Freemasonry in Early U.S. History

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The United States has been considered, especially by Roman Catholic authors, as a Masonic country. The article on "Freemasonry" in the 11th edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica notes that nowhere, "outside Great Britain has the craft flourished so much as in the United States of America."[i] Nevertheless, many Christians in the United States view their country as having primarily Christian roots. Christian influence indeed has been prevalent, but because Freemasons and Deists used religious terminology, language often has a double meaning.

About a century of English colonial development preceded the introduction of Freemasonry in America. Bernard Fay noted that even before 1717, the date of the founding of the first Grand Lodge in London, American lodges were meeting in the ports, especially Philadelphia and Boston. J. Hugo Tatsch claimed that by 1730 New England, Jamestown, Pennsylvania and Georgia were "centers for the diffusion of Masonic light." Lodges became well established in the following decade.[ii]

Lodge members met in back rooms of taverns, gathering later in the main room to drink and discuss. These men were outstanding leaders of the economic and social aristocracy in every town. Fay believed Masonry was very influential.

> In 1760 there was no town, big or small, where Masonry had not spun its web. Everywhere it was preaching fraternity and unity…Masonry alone undertook to lay the foundation for national unity in America, because, through the very nature of its organization, it could spread throughout all the colonies and work steadily and silently. It created in a limited, but very prominent class of people, a feeling of American unity without which American liberty could not have developed, without which there could have been no United States. [iii]

Anson P. Stokes agreed, commenting on the strength gained by Masonry before the Revolution. Masonry helped to unify patriots from different colonies. Some Protestants saw Masonry as a necessary successor to Christianity to implement harmony, and they worked together within the brotherhood.[iv]

A small book entitled Masonry and Americanism, (no named author) published in 1924, by the Masonic Service Association of the United States, noted that in the early 18th Century religious liberty was lacking, especially in Europe. Men pressing into the future joined Masonry. Their ideal was "The universal brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God." Learning of

"the wonderful new country across the sea," they left their homeland in search of religious freedom. "They brought their Masonic Altars with them and set them up in the wilderness." As the colonies prospered, Masonry prospered. The history of the United States and Masonry were "inseparably linked together." Masonry could bring to men the fundamental religious principles needed by all, because it was a plan of life, a trestle-board, containing the "edicts of the Grand Architect of the Universe," which, if faithfully followed, would not fail to bring happiness.[v]

By 1773 Boston had become a center of revolutionary activity. According to Fay, St. Andrew Lodge, a Grand Lodge of the Scottish Rite, was at the heart of the movement. Meetings were held at the Green Dragon Tavern. Fay believed these Masons were responsible for the Boston tea party. "The Boston Tea Party was the first revolutionary act of America, and this was a great Masonic day." The principal leader of St. Andrew Lodge was Paul Revere, rewarded for his daring midnight ride by being elected Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts. The author of the book Masonry and Americanism remarked, "Where did Paul Revere find the men bound to him by such indissoluble bonds of secrecy as to make his exploit possible? Only the walls of the old Green Dragon Tavern can answer."[vi]

Masonic authors are inclined to identify Americanism with Masonry, taking credit for historic events in the United States. Philip A. Roth stated, "The American ideal of government was, with few exceptions, promulgated and achieved by members of our Fraternity. And when the reader will have finished reading this book, he will have found that ours is truly a Masonic government." [vii] Roth claimed thirteen out of forty-seven signers of the Declaration of Independence were Masons. Ronald E. Heaton lists only nine Masons as signing the Declaration of Independence and thirteen signing the U.S. Constitution. He also named thirty-three Masons as general officers in the continental army, and eight Masons as aides and military secretaries to General Washington. Fifteen U.S. Presidents, were Masons, and seventeen vice presidents.[viii] Probably the most famous Masonic founding fathers were Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) and George Washington (1732-1799). Fay remarked:

> At the tragic moment when America needed a national army and a national diplomacy, it turned to Brother George Washington as the only officer…who, due to his Masonic application, had friends in all parts of the continent…When America needed foreign alliances it turned to Brother Benjamin Franklin…who, due to Masonry had friends all over the world.[ix]

It will be interesting to look at these two famous Americans, especially in light of Masonic connections and influence. I will continue to focus on their religious thought, as I hope to demonstrate that Masons in the United States, like their European counterparts, promoted religious tolerance. After looking briefly at Franklin and Washington, I would like to examine the doctrines of religious tolerance, deism, and separation of church and state as viewed by U.S. Masons. Especially interesting as examples of the struggle for church-state separation are the cases of Virginia and Connecticut. James Madison and Thomas Jefferson were famous Virginians largely responsible for promoting separation of church and state in the United States. While it has never been adequately demonstrated that Jefferson and Madison were Masons, William Moseley Brown, author of Freemasonry in Virginia, commented, "Monroe (James) is known to be a Mason, and many persons believe that both Jefferson and Madison were also members of the craft."[x] What is evident, especially in the case of Jefferson, is that while his Masonic affiliation is questionable, his beliefs were similar to Masonic tenets.

Benjamin Franklin's father, a dissenter from England, was opposed to the Papacy and the Bourbons. At an early age Franklin wrote anticlerical essays in The New England Courant, a paper published by his brother James, whose shop had become a gathering place for liberal thinkers. Benjamin left New England for Philadelphia at an early age, partly due to a quarrel with his brother. Philadelphia was known as an exceedingly tolerant city, with Quaker influence abounding. Benjamin did not remain long, traveling to London at age nineteen where he stayed for less than two years.[xi]

In London he was introduced to Masonry. He became aware that intellectuals of the upper middle class were among its members. The international connections available in Masonry were important for a journalist and a printer. Franklin wrote deistic essays, viewing man as a mechanical part of a much larger machine. In his pamphlet, "A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain," he included two sections. The first stated that evil didn't exist; the second that pleasure and pain balanced each other. For a short period of time he fancied himself an atheist. Alfred Aldridge remarked that on his return from London he "shifted to a fanciful faith in a plurality of gods." In 1728 he prepared his own creed, which included many created gods. Man was as an intermediate being between ranks of superior and inferior creatures.[xii]

The date of Franklin's Masonic initiation is uncertain, but Tatsch thinks this occurred in 1730 or 1731. The lodge became Franklin's pathway into upper society, and he became Grand Master of Pennsylvania in June of 1734. Tatsch wrote, "..he did more to establish Freemasonry in America than any other man of his time." Fay felt that Franklin's turning to Masonry, "shows us the possibilities that were open to Masons to reach a mystical, profound, ardent, and intimate conversion, though remaining outside Christianity and even whilst warring against it." At this time he also became close friends with Thomas Paine, who shared Franklin's beliefs, although there is no known record of Paine's Masonic membership.[xiii]

Among other activities Franklin wrote for the The Pennsylvania Gazette. He raved about Masonic ceremonies and activities. According to Fay the Gazette was a Masonic paper. Franklin became the first owner of a chain of newspapers, and "thus, he established in all the English colonies of America a network of Masonic newspapers." [xiv] In 1734 he printed and published the first Masonic book in America, The Constitutions of the Freemasons. The same year he became Grand Master of St. John's Lodge of Freemasons. He became an intermediary between the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania and the American Philosophical Society, which, according to Fay, could have been called an extension of Masonry. As in the Royal Society of England, most of the members were Masons.[xv]

