



A Closer Look at

A Bridge to Light

AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS OF THE SCOTTISH RITE

Introduction

During the 1993 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in Houston, Texas, the SBC received a report from the then Home Mission Board (HMB) on Freemasonry. The report from the HMB identified *A Bridge to Light*, by Rex Hutchens, as one of the Masonic writings that is “undeniably pagan and/or occultic” [*Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention Nineteen Hundred and Ninety-Three*, p. 226]. The North American Mission Board (NAMB) Interfaith Evangelism Team, in this booklet, takes a closer look at *A Bridge to Light*. There are several reasons for this critique. First, *A Bridge to Light* is an official publication of The Supreme Council, 33rd degree Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Southern Jurisdiction, United States of America. Second, it is a contemporary publication. Third, the book is strongly recommended by C. Fred Kleinknecht, 33rd degree, Sovereign Grand Commander, Scottish Rite Freemasonry. Kleinknecht writes in the Foreword of the 1988 edition: “I believe that the publication of this work could truly be the dawning of a new day in our Jurisdiction” [p. vii]. Fourth, the book was unanimously approved by the Scottish Rite Committee on Rituals and Ceremonial Forms [p. ii]. And last, the book is now given to all candidates for Scottish Rite degrees [Jim Tresner, “Perspectives, Responses & Reflections” (Unpublished article, n.d.), p. 20].

A Bridge to Light presents the rituals and religious teachings of the Scottish Rite. In the second edition of *A Bridge to Light*, the following disclaimer was added to the Foreword of the book: “Every one is entirely free to reject and dissent from whatsoever herein may seem to him to be untrue or unsound. It is only required of him that he shall weigh what is taught, and give it fair hearing and unprejudiced judgment” [p. vii]. This disclaimer means that Scottish Rite Masons do not have to believe the teachings found in *A Bridge to Light*.

However, the disclaimer does not change the fact that the leaders of the Scottish Rite (Southern Jurisdiction) publish, endorse, and present for the consideration of its members the interpretations found in *A Bridge to Light*.

Scottish Rite Freemasonry claims to teach religious truth [pp. vii, 3]. It is a legitimate question to ask whether its teachings are compatible with Christianity.

A Bridge to Light

Denies Certainty in Religious Truth Claims

A Bridge to Light denies the certainty of religious truth claims [p. 9]. *A Bridge to Light* also endorses the idea that religious truth is relative [p. 69]. In addition, Scottish Rite Freemasonry teaches that dogmatic certainty is impossible [p. 103]. According to *A Bridge to Light*, “perfect truth is not attainable anywhere” [p. 107].

Response: While Scottish Rite Freemasonry claims that certainty in matters of truth is impossible, the Bible teaches otherwise. Jesus, for example, taught that while the Samaritans worshiped a false religion, God’s salvation would come from the Jews (see John 4:22). Likewise, Peter and Paul warned their readers of the errors of the pagans and taught the possibility of religious certainty (see Rom. 1:18,25; 2 Thess. 2:10-11; 2 Tim. 3:8; 1 Pet. 4:3). The apostles not only taught the possibility of religious certainty, but they also claimed to have found truth in the Person of Jesus Christ. But Jesus claimed to be both “the way, and the truth” (John 14:6).

A Bridge to Light

Argues Against Fearing God

A Bridge to Light teaches that God is a God of love who should not be feared. “‘I put my trust in God,’ is the protest of Masonry against the belief in a cruel, angry, and revengeful God, to be feared and not revered by His creatures” [Albert Pike, *Morals and*

Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, p. 196, quoted in *A Bridge to Light (BTL)*, p. 85]. According to *A Bridge to Light*, the belief that God should be feared belonged to a primitive time. In these enlightened times, Scottish Rite Masons are taught that a God of love should not be feared [p. 92].

