

Freemasonry and its Critics

John J. Robinson

Virginia Research Lodge No. 1777

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Introduction of John J. Robinson

E. Robinson Lee, Worshipful Master: I am going to ask our Secretary, Rt. Wor. Brother Allen Roberts, to introduce our speaker since he is well acquainted with him.

Roberts: Good morning. I think all of you have seen this book, *Born in Blood: The Lost Secrets of Freemasonry*. We're fortunate to have with us the character who wrote it. My first association with him was through this book. And I don't mind telling you I picked it up with a lot of skepticism, I think that is the proper word. But as I went through it, I found much that was worth highlighting. So the original copy is thoroughly marked. It was a review copy, so I wrote a review for *The Philalethes*. I faxed a copy to his publisher. His publisher faxed it to him.

That same night about 10:30 my phone rang. The voice on the other end says: "This is John Robinson and I called to apologize." I said: "For what?" He said: "Well, you didn't like my title, and I want you to know that it was not mine originally." And I said: "I know that. Your publisher put it on there because by putting blood in the title it would sell more copies." And he said: "That's right." We ended up talking for well over an hour. Since that time we have become cussin' buddies.

The thing I think that impresses me more than anything else is that John — a non-Mason knows more about Freemasonry than 99% of us — a non-Mason who dared to take on characters like Stephen Knight and a bunch of other kooks who oppose Freemasonry — while the hierarchy of Freemasonry sits back listening to all the lies being told about us

and does nothing. Since the publication of this book, John has been on more talk shows, TV shows, taken on more of Masonry's critics, spoken in more Grand Lodges than more than 99.9% of any of our members. He is going over to Munich, Germany, to meet with the American-Canadian Grand Lodge in November. While there he will learn what's happening to Freemasonry in what was once communist countries. Back here he'll tell a CNN audience what he has learned.

At breakfast this morning I told him I don't know how I get surrounded with con artists, but he's a pretty good one. He is going to sell you on his version of Freemasonry. Later on, maybe in another year or so, I'll give you the real version. Here's my good friend, John J. Robinson, author of *Born in Blood: The Lost Secrets of Freemasonry*.

Editor's note: What follows is an edited version, at the request of the speaker, of the extemporaneous address to Virginia Research Lodge.

Thank you very much, Allen. As he mentioned, this morning he said, "I don't know why I find myself mixing with con artists." So I told him, "It is because of your strong magnetism toward brotherhood, seeking out those like yourself."

Actually, Allen was the first one to write anything about my book other than condemnation. His was the first friendly word that I had. Later another came from a gentleman who is probably in the room, Catlin Tyler. One of my startling experiences was to get a call one day from another gentleman who is in this room, Dr. John Boettjer, the editor of *The Scottish Rite Journal*, which in those days was called *The New Age*. And he said I want to do something but I think I should ask your opinion. He said we have a review of your book by our book reviewer which is somewhat negative. On the other hand, we have a number of letters from Scottish Rite Masons who liked what you have written. I think the answer is rather than having one man's opinion is to have two opinions. I thought that was wonderful that an editor wanted to be fair. He wrote a review that some of you may have seen or presented it as "Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down." Allen,

by the way, I really appreciate you bringing me to this group. It makes me feel a little better than some of the others where I have walked in as a total stranger. Here I have met people whose names I have known for a long time.

Allen is absolutely right. When I submitted the book it was not called "Born in Blood." I had used the title "The Curse of Jacques DeMolay." My publisher said, "I would rather you not start a scholarly debate on whether or not Jacques DeMolay had menstrual periods." The title finally selected did not refer to the blood spilled by Masons, but the blood of the Knights Templar spilled by the Inquisition.

Very early on I was startled to receive this medal, which I have worn to Masonic meetings, awarded by the Philalethes Society which was sent to me by Allen Roberts. And I thought that today would be my opportunity to do something in response to him, and it was a rather disappointing experience. I was trying to think what kind of gift could I take to Allen. We certainly can't add to his library. I got to thinking, he's got all of the socks and underwear he needs. I thought that winter is coming on and he will be sitting at that word processor. I know how I feel in my office. I decided to get him something warm to wear at the word processor. So I sent away for a nice snow-white sweatshirt to keep him warm and cozy. It arrived a couple days ago and damn if the printer didn't make a mistake. They sent me one with printing on it. And that's embarrassing to me. If you and Allen can ignore the printing I'd like for him to have this in hopes it will keep him warm in the winter, and just ignore what it says on it. Oh, you want to see what it says. It has nothing to do with Allen. It says, "I Am Not Opinionated; I Am Just Always Right!"

At the risk of being totally frivolous, I noticed your ballot box here on the platform, and there is one item of Masonic research that hasn't been revealed to me yet. Some of you may know the answer. I see the box and through the opening I see the white balls. I wondered if when a man joins a Prince Hall Lodge, or tries to, and they don't like him, is he "white balled"? The emotional pull would be in the opposite direction. I can see a guy saying, "Oh I got white balled!"

It's time to get serious. I told Babcock Lodge last night, the first group of Masons that I ever talked to was in the Valley of Cincinnati. And I asked if we could have any questions or criticism to come afterwards. The very first question I was ever asked in a Masonic meeting was: "Do you honestly believe that you can write effectively about Freemasonry when you have not enjoyed the emotional experience of Masonic membership?"

I especially remembered a young man who I had gone to high school with, had been in the service with, and became my college roommate. He was a very devoted Catholic, which meant of course that we argued incessantly. One subject for debate was the effectiveness of his Parish Priest as a marriage counselor. He assured me that his Parish Priest was extremely knowledgeable; he had received special training at the university level. He had read numerous volumes about sex. And I recalled saying to him: "I don't care if your Priest has read every book about sex that has ever been written. If he just tries it once, himself, it will change his whole outlook." So I have to admit an outsider does have some shortcomings.

