

## THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND FREEMASONRY

Those who build their knowledge of Thomas Jefferson with information provided by academic historians who wrote during the last century do not know that most members of Jefferson's French circle were Freemasons. Not even the word appears in Dumas Malone's detailed reconstruction of Jefferson's five years in France.

Malone was not alone in ignoring Freemasonry. Many, perhaps all, of the leading intellectual historians writing during Malone's lifetime also ignored it. J. B. Bury did not mention that almost half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century enlighteners he discussed in *The Idea of Progress* (1932) either were Freemasons or traveled in masonic circles. Ernst Cassirer, whose *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (1951) is still considered by many as the most profound commentary on the subject, said nothing about Freemasonry. Nor did Kingsley Martin, whose *French Liberal Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (1962) "stands next to Cassirer". The word does not appear in either volume of Peter Gay's long two-volume dissertation, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation* (I - 1966, II - 1969). Nor is it found in Arthur Herman's *The Scottish Enlightenment - The Scot's Invention of the Modern World* (2001), this omission in spite of the fact that "fellow craft" originated in Scotland. It may be understandable that Robert Darnton would fail to notice Freemasonry during his tour through the lower strata of Enlightenment-era French literature, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (1982).

Given the significance of Freemasonry as an enlightening impulse during the 18<sup>th</sup> century these omissions provide a good reason to rethink the history of that revolutionary age. In this discussion, I will show explain that Freemasonry was a primary instrument not just in the growth of scientific knowledge, but also in opening the public mind to the "enlightened" view of man and nature.

Why have eminent intellectual historians excluded Freemasonry from their analyses? A noted geologist once exclaimed upon spying a rock outcrop while walking in a Massachusetts wood, "if I hadn't believed it, I wouldn't have seen it!" In terms of this logical fulmination, if historians had believed Freemasonry was a factor in spreading enlightenment, they would have seen it. An abundance of information confirms it and was available to them, but they lacked the inclination to

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use it. I suppose this can owe to the well-documented fact that Freemasonry has connections to the Occult. While this is true, the roots of Freemasonry are in universal concepts of civic virtue. These concepts, not its connection to the Occult, allowed Freemasonry to spread during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They are also prominent factors in the enlightening influence Fellowcraft exerted throughout Europe during this famous period of social progress.

Bury aimed to provide a broad-based survey of the history of the idea of *progress*. Cassirer explained “the unity of [the Enlightenment’s] conceptual origin and of its underlying principle.” Martin traced “the formation during the eighteenth century of western man’s creed of progress and democracy.” Noting bias in the analyses of his peers, Professor Gay vowed to “respect the differences among the philosophes . . . I shall speak throughout,” he continued, “of the philosophes and call the totalities of their ideas, their strategies, and their careers, *the Enlightenment*, and I shall use these terms to refer to what I call a family, a family of intellectuals united by a single style of thinking.”<sup>1</sup> Whew! Arthur Herman undertook to explain how “the Scottish Enlightenment created the basic idea of modernity.”

These analyses all imply the existence of a generative impulse, but leave it to their readers to imagine how this energizing current reached and worked in the minds of the 18<sup>th</sup> century’s citizenry. In this respect, they resemble Isaac Newton’s *Principia* in the sense that he described the force of gravity without explaining what it is. In his discussion of the “Age of Revolution”, Professor Carl Becker identified the enlightening impulse as the “arisen intellect”. Well? What roused it, and why was its effect so pervasive?

Not until the end of the last century did an academic historian *discover* Freemasonry. To her credit, Professor Margaret Jacob dared to “discard the map provided by Cassirer and others, at moments finding their taxonomy so idealized as to mislead.”<sup>2</sup> Abandoning Cassirer’s premise that the Enlightenment was the work of “about twenty men, the great philosophers and their followers,” Professor Jacob shifted to a concept of the Enlightenment as a “vast cultural upheaval.”<sup>3</sup> She was certainly correct to do this, but she provided surprisingly little insight into the dynamics of the age. She did not mention, for example, that an industrial revolution was occurring in England during

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1 *The Enlightenment, An Interpretation: The Science of Freedom*. Penguin Books. Canada. Vol. 2. 1969. Preface: x.

2 *Living the Enlightenment – Freemasonry and Politics in the Eighteenth Century*. Oxford University Press. New York. 1991. 19.

3 Jacob. 215.

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the 18<sup>th</sup> century, or that, in large part because of this revolution, England's feudal system was collapsing, that a new commercial society was forming, that an underclass of urban poor was gathering in a new bottom tier of an "open society", that civic-mindedness was spreading among its upper classes as they sensed their responsibility to "ameliorate" the condition of the unfortunates beneath them, that the members of the urban working classes were organizing politically to assist themselves, or that "politicians" were beginning to gather them into parties and campaign for election.

In fairness to Professor Jacob, her concern was to explicate the role Freemasonry played in the societal transformation that occurred during the revolutionary 18<sup>th</sup> century. But even in this narrower scope, her exposition exhibits a variety of frustrating weaknesses. It is impaired, at least for the private scholar, by its reliance on academic jargon, e.g., "modern civil society"<sup>4</sup>, "private public space"<sup>5</sup>, "political individual"<sup>6</sup>, "bourgeois public space"<sup>7</sup>, "cultural migration"<sup>8</sup>, and "civic meaning"<sup>9</sup>. It draws on a wealth of previously unexamined masonic records, but its attention to local detail tends to obscure rather than elucidate Professor Jacob's larger points. And from the standpoint of this discussion, although Professor Jacob explains masonic principles, the structure of masonic government, and lodge politics, she says virtually nothing about the impulse that drew individuals from the "public space" into masonic lodges or how, after entering them, they changed the world outside.

What roused the age's "arisen intellect" and why was its effect so pervasive? The answer to both of these questions is *Freemasonry*. Freemasonry was neither a principle nor a concept. It was a "Royal Art" practiced, as Professor Jacob observed, "by the free born . . . from the beginning of the world."<sup>10</sup> Learned members of the 18<sup>th</sup> century's thinking class applied masonic principles when they led the movement away from revelation and faith into natural religion and when they established "utility" as the foundation for right behavior. Individuals in the underclasses practiced them while preparing themselves to be productive members of England's new commercial society. Civic-minded members of the privileged classes drew on them while organizing benevolent associations and pressing for social reform.

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4 Jacob. 15.

5 Jacob. 17.

6 Jacob. 17.

7 Jacob. 20.

8 Jacob. 72.

9 Jacob. 216.

10 Jacob. 32.

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Professor Jacob would probably accept a characterization of the Enlightenment as a collection of events that occurred in a three-dimensional continuum over six generations. An upper level in this continuum was *intellectual*. Prior to the Enlightenment, during what I will call the *Pre-Enlightenment*, a few *virtuosi* replaced natural philosophy with natural science and a few heterodox English rationalists challenged the tenets of *organized* religion and laid the foundations for a new *natural* religion. During the *Enlightenment Proper*, which, I will explain, unfolded in at least three distinct events: 1) cosmopolitans (beginning in Scotland) replaced moral theology with moral philosophy; 2) a few energetic French *lumieres* undertook to teach their fellow citizens what is true and what is false; and 3) a few patriotic activists in America, invoking the ancient Common Law right to approve the laws by which they are governed, launched an era of political revolution.

This top level *intellectual* process was accompanied by a bottom level *practical* process in which members of growing urban underclasses, while struggling to make a living, undertook to improve themselves. This bottom tier of society did not exist during the Pre-Enlightenment. It grew during what Professor Carl Becker called the *Age of Revolution*. As this urban underclass grew, it transformed from ignorant rabble into an irresistible political force. This transition occurred first in England then in America then in France. Between these upper and lower social tiers was a cross-grained middle strata comprised of civic-minded citizens from emerging commercial upper classes and increasingly able middle classes. The members of this middle strata were sufficiently disturbed by the suffering of those beneath them that they considered it necessary to help them.

The Enlightenment was not, in other words, a fortuitous trickling down of new scientific and moral concepts from the high plateau into the low lands and valleys. Revolutions in the idea world did not cause the man on the street to see things in new ways. He was left mostly to improve himself—until civic-minded members of the new middle strata extended their helping hands and began pressing for social reform. To the extent the worldview of the man on the street changed, it changed in respect to his awareness of his right to express his opinions on *political* matters, not because of a gradual deepening in his appreciation for the arts and the sciences.