Especially in his early years, Franklin was prone to make derogatory comments about Roman Catholics. Nevertheless, in Europe he met enlightened Catholics, and his view was tempered. An interesting incident allowed Franklin to have an indirect influence on the termination of the Spanish Inquisition. In 1788 a young clergyman, Don Antonio José Ruiz de Padrón, was shipwrecked not far from Philadelphia. Taking refuge there, he was invited to discussions including Protestant clergy. These took place both in Franklin's home and in Washington's quarters in Philadelphia. As these clergymen skillfully attacked the Spanish Inquisition, Ruiz de Padrón became convinced of the truth of their arguments. The young priest not only preached publicly in Philadelphia against the Inquisition, but carried the debate home to the Spanish Cortes, where he enlisted others in the cause.[xvi] Opening the debate on the Inquisition on January 15 of 1813…"the secretary read aloud the valiant priest's Dictamen sobre la Inquisición in which he described his experiences in Philadelphia and Franklin's role in drawing his attention to the evils of the Inquisition."[xvii]

Franklin was highly involved in French Freemasonry. While Grand Master of the Nine Sisters Lodge in Paris (1779-1780), two important assemblies took place promoting cultural activities. According to Weisberger these assemblies, "..revealed that the Nine Sisters would function as a center for Masonic supporters of the American Revolution." This was a supposed violation of Masonic practice, but was never questioned by the Grand Orient. Due partly to Franklin's influence, many came to see Masonry as being in sympathy with the American Revolution.[xviii]

During one of these cultural assemblies Hilliard d'Auberteuil read the preface to his Essais historiques et politiques sur les Anglo-Americains, one of the first works about America to appear in France. He praised Americans for advocating natural liberties and virtue. Especially impressed by the constitutions of New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, he noted their emphasis on freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of religion. He believed Washington and Franklin were enlightened Masons bringing forth the tenets of the Craft. Another Frenchman, Rouchefoucauld d'Anville, presented the Nine Sisters Lodge with his translations of the Declaration of Independence and Articles of Confederation, as well as six state constitutions which explained natural liberties. During these cultural assemblies an announcement was made. The Nine Sisters Lodge would offer a prize of six hundred livres for the best paper on the theme of "Benjamin Franklin vivant." Members of this lodge also financed and edited, "Affaires de 'Angleterre et de l'Amérique," between 1776-1780, to supply news about the American independence struggle.[xix]

Henry S. Commager wrote a delightful description of Franklin in France.

> With his long white locks falling about his benign countenance, his beaver hat which spoke of the backwoods, his brown homespun suit – on a famous occasion velvet-his gold rimmed spectacles of his own make, he was the very picture of innocence and symbol of wisdom. This printer's apprentice from frontier America…had wrested the lightning from the skies and the scepter fro the hands of tyrants…When he and Voltaire met, at the Academy, all Europe exclaimed in ecstasy that it was the meeting of Solon and Sophocles. Every learned society honored itself by counting him a member…the Royal Society over in London sent him a gold medal for his services to humanity.[xx]

The year after Franklin joined the Nine Sisters Lodge in 1777, he took part in an elaborate Masonic memorial service for Voltaire. When Franklin was selected as Grand Master

for this lodge in 1779, he became fast friends with Masons who sought liberty for France and who looked to the example of the United States.[xxi]

What did Franklin believe? Like most Freemasons, his faith was eclectic. John Adams said of him in disgust, "The Catholics thought him almost a Catholic. The Church of England claimed him as one of them. The Presbyterians thought him half a Presbyterian, and the friends (the Quakers) believed him a wet Quaker."[xxii] Franklin joined several congregations, subscribed to various creeds, some of his own invention, but in the end he was a pragmatist and a deist. Tolerance and humanitarianism were important to him. He disbelieved Christianity and yet was attracted to it, enjoying clergy from all denominations. Gregarious and sociable, he attempted to harmonize his beliefs with those about him. Continually searching for a higher power, he was never quite sure of its nature. His polytheistic ideas "embraced either a multiplicity of gods, each one controlling a system such as our own, or the single supreme god controlling all subordinate gods and their systems."[xxiii] In his autobiography he said he respected all religions, "and I hope to go out of the world at peace with them all."[xxiv]

Franklin's behavior was at times bizarre, hedonistic. While in England, he prepared a new text for The Prayer Book of the Church of England, used also by American Episcopalians. He did this in cooperation with Lord Le Despenser, according to Fay, "one of the most notorious rakes in England." His home housed a peculiar monastic order, the famous Medenham Monks. "Arrayed in religious costumes, the members met and recited blasphemous liturgies while drinking and making love."[xxv]

Another unusual associate of Franklins was Sir Francis Dashwood, whom Franklin met while he was Deputy Postmaster General. Dashwood, who was Joint Postmaster General of England, had a "taste for spectacular sex, blasphemy and the macabre. He belonged to a secret society, the Order of St. Francis, which held black masses and other blasphemous rites. The purpose of this deistic organization was to combine sex and heavy drinking with the external appearances of religion." Dashwood revised common prayer books together with Franklin. This was partly a hoax and partly a sincere attempt to improve worship.[xxvi]

In the United States Franklin prepared A Book of Common Prayer with David Williams, who was deistic and radical. Williams said, " all honest, pious men, Calvinists, Arians, Socianians, Jews, Turks and Infidels might and ought to worship God together in Spirit and in

Truth." This was similar to Franklin's statement in his autobiography, "tho' my scheme was not wholly without religion there was in it no mark of any of the distinguishing tenets of a particular Sect. I had purposely avoided them; …that it might be serviceable to people in all religions." Franklin called Williams, a "priest of nature" and they planned to use their liturgy in a deistical chapel. Together they belonged to a club called "the Society of 13."[xxvii]

George Washington, although perhaps less colorful than Franklin, was also well-known as a Mason. He was initiated into the Lodge at Fredericksburg, Virginia in 1752. Masons remembered well the occasion when Washington laid the cornerstone of the capital in Washington, D.C. on September 18, 1793…"wearing an apron which had been presented to him by his Masonic brother, General Lafayette." He received Masonic honors in many cities and had a Masonic funeral at Mount Vernon. "With one exception, all the pall bearers were members of Lodge No. 22, Fredericksburg.[xxviii] Although Washington joined the lodge at Fredericksburg, he seldom attended lodge meetings.[xxix]

Religious quotes from Washington's speeches and papers are noncommittal and vague. There was an attempt to be inclusive, non-offensive.. Paul F. Boller remarked , "Washington frequently alluded to providence in his private correspondence. But the name of Christ, in any connection whatsoever does not appear anywhere in his many letters." The words for God were words used by deists, "providence, great architect, governor of the universe, higher cause, and supreme architect." References to Christianity were formal and impersonal. He had the "characteristic unconcern of the eighteenth century deist for the forms and creeds of institutional religion.[xxx]

Writing to Lafayette in 1787 he wrote that he was pleased with the plan for religious tolerance in France. He wrote, "being no bigot myself to any mode of worship, I am disposed to indulge the professors of Christianity in the church, that road to heaven which to them shall seem most direct, plainest, easiest, and least liable to exception." In a letter to Sir Edward Newenham in 1792 he said, "Of all the animosities which have existed among mankind, those which are caused by a difference of sentiments in religion appear to me to be the most inveterate and distressing…"[xxxi]

Although Washington was a lifelong member of the Episcopal Church, being convinced that organized religion served a good purpose, that of promoting morality and maintaining order, he disliked religious quarrels, which might upset the peace. Like most American deists, not as

anticlerical as European deists, he gave money to many denominations for building churches.[xxxii]