Response: There is no incompatibility between the biblical teaching that we are to fear God and the biblical teaching that God is loving. Scottish Rite Freemasonry has set up a false dichotomy. The Bible clearly teaches that we are to fear the Lord God (see 2 Chron. 19:7; Pss. 19:9; 34:11; 111:10; Prov. 14:27; 15:16). The biblical principle of “the fear of the Lord” is also found in the New Testament. Jesus taught that we are to fear God (see Luke 12:4-5). The denial of this biblical principle by Scottish Rite Freemasonry is contrary to the teachings of Christ.

***A Bridge to Light* Falsely Claims that Christianity Affirms Dualism**

A Bridge to Light misrepresents Christian doctrine in several areas. For example, it claims that Christianity accepts the principle of dualism as taught by Zoroaster [p. 311]. Zoroaster was an ancient Iranian false prophet who founded the religion called Zoroastrianism. He taught that there are two equal and mutually hostile forces in the world. One is the source of all good, while the other is the source of all evil. [Walter A. Elwell, ed. *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Co., 1984), p. 334]. Scottish Rite Freemasonry embraces belief in this type of dualism. According to *A Bridge to Light*, dualism is found in both the teachings and symbols of the Scottish Rite [pp. 18, 81, 133].

Response: The concept of the universe as a duality is incompatible with biblical Christianity. Christian theologian Millard J. Erickson writes that “the biblical teaching on creation disallows any type of dualism” [Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), p. 371]. Dualism is incompatible with Christianity because it rejects the Christian belief that God is all-powerful (omnipotent). The religion of Zoroastrianism rejects the omnipotence of God because of its belief in dualism [*Christian Theology*, p. 414]. *A Bridge to Light’s* claim that Christianity derived its belief in dualism from Zoroastrianism is untrue both historically and theologically.

***A Bridge to Light* Claims It Is Impossible to Have Knowledge of God**

In its commentary on the 24th degree, *A Bridge to Light* claims that it is impossible to form any conception of God. It rules out any descriptive knowledge of God

[p. 218]. *A Bridge to Light* claims: “This knowledge defied expression in ordinary language; even to attempt it was dangerous because the use of adjectives ordinarily describing men when used to describe the Deity tended to lessen Him” [p. 248].

Response: While finite human beings will never fully comprehend the infinite God, it is not true that we are “utterly powerless to form any conception of what He is” [p. 218]. The Bible not only indicates that we can form accurate conceptions about God, but it also teaches that we can know God to the point of having a personal relationship with Him. The Bible uses many adjectives to describe God. God is portrayed as light (see 1 John 1:5), love (see 1 John 4:8,16), eternal (see Deut. 33:27; Rev. 4:8-10), immortal (see Rom. 1:23; 1 Tim. 6:16), almighty (see Gen. 17:1; Ex. 6:3), all-knowing (see Ps. 139:1-6; Prov. 5:21), unchanging (see Ps. 102:26-27; Jas. 1:17), wise (see Rom. 16:27), perfect (see Deut. 32:4; Matt. 5:48), holy (see Ps. 99:9), just (see Deut. 32:4; Isa. 45:21), true (see Jer. 10:10; John 17:3), good (see Pss. 25:8; 92:15), righteous (see Ezra 9:15; Pss. 119:68; 145:17), gracious and compassionate (see Ex. 34:6; Ps. 116:5), and faithful (see 1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Pet. 4:19). The Bible regularly uses adjectives that *A Bridge to Light* calls dangerous “even to attempt.”

***A Bridge to Light* Teaches a False Trinity**

Scottish Rite Freemasonry claims to believe in the doctrine of the Trinity [pp. 227-28, 230, 234, 236-37, 255, 316]. *A Bridge to Light* even refers to the “Masonic Trinity.” However, when it describes the Trinity, it becomes clear that it is not referring to the same Trinity believed by Christians [p. 227]. “They may also be seen as symbols of Faith, Hope and Charity, which are the virtues of man. These three virtues are expanded into what Pike calls the Masonic Creed, a concept of Trinity which brings to mind the Nicene Creed of Christianity discussed in the ceremony section” [p. 234].