These enlightening impulses proceeded on generally peaceful parallels for two generations. During this time, cloistered *philosophes* debated whether right behavior promotes “the greatest good for the greatest number.” As they did this in their small closed circles, *the people* were digesting the masonic-like creed of “liberty, equality, fraternity.” For fifty years this stew, as they say, simmered.

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This simmering began at the end of the Pre-Enlightenment. During the Enlightenment Proper it progressed through “philosophical” discussion, into engagement, into politics, into social unrest, and finally into open conflict. During the Post-Enlightenment it blossomed into full-scale rebellion.

The *habitués* of the high plateau did not change materially during this march of human progress. But the common man did. He learned first to cope. He then undertook to improve himself. While doing this, he discovered that he was not being treated fairly. He then embraced social reform and became politically active. Joining with his neighbors and fellow laborers, he rioted in the streets and burned things. Leaders appeared and began to direct these random expressions of public anger. In America, they formed a “patriotic” movement and gradually transformed it into an “independence” movement. French patriots, after rallying *the people* with calls for liberty, equality, and fraternity, stormed the Bastille in Paris and formed a new government.

Freemasonry was an active agency in all of these enlightening events, through all six generations of this Beckerian uprising. Individuals from all levels of society were attracted to its “fellowcraft”. Fellowcraft appealed to members of the upper classes for certain (evolving) reasons. It appealed to members of the lower classes for other (evolving) reasons. It attracted individuals in the middle strata for still other (evolving) reasons. The last generation of the Pre-Enlightenment–Enlightenment–Post-Enlightenment continuum lived during the fourth quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Only in this period did the upper classes embrace the social creed of the lower classes, being liberty, equality, fraternity. At least in France, this was as much a matter of survival as enlightenment. Then, the *cognoscenti* on the high plateau, who mounted a dilettantish effort to reform the *civil* society they had always controlled, were overwhelmed by angry mobs of bottom dwellers, now engaged and politically organized, to replace the old hierarchical organism with a *political* society. They would constitute it by using the weight of their numbers.<sup>11</sup>

This transition of civil society into political society began in England with the coronation of William & Mary. It accelerated with the declaration of independence by the American colonies. It spread to France with the convening of the Estates-General in 1789. These events marked the

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<sup>11</sup> By the spring of 1786, Jefferson had become involved in this eleventh hour reform movement. He did this by joining the small closed group of the duc de la Rochefoucauld, which included the Marquis de Condorcet and Lafayette.

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staged beginning of the Post-Enlightenment, which can also be called, I believe, as the Age of Politics. It also marked the beginning of a dynamic new period of growth in Freemasonry.

What drew enlightened members of the upper social classes and their learned cohorts to Freemasonry? Patrizia Granziera addressed this question in her essay “Freemasonic Symbolism and Georgian Gardens.” “At this point in its history [the Enlightenment period],” Professor Granziera observed, “Freemasonry develops as a focus for intellectuals, politicians, the gentry, artists and architects, thus fostering a continuous exchange of ideas, aesthetic values and beliefs between English and European intellectuals . . . Freemasonry, with its mystical overtones and origins dating back to the Middle Ages, held a fascination for the cognoscenti . . .”<sup>12</sup> Their curiosity, she opined, was enhanced by its connection of Rosicrucianism with “the myth(s) of Egypt, Solomon's Temple, The Hermetic quest, and the secret order of an invisible brethren dedicated to the search of ultimate truths and to the understanding of the mysterious universe . . .”

Professor Jacob expanded on this theme:

*Hermetic philosophical currents<sup>13</sup> turn up in seventeenth century Scottish texts that relate the Mason's Word, the secret password of lodge members, to the practiced of the Brothers of the Rosy Cross, or Rosicrucians. Some masonic writings also make reference to the sun in language that is Hermetic and mystical . . . One version of the masonic Constitutions published in 1726 laid claim to Hermes as a great masonic teacher . . . These mystical philosophical traditions, grafted onto a craft of medieval origin, only made it more interesting, undoubtedly providing one explanation of why some gentlemen with philosophical interests sought to join it.<sup>14</sup>*

Mysticism may have attracted aristocratic seekers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but their predecessors in the pre-enlightened 17<sup>th</sup> century appear to have been attracted to Freemasonry for more practical reasons. Prince James Stuart of Scotland was among the first pre-enlightened gentlemen to enter the craft. Is motivation? He joined the Lodge of Scoon and Perth in 1601 to bind with its lairds and strengthen his claim to the Scottish throne. Forty years later the adventurous Sir Robert

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12 Patrizia Granziera. *Freemasonic Symbolism and Georgian Gardens*. Online at: <http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeV/Freemasonill.html>.

“The Ideology of the English Landscape Garden 1720-1750.” Unpublished PhD Thesis. University of Warwick, 1997.

13 *Hermeticism refers to a set of esoteric beliefs, philosophical and religious, that are based on writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus.*

14 Jacob. 36.

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Moray became the first Scot initiated into the brotherhood on English soil. The circumstances of his initiation are instructive as to nature of the brotherhood and the reason gentlemen of that early era entered into it. Sir Robert was at the moment of his initiation the quartermaster-general of a Scottish Army that had invaded England (during the Second Bishops' War) and laid siege to Newcastle-upon-Tyne. His sponsors were Alexander Hamilton, the army's commander of artillery, and Moray's subordinate, Master Mason John Mylne, grandson of the mason who initiated James IV/I as a Freemason at Scoon. Sir Robert may always have been interested in its mystical truths, but he joined a fraternity of warriors, not a cabal of conjurers.

Civil war ravaged England and Scotland for another decade. On 29 January 1749, King James I's son Charles was beheaded at Whitehall Palace in London. His death warrant had been written by his mortal enemy, Oliver Cromwell, commander of the parliamentary army. Some of those loyal to the king suffered reprisals during the Commonwealth period. Some of those preferred by Parliament during interregnum suffered reprisals at the hands of Charles II following his restoration in 1660. Members of both parties formed private alliances with trustworthy friends. These were "secret" societies with secret signs and words by which members could identify each other. Men like Moray joined them to protect themselves and to promote their cherished causes. During these turbulent times, the mystical secrets of the Craft served as a binding agent between the initiated.

It is not surprising that old loyalists and old parliamentarians would build their alliances on masonic principles. During the last decades of the 17<sup>th</sup> century these principles became institutionalized. We know what they were because they were published to instruct and edify masonic apprentices in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

A text from 1722 emphasized the importance of social virtue, which the text defined in terms of brotherly love, benevolence, honesty, toleration, and temperance. By 1725 the Craft had instituted three degrees of mastery: Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason. The Apprentice Mason sought to master his "moral and social duties to his God, his neighbor and to himself." The Fellowcraft Mason explored a "hidden mysteries" of nature and science contained in the "liberal arts". The Master Mason taught those beneath him to develop a "moral character" by practicing fidelity and trustworthiness. In 1728, Masons were bidden to "love, cherish, relieve, and promote the Interest of each other." These admonishments crystalized in the minds of masons the necessary

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conditions for the existence of every society—conditions that were often lacking in those turbulent times.

Education in the “liberal arts and sciences” was considered essential to complete the man and for mastery of the craft. In 1726 Francis Drake, Junior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge of All England, compared "a Gentleman without some knowledge of the Arts and Sciences" to “a fine Shell of a House without suitable Finishing, or Furniture." In 1728, William Oakley exhorted “the Brethren” to be "industrious to improve in, or at least to love and encourage some part of the seven Liberal Sciences." By 1738 lodges, by sponsoring lectures and readings on scientific subjects, had become vehicles for the diffusion of knowledge.

John Theophilus Desaguliers is an example of a man who applied these principles in his life. A Huguenot immigrant to England in 1794, he was attracted to the new “experimental philosophy” while studying at Oxford. He went on to become the assistant of Isaac Newton and popularizer of Newton’s theories. Newton was elected President of the Royal Society in 1703. With Newton’s support, Desaguliers was invited to join the society in 1714. Five years later, he became the society’s Curator. The same year he was elected the third Grand Master of the Premier Grand Lodge of England. He went on to serve as Deputy Grand Master in 1723 and again in 1725.<sup>15</sup>

Desaguliers was not the first Mason to be associated with the Royal Society. In fact, the connection between the Royal Society and Freemasonry dated back to its founding in 1660 and beyond that to its earliest roots in the mid-1640s. A group of scholars began to meet then at Gresham College in Bishopsgate, London to discuss developments in the new *experimental philosophy*. Gresham College had been founded in 1597 with funds bequeathed by Sir Thomas Gresham. Sir Thomas had been appointed Grand Master of the Masonic lodges in the southern “part of the kingdom” in 1567.

