

THE BRIDGE

Are Freemasonry and Christianity Compatible?

by V.W. David S. Julian

Before we can begin trying to determine if Christianity and Freemasonry are or are not compatible, we first have to agree on how we are going to define our terms.

This is the definition of *Freemasonry*, taken directly from the *Washington Monitor and Freemasons Guide*:

...the Institution of Freemasonry is inspired by the pure principles of truth and benevolence. It's ceremonies and allegories are intended as useful and moral lessons, illustrative of light and truth to the mind of him who enters its portals. These lessons should be cherished among life's fondest memories.

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

Whatever man possesses in this world, whether it be wealth, honor, or the undying love of countless multitudes -- these will not entitle him to a seat in that Celestial Lodge above, where the Supreme Architect of the Universe presides...

...every candidate is informed that Freemasonry consists of a course of symbolic and moral instruction...

Freemasonry is a system of morality, veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols.

This is the definition of Christianity, taken from the Great Light of Freemasonry, the *Holy Bible, King James Version*:

Acts 2:42-47 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Acts 4:32-35 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

Acts 5:42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

George Barna, the noted Christian researcher, defined it like this in his book *Revolution*:

If you study these passages and categorize their content, you find that the Church was characterized by seven core passions.

Intimate Worship

Every believer was expected to worship God every day, both in Private and in the company of other believers. This did not require a “worship service”; it only necessitated a commitment to feel the awe of God’s magnificence, to express gratitude for His love and authority, to acknowledge His control and power, to follow Him with dedication, and to enjoy the miracle of His relationship with us.

Faith-Based Conversations

Just as Jesus was intractable in His pursuit of us, we are called upon to share His love with those who have not yet understood or embraced it. It is natural to talk about and promote the things that excite us. Nothing should excite us more than the realization that God Himself loves us, and allows us to invite others into that sacred and priceless relationship with Him. The evangelistic efforts of the first believers were carried out through preaching, low-key/high impact conversations about truth and purpose, prayer, performing miracles to foster the opportunity to discuss the Source of their power, and the joy-filled perspective they had toward God and life that created interest in their lives.

Intentional Spiritual Growth

The Church in Jerusalem endeavored to learn more about the Christian faith and employ the principles of Jesus’ teaching. Believers exhibited a remarkable attitude toward life and people and acknowledged the presence of the supernatural in their everyday adventures. They placed their faith at the center of their lives and derived their sense of meaning, purpose, and direction from their connection to God and His commands.

Servanthood

Love is more than a feeling; it is a tangible reality when it is shared with other people through acts of selfless service. The early Church fostered the notion that serving other people was the best means of demonstrating the example that Jesus had set for them. Servanthood also showed the transformation that their faith had wrought within them. Like Christ, they lived to serve, rather than be served.

Resource Investment

Because we own nothing in this life, it is best to wisely invest the resources we manage for the One who is the true owner of all things. The first Christians defined communal living through their sacrificial sharing of everything they had. Note that the Scriptures specifically tell us that they shared “everything” with those in need, and that they used the variety of resources at their disposal -- money, food, clothing, housing, relationships, influence, skills, time -- for the benefit of all believers.

Spiritual Friendships

The Church was all about relationships. These friends of Jesus became friends with each other and reveled in their mutual admiration of Christ in their frequent get-togethers. The friendships they formed provided not only encouragement but also loving accountability for spiritual integrity.

Family Faith

Christian families taught the ways of God in their homes every day. Parents were expected to model a Spirit-led lifestyle for their children, and families were to make their home a sanctuary for God. In a very real sense, the home was the early Church -- supplemented by larger gatherings in the Temple and elsewhere.

Obviously that's what Christianity was supposed to be. Is that what Christianity is today? Barna continues:

So lets take a look at the condition of the 77 million American adults who are churched, born-again Christians: people who have confessed their sins, asked God for forgiveness, accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior, are confident of their salvation solely because of the grace extended to them by God, and regularly participate in the life of a Christian congregation...

Regarding Worship...

- *The biweekly attendance at worship services is, by believers' own admission, generally the only time they worship God.*
- *Eight out of ten believers do not feel they have entered into the presence of God, or experienced a connection with Him during the worship service.*
- *Half of all believers do not feel they have entered into the presence of God, or experienced a connection with Him during the past year.*
- *Only one out of four churched believers says that when they worship God, they expect Him to be the primary beneficiary of their worship (most people say they expect to get the most from the experience)*

Regarding Faith-Based Conversations...

- *The typical churched believer will die without leading a single person to a lifesaving knowledge of, and relationship with, Jesus Christ.*
- *At any given time, a majority of believers do not have a specific person in mind for whom they are praying in the hope that person will be saved.*
- *Most churched Christians believe that since they are not gifted in evangelism, such outreach is not a significant responsibility of theirs.*

Regarding Intentional Spiritual Growth...

