



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

This month we have been asked to consider a question which, at first glance, may appear to fall outside the scope of "Question Box," since the topics with which we usually deal are those that obviously have to do either with the scriptures or with our faith.

The question, which has been sent in, is this:

"Is it alright for a Christian to be a Worshipful Master in the Freemasons?"

However, if we read chapters 2 and 3 of the Book of Revelation, where we find the letters of the Lord Jesus to seven churches of Asia, we see that this question is not at all irrelevant, because those letters reveal a very real problem that had to be faced by the churches to whom they were sent; a problem that was created by the Trade Guilds which, in New Testament times, exerted a powerful influence on all life in the cities named in the letters - Guilds to which all who followed a particular trade were expected to belong. The dilemma that confronted Christian tradesmen was simple, but inescapable. They must either compromise their faith and join a Trade Guild, or remain

true to their faith and refuse to become involved in an organisation which recognised a false god as its patron. They knew that if they refused to join they would find themselves denied the right to earn a living.

A Brief History

To explain the connection between 'then' and 'now' let me point out that, even after these Trade Guilds ceased to be idolatrous in nature, they survived for many centuries: well into the Middle Ages and one of the most influential of them was the '*Guild of the Masons.*' Originally, membership in this Guild was restricted to the stonemasons who, in the 14th century, built some of the great cathedrals, and it was set up by the masons themselves, '*for mutual help and brotherly association.*'

It was some time later that the conditions of membership were relaxed to allow in wealthy and important people, and it was this broadening of the Guild's membership that inevitably produced a shift of emphasis in the nature of its aims from business matters to social activities.

Eventually, as membership continued to grow, and especially when members of the nobility and of the Royal family joined the 'Lodge' several Guilds agreed to unite to form '*The Grand Lodge of London and Westminster.*' That was in 1717, and those in that association were known as '*The Free and Accepted Masons.*' Less than six years later this 'Grand Lodge' took the name, '*Grand Lodge of England*' and, it is claimed by some, that from this body, which they describe as the 'mother lodge' all recognised Masonic Lodges throughout the world derive their origin.

A Status Symbol

It is not surprising that, because members of the nobility and people of wealth and influence were known to belong to the Lodge, merchants and business-men quickly came to regard membership in the 'Freemasons' not only as an indication of social status, but also as an essential aid to success in business. Consequently, Freemasonry gradually assumed the character of an 'upper and middle-class' philanthropic society, which, today, claims to be '*essentially an educational society, attempting to teach its members a moral philosophy of life.*'

At least, this is how it officially represents itself. But although it strongly denies that it is a 'religion' it has quite definitely taken on itself a religious veneer by making use of the Bible in its rituals, and especially, those Old Testament passages which relate to Solomon's Temple. As you will appreciate, considering its early beginnings among the stonemasons, details concerning the building of the First Temple have become the basis of the 'rites' and ceremonies of The Masonic Lodge.

Appropriate for a Christian

The brother who asked this month's question wishes to know if a Christian can be a '*Worshipful Master*' in the Freemasons.

First, although the Masonic Order claims to be an impartial philanthropic society, extending benevolence to any and all who may be in need, it is, in reality, an exclusive society. With its closely guarded rituals, its secret signs and its coded language - (proceedings, it should be noted, that are enforced by the taking of an oath. See what the Lord says about this, in Matt. 5:34-37) - it cannot be denied that Freemasonry is a secret association, and this fact alone should cause any Christian to ask himself if, as a follower of Jesus Christ, is it an organisation to which he can belong, much less, in which he can accept office.

The Freemason's oath, to which I have referred, is taken on the Bible, '*or the book held sacred by those concerned*' whichever book that may be, and the stated purpose of the rituals is '*to help to keep secret a Freemason's means of recognition.*'

Incidentally, I might mention that the word *'Bible'* is not used in the language of the Lodge, probably to avoid giving offence to non-Christian Masons. Instead, they refer to *'The Volume of the Sacred Law,'* and we are told that *'it is always open at every meeting.'*

Opposition to A Secret Society

To say that the secrets of the Lodge are closely guarded is no exaggeration and is not difficult to prove. For instance, in 1826 William Morgan, who lived in New York and who was a Freemason, threatened to reveal the secrets of the Masonic Order.

This man was arrested on a flimsy charge of theft and debt and was convicted and imprisoned. There was widespread suspicion at the time, that the charge was a pretext for silencing him and the suspicion was deepened when, shortly afterwards he was kidnapped.

Morgan was never seen again and what happened to him is still not known, but it was widely believed that he had been abducted and murdered by the Masons. Whether this was true, or not, the incident resulted in a wave of 'anti-Masonic' feeling in the United States, and in certain States several Lodges were abandoned. The Morgan affair resulted in the formation of the 'Anti-Masonic Party' about two years later, but the Party did not survive for very long, due to political changes in the United States.

