God illuminated the Earth with the sun, moon, and stars. If "*true enlightenment is said to come through Freemasonry*", it isn't "*said*" in the quoted passage. Nor is it said in the ritual of the Grand Lodge of Washington. As I said before, in the Grand Lodge of Washington, the Great Light of Freemasonry is the *Holy Bible, King James Version*.

Rhodes continues, "*The main point to emphasize here, however, is how inconceivable it is that a Christian could, in good conscience, bow before 'The Worshipful Master' and say, 'I am in darkness and I am in need of the light of Freemasonry.'*" And once again I reiterate, no Freemason is required to bow down before the Master of the Lodge or any other man -- not ever!

Rhodes concludes, "*Christians have already escaped the defilement of the dark world system, and are enlightened by the Word of God (2 Peter 1:3,4; Psalm 119:105).*"

2 Peter 1:3-4 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Once again Rhodes is only telling part of the story. Lets look at the entire passage in context.

2 Peter 1:2 -8 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace and Peace are to be "multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ." Peter, like Paul, James, and all the others, indicates here that faith alone is not enough. "Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge," etc., until you finally get to brotherly love and charity, two of the three tenets of Freemasonry.

Psalms 119:105-106 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Doesn't this verse indicate that the Word of God (the *Holy Bible*) was also the Great Light of the Psalmist?

Ask...

If the Mason to whom you are speaking claims to be a Christian, as is likely, ask the following questions.

- Would you please read aloud from John 8:12? John 12:46? Colossians 1:12-14? Ephesians 5:8?

FR: John 8:12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

John 12:46 I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

Colossians 1:12-14 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

Ephesians 5:8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

- In view of these statements from Scripture, how can an Entered Apprentice candidate who is a Christian affirm in the Masonic ritual, "I am lost in darkness, and I am seeking the light of Freemasonry?"

*FR: I have no idea, since neither that phrase, nor anything like it exists in the ritual of the Grand Lodge of Washington as outlined in the *Washington Monitor and Freemason's Guide*. During the allegorical play that is called a degree, when the candidate is symbolically taken from darkness to light, he is blindfolded (to represent the state of things before God created light). When the blindfold is removed, the first thing the initiate sees is the Great Light of Freemasonry, the *Holy Bible, King James Version*. One would hope that the *Holy Bible* is the Great Light of all Christians.*

- Doesn't this statement represent a denial of your Christian faith?

FR: Since I have never made such a statement, it does not apply to me.

Deuteronomy 6:13: Support for Masonic Oaths

RRMV: Rhodes cites this and other OT verses (as if any were necessary) to support Masonic Oaths.

RRBV: Rhodes acknowledges that the OT contains several examples of oaths, and then he asks "*But does this substantiate the Masonic blood oaths? Let me be perfectly frank: The Masonic oaths spoken within the confines of Masonic Lodges are nothing less than barbaric, even though many Masons claim that oaths are not to be taken literally. One pro-Mason historian claims, 'No Mason believes that the penalties of his oath will be visited upon him, and every candidate would hurry out of the room if ever told that he must help to inflict those penalties on someone else.'*" This "*one pro-Mason historian*" turns out to be two pro-Mason historians, George Mather and Larry Nichols in a book aptly named *Masonic Lodge*, and published by Zondervan, not exactly known as a publisher of books by or about pagans or idolaters. Zondervan, for those who don't know, is the publisher of religious books, especially the *Holy Bible, New International Version* and the *Holy Bible, New American Standard Version*, among others.

Rhodes continues, "*Still the very spirit of such oaths should be exceedingly offensive to the consciences of civilized people, especially Christians.*" Why on earth would "*civilized people, especially Christians*" take offense at a part of an allegorical play? Who would take offense? It would obviously have to be someone who could not tell the difference between reality and fantasy, someone who would be unable to understand simple concepts such as: a word can have more than one meaning, and someone who knows that everything written (including the Bible) does not have to be taken literally.

To his credit, on Pages 63-65 Rhodes gives a pretty decent explanation of why Christ's admonition in Matthew 5:34-37 to "*...Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil*" refers to the admonition in Matthew 5:33 to "*not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths.*" Yet he calls those who refuse to "swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God" in a legal courtroom "*well-meaning Christians*".

Throughout this review I have been very careful to try to limit my Bible quotes to the New Testament so there will be no mistake that what is quoted is, in fact, Christian. Rhodes also makes reference to some New Testament examples of swearing oaths. But he left out the most important one:

Rev 10:5-6 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:

The Candidate is informed by the Master that the Obligation contains nothing that will interfere with his duty to God, his country, his neighbor, or himself. If the candidate believes that the obligation contains anything that does conflict with any of them, he is always free to call off the degree and resign (called demitting). In my 21+ years of Freemasonry, I have never seen anyone do this. That's because the lecture that always accompanies a degree fully explains the concepts being taught by the allegory.

On Page 65, Rhodes says, "*This is flatly false, since the oath most certainly does interfere with the Christian's duty to the one true God of the Bible.*" Then he cites the previously completely discredited British anti-Mason Walton Hannah. And this time Rhodes does not need an endnote.

Ask...

If the Mason to whom you are speaking claims to be a Christian, ask the following questions.

FR: Are there any questions to be asked of a Mason who doesn't "*claim to be a Christian.*"

- Am I correct in saying that before taking the oath, the candidate is assured that the oath *will not conflict* with any duty that is owed to God, country, family, or friends?

FR: In the jurisdiction of Washington it's actually God, country, neighbor, and self, but that's essentially correct.

- Since you are a Christian, this means that the Masonic oath cannot conflict with any duty owed to God as defined in the Bible, right?

FR: That is correct, as long as you acknowledge that the Christian's duty to God is to follow Christ's higher law, not the 613 mitzvah or Law of Moses.

- According to the Bible, prayers are to be offered to God in the name of Jesus Christ. (See John 14:13,14; 15:16; and 16:23,24, if there is any question about this.) The Masonic ritual excludes the name of Jesus Christ in its prayers, doesn't it?

FR: First of all, the way your question is phrased shows you have a basic misunderstanding of what it means to offer prayers "in the name of Jesus Christ."

John 14:13-14 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

John 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

John 16:23-24 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

Jesus told the disciples that all authority from God was given to him.

Matthew 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

Then he passed that authority on to the apostles.

John 17:18-23 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

When a Christian asks the Father for something, he asks it with the authority of Jesus Christ himself. He does not end his prayers with the phrase "in Jesus' name" as if the phrase were some kind of magic mantra to be chanted over our wants and needs. What is Jesus' name, anyway?

When he was born he was *yeshua bar yoseph* (Joshua son of Joseph, or anglicized, Joshua Josephson); when he achieved manhood he was made a rabbi (teacher) so he became *yeshua bar abba*, (Joshua, son of the Father, which idiomatically means Joshua the Priest); after his baptism or the transfiguration (depends on whose account you are reading) he became *yeshua ha mashiah* (Joshua the anointed one, idiomatically, Joshua the priest-king). After the trial, he was known as *IESVS REX IVDORVM* (Yasus, King of the Jews) and *IESVS CHRISTVS* (Yasus the Anointed One -- idiomatically King Yasus). When the New Testament was finally written down, *IESVS CHRISTVS* was translated into Greek as *iesous christos* -- (there are no capital letters used in biblical Greek) which is the name used throughout the New Testament.

After Holy Roman Emperor Constantine hijacked the Christian religion in the 4th Century, for the next 1200+ years, Jesus was again known as *IESVS CHRISTVS*. There was no letter "j" or even a "j" sound in any classical language. From *TakeOurWord.com*:

The letter "j" as a consonant was first differentiated from the vowel "i" in Spain around 1485. It is a matter of scholarly debate how its form arose. One theory is that, in medieval illuminated manuscripts, a decorative initial "i" was often given a curl to the left at its base and as words are more likely to start with a consonant this became the letter "j". It was not fully accepted as a proper English letter until the 19th century.

That means in no uncertain terms the name "Jesus" pronounced like it is today did not exist until the 1800's. That also means that until that time, no prayers were offered up "In Jesus' name." And finally, the New Testament is full of prayers. Can you show me a single example where a prayer ends "In Jesus' name"? How about this prayer? This is exactly how Christ said we should pray.

Matthew 6:9-14 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Does this prayer end "in Jesus' name? Is there any mention of Jesus at all? How about Father God's name? Can you give me even one example in the Bible where Jesus or anyone else ever uses God's name? Of course Masonic ritual excludes the name of Jesus Christ in its prayers. Freemasonry is, after all, a philanthropic fraternity, not a sectarian religious denomination, so in all instances, prayers and otherwise, God, the common Father/Creator of all men is referred to by such generic terms as God, Heavenly Father, Creator, Great (or Grand) Architect of the Universe, etc. -- *never by name*.

- Did you know that in the Royal Arch degree, God is given a name, (*Jabulon*), that relates the God of the Bible to pagan deities Baal and Osiris? Did you know that the God of the Bible absolutely condemns anyone participating in Baal worship and any other false religious system? (Share Exodus 20:4-6; Leviticus 19:4, 26:1; Deuteronomy 4:15-19; 2 Samuel 7:22.)

FR: I have never participated in the allegorical plays called degrees of the Royal Arch, but I can tell you this: the Volume of the Sacred Law and Great Light of Freemasonry in the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Washington is the *Holy Bible, King James Version*. Nowhere in it, or the *Washington Monitor and Freemasons Guide* is any such name for God ever used. Once again, Freemasonry is a philanthropic fraternal organization, not a place of religious worship.

Because no God is worshipped there -- not Baal, not Osiris, not even "the God of the Bible" -- the Masonic Lodge is a sanctuary from the sectarian denominational differences and religious divisiveness characteristic of all religious fundamentalists and other extremists. Here are the verses you asked me to read:

Exodus 20:4-6 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Leviticus 19:4 Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods: I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 26:1 I Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 4:15-19 Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

2 Sam 7:22 Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

Pardon me, but I don't see how any of these verses relate to Freemasonry at all! No one in any allegorical play called a degree or in any business meeting I have ever attended has ever been involved in the making of any "graven image" or "likeness" or the "bowing down" or "serving" any God other than the God of the *King James Bible*. If anything remotely like this occurred in a Masonic Lodge, none of the lifelong Christian ministers, pastors, deacon chairmen, ministers of education, and missions directors would have ever joined, never mind remained members for life. This alleged connection to idolatrous practices has not been substantiated by anything other than Ron Rhodes' own vivid imagination.