American Universalists looked up to Washington because John Murray, their founder, was a chaplain in the Continental Army. However, their doctrine of universal salvation, absence of hell, caused controversy among the orthodox. Chaplains in the army petitioned for Murray's removal. Washington stood firm, refusing to dismiss him. Washington followed a policy of religious tolerance. Nevertheless, he was skeptical about the Quakers and their policy of pacifism, suspicious that they might be Tories in disguise. Despite actions that supported religious freedom, he spoke little about it, until after he became president. Baptists and Quakers were especially focused on religious freedom and beseeched the president to be supportive.[xxxiii]

Washington believed man was naturally good. Civil liberties would bring about virtue, resulting in free, democratic, and peaceful states. Viewed from this perspective, the cause of American freedom took on religious significance. He believed there was a supernatural force, providence moving in men's affairs, "a virtuous force, furthering the welfare of mankind."[xxxiv] After the disestablishment of the Anglican Church, Virginia attempted a tax to support all churches. Washington was disappointed, as state support of religion was not practical. He agreed with Thomas Jefferson's ideas. "Intolerance in any form, religious or secular, was as foreign to Washington's mind as it was to Jefferson's." He strongly supported the clause in the Constitutional Convention prohibiting a religious test for office holders. When Presbyterians in New England were concerned about the lack of acknowledgement of the "true God and Jesus Christ" in the constitution, he replied, "To the guidance of the Ministers of the gospel, this important object is perhaps, more properly committed…in the progress of morality and science, to which our government will give every furtherance, we may confidently expect the advancement of true religion, and the completion of our happiness." [xxxv]

In these two founding fathers, Washington and Jefferson, we see different types of Masons. Both supported religious tolerance and religious pluralism. Franklin, however, was more radical, both in his profession and in his actions. Washington's letters and speeches were often vague, but it was evident that he made no strong commitment to Christianity, and perhaps attempted to walk a middle road. Anson Phelps Stokes states that if Unitarianism had been formally organized, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine and James Madison might have become members.[xxxvi]

Americans, however, began to feel that more than mere tolerance was needed. The idea of toleration implied that one belief was more acceptable than others. Only a country with an established church could speak about tolerance. The Founding Fathers were influenced by rhetoric from the French Revolution. Comte de Mirabeau remarked to the French National Assembly on August 22, 1789, "The most unlimited religious freedom is in my eyes so holy a right that the word tolerate….appears to me in a certain degree tyranny."[xxxvii]

Thomas Paine in his classic book, Rights of Man, commended the French constitution for renouncing tolerance in favor of universal right of conscience. Paine wrote:

> Toleration is not the opposite of Intolerance, but is the counterfeit of it. Both are despotisms. The one assumes to itself the right of withholding Liberty of Conscience, and the other of granting it. The one is the Pope armed with fire and faggot, and the other is the Pope selling or granting indulgences. The former is church and state, and the latter is church and traffic.[xxxviii]

James Madison objected to the word toleration because it gave the impression that "the free exercise of religion was permissive, instead of an unquestioned natural right."[xxxix] Paine speaks of the "divine origin of the rights of man at the creation." All men are born equal and therefore have equal natural rights. These rights concern his freedom to act in his own best interest for his own comfort and happiness, as long as others are not harmed. Civil rights come about with man joining society. "Every civil right has for its foundation some natural right pre-existing in the individual…"[xl] Paine ignored the Biblical doctrine of the fall of man, the need for redemption.

I found no good evidence that Thomas Paine ever joined Freemasonry, although he was a good friend of Benjamin Franklin. However, Paine's beliefs were deistic, and he held strongly to natural religion, the religious basis for Freemasonry. Paine wrote Age of Reason, in which he favored a pure morality based on natural religion. He hoped reason would overcome superstition and believed that it was god's will to have many religions, as long as they were kind and moral. Paine believed the word of god existed only in nature, not in print, and he believed that if there had been a man named Adam, he would have been a deist. Paine's radical views were not well accepted, and many turned against him.[xli]

An interesting sidelight is that Paine wrote an essay entitled, "The Origin of Freemasonry." The real secret of the Freemasons, "is …. their origin, which but few of them

understand; and those who do, envelop it in mystery." Not until the third degree could this knowledge be revealed. Masonry claimed divine communication unrelated to the Bible. Paine thought that Masonry came from some ancient religion, probably from the Druids. He offered proof from the customs, ceremonies, hieroglyphics and chronology of Masons. Druids were priests of the sun, and the name Druid meant wise man. The image of the sun was seen in the lodge and was also a central figure on Masonic aprons. This ancient sun worship was later reduced to a system showing the progress of the sun through the twelve signs of the zodiac. The religious rites of the Druids had reference to the twelve signs of the zodiac. In many Masonic temples one could see (and can still see) zodiac signs used as ornamentation. Masons celebrated on the feast of St. John, but every "enlightened Mason must know that it is really the celebration of the summer solstice, when the sun is at its highest." Paine praised the beliefs of the Druids,…"that wise elegant philosophical religion was…the opposite..to the gloomy Christian church."[xlii]

He quoted Captain George Smith, Provincial Grand Master of Masonry in Kent. In 1783 Smith wrote a treatise entitled, "the Use and Abuse of Masonry." Captain Smith said, "In Masonry many of the ceremonies of the Druids are preserved in their original state," but he was not at liberty to explain. The white aprons represented the Druids who wore white at the time of their sacrifice and solemn ceremonies. Smith said, "As Masons, we regard the principles of those who were the first worshippers of the true God, imitate their apparel and assume the badge of innocence." Paine also cited a speech by Doctor Dodd, Grand Chaplain in London, in which he traced the worship of the sun throughout various countries.[xliii]

On the back of George Washington's chair in Independence Hall in Philadelphia, the rising sun can still be seen. As the Constitution was signed, Franklin remarked, "Now I have the happiness to know that it is a rising, not a setting, sun." The author of Masonry and Americanism wrote, "That (Franklin's comment) was a splendid bit of symbolism for all mankind; but to us of the Craft it is a direct message from Benjamin Franklin that in his opinion the presiding officer of that convention was sitting in a Masonic East and that the work done in that convention was Masonic work."[xliv] There was optimism, bringing in a new day for humanity. The Continental Congress adopted an American seal with the words "Novus Ordo Seclorum," (new secular order) to be used on the dollar bill.[xlv]

Stokes mentioned several ways that the institution of Freemasonry influenced religious tolerance in the United States. Among these were: the meeting together of men with different religious persuasions, new friendships and contacts brought about by military lodges, the shared belief in the "great architect of the universe," the tenet that all men were of divine origin and were to receive equal treatment, and finally, the desire for separation of church and state, emphasizing freedom of conscience.[xlvi]

Stokes quoted Andrew L. Randell:

> ….in our lodges we teach the Brotherhood of Man based on the Fatherhood of God and advance no other dogma…within the tiled precincts of the lodge every Mason is taught to revere and respect and be tolerant of that which is sacred to his brother be he Christian, Mohammedan or Jew…it is unMasonic conduct to discuss religious opinions concerning which men differ. The religious opinions concerning which men differ are far removed from the essentials of religion, concerning which all Masons and most thinking men agree…This is the sense in which the Freemason understands religious liberty.[xlvii]

In the article entitled, "Masonry," The Catholic Encyclopedia quoted Albert Pike. "Masonry propagates no creed, except its own most simple and sublime one taught by Nature and Reason. There has never been a false religion in the world. The permanent one universal religion is written in visible nature and explained by Reason and is completed by the wise analogies of faith. There is but one true religion, one dogma, one legitimate belief."[xlviii]

Pike (1809-1891), commander of the Southern Jurisdiction of Scottish Rite Masonry, was well-known among Masons for rewriting the Scottish Rite Doctrines. He was also responsible for including occult terminology in the higher degrees. Jack Harris, a former Mason, quoted Pike on July 4, 1889, when he accepted the positions of Grand Master of the Central Directory of Washington, Grand Commander of the Supreme Council Charleston and Sovereign Pontiff of Universal Freemasonry. According to Harris, he gave these incredible instructions to the twenty-three Supreme Councils of the world.