I am frequently asked, "If you think Freemasonry is so great why don't you become one?" I do have about a half a dozen Lodge petitions in my desk. A number of rather highly placed Freemasons and men I respect have asked me to hold off. The reason is that I'm getting any number of invitations to speak on radio interview and call-in shows. I have two cable TV network shows and one radio network show coming up on the subject of Freemasonry, only because I can purport to show an objective point of view. If, for example, a Catholic Priest writes a book favorable to the Catholic Church, that's not surprising to anyone and that's not news.

In debates I have had with anti-Masons, mostly fundamentalist Protestants, about Freemasonry, the opponent is at a disadvantage because he cannot attack me personally, which is a favorite technique, because he has to say "they believe this," and I say "no they don't." I am speaking as an objective observer and he is not, which has proven to be a very effective advantage and more convincing to the audience.

I did have an interesting encounter with some members of Medinah Shrine Temple in Chicago. The same question of a Lodge petition came up, and one of the men asked me, "How old are you?" I said in a few weeks I'll be 66. He said, "Well you had better come in pretty quick because if you don't you're liable to have to take the Senior Citizen Degree." I asked, "What the hell is that?" He said, "Well, if you wait until you get up in years before you join, we have this special Senior Citizen's Entered Apprentice Degree. We present you with a 24-inch gauge and we teach you to divide your day into three equal parts: One for rest, one for looking for a men's room, and one for trying to remember someone's name." That's frightening because part three is already upon me. If I run to the door you'll know part two has arrived as well.

I want to pass out a print of an old, old piece of art work and see if we can look at it together from the standpoint of Masonic researchers. This is a painting by a Flemish artist by the name of Hieronymus Bosch. If any of you are familiar with the work of Hieronymus Bosch it is usually filled with demons, all kinds of weird strange devils and demons, none of which appears in this painting. Hieronymus Bosch was a man whose work was declared hieratical by the Catholic Church. It is also known that he belonged to a secret brotherhood of an anti-church nature. There are many years of his life that are simply missing, no we don't know if he ever got to England.

He prepared this one painting that is hanging in a cathedral in Rotterdam which was painted as near as anyone can tell about the year 1500. So we are looking at a painting that is 490 years old.

This painting was done over two centuries before Freemasonry revealed itself in London. Just take a look at that picture, it doesn't have a name. This painting is called "The Drunkard" by some; "The Prodigal Son" by others. The Smithsonian Institute calls it "The Wayfarer."

What we see here is a man walking, leaving behind a decrepit tavern with holes in the roof and broken windows. There's a man standing in the doorway holding his hand over the breast of a waitress, and she holds a jug of wine in her hand. Alongside there's a guy urinating on the building. Pigs are eating from a trough and an angry little dog with a spiked collar barking at the traveler as he leaves. He is approaching a gate which is worth a second look. Anyone who knows anything about gates knows that the brace goes from one corner to the other to make a triangle. This brace misses the corner, goes above the top rail and comes back forming a perfect square on top of the gate. On the other side of the gate is a milk cow, the medieval symbol for peace and plenty.



The Wayfarer - Hieronymus Bosch

Now look at the traveler. He has one trouser leg pushed up to the knee. You might say that is because he has a bandage on his calf. When did a bandage on the calf that did not keep you from walking require that you have a slipper on one foot and a shoe on the other? In his hat is a plumb bob instead of the usual feather. Certainly the easiest way to carry a hat is not in your hand, it's on your head. But the artist wanted the man's hood to be up. (We will come back to that in a moment.) So he is wearing his hood. Every knapsack has straps that go over the shoulders to support the load; but here the straps go around his upper arm, binding him as though with a cabletow.

So, here we have a Traveling man traveling from left to right, or from west to east. He is leaving a rude, crude world behind him to pass through the Gate of the Square to a better land beyond. Above his head in the tree sits an owl, the medieval symbol for wisdom.

All this may mean that all the Masonic symbols we see here are just coincidences, the damnedest collection of Masonic coincidences one could ever expect to see in a single painting. On the other hand, if these are not just coincidences we are looking at the first graphic evidence of Masonic degree work before 1717 — almost 500 years ago. No judgment has been passed. You are the first Masonic research body to examine this work. Feel free to use your own judgment.

I've brought this painting to make a broader point. If a man was not allowed to paint, carve, stain or in no way reproduce Masonic knowledge he gained, he might still be tempted to work it into art which only the initiated would understand. Those of you who have read *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* will recall that the authors dwell quite a bit on the symbolism in Poussin's painting of the Shepherds of Arcadia and other paintings.

In *Born in Blood* I mentioned a painting on the ceiling of the Royal Naval Hospital at Greenwich. That painting is a great allegorical painting of the Protestant monarchs William and Mary. In one corner two cherubs are holding up an architectural drawing of Sir Christopher Wren's cathedral of Saint Paul as a tribute to the great architect who had

also designed the Naval Hospital. Behind that drawing a cherub is holding a square in one hand and compasses in the other. Nearby, the papal tiara is lying on the ground. Is this another coincidence, or was the artist presenting an allegorical memorial of the architect's connection to Freemasonry? I don't know?

All of this is just to suggest to research Lodges that one aspect of Masonic research that I believe has never been addressed is the possibilities of research in art work in the late middle ages. It's simply a matter of having your head tuned in to the possibility of Masonic connection. When I was browsing through a Smithsonian magazine and saw that picture Masonic objects began to jump out and hit me in the eyes, so I thought I would bring it along.

I think that my own conclusions as to all the factors that influenced the origins of Freemasonry would be too long to talk about today. Those of you who read *Born in Blood* know what my feelings are.