[\*FN: “Sir Thomas Sackville resigned the grand-mastership in favor of Francis Russel E. of Bedford and the celebrated Sir Thomas Gresham; committed to the former the care of the N. part of the kingdom; and the S. to the latter.” *Encyclopaedia Perthensis; or Universal Dictionary of Knowledge*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Vol. XIV. 26. Printed by John Brown, Anchor Close. Edinburgh. 1816.  
[http://books.google.com/books/download/Encyclopaedia\\_Perthensis\\_or\\_Universal\\_di.pdf?id=n](http://books.google.com/books/download/Encyclopaedia_Perthensis_or_Universal_di.pdf?id=n)

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15 Refer to *Masonic Creeds: Freemasonry and Social England in the Eighteenth Century* by Wor. Bro. Gilbert Daynes. Online at:  
[http://www.themasonictrowel.com/Articles/History/england\\_files/freemasonry\\_and\\_social\\_england\\_18\\_century.htm](http://www.themasonictrowel.com/Articles/History/england_files/freemasonry_and_social_england_18_century.htm).



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The likelihood that Gresham was involved in an early form of English Freemasonry is strengthened by the correlation between the subjects he commanded his college to teach and the list of “the arts taught by Masons to mankind”, which were identified in manuscripts of the “Old Charges”. These were Masonic constitutions from the 14<sup>th</sup> century into the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They identify seven “liberal arts”: Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Arithmetic, Astronomy, Geometry, Music, and Astronomy. The six courses of instruction stipulated by Gresham were Divinity, Rhetoric, Medicine, Geometry, Music, and Astronomy. That Gresham commanded his college to teach subjects conducive to the improvement of its students and their society also conformed with Masonic principles.

No record exists of the Gresham College meetings in the years leading up to or following the beheading of Charles I in January 1649. It is known however that the college’s professors of geometry and astronomy worked with the Royal Navy to improve computational techniques for navigation and the design of warships.

Christopher Wren (a Mason) was Professor of Astronomy at Gresham College in 1660. On 28 November of that year, following one of Wren’s lectures, twelve “scholars” met in the rooms of Wren’s fellow professor, Lawrence Rooke. Those present included Rooke, Wren, Robert Boyle, Reverend John Wilkins, (Oliver Cromwell’s brother-in-law), William, Viscount Brouncker, Alexander Bruce, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Kincardine (a Mason), Jonathan Goddard, Sir Paul Neile, William Petty, William Ball, Abraham Hill, and Sir Robert Moray, (who, in addition to being a Mason, had a close relationship with the newly restored king). Those present at this meeting, Loyalists and Parliamentarians, approved a motion to found “a Colledge for the Promoting of Physico-Mathematicall Experimentall Learning according to the manner of other countreys, where they were voluntary associations of men into Academies for the advancement of various parts of learning so they might do something answerable here for the promoting of Experimentall Philosophy.” They then agreed to invite forty additional members to join their society and drew up the list. By the summer of 1661, the “Royal Society” had been organized. Of the forty individuals invited to join, thirty-five accepted and became members. Nineteen were “men of science”. The

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rest were “statesmen, soldiers, antiquarians, administrators, and one or two literary men.” Between thirty and forty-five percent of these men are thought to have been Masons.

As this “invisible college” gathered its new members, its founding members commenced an effort to obtain patronage in the form of a Royal Charter of Incorporation. Because Sir Robert Moray was close to King Charles II, he was chosen to be president of the fledgling society and put in charge of this portentous enterprise. By its meeting on 18 September 1661, Moray was preparing the Charter to present to the King. By the meeting on 16 October, Moray and Neile had “kissed the king’s hand in the company’s name.” The Charter of Incorporation received the Great Seal on 15 July 1662. The “Royal Society of London” officially existed from that date. Vicount Brouncker became the first president of the chartered society. Robert Hooke was named its first Curator of Experiments. In addition to Moray, Wren, and Bruce, known Freemasons among the society’s early members included John Aubrey (pioneer in archeology) and Elias Ashmole (wealthy collector of curiosities and astrologer).

John Locke became a member of the society in 1668, a year after he became private secretary to Anthony Ashley Cooper, powerful member of the so-called Cabal Ministry. Some believe that he acknowledged his membership in the Masonic craft in an expository letter (since lost) to the Earl of Pembroke (who was a Mason) on 6 May 1696. Whether or not he was ever initiated, Locke was in regular contact with many known practitioners of the Craft and with many others whose works and interactions suggest membership (e.g., Isaac Newton and Anthony Ashley Cooper). Locke’s works were to become instrumental in broadening the enquiries of the *cognoscenti* during the 18<sup>th</sup> century into social science. Before considering the changing complexion of enlightened investigation, however, let us notice the place where cosmopolitans at every level of enlightening society conducted their conversations—their local tavern.

The Royal Society began as an exclusive, pre-enlightenment association. It was “revolutionary” in the sense that it paved the way for the Enlightenment of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which it did by encouraging analyses of nature’s processes to explain them in terms of general governing “laws”. It certified a new paradigm for the study of nature, which had theretofore employed a method devised by Aristotle three centuries before the birth of Christ. In this respect, the Royal Society’s contributions to the Enlightenment were *intellectual*.

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Its significance extended, however, beyond the intellectual into the *social*: it marked a beginning in a movement away from the closed associations in which men gathered during the previous millennium and toward smaller, then larger, “open” associations, which included individuals with diverse social backgrounds and even hostile religious and political allegiances. The enlightened worldview was spread by individuals in conversation with one another. In these conversations, men of good will exchanged and debated ideas. In the process of doing this, they broadened their understandings, which formed the basis for new allegiances. The Royal Society was a pioneer social institution in these respects. “Clubs” with similarly liberal characteristics formed in its wake. One of these included several Royal Society members. The Kit Cat Club of London was said to be organized by publisher and Freemason Jacob Tonson in the late 1690s. Horace Walpole described it in these words: “The Kit Cat Club, generally mentioned as a set of wits, were in reality the patriots that saved Britain.” Henry Shelley added this:

*At an early stage of the history of the club it became a more formidable institution. Its membership quickly comprised nearly fifty nobles and gentlemen and authors, all of whom found a bond of interest in their profession of Whig principles and devotion to the House of Hanover, shortly to be established on the throne of England in the person of George I. Indeed, one poetical epigram on the institution specifically entitles it the ‘Hanover Club’.*<sup>16</sup>

The club derived its name from the mutton pies served at the Fountain Tavern where it met. Innkeeper Christopher Cat made the pies, which were described as “a supper for a Lord.” Among its earliest members included new Whigs (like Charles Seymour, Duke of Somerset, William Cavendish, Duke of Devonshire, and Charles Montague, Duke of Manchester) and old Jacobites (like Charles Lennox, Duke of Richmond and Charles Sackville, Earl of Dorset). The balance in the club’s membership seems to have shifted to the Whig side before the demise of Bolingbroke’s government in 1714 and the failure of the Jacobite uprising the following year.

Four dozen of London’s most powerful men were members of the club, and a large number of them were Masons. Joseph Addison was a Mason. Club members in his literary circle included Samuel Garth, Richard Steele, William Congreve and Sir John Vanbrugh. No initiation records exist for these men, but their associations and habits suggest that all four were Masons.

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<sup>16</sup> Henry C. Shelley. *Inns and Taverns of Old London: Setting Forth the Historical and Literary Associations of Those Ancient Hostehries, Together with an Account of the Most Notable Coffee-Houses, Clubs, and Pleasure Gardens of the British Metropolis*. 1909. 245..

