

FALSE ACCUSATIONS

ANTI-MASONIC ABUSE OF SCOTTISH RITE LITERATURE

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A Pennsylvania pastor urged members of his church to dissociate themselves from Freemasonry and announced that Masons would be ineligible for membership in his church. Using a 19th-century Masonic monitor as a source, the pastor has condemned the fraternity based on a lack of understanding and an unwillingness to hear the truth.

I recently read Pastor David S. Janssen's "Sermon on the Rituals of Freemasonry," which is a compilation of three anti-Masonic sermons he delivered on Sept. 28, 1997, at State College Christian and Missionary Alliance Church, State College, Pa. Anti-Masons are generally content to condemn the fraternity based on their misunderstanding of the sources they haphazardly select, and Pastor Janssen is no exception. In this instance the single source selected by Pastor Janssen was a 1914 printing of Charles T. McClenachan's *The Book of the Ancient and Accepted Rite* (first edition, 1867). It is hardly possible to understand and fairly judge any complex topic by exposure to a single book, and in the case of Freemasonry it is a sure way to get confused. So much has been written about Freemasonry from so many viewpoints that even intelligent Masons sometimes have difficulty sorting the credible from the incredible. It is perhaps, a good idea to begin by observing that McClenachan's book was only a Scottish Rite "monitor," not the ritual itself. As most Masons know, a monitor is a book containing some instructions, and selected, brief exoteric (non-secret) extracts from the ceremonies, lectures and rituals. Because monitors are intended for those familiar with the ritual, they generally do not provide the context of the selected excerpts, a fact which partially explains Pastor Janssen's misunderstanding.

Pastor Janssen also appears to be ignorant of the fact that since the founding of the first Supreme Council in 1801, Scottish Rite rituals have undergone numerous refinements and revisions, and differ worldwide today. Even within the United States there are significant differences between the ceremonies and rituals of the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, the Southern Jurisdiction, and the Prince Hall Affiliation.

McClanahan's book

Recall that prior to the Union of 1867 McClenachan had belonged to three successive Supreme Councils. The second of these was the Hays-Raymond Supreme Grand Council, mentioned above. On Oct. 20, 1864, this Supreme Council adopted a resolution authorizing the printing of a Scottish Rite monitor. Although it was not published for three years, McClenachan's book was,

in essence, the end-product of the resolution. Concurrent with the Union of 1867, when the two rival Supreme Councils merged, was the adoption of the ritual of the Hays-Raymond Supreme Grand Council, printed in a new edition. I have studied both the five-volume Hays-Raymond, or Revived Raymond, Secret Directory and the four volume Union of 1867 rituals. They are virtually identical.

My study has satisfied me that McClenachan's book was simply a monitor of the Union of 1867 ritual, which would be revised by 1870.

Relevance of McClenachan's book

Now that we understand its historical origins, we might ask, "What relevance does McClenachan's book have for us today?" As noted earlier, the rituals of the Northern Jurisdiction have been under continuous refinement and revision, and it is noteworthy that within just three short years after its publication. McClenachan's book was outdated. Beginning in 1870 the Supreme Council revised and adopted new rituals, and it has continued to do so from time to time. McClenachan's lectures, largely taken from Pike's first attempt at ritual (the Magnum Opus), have long since been abandoned. Dramas once set in ancient times are now placed in historic settings within the memory of those living today. Pastor Janssen and other anti-Masons have not bothered to keep up on these facts. Rather, he assumes that because McClenachan's book was published at least through 1914, it still reflects current practices. Using the Pastor's logic, reprints of any book are grounds to misjudge the groups which once published or used them. This would mean that reprints of the notorious Malleus Maleficarum (the "witch-hunters bible" used during the Inquisition) indicate that the modern Christian Church condones physical torture to extract confessions from people accused of "witchcraft." Clearly, this methodology is flawed.

Much of the pastor's misunderstanding results from the fact that he superficially read a monitor which was intended for someone familiar with the rituals as they were used from 1867-70. Freemasonry does explain its symbols, but the pastor has no way of knowing this. Although we do not confuse the symbol with the thing symbolized, this seems to be another problem with Pastor Janssen.

Concluding remarks

McClenachan died in 1896, and later editions of his book were published by his wife who, no doubt, considered it a tribute to her husband's many years of hard work in Freemasonry.

Earlier I asked, "What relevance does McClenachan's book have for us today?" We are of a different age, but this does not mean that his book has no interest for us as Freemasons today. It has been wisely observed that in order to appreciate our future we must remember our past. The value of McClenachan's book lies in its usefulness to the historian or student of the evolution of ritual. It includes some fascinating passages which give us a glimpse into an earlier type of Freemasonry, at a time when unfamiliar allegories and tales of knighthood and intrigue were used to teach the lessons of tolerance and morality.

Pastor Janssen, like other non-Masons, cannot appreciate the context of the extracts he reads in Masonic literature. He is ignorant of our literature. The 1864 Resolution which authorized the printing of the "Manual or Guide" specified that the context be intentionally withheld. This is because nonMasons do not have a right to read the full rituals. Not having studied the full rituals, Pastor Janssen assumes too much-far more than is warranted and cannot appreciate what he is reading, or who is speaking the parts. His condemnation of Masonry is as illogical as a condemnation of Shakespeare based on Othello's murder of Desdemona, or a condemnation of Christianity based on Bible quotations removed from context.

Freemasonry does not teach the dogmatic or doctrinal truths of any one religion, or teach the absurdities espoused by Pastor Janssen. It teaches truths upon which all honest men agree. Its love of humanity is seen in the many philanthropies which are open to people of all races and faiths. If Pastor Janssen and other anti-Masons choose to condemn us we invite them to do so on a basis of truth.