But in looking at certain aspects of the Old Charges there were certain things that I could not fit with the concept of stonemasons in the medieval period. Among those was the charge that no Brother could tell the secrets of a Brother that could cost a Brother his life or property. I sweated and strained over that one. What secret could a stonemason have that could cost him his life and property. But the church council of 1276 decreed that anyone who was in opposition to teachings of the church — in other words a heretic — or anyone who aided a heretic, anyone who gave advice to a heretic, merited death as punishment. In addition, his house was to be burned or torn down and his land given to the church. There was no secular law that required that punishment. Such an old charge made all the sense in the world for men in opposition to the teachings of the church, but no sense as an admonition to stonemasons.

Another old charge that bothered me was that no "itinerant" member was to go into the town without having someone to "witness" for him. "Wit" in old English meant

"knowledge." The suffix "ness" indicated the possessive form. So someone who would witness for a man was someone who "possessed knowledge" of him. In those days, if a man was found to have no stated business in a town he could be locked up and then ejected from that town. If he had no money, he was a vagrant, subject to punishment. For a first offense, a whipping. For a second offense, a more severe whipping. For the third offense, death. The truth is that if a man was in that town legally, he had no need for a witness. At that time, it was illegal to travel from one town to another without a written pass that stated a man's name, his home and his reason for travel. In those days you could not go from Richmond to Charlottesville unless you had a pass. And if a man had written authority and a written explanation, why would he need a witness? Or steer him away from places where he might be asked questions? It would be necessary only if a man was on the move illegally and needed someone to cover for him.

A heretic on the move was just such a person. The brutal treatment given to heretics is almost beyond description, which brings as to the Masonic penalties. I find no sense in the Masonic penalties as applied to a stonemason. Here he is, spending all day cutting stones to fit a wooden template, and is cautioned not to mention anything that happened in yesterday's meeting or he could be disemboweled or have his tongue torn out. That makes no sense.

What makes a lot of sense is the penalty as a means to prevent a man from being subjected to medieval punishment. A scholarly Freemason has accused me of being too sensationalistic in my writing, but the subject calls for it. I did describe in detail the execution of the Scottish hero Sir William Wallace as an example to make a point. His captors pulled him up by the neck and let him hang until he was almost dead, and then took him down. When they revived him they tied him to a post. They castrated him, then cut a small incision in his stomach. They went in with a hook, and slowly pulled out his intestines, then dropped them into flaming charcoal at his feet. When Wallace finally died they cut off his head. Then they cut his body in four parts to hang in market places in Scotland. If someone could cause you to suffer that kind of pain and death by revealing

your name, what kind of oath would you want as some kind of assurance of security? And in the proper time frame the Masonic penalty is far less grotesque than the civil punishment, or the church punishment, that would be handed down by a secular judge.

The penalties have brought on one of most common misunderstandings, that the Freemason in taking his oaths is swearing to inflict these punishments on someone else, which is simply not true. No Freemason would agree to commit such barbarous acts, nor does he swear to do so. The only reasonable conclusion is that God is invited to do it. Such oaths have been part of our culture for centuries. As a child of six I would assure a friend of my veracity by saying, "Cross my heart, hope to die." Cross my heart, a religious oath. Hope to die if I am lying to you, not my seven-year-old buddy to whom the oath was offered.

As an example from history: Pope Gregory VII had violent confrontations with Henry, the Holy Roman Emperor. The Pope won and made the emperor swear to obey him in all things. Then, at the great victory gathering, the pope took a piece of the consecrated bread from the altar. He held it up and said, "May God choke me to death on this bread if I have done anything wrong." He swallowed the little piece of bread with ease, and the watching crowd went crazy with religious euphoria and cheering. They had just witnessed a divine miracle. It meant that God approved of the pope's actions because He had declined the invitation to choke the pope to death on the bread.

Another example of medieval oaths is the agreement made between Philip IV of France and Archbishop de Goth, who would become Pope Clement V. This was the agreement that set the stage for the suppression of the Knights Templar. The King said, in effect, "I will see to it that you are made pope, but you must swear to meet my terms." (Terms that included such items as the right to tax the clergy in France and the posthumous impeachment of Pope Boniface VIII.) The pope-to-be swore a sacred oath on the consecrated Host, but that wasn't good enough for Philip. He also demanded that the archbishop deliver up his brother and his nephew as hostages. The new pope's penalty

for breaking his oath would be the death of his family. Bloody oaths were common in the Middle Ages.

Frankly, although some form of punishment for betrayal would have been necessary, I believe that the Masonic oaths, as they survived, were largely symbolic and were not taken literally. I doubt that anyone in central England would run the risk of carrying a body in the bottom of a cart on a hundred-mile journey no that it could be buried where the tide ebbs and flows. If I'm right, those early masons meeting in secret had need for security, and a way to emphasize that need, up to and including frightening the new initiate. They were risking their lives to establish religious freedom. Here in these cells of secret masons were sown the first seeds of the ultimate Reformation that made religious freedom a matter of law.

The hypothesis made sense to me, but it was contrary to everything I had read about origins in medieval guilds of castle and cathedral builders. I had to confirm or deny the roots in medieval guilds, and for that I had to go to England. At one Masonic meeting a man asked, "you've only gone there once, right?" As close as I can recall, in the course of my business career and doing this research, I've been to Britain about forty times, but this trip was devoted to tracking the guilds. As a basic premise, I said to myself, "Either you believe in the *Regius Poem* or you do not. If you do, then Freemasonry existed in the fourteenth century." It was to that century, then, that I directed my attention.