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Robert Walpole was a Mason. Sir Robert, later Lord Orford, became the leader of the “Old Whig” establishment and is now regarded as England’s first Prime Minister, a post he held for more than twenty years. Spencer Compton, Earl of Wilmington succeeded Sir Robert as Prime Minister and died in the office a year later. No records exist showing that Lord Wilmington was a Mason. William Pulteney, Earl of Bath led Walpole’s Old Whig Party after his dismissal in 1742 and formed the new government. For some unknown reason, he surrendered the honor of becoming Prime Minister to Wilmington. No records exist showing that Lord Bath was a Mason. Thomas Pelham-Holles, Duke of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, advanced to the rank of Master Mason in Norwich Maid's Head Lodge in 1731. The Duke was a protégé of Sir Robert and one of his successors as Prime Minister. William Cavendish, Duke of Devonshire, served as Prime Minister between Thomas Pelham-Holles’s two terms. Lord Devonshire was a Mason. Richard Temple, Viscount Cobham became Sir Robert’s rival and William Pitt’s patron. Lord Cobham, was a Mason. His home in Buckinghamshire, Stowe House, was famous as were its gardens with their Masonic temples and statuary. (Thomas Jefferson visited Stowe House with John Adams in 1786.)

Charles Lennox, Duke of Richmond, was the illegitimate son of Charles II. Lord Richmond is said to have been drawn into the Masonic order through its links to his uncle’s Jacobite supporters. He served as the Grand Master of the Premier Grand Lodge of England in 1724. The domed pavilion he built in a remote part of his Chichester estate, Fox Hall, is thought to have served as a Masonic lodge. Charles Fitzroy, Duke of Grafton, was the grandson of Charles II. According to Jonathan Swift, he was “almost a slobberer, without one good quality. Lord Waldegrave found him “totally illiterate; yet from long observation and great sagacity he became the courtier of his time.” Lord Grafton was the father of another English Prime Minister and is said to have been a Mason. Charles Montagu, Earl of Halifax, was a Mason. Lord Halifax held several posts in the government, including Chancellor of the Exchequer. John Montagu, Duke of Montagu, married Lady Mary Churchill, daughter of John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough. Lord Montagu was a Knight of the Garter, a fellow of the Royal Society, and a Grand Master of the Premier Grand Lodge of England from 1721-23. Lord Montagu was also an officer in the Grand Lodge of England. His father-in-law was also said to be a Mason.

Evelyn Pierpont, Duke of Kingston, was Grand Master of the Grand Premier Lodge of England in 1728. Lord Kingston served as President of George I’s Privy Council and as Lord Privy Seal. Thomas Wharton, Marquis of Wharton, was a Mason. His libertine son Philip served as

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Grand Master of the Grand Premier Lodge of England in 1723. He went on to found the notorious Hell Fire Club of which John Wilkes (another mason) was a notable member. Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington, sat in the House of Lords, but his true loves were art and architecture. Known as the “Apollo of the Arts”, he was responsible for reviving interest in the classical designs of Palladio. He did this in part by employing Palladian concepts in his Middlesex home, Chiswick House, and its famous gardens. He decorated its landscapes with temples and statuary that are now recognized for their Masonic motifs. This is the basis for the widely-held belief that Lord Burlington was a Mason.

Charles Montagu, Duke of Manchester, is said to have been a Mason. His grandson, Robert Montagu, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Manchester, was Grand Master of the Grand Premier Lodge of England from 1777 to 1782. Among the other high offices held by Lionel Cranfield Sackville, Duke of Dorset, was Lord Steward of his Majesty George II’s Household from 1725-1730. There is no indication that he was a Mason. James Stanhope, Earl of Stanhope was First Lord of the Treasury when the South Sea Bubble burst in 1721. He suffered a stroke while defending his government against charges that it was responsible for the calamity. He died soon thereafter and was buried in the nave of Westminster Abbey. His death opened the way to his chief opponent, Sir Robert Walpole, to begin his reign as Prime Minister. Lord Stanhope was said to be a Mason. His grandson, Philip Stanhope, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Chesterfield, was elevated to Master Mason of the Norwich Maid's Head Lodge with Thomas Pelham in 1731.

Algernon Capel, Earl of Essex, was Knight of the Most Ancient Order of the Thistle, Lord of the King’s Bed Chamber, Chief Ranger of St James Park, and Lord Lieutenant of the County of Hertford, all before becoming Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the King of Sardinia. Lord Essex’s grandson was a member of the Royal Society and a Mason. John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, was said to have been “instrumental in bringing the Army over to the Prince of Orange” during the Glorious Revolution. Lord Marlborough is thought to have been a Mason. Richard Lumley, Earl of Scarborough, was one of the “immortal Seven” English noblemen who invited William of Orange to invade England. After his coronation, William appointed Lumley to be a Gentleman of the Bedchamber and a member of his Privy Council. No record exists showing Lord Scarborough was a Mason.

Charles Seymour, Duke of Somerset, met William of Orange when he stepped ashore at Torbay, Devonshire in 1688. Following William’s coronation, he served as President of the Privy

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Council and was Regent during William's visit to Holland in 1701. No record exists showing the duke was a Mason. The widow of Theophilus Hastings, Earl of Huntingdon had inscribed upon his tombstone, "Although he was capable of exceling in every form of public life, he chose to appear in none." His friend Lord Rochester broadened this vista by observing that, "he never did any foolish, or said anything wise." No record exists showing that he was a Mason.

It seems unlikely that the privileged members of the Kit Cat Club who were Masons joined the fraternity to advance egalitarianism or reform the hierarchical system they sat atop. The greatest number of them probably enrolled to affiliate with their political peers and trade influence. Still others probably did as Moray did and joined their fellow officers in a close-knit military fraternity. A few, though not many, may have been seeking ancient knowledge and mystical truths. A final few probably enjoyed exchanging ideas with other learned Masons.

By the end of Queen Anne's reign (1714) the Kit Cat Club had become a cynosure for magnates of the Old Whig establishment. By the time the club dissolved in 1720, tavern societies were meeting all over England and Scotland. Many of the men who enlightened 18<sup>th</sup> century England gathered in these groups and were practitioners of the Craft.

In addition to Joseph Addition and his Masonic brothers in the Kit Cat Club, these included Francis Bacon, Inigo Jones, Jonathan Swift, Daniel DeFoe, Philip Stanhope (Lord Chesterfield), Alexander Pope, William Hogarth, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Richard Sheridan, Henry St John, Lord Bolingbroke, Dr. Johnson's biographer, James Boswell, Edward Gibbon, James Thomson, the notorious John Wilkes, and Edmund Burke.

The number of brothers who were not "distinguished" were growing rapidly as the Kit Cat Club approached its end. The first Grand Lodge of England (and the world) was formed in London in 1717. By this time at least a dozen lodges were meeting there. Brother H. L. Hayward explained that

*After the [1715] Rebellion was over [a] few Lodges at London . . . thought fit to cement under a Grand Master as the center of Union and Harmony, viz., the Lodges that met,*

*"1. At the Goose and Gridiron Ale-house in St. Paul's Church yard.*

*"2. At the Crown, Ale-house in Parker's-Lane, near Drury-Lane.*

*"3. At Be Apple-Tree Tavern in Charles Street, Covent-Garden.*

*"4. At the Rummer and Grapes Tavern in Channel-Row, Westminster.*

*"They and some old Brothers met at the said Apple-Tree, and having put into the Chair the oldest Master Mason (now the Master of a Lodge), they constituted themselves a Grand Lodge pro Tempore in*

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*Due Form, and forthwith revived the Quarterly Communication of the Officers of Lodges (called the Grand Lodge), resolv'd to hold the Annual Assembly and Feast, and then to chuse a GRAND MASTER from among themselves, till they should have the Honour of a Noble Brother at their Head.*

*. . . There were doubtless several Time Immemorial lodges in or about London, but either only four of these were invited to participate in the formation of Grand Lodge or else for some reason the names of other participating lodges were omitted from the records. According to the Engraved List of 1729 the lodge, which met at the Goose and Gridiron was constituted in 1691. This old lodge made several removals after 1717, and once or twice changed its name; it moved to Mitre Tavern in 1768 and commenced to call itself Lodge of Antiquity, No. 1. This lodge was neither large nor influential until in 1774 when it had the singular good fortune to elect as its Master the famous William Preston, who gave it prestige and power. When all lodges were re-numbered after the Union of the 'Antients' and 'Moderns' Antiquity was unjustly given rank No. 2, the precedence having been granted to a lodge formed under an 'Antient' charter in 1735.<sup>17</sup>*

The men who joined these lodges became members of an organization that was, thanks to the efforts of Royal Society member Desaguliers, on the verge of becoming an integrated international entity resting on a universal humanitarian creed reinforced by enlightened concepts of natural religion. Fundamental to this creed was the objective of creating a society open to all men of good will. Masons planned to build it on self-confirming social principles: virtue, brotherhood, and benevolence. Not only did lodges endeavor to instruct their members in this civic art, they made deliberate efforts to enlighten the general-public.