> That which we must say to the crowd is, "We worship a God, but it is the God that one adores without superstition. To you, Sovereign Grand Inspectors General, we say this ,that you may repeat it to the Brethren of the 32nd, 31st, and 30th degrees – The

> Masonic religion should be, by all of us initiates of the high degrees, maintained in the purity of the Luciferian doctrine. If Lucifer were not God, would Adonay (The God of the Christians) whose deeds prove his cruelty , perfidy, and hatred of man, barbarism and repulsion for science, would Adonay and his priests calumniate him? …the true and pure philosophic religion is the belief in Lucifer, the equal Adonay; but Lucifer, God of Light and God of Good, is struggling for humanity against Adonay, the God of Darkness and Evil.[xlix]

Pike wrote that the Kabalah, an occult mystical Jewish interpretation of Scriptures, was used by Freemasonry. Masonry was a search after light that would lead directly back to the Kabalah. Kabalistic doctrine, like Freemasonry, led to perfection. Pike felt the Kabalah was necessary to unveil the symbols and doctrine of the Bible.[l]

Separation of church and state has long been and remains a favorite goal of Freemasonry. Virginia was especially important in the history of the United States due to early influence on American thought regarding church-state separation.[li] Two important Virginians, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, sympathetic to Masonry, although not proven to be Masons, were instrumental in developing the concept of religious tolerance, both in Virginia and in the federal constitution.

Two important states, Virginia and Connecticut, had Masonic influence on church-state separation. Dorothy Ann Lipson studied Freemasonry in federalist Connecticut. She distinguished between "orthodox and latitudinarian frames of reference." Orthodox beliefs were usually Calvinist, believing in the sinful nature of man, with redemption as an act of grace. Latitudinarians, including Freemasons, emphasized an ordered universe, designed for man's happiness.[lii]

The revolution disturbed the established order. In the 1790's Freemasonry was linked to "anticlerical latitudinarianism and to Jeffersonianism." Enlightenment thought was altering the ideas of those who had lived through the Revolution. Conflicts began between the clergy and Freemasons, due to the inclusive nature of Freemasonry. Western land sales became a topic of fervent debate. Some felt that the profits from these sales should not be used to support the clergy or religious education. Were Masons behind this questioning of what had been accepted procedure? "The Association of Masonry with deism, universalism, anticlericalism, and finally Jeffersonian-Republicanism corresponded to a new political reality: the overlapping affiliations of different kinds of dissent to Connecticut's Standing Order."[liii]

William Judd, the Grand Master of Connecticut Masonry said, "I revere the clergy of this state…but I am unwilling the churches and people of this state should be subjected to ecclesiastical tyranny." Luther Payne, officer of Moriah Lodge said, "The clergy are a discerning set of gentlemen and look well for themselves as respects property and influence." In May of 1795 a bill passed to secularize education. It was sponsored by Masonic leaders. However, the "new latitudinarian spirit, avowedly institutionalized in Masonry," was at that time a minority opinion. The clergy began to attack Masonry in the pulpit. They were concerned about Masonic involvement in the French Revolution and in secret conspiracy.[liv]

Washington's death was an occasion for Connecticut Masons to regain favor. It was emphasized that he had been a Grand Master in Virginia, laying the cornerstone for the nation's capital in a Masonic ceremony. Masons in mourning were proud to announce that the Father of the United States had been their Masonic brother.[lv]

Because most of Connecticut's social life had been organized around the church, the institution of Freemasonry threatened "the Standing Order." Traditionally, morality had been an area of teaching reserved for the church. Masons were teaching another morality, a morality which they believed was superior to Biblical revelation as it was universal and, they thought, the basis for all religions. In 1789 Connecticut Grand Lodge was established and in 1818 Oliver Wolcott, Jr., was elected governor as a "Tolerationist." In that same year Wolcott became Grand Master of the Grand Lodge and became a leader in the endeavor to accomplish church-state separation, promoting the acceptance of all religions.[lvi]

Masonry used rituals and symbols to pass on secret knowledge. The initiation ceremony was permeated with symbolism about leaving darkness and coming into light. Lipson commented, "the similarity between deism and Freemasonry is so pervasive that it is difficult to distinguish them." Many Masons held that Christianity was a corruption of monotheism. They saw themselves as descending from a line of religious elites who had preserved and could restore a universal religion. There were also some Masons who wished to discover Christian ties. John Kewley, rector of Christ's Church in Middletown in 1812 wrote a book entitled Masonry on Christian Principles. Masons encouraged clergy to join, often remitting fees to encourage membership. Many universalists became members. There was hesitancy on the part of Christians to challenge Masonry despite its religious character.[lvii]

Another source of friction was that, according to the claims of many, Masonry was used to gain unfair advantage. The secrecy, exclusiveness and elitism were hard to resist. Masons stressed equality, but it appeared be equality only in origin and destination. Meanwhile, on this earth, differences of rank were acceptable, and the Mason gained prestige as he progressed through Masonic degrees. "Those of orthodox belief lamented the propensity for Masonic gatherings to enjoy a festive atmosphere, engaging in singing immoral songs. The airs commonly performed in the lodges unequivocally express the varied immorality of Freemasonry."[lviii] Lipson discussed the struggles between Masonic and Antimasonic factions and the rise of the Antimasonic party, but she did not cover the influence of Freemasonry in the disestablishment of the church in Connecticut. Although Masonry may have been only one element in the downfall of the "Standing Order, " no doubt it was important.

It is not easy to discern what role Freemasonry played in the separation of church and state. The periodical of the Scottish Rite, The New Age Magazine, of August, 1988, stated that the Supreme Council of the Mother Jurisdiction was in favor of various methods to implement their creed. One of these methods was "the complete separation of church and state, and opposition to any direct or indirect diversions of public funds to church-related schools or institutions."[lix]

As previously mentioned, Virginia's role in the development of religious tolerance in the United States was vital. Deists, Baptists, Freemasons, and Presbyterians, among others in Virginia, all favored religious tolerance. It is likely that they worked together to achieve the disestablishment of the Episcopal Church. Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, the two Virginians most responsible for Virginia's Bill of Rights and Statue for Religious Freedom, have not been positively proven to be Freemasons. These two were prominent in the promotion of separation of church and state in the federal government.[lx]

Madison was brought up in the Episcopal church, although he never identified himself as an Episcopalian. Though knowledgeable about the Bible, it is possible he became a deist later in life. He was reluctant to discuss religion, believing it was a private subject, and especially after 1776, spiritual topics were not frequently found in his papers.[lxi] Jefferson was undoubtedly a deist, and his beliefs agreed with Masonic tenets. Even though Madison's religious views were not as well known, he and Jefferson were closely allied, sharing many views in common.