- In view of these factors, isn't it clear that the Masonic oath conflicts with the duty owed to God as defined in the Bible.

FR: On the contrary, I have clearly shown you that the lessons taught by the allegorical plays called degrees, including the Oaths of Obligation, are actually right in line with the teachings of the Bible -- and actually were highly instrumental in my own rebirth and reconversion to Fundamentalist Evangelical Christianity.

Ask...

- Though I understand that some Masons claim the oaths are merely symbolic, isn't it fair to say that no candidate entering into Masonry is *told* that the oaths are symbolic?

FR: First of all, I don't "*claim*" the oaths (called Obligations) are symbolic -- they are symbolic. And though I can't answer for all jurisdictions of Freemasonry, in the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Washington it is not only "*not fair*" to say that candidates aren't "*told that the oaths are symbolic*" -- it's an outright lie to make that claim.

You'll remember I told you there were questions the candidate had to answer before he could be accepted as a candidate. Right after he answers them, before he sets one foot into the Lodge, he is given what is known as the Preparatory Lecture, which includes this statement right at the beginning, taken directly from the *Washington Monitor and Freemason's Guide*:

As you have given satisfactory answers to the questions propounded, it becomes my pleasing duty to inform you that the Institution of Freemasonry is inspired by the pure principles of truth and benevolence. Its ceremonies and allegories are intended as useful moral lessons, illustrative of light and truth to the mind of him who enters its portals. These lessons should be cherished among life's fondest memories.

Freemasonry consists of a course of moral and philosophical instruction illustrated by hieroglyphics, and taught, according to ancient usage, by types, emblems, and allegorical figures...

- When the candidate is swearing the oath, is there any indication given that the penalties are not literal?

FR: Do you mean other than his being informed right from the beginning that the "moral and philosophical" lessons are learned through allegorical plays, and then he is dressed in a costume "to impress this truth more forcefully" upon his mind?

- Is it fair to say that either the oaths mean what they say or they do not?

FR: The oaths of obligation parts of the allegorical plays called degrees mean what they say only within that context. They are not meant to be taken literally.

- If the oaths *do* mean what they say, does this mean you are entering into a pact consenting to your own murder as a penalty for violation?

FR: Are you really that oblivious to the truth or are you trying to be intentionally insulting? Once again I reiterate, the penalties are only symbolic and are never meant to be taken literally.

- If the oaths *do not* mean what they say, are you swearing with your hands on a Bible something that is not true and is, in fact, a lie?

FR: As I said before, they mean what they say only in the context of the moral and philosophical lesson being taught.

- How do you interpret the Masonic stipulation that the oaths are to be taken "without any mental reservation or secret evasion of mind whatever"?

FR: That means that for the purposes of this lesson, the candidate should take the obligation, including the penalty of same, *seriously* -- not *literally*.

Now let me ask you a serious question: Do you really think that trying to use trick questions, deceit, and outright lies represents righteous Christian behavior? Can you think of any similar situations in the Bible where the highly educated religious leaders falsely accused someone whose only crimes were teaching moral lessons by allegorical parables and trying to help the afflicted?

Ask...

- Do you agree that the cutting of throats is a *human* technique of execution, not a *divine* technique? After all, God doesn't reach down from heaven with physical hands and a knife to slit throats, right?

FR: This question is so ridiculous that it hardly deserves an answer. My personal belief that the cutting of throats of animals being sacrificed by the High Priest in the Temple in Jerusalem would have been seen as a divine technique of execution. And I'm pretty sure any beginning Bible student would know that.

- How, then, do you reconcile this with the oft-heard Masonic claim that God is the one who carries out the judgments in the oaths?

FR: Quite frankly I am at a total loss to explain why anyone would expect God to carry out the *symbolic penalties* of the *symbolic obligation* portions of *allegorical plays*. In my 21 years as a Freemason I have never heard what Rhodes calls this "*oft-heard Masonic claim*." My best guess is that Rhodes has only "*oft-heard*" it from others also involved in the cottage industry of anti-Masonry.

On Page 68 Rhodes says, "*It may be revealing to note that there may be at least one case on record where the penalty of the Masonic Oaths may indeed have been carried out in all too literal fashion.*" Then he proceeds to describe the infamous case of William Morgan from New York in 1826, saying, "*Many believe Morgan was murdered in an attempt to protect Masonic secrets.*"

Rhodes goes on to cite then Congressman John Quincy Adams, who, Rhodes says, "*...expressed his indignation by writing a letter to Edward Ingersoll on September 22, 1831 in which he said that 'ever since the disclosure of the Morgan-murder crimes, and of the Masonic oaths and penalties by which they were instigated, the indispensable duty of the Masonic Order in the United States is to either dissolve itself or to discard forever from its constitution and laws, all oaths, all penalties, all secrets, and as ridiculous appendages to them, all mysteries and pageants.'*"

Now let's be sure we understand the players here. William Morgan was a Virginian who had moved to New York to engage in the brewery business. After his brewery burned to the ground leaving him penniless, he moved to Batavia, NY where he joined the York Rite after swearing under oath that he had received the first six degrees. He was tossed out shortly thereafter because he could never come up with any valid proof he had ever been made a Mason. After that he hooked up with a newspaper editor David C. Miller, another disgruntled Mason who had only taken the First Degree. The two conspired to publish an expose of New York Masonry, and shortly after the announcement, a handful of men were convicted of at least two attempts to burn down his newspaper. In the meantime, William Morgan was allegedly kidnapped and supposedly killed according to the penalties of the obligations. The best source of information about the Morgan Affair I have found is located on line at the Grand Lodge of Vermont in an on-line book by Past Grand Master Lee Tillotson at this web address: <http://www.vtfreemasons.org/tillotson/chapter7.htm>.

John Quincy Adams was described in a July 2000 article in the Columbus Dispatch as a born-again Christian espousing born-again Christian values. The truth is, like his father John Adams, John Quincy Adams was both a Federalist and a Unitarian Universalist who had no use for what he described as "the blasphemy of Trinitarian Christianity." John Quincy Adams was tossed out of the Federalist Party because he was constantly at odds with the pro-Freemasonry party leadership. To get elected President of the United States he had to defeat the immensely popular War of 1812 war hero and Freemason, Andrew "Old Hickory" Jackson, which he did by founding the Antimasonry Party right after news of the Morgan scandal broke. Even then, he was elected by only a tiny margin of Electoral College votes, even though Jackson had clearly won the popular vote.

What gets lost in all the confusion is this: Ron Rhodes wants you to believe the penalties of the obligations are to be taken literally, yet of the 3 to 5 million Freemasons, not one provable case exists where someone has met this fate. There are a few books revealing the "secrets" currently being distributed out by people claiming to have been former Freemasons -- and yet all of their authors are "miraculously" still alive.

Exodus 12:3-5; Isaiah 53:7; John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Revelation 5:8-13: The purity of the Lambskin

Exodus 12:3-6 Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

John 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

1 Peter 1:18-19 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Rev 5:8-13 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

RRMV: Nothing new here.

RRBV: Nothing new here either.

We have visited the apron not once but twice, and now this is the third time. The apron can be lambskin but it doesn't have to be; obviously, apparently to everyone except Ron Rhodes, it can be any kind of bleached leather. It is the white surface of the apron that is the emblem of *innocence* that should always be a "reminder" to attain to higher goals, rectitude of conduct (righteous living), nobler deeds, higher thoughts, greater achievements.

The Lamb in Revelation refers to the person of Jesus Christ, not his skin; and it refers to only one kind of sacrificial animal, the Passover Lamb. In all of the Old Testament sacrifices, the necessity of the purity of everything offered, including sheep (especially rams), goats, doves, oxen, bulls, and even certain plants and liquids, was maintained.

Rev 5:6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

In *Revelation*, "The Lamb as it had been slain" obviously refers to Jesus the way he looked during his ascension -- which means in his human body. The seven horns and seven eyes obviously are not meant to be taken literally. For the last time, nothing about the Apron Lecture says anything at all about the "lambskin or white leather apron" having anything to do with the purity of the "Lamb of God" whatsoever.

Ask...

These questions can be asked after sharing the above facts from the book of Revelation.

- Is it not clear from the book of Revelation that our salvation is not based on our good works but rather through what Christ accomplished on our behalf by dying on the cross as the Lamb of God? (See 12:11)

FR: Of course. Every Christian Freemason knows this.

- Do you agree that Revelation makes it clear that we become pure not by our own efforts but by being washed in the blood of the Lamb of God?

FR: Certainly. And every Christian Freemason knows this, too.

- Doesn't the entire tone of the book of Revelation communicate praise for Jesus Christ for what He has accomplished in our salvation.

FR: Actually the entire New Testament points to that truth, and every Christian Freemason also knows that.

- Where is there praise for human beings "earning" their salvation by attaining personal purity?

FR: I thought you'd never ask. Salvation is not earned, it is an undeserved gift from God, purchased by the blood of the Lamb, spread over the door to heaven and eternal life, which is the altar of the cross. But the salvation story does not end there. We can't work for it, not even by doing miracles or casting out demons in Jesus' name because we think He might reward us for it by saving us. The Bible is very clear that our ticket to heaven has already been paid for by Jesus Christ, and He is in heaven right now preparing places for us, rewards promised to us since before the beginning of time.

But that's still not the end of the salvation story. After we are raised into heaven, we are judged by how we treated Christ while we were here on earth. And what is the criteria for that judgment? Is it how strong our faith was? No, it is clearly described as *what we did*.

Revelation 20:11-15 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 22:12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

Matthew 16:27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

2 Corinthians 5:9-10 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

While the gift of salvation is provided through faith in and by the grace of God, the Bible clearly and repeatedly states that each man's ultimate heavenly reward is based solely "according to his works" or "that he hath done." It's a subtle but important distinction: In Masonic ritual, Faith, Hope, and Charity are denoted as the "principle rounds," or most important steps, of Jacob's ladder, but they are definitely not the only rounds. Freemasonry does not provide any path to salvation beyond those first three rounds (the rest is up to the individual Freemason); nor does Freemasonry guarantee immortality (it only instructs the Mason to have the "hope" of the same). What Freemasonry does provide is plenty of opportunities to provide "charity to all mankind."

1 Corinthians 13:11-13 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

Ask...

- How do you interpret Ephesians 2:8,9? Titus 3:3-6? Romans 4:5?