While Freemasonry in the 17<sup>th</sup> century consisted of cells of the socially elite, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century it began to democratize. The spread of knowledge and commerce encouraged this trend by bringing men with different pedigrees, religions, and political persuasions together in professional and other public and private activities. The best men joined to share the company of their peers and promote their interests. Lesser men eventually began to do the same. In doing so they showed the influence of their betters—what was good for the goose was good for the gander.

As cosmopolitans were building, writing, painting, philosophizing, and conversing in London, the *cognoscenti* of Scotland were enlightening each other in the smoke-filled pubs of Edinburgh. As in England, many of Scotland's notable men were freemasons.

Among these were Robert Adam (visionary architect and city planner) and his brothers James and John, Adam Ferguson (Professor of Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh who

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<sup>17</sup> "The First Grand Lodge". *The Builder Magazine*. March 1924. Volume X. Number 3. Online at: <http://www.masonicdictionary.com/goose.html>.

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came to be known as the “father of modern sociology”), Reverend Richard Hutcheson (Professor of Moral Philosophy and leading moral sentimentalist), Henry Home, Lord Kames (jurist, scholar, and social philosopher), Reverend William Robertson (Professor of History and founder of Edinburgh’s Select Society), Hugh Blair (rhetorician and educator), Henry MacKenzie (the “Addison of the North”), Dugald Stewart (moral and political philosopher whom Jefferson knew and admired), Lord Monboddo (jurist and pioneer in the study of linguistics), Erasmus Darwin (physician, scholar, and grandfather of Charles), James Watt (inventor), Sir Walter Scott (novelist and memorializer of Highland lore), and Robert Burns (“The Bard”).

These Masons shared their society with brilliant men who were not initiates in the Craft. James Hutton revolutionized geology and authored *Theory of the Earth*. David Hume revolutionized Philosophy and authored a seminal dissertation on “the science of human nature”. Adam Smith followed Hutcheson as Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow and authored a groundbreaking text in political economics, which he entitled, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Joseph Black was a French-Scottish chemist and Professor of Medicine at University of Glasgow. John Playfair was Professor of Natural Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh and popularizer of Hutton’s geological principle of Uniformitarianism. Thomas Reid founded the school of Common Sense Philosophy as a platform to rebut the skepticism of David Hume.

These men associated with each other in organizations like the Select Society. Allan Ramsay founded this society in 1754 so thinkers could socialize and exchange ideas:

*Its first meeting in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh was attended by fifteen men. Ramsay (a mason) was joined by James Adam (a mason), John Adam (thought to be a mason), James Burnett, Lord Monboddo (a mason), George Drummond (a mason), Adam Ferguson (a mason), Francis Home, Henry Hume, Lord Kames (a mason), David Hume, John Munro, William Robertson (a mason), and Adam Smith. Another one hundred and fifteen associates were elected to membership during the remaining ten years of the club's existence. These included such social magnates as the Duke of Hamilton (a mason), George Gordon, Earl of Aboyne (a mason), and the Earls of Cassius, Errol, Lauderdale, Rosebery, Selkirk, and Sutherland. Other later members were Hugh Blair (a mason), Dr. Alexander Carlyle, Alexander Monro, and William Cullen, Mr Alexander Wedderburn (a mason), afterwards Lord Chancellor and Sir Gilbert Elliot, Lord Minto. [Lord Minto and many other of these men were probably masons.]*

*The club met each Friday evening while the Court of Session was sitting. One of the members, Mr. Robert Alexander, a wine merchant, supplied, according to Dr. Carlyle, his deficiency as a speaker, by entertaining the members at warm suppers. "At these convivial meetings," adds Dr. Carlyle, "the members were more improved by free conversation than by speeches in the Society. Those meetings in*



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*particular rubbed off all corners, as we call it, by collision, and made the literati of Edinburgh less captious and pedantic than they were elsewhere.*<sup>18</sup>

Ramsay died in 1758. Four years later, in 1762, the leading members of the Select Society founded the Poker Club. Two years after that the Select Society dissolved. The founders of the Poker Club formed it ostensibly to promote the reestablishment of a Scottish militia, an institution that had been abolished in retribution to the Jacobite uprising led by Bonnie Prince Charlie in 1745. According to Dr. Carlyle, Adam Ferguson suggested the club's name. It was intended to be a secret among the members, who understood that that they were "stirring up" support for a politically charged issue. Success in this matter was to be followed, "as some of its radical members hoped, by a parliamentary reform which would 'let the industrious farmer and manufacturer share at last in a privilege now engrossed by the great lord, the drunken laird, and the drunkener bailie.'"<sup>19</sup>

The Oyster Club attracted several of the same men. The purpose of this association was ostensibly to eat oysters. Among its founders were Adam Smith, Joseph Black, David Hume, and James Hutton. Many other such clubs were organized and maintained in "Athens of the North" during the middle half of 18<sup>th</sup> century. Not only did these associations foster enlightenment, they promoted Freemasonry.

Richard Sher described another venerable Edinburgh organization. The Medical Society of Edinburgh evolved in this way:

*When Alexander Monro primus fell ill, Colin McLaurin, an Edinburgh University mathematician and Newtonian, broadened the Society's scope to include all 'philosophical' topics (in the eighteenth-century sense), and the name changed to the Philosophical Society. The membership is a roll call of the Scottish Enlightenment: McLaurin himself, Joseph Black, James Hutton, Adam Smith, David Hume, the chemist and doctor William Cullen, and the philosopher Dugald Stewart. The Society flourished from 1737 until 1783. Within its boundaries, smaller, special-interest groups, like the Newtonian Club, operated. The Society as a whole achieved the highest possible status when it was given a royal charter in 1783, to emerge as the Royal Society of Edinburgh, the premier scientific society of the country.*<sup>20</sup>

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18 Reverend Charles Rogers. *Social Life in Scotland: From Early to Recent Times*. Volume 2. Edinburgh. W. Paterson, 1884. 371-372. Online at: [https://books.google.com/books?id=5E0OAAAAQAAJ&dq=The+club+met+each+Friday+evening+while+the+Court+of+Session+was+sitting.+One+of+the+members,+Mr.+Robert+Alexander,+a+wine+merchant,+supplied,+according+to+Dr.+Carlyle,+his+deficiency+as+a+speaker,+by+entertaining+the+members+at+warm+suppers.&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.com/books?id=5E0OAAAAQAAJ&dq=The+club+met+each+Friday+evening+while+the+Court+of+Session+was+sitting.+One+of+the+members,+Mr.+Robert+Alexander,+a+wine+merchant,+supplied,+according+to+Dr.+Carlyle,+his+deficiency+as+a+speaker,+by+entertaining+the+members+at+warm+suppers.&source=gbs_navlinks_s).

19 Hirst, Francis W. *Adam Smith*. Macmillan. 1904. 106-108. Online source: <http://www.jamesboswell.info/content/poker-club#Notes>.

20 Richard b. Sher. *The Enlightenment & the Book: Scottish Authors & Their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland & America*. University of Chicago Press. 2007. 108.

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Sher also commented on the connection between Freemasonry and “the spread of enlightened principles”:

*Freemasonry also deserves mention here, as a fraternal cosmopolitan organization that encouraged the spread of enlightened principles and provided another homosocial milieu for Scottish men of letters. At least twenty-four individuals from table I (and probably many more) were Masons, no fewer than sixteen at Lodge Canongate, Kilwinning No. 2, in Edinburgh. It is significant that they included physicians, judges, professors, and gentlemen such as John and James Gregory, Alexander Monro (secundus), John Brown, James Bruce, William Buchan, Lord Monboddo, Lord Hailes, Henry Mackenzie, John Millar, Andrew Duncan, James Boswell, Sir John Sinclair, and the noble Earl of Buchan, as well as men from the humbler occupations, such as Robert Burns and the printer William Smellie [first publisher of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*].<sup>21</sup>*

The number of cosmopolitans in England and Scotland increased dramatically during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This had a corresponding impact on the number of and participants in tavern societies throughout the Kingdom. The conversations they conducted changed as one generation gave way to the next.