Scottish Rite Freemasonry views the three Persons of the Christian Trinity as the first three emanations of a gnostic and occultic manifestation of Deity [pp. 133, 139, 236, 255]. *A Bridge to Light* redefines the meaning of the Trinity to the point where it claims to find the doctrine within all of the world’s major religions [p. 228]. Scottish Rite Freemasonry uses the assumed existence of the Trinity in other religions to justify teaching its candidates about several non-Christian faiths. The candidate is instructed that several pagan deities are similar to the Christian Trinity. These include such pagan deities as Agni, Indra, Vishnu, Brahma, Shiva, the Buddhas, Ahura Mazda, Spenta Mainyu, Vohumano, Mithra, Odin, Freya, Thor, Kneph, Khem, Amun, Ainsoph, Kether, Hakemah, and Binah [pp. 230-31]. This pagan understanding of the Trinity is also seen in its discussion of the 32nd degree of Scottish Rite Freemasonry in *A Bridge to Light* [p. 316].

Response: Christianity does not believe that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are “emanations” of the Trinity. The three Persons of the Holy Trinity are not the “first three” of 10 emanations as claimed by *A Bridge to Light*. The concept of emanations proceeding from God is a pagan and gnostic concept that is not compatible with Christianity. Since gnosticism believed that the material world was evil, it taught that the Supreme Being could not have created the material universe. Gnosticism, therefore, postulated a series of emanations from the Supreme Being. It was one of these emanations, not the Supreme Being, who created the evil material world [*Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, p. 181].

The Christian doctrine of the Trinity is also not the belief that God has three attributes. The “Masonic Trinity” is a complete misrepresentation of the Christian belief. This teaching, found in the lessons of the 26th Degree, is false. Christianity is the only religion that believes in the Holy Trinity [*Christian Theology*, p. 321]. The only way Scottish Rite Freemasonry can claim that the Trinity is not unique to Christianity is to redefine the doctrine so that it becomes something Christians have never believed. This misrepresentation of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is very objectionable. To compare the Triune God of Christianity with the Hindu deities Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva is not only blasphemous, but also completely misrepresents Christian doctrine [pp. 230-31]. The Bible teaches that followers of the true and living God are not to follow after the false gods of the pagans (see Gen. 35:2; Ex. 23:13; Josh. 23:7; Ezek. 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:20).

Scottish Rite Freemasonry not only misrepresents Christian doctrine, but it also distorts non-Christian religions when it falsely claims that they also believe in the Trinity. *A Bridge to Light* is incorrect when it argues that the doctrine of the Trinity is a universal truth of man [p. 236]. To maintain this position, it has to misrepresent the beliefs of both Christianity and the pagan religions. Its contention that the *Trimurti* of the Hindus is similar to the Christian Trinity is again both simplistic and false [Geoffrey Parrinder, “Triads,” *The Encyclopedia of Religion* 15, ed., Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1987), p. 40]. The *Trimurti* of the Hindus has nothing in common with the God of Christianity.

***A Bridge to Light* Denies the Uniqueness of Jesus**

According to *A Bridge to Light*, Jesus of Nazareth was not unique. The book teaches that Jesus was just one messiah among the many messiahs found in the world’s religions. Jesus is placed on the same level as the pagan deities Dionysus, Sosiosch, Krishna, and Osiris. “We see references to Dionysius [sic] of the Greeks, Sosiosch of the Persians, Krishna of the Hindus, Osiris of the Egyptians, Jesus of the Christians. The purpose of these varying cultures’ messiahs was to find in human form

a source of intercession with Deity; in particular one who, as a human, had been tempted and suffered the daily pangs of life and so could be expected to possess a particular sympathy and understanding; in a word, the messiahs expressed hope” [pp. 112-13].

Response: The comparison of Jesus Christ to the pagan deities Dionysus, Sosiosch, Krishna, and Osiris denigrates the deity of Christ. The words of Hebrews 2:18 apply to Christ and Christ alone. The Bible teaches that Jesus is unique. He is not just one messiah among many (see John 3:36; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5). *A Bridge to Light* attempts to read into these pagan religions Christian concepts that never existed.