J.R. Church, a student of Biblical prophecy and author of Guardians of the Grail, wrote his book to dispute the film, "the Last Temptation," the affirmed love affair of Jesus and Mary Magdalene. He writes about the founding fathers:

> It is reported that Benjamin Franklin was a Rosicrucian. Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and George Washington were Masons. It is interesting to note that though these men were a part of these orders, George Washington warned the Masonic Lodge in America of the dangers of the Iluminati, while Thomas Jefferson and John Adams later disagreed over the use of the Masonic Lodge by the Illuminati. John Adams, who is reported to have been the founder of the Masonic Lodges in New England, accused Jefferson of using the lodges that he himself had founded, for subversive Illuminati purposes. The three letters of Adams which deal with this problem are in the Wittenburg Square Library in Philadelphia. Many today are becoming convinced that Franklin, Adams and Jefferson were manipulated by the Illuminati until John Adams became alerted. This should not be interpreted as an indictment against the American founding fathers as being un-Christian or unpatriotic. Many good men are quite naïve of the tremendous influence of ancient religious-political movements."[lxii]

Ronald E. Heaton, author of Masonic Membership of the Founding Fathers, stated about James Madison, "His Masonic membership has never been proved and has been a matter of debate for many years. Many researchers…think Madison was a member of Hiram Lodge No. 59, Westmoreland Court House, Virginia." Heaton admitted that this membership had been contested. He also mentioned a letter in which Madison claimed he had never been a Mason. There was, however, a question as to whether the letter was written by Madison.

Heaton said of Jefferson, "Jefferson was said to have affiliated with the Door to Virtue Lodge No. 44, Albemarle Country, Virginia, and also that he was made a Masons in France in the Famous Lodge of the Nine Sisters, but there is no supporting information for either claim." He included several other statements, some referring to him as a Mason, some contradicting that claim.[lxiii] Two letters in which Jefferson mentioned Freemasonry appeared to substantiate the claim that he was not a Mason, although he was not unsympathetic to their hopes and beliefs. In a letter written from Philadelphia, dated Jan. 31, 1800, to Bishop James Madison (a Mason and cousin of President James Madison) Jefferson mentioned that he had recently read Abbe Barruel's Antisocial Conspiracy, noting that Barruel quoted from Wishaupt (former Jesuit and founder of the Illuminati, an off-shoot of Freemasonry) who believed in the "indefinite perfectibility of man." Jefferson wrote:

> Wishaupt believed that to promote this perfection of the human character was the object of Jesus Christ. That his intention was simply to reinstate natural religion, & by

> diffusing the light of his morality to teach us to govern ourselves. His precepts are the love of god & love of our neighbor. And by teaching innocence of conduct, he expected to place men in their natural state of liberty & equality. He says, no one ever laid a surer foundation for liberty than our grand master, Jesus of Nazareth. He believed the Free-masons were originally possessed of the true principles & objects of Christianity & have still preserved some of them by tradition, but much disfigured.

Jefferson concluded by remarking that if Wishaupt had written in the United States, "where no secrecy is necessary in our endeavors to render men wise & virtuous, he would not have thought of any secret machinery for that purpose."[lxiv]

Another letter written by Jefferson to Martha Jefferson Randolph on Aug. 31, 1817, spoke of the request of the Widow's Son Masonic Lodge, No. 60, and the Charlottesville Lodge 90 to lay the cornerstone at the University of Virginia, then called Central College. Jefferson thought it was a fine idea as these Masons had been a good influence in Charlottesville. Jefferson, James Madison and James Monroe (a proven Mason) were present at that ceremony.[lxv]

Besides George Washington, the most famous Mason from Virginia, other prominent Virginians were active in Freemasonry. Peyton Randolph, the first president of the Continental Congress, was the first Grand Master of the Williamsburg Lodge. Edmund Randolph was Grand Master in Virginia from 1786-1788 and was also Governor of Virginia during that same period. He was on the committee that drafted the Virginia Bill of Rights and first Virginia Constitution. As leader of the Virginia Delegation to the Constitutional Convention in 1787, he presented the Virginia Plan to that body. He was also the first U.S. Attorney General. Other prominent Virginia Masons were members of the Pendleton, Lee, and Blair families. Marquis de Lafayette was not made a Mason in Virginia, but both he and his son George Washington Lafayette were made honorary members of many lodges in Virginia.[lxvi] Marsha Schuchard wrote that Lafayette was initiated into American Freemasonry at Valley Forge, with Washington presiding as Master Mason.[lxvii]

John Marshall, the first Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, was Grand Master in Virginia 1793-95. However, in a letter to Honorable Edward Everett dated July 22, 1833, he said that he became a member as a young man, and that later Freemasonry lost its attraction for him. He claimed he hadn't been in a lodge for forty years, except once to accompany General LaFayette. Thinking it harmless until the murder of William Morgan and the

formation of the Antimasonic Party, he had changed his mind. Morgan was a Mason who had been kidnapped and possibly murdered for telling Masonic secrets. He was reluctant to say too much as he had several friends who were Masons.[lxviii]

The author of Freemasonry in Virginia, Willliam Moseley Brown, wrote:

> For more than two hundred years, therefore, Freemasonry has been making its contribution to Virginia life and thought. Its influence in the early history of the commonwealth can hardly be overestimated. For then, as today, it provided a common bond – the "mystic tie" between men of different religious persuasions, varying national origins and divergent views…[lxix]

In Virginia Anglican establishment had been a fact since 1619. Virginia Royal Governors were told to assure that colonists observed the Church of England rites. By 1629 the established church had become quite intolerant and dissenters were forced to either leave Virginia or pretend conformity.[lxx] By 1730 Scotch Presbyterians had moved into Virginia and began to upset the statue quo. Laws were passed to fine them for assembling to worship. In 1738 these Presbyterians requested their just rights, asking that The Act of Toleration, which had passed in England in 1688, be enforced and applied to them.[lxxi] This appeared to be acceptable until it was obvious that Presbyterianism was becoming too popular and awakening undue interest. "Militant Presbyterianism caused the crust of privilege to be broken and democratic ideas in religion and politics to be spread and strengthened."[lxxii]

Baptists arrived in Virginia in 1743 but did not confront the established church until 1750-1760. At that time the "Separate Baptists" began to agitate against infant baptism and to heap scorn on self-indulgent Anglican clergy.[lxxiii] Baptists were then charged with disturbing the peace, but the persecution only seemed to encourage them.[lxxiv] Although Virginia laws did not favor dissenters, the Baptists soon received support from Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and George Mason, among others.[lxxv]

The Virginia Bill of Rights of 1776, written by George Mason, provided for the "free exercise of religion," rather than "fullest toleration." Dissenters were not really satisfied with this and wanted complete freedom, seeing freedom of religion as a natural right. The established clergy presented a paper to the legislature on November 8, 1776, titled "Memorial from the Clergy of the Established Church." It spoke of the importance of promoting peace and happiness

and the problems clergy would encounter if disestablishment occurred. Their pleas were ignored.[lxxvi]

Madison objected to the wording of Article 16 in the Virginia Declaration of Rights and offered an amendment. He wanted to remove the word "toleration" because he believed religious freedom was a natural right, rather than a concession of the established church. Edmund Pendleton, who was a Mason, spoke on behalf of Madison's amendment. In the little book, Masonry and Americanism, the author commented, "Section 16 of that document (The Virginia Bill of Rights) is so truly a Masonic expression that it is worth our while to listen to it." Madison was mainly responsible for achieving the passage of this legislation, which occurred on June 12, 1776. This act allowed free exercise of religion and dissenters were not to be penalized.[lxxvii]

However, more needed to be accomplished. The Episcopal Church was firmly entrenched, and many supported state financial support for Christianity. Madison, convinced of the need for church-state separation, had a significant role in defeating a general tax in Virginia to support Christian education. He and Jefferson often worked together. Jefferson was responsible for preparing the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, which provided complete religious freedom, but Madison was instrumental in seeing that it passed. Lance Banning stated, "Defeat of the assessment and approval of the Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom marked a major turning point in the development of the American relationship of church and state.[lxxviii]

