

I LEFT THE LODGE

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REGULAR BAPTIST PRESS
1300 North Meacham Road
Schaumburg, Illinois 60173-4888

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Byers, Dale A., 1937-

I left the lodge/Dale A. Byers.

p. cm.

Bibliography: p.

ISBN 0-87227-127-7

1. Freemasonry—Religious aspects—Christianity. 2. Freemasons—United States. I. Title.

HS495.B94 1988

366'.1'0973—dc19

88-31152

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Regular Baptist Press

Schaumburg, Illinois

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Second printing—1989

Third printing—1991

Fourth printing—1996

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Preface

For many years I have remained silent in regard to the Masonic Lodge. This silence has not been out of fear or shame but out of respect. I have many fine friends and loved ones who belong to the Lodge. It is not my desire to be offensive or harmful to them, but I must speak out on what the Lodge really is. I pray that those Masons who read this book will understand that this is not an attack on them as individuals but rather a disclosure of the organization and the principles upon which it is founded.

I was regularly initiated an Entered Apprentice on August 10, 1958, and passed to the Degree of a Fellow Craft on September 17, 1958, and raised to the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason on September 22, 1958. These events marked my entrance into the Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in Veedersburg, Indiana, Lodge #491.

The greatest event of my life came, however, in February, 1961, when I surrendered my heart and life to Jesus Christ. Following my conversion I experienced a great struggle regarding my membership in the Lodge. Only after much thought and prayer did I withdraw. I was asked, "Why are you dropping out of the Masons?" Too many times my answer was not the best and lacked the real reason for my action. I would like to answer that question for you today: "Why must the Christian withdraw from the Masonic Lodge?"

Why I Joined the Masons

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Veedersburg, Indiana, population 2,000, lies twenty miles from the Illinois border. Like most small towns, the residents there are tightly knit. I came from a middle-income family—my father being one of a long line of railroaders. Life at home was sweet and pleasant, and I thank God for the memories of that town. Those people shall always be cherished—they are part of my life, and I hold them dear.

There are certain experiences in our lives we never forget. When I was in my early teens my father, older brother and I began digging a basement under our house. Removing the dirt by wheelbarrow was a laborious undertaking, and my father became seriously ill and spent several months in the hospital. To add to this burden, rains came and the basement began to fill with water, causing the house to settle and begin to sink into the basement hole. The care of two teen sons, a house that was settling into a mudhole and the sickness of her husband placed a tremendous load on my sweet mother.

At this difficult time in my life I was introduced to the Masonic Lodge. I can still picture in my mind the group of men who came into our situation, pumped the water out, jacked the house up, set it on a proper foundation and poured the cement floors for our basement. Words cannot describe what that meant to our family.

My father recovered from his illness, the house remains intact on its foundation, and my brother and I have both matured through the process of raising our families, but that experience is still with me.

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From that experience there was a family commitment to the Masonic Lodge. I personally desired to become a Mason, but I was required to wait, since a Mason must be one who is "freeborn, of lawful age, and coming well recommended." The lawful age at that time was twenty-one.

Following high school I met the girl who was to become my wife, and I pledged that my marriage would have the same commitment and happiness that my parents knew. The following July after we were married, I became a man of "lawful age." Applying for Lodge membership, I was regularly initiated an Entered Apprentice the following month, and the next month passed to the Degree of a Fellowcraft. Just a week later I was raised to the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason. Normally it takes several weeks or even months to earn each degree. A Mason once stated that he did not see how I could learn the required materials in such a short time. However, the fact that I did learn it shows how important it was to me. These events marked my entrance into the Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in Veedersburg, Indiana, Lodge #491.

This might seem to be a good time to end my story and state that "all lived happily evermore." But the best was just beginning. Soon after we were married, my wife asked if we might start attending church, so we tried various churches in the city of Crawfordsville, where we had moved at the time of our wedding. My wife had been a member of Calvary Baptist Church in Danville, Illinois, where she lived prior to our marriage, so we also visited the Pleasant View Baptist Church. The people greeted us warmly. Some of them were employees of R. R. Donnelley Co., where I was an offset printer. Pastor Paul Hubble preached from the Bible with clarity and concern. The message of Jesus Christ was presented, and I was confronted with my need of salvation.

We became regulars at this church and began to see God working in our lives. As a boy I had visited my aunt for a week and attended a Nazarene church with her. There I heard for the first time the gospel and my need to be saved, but I did not come from a church family and there were many things I did not understand. So when Betty and I became regular attenders at the Baptist church it was quite an accomplishment.

One night we attended a revival meeting, and my wife walked to the front of the church and rededicated her life to Christ. She asked the church to pray for her husband. They prayed earnestly and fervently for me, but I did not respond. I felt I could not make a commitment to Christ unless there was some assurance that I could keep and honor the commitment.

Several months passed after my wife's decision to follow Christ. Her example and patience with me made me realize she did have something I needed in my life. There was a hunger in my heart that I could not explain. I would awake often in the night and would sit on the porch smoking and watching the moon sail across the night sky. Several of the workers at Donnelley had witnessed to me of Christ in their lives. I knew they were praying for me.

Finally on a February Sunday morning as the invitation was given to trust Christ as Savior, I closed my hymnal and slipped to the front, where Pastor Hubble shared Bible verses and prayed with me. There was peace and an inner joy at letting God have His way in my life.

We left the church that morning and were enroute to my parents for a birthday dinner for my nephew. There was snow on the ground, and the road up the huge Covington hill west of Crawfordsville was covered with ice. As we approached the crest of a hill, a car going the opposite direction slid sideways into my lane. There was no stopping my little Rambler on those slick roads, and we plowed into the car broadside. This happened less than fifteen minutes after I had trusted Christ!

Pastor Hubble, learning of the accident, came immediately to the scene. I'll never forget his words: "Skip, it's a good thing you got right with God this morning!"

Fortunately there were no major injuries. What God did in my life that day was only a prelude to more blessings. I could not get enough of my Bible, praying or attending church. I am thankful for a pastor who was patient with my elementary questions. I followed the Lord in believer's baptism and grew in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ as my Savior.

Some time later Pastor Hubble informed me that some

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people had spoken about nominating me for a church office. But there was a clause in the church constitution stating that an officer could not be a member of a secret organization such as the Masonic Lodge. I had read that in the constitution myself and wondered why it was there. He explained some of the Biblical principles involved, prayed with me and left a tract by Dr. Robert T. Ketcham and some other literature about the Lodge.

Words could never describe the turmoil that went on in my heart and mind after this visit. There were three reasons why I thought I could not leave the Lodge. First, there was a love and respect for my father—the one man in my life whom I idealized. He was stronger, wiser, kinder and more joyful than any man I knew. Second, there was a respect and admiration for the men who had taken me into the Lodge. They were men I enjoyed. Third, I was a great debtor to the Lodge. They had come in to help at a time when it seemed no one else would. That strong sense of debt was hardest for me to face. I had not been a member of the Masonic Lodge for very many years, but there was a great depth of commitment.

Only after much thought and prayer did I withdraw and receive my demit. There were many repercussions from my family and friends. Often I was asked, "Why are you dropping out of the Lodge?" This book is an attempt to answer that question.