Pastor Janssen's Top Ten Misunderstandings

Pastor Janssen outlined ten reasons why he believes Freemasonry is incompatible with the bylaws of his church. Here are just a few examples to demonstrate his many errors. (The pastor's allegations are in bold, while Art deHoyos' comments follow).

1. Freemasonry freely uses pagan religions as an inspiration for their ceremonies. One of the hallmarks of early Christianity was its adoption and transformation of pagan ceremonies and symbols.

To be consistent, Pastor Janssen would have to Using the pastor's argument, no Christian should use a Christmas tree, burn a Yule log or eat gingerbread cookies, because of their "pagan origins." The use of Christmas trees resembles a practice forbidden in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 10:2-5), while the latter two symbolized human sacrifice and cannibalism.

give up the observance of Easter, as the name derives from a pagan festival celebrated at the vernal equinox, in honor of the Teutonic goddess of dawn, Eastron or Austron.

2. Freemasonry teaches Universalism, that all will be ultimately saved. Pastor Janssen found a passage in McClenachan's book which he, as a nonMason, interprets differently than I do, as a Mason. It reads, "The Masonic system regards all the human race as members of one great family-as having the same origin and same destination; all distinctions of rank, lineage, or nativity, are alike and unknown." I don't believe this passage teaches universalism (universal salvation). Rather, it reminds me of Acts 17:26. Further, I suggest that the words "same destination" can refer to a bond of universal brotherhood, irrespective of the "rank, lineage, or nativity."

3. Freemasonry teaches the principles of pagan religions as truth. In support of this, Pastor Janssen quotes from the "argument" or rationale of the old 25 (disused in 1880), which employed an allegory that mentioned "the fables of Osiris and Ormuzd, and Typhon and Ahriman" (emphasis added). Pastor Janssen objects to the use of "the symbols and allegories of the

mysteries," but not having read the complete ritual he seems unaware of the Old Testament setting.

4. Freemasonry teaches that the cross is not the most important symbol of the world, but rather the pentagram. This is a misapplied reference to the old 25', which mentioned that among the mysteries of Magism, gnosis (secret knowledge) and occult (hidden) philosophy, the pentagram was considered "the greatest and most potent symbol." The ritual does not say that the pentagram is the greatest Masonic symbol, or that it is greater than the Christian's cross. It merely makes a comment on the pentagram in the context under discussion.

5. Freemasonry teaches astrology in its rituals. The passage which Pastor Janssen objects to begins, "The world, the ancients believed Had Pastor Janssen paid attention to these introductory words he should have understood that the passage is describing ancient beliefs, not Masonic beliefs or practices. It's almost amusing that Pastor Janssen accuses Albert Pike for the "offending" passage. In a letter written to a friend, Pike wrote: 'I think that no speculations are more barren than those in regard to the astronomical character of the symbols of Masonry, except those about the Numbers and their combinations of the Kabalah. All that is said about Numbers in that lecture, if not mere jugglery, amounts to nothing The astronomical explanations of them, however plausible, would only show that they taught no truths, moral or religious. As to tricks played with Numbers, they only show what freaks of absurdity, if not insanity, the human intellect can indulge."

6. Freemasonry does not affirm the uniqueness of the Old and New Testaments. Pastor Janssen seems to desire some type of special Masonic proclamation on the uniqueness of the Bible. He expresses the dissatisfaction at the fact that the old 17 (disused in 1870), noting common motifs, suggested an interdependence of the Mosaic laws and those of other cultures. A course in comparative religion would help him see the similarities between Hammurabi's Code and the Ten Commandments, and the parallels between the Biblical Noah and the Mesopotamian hero Utnapishtim in the Gilgamesh Epic. These do not detract from the value of the Bible as the "inestimable gift of God to man." As the "Great Light of Masonry," the Holy Bible is afforded respect and admiration by all good Masons.

7. Freemasonry states that it is not a religion, then affirms that it actually is. In essence, the pastor says, "I don't care what Freemasonry says, I know better." Citing older versions of the 4 and 20, the pastor notes that "primitive" Freemasonry 'approache[dl religion]." Pastor Janssen should learn that similarity is not equivalence. The movies Ben Hur and The Ten Commandments are religious, but they are not religion. Similarly some Masonic ritual dramas are religious in character, but they do not teach sectarian dogma.

8. Freemasonry uses the Kabalah as a base of teaching. Although there were references to the Kabalah (a form of Jewish mysticism) in some early Scottish Rite degrees (and still are in some jurisdictions), they are presented in a form which is consistent with the setting of the drama. They portray one group's attempt to discover the truth. Just as there are many types of 'Christianity,' there are many types of "Kabalah." In fact, there was even a type of 'Christian Kabalab' which was used to convert Jews. Pastor Janssen, not having studied the rituals, is incapable of assessing the context of the discussion.

9. Freemasonry believes it alone is the guardian of spiritual truths given at the dawn of humanity. This refers to a statement in the old 8 (disused in 1871), in which it was stated that Freemasonry pre-served 'divine truth, given by God to the first men'. The context of the degree makes it apparent that they are the moral truths of integrity, virtue and charity. Symbolic Masonry does encourage their practice and maintains that they will better mankind.

10. Freemasonry contains material shared in common with Spiritualist groups. Pastor Janssen alleges that the double-headed eagle originated with 17th century alchemy. Actually, it was used by the Holy Roman Empire with the two heads looking East (to Byzantium) and West (to Rome). The symbol was later adopted by the Masonic "Emperors of the East and West" which was an ancestor of the Scottish Rite.