Madison, although probably not a Freemason, was influenced by liberal teaching at Princeton, a "hotbed of anti-establishment and anti-clericalism."[lxxix] In a letter to his friend William Bradford, Madison wrote, "ecclesiastical establishments tend to great ignorance and corruption all of which facilitates the execution of mischievous projects." In this letter Madison also lamented the prevalent pride and ignorance found among the clergy.[lxxx]

The controversy regarding the established church continued for several years. It was not until Jefferson's Bill for Religious Freedom finally passed in 1786, a decade after it had been introduced, that the Anglican church was disestablished in Virginia. There had been debate concerning the preamble to the Bill. Some wanted the Bill to promote Christianity exclusively, but they were outnumbered. In Jefferson's autobiography he wrote:

> Where the preamble declares that coercion is a departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion, an amendment was proposed, by inserting the word (s) "Jesus

> Christ," so that it should read "a departure from the plan of Jesus Christ, the holy author of our religion." The insertion was rejected by a great majority, in proof that they meant to comprehend, within the mantle of its protection, the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and mahometan, the Hindoo and the infidel of every denomination.[lxxxi]

J.G.A. Pocock doubted that the General Assembly in Virginia was really concerned about freedom of the mentioned religions. He felt it more likely "that Unitarians, Socinians, and other kinds of deists and humanists had the vote," remarking that although Unitarianism had not appeared in Virginia, liberal Episcopalians had adopted Unitarian and deistic beliefs. Furthermore, Pocock observed, "The Virginia Statue is not neutral as to religion; it defines it, declaring it to be something – opinion or free inquiry- and denying it to be something else – a presence of Christ as anything more than a historic figure about whom opinions may be held." [lxxxii]

Cushing Strout observed that although the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom was local and not national, it was an important expression of enlightenment thought. Many realized that Virginia became a model for other states and for the federal government.[lxxxiii]

Jefferson believed that God had made man's mind free. Furthermore, God had not used force to extend his influence, but rather reason. Convinced that truth was a sufficient antidote to error, Jefferson was optimistic. The natural weapons of truth, according to Jefferson, were free argument and debate. Stokes, citing Jefferson's "Notes on Virginia, 1781-82," quoted him, "It is error alone which needs the support of government. Truth can stand by itself." Jefferson and Madison both spoke well of Pennsylvania and New York, states with no established religion. Jefferson said, "their harmony is unparalleled and can be ascribed to nothing but their unbounded tolerance." Bayliss wrote, "The preamble to Thomas Jefferson's bill furnished a philosophical justification, not only for religious toleration and complete separation of church and state, but also for the absolute right of the individual to complete intellectual liberty."[lxxxiv]

In a letter to James Madison, Jefferson wrote:

> It is comfortable to see the standard of reason at length erected, after so many ages during which the human mind has been held in vassalage by kings, priests, and nobles; and it is honorable for us to have produced the first legislature who had the courage to declare that the reason of man may be trusted with the formation of his own opinions.[lxxxv]

Adrienne Koch wrote about the statute for religious freedom in Virginia. "This enlightened act did much to win Jefferson a place among the liberal philosophers and statesmen of Europe." It was translated to French and Italian and found its ways to centers of European enlightenment. Jefferson's secretary, William Short, wrote to Madison, "The philosophical legislation of Virginia is in the mouths of all the learned of this place, and quoted by all the advocates of the lumieres de la Philosophie." Jefferson had been a "subtle-brain-trust" for the liberal reform group headed by Lafayette, advising Lafayette on the chief principles to include in his bill of rights.[lxxxvi]

Virginia's Bill of Rights was passed prior to the United States Bill of Rights and also before the French Revolution. Lafayette, influenced by the Virginia Bill of Rights and by Jefferson, was responsible for introducing this information to France.[lxxxvii] Both Jefferson and Madison had abundant correspondence with Lafayette, and most likely Freemasons quite pleased with the turn of events in Virginia. That is not to say that dissident denominations were not equally pleased.

These two Virginians, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, who along with George Mason "achieved for Virginia the distinction of being the first legislature to declare that man was free to believe as he pleased in matters of religion,"[lxxxviii] were also largely responsible for influencing national thought on religious freedom, although many were supportive and interested.

Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, and Madison, whose efforts were effective in seeing that the Bill of Rights became part of the Constitution, were probably most instrumental in the United States theory of church-state separation. The Bill of Rights was not considered in the Constitutional Convention of 1787 because some states had established churches, and it would have encountered too much opposition. However, eight new states already had Bills of Rights and half of these had guarantees of religious freedom. On June 8, 1789, Madison sought adoption of the Bill of Rights. When it finally passed he had gained what he most wanted, separation of church and state at the federal level, and the protection of the civil and natural rights of the people.[lxxxix]

Charles B. Sanford in his book, The Religious Life of Thomas Jefferson, noted that Jefferson, "crystallized the ideology of the new nation" around his religious beliefs as reflected

in his famous sentence, “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with inherent and (changed by Congress to certain) inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”[xc]

Who influenced Jefferson? Stokes believed three French writers, Montesquieu, Rousseau and Condorcet, impacted early American political thought, stating that French philosophic skepticism did much toward forming a “creedless national religion” in the United States. All three of these Frenchmen were Masons.[xci] Sanford mentioned that Jefferson found in the writings of Montesquieu justification for separation of church and state, as well as for freedom of religion being a “natural right.”[xcii] Furthermore, Jefferson had all the writings of Montesquieu in his library as well as two commentaries on them.[xciii] Jefferson, however, told his friend, James Madison, that the Declaration of Independence was original, and he had “turned to neither book nor pamphlet while writing it.”[xciv]

This was no doubt true. Nevertheless, the theory of natural rights was not new and was well accepted by many intellectuals. The idea that god had created man with natural rights was discussed and developed in England during parliament’s struggles with the monarchy. Natural rights were seen as opposing the divine right of kings. Jefferson and Paine, both deists, spoke of natural rights as existing from creation, although privately both were skeptical concerning the Biblical account of creation. Locke listed life, liberty and the right to property as natural rights. Jefferson changed Locke’s list to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.[xcv]

Stokes remarked that the Declaration of Independence was written when “the religious life of the United States was at a rather low ebb.” He explained that as the great awakening waned, the writings of the French Encyclopedists and English deists became very influential, especially in Virginia, Philadelphia, and Boston, centers of the independence movement. Bayliss noted that the Declaration asserted that man has certain rights from his Creator which cannot be removed. The highest law was the law of nature, seen in a world designed by God. This law could be discovered by reason. Commager noted that natural rights were as old as Greek philosophy. Nevertheless, in America, for the first time, these rights had been written as constitutional guarantees. The constitution was a reflection of the Declaration with its emphasis on “certain inalienable rights.”[xcvi] The omission of the reference to god in the constitution caused some controversy. President Dwight of Yale thought it the influence of Jefferson.[xcvii]

Believing that man was basically good, and that his life in the primitive state had been happy, Jefferson thought oppressive government was responsible for most problems. God had created man's mind free and man was accountable to god alone. Therefore religious freedom was the most important of all the rights, and from it all others stemmed. He hoped the United States would be "a barrier against the return of ignorance and barbarism" and wrote, "let us not be uneasy about the different roads we pursue (to heaven)…we shall all meet in the end." He believed Locke had taken a step in the right direction, but more remained to be accomplished.[xcviii]

Although Jefferson was not a Freemason, I felt it was important to emphasize his life for two reasons. First, as stated by Commager,"…only Franklin can challenge the preeminence of Jefferson, and Franklin died at the birth of the Republic (1790) while Jefferson lived on for another thirty-six years, active to the end…he dominated the American state more completely than Voltaire the French or Goethe the German…" Although the old world introduced the Enlightenment, the new world brought it into being. Jefferson's thought, especially in collaboration with James Madison, had a profound influence on American religious tolerance, as well as separation of church and state, one of the goals of the Scottish Rite. As perceived by Thomas E. Buckley, S. J… "In the development of American political thought and public policy, Jefferson is recognized as the preeminent spokesman for religious liberty and the separation of church and state." Jefferson predated statements on freedom of belief by contemporary Christian groups, such as the World Council of Churches and the Second Vatican Council. Jefferson was the formulator of an "American faith."[xcix]

Secondly, because the thought of the English deist, Matthew Tindal, was probably the basis for the Masonic first charge, "the religion in which all men agree," Jefferson most clearly represented that desire.