What changed from one generation to the next? Everything! This was Professor Becker’s point in characterizing the 18<sup>th</sup> century as the “Age of Revolution”. By the beginning of this new century, England’s agricultural revolution was largely over and its industrial revolution was gaining momentum. Both events were undermining England’s ancient feudal system and promoting a massive migration by dispossessed rural poor into England’s unsuspecting and unprepared cities. The spread of benevolence through England’s upper and middle classes coincided with the emergence of a disenfranchised urban underclass, a demographic group that did not exist in England at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The Glorious Revolution (1688-90) secured for Englishmen a constitutional monarchy based on the concept that the people have rights prior to and superior to the form of their government. First among them was the ancient Common Law right of *Consent*: the people have the right to consent to the laws by which they are governed.<sup>22</sup> The revolution that produced England’s constitutional government also produced a coalition of vigilantes dedicated to defending it. The Whig Party began with the gathering of anti-monarchists to guard against Jacobite attempts to reestablish the Stuart monarchy. Theoretical defender of the “rights of the people,” the Whig Party

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<sup>21</sup> Sher. 109.

<sup>22</sup> Locke provided yeoman service in the eyes of American patriotic interpreters of his *Second Treatise of Government* by transforming this fundamental Common Law right into an enlightened “natural” right.

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naturally evolved into an instrument for “social reform”. The coalescence of a new underclass as the Industrial Revolution progressed increased the need and public support for such reform.

Sir Robert Walpole and his “Old Whig” allies (many of whom were, like Sir Robert, Masons), with significant assistance from George I and George II, controlled England’s government from the bursting of the South Sea Bubble (1720) until the coronation of George III (1761). During these four decades, Sir Robert presided over the reconstitution of England’s hereditary *civil* society into a democratizing *political* society. That is to say during Sir Robert’s tenure as England’s first Prime Minister, politics became the business of professional advocates speaking on the behalf of *the people*. William Pitt became the leader of “the Opposition” after the death of Queen Caroline (1738). As the leading critic of Sir Robert’s government, Pitt was artful in making himself the model of the new political professional. He did this by speaking in “the voice of the people” and shaping public opinion in his favor. Pitt, later Lord Chatham, also laid out the hierarchical order of the enterprise: the professional advocate employs rhetoric to *raise* his own popularity, then to raise the popularity of his party, then to promote the interests of his nation, then—if time permits—to ameliorate the condition of his constituents. Men like Pitt, in other words, roused Becker’s “arisen [public] intellect”. Pitt’s protégés, men like John Wilkes, carried on the master’s work when he was no longer able. Neither men of science nor disinterested scholars had much to do with this world-changing campaign to awaken the common people.

The door opened for *the people* of England to enter politics by a new class of capitalist *entrepreneurs*. These energetic men did this by mechanizing England’s textile and coal industries, and, in the process, amassing private fortunes.

Factory owners and investors employed technology invented by men John Kay (flying shuttle), James Hargreaves (spinning jenny), Richard Arkwright (water frame), Samuel Crompton (spinning mule), Edmund Cartwright (power loom), and James Watt (inventor of a commercially viable steam engine and a freemason) to eliminate manual labor, expand worker productivity, and increase profitability. As England’s industrialists were doing these things, her “oeconomists” were contemplating how to pry open “the dead hand of the past” and free the nation’s resources for commercial exploitation—growing the economy and creating wealth then being counted as useful ways to enhance *the general well-being*. As members of England’s new commercial class pondered how to increase production, profits, and the wealth of nations, swelling ranks of factory workers

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and ghetto dwellers took to the streets in search of social justice. This produced fruitful opportunities for England's new political men.

By mid-century, economic issues had come to dominate public discourse and were swaying government policy, including William Pitt's imperialist war against France for control of Canada and other choice parts of France's colonial empire. These considerations—economic and political—made the Age of Reason significant for the common man. To that extent the astonishing advances in scientific knowledge and technology contributed to the rising up of the common man, it did so by encouraging him join political and fraternal organizations.

During the enlightened middle-half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, learned members of England and Scotland's thinking class organized literary clubs and debating societies, and re-vitalized moribund academies. As they were doing these things, the laboring class rioted in the streets. The thinking class, which had virtually no connection to the poor unfortunates collecting at the bottom of English society, occupied itself debating public *utility* and how to promote the *common good*. As it did, the hitherto unknown middle-strata of English society, which was comprised of civic-minded *helpers*, bestirred itself. The better men in this community founded colleges, started schools, organized reading clubs, established benevolent societies, and lobbied for social reform. Many of them were Masons. Less learned members of the Fellowcraft joined their more-learned brothers in discussing these projects and their results in the pubs where they relaxed after completing their day's labor.

Tavern-based philosophical societies provided social outlets for thoughtful individuals in each tier of the community. The individuals who joined them were welcomed not because of their social pedigrees, but because of their ability to contribute to the conversation.

Some tavern associations organized themselves under constitutional governments. Professor Jacob characterized these as "a new form of civil society." For purposes of clarity, these new "constitutional" associations should be distinguished from old form "civil" societies. A family is a *civil* society. A sandlot baseball team is a *civil* society. Patrons drinking and chatting randomly in a pub constitute a *civil* society. These are all examples of individuals who share common interests engaging in a common enterprise. What they do not have are formal governing structures administered by formally selected officials. A tribe with a chief is a civil society if its members follow common customs when they name him to lead them in pursuit of their common good. A

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tribe becomes a political society when it adopts formal rules to select its leaders, define their common good, and make laws to accomplish it. The colony of Jamestown in its earliest configuration was almost a civil society that operated under a governor appointed by the London board of the Virginia Company. It became a political society when its London board agreed to allow its governor to establish a legislature and in which a number of elected property-owning adult males could determine what was in the best interest of the colony and make laws to accomplish it.

England's civil society began a slow transition into a political society in 1215 when, at the point of a sword, King John signed the Great Charter. The question of whether England's monarch exists under the law that applies to his subjects was finally settled at the Battle of the Boyne in Ireland in 1690.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, commerce replaced agriculture as the foundation of England's economy. In this process, English society began to level and democratize. The process was carried forward in associations like the Royal Society in London, the Select Society in Edinburgh, and in Masonic lodges everywhere in between. Freemasons did more than witness the change. They encouraged it by regularly affirming their commitment to public and private virtue, brotherhood, benevolence, toleration, public learning, and respect for the law. Lodge members were taught to transcend politics and religion and aspire instead to create a prosperous homogenous community. Neither the Church of England nor the Roman Church had comparable doctrines.

In this nomenclature, the tavern societies Professor Jacob characterized as "a new form of civil society" were *political* societies because they formed themselves under laws approved by their members. They were "new" because they had up to then been *civil* societies.

Right behavior was key to the success of the Masonic community. It developed into a subject of discussion in the tavern societies of England and Scotland when Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Shaftesbury, abandoned his mentor's *moral theology*.

John Locke conceived Moral Law to be an expression of the divine will as revealed in Scripture. He attributed its authority to God, the "Creator of heaven and earth." Shaftesbury, who performed a "scientific" analysis akin to the one Locke presented in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, laid the foundation for *moral philosophy* in which rules of right behavior are rational constructs confirmed through empirical observation. This new branch of knowledge would remain

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in focus for cosmopolitans through the 18<sup>th</sup> century and ever after. Theologians mostly decried its investigations (although men like Reverend Francis Hutcheson contributed pioneering analyses). Conversationalists who participated in these discussions held every possible view in respect to God, Nature, and Human Society. They were Gnostics, Agnostics, Deists, Pantheists, Unitarians, and Atheists. They were materialists, empiricists, rationalists, and solipsists. They were aristocrats, plutocrats, monocrats, democrats, republicans, and anarchists. Their ability to join together to debate their heterodox views reflected the socializing influence of Freemasonry—in which men of all religious and political persuasions, all economic stations, all races, nationalities, and gender, were welcome.

As diverse tavern society intellectuals aired their diverse views on right behavior and other subjects, interest in organized religion waned and Church control over the affairs of day-to-day living loosened. What sort of questions were raised? Is moral law God's will as Locke reasoned? Do men know what is right by a moral sense as Shaftesbury contended? Is right behavior that which produces *the greatest good for the greatest number* as Francis Hutcheson claimed? What of Hume's masonic-sounding thesis—do we naturally sympathize with our fellow men? If we do, why does this conduce to the common good? Humean skeptics also wondered how such a theory affixed moral authority and how it explained moral obligation. These inquiries contributed *ipso facto* to the rise of a murky new “natural” religion based on the reasoning capacity—and prejudices—of the inquirer.