***A Bridge to Light* Confuses Pagan Deities with the One True God**

A Bridge to Light does not distinguish between the true God of the Bible and the deities of the pagan world. It indicates that the only distinction between the God of the Bible and those of the pagans is a difference of terminology [pp. 31, 120]. For example, *A Bridge to Light* calls Albar of the Druse “the Most High, or the Deity” [p. 219]. In the 31st degree, Amun-ra is called “this great God.” *A Bridge to Light* quotes the following words in its discussion of the 31st degree:

“they do not behold the great god Amun-ra
their eyes do not imbibe the rays that flow from
his disktheir souls shall not be manifested or
made illustrious in the worldthey shall not hear
the voice of this great God,who is exalted far
above their sphere” [p. 301].

Response: *A Bridge to Light* does not distinguish between the deities of the pagans and the true God of the Bible. The gods and goddesses of the pagans were not just different cultural representations of the one true God. The gods and goddesses of the pagans, and their representative idols, are false deities, which the Bible totally rejects (see Ex. 20:4-5). The Bible also rejects the idea that the pagans simply worshiped the one true God but used different names (see Ex. 32:4-8).

No idol or pagan deity is a representation of the true God. They are all false deities and must be rejected by Christians. The differences between the God of the Bible and the gods and goddesses of the pagans are far greater than just a difference of terminology.

***A Bridge to Light* Teaches that Truth Is Found Within**

A Bridge to Light teaches that the soul of man is part of God [p. 220]. Therefore, it claims that religious truth can be found “by seeking ever deeper within ourselves” [p. 90].

Since *A Bridge to Light* teaches that humanity is part of God, it rejects the idea that human nature is evil or sinful. *A Bridge to Light* quotes Pike as claiming, “The heart of man craves only justice and love. Men are good.

Evil institutions alone have made them bad” [Legenda XIX-XXX, pp. 168-169, quoted in BTL, p. 292].

Response: The Bible warns us that “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9—see also Pss. 51:5; 53:2-3). Likewise, Jesus cautioned us that evil thoughts and deeds do not come from outside a person but from within (see Matt. 15:19; Mark 7:21). The assertion by Pike, that “the heart of man craves only justice and love” directly contradicts the teachings of the Bible [p. 292]. Jesus taught that human hearts have a tendency toward sin and evil. He also instructed His disciples that this tendency toward evil is not only caused by outward influences, but also by the evil desires of the human heart. The Bible warns us that human beings are not good (see Rom. 3:23).

A Bridge to Light also errs when it claims that “the soul of man is part of the Divine” [p. 220]. The Bible teaches us that humans were created in the image of God (see Gen. 1:26-27). However, the Bible never instructs us that humans are a part of God. The Bible instead stresses the distinction between God and humanity (see Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29). When God created human beings, He made something that was not Himself. This is the heart of the Christian understanding of creation.

Influence of Pagan Religions on Scottish Rite Symbolism and Ritual Admitted by *A Bridge to Light*

According to *A Bridge to Light*, the symbolism of Freemasonry has been influenced by several pagan and occultic groups [p. 1]. The influence of these pagan and occultic groups can be found in several Scottish Rite rituals. In its discussion of the 9th degree, *A Bridge to Light* claims that one of this degree’s symbols originated in the mystical and occult school of the Jewish Kabbalah [pp. 56-57]. Commenting on the 17th degree, *A Bridge to Light* quotes Pike, who indicates that two of the colors used in the degree are emblems of the sun and moon, which in turn are representations of the pagan deities Osiris and Isis [*Morals and Dogma*, p. 202, quoted in BTL, p. 133]. *A Bridge to Light* also claims that the 24th degree of Scottish Rite Freemasonry focuses on the mystery religions of the ancient world. Candidates for this degree are invited to compare the teachings of Masonry with these mystery religions [pp. 206-07]. In the commentary on the 28th degree, we are informed by *A Bridge to Light* that the eye of gold is a “symbol of the sun or of the Deity” [p. 247]. The book also explains the symbol of the gnostic worm as it is used in Scottish Rite Freemasonry [p. 251]. Of all the degrees of Scottish Rite Freemasonry, the 31st degree probably has the greatest uses of pagan symbolism. As *A Bridge to Light* explains, the ritual of the 31st degree is derived from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* [pp. 299-300]. According to *A Bridge to Light*, Isis directs the Masonic candidate to “the altar of the great god Khem, the source of life” [p. 302].