FR: Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

You should be aware from the onset that I do not usually interpret the Bible. Normally I just read it, and it interprets itself. Verses 8-9 are incomplete without verse 10, which says, *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

I'm pretty sure that these verses basically mean what they say. This passage is a comparison of Old Testament values with New Testament values. In the Old Testament, righteousness was accomplished by how hard one worked to uphold the 613 mitzvah, or Law of Moses. Anyone afflicted with disease, poverty, weakness, disobedient children, or a nagging wife had to admit he was cursed by God for his failure to uphold the Law; while anyone who had an abundance of land, health, wealth, submissive wives, obedient children, servants, and "clout" could boast that he was blessed by God for his obedience to the Law.

In the New Testament, however, we are told that true righteousness does not come from material things, but instead that the power of God is best demonstrated by weakness and poverty of self; not by having servants, but by being a servant; not by overwhelming your enemy or your neighbor with your own power and majesty, but by showing them the power and majesty of the love and compassion of Christ that comes from the fruit of the Spirit.

Titus 3:3-6 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

Once again this passage is incomplete (which is why it ends in a semicolon instead of a period). This is the rest of the story:

Titus 3: 7-9 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.

Once again we see the reason why we have been saved: it is to "be careful to maintain good works." These good works by which we will be judged are outlined in Matthew 25: feed the hungry, water the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the stranger, visit the prisoner and the hospital patient.

Romans 4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

And still again we see Rhodes removing a verse out of context. The first part of Romans 4 is about Abraham and David, used as examples to show that only God can grant salvation. Abraham was a pagan, Abram, who believed in the one and only God enough to leave his homeland and follow God's direction. Abram did not have the Law of Moses to guide him, so verse 3 says, "...Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Likewise, David (who had committed the sins of adultery and murder, both punishable by death, who was told by the Prophet, Nathan, that God had forgiven his sin and he wouldn't have to die) had earlier prophesied about himself. Verse 7 says, "*Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.*"

- Can these verses be reconciled with the Masonic claim that a man can merit the Celestial Lodge Above by living a pure life?

FR: I'm confused here. Where in the *King James Bible* or the *Washington Monitor and Freemasons Guide* is the claim ever made that a man can achieve heaven simply by living a pure life? It is my perception that Ron Rhodes and you are the only ones making that claim. Once again I submit that if this claim were true, none of the thousands of Pastors, Ministers, and Deacon Chairmen who are also lifelong Freemasons would stay in the fraternity for a minute longer.

- How does someone become "perfect" according to Hebrews 10:14?

FR: Hebrews 10:14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

That means we are sanctified by the offering of Christ's blood upon the altar of the cross. Every Christian Freemason already knows this, too.

Luke 2:35: Sword Pointing to the Naked Heart

RRMV: Once again it's "Masons on occasion..." this time without a single reference.

RRBV: Once again Rhodes is off on some completely unrelated tangent, this time about Mary's suffering.

Luke 2:35 (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

FR: There are no questions here, but I'll provide a comment anyway. According to the *Washington Monitor and Freemasons Guide* the symbol of The Sword Pointing to a Naked Heart reminds us that "although our thoughts, words, and actions may be hidden from the eyes of man," eventually each of us will be judged according to the thoughts and intentions of his heart. If I were going to find biblical support for this symbol, I'd use this:

Hebrews 4:12-13 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

5. Is Freemasonry A Religion?

On Page 75 Rhodes says that "Well-known Masonic authors, such as Albert Pike and Henry Wilson Coil, say Freemasonry is a religion. These men refer to the fact that Freemasonry requires a belief in a Supreme Being and involves temples, doctrines, altars, worship, even chaplains. Such factors point to the reality that Freemasonry is a religious organization." Once again Rhodes is quoting deceased Masonic authors, who were looking at Freemasonry from their own viewpoints.

While I was in high school In Colorado Springs, Colorado I had the opportunity to see the completion of a beautiful religious facility. Near the center is a uniquely constructed multidenominational temple and chapel, with a beautiful altar, a staff of chaplains, and regular worship services that are attended by almost 100% of the faculty, staff, and students. Can you guess what facility this is? Focus on the Family's new headquarters? Fuller Seminary's Horner Center for Lifelong Learning? New Geneva Theological Seminary? Do you give up? It was the world headquarters of that exciting new religion: *the United States Air Force Academy!*

Rhodes, as per usual is only partly correct in his assessment. Freemasonry is religious, in that it requires a belief in and respect for the Grand Creator and Designer of the Universe, God, if you will; and a belief in the transition from this to a future life. That's why Freemasons take the answers to the preliminary questions most seriously. The Charge to the Entered Apprentice (1st Degree) spells out what duties to God are required of him: "by never mentioning His name but with the awe and reverence which are due from the creature to his Creator; by imploring His aid in all laudable undertakings, and by looking up to Him in every emergency for comfort and support." And that is the end of it. Everything after that, each Freemason must find out for himself.

My Christian Accountability Group is very religious, but it is not a religion of its own. My Prison Ministry is very religious, but it is not a religion of its own. So obviously it is possible to be religious without being a religion. And that means that the answer to this question simply hinges on what the definition of religion is. So when in doubt, look it up in the dictionary. Mine is the *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary and Thesaurus*:

religion 1a: the state of a religious [that's a monk or nun] b(1): the service and worship of God or the supernatural (2): commitment or devotion to religious faith or observance 2: a personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices 3 *archaic*: scrupulous conformity 4: a cause, principle, or system of beliefs held to with ardor and faith

Christianity 1: the religion derived from Jesus Christ, based on the Bible as sacred scripture, and professed by Eastern, Roman Catholic, and Protestant bodies 2: conformity to the Christian religion

Freemasonry 1: a major fraternal organization called Free and Accepted Masons or Ancient Free and Accepted Masons that has certain secret rituals

The real question here should not be "Is Freemasonry a religion?" but "Is Freemasonry a religion like Christianity?"

Ask...

- Do you think Freemasonry is a religion?

FR: It depends on your definition of a religion. If you're asking me if I think Freemasonry is a religion like Christianity is a religion, then absolutely not! If you're asking me if I think Freemasonry is a religion like the Democratic Party is a religion to Ted Kennedy, then maybe.

- In view of the fact that participation in a Masonic Lodge involves altars, pulpits, Worshipful Masters, rituals, prayers, pledges, sacred vows, reading from sacred literature, singing hymns, and funeral services, can you see why many people classify Masonry as a religion?

FR: What other people think is none of my business, especially when their conclusions are drawn only from the superficial. What is most significant here is the way some Christians want to redefine the terms. For example, what defines me as a Christian doesn't have anything at all to do with altars, pulpits, and the rest of these superficial trappings. What defines me as a Christian is that I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. I confess with my mouth that Jesus is Lord, and I believe in my heart that God the Father raised Him from the dead. I believe that my sins were washed away by His blood on Calvary, and I am becoming less like me and more like Christ as each day passes as evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit that is manifested in my life. In the meantime, He has returned to heaven to prepare a place for me, and I am patiently waiting for Him to come and take me home.

There is nothing inherently wrong with altars, pulpits, Worshipful Masters, rituals, prayers, pledges, oaths, reading from sacred literature, singing hymns, or religious funeral services -- as long as these superficial things do not become a substitute for the real thing. In fact for those of us who are secure in our beliefs, those things only enhance and strengthen our faith.

- If these things don't constitute Freemasonry as a religion, couldn't it then be argued that Christianity is also not a religion? Will you please explain the difference to me?

FR: As I said before, it all depends on your definition of a religion. You can choose to redefine the terms and make Christianity into anything you want it to be; just like Ron Rhodes is redefining all his terms to make Freemasonry into what he wants it to be. For those of us who are both Christians and Freemasons, Freemasonry will never be a substitute for our Christianity, nor will our Christianity be a substitute for our Freemasonry. Freemasonry deals with the temporal, Christianity with the spiritual, and never the twain shall meet.

One other quick comment. While attempting to convince me that the philanthropic fraternity of Freemasonry was a religion, proven liar and anti-Mason Duane Washum said this to me: "My position is that the religious doctrines of the lodge are incompatible with the Christian faith. Obviously, you have not read enough of the bible you carry around as Grand Bible Bearer to understand that Christianity is not a religion - it is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ." I guess it's just all in the way you choose to define your terms.

Ask...

- Did you know that Hinduism is classified as an individual religion, even though it believes that all spiritual paths lead to God?

FR: I really can't comment on the Hindu religion because it doesn't apply to me or the Grand Lodge of Washington. I don't think I've ever met a Hindu Freemason, but I'm not entirely sure I'd know one if I saw one.

- Did you know that the Baha'i Faith is a religion, even though it embraces all religions within its folds?

FR: I don't know anything about the Baha'i Faith except that I read on some website that it was the fastest growing religion in the world today.

- In view of these facts, can you see why it could be argued that Freemasonry is a religion, even though it sees the truth in many religions?

FR: As Rhodes so succinctly demonstrated earlier in this chapter, anything can be argued. It all depends on your definitions. As far as I'm concerned, the only thing that's important here is that Freemasonry is not my religion.

On Page 82, Rhodes states, "*Understandably, many Christian denominations in both Europe and America have forbidden its members to join with Freemasonry.*

These include the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church of Greece, the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Church of God, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Pentacostal Church, the Church of the Nazarene, the Wesleyan Methodist Church, the Mennonite Church, the Seventh-Day Adventists, and the Quakers."

Let's examine this list a little closer. What is the largest Christian denomination in the US? The Roman Catholic Church. This is the current official position of the post-Vatican II Roman Catholic Church, as outlined in a letter to the Masonic Service Association, March 23, 1981 by Thomas C. Kelly, General Secretary, National Council of Catholic Bishops:

The Declaration of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, released February 17, 1981, is primarily a reminder of the principles of Canon Law governing the application of penalties and only in this way does it directly address the situation of an individual joining a Masonic association. The Declaration does not answer the question "What is the nature of a Masonic organization?" The focus is not on the association per se, but on the individual Catholic and his possible membership in a Masonic fraternity.

The Declaration states that the general law of the Roman Catholic Church, issued in 1917 remains in effect, namely that a Catholic, under penalty of excommunication, is not to join any organization which plots against the church or legitimate civil powers. At the same time the Declaration reminds us that to incur excommunication, certain requirements must be met. Among these, it seems clear, would be the fact that the association in question is one which actually plots against the Catholic Church or a legitimate government. I understand that this would not appear to be the case with Masonic fraternities in the United States.