How much of this new way of thinking can be attributed to Freemasonry? A significant amount! The connection begins with Locke who, if he was not himself a Mason, conversed with and responded to participants in the Craft. It continued with Shaftesbury, of whom the same was true. It passed through Hutcheson, who was a Mason, to Hume, who like Locke and Shaftesbury had close associations with many Masons. Hume carried his skeptical empiricism, his unbelief in God and revelation, and his heretical views on right behavior to France where he communed with receptive members of France's enlightened society. One of these was Claude Adrian Helvetius who was an ardent Freemason. Helvetius incorporated Hume's concept of “utility” into a social theology in which he postulated that equality of condition and concluded that given equal circumstances, individuals would accomplish equal amounts. His theoretical world had no organized church, being administered instead by a technocracy of enlightened social engineers who would employ a variation of Epicurus's pleasure principle to promote human progress.

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Helvetius's rationalistic construction appealed to *encyclopedists* Denis Diderot and Jean d'Alembert, both of whom were Masons. Jeremy Bentham encountered it in 1769 when he read *De l'esprit*. He went on to institutionalize it as *utilitarianism*, which became the rationale for post-enlightened social reformers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Bentham equated individual happiness with the general welfare and asserted that the general welfare (the greatest good for the greatest number) is the proper standard for determining right behavior. Said Bentham:

*The principle of utility judges any action to be right by the tendency it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interests are in question . . . if that party be the community the happiness of the community, if a particular individual, the happiness of that individual.*<sup>23</sup>

The Enlightenment in France was also closely associated with Freemasonry. The Craft appears to have arrived there several decades after its appearance in England and Scotland. Although its early members were on a social par with those in England and Scotland, by the middle of the century the lodges they formed were exhibiting different characteristics. The Enlightenment's English dawn had been launched by natural scientists whose admirers carried it into social science and moral philosophy. The Enlightenment continued in Scotland with the innovations of scholars, physicians, and builders. By the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Freemasonry in France was a home for widening circles of progressives and radicals.

England had by then adjudicated the complaints that led to its civil war, a commercial system was well on the way to replacing its old agricultural economy, and its ancient feudal order was giving way to an open society. Frenchmen followed these developments from across the Channel, but their own economy and social order remained firmly rooted in the past. Enlightened ideas, like those David Hume brought to France in 1763, floated across the channel and seeded themselves in the minds of French *philosophes*. *Lumieres* in the Parisian salons cultivated them in the light of their own circumstances, which were defined by men like Montesquieu, Voltaire, Helvetius, Diderot, and Rousseau, all of whom were or would become Masons.

The first French lodge whose existence can be verified was founded in Paris in 1725 by the Earl of Derwentwater. In 1728, Jacobite members of this lodge recognized Philip Wharton, 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Wharton, as their Grand Master. Four years later the London Grand Lodge deputized this Parisian lodge, which then became known as the *La Grande Loge de France*. In 1743 it

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23 Introduction. *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. 1789 edition.

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appointed Louis, *Comte de Clermont* and prince of the blood, as its Grand Master. Clermont served in this post until his death in 1771. Soon after his death, the lodge divided and the larger part, under the name of *La Grande Orient de France*, called Clermont's cousin to be its Grand Master. Louis Philippe d'Orleans, afterward the *duc d'Orleans* and Philippe Egalitaire, assumed the post in 1773 and retained it until his beheading in 1793. By the time of the revolution, 1250 lodges had been formed in France. During his tenure, Philippe presided over four particularly notable lodges.

The oldest of these was *La Loge du Contrat Social de St. Jean d'Ecosse*, which was constituted in 1766. It was deputed under the name *La Loge St Lazare* in honor of its founder, Lazare Brunetau, but changed its name in 1776 to honor Jean Jacques Rousseau's testament to the *general will*. This was the first lodge in Paris to adopt the fellowcraft of the Scottish Rite. The Scottish Rite embraces the idea that Freemasons belong to a brotherhood and are themselves an order of knights. It therefore attracted many members of the French military. Its first Grand Master, Adrien-Nicolas Piédefer, *Marquis La Salle d'Offémont* was a career soldier who held the rank of lieutenant general. (The Marquis became the leader of the Nine Sisters Lodge after Franklin vacated the post in 1781.) Many French officers who served in the American Revolution were members of *La Loge de Contrat Social*. Among these were the Marquis de la Fayette, Vicomte de Rochambeau, his aide Count de Ségur, Count Chambrun (Lafayette's cousin), Andre Boniface Louis Riqueti, Vicomte de Mirabeau (whose brother wrote a passionate attack against the Society of the Cincinnati), Viscount de Ricce (who was *aide de camp* to M. la Baron de Viomenil, commander of the assault on Redoubt 9 at Yorktown), and the Marquis de Casteras (who distinguished himself in Savannah under Count d'Estaing). John Paul Jones was an American member of this lodge. The duc de la Rochefoucauld d'Enville and his son also affiliated with this lodge.

*La Loge du Contrat Social* was also a gathering place for musicians and performers. Jean-Benjamin de Laborde was, in addition to being a *fermier generale* and first *valet de chamber* to Louis VX, a composer of music. Other celebrated musician/composers were abbe Nicholas Roze and Chevalier de Saint-Georges. Chevalier de Saint-Georges, a brilliant mulatto born in the Spice Islands of the Caribbean, became the travelling companion of the Duc d'Orleans and director of the *Concert de la Loge Olympique*.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> In 1779, *La Loge du Contrat Social* became the mother lodge for *La Loge Olympique*. This child-lodge sponsored another group (*La Société Olympique*) for the purpose of creating masonic orchestra to replace *La Concert des*



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The second notable Parisian lodge was *La Loge des Amis Reunis*—the people together. Charles Pierre-Paul, *Marquis de Savalette de Langes*, founded this lodge in 1771. Savalette was the son of Charles Pierre Savalette de Magnanville. The senior Savalette was the senior of two *Gardes du Trésor royal*—Keepers of the Royal Treasury. In 1773, his son became the junior Keeper of the Royal Treasury. The Marquis served as *Archiviste* for *La Grande Orient de France* and was a founding member of the *La Société Olympique*. Because so many members of this lodge were, like the Marquis, financiers, it was referred to as the home of *les Crésus de la Maçonnerie*—the wealthy ones among the Masons.

Members of the *La Loge des Amis Reunis* advanced through twelve “orders”. The highest of these was known as *La Philalethes*, the seekers of truth. The members of this lofty circle had ties to an esoteric sect known as the Bavarian Illuminati, whose two-fold mission was to teach people how to be happy and help them achieve it by freeing themselves from the shackles of (religious) superstition. In keeping with this enlightened vision, *La Loge Amis Reunis* embraced a social philosophy based on *equality*. One of its tenets was the abolition of the privileges that accompanied social rank. Many of lodge’s elite members agreed that this should be done. Among these were the Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, the Duc de Biron, and the Marquis du Condorcet. They were joined by Baron d’Allarde, Viscount de Beauharnis, Vicomte de Tavannes. Dutrousett d’Hericourt (who was President of the Parliament of Paris), and the brothers Lameth (who saw action at Yorktown). Comte de Roederer and du Pont de Nemours were also members of this group.

Support for social equality was more energetic among the lodge’s “new” men—those who had to earn their livings. These included minor clergy, lawyers, doctors, and entrepreneurs. Most were writers. Among its clergy were Abbé Sieyes, Abbé Gregoire, and Abbé d’Espagnac. Its lawyers included Isaac René Guy Le Chaplier and Maximilien Robespierre, both of whom were dedicated disciples of Rousseau. Antoine Barnave and Adrien Duport were trained in the law, but found their callings in politics. Pierre Beaumarchais supplied arms to George Washington’s American army and wrote many successful plays including the scandalous Figaro Trilogy.

Nicolas Chamfort left Madame Helvetius’s salon to join the household of the Prince of Condé. Marie Antoinette once teased him saying that, “you pleased all the world at Versailles not because of your talent, but in spite of it.” Andre Chenier wrote poetry when he was not tending

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*Amateurs* after financial insolvency forced it to close in 1780. Most of the musicians from the defunct orchestra became members of *la Loge Olympique*. Two of these musicians, Charles Marin Delahaye (a *fermier generale* and assistant concertmaster) and Count D’Ogny (who sat in the cello section) are among the orchestra’s chief patrons.