An Unchristian and Deistic Organisation

Another fact to take into consideration is that the Masonic Order cannot be regarded as a 'Christian' organisation, since what 'religion' it represents is 'Deism,' which is *the recognition of the existence of a Supreme Being, independent of any particular religious creed.*

This is a philosophy which is very convenient and accommodating, and one which many people in the world today find acceptable, but it is not one to which anyone who calls himself a Christian can subscribe, unless he is prepared to compromise his own Christian faith and accept the popular view that *'one religion is just as good as another.'*

The Lord Jesus said, *"I am the Way . . . no one comes to the Father except by Me"* John 14:6. The liberal attitude of Freemasonry rejects this.

In fact, if we look at the principles of Freemasonry we find among them, that:

1. It claims that *'religion is the private concern of the individual himself, and what a man chooses to believe or not believe, is his own business.'*
2. It is *'open to men of all religious faiths, and the discussion of religion at its meetings is forbidden.'*
3. It demands that all its members have a *'belief in a Supreme Being.'*
4. It states that, *'A Freemason's God remains the God of the religion he professes.'*
5. It says that, Freemasons (of all religious persuasions) *'meet in common respect for the Supreme Being, and it is no part of Freemasonry to attempt to join religions together.'*

Notice the use of the description, *'Supreme Being.'* Care is taken not to use any name for God that could possibly give offence to non-Christians, and, I have to say that, it seems a little odd that an organisation which denies being a religion, should *'demand belief in a Supreme Being.'*

Opposition

Bearing in mind that Freemasonry developed in the Middle Ages, before the rise of 'Protestantism,' thus, when the Church of Rome held both political and religious power in the world, its clerics were regarded as the guardians of the Christian faith, and it was such principles as those I have outlined that, centuries ago, raised the opposition the Church of Rome against Freemasonry. That opposition caused it to be banned in

countries such as Spain, where, even today, Rome has great influence. In France the situation was quite the reverse. As a result of the French Revolution when Christianity was rejected and France declared itself an atheistic country, Freemasonry flourished.

It is sometimes said that 'Roman Catholics' are not admitted into the Masonic Lodge, but, the reality is not as simple as that. When I sought the view of someone who has been deeply involved in Freemasonry for many years. I learned that, in theory, a member of the Church of Rome might join the Freemasons, *providing he is prepared to 'swear on the Bible that he will follow the principles of Masonry.'*

But, once he learns the nature of those 'principles' it is unlikely that a true 'Roman Catholic' would be able - or willing - to make that commitment. In any case, according to the Law of the Church of Rome, if he *did* join the Freemasons, he would be liable to excommunication from his Church.

The Ultimate Question

For the Christians who lived in the cities of the book of the Revelation, the Guilds were not merely a subject for academic discussion. They presented a very real, life-affecting problem. A Christian tradesman had to decide whether to join, or refuse to join.

In these days Christians are under no such pressure. The question, therefore, which arises in my mind is simply this:

What can a present-day Christian find in Freemasonry, that the Lord Jesus has not already provided for him in His Church?

Or, let me put that another way: *What legitimate, personal need, experienced by a Christian, can be met by the Masonic Lodge, that cannot be met by Jesus Christ and the Church He established?*

Now - reverse the question! *What does the Jesus Christ provide which cannot be provided by the Freemasons? And I leave you to work that out for yourselves!*

If a member of the Lord's Church finds it necessary to turn to the Freemasons to find fulfilment, something is radically amiss somewhere!

*(Questions to: Frank Worgan, 5 Gryfebank Way,
Houston, Renfrewshire, PA6 7NZ, Scotland.)*

LAW & LIBERTY IN CHRIST

Sometimes Biblical truth is suspended between what appears at first to be contradictory statements. Galatians 3:24-25 says, "The law is our custodian, and now that faith is come we are no longer under a custodian." Therefore we are no longer under Law. Galatians 5:18 says "If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law" (RSV), (see also Rom. 6:14; Gal. 2:16).

On the other hand, Gal. 6:2 says we are to "fulfill the law of Christ" (see also 1 Cor. 9:21). Is this a contradiction? How can there be "a law of Christ" and yet we are not under law?

Does law here specifically refer to the law of Moses? Likely not, as in over half of its uses in the book of Galatians there is no definite article. The Greek speaks of "law," not "the law." This passage is not saying that we **once** were under an "Old Testament code," but **now** we are under a "New Testament code." Its aim is to refute the doctrine of justification by any code of meritorious works.

Actually, this passage (and others) indicates that Paul is talking about two different kinds of law.

The Old Testament law is a code of regulations. It did not save. Rather, it guided