And the second largest denomination in the US:

In 1992, Dr. James Holly, a Dallas physician introduced a resolution to the Southern Baptist Convention that Freemasons should be excluded from positions of leadership in the SBC. The SBC responded by ordering a study of compatibility issues between Freemasonry, Christianity, and the SBC. The study was conducted by Gary Leazer, PhD, MDiv, who served for 15 years on the staff of the Interfaith Witness Department of the Home Mission Board (the last 5 years as the Director). Dr. Leazer came to the following conclusions:

The Interfaith Witness Department reaffirms its position taken in 1986; Freemasonry is NOT a religion... We, therefore, with no hesitation, recommend the following: that the Southern Baptist Convention take a position neither for nor against Freemasonry and its related branches, and that membership in Freemasonry be left with the judgment of the individual.

When the leadership of the SBC ordered Dr. Leazer to reword his conclusion to include the phrase "*many tenets and teachings of Freemasonry are not compatible with Christianity or Southern Baptist doctrine,*" Dr. Leazer resigned from his six-figure income job as Director of the IWD rather than put his name to that erroneous conclusion.

During the annual session of the (SBC), June 15-17, 1993, the messengers overwhelmingly approved "A Report on Freemasonry". Although the report included the reworded conclusion, it also recognized "*the many charitable endeavors of Freemasonry.*" Most significantly it also acknowledged that "*many outstanding Christians and Southern Baptists now are, and in the past have been Masons.*"

The third largest denomination is the United Methodist Church; the fourth, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints; fifth, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; sixth, the Church of God in Christ; seventh, Presbyterian Church (USA); eighth, National Baptist Convention of America -- none of these have official anti-Masonic policies either.

You have to get all the way down to the tenth before you get to one of those on Rhodes' anti-Masonry list, with most of the rest being obscure European congregations.

Ask...

After reviewing the previous definitions of religion with the Mason, ask the following questions.

- Will you agree that Freemasonry advocates a personal awareness or conviction of the existence of a supreme being?

FR: In my jurisdiction, Freemasonry advocates a personal awareness of the "ever living and true God" of the *Holy Bible, King James Version*.

- Does Freemasonry focus attention on a person's relation to God?

FR: Only for brief moments in certain ceremonies. Nearly all of the focus is on charity.

- Does worship take place within Masonic Lodges?

FR: Absolutely not!

- Is moral conduct emphasized in the Masonic Lodge?

FR: Yes, rectitude of conduct is important, not only in the Masonic Lodge, but in life in general.

- Is the Masonic Lodge a religious institution?

FR: Yes, but in a very limited way. *Belief in God and a future life is required, but that is not in any sense the primary focus of the institution. It would be much more correct to say that Freemasonry is a philanthropic fraternal organization of religious men.*

- According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica's* definition, is Masonry a religion?

FR: Since the *Encyclopedia Britannica's* definition says that "worship is probably the most basic element of religion," then Freemasonry obviously lacks the most basic element of religion -- so the answer is obviously -- no. Freemasonry is not my religion, nor is it the religion of any of the other Christian Freemasons I know

On Page 83 Rhodes goes off on another tangent that belies his own poor scholarship, and takes Coil, Ankerberg, Weldon, and Hannah down with him. Rhodes quotes Freemason author Henry Wilson Coil, speaking for himself, of course, who said "to call Masonry not religion but religious merely substitutes an adjective for a noun, both meaning the same thing. It is as absurd as saying that a certain individual has no intellect but is intellectual or that he has no wealth but is wealthy." Rhodes then quotes Ankerberg and Weldon, and Hannah with equally preposterous claims.

Ask...

- Can an individual have no intellect but be intellectual?

FR: Of course. Ron Rhodes is a perfect example. His academic credentials would indicate that he is an intellectual, yet his poor scholarship, incomplete research, inaccurate assumptions, and foregone conclusions belie that.

- Realistically, can someone have no power but be powerful?

FR: It all depends on what you mean by "realistically" and "power." Jesus had no outward manifestations of power. He wasn't noted for having unusual physical strength, a massive conquering army, immense wealth, or unlimited resources. "Realistically" He appeared to be totally powerless, which is why all of the apostles denied Him -- yet by His resurrection He demonstrated that He was the most powerful man that ever walked upon the earth!

- Is it possible for a man to have no courage yet be courageous?

FR: The Bible is full of examples where cowardly and ordinary people, through extraordinary circumstances, become incredibly courageous and become victorious after facing virtually impossible odds.

- Likewise, does it really make sense to say that the Masonic Lodge is not a religion but is religious? Please explain.

FR: First of all, the question was not "Is Masonry religion?" as was implied by the intentionally misleading examples Rhodes uses. The question was, as it was stated all three times, "Is Masonry a religion?" To say a person is intellectual but not an intellect, a government is democratic but not a democracy, a school is academic but not an academy, or a fraternal organization is religious but not a religion of its own all make perfectly good sense.

On Page 84 Rhodes says, "Whether or not Masons want to accept it, the Masonic Lodge claims to be an institution that:

- draws men closer to God

FR: No argument there.

- gives men a clearer picture of their responsibility to God

FR: Actually it only gives them a very general reminder of their responsibilities to God

- teaches the immortality of the soul

FR: Actually it teaches that the Mason should have the "hope" of immortality

- asserts that the entrance into the Celestial Lodge Above depends on following its moral dictates

-

FR: Actually Freemasonry has no specific "moral dictates" or specific "Celestial Lodge Above" one of the clearest indicators that Freemasonry is not a religion of its own.

- engages in worship

FR: Absolutely not. Not in any way, shape, or form. Even a superficial study of what goes on in a Masonic Lodge would indicate that this is a complete fabrication. By putting this overt and intentional misrepresentation in the list, Rhodes has shown his true colors. Throughout the book, Rhodes has been attempting to show that Freemasons will accept anyone of any religious persuasion who says he believes in a "higher power" -- any "higher power" including pagan Egyptian deities, Hindu manifestations of Gods, etc.

So what does he think Masons do in the meetings? Sing Christian hymns, then chant mantras to Buddha, then face Mecca and bow down on our prayer rugs while reciting the Koran, then ring temple bells while meditating on the meaning of the Bhagavad Gita, then cant passages from the Talmud, then read from the New Testament, finally ending with a composite prayer to some kind of three-headed monster god called Jabulon or some other such nonsense?

The truth is that the business meetings are by and large pretty dull and boring affairs concerning the raising and disbursement of funds for charitable causes. Both the proficiency for and participation in the allegorical plays called degrees require a pretty healthy chunk of memorization, further screening out those whose hearts are not truly dedicated to "charity for all mankind." Not only is there no worship, but even discussions about sectarian religious beliefs are forbidden within the confines of the Lodge. Any real investigator, never mind a "noted researcher" would know this.

- utilizes rituals, prayers, and altars (with Bibles on them)

FR: Have you ever witnessed the ritual of the opening of a court of law? For example, this is the ritual of the opening of the United States Supreme Court:

When the Court is in session, the 10 a.m. entrance of the Justices into the Courtroom is announced by the Marshal. Those present, at the sound of the gavel, arise and remain standing until the robed Justices are seated following the traditional chant: "The Honorable, the Chief Justice and the Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States. Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! All persons having business before the Honorable, the Supreme Court of the United States, are admonished to draw near and give their attention, for the Court is now sitting. God save the United States and this Honorable Court!"

Is the Supreme Court a religion?

Every session of Congress since 1789 has opened with a prayer. Is the US Congress a religion?

Other than as a table on which the Bible is placed what is a Masonic altar used for? You'll be awfully hard pressed to find another reason!

- calls the Lodge leader "Worshipful Master"

FR: Do you know what "worshipful" means? My *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary and Thesaurus* includes this definition: "a title for various persons or groups of rank or distinction". Do you know what "master" means? "A worker or artisan qualified to teach apprentices." So Worshipful Master is "a title for a person of rank or distinction who is a worker or artisan qualified to teach apprentices." It has nothing to do with religious worship at all.

At the bottom of Page 84, Rhodes once again quotes Walton Hannah (already exposed as an disgruntled former Anglican priest who became obsessed with trying to "expose" British Freemasonry after his superiors refused to respond to his unfounded accusations). Normally I would have skipped this, except that Hannah introduces two interesting concepts here when he says:

The [Masonic] ritual is worked in the spirit of a solemn religious ceremony; it is a frequent custom to sing hymns at the opening and closing of the Lodge, candles are lighted before the three pedestals, and the Bible is always open before the Worshipful Master. The Lodge must be opened and closed with a prayer.... The places where Lodges meet are customarily known as temples, a word strongly associated with worship and religion. Most Lodges have chaplains and organists who have their regular part to play in the ceremonies.

Except for the hymn signing at the opening and closing of the Lodge, this description is essentially correct. Of course it could be that British Lodges open and close with hymn singing, but I can assure you that singing is not the strong suit of any American Lodges I have ever attended. But I think it's a great idea.

Perhaps we could sing some of the hymns from the chart below taken from The Hymnal for Worship & Celebration, (1986, Word Music, Waco TX) all written by Christian Freemasons.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Years</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>Title</i>
Thomas Augustus Arne	1710-1778	482	Am I A Soldier Of The Cross?
Ludwig van Beethoven	1770-1827	1	Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee
		215	Alleluia! Alleluia!
		608	May The Grace Of Christ, Our Savior
Henry John Gauntlett	1805-1876	155	Once In Royal David's City
Franz Joseph Hayden	1732-1809	9	Praise The Lord! Ye Heavens, Adore Him
		62	The Spacious Firmament
		278	Glorious Things Of Thee Are Spoken
		557	In Thanksgiving Let Us Praise Him
Johann Michael Hayden	1737-1806	10	O Worship The King
Oliver Holden	1765-1844	97	All Hail The Power Of Jesus' Name
Albert Hay Malotte	1895-1964	426	The Lord's Prayer
Robert Guy McCutchan	1877-1958	593	O Worship The Lord
Felix Mendelssohn	1809-1847	133	Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
		269	O Word Of God Incarnate
		502	In Heavenly Love Abiding
		556	Now Thank We All Our God
		598	Cast Thy Burden Upon The Lord
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	1756-1791	377	Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken
		584	It Is Good To Sing Thy Praises
Anthony Johnson Showalter	1858-1924	354	Leaning On The Everlasting Arms
Jean Sibelius	1865-1957	347	Be Still, My Soul
		535	A Christian Home
Henry Thomas Smart	1813-1879	131	Angels, From the Realms Of Glory
		225	Worship Christ The Risen King
		226	The Day Of Resurrection
		241	Lo, He Comes With Clouds Descending
		276	Christ Is Made The Sure Foundation
		483	Lead On, O King Eternal
John Stafford Smith	1750-1836	576	The Star Spangled Banner
Arthur Seymour Sullivan	1842-1900	479	Onward Christian Soldiers
Samuel Sebastian Wesley	1810-1876	49	Lead Me, Lord
		277	The Church's One Foundation
		567	Another Year Is Dawning

The places where Freemasons meet are called Lodges. Until the Civil War, lodges met in the only public places that were available, in the upper rooms of inns, taverns, and alehouses. Freemasons Lodges did not meet in "temples" until the late 1800's, when they began to construct their own buildings. Apparently neither Hannah nor Rhodes has ever heard the expression "temple of higher learning" used to describe a college or university.