I started with London. There is a formal guild of master masons there, but it started long after the fourteenth century. The records of that period had been lost in the Great Fire of London in 1660, so I decided to go to Oxford. Those of you who have been there know that, with its wide range of individual colleges, Oxford is covered with walls, halls, churches and chapels, most built in the Middle Ages, and for centuries had a great castle as well. Surely, if any city could have supported a full-time local guild of stonemasons, it would have been Oxford. The county archives at Oxford go back to the twelfth century, so I reserved a seat in the search room. I told the staff in advance that I wanted to see

any guild charter, any contract with a fourteenth century guild of masons, any letter, bill of materials, or other references to such a guild.

Upon my arrival, I was informed that they had searched their computerized data and had consulted with local experts, finding no reference whatever to such a guild. They were kind enough to call the librarian of nearby Burford, where the beautiful Cotswold stone is quarried. That gentleman said that if I wanted to find a stonemasons' guild prior to the sixteenth century I would have to go to France.

I next went to the city of Lincoln, which is famous for its medieval stone buildings; a lofty castle, a magnificent cathedral and what is said to be the finest collection of Norman stone houses and guild halls in all of Britain. The library, the university and the museum could not find any trace of a stonemasons' guild before 1526. I could only conclude that Freemasonry could not have been born in medieval stonemasons' guilds, because there were no medieval stonemasons' guilds. And if there were no operative guilds there could have been no speculative bodies attached to them in the fourteenth century. Masonic beginnings were an unsolved mystery. Later, when I met with John Hamill, the Librarian and curator of the United Grand Lodge of England, he told me that his own research had shown that there were no stonemasons' guilds in Britain at the time of the *Regius Poem*.

So, you might ask, what am I trying to do? I don't enjoy tearing down something that men have been taught, and have believed, that has given them great comfort. But I am suggesting that when all of the evidence is in, you may find that the real origins of Freemasonry are much more exhilarating, and filled with much more purpose and meaning. Something in which secret signals and passwords were vital, not just used for fun the way they are in a college fraternity. Something much more valuable than seeing Freemasonry as a social organization attached to operative guilds. Such social activity might be nice, but it does not hold the deep purpose that would cause men to guard their secrecy, to take sacred oaths with vicious penalties, and risk their lives for their dedication to some ideal or principle.

Part of my approach to all of this lay in prior studies of secret societies, because before 1717 Freemasonry was a secret society in the strictest sense of the term. I had lived for a year in China, the great mother of secret organizations, and had become intrigued with the subject. Some of you know that a secret society named the "Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists," called the "Boxers," staged a rebellion in China against all foreigners, including Christian missionaries. When the Boxers were rounded up and beheaded, the authorities thought they had wiped them out. What they didn't know was that the Boxers were a militant subsidiary of a larger, older secret society called the "White Lotus." Even the Boxers didn't know who controlled them. When the Boxers were executed, the parent company kept right on going.

There are certain characteristics of secret societies that appear to be almost universal, and they apply to ancient Masonry. Let's go back now to the Bosch painting of the Traveling Man. He is carrying his hat in his hand because the artist wants his hood up on his head. In the Middle Ages, men didn't carry handkerchiefs. The way a man was blindfolded, which, by the way, was a popular technique in street fighting, was to pull his hood down over his face. That was called "hoodwinking." The only place the practice lives today is in the sport of falconry. When the bird returns to the handler's wrist a hood is placed over its head. The bird is "hoodwinked" to keep it calm. As with many other terms, the meaning gradually deteriorated as hoodwinking came to indicate trickery, as did the other phrase based on that same act of pulling down the hood. You might remember this when you hear, "to pull the wool over his eyes."

What does this have to do with secret societies? In every secret society's initiation the candidate is blindfolded, or in the alternative he is not blindfolded and the face of every other man in the room is covered. There was a very good reason for that precaution. The secret society almost always existed for a political or theological reason, or for both, where there was separation of church and state. It was secret because what it was teaching, what it was trying to achieve, was against the law. So if a man's membership was revealed he could be arrested, imprisoned, tortured, even executed. On that basis

no member would allow his face to be seen by a new member after the oath was sworn. Then his blindfold was removed, or the covering came off the faces of the men in the room.

All truly secret societies function on levels, for reasons of security. The new man knows very little. He is often taught that the initiation team of, say, five men is the whole society. Now if he gets drunk, or is tortured, or just gets angry, he can reveal only the five men who initiated him — which is the reason the group examines him so closely. At this stage he might be said to be the equivalent of the Entered Apprentice. After a period of time, after he has been found to be trustworthy, he can be taken into the local chapter and learn much more about the society. Only now will he be a full member, a peer, or — in English — a fellow. Now he learns the passwords and signals that he will be able to use when traveling. That means, of course, that such signals must be standardized across the entire area covered by the society, which means that there must be communication among the local chapters. These communicators have to be the best informed, and therefore can betray far more of the membership than the fellows, who know only the men in their own chapters. These contact men with the broadest knowledge are the masters. They need the most protection, the most elaborate system to seek help and get it, which may be the reason why there is no Grand Hailing Sign of Distress for the Entered Apprentice.

The traveling mason has a catechism that consists of two questions and two answers. One Chinese secret society I looked at had up to fifty-four questions and answers, and getting any one of them wrong could mean departing this earth. The higher the man rose in the society, the more complicated his identification procedure became.

In the ancient Charges of Masonry a man shows up looking for work. If there isn't any, he is given up to two weeks of employment, paid, and sent on to the next stonemasons' lodge.

What I see in my mind is a man on the run. He is told to go to the next town, and to look up the blacksmith, the miller, or even the parish priest. He has been instructed in how to identify himself secretly. When he is recognized, he is taken to a secret place; a cellar, an attic or a hut, to provide what he needs most, a secure place to sleep. The most urgent need of the man on the run is secure lodging. When asleep he is helpless. If Arnold Schwarzenegger is asleep, Pee-Wee Herman can take him.