Douglas Knoop and G.P. Jones, in 1946, submitted a paper entitled "Freemasonry and the Idea of Natural Religion," to Quatuor Coronati Lodge of London, No. 2076, a lodge specializing in historical research. Two aspects of deism mentioned agreed with Webster's definition: a belief in God, as "a constitutional monarch of the universe," and a denial of revelation, asserting the adequacy of human reason. These two beliefs made up the basis for what was termed "natural religion," considered to be both natural and universal, binding upon all men. They concluded that the thought of Matthew Tindal, especially in his book, Christianity as Old as the

Creation, summarized the theology of earlier deist and latitudinarian authors, clearly setting forth the essence of natural religion.[c]

Sanford wrote that Jefferson's religious beliefs were saturated by the ideas of the English deists, Herbert of Cherbury, Charles Blount, Matthew Tindal, John Toland and Conyers Middleton.[ci] Especially reflective of Tindal was Jefferson's emphasis on natural, reasoned religion, and happiness as a basic human right. Sanford felt that Jefferson had both a "stoical, ascetic strain and an epicurean appreciation of finer things." Happiness was the goal; virtue was the way to attain it. Duty was important to Jefferson, and he, as did Tindal, saw morality as the common basis for all religions. He preferred the study of morality "which is the same in all religions to that of religious doctrine in which all differ." Although Jefferson was familiar with the classics, and considered the doctrines of Epicurus the best, most rational of Greek and Roman moral thought, like Tindal, he saw the teachings of Jesus as the most perfect morality of all time. Jefferson did not say which came first, "his belief in God the Creator of human morality or his belief in man's goodness, which suggested a moral God as Creator." Similarly, Jefferson was convinced that religion should be based on reason rather than revelation; he put his faith in natural law as opposed to miracles.[cii]

Jefferson wrote The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth, printed by an order of Congress in 1904. An edition of 9000 copies was distributed to Congress. This book was an edited version of the New Testament. Jefferson said it was an attempt "to pick out the diamonds from the dunghills," as he removed what he believed was unnecessary doctrine, simplifying the New Testament into a system of morals.[ciii] Stokes mentioned that Jefferson did not want America to be called a Christian nation, although he felt civil liberties depended on a belief in god. Sanford told that when Jefferson ran for president in 1800 controversy was plentiful. Although Jefferson had numerous supporters, newspaper articles and pamphlets referred to him as a "French infidel and atheist." People in New England actually hid their Bibles to keep them safe after his election![civ]

Jefferson had faith in mankind and also the "lawyer's faith in the efficacy of law in shaping human conduct by restraining evil and encouraging good." Man could be taught to do right by education, reason and even by a future state. He was not averse to using heaven and hell as a motivation, although he doubted their existence. Even though Jefferson was optimistic about mankind, he did believe there were a few men inclined to evil. Priests and the church were

responsible for many social ills, and the Calvinistic idea that man was sinful was responsible for hampering progress. He was impressed by the thought of Lord Bolingbroke. Bolingbroke, like Tindal, attacked the doctrine of the atonement as barbaric.[cv]

Koch mentioned that education was essential in Jefferson's view. Jefferson felt it could not be overestimated as a road to liberty. Both he and Madison hoped for an educational institution in the south, making the south equal to the north in culture and learning. The two spent nine years creating the University of Virginia. Jefferson did not see theology as important for study, and with the help of his friend, the future Bishop James Madison (a Mason), he eliminated theology from the curriculum of the College of William and Mary. They also attempted to keep it out of the University of Virginia.[cvi]

The author of the book Masonry and Americanism saw education as an important objective:

> If there is one idea in Masonry...it is the Fraternity's never-ending search for Light, More Light, and Further Light. This runs all through our Ritual…In Masonry's school…we learned that Light is the symbol of knowledge…The Level...is a symbol of equality. What Masonry teaches in the lodge room she advocates in the world at large…And it is for that reason that Masonry puts the whole weight of its influence behind the public school system. She is the advocate of schools because she is the friend of knowledge. Washington in his farewell address said, "Promote then…institutions of the general diffusion of knowledge...It is essential that public opinions should be enlightened." (As Masons) we must not only enforce our compulsory education laws in order to save the Republic, but we must enforce them in order to save the race![cvii]

Happiness, stressed by English deists, was important to Jefferson. This would be achieved by each person working and fulfilling his duty to society. He worked to develop libraries and for social and political reform, so that all men might have equal opportunity.[cviii] Commager noted, "In the 18th Century all the philosophers were moralists, whatever their philosophy, whatever their religion. They were not pious, they were not devout, certainly they were not orthodox, but they had a religion all the same. It was the religion of happiness." If then, man was supposed to be happy, why wasn't he? These men often blamed a tyrannical church and society. As Commager concluded, "Only Man in a state of nature was happy. Man before the fall." The right to happiness included in the Virginia Bill of Rights, had also been written by John Adams into the Massachusetts Bill of Rights. From the time of the Revolution to

the advent of the twentieth Century, two-thirds of one hundred and twenty state constitutions that had been written guaranteed happiness.[cix] John Adams wrote in 1776:

> Upon this point all speculative politicians will agree that the happiness of society is the end of Government, as all divines and moral philosophers will agree that the happiness of the individual is the end of man. From this principle it will follow that the form of government which communicates ease, comfort, security, or in one word, happiness, to the greatest number of persons, and in the greatest degree, is the best.[cx]

A Masonic author, Bobby J. Demott, has an ascending ladder of concepts illustrated in his book, Freemasonry in American Culture and Society. These are illustrative of steps, "in the attainment of human happiness from the basic natural religion." Beginning with natural religion, the Freemason proceeds to knowledge, then reasoning, followed by virtue, freedom, security, and finally human happiness![cxi]

Freemasons have continued to be involved in the cause of separation of church and state. Joseph Martin Dawson, a Texas Baptist and a Freemason, helped to create Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State, a group that gives counsel in church-state cases. Scottish Rite Masons gave the funds to begin this organization. Masons and Baptists urged Protestants to fight against enemies of the American school system and religious freedom. Catholics were seen as among those enemies.[cxii]

Many Roman Catholics have seen Freemasonry as an extension of Protestantism. As Catholics were early targeted by Freemasonry, they have historically been opposed to Freemasonry. Bernard Fay, author of Revolution and Freemasonry, was a French Roman Catholic who tried to alert the public to the dangers of Freemasonry.[cxiii] Nevertheless, there are many Roman Catholic members of the lodge. Since Vatican II Catholics have been permitted to join Freemasonry.[cxiv] Many Protestants have also been involved in Freemasonry.