Response: Isis was the chief goddess in the ancient

pantheon of Egypt. Her worship was so popular that the cult of Isis was one of the last mystery cults to survive [Leonard H. Lesko, “Isis,” *The Encyclopedia of Religion* 7, ed., Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1987), p. 302]. Christians must reject the statement that the pagan god Khem is “the source of life.” The New Testament instructs us that it is Jesus, not “the great god Khem,” who is the true source of life (see John 6:35,48,51; 11:25; 14:6).

The recognition and respect accorded these Egyptian deities in *A Bridge to Light* is highly objectionable. Among these deities are gods and goddesses that are condemned in the Bible. For example, the ninth plague in which God brought darkness on the land of Egypt (see Ex. 10:21-29) was an insult directed toward Thoth, one of the moon gods [John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), p. 128].

It is highly objectionable to Christians that Scottish Rite Freemasonry includes references to these deities in its rituals. The Bible warns its readers that they are to have nothing to do with Egyptian deities. No Christian should ever participate in any ceremony or ritual that involves pagan deities (see Ex. 12:12; Deut. 32:16; Josh. 24:14; Jer. 43:12-13; 46:25).

Scottish Rite Uses the Occult as a Source of Religious Truth

In addition to using pagan religions as a source for its teachings, Scottish Rite Freemasonry also has employed several occult sources. For example, astrology, which is a form of occult divination, is spoken highly of by *A Bridge to Light*. The book even claims that the biblical character Enoch was learned in astrology [pp. 88-89].

According to *A Bridge to Light*, the 28th degree of Scottish Rite Freemasonry studies the occultic practices of numerology, astrology, and alchemy [p. 158]. The book also claims that the signs of the occultic zodiac are found in the 19th degree and associates them with the 12 tribes of Israel [pp. 163, 165].

A Bridge to Light claims that the occultic symbol of the pentagram is associated with the Greek characters “Alpha and Omega,” a biblical title for Jesus (see Rev. 1:8; 21:6; 22:12-13). Concerning this symbol, *A Bridge to Light* states, “It is the symbol of the Divine in man” [pp. 205-06].

Response: The Bible warns its readers that they are to have nothing to do with the occult (see Ex. 7—8; Deut. 18:10-13; Lev. 19:31; 1 Sam 28; Jer. 27:9; Ezek. 13:23; Zech. 10:2; Acts 16:16-18; Col. 2:8). The claim made by *A Bridge to Light* that the biblical character Enoch was learned in astrology is not supported by the Christian Scriptures. The book is disingenuous when it leaves its readers with this impression. It refers the reader to Genesis 5:23-24, which states that “Enoch walked with God,” and then *A Bridge to Light* states, “We are told he . . . was learned in astronomy and astrology” [p. 89]. The implication of this statement is that astrology is

compatible with walking with God. The Bible, however, indicates that this is not true. Astrology is a form of divination, and the Bible warns its readers that God considers divination an abomination (see Deut. 18:10-13).

The statements made about Genesis 49 and astrology also falsely imply that Jacob was a practitioner of astrology. A reading of Genesis 49 reveals that astrology is not the subject matter of this biblical passage. The statement found in *A Bridge to Light* that the 12 tribes of Israel are associated with the 12 signs of the astrological zodiac is both false and offensive.