To avoid the confusion, Masonic Lodges in my jurisdiction, the Grand Lodge of Washington, now meet in "Masonic Centers".

At the bottom of page 85 and at the end of this chapter, Rhodes says, "*An honest and unbiased look at the facts reveals that Freemasonry is a religion.*" I'm sorry but Rhodes has clearly indicated, by his false characterization of Lodge meetings as worship services, by his misuse of unrelated Bible verses taken out of context, and his repeated use of archaic and outdated sources, that his view is neither honest nor unbiased. Rhodes continues, "*If Freemasonry is not a religion, then it is certainly the most religious nonreligion I have encountered in my 25 years of religious studies!*" This is one of only a handful of absolutely accurate statements about Freemasonry in the book.

6. The Bible: A "Great Light"

Once again it's "*Masons believe...*" as in "*Masons believe that even though the Bible is a significant book, it is not the sole Word of God.*" Yet I'm a Freemason and I don't believe that. On Page 87 Rhodes says, "*The Bible is not viewed as God's only revelation to humankind, but is viewed as one of many holy books that contain religious and moral truth.*" One does not have to a Doctorate in Theology to recognize that the Bible is not God's only revelation to humankind. The beauty, majesty, and complexity of our universe reflects God's divine plan in everything from the tiniest subatomic particle to the brightest star in our galaxie.

The *Holy Bible, King James Version* is not just one book, it is a collection of the 66 books and letters canonized by the Church of England. Other Christian denominations use everything from 5 books (Pentateuch) to 81 books (Ethiopic).

It is my personal belief that everything in heaven and earth was created by God, and therefore reflects some tiny aspect of God, like a giant jigsaw puzzle with a seemingly infinite number of pieces ranging in sizes from so small that I can't even imagine them to so immense that I can't even imagine them. As a Christian, the Bible not only shows me the puzzle exists, but gives me the security of the knowledge that in the end, the puzzle will be finished, and that only the God who created it can complete it. For me, the Bible reveals the Son of God, who in turn reveals the Holy Spirit of Truth, who, in turn, reveals the parts of the puzzle I was put on this earth to complete.

The rest of this chapter is just more demonstration of Rhodes' obsession with the bizarre notion that all Freemasons have to believe everything written in every "holy book" of every "religion" in the world; or else its an exposition of his own separatist Neofundamentalist theology, which is as out of touch with mainstream Christianity as it is with Freemasonry.

In the Grand Lodge of Washington, the Great Light of Freemasonry is the *Holy Bible, King James Version*. Any other sectarian beliefs another Freemason may have beyond "one ever living and true God and in a transition to a future life" is really none of my business nor is it the concern of Freemasonry.

7. God: The Great Architect of the Universe

On Page 105, Rhodes begins this chapter with a false assumption he has been making throughout the book when he says, "*A key requirement of joining a Masonic Lodge is that one must subscribe to belief in a Supreme Being.*"

The "*key requirement*" is not that the Freemason should believe in "a" Supreme Being, but that he must believe in "the" Supreme Being. It's a subtle but very significant distinction. "A Supreme Being" is another oxymoron, another of Rhodes' absurdities, like the supposed existence of "*another god, another Jesus, or another gospel.*"

Unless you are an atheist, then you already know that the one and only Supreme Being is God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth. He is the Great Architect of the Universe, its Grand Designer, Creator, and Sustainer. He is unique in that He is the only omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent existence, ever. I choose to call Him "God", and I respect other peoples' right to call Him whatever they feel is appropriate.

Rhodes continues, "*Masonic literature gives the distinct impression that the Supreme Being of the Masonic Lodge is essentially unknowable and, consequently, inoffensive.*" I don't understand that concept. The Masonic literature I read, the Great Light of Masonry, the *Holy Bible, King James Version* is full of story after story where God, "*the Supreme Being of the Masonic Lodge*" (the one and only Supreme Being) speaks to, walks with, and reveals himself to people right here on earth. He constantly reveals his expectations of us and sends spirits and angels to guide us. In fact there are only a few things about Him we don't know, such as His name, where He lives (*i.e.*, specifically where heaven is), where He came from, or why He chose some of us to participate in the Divine Plan with Him.

On Page 128, Rhodes says, "*I could not close this chapter without noting that Masons are, in some of their rituals, guilty of blasphemy -- whether they are aware of it or not. Blasphemy specifically involves irreverence toward God and often entails the act of claiming for human beings the attributes or prerogatives of deity.*" He then goes on to expound about his perception of the opening of the "seven seals" of the 17th Degree of the Scottish Rite, and the use of holy names for God as passwords or secret words. He uses the examples of Jehovah, Adonai, and Immanuel.

Even a novice Bible student should be able to tell you that neither *Jehovah, Adonai, nor Immanuel* are "holy names" for God. Jehovah is an attempt to make a pronounceable English name out of the Tetragrammaton *yhvh*, which is neither pronounceable nor a name, but *represents* the person of God the Father in the Hebrew Bible, by adding vowels from the word *adonai*, which itself means "lord", and is substituted and pronounced in place of the Tetragrammaton when a Jew reads the Torah in Hebrew. *Immanuel* means "God is with us" or idiomatically, "our Savior".

Matthew 1:23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Note that it is not the Christ Child himself who is called *Emmanuel*, but it is the Christ Child's name that is called *emmanuel*. Mary and Joseph named their son "yeshua" which means "God saves."

Rhodes continues, "*To so casually use such holy names of God as secret words or passwords shows great disrespect.*" Rhodes has a Doctorate in Theology, so he can't pretend that he isn't intentionally misrepresenting these words as "*holy names*" or "*secret words.*" If they are secret, how could he know them?

Rhodes concludes this chapter stating, "*Masons are also guilty of idolatry. One scholar has noted that idolatry 'does not consist in bodily kneeling before a material image; it consists in worshipping God under any other conception of him [sic] than that which is set before us in the gospels...'*" That one "scholar" was -- you guessed it -- Walton Hanna, the same disgruntled obsessed, former Anglican priest exposed earlier.

Since Freemasons Lodges do not permit worship of any kind, including worship of the one, true, Almighty God revealed in the *Holy Bible, King James Version* that is the Great Light of Freemasonry in the Grand Lodge of Washington, then there is no idolatry practiced there at all.

Rhodes concludes, "*Truly, Masonic idolatry is deadly since eternal salvation is found only in the one true God of the Bible.*" The only idolatry I have seen so far is Ron Rhodes' claim that his own separatist Neofundamentalist perception of the Bible is the only "true" perception. Christian anti-Masons like Rhodes go to great lengths to try claim Freemasons really can't be Christians because we supposedly believe in a pantheon of gods that denies the Trinitarian nature of the Godhead. At the same time, Christian anti-Masons like Anthony Grigor-Scott go to great lengths to prove Freemasons can't be Christians because we "*are for the most part Trinitarians, and the Trinity is of the devil.*"

Once again, it's no surprise that the testimony of false witnesses contradict each other.

8. *Masonry's Connection to Paganism and the Mystery Religions*

This chapter is just another example of Rhodes' self-contradictions. After convincing us not just once, but twice that the origin of Freemasonry began in London in 1717, and that "*it is not true that there is a direct, unbroken historic line of development between these ancient religions and modern Masonry.*" I thought we already agreed in Chapter 3 that other claims that have been made to find the origin of Freemasonry in ancient Egypt, or in the Essenes, Zoroastrians, Chaldeans, "*and especially the Phoenicians*" were all "*wild legends*".

Who is the great source for claiming "*The ancient pagan mystery religions practiced in Egypt, Asia Minor, and later in Greece appear to have formed the religious basis of much Masonic teaching, symbol, and ritual, although no direct link can be established.*"? None other than the infamous libel defendants Ankerberg and Weldon. And who is quoted to say "*Freemasonry is the religion of the mysteries translated into a new and more modern ceremonial...*"? Martin Wagner from his 1910 book *Freemasonry: An Interpretation* -- only six years short of being a full century out of date!

Rhodes then goes off on another of his unrelated tangents, trying to show the incompatibility between the pagan mystery religions and Judeo/Christianity -- *as if there were ever any doubt.*

Masonic Lodges in the Grand Lodge of Washington are dedicated to St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist. The Volume of Sacred Law on the altar is the *Holy Bible, King James Version*. There are Chaplains to pray for the brethren and Deacons to serve them. The emphasis is on faith in God, hope in immortality, and charity for all mankind. From which of "these old religions" did Freemasonry "borrow some of its ideas and rituals"?

Rhodes concludes this chapter, saying: "*God's message -- not just to Masons, but to all people everywhere -- is this: There is none like me in all the earth; therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord God Almighty.*" This is a concise statement of Rhodes' separatist Neofundamentalist theology and the real premise of the book. And I think Rhodes' failure to cite the Chapter and Verse of this statement says volumes. The first clause is from Isaiah 46:9, the second from 2 Corinthians 6:17. It reminds me of my Hermeneutics class, where I learned to never remove clauses from their context when quoting from the Bible or else you find yourself committing the sin of eisogesis: *Judas went and hanged himself. Then said Jesus Go, and do thou likewise. (Matthew 27:5 and Luke 10:37)*

One more time, I am a Christian and a Freemason, and none of this nonsense about the beliefs and worship of other religions applies to me or any other Christian in the Grand Lodge of Washington.