Another prominent American and Freemason, Senator Sam J. Ervin ,Jr., of North Carolina, spoke highly of The Virginia Statue for Religious Freedom, seeing it as "one of the greatest documents ever conceived by man," and leading to the First Amendment. Senator Ervin was active in attempting to exclude church-controlled colleges and universities from receiving grants and loans. As a Presbyterian from the Bible-belt, he was selected to fight against the

Dirksen Amendment to restore prayer in public schools. He was honored for his work in 1973 by "fellow members of the Scottish Rite Masons."[cxv]

And so it would appear, that there is indeed some justification for Catholic authors to look upon the United States as a Masonic country. To criticize Freemasonry is considered anti-American, as seen in The Congressional Record of the U.S. Senate, September 9, 1987. The Senate considered the nomination of David Bryan Sentelle for U.S. Circuit Judge of the District of Columbia. Some on the Judiciary Committee were concerned about his Masonic membership. Questions were raised about the membership policy of the Masons. Judge Ronald Lew, of California, was also a Mason up for recommendation. The concern had to do with whether Masonic membership was restricted by race, color, or creed. It was referred to the America Bar Association. David R. Almond, chairman of the ABA's Standing Committee on Ethics and Professional Responsibility, wrote that he had investigated and found no policy of restrictive membership.

Strom Thurmond, noted that there were five members of the Judiciary Committee, including himself, who were Masons as well as the majority leader, Senator Robert Byrd, and thirteen members of the Senate, as well as fifty-eight members of the House of Representatives. Alan Simpson, a Mason, commented, that… "during that April 29 meeting, objection was raised because Judge Sentelle was a member of the Masonic Lodge, which was one of the most extraordinary things I have ever seen raised in my time in the Senate…I do not want to create controversy, but I think this totally unwarranted delay in the consideration of the nomination is truly one of the most absurd things I have witnessed as a Member of the Senate." He continued to name senators and presidents involved in Masonry, commenting, "not exactly the kind of suspicious people you would think may not match the test to be on the Federal Judiciary…I could go on at length on this richly absurd matter, Mr. President, but I shall not. I just say that Masonry in this country is the bedrock. There are many buildings in this remarkable city that have been laid with cornerstone ceremonies of the Master Masons…Let us not hold matters from going forward ever again on some basis of membership in Freemasonry. That is a galling and ponderous and very unbecoming exercise. Let not Masonry be sullied in the judicial select process anywhere again in this fine country and especially in this body." Senator Byrd added…"I hope that this ugly head of prejudice against Masons will not rear itself again." Mr. Thurmond added, "I just want to say this: I was astounded that this question was raised in the

Judiciary Committee… I just want to say that of our forefathers who established this Government, a lot of them were Masons. George Washington, who laid the cornerstone for the original Capital, was a Mason. In 1803, he laid the cornerstone and did it with a Masonic apron. So I hope…that will be the end of it, and we will not hear any more on it."[cxvi]

The United States. Is it, as some Christians would claim, founded on Jesus Christ, "a chosen and precious cornerstone,"[cxvii] or is it as Senator Simpson alleged, founded on Masonry, the bedrock?

[i] Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th edition, s.v., "Freemasonry," by William James Hughan.

[ii] See Bernard Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry, pp. 230, 234, and J. Hugo Tatsch, Freemasonry in the Thirteen Colonies, (New York: Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Company, 1929), pp. ix-x.

[iii] Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry, pp. 229-230, 234.

[iv] Anson Phelps Stokes, Church and State in the United States, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), 1:245.

[v] Masonry and Americanism, (Washington, D.C.: The Masonic Service Association of the United States, 1924), p. 4-5, 20.

[vi] See Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry, pp. 237-241, and Sidney Morse, Freemasonry in the American Revolution (Washington, D.C.: The Masonic Service Association of the United States, 1924), p. 52, 64-65, and Masonry and Americanism, p. 7. Other resources covering this are, Baigent and Leigh, The Temple and the Lodge (New York: Little Brown and Co., 1989) pp.222-223, and Steven C. Bullock, Revolutionary Brotherhood (Chapel Hill and London, University of North Carolina Press, 1996, published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Va.) p. 117.

[vii] Philip A. Roth, Masonry in the Formation of Our Government (1761-1799), (Milwaukee, Wis.: Masonic Service Bureau, 197), p. 15.

[viii] Ronald E. Heaton, Masonic Membership of the Founding Fathers (Washington D.C., The Masonic Service Association, 1965), pp. xvi, 165.

[ix] Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry, p. 243.

[x] William Moseley Brown, Freemasonry in Virginia (1733-1936) (Richmond, Va.: Masonic Home Press,inc., 1936) p. 100.

[xi] See Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry, pp. 150-151, Alfred Owen Aldridge, Benjamin Franklin and Nature's God (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1967), pp. 13, 25.

[xii] See Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry, pp. 145, 154, and L.W. Labaree et al (eds.), Papers of Benjamin Franklin, I (New Haven, 1959), pp. 102-104 as cited in Aldridge, Benjamin Franklin and Nature's God, pp. 19, 25-26.

[xiii] See Tatsch, Freemasonry in the Thirteen Colonies, pp. 21-2 and Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry, p. 164.

[xiv] See Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry, pp. 147, 233, and Bernard Fay, Franklin the Apostle of Modern Times (Boston: Little Brown, and Co, 1929), p. 485.

[xv] Charles W. Meister, The Founding Fathers (Jefferson, N.C. and London: McFarland and Col., Inc., 1987), p. 73 and Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry, p. 173.

[xvi] Miguel Villaba Hervás, Ruiz de Padrón y su tiempo (Madrid, 1857) as cited by Aldridge, Benjamin Franklin and Nature's God, pp. 222, 225, 245-258.

[xvii] Aldridge, Benjamin Franklin and Nature's God, p. 249. See also Dictamen del Doctor Don Antonio José Ruiz de Padrón…sobre el tribunal de la inquisición (Cádiz y reimpreso en México, 1813).

[xviii] Weisberger, " The Cultural and Organizational Functions of Speculative Freemasonry During the Enlightenment.." pp. 138-139.

[xix] Durand Echeverria, Mirage in the West: a History of the French Image of American Society to 1815 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957) pp. 55-56, 73, 150-155, 171, as cited in Weisberger, "The Cultural and Organizational Functions of Speculative Freemasonry during the Enlightenment..", pp. 139-140.

[xx] Henry Steele Commager, Jefferson, Nationalism and the Enlightenment (New York: George Braziller, 1975) pp. 104-105.

[xxi] Charles W. Meister, The Founding Fathers, p. 90.

[xxii] The Works of John Adams, ed. C.F. Adam (Boston, 1851) I, 661 as cited in Aldridge, Benjamin Franklin and Nature's God, p. 8.

[xxiii] Aldridge, Benjamin Franklin and Nature's God, pp. 8-10, 33.

[xxiv] Franklin Writings, ed. Smyth, Vol. X, p. 35, as cited by Aldridge, Benjamin Franklin and Nature's God, p. 206.

[xxv] Franklin Writings, ed. Smyth, Vol VI, pp. 165-170, as cited by Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry.

[xxvi] Aldridge, Benjamin Franklin and Nature's God, pp. 166, 173.

[xxvii] Ibid., pp. 213-216.

[xxviii] Tatsch, Freemasonry in the Thirteen Colonies, pp. 140-141.

[xxix] Charles W. Meister, The Founding Fathers, p. 314.

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