The secret lodge was the most crucial service provided, and since it was the most secure place they knew it was also the best place for a secret meeting or an initiation. When politics changed, and it was no longer necessary to run, the lodge room had no purpose other than as a meeting place. Ancient Masons didn't have regular meetings, and for security's sake only met when they had to; to deal with a crisis or stage an initiation.

That's a lot to digest, but I'm trying to say that I believe that Freemasonry had a far more important purpose than a social gathering to play with masons' tools. The most important purpose appears to have been their determination to establish religious freedom and religious tolerance.

I love the concept of men of all religions accepted as equal but — not everyone loves it. I have a document dated 1986 from the Sacred Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith — the modern name of the Holy Roman Inquisition — which explains why the Catholic Church is opposed to Freemasonry. The precise words are, "A Catholic man who becomes a Freemason is in a state of grievous sin and may not approach Holy Communion." The authority cited is the papal bull *Humanum Genus*, "The Human Race", promulgated by Pope Leo XIII in 1884. The pope objected to the Freemasons' acceptance of men of all religious persuasions. He would let no Catholic participate because the Catholic Church, being the one true religion, could only be damaged by being regarded as equal, rather than as supreme and exclusive.

This directive telling Catholics to stay out of Freemasonry cites just that one point in *Humanum Genus*, choosing to leave out its other major points. This is not surprising. I was so surprised by what I found in this papal bull that I was afraid of not being believed; so I reprinted the whole thing in the back of *Born in Blood* as an appendix.

This bull condemns Freemasons for believing that people have the right to elect their own ruler, and if the ruler turns out to be a tyrant, they should have the right to go to the polls and expose him. They are condemned, too, because they believe that people have the right to make their own laws, that there must be a separation of church and state, and that laymen have the right to teach children. And all this is in accordance with "...new principles which they call liberty." As I read one accusation after another I found myself saying, 'Guilty ... yes, I'm guilty of that!'

The startling realization to me was not just that the pope was laying all these "crimes" on the Freemasons, but that the fact of the charges was in itself a flagrant condemnation of democracy, of these "new principles which they call liberty." All that the Church quotes now is that little bit about being the one true religion, with no mention of the strong condemnations of democratic ideals; probably because the leaders have been forced to change their minds, or at least pretend they have. And even with that anti-Masonic ban in place, it is enforced with less than ten percent of the vigor employed to enforce the Church ban against contraceptives. In many cases it is just ignored. The Scottish Rite Valley of Chicago told me that twelve percent of its membership is Roman Catholic. One of the members of Cardinal Bernardin's advisory council there is a 33rd degree Mason.

Certainly there is still Catholic opposition. A Catholic professor at Purdue wrote an anti-Masonic book called *Christianity and American Freemasonry* to explain why Catholics and some Protestant denominations don't like Freemasonry. I asked him why, if Catholics can't become Freemasons, there are tens of thousands in Mexico, South America and Spain, almost all of whom are Catholic. The only answer I got was, "You can't expect me to know what's going on in other countries."

In the same book the author is offended that in the past the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite had actually accused the Catholic Church of being opposed to democracy. Bearing in mind what appears in *Humanum Genus*, I told him that I have discovered why the Southern Jurisdiction has said that the Catholic Church was opposed to democracy. It was because the Catholic Church *has* been opposed to democracy.

He also had to bring up the alleged murder of Captain William Morgan by Freemasons. I said, "O.K., that's never been proven, but let's accept it so we can get on with the discussion. The Freemasons, you claim, murdered one man. but if all the people murdered by your church could come back, they could re-populate Europe." He also threw out the fact that Freemasons had been among the founders of the Ku Klux Klan. I reminded him that a lot of Catholics had been among the founders of the Inquisition. And so it went. Finally, I told him that my suggested attitude for the Catholic Church to take could be summed up in a story I heard some years ago:

A white missionary had been living for some years in a native village in Africa. One morning as he came out of his hut he was grabbed by two huge warriors, dragged through the village and thrown down in the dirt in front of the chiefs. The terrified missionary looked up and said, "Chief, what's this all about? What happened?" The chief scowled down at him and said, "This morning a white baby was born in this village. You are the only white man here, so you die!" The missionary defended himself: "Just because there is a white baby it doesn't mean that I'm the father. Those things can just happen. Look! Up there on the hillside. Look at your own flock of sheep; all those beautiful white sheep, and in the middle of them is one black sheep. See that, chief? It can just happen." The chief looked up at the white sheep on the hillside with that one black sheep, then looked back at the missionary. He stared at the one black sheep again, then leaned down to the missionary and whispered, "Tell you what —you don't say nothing, I won't say nothing."

Anti-Masons don't want to talk about what the pope wrote in 1884, but they certainly do like to talk about what Albert Pike wrote at about the same time. One frequent charge is that Pike wrote that Lucifer is a Masonic reference to God, and he must have known that most Americans thought that Lucifer was another name for Satan. Anti-Masons like to say that Freemasonry is a separate religion with its own God, called the "Great Architect of the Universe." They don't want to hear that Great Architect is simply a reverent designation, like the "Most High," or the "Creator." They desperately want Freemasonry to be a religion, or anti-religious.

Evangelists like John Ankerberg use anti-Masonic bigotry to make money, selling books, audio tapes and even a video tape with costumed actors in the ritual of the third degree. They ask people to send cash or call in their credit card numbers to help pay for the glorious fight. I told Ankerberg that the thing that he has discovered that helps to screw up the world is that Jesus rhymes with Visas.

The penalties are a problem in the hands of anti-Masons, but there is very little that they can point to in the three basic degrees to support their attacks. There is not even a mention of Satan, no attempt to describe heaven or hell. There is no promise of forgiveness of sins, and no dogma. That statement can get pounced on. There certainly is Masonic dogma, they shout, and point triumphantly to Albert Pike's *Morals and Dogma*, a big, thick book that a couple of million American Freemasons know little or nothing about. Pike did indeed say that Lucifer is a Masonic designation for God. The problem may have been that he was too smart, or too knowledgeable about the esoteric and the mystical. He appears to have determined to preserve all his broad knowledge by incorporating it into Freemasonry, with little regard for folk-custom or common usage.