9. Whatever Happened to Jesus?

On Page 151 Rhodes makes this statement, "*The deity of Christ is either completely denied or greatly downplayed within Masonic circles.*" That is really going to come as a surprise to my friend, Past Grand Chaplain, and retired Anglican Archbishop, Venerable or Most Reverend, and Very Worshipful "Bud" Robinson. Lets see how we downplay the deity of Christ: first we dedicate our Lodges to St. John the Baptist (the harbinger of Jesus as the Messiah) and St. John the Evangelist (the identifier of Jesus as the messiah), then we use the *Holy Bible, King James Version* as, dare I say it, our Masonic Bible and Great Light.

Rhodes continues this absurdity by saying, "*Since not all Masons believe in Jesus, calling on Jesus might be offensive to some.*" Wait a minute! Did I miss something important here? Didn't Ron Rhodes just spend two whole chapters trying to convince you and I that Freemasons don't draw such distinctions, that it doesn't matter to Freemasons what name you call God by, and that to Freemasons, Christianity is interchangeable with Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, even pagan religions? So if Christianity is interchangeable with the rest, your personal path to salvation is not important, and the name by which you call God doesn't matter, *then why would anyone in a Masonic Lodge take offense?*

After all, that wouldn't be any more offensive than say, asking your Jewish friends to come for dinner and then forcing them to eat clam chowder and stuffed pork chops. Oh, I'm sorry. I almost forgot. To separatist Neofundamentalist Christians, "come out from them and be separate" means they can't have any Jewish friends. Or Catholic friends. Or Jehovah's Witness friends. Or Mormon friends. Consider this part of the Statement of Faith from Bible Discernment Ministries, another anti-everyone-but-us web site):

We also believe in the separation from detractors of orthodox doctrine; unbiblical ecclesiastical practices (i.e., neo-evangelicalism, ecumenism, ecclesiastical apostasy, modernism/liberalism, and the charismatic movement), immoral unrepentant "believers," and the state. Moreover, we believe that Christians are commanded by Scripture to withdraw from professing brethren who enter into memberships, affiliations, and fellowships (including evangelistic crusades, youth movements, mission agencies, schools, etc.) which seek to unite separatist fundamentalists with those who do not obey the Biblical teachings on separation.

On Page 154 lists a series of three Bible references and indicates, "*There is no doubt that the Masonic deletion of Jesus' name from Scripture verses violates the spirit of these commands of God.*" The only problem with this is, I can't find these Scripture verses in any of the ritual of the Grand Lodge of Washington. So I looked up the three separate endnote references and guess what? All three verses came from the same place. An obscure Masonic ritual? An 18th-Century theosophist's idea of Freemasonry? A clandestine European Grand Lodge? No. All three came from a single source, *The Secret teachings of the Masonic Lodge*, more anti-Masonic hogwash by our favorite defendants, Ankerberg and Weldon.

This is the Christian Freemason's answer to "Whatever Happened to Jesus?":

He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven; and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

10. Redefining Sin and Salvation: Part 1

On Page 176, Rhodes says, "*The Masonic view of salvation is works-oriented from beginning to end. A man earns salvation by living according to whatever holy book he subscribes to (the Christian Bible, the Hindu Vedas, or the Muslim Koran, for example).*"

I really don't know how to respond to this kind of statement. I can only speak for the Grand Lodge of Washington, where the Great Light is the *Holy Bible, King James Version*. That means my only path to salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ by the grace of God as revealed in the Bible. I can't speak for any Freemasons other than myself, or Grand Lodges in other countries that might use different books as their Volume of the Sacred Law. When I was Grand Bible Bearer, it was my honor to carry the official Bible in all the Grand Lodge official functions. The only book I ever carried was the *Holy Bible, King James Version*.

Rhodes quotes Jack Harris, a former Master Mason who said, "*in all the rituals that I have taught for eleven years, Masonry did teach how to get to heaven. They taught it with the apron I wore, by my purity [of] life and conduct... Never at any Masonic ritual did they point out that Jesus is the way of salvation.*"

What do we know about Jack Harris? We know he was a Past Master who quit the Fraternity to sell anti-Masonic books. We therefore also know that Ron Rhodes' allegations of "blood oath" penalties for revealing the "secrets" of Freemasonry are a sham, and that the Morgan Affair was a hoax. Harris says he "taught" rituals for eleven years. I was the Master of my primary Lodge three times, participated in of allegorical plays called degrees, and presided over dozens of business meetings, and I never once "taught" a ritual. Some anti-Masons are critical of the lectures of the Entered Apprentice and Master Mason degrees, where we are told in the former that:

The covering of a Lodge is no less than the cloudy canopy or starry-decked Heaven, where all good Masons hope at last to arrive by the aid of that theological ladder which Jacob in his vision saw extending from earth to heaven, the three principle rounds of which are denominated Faith, Hope, and Charity, and admonish us to have Faith in God, Hope in immortality, and Charity for all mankind.

and in the latter:

...justice will sooner or later overtake us, and although our thoughts, words and actions may be hidden from the eyes of men, yet that All-Seeing Eye, whom the sun, moon and stars obey ... pervades the inmost recesses of the human heart, and will reward us according to our merits.

Genesis 28:10-17 And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

Of course, every Christian knows that Jacob's Ladder was actually a prophetic vision of Christ, as revealed by St. John the Evangelist, one of the two Patron Saints of Freemasonry.

John 1:51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

Some anti-Masons, like Jack Harris, go so far as to say, "*But Christians know it is the Person of Jesus Christ who will reward men according to their faith.*" Is that what the Bible really says? From the Great Light of Freemasonry, the *Holy Bible, King James Version*:

Proverbs 24:12 If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?

Psalms 33:13-22 The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works. There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name. Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

Matthew 16:27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

2 Corinthians 5:9-10 9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Revelation 20:11-15 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

RE 22:12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

While the gift of salvation is provided through faith in God, the Bible clearly and repeatedly states that each man's heavenly reward is based solely on "his works", "his deeds", "what he has done." It's a subtle but important distinction: In Masonic ritual, Faith, Hope, and Charity are denoted as the "principle rounds," or most important steps of Jacob's ladder, but they are definitely not the only rounds.

Freemasonry does not “provide” the “faith” (*Psalms 33:15 He fashions their hearts individually* (NKJ)); nor does Freemasonry “guarantee” immortality (it only instructs the Mason to have the “hope” of the same). What Freemasonry does provide is plenty of opportunities to provide “charity to all mankind,” which, according to 1 Corinthians 13:13 is “the greatest of these.”

*We are climbing Jacob's ladder,
We are climbing Jacob's ladder,
We are climbing Jacob's ladder,
Soldiers of the cross.*

*Every round goes higher, higher,
Every round goes higher, higher,
Every round goes higher, higher,
Soldiers of the cross.*

-- Negro Spiritual]

Rhodes continues, "*One of the closing prayers used in the Lodge includes words that point to the works-oriented salvation of Freemasonry: 'May we so practice thy precepts, that we may finally obtain thy promises, and find an entrance through the gates of the into the temple and city of our God.'*" In order to respond to this false claim of "works-oriented salvation", we need to examine the whole closing prayer, taken from the *Washington Monitor and Freemason's Guide*:

Supreme Architect of the Universe, as we are now about to separate, accept our humble praises and the gratitude of our hearts for the many mercies and blessings Thy bountiful goodness has conferred upon us. Pardon we beseech Thee, whatever Thou has seen amiss in us, and continue to us Thy presence, protection, and blessing. May all our irregular passions be subdued, and may we daily increase in Faith, Hope, and Charity; more especially that Charity which is the bond of peace and the perfection of every virtue. May we practice Thy precepts, that we may obtain the fulfillment of Thy promises, and gain an entrance through the gates into the Temple and City of our God. Amen!

Although I have no Degrees in Theology, my understanding of "works-oriented salvation" is the idea that one can get to heaven simply by doing good things for one's fellow man, and that God will count those things as righteousness in place of believing in Jesus Christ as defined by John 3:16,18:

John 3:16,18 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ...He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

I think you have to stretch pretty far to make this prayer into a "works-oriented salvation". To the Trinitarian Christian, the Prayer at Closing acknowledges that the universe has a Supreme Architect (not several architects) of the Universe (the Godhead), humbly asks God to accept our praise and our thanks, asks God to forgive our trespasses and to deliver us from evil, and asks God to help us increase our faith in Him, hope of immortality, and charity for all mankind. What does it mean "to practice Thy precepts"? Where does the Freemason find "Thy precepts"? Once again, in my jurisdiction, its the *Holy Bible, King James Version*.

In this book much has been made of the possibility for non-Christians to fashion the prayers, degrees, and rituals of Freemasonry into some kind of polytheistic worship service. Quite frankly, without going to ridiculous extremes, I don't see how that's possible. For me, using the *Holy Bible, King James Version* as the Great Light precludes the possibility of the "entrance through the gates into the Temple and City of our God" being anything other than the person of Jesus Christ.

I submit that in this book it is Ron Rhodes, not Freemasonry, that is attempting to redefine sin and salvation. So far at least, instead of *Reasoning from the Scriptures with Masons*, the book would have been better titled *An Exposition of My Separatist Neofundamentalist Theology Using 19th-Century Freemasonry as My Whipping Boy*.

Redefining Sin and Salvation: Part 2

Originally, I was going to conclude this review here because I thought I had wasted enough time, but when I read this next section I was simply flabbergasted

Luke 10:30-37: The Good Samaritan

RRMV: Rhodes quotes the passages here, then says "Masons often assert..."

RRBV: Rhodes says, "This passage has nothing to do with salvation. It only deals with how to treat other people. More precisely, Jesus was teaching that when you see someone in need, and you have the means of helping that person in need, then you should help that person. However if the Mason thinks that by helping other people he is earning entrance into the Celestial Lodge Above, then that is wrong."

This is where the gloves come off. Rhodes has spent 194 pages insulting, inciting, and falsely accusing by spewing some of the most vicious, slanderous, venom I have ever heard come out of the mouth of someone claiming to be a Christian, against some of the kindest, gentlest, and most loving Christian men I have ever met. Now I am going to show you, dear reader, that Ron Rhodes is a wolf in sheep's clothing who doesn't know any more about the Bible than he knows about today's Freemasonry. Rhodes quoted Luke 10:30-37, but once again it is a passage quoted out of context and completely misinterpreted. This is the entire passage:

Luke 10:25-37 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

And he said, He that shewed mercy on him.

Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

Rhodes says, "This passage has nothing to do with salvation," yet it is the answer to the question posed by one who is described as an "expert in the law" (that means he had what was ancient Jerusalem's equivalent to a Doctorate in Theology from Dallas Theological Seminary): "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" That means in no uncertain terms that this answer has *everything to do with salvation*, just as every verse, chapter, and book of the Bible has to do with salvation!

Then Jesus asks him, "OK, Mr. Doctor of Theology, what does the Law of Moses say is the answer? How do you read it?"

"It says 'you shall love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind' and 'love your neighbor as you love yourself.'"

Jesus said, "You got it right. Do this and you will live forever."

"You mean, that's all there is to it?"

"That's it."

Then the Doctor of Theology said, "Wait a minute. I'm a separatist fundamentalist Jew so I only surround myself with other separatist fundamentalist Jews. After I studied the writings of the Prophet Isaiah over at the secret Hebrew Library in Qumran, I figured I'd better not touch any unclean thing. So when I suddenly realized that the Samaritans and Gentiles were taking over the neighborhood, I withdrew myself from all of the rest of that riffraff. So, just so I can be sure to get this right, Rabbi, please tell me who, exactly, is my neighbor?"

Jesus answered. "Let me tell you one of my special stories. My stories are special because they are short allegories, called parables. What makes them special is that even though the characters are fictional, there's an obvious lesson to be learned from them -- and at the same time, there is a hidden message that only my true followers can figure out."

"Shalom, Rabbi. I'm all ears."

"One day a *certain man* was *going down* from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he *fell* among *thieves*, who *stripped him*, *pierced him*, and left him there to die. Lucky for him though, a short time later, a *priest* happened to come by. Realizing that touching an unclean thing, like a naked, half-dead man laying in the street, would cause him to have to go through weeks of purification rituals, the priest not only ignored him, but he went so far as to cross over to the *other side* of the street to avoid him. A few minutes later a Levite, one of the men responsible for keeping everything in the synagogue clean and spotless, came by the same place. Realizing that he might lose his chance to go to heaven if he touched the naked, bloody body, he too crossed over to the *other side* of the street. But then a *certain Samaritan*, came to the place. But when he saw the *naked, pierced man* the Samaritan had compassion on him. So he *took the stranger in*, patched him up as best he could by binding up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine *as medicine*, and setting him up on his own beast. The Samaritan too him to a nearby inn, where the Samaritan took care of him. The next morning the Samaritan gave the innkeeper some money to pay for the stranger's *food, drink, and lodging*; gave instructions for the innkeeper to care for him; and promised to pay the innkeeper for any additional expense *when he came back again*. So which one of these three, the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan, do you think acted like a neighbor of the guy who fell among thieves?"

The Doctor of Theology didn't even have to think about it. He said "The one who showed mercy to him."

"Right again", Jesus said. "Now you go and do likewise."

When Ron Rhodes says this passage "*only deals with how to treat other people*," he clearly indicates that he is not one of those who understands the true meaning.

Mark 4:10-13 When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables 12 so that, "they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!" Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?"

It doesn't take a Doctorate in Theology to figure out the Parable of the Good Samaritan. It is explained thoroughly by Matthew 25:31-46. And it also helps if you know a little background. As we agreed earlier, every word in the Bible is important. God does not speak in idle chatter or through poorly selected words.

John 6:63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

Jerusalem was regarded as Heaven. This is where the Garden of Eden was. This is where Abram became Abraham by taking the bread and wine sacrament of the Melchizedek Priesthood, that Jesus would later repeat for his own priests, and would be replicated as the Eucharist (Holy Communion). This was where the Temple was and where God permanently resided.

Jericho, on the other hand, represented everything worldly.

Samaritans were people of the country of Samaria, northwestern neighbors of Israel. According to Ezra 4:2, the Samaritans worshipped the same God as the Israelites for a number of years, so after the return from Babylon, Sanballat, the King of Samaria, asked to be included in the building of the Second Temple. But the hardhearted, unforgiving Jewish leadership of the day refused their request, only allowing members of the Twelve Tribes who had kept the race pure during the captivity to participate. This became a serious international incident because Sanballat's daughter was married to Manassah, the grandson of the High Priest.

Eventually Nehemiah's separatist fundamentalist obsession with racial purity led to Manassah's expulsion from Jerusalem, so he, and a large band of other dissident Jews headed north to Samaria, where Sanballat built him a duplicate temple at Mt. Gerazim.

At the time of Christ, "priest" was a euphemism for "temple construction worker." 140 years earlier, Antiochus Epiphanes defiled the temple and killed all the priests, starting the Maccabean Revolt. Just a few years earlier, Alexander the Great had conquered the Holy Land, Simon and his successors were appointed as the new priesthood. When Herod the Great (an Edomite -- i.e., an Arabian) was appointed ruler of Israel, he appointed his own priesthood of construction workers to remodel the temple (and his own palace). These men were supposed to follow a certain code of ethics outlined in the Septuagint in order to be qualified to work on the inner courts of the temple.

To be fair to the priest, for him to touch a bleeding man or even look upon his nakedness could have serious repercussions in area of "cleanliness," which could in turn result in weeks or even months of purification rituals that could delay the temple construction (and cost him his life). Levites (descendants of the former priest tribe of Levi), were designated as the priests' assistants who were the custodians of the temple property and artifacts, so the same "cleanliness" issues and risk of his life would have been true of the passing Levite.

Is there any doubt in your mind who the "certain man" who "came down" from heaven-like Jerusalem to the worldly Jericho was? Who was between thieves, stripped, pierced, and left to die? Who was not only not helped by the separatist fundamentalists of his day, but was actually opposed by them? Is there any doubt who the Good Samaritan is, loving his neighbor? That he is the sheep of Matthew 25:33, who takes in the stranger, clothes his nakedness, and gives him food, water, comfort, a place to stay and whatever else he needs?

Ron Rhodes and his cult of separatist Neofundamentalists would have you believe that a Christian only does "good works" because he is a Christian first and the "good works" follow. I submit to you now that that is the worst kind of idolatrous, hypocritical, works-oriented false path to salvation there is. Because in Matthew 25:31-36, when Jesus describes the criteria for salvation, he says:

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

This is the part that is invisible to Ron Rhodes:

Matthew 25:37-39 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

If the righteous sheep are already Christians, why would they even have to ask when they saw Jesus hungry, thirsty, naked, a stranger, sick and in prison? Matthew 25:37-39 clearly shows that they don't discover why they are doing these good works until *after Jesus returns*.

Perhaps the most significant element of this narrative was the one Jesus apparently left out: Jesus never told the "expert in the law" that to receive eternal life, *he would have to convert to Christianity!* Jesus never told him that he would have to believe that Jesus was the personification of *yhvh* or the *eleyon* of the *elohim*; or to believe in a virgin birth; or to believe in the need for an advocate to represent him before God in the "great assembly of the gods" or before the "great white throne" of judgment; or to believe in miracle cures, speaking in tongues, handling snakes, original sin, celibacy, communal living, ritual bathing, baptism, holy communion, communion of saints, penance, or any other sacraments. Jesus never told him he needed to join a congregation or a church, start a ministry, become a missionary, not even to go forth and preach the gospel. Jesus' requirements were very simple:

Luke 10:27-28 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

He told the "expert in the law" to "love the Lord" and "love your neighbor," and especially to have mercy on the downtrodden. "This do," Jesus said, not "this believe."

Rhodes continues, "*This same Jesus that told the story about the Good Samaritan constantly taught that it is only by personal faith in Him that one can be saved.*" Then Rhodes uses John 5:24; 11:25; and 12:46 as proof texts.

John 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

I've read this passage over and over and I cannot see anything in it that remotely resembles "personal faith" or the word "only." In fact it clearly says whoever hears Jesus' words and believes in God the Father who sent him has everlasting life.

John 11:25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

This verse is not a statement, but is the first part of a question that Jesus asked Martha one of Lazarus' sisters.

John 11:26-27 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

Then she finds her sister Mary, who confronts Jesus with the fact that Jesus said "anyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die," yet although Lazarus believed, he was already dead for four days. Jesus tells them to remove the stone covering the grave anyway. Then Jesus prayed to God for assistance and apologized for praying out loud and in front of nonbelievers, something he told his followers to never do.

John 11:41-42 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

Then Jesus called out to Lazarus to come forth from the grave, which he did to everyone's astonishment. Then Jesus made this equally astonishing statement:

John 12:44-45 Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.

Once again Jesus says that the people who say they "believe on" him actually "believe on" God the Father, the One who sent Jesus. This passage clearly indicates that all the power of resurrection and the granting of salvation rests with the Father.

John 12:46 I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

That sounds good, except once again it is incomplete. There is an "and" following:

John 12:47 And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

There is one verse that does argue for salvation by personal faith, but it's not one of Rhodes' examples used here. Right before Jesus offers himself to the Father as a human sacrifice, he tells the apostles:

John 14:1-12 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

Jesus did not "constantly" teach this. This encounter is mentioned only once, in this chapter of John.

Please note: for me, as a Christian, being told by Jesus Christ even once that "no man cometh to the Father, but by me" is sufficient. So as a Freemason, it is my fervent hope that other Freemasons will recognize that this is the greatest illumination of the Great Light. Freemasonry does not permit sectarian religious contention or confrontation within the confines of the Lodge. So the best I can do there is to be an example of the best that Christianity has to offer. Outside the Lodge room I can do all the evangelization I want. But why would I? Nearly all the Freemasons I know are already good Christian men, despite the false characterizations by Ron Rhodes and others in this book.

12. Masonry's Great Omission: The Judgment of Hell

On Page 208 Rhodes says, "*The literature and rituals of Freemasonry often speak of the Celestial Lodge Above (heaven), and this Celestial Lodge is viewed as the ultimate destiny of all Masons as a result of their good works. By contrast, hell is not mentioned in a single ritual or ceremony of the three degrees of the Blue Lodge, the 10 Degrees of the York Rite, or the 30 Degrees of the Scottish Rite. The result of this is that many Masons think they will automatically go to heaven when they die.*"

Once again it's "many Masons think..." The Celestial Lodge Above is the ultimate goal of all Freemasons, and for Christian Freemasons that means heaven. Christian Freemasons do not pray for a substitute path to salvation, *via* their good works. The specific sectarian belief system for getting there is a matter of conscience to the individual Mason. Each Mason prays that God will subdue his irregular passions (worldly nature, in Christian terms) and help him increase in faith in God, hope in immortality, and charity for all mankind.