- *Only 9 percent of all born-again adults have a biblical world view -- meaning that less than one out of ten Christians age eighteen or older believes that absolute moral truth exists, believes such truth is contained in the Bible, and possesses a handful of core beliefs that reflect such truth. Those beliefs include a certainty that the Bible is accurate in its teachings; Jesus lived a sinless life on earth; Satan is real, not symbolic; all believers are responsible for sharing their faith in Christ with others; the only means to salvation is through God's grace; and God is the all-knowing and all-powerful creator of the universe who still rules it today. The other 91 percent of born-again adults possess a patchwork of theological views and rarely rely upon those perspectives to inform their daily decisions.*

- *Although the typical believer contends that the Bible is accurate in what it teaches, he or she spends less time reading the Bible in a year than watching television, listening to music, reading other books and publications, or conversing about personal hobbies and leisure interests.*
- *When asked what constitutes success in life, few believers define success in spiritual terms. Most describe outcomes related to professional achievement, family solidarity, physical accomplishments, or resource acquisition.*
- *When given the opportunity to state how they want to be known by others, fewer than one out of ten believers mentioned descriptions that reflect their relationship with God.*

Regarding Resource Investment...

- *Churched Christians give away an average of about 3 percent of their income in a typical year -- and feel pleased at their “sacrificial” generosity.*
- *Fewer than one out of every ten churched Christians donates at least 10 percent of their income to churches and other nonprofit organizations. (More than one-third claim to do so).*
- *When asked to explain their understanding of stewardship, less than one out of every twenty includes resources such as time, relationships, ideas, or skills in their assessment.*
- *Most believers are unable to identify anything specific they have ever donated money to that they would describe as life-changing outcomes.*

Regarding Servanthood...

- *In a typical week, only one out of four believers will allocate some time to serving other people. Most of that time is dedicated to volunteering in church programs that serve congregants; little effort is invested in serving needy people outside the congregation.*
- *Most churched Christians admit to having seen homeless or hurting people in their community or travels during the past year; a very small percentage says they interacted with any of those disadvantaged individuals.*
- *The typical believer would rather give money to an organization to allow it to do good deeds in society than personally assist in alleviating the needs of disadvantaged people.*

Regarding Spiritual Friendships...

- *Fewer than one out of every six churched believers has a relationship with another believer through which spiritual accountability is provided.*
- *The most significant influence on the choices of churched believers is neither teachings from the pulpit nor advice gleaned from fellow congregants; it is messages absorbed from the media, the law, and family members.*

Regarding Family Faith...

- *A large majority of churched believers rely upon their church, rather than their family, to train their children to become spiritually mature.*
- *In an average month, fewer than one out of every ten churched families worships together outside of a church service; just as few pray together, other than at mealtimes; and the same minimal numbers study the Bible together at home or work together to address the needs of disadvantaged people in their community.*

- *The likelihood of a married couple who are born-again churchgoers getting divorced is the same as couples who are not disciples of Jesus.*
- *Apart from church-based programs, the typical Christian family spends less than three hours per month in endeavors designed to jointly develop or apply their faith.*
- *Most Christian parents do not believe they are doing a good job at facilitating the spiritual development of their children.*

The key element that is missing from most discussions of the compatibility between Christianity and Freemasonry is the word "why". *Why* did Freemasonry come into existence to begin with? And why does it continue today?

In spite of some wild and crazy claims to the contrary by some Freemasons and some anti-masons, Freemasonry as we know it today came into existence in 1717 in the Goose and Gridiron Tavern In London when the Reverend James Anderson, D.D.; Reverend John Theophilous Desaugliers, L.L.D., F.R.S.; and the United Kingdom's first Grand Master, George Payne assembled the Grand Lodge of England. (It should be noted here that they weren't drunks meeting in a bar. The Goose & Gridiron was actually located in the church yard of St. Paul's Cathedral, and in the early part of the 18th-century, taverns and inns were the only public meeting places available for such purposes. There were no "public eateries" or restaurants until the 1760's.)

There is no solid evidence supporting any of the speculations about how and when the stonemason guilds (operative masonry) that were the forerunners of Freemasonry (speculative masonry) actually started. From Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem, to the Great Pyramid of Giza, to the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, to the Statue of Zeus in Olympia, the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus, the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, the Colossus of Rhodes, the Lighthouse at Alexandria, on to the ancient edifices of Greece and Rome, to the Gothic cathedrals of medieval Europe, certain architectural "secrets" were passed on and preserved so that the builders could freely travel between countries to use their unique skills. The origins of the geometry and engineering knowledge that was required to erect some of these structures still baffles historians and engineers today.

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

On the mainland, Christianity fared no better, as the extravagance of the Pope in Rome far exceeded his income. What was left of the once "catholic" (meaning "universal") Church was forced to extort money from its extensive flock in Italy, France, Spain, and Portugal, and Germany and to begin its own colonization and subsequent exploitation of North America, South America, and Africa.

To keep the flock in line, the Pope used the Inquisition, which had the power to order the torture and executions of "heretics" (meaning any and all dissenters), and which continues to this day as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (presumably without the torture and killing).

Freemasonry started when the organized church was a cesspool of hypocrisy better known for its corruption, cruelty, and extravagance than for its service to humanity. It continues to this day for the same reasons. Freemasons first came to America along with all the Puritans, Quakers, Shakers, Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians, Anabaptists, Mennonites, Congregationalists, Huguenots (French Reformed Protestants) and others who were trying to escape from merciless persecution by this totally corrupt and brutally repressive European Christianity.

Freemasonry is compatible with any faith group that believes in the one, true, and living God and a transition to an afterlife, whose principles support brotherly love (for all mankind); relief for widows, orphans and other distressed and less-fortunate people; and the search for absolute truth in the Socratic tradition (seek the truth no matter where it leads). Freemasonry is not compatible with religious denominations that exhibit extremist dogma, bizarre biblical interpretations, and that do not subscribe to the ecumenical concept that all men are brothers under the common fatherhood of God.

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