Albert Pike knew that Lucifer was the Roman name of the Morning Star, the planet we call Venus. It rises just before the dawn, so was regarded mythologically as the harbinger, the bringer of light. For Pike, what the Romans knew was much more pure and enlightening than what ordinary people of his own day knew, or thought. He probably

knew that a reference in the Old Testament to the fall of Israel's oppressor as the fall of a "bright star" had led to the myth of the fall of Lucifer, the angel of light, from heaven, as punishment for disobedience. (The seventeenth century poet Milton picked up on this legend when he named Satan "Lucifer" in his poem Paradise Lost. This, in turn, led to the standard misconception that "Lucifer" is the Biblical name for Satan.) Pike would probably also be familiar with the association of Lucifer with light, the sun, and fire.

Those here old enough to remember an old British soldier's song called "It's a Long Way to Tipperary" will recall the words, "...While there's a Lucifer to light your fag / Smile, boys, that's the style...." Lucifer had become slang for a match. So while Pike used the name of Lucifer in its Classical context, it is a predictable sequence of association for fundamentalists to go from flame, to fire, to the lakes of fire that the Scriptures say cover Hell, and for Lucifer to be equated with Satan. The Freemasons, its enemies claim, say that Lucifer is a name they call God? Well, that's clear proof, they say, that Masons worship the devil! I've had that one thrown at me several times.

Not to denigrate Pike's contribution to Masonry, I do wish he had stopped sooner. Some weeks ago, Allen Roberts invited me to speak to the semi-annual assembly of The Philalethes Society in Indianapolis. There Pike was quoted by the Catholic anti-Masonic author I mentioned earlier. After thrashing that out I told the group that many years ago in the Amazon I was privileged to attend a funeral ceremony of the Karaja Indians.

The ritual was fascinating. The body was coated with a mixture of ground charcoal and fat to make it black. The hair was greased and then coated with down (tiny feathers) to help the spirit fly to his own heaven. In front of me an Indian woman in a short dress kept hiking it up to scratch an insect bite on her bottom. At the time I thought that if a professor of anthropology was here from the University of Chicago, he would probably hurry back to write a monograph on "The Factor of Butt-Scratching in Karaja Funeral Ceremonies.' Now, I believe that if Albert Pike had been there he would have found a way to incorporate the incident into Freemasonry.

In short, I have found that in many ways there is just too much in *Morals and Dogma*, and although many Freemasons may own a copy, not many have read it from cover to cover, in much the same way that many home libraries hold unread copies of *War and Peace*. I dwell on it only because it is the favorite reference work for anti-Masons, which forces me to study Pike's book to be prepared to answer their tirades. It is a ponderous task best explained in a wonderful little story:

One day a little girl walked up to the desk in a library and asked, "Do you have a book about frogs?" "Yes, my dear, we surely do," the librarian said. And she walked the little girl over to the biology section and took down a heavy book, three inches thick. The little girl cradled the book in both arms and took it to a table. She began to turn the pages. She saw a picture of a dead frog, pinned down on cork, being slit up the middle. There is a picture of the frog with its internal organs pinned out to the sides. There is a sketch of the frog's reproductive organs, and so on. Finally, the child closed the book and carried it over to the desk, where the librarian asked, "Didn't you like it?" The little girl replied, "This book tells me more about frogs than I care to know."

I'm running over-time. I'm afraid that I have a flywheel in my throat. Give it a little spin and you can go away on a two-week vacation. When you get back I'll still be standing here talking. It's time for you to talk. Does anyone have a question or comment?

Question: You said at the start of your talk that a lot of Masons in the beginning disagreed with the premise of your book. What was the basis for their disagreement?

Answer: Perhaps the best way to explain the initial reaction is an experience I had in London. I had lunch with a highly ranked English Freemason who said, 'I believe that I owe you an apology.' I replied, "You can't possibly owe me an apology." He explained, "Yes I do. When I first read your book it made me a bit angry. As I drove around I kept thinking about it, and finally read the book again. The first time around my reaction was that you were telling me that things I had believed for twenty years might not be true."

When I read the book again I realized that many of the traditional things we believe and teach have no documentation whatsoever behind them. The more I thought about your theory the more it made sense. Today it makes more sense to me than what we have been teaching because the truth, the raw truth, is that we do not know where Freemasonry originated."

That is true. Even such well-known authoritative scholastic figures as Whatshisname over here have said that we don't know where Freemasonry came from. Actually, Allen Roberts was the first Masonic writer in whose works I read that the origins of Freemasonry are unknown. John Hamill wrote a beautiful little book called *The Craft*. He starts the book by saying, "When, Why and Where did Freemasonry originate? There is one answer to these questions: we do not know . . ." Over fifty thousand books and pamphlets have been written about Freemasonry, and we still don't know how it got started. That at least paved the way for the introduction of new ideas and suggestions.

So most of the negative reaction to *Born in Blood* came in the very beginning. Several men who wrote critical reviews then are now warm friends. Apparently, it was that shock of being asked to accept that what you have believed and taught for all these years may not be the truth, or may not be the whole truth. My own feeling was that something was lacking in the old guild theory, something vibrantly important that would have created the need for secret meetings, secret signals and severe penalties for oath-breaking.