Rhodes continues, "*They are never told the penalty for rejecting God's true salvation in Jesus Christ.*" This could be the most unchristian, demeaning, and disingenuous insult to Christian Freemasons that is in this book. I, like most real Christians, am involved in several legitimate ministries. That does not occur in a vacuum. All of my friends and acquaintances -- including my Freemason brothers -- are well aware of the importance of Christ in my life. When asked, I never hesitate to share my testimony of how I came to the Lord, ironically because I took my Freemasonry seriously. As Grand Bible Bearer I wasn't just carrying some book around. And among the greatest witnesses of Christ to me were devout Christian Freemasons who used the example of their very lives inside the Lodge Room and their testimonies outside it.

Rhodes concludes this chapter with page after page about how God will judge humankind. Once again, I reiterate, Freemasonry is a sanctuary from that kind of sectarian divisiveness. It is an attempt at positive personal refinement, not a threat of eternal damnation that may or may not be a part of the creed of your own denomination's belief system. This for example is the Apostles' Creed, one of the few things that even approaches universal acceptance among Trinitarian Christians.

I believe in God the Father Almighty; Maker of Heaven and Earth; and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven; and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

I do not believe that adding a line to it that says "And if you don't believe the same, you're going straight to hell," is the best way to encourage nonbelievers to start on the road to true salvation.

John 12:47-50 "As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."

13. Occultism in Masonry

On Page 225 Rhodes says "Authoritative Masons acknowledge their heavy indebtedness to occultism. H.L. Haywood, for example, writes 'All Historians, at least nearly all of them, agree Freemasonry owes very much to certain occult societies or groups that flourished -- often in secret -- during the late Middle Ages.'" When did Haywood write this? According to Rhodes' own endnote, from a book published in 1923. At least Rhodes is quoting someone within the last Century. Pardon, me, but I thought we established not once, not twice, but three times previously that Freemasonry as we know it today was started by two Christian ministers and a philanthropist in London in 1717.

Before we go much further with this, it is important to understand what occultism is:

occultism n. belief in or study of the action or influence of supernatural or supernormal powers

Exodus 22:18 Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.

Leviticus 19:26 Ye shall not eat any thing with the blood: neither shall ye use enchantment, nor observe times.

Leviticus 19:31 Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 18:10-12 There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.

Malachi 3:5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

That's conjuring up demons or casting spells (sorcery), foretelling future events (observer of times), interpreting dreams or omens (divination), sacrificing firstborn children (pass through the fire), holding seances (consulter with familiar spirits), communication with the dead (necromancy). So what are all the following Bible characters doing?

Genesis 41:15-16 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it. And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace. (Divination)

Numbers 27:18-21 And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation. (Observer of times -- Urim was an oracle)

1 Sam 28:6-15 And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams nor by Urim, nor by prophets. Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her

And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor.

And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee.

And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?

And Saul sware to her by the LORD, saying, As the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing.

Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel.

And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul.

And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth.

And he said unto her, What form is he of?

And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself.

And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?

And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do. (Consulter of familiar spirits)

2 Kings 2:23-24 And he [Elisha] went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them. (Sorcery)

Dan 5:11-12 There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation. (Divination)

Acts 13:6-11 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus: Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. (Sorcery)

According to Ron Rhodes, if Freemasons do this sort of thing its called occultism. But like everything else, the definitions have to be changed if it's Biblical or in the Name of God. Joseph wasn't interpreting dreams, Eleazar didn't really consult the oracle for God, Saul the anointed of God didn't really ask the witch of Endor to conjure up Samuel the prophet from his grave under the ground. (Witches can't really conjure up dead people can they?)

And the Prophet Daniel, whose name means "my judge is God," really wasn't the "master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers" while he was a Prophet of God was he? And Paul really didn't cast a spell that struck a man blind because he was a harmless false prophet bending the ear of a gullible politician, did he?

This chapter is just more of his same inane and futile attempts to link Freemasonry to 19th-Century theosophists, proto-Christian Kabalists, pagans, oriental and middle-eastern mystery religions, and now occult groups from the Dark Ages.

The Bible is full of mysteries, undefinable words, unexplainable happenings, talking plants, talking animals, pillars of smoke and fire, all kinds of bizarre behavior from genocide to incest, miraculous supernormal and supernatural events, hidden messages, and secrecy.

But here's the thing -- *Freemasonry isn't*. There are no elements of the allegorical plays called degrees that teach any message or moral lesson that is in conflict with the lessons taught by Jesus Christ in the *Holy Bible, King James Version*. If there were, neither I, nor any of the other priests, pastors, ministers, deacon chairmen, or other good Christian men would have either joined or remained in this benevolent, philanthropic fraternity for one second longer, never mind their whole lives.

On Page 232, Rhodes issues this challenge, "... *Masons have a choice to make. Will they honor God and leave the Masonic Lodge? Or will they remain in the Masonic Lodge despite the fact that God condemns the occultism that is part of the Lodge?*" And he concludes with this note:

"Note: It may be that some Christian Masons, upon learning of the occultic connection with Freemasonry, may choose to leave the Masonic Lodge. In the process, it is possible, and even likely, that they may experience an elevated level of spiritual warfare. Be sure to share with them the scriptural truths contained in appendix C: 'Victory over Satan.'"

I wouldn't hold my breath if I were you. How many Freemasons are there? From Chapter 1 we learned that there was somewhere between three and five million, right? Now how many documented cases are there of Christian Freemasons leaving their Lodges for any of the reasons stated above? One? Two? A dozen? Now ask yourself how many good Christian families have left their local churches because of this wave of separatist Neofundamentalism that has been rearing its ugly head for the past decade or so?

I'm giving you fair warning: If you came to me with these false accusations, incomplete scriptures, immature interpretations, and sources that are decades if not centuries out of date -- I would tip my head slightly to the left or right, slowly shake my head from side to side, and look at you with a look of sad compassion. Then I'd ask you if you'd like to come and join us in some of our upcoming projects. It will probably surprise you that some of them actually occur in Christian churches.

14. Should Christians Be Masons?

This chapter starts with a brief description of James Holly's request for an investigation of Freemasonry. Of course he completely left out the conclusions of Dr. Gary Leazer's original investigation. On page 238, Rhodes quotes *"Cult apologists" Mather and Nichols who point out that the Jehovah's Witnesses also hold to many 'tenets and teachings... not compatible with Christianity and Southern Baptist Doctrine... Why then don't Southern Baptists allow participation and cooperation with the Witnesses "as a matter of personal conscience?"*"

I think the answer is pretty obvious. The SBC Report on Freemasonry includes this statement: *"many outstanding Christians and Southern Baptists now are, and in the past have been Masons."* I don't think that statement can be made about Jehovah's Witnesses. And, of course, there's the tiny problem of the fact that Freemasonry is not a religion in competition with the SBC with salvation as its primary purpose.

On Page 239, Rhodes says *"I am convinced that one reason some Christians (though not all) join a Masonic Lodge is that they are biblically uninformed."* This coming from a man with a Doctorate in Theology, the author of a book titled *The Complete Book of Bible Answers*, who doesn't even know that a response to the question "How do I obtain eternal life?" is about salvation, or that "Cult apologists" defend *cults*, not Christians.

Rhodes quotes Walter Martin, Christian apologist and cult expert, who says *"To be sure, a few pastors teachers, and evangelists defend adequately their beliefs, but most of them -- and most of the average Christian laymen -- are hard put to confront and refute a well-trained cultist of almost any variety."* I guess that's why you don't see many books with titles like *Reasoning From the Scriptures with Oneness Pentecostals, the Christian Identity Movement, Christian Reconstructionists, Neo-Nazis, and White Supremacists.*

I think the truth is that most mature Christians are too busy in real ministry to waste their time arguing over minor, unimportant doctrinal differences.

From Pages 240 - 243 Rhodes reiterates all the points he has made over the past eleven chapters, which, of course, I have refuted point by point in this review.

15. Evangelism Among Masons

Ron Rhodes made one very critical mistake right from the very beginning. He acknowledged that Freemasons do many good things for people. You see, Jesus said:

John 15:1-17 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another.

Jesus says he is the true vine and his Father is the vintner. God the Father doesn't care what you call yourself, he only cares that you bear fruit. And if you don't bear fruit you're dead wood. Every branch that bears fruit gets pruned so it can produce even more. Even more than that, Jesus says that without Him, you can't produce any fruit at all -- and the abundance of the fruit is how God shows his approval.

First there was a Blue Lodge, then a York Rite, then a Scottish Rite, then Eastern Star, Grotto, Shrine, and on and on as the vine of Freemasonry produced more and more fruit, providing first for widows and orphans, and then branching out to include service to the less-fortunate children, elderly, and disabled of this world.

If Ron Rhodes really believed the Bible, then he'd know why my little Lodge of 65 members is doing the Second Degree for six candidates next Saturday, and why the cottage industry of anti-Masonry is making almost no headway in its quest trying to turn reasonable Christians into some new incarnation of the Pharisees using a new version of the Inquisition that has already started by persecuting Freemasons, Roman Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Mormons. Eventually Rhodes will target your denomination, unless, of course, you belong to a real cult like the People's Temple, Branch Davidians, Heaven's Gate, Unification Church ("Moonies"), snake handling Pentecostals, Christian Identity (Reconstructionists, Aryan Nations, Army of God), etc.

Evangelism among Masons should be pretty easy since you already know they believe in God, and most of them are already Christians. But you may have a tough time explaining to the Christian pastors and ministers who are Freemasons that you know more about Freemasonry or the Bible than they do, and that in spite of their lifelong dedication to Christ, they can't really be Christians simply because they aren't separatist Neofundamentalists.

In Conclusion

What really makes me sad is that all this false information about Freemasonry will be given to naive and unsuspecting Christians that will not immediately recognize this book for what it is: a presentation of separatist Neofundamentalist theology using buzzwords about Freemasonry as the come-on. And in the process they will waste their valuable time and money, both of which could have been used by a legitimate ministry that actually aids and assists their less fortunate neighbors, instead of attacking other parts of the Body of Christ that they really don't know anything about. Both Ron Rhodes and his readers could find better use for their time than this...