Even more offensive is the claim made by *A Bridge to Light* that the Greek letters Alpha and Omega are representative of the divine in man. According to the book of Revelation, the Greek letters Alpha and Omega do not represent the divine in man but rather represent the God-Man Jesus Christ. When Jesus claims to be the Alpha and Omega, He is making a unique claim for personal divinity (see Rev. 1:8; 21:6; 22:12-13). He is not claiming that all humans are divine, as claimed by *A Bridge to Light* [pp. 205-06]. It should also be pointed out that the pentagram is one of the most common symbols of the occult and is used in countless magick rituals. Masons may use it to symbolize humanity, but other groups give this occultic symbol entirely different meanings. Satanists, for example, use the upside-down pentagram to represent Satan [Anton Szandor LaVey, *The Satanic Bible* (New York: Avon Books, 1969), pp. 129-30].

***A Bridge to Light* Teaches a Works Salvation**

One teaching of *A Bridge to Light* that is incompatible with Christianity is “the implication that salvation may be attained by one’s good works” [SBC Annual, 1993, p. 227]. There are many examples of this teaching in *A Bridge to Light* [p. 92]. For example, the book claims that immortality is “won by suffering and sorrow” [p. 142]. Its discussion on the 19th degree informs the reader that “a man’s actions are a bridge to his own immortality and to the future of mankind” [p. 165]. Likewise, in the material on the 24th degree, the reader learns that “reformation and repentance wash away sin” [p. 204]. In the 27th degree, the reader is told that “honor and service to others” is the “path of salvation” [p. 243].

The 31st degree recreates the ancient myth of the Egyptian Court of the Dead, where it is determined whether the soul of a dead person will be allowed “to enter into the kingdom of the gods” [p. 299]. In this degree, the Scottish Rite candidate is told that the actions of the dead determine whether they deserve to dwell with the gods in the afterlife [pp. 300-01]. According to the 31st degree, the hope of eternal life is to live a “most virtuous” life while on the earth [p. 301]. The 31st degree also endorses the belief that one’s eternal destiny is determined by weighing one’s good works and bad deeds to determine whether one is worthy to go to heaven [p. 302].

Response: The belief that one can do something to make oneself acceptable to God is a belief common to many false religions. Human nature leads people to believe that there is something they can do to earn eternal life. The Bible, however, informs us that this belief is wrong. The Bible warns us that there is nothing that we can do to make ourselves acceptable to God. Salvation is obtained on God’s terms, not by what may appear right to humans.

The Bible informs us that salvation is the result of the grace of God and that this grace comes to us when we personally place our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible also warns us that the grace of God is incompatible with any type of works salvation (see Rom. 3:27; 4:4; 11:6; Gal. 2:21; 5:4; Eph. 2:8; Titus 3:5).

The teaching that salvation is the result of good works (which is found in BTL) is highly objectionable to Christians. It is objectionable because it contradicts the teaching of Scripture. It also gives people the false hope that through their good actions they may be found acceptable in the eyes of God. This teaching of Scottish Rite Freemasonry is incompatible with the Bible because it does not point to faith in Christ as the only hope of salvation (see John 3:16).

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is that many of the religious teachings presented in *A Bridge to Light* are incompatible with biblical Christianity.

Bill Gordon, Associate, Interfaith Evangelism

© 2001, North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Alpharetta, Georgia

All rights reserved. The North American Mission Board grants permission for reproduction of this publication for educational purposes. Alteration of this publication is strictly prohibited. May not be sold for profit.

All other inquiries should be addressed to: Editorial and Design Manager, North American Mission Board, 4200 North Point Pkwy., Alpharetta, Ga. 30022-4176; or fax (770) 410-6006; or e-mail permissions@namb.net.

For more information contact Interfaith Evangelism via e-mail at interfaith@namb.net.

<http://www.namb.net/interfaith>



NORTH AMERICAN MISSION BOARD, SBC
NAMB

4200 North Point Pkwy.
Alpharetta, GA 30022-4176

*A Southern Baptist Convention agency supported by the
Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering®*