On that subject, let me add that I am delighted that Freemasonry has chosen to preserve the ancient oaths and penalties. I cringe every time I read or hear someone saying, "Let's abandon the penalties." I stated my case in my book. I see nothing lost in identifying a tradition as a tradition. My suggestion is to let a man take the oath without the penalties. Then say to him, "We want to recite another oath, not an oath that you will swear to, but that you will repeat in memory of those of our forebears in Masonry who in other lands and in other times put their lives at risk to fight for those freedoms you enjoy today. Let us remember them."

Remember them. I believe that much of the ancient allegory in Freemasonry is in truth a Rite of Remembrance. There are two major forms of ritual. The first is the Rite of Remembrance. Has anyone here ever been to a Jewish wedding? A drinking glass is wrapped in a napkin and placed at the feet of the groom. He stomps on it, breaking the glass. The symbolic act dramatizes for him the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., almost two thousand years ago. The charge that goes with it is to pass the knowledge of that desecration on to his children. It is a classic Rite of Remembrance.

The other major form of ritual is that performed to give status and memorable importance to an event. I for one am boggled by the ritual that surrounds the event of getting a daughter married. There is gift registration at department stores, selection of invitations, reception planning. There are costumes to be selected for the bride, the bridesmaids, the groom's party. There absolutely must be a florist and a photographer. Sometimes I get the feeling the minister isn't all that important, because what makes the wedding official is the mandatory photograph of the bride shoving a piece of cake into the groom's mouth.

Or take the ritual that surrounds high school graduation. There must be big pictures for relatives and little-bitty pictures to pass out to classmates. There must be an annual, to be passed around for everyone in the class to sign. There has to be a costume, the cap and gown, and a diploma tied with a ribbon. Formal wear must be brought or rented to wear to a prom. And then there's the high school ring. I mean, like you'll *die* if you don't have a class ring. Two years later you don't know what to do with the damned thing. But I can tell you from experience that it makes a wonderful emergency sinker if you're into bottom fishing. My point is that our world is full of ritual, but no one calls it that.

I believe that much of the conduct of the Masonic Lodge is steeped in rites of remembrance. It remembers the days when such meetings *had* to be secret. The presence of the Tyler remembers that attendance at such meetings was dangerous. If the lodge met in the woods there might have been three or four Tylers posted at different locations. Look at the Tyler and remember how it was in the old days. If all that repetition

gets boring remember there was a time when no one could risk writing anything down, it was vital for every man to memorize in order to preserve the organization. The best way to memorize anything is to repeat it over and over until it is burned into your brain, so if you're sitting in a meeting and getting bored, let your mind wander. Let it take you back to a root cellar under a barn, with just one candle burning. The repetition is for your benefit—you must memorize this because you dare not write it down. If you'll simply let your mind take you back to the days when Masonic membership was very secret, and even hazardous to your health, it will aid you in understanding.

I really must quit this. Allen has told me that too often I take half an hour to answer a ten-second question. Perhaps I did better last night in a simple story I told Babcock Lodge to emphasize the point that imparting facts does not necessarily impart understanding:

A preacher followed the boring custom of paying a monthly call on two spinster sisters. He didn't enjoy it, but they were regular contributors and supporters of his church. One day he was standing in their parlor, holding his cup of tea, engaged in their usual idle chit-chat, when he was startled by something that caught his eye. There on the piano was a condom! "Ladies, in all the years we've known each other I have never intruded into your private lives, and never felt the need to. But now I am forced to ask — what is that thing doing there?"

One of the ladies replied, "Oh, that's a wonderful thing, pastor, and they really work!"

The minister was agitated: "I'm not talking about their value or effectiveness. I just want to know what that thing is doing on your piano?"

She said, "Well, my sister and I were watching television. We heard this lovely man, the Surgeon General of the whole United States. He said that if you put one of those on your organ, you'll never get sick. Well, as you know we don't have an organ, but we bought one and put it on the piano, and we haven't had a day's sickness since!"

The point is simply that it does no good to transmit facts unless real understanding is transmitted along with them.

Question: How has your book been accepted by the Grand Encampment of the Knights Templar?

Answer: It has been accepted to the point that about ten days before the Triennial in Washington, D.C., I received a call from the Reverend Tom Weir, the Grand Chaplain of the Knights Templar. I had previously told the Grand Secretary, Chuck Neumann, of the coincidence that they were holding the Triennial during the 700th anniversary of the loss of the Holy Land, where the Templars were the last to leave. He passed the fact on to Tom Weir, who decided to build his sermon around that anniversary. He invited me to the Triennial to take part in the church service. My part was to recount the history of the Templars in those days seven hundred years earlier. After the service they took me across the hall to where the Grand Encampment was selling my book, about two hundred copies. I autographed them all and, as I told Dr. Boettjer this morning, my hand got so tired that toward the end I actually misspelled my own name. I think I can say that we have developed a very nice relationship.

Question: A week or two ago, I saw a new video from the Grand Lodge of Illinois called *The Unseen Journey*. I think some others here may have seen it also. We are going to be featuring it in the *Scottish Rite Journal*. We've already received both negative and positive comments. Do you have anything to say about film?

Answer: First let me say that I was asked to participate, and I said yes, because I never turn down a request from a Masonic body, even if it's a country lodge with twelve men present, because I love it. I went to Chicago and was taken to several locations such as the Medinah Temple and the Temple of the Valley of Chicago. They would say, "Talk about the thesis of your book for 120 seconds"; and, "Talk about this for 115 seconds."

I did try little pieces, said goodbye to everyone and went home. I didn't see any of the film until it was all finished.

I can tell you that on the day a finished copy arrived at home my wife was entertaining some ladies for a musical evening. One of them is 83 years old. When they heard about the film they wanted to see it. I had been told that its primary purpose was to show to family and friends, so we all watched it. After it finished, the elderly lady said, "I really enjoyed that. My husband of 47 years was a Freemason. He was a 33rd degree, a Knight Templar, and as far as I knew he was everything there was to be. I always resented the fact that in our house there was a closet with a lock on it, and he had the only key. He said not to look in that closet and I asked him if he'd ever heard the story of Bluebeard. He wouldn't tell me anything about what was going on in his Masonic meetings. I have learned more about Freemasonry in the past hour than I did in a lifetime of living with one." She liked what she had learned, and that made me feel pretty good.