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the affairs of Chevalier de la Luzerne's delegation in London. Count de Gebelin became famous by reading the future in Tarot card. Choderlos de Laclos was secretary to the duc d'Orleans and the author of the provocative novel *Les liaisons dangereuses*. Louis-Sébastien Mercier was called *Le Singe de Jean-Jacques* (Jean-Jacques' Ape) because he followed Rousseau in rejecting the proposition that scientific knowledge produces human progress. In 1770, Mercier published a "futuristic" novel called *L'An 2440* ("The Year 2440"). In it, he described the utopian society that science would produce. Jean-Paul Marat was trained as a physician. Prior to the French Revolution, Marat maintained a scientific laboratory that Benjamin Franklin occasionally visited. Antoine Fourcroy was another physician. Fourcroy was chosen to succeed Pierre Macquer as lecturer in chemistry in Comte de Buffon's college of at the *Jardin du Roi*. He was later elected to France's Royal Academy of Science. Louis Antoine Saint-Just was the youngest member of the lodge.

The third notable lodge under the jurisdiction of the Duc d'Orleans was *la Loge de la Candeur*. This lodge, which was inaugurated it in 1775, became the parent of an Adoption lodge known as *la Loge de Grande Maitresse* in honor of its leader—the *Duchess de Bourbon-Condé*, the sister of the Duc d'Orleans. It became the most prestigious of the dozen or so lodges that existed in the city prior to the revolution. Its members included the Duchess of Chartes, the Princess Lamballe, the Marchionesse of Genlis, the Countesse de Polinac, the Countess of Choisel-Gouffier, and the Viscountess of Faudos. The rite, which guided this lodge, centered on *Benevolence* interpreted in terms of the virtue of women. Its mission was to promote this virtue among its members who were to be tender loving mothers, faithful spouses, sincere friends, and caring citizens.

This virtuous social mission was accompanied by a progressive political agenda, which included establishing a constitutional monarchy and replacing Louis XVI with his distant cousin, the Duc d'Orleans. Members of the lodge's parent lodge shared this view. Among them were Merlin de Douai, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Perigord, Adam Philippe, Comte de Custine, Adrien Maurice, duc de Noailles, Jacques Pierre Brissot, Anne Pierre Adrien de Montmorency, Duc de Laval, Louis-René Levasseur de Latouche Tréville, the Marquis de Lusignan, and Prince de Broglie.

The *Grande Maitresse*, Bathilde d'Orléans, was born at the château of Saint-Cloud west of Paris. Her father, Louis-Philippe d'Orléans, Duc d'Orléans, is said to have owned twenty percent of the land in France. Her brother, who succeeded her father to this dukedom, became Grand Master of the *La Grande Orient de France* two years before Bathilde entered the Craft. She began as

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an ordinary Sister, but soon after her initiation, her brother appointed her head of all the French lodges of adoption. To qualify for this honor, she followed the normal procedures for rising through the masonic orders and became an embodiment of charity and benevolence.

The fourth Parisian lodge is perhaps the most famous—and the most radical. *La Loge des Neuf Soeurs* was founded in 1776 by Joseph Jérôme Lefrançois de Lalande, noted astronomer and a close friend of Claude Adrian Helvetius. The two men had been planning to found a lodge as a meeting place for scientists at the time of Helvetius's death. Helvetius's wife, who maintained a famous salon at her home in Auteuil, was instrumental in making her deceased husband's dream a reality.

R. William Weisburger described it in these terms:

*Lalande evidently envisioned a Masonic lodge explicitly designed to service the cause of the Enlightenment; his intention also was to have this lodge serve as the cultural locus of Masonry in Paris. Lalande, moreover, thought that a Parisian Masonic learned society would provide prominent and obscure Masonic intellectuals the opportunity to interact, to deliver lectures about various topics, to display paintings and sculpture, to perform scientific experiments, and to sponsor special projects pertinent to Masonry and to the Enlightenment. He evidently did not anticipate problems recruiting members for his proposed society. This enlightener expected to recruit Masons affiliated with the Paris Academy of Sciences and with other learned societies in the French capital. Lalande also thought that Masonic intellectuals belonging to French provincial academies and to European and American learned societies would like to serve as members of a Parisian Masonic academy. In light of his involvement in the Salon of Madame Helvétius, or the "Estates General of the philosophes," Lalande knew that support of many of its Masonic enlighteners could be enlisted for his proposed society.<sup>25</sup>*

Among the men who became members of the lodge were Abbe Sieyes, Dr. Guillotin, the Marquis de Condorcet, Camille Desmoulins, Bernard-Germain-Étienne de La Ville-sur-Ilion, comte de Lacépède, and Benjamin Franklin. Benjamin Franklin initiated Voltaire a month before Voltaire's death. In addition to their shared interest in science, its members supported the creation of a republican government in France.

Benjamin Franklin spoke to the ordinary man when he described the principles and tenets of Freemasonry. Freemasonry has tenets peculiar to itself, Franklin explained:

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25 R. William Weisberger. *Speculative Freemasonry and the Enlightenment: A Study of the Craft in London, Paris, Prague, Vienna and Philadelphia*. McFarland. 2017. 76. Also printed as *Parisian Masonry, the Lodge of the Nine Sisters, & the French Enlightenment*. Online at: <https://archive.org/stream/VilijamVajsbergerPariskamasonerija/weisberger#page/n11/mode/2up/search/that+Masonic+intellectuals+>.

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*They serve as testimonials of character and qualifications, which are only conferred after due course of instruction and examination. These are of no small value; they speak a universal language, and act as a passport to the attentions and support of the initiated in all parts of the world. They cannot be lost as long as memory retains its power. Let the possessor of them be expatriated, shipwrecked or imprisoned, let him be stripped of everything he has got in the world, still those credentials remain, and are available for use as circumstances require. The good effects they have produced are established by the most incontestable facts of history. They have stayed the uplifted hand of the destroyer; they have softened the asperities of the tyrant; they have mitigated the horrors of captivity; they have subdued the rancor of malevolence; and broken down the barriers of political animosity and sectarian alienation. On the field of battle, in the solitudes of the uncultivated forest, or in the busy haunts of the crowded city, they have made men of the most hostile feelings, the most distant regions, and diversified conditions, rush to the aid of each other, and feel a special joy and satisfaction that they have been able to afford relief to a Brother Mason.<sup>26</sup>*

Franklin went on to enumerate the specific tenets of Freemasonry: Charity, Benevolence, Community, Morality, Education, Belief, Truth, and Justice. All of these, one notices, conduce to the common good. Of Community, Franklin said this: “While each lodge is created from individual members and while individuality is treasured, lodges are designed to be sociable and to encourage mutual works. Brotherhood is a key tenet in lodges and that is one reason why [Freemasonry](#) is designed to allow men to meet together.”

The Enlightenment was, in other words, as much a period of social integration and political engagement as it was an age of intellectual development. As the century progressed and new men from new generations ascended to leadership positions, the focus on science declined and demands for social reform increased. Freemasons were leaders in both these essential aspects of 18<sup>th</sup> century history and in every phase in their advance. Interest in Freemasonry expanded steadily through the century because it provided its members with social opportunities that were not otherwise available. Individuals who joined the brotherhood got more than an entrée into a beneficial social circle. They studied and internalized a universal creed of civil virtue, which encouraged them to take an active hand in improving their flawed societies. Indeed, they were leaders in every aspect of this process.

Jefferson arrived in France in time to become involved in one of its greatest moments: a rising generation of political activists, many of whom he either knew personally or knew of through friends, was seizing control of a political movement that had been organized by the

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26 C. Paul Jeffers. *Freemasons: A History and Exploration of the World's Oldest Secret Society*. Citadel Press. 2005. 44-45.

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progressives of the previous generation. Many, probably most, of the key figures in this movement were freemasons. Jefferson had close associations with members from both generations, being men like Franklin and la Rochefoucauld, Brissot, Cabanis, and Lafayette. Jefferson's private secretary, William Short, was a Mason. Surely Jefferson had occasion to speak with them about the creeds and social vision that guided them in their public and private lives. These men were after all creating a new world on enlightened principles of Freemasonry.