Even better, two Masons have told me that their sons seem more inclined to become Freemasons since watching the movie. Their complaint was one I've heard many times, that Masonry seems to them to be a kind of over-ritualized Sunday School. It isn't manly; it isn't macho. After watching the movie the boys and their fathers talked about Sam Houston, Davy Crockett and Andy Jackson, and about the seven members of one lodge who died at the Alamo. They talked about great revolutionary leaders like Washington, Garibaldi and Juarez. All very macho men. Even Sylvester Stallone couldn't have pushed those guys around. The young men had just never thought about Freemasonry in that way.

Young men seem to think about their bodies, and their jobs and, if they're married, about their families. I often hear from Masonic leaders, "We just can't compete with television, or softball or soccer." OK, so you can't compete with a man's recreation time, but you don't have to compete with his concerns about his family: you can involve his family. You don't have to compete with his job concerns; you can help them. One young Master

Mason told me that he had decided to drop out to save the money because he had lost his job. Then the day came when he told his wife that he had found a job, and she said, "Thank God!" He explained that some of the men in his lodge had called around and got him the appointment, and his wife now credits the Freemasons with finding him a job. He told me, "She'd never let me quit now."

Question: One of the things you do well in your book is discuss the political events in Europe and the influence of Freemasons that made it possible for us to be here today. Are there any other references you can provide, for example to support what happened in Great Britain at that time?

Answer: Are you talking about the swing back and forth between Catholic and Protestant rule? Or specifically the coming of William and Mary? The London group that brought them to England appears to have included several Freemasons, but I don't think I indicated that Freemasons alone were responsible. Do you feel that I did?

Question: No, I mean that I'd like to acquire more background on that and the events leading up to it. I've asked my instructor, but he hasn't come up with specific books for me to read. I'd really like to acquire some background material.

Answer: You want specific references as to the history of the period before Freemasonry revealed itself? Bloody Mary, Elizabeth I, Edward VI. If it's new to you, I'd suggest starting with Winston Churchill's *The Birth of Britain*. Then follow with Trevelyan's *History of England*. Try the *Oxford Illustrated History of England*. Actually, rulers like Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth are favorites of historical biographers. You'll be overwhelmed by the material available at any good library.

Question: Why are there so many different versions of the Old Charges?

Answer: There certainly is a wide variety of them, and they do frequently differ from each other — which I feel adds to their credibility. You may recall the old parlor game that demonstrates the problems of verbal transmission. I whisper something to the first gentleman in this row, he whispers it to the man next to him, and so on to the end of the row. I whispered, "I like chocolate sundaes with chopped pecans." By the time the message reaches the last man in the row, he reports that I had said, "The price of ice in Afghanistan has dropped forty cents a pound." The wonder of the various copies of the Old Charges lies not so much in their differences as in their similarities, which reassures us that such Charges actually existed.

Question: Another book came out recently that tied Masonry to the Scottish nobility. Can you tell us about that? And what is your next project?

Answer: I believe the book you're referring to is *The Temple and The Lodge*, by Baigent and Leigh. The book has the standard origin of operative lodges that take in non-operatives, who form speculative lodges under the sponsorship of certain members of the Scottish nobility. Then neo-Templarism comes to Scotland, sponsored by the same members of the nobility. They specifically identify the Scots Guards at the French court as those "neo-Templars," who came back to Scotland, bringing a Templar heritage that is never identified. A problem is that the Scots Guards were formed about 250 years after the fourteenth century events we've been discussing here. Essentially, they're saying that Masonry and neo-Templarism existed side-by-side, not that one may have come from the other. That's a basic difference between their book and mine. We're running out of time, so I'll try to run through this quickly. Those two authors, together with a third writer named Henry Lincoln, had written a best-best-best seller called *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*. They followed that great success with a sequel called *The Messianic Legacy*. The second book died on the vine. I'm told that it didn't sell out its first printing. The story I get is that they were trying to figure out the difference between the big success and the total flop. One difference was that the first book had a great deal to say about Freemasons and Knights Templar, while the second book didn't include them at all. The answer was

to get another book out about Freemasons and Templars. The result of that decision was *The Temple and The Lodge*, a book about both of them.

As for my next book, I've already received the proofs of it, which will occupy me for the coming week. In addition to *Born in Blood*, other books have stirred up interest in the Knights Templar. *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* had the Templars guarding a holy royal bloodline that flowed from the marriage of Jesus Christ to Mary Magdalene. Umberto Eco, the author of *The Name of The Rose*, has published a book called *Foucault's Pendulum*, a novel based on a six-hundred-year-old plot by a secret society — based on the fugitive Knights Templar — to take over the world. I was asked by a number of people, including my publisher, to write a definitive history of the Knights Templar. It comes to about 500 pages and is really two books in one — a history of the Templars and a history of the Holy Land. The reason is that the Templar story is usually told in batches: First Crusade, Second Crusade, *et cetera*. When five thousand Crusaders came to the Holy Land an army of six or seven hundred Templars didn't make all that much difference. It was between those Crusades, long stretches of time, that the Templars came into their own, when as the largest standing army in the Holy Land they played a major role in holding the Muslims at bay.

While writing the book I remembered the old hymn called "Faith of Our Fathers." That's where I got the title. The opening line of the hymn is, "Faith of our fathers, living still / In spite of dungeon, fire and sword. So that's the name of the new book: *Dungeon, Fire and Sword: The History of The Knights Templar in The Crusades*.