

"THAT MOST ANCIENT AND RIGHT WORSHIPFUL FRATERNITY": FREEMASONRY AND THE ORIGINS OF SECULAR PHILANTHROPY AND VOLUNTARISM

Benjamin Franklin is such an attractive and vital historical personality that it is all too easy to believe that he single-handedly brought about the emergence of secular non-governmental voluntary associations in the colonies. But Franklin's successes were much due to the fact that, for a variety of reasons, many of his fellow citizens were thinking along the same lines as to his genius and his strategic location and occupation.

As he presents it in his autobiography, for example, the Junto seems a direct outgrowth of his personal philosophy -- and as a unique entity in its time and place. What he does not tell us is that the Junto was both modelled on and in a variety of important ways connected to the Masonic orders that were being founded in the colonies in the 1730s. Nor does he tell us of his prominent involvement in their establishment: in 1730, his newspaper, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, printed the first documented notice of Freemasonry in North America; the following year, he became a Freemason himself; in 1734, he became Provincial Grand Master of Pennsylvania. In the same year, he printed the first book on Freemasonry to appear in the colonies, THE CONSTITUTIONS OF THE FREE-MASONS. CONTAINING THE *History, Charges, Regulations, &c.* of that most Ancient and Right Worshipful FRATERNITY. For the Use of the LODGES. This was a facsimile edition of a volume that first appeared in London in 1723. Its purpose was to provide an introduction to the history and ideals of the order, as well as guidelines for organizing Masonic lodges.

Though Franklin had undoubtedly come in contact with the Masons in the 1720s, during his first stay in England, where he had gone to perfect his skills as a printer, he was not the first colonist to become a Mason. Jonathan Belcher, a Boston merchant, had been inducted into an English lodge in 1704 and, by the early 1730s, the Boston Masons were sufficiently numerous to petition the Grand Lodge in London for their own charter (which was granted in 1733). While the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania was not formally organized until 1734, one Daniel Coxe of New Jersey had been deputized Grand Master of the Provinces of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania in 1730. The organization spread rapidly: by 1740, lodges had been established in Massachusetts, Georgia, New York, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Virginia. By the 1760s, the

Masons membership included a considerable part of the generation of men who would lead the Revolutionary effort.

Although the actual origins of the order are obscured both by the mists of time and the organization's own propensity to mythologizing (which traces their descent to the builders of the Temple of Solomon and the medieval chivalric order, the Knights Templar), it appears that Freemasonry was connected to the emergence of the middle classes in England in the seventeenth century. While there are scattered documents from lodges in England and Scotland dating back to 1599, the order did not achieve a genuinely public presence until 1717, with the establishment of the Mother Grand Lodge in London. This entity, with consolidated three older lodges, made the bold and unprecedented move of branding as "irregular" all Masonic organizations which declined to accept its authority. Most of the older bodies in England, Scotland, and Ireland quickly fell into line, and the London body became the basis for rapid worldwide expansion of the order.

The rise of the order in this guise appears to be closely linked to the rise of Enlightenment political and aesthetic ideas. Despite its internal hierarchy, its offices were filled by election, not by succession -- which in itself made it unusual and radical in a political setting where patriarchy and deference to inherited titles were still very much the rule. Its emphasis on individual merit and achievement further tied it to the rise Enlightenment ideas about equality. Moreover, although the primary purposes of the organization involved mutual assistance and benefit (doubtless a heritage from the old trade and artisan guilds), the order early made charity of broader scope, including civic improvement, a central concern.

The rise of the Masons in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries also appears to have been tied to the classical revival in architecture style and to an explicit rejection of the Gothic. This favoring of geometrical over organic forms contains powerful political, social, and economic assumptions. As cultural historian James Deetz puts it,

"more than a change of style of detail is involved here: it is a change in basic tradition. Like folk buildings earlier, these structures grew out of a way of life, a new and different concept of the relationship between man and nature. Gone is the medieval 'acceptance' of nature taking its course, along with the unworked

materials, exposed construction, and additive composition that expressed it. This design is informed by very different convictions: that the world has a basic immutable order; that men by powers of reason can discover what that order is; and that, discovering it, they can control environment as they will" Order and control: the eighteenth century is called the age of reason, and it saw the rise of scientific thought in the Western world and the development of Renaissance derived form, balanced and ordered, in the Anglo-American world. By 1760, significant numbers of New Englanders and their counterparts in other colonies partook of this new world view. . . [which was] mechanical where the older was organic, balanced where the older had been asymmetrical, individualized where the older had been corporate. . . . (Deetz, 39-40).

Thus, the revolution in style evident in the Masons celebration of geometry is symptomatic of a more fundamental revolution in how Europeans and Americans thought, worked, worshipped, and governed themselves. It was the tangible expression of Franklin's perfectionism.

Masonry was a central component in the emergence of secular voluntarism. While Masonry took pains to profess its loyalty to established religion, the movement's emphasis on religious toleration gave it a distinctly radical tinge. Similarly, while it enjoined its members to peaceably submit to the civil order and avoid political scheming, its pledges of loyalty to "government for the time being," as well as its commitment to retain as members even brothers who were accused to being in rebellion against the State, make its pledges of submissiveness seem, at best, disingenuous. It is easy enough to see why Freemasonry attracted skeptics and free-thinkers like Franklin, as well as why, by the end of the eighteenth century, the order was so often associated, both here and abroad, with anti-clericalism and radical republicanism.

From our own perspective, Masonry seems like a tame -- even childish -- affair. But in eighteenth century America, where voluntary associations and private charity were virtually unknown, an organization which set itself and its members apart from government and established religion, which extended economic and political preferment to its members over the rest of society, which operated in secrecy to arbitrate disputes between members and to influence the outcome of the legal and political process was a very powerful force indeed. More importantly, however, the

Masons' mechanisms self-government, as well as their concerns with mutual assistance, charity, and civic improvement, provided hundreds of eighteenth century colonists with an organizational model that could be -- and was -- applied more broadly in the reordering of social, political, and economic life.

THE CONSTITUTIONS OF THE FREE-MASONS. CONTAINING THE *History, Charges, Regulations, &c.* of that most ancient and Right Worshipful FRATERNITY. For the Use of the LODGES. (1723)

. . .the *old Records* of Masons afford large Hints of the *Lodges*, rom the Beginning of the World, in the polite Nations, especially in Times of Peace, and when the Civil Powers, abhorring Tyranny and Slavery, gave due scope to the bright and free Genius of their happy Subjects; for then always Masons, above all other Artists, were the Favorites of the Eminent, and became necessary for their grand Undertakings in any sort of materials, not only in Stone, Brick, Timber, Plaister; but even in Cloth or Skins, or whatever was us'd for Tents, and for the various sorts of *Architecture*.

Nor should it be forgot, that *Painters* also, and *Statuaries*, were always reckon'd good Masons, as much a *Builders, Stone-cutters, Bricklayers, Carpenters, Joiners, Upholders, or Tent-Makers*, and a vast many other Craftsmen that could be nam'd, who perform according to *Geometry*, and the Rules of *Building*. . . .

But among the Heathen, while the noble science of *Geometry* was duly cultivated, both before and after the Reign of *Augustus*, even till the *Fifth Century* of the *Christian Aera*. Masonry was held in great Esteem and Veneration: And while the *Roman Empire* continu'd in its *Glory*, the Royal Art was carefully propagated, even to the *ULTIMA THULE*, and a *Lodge* erected in almost every *Roman Garrison*. . . .

But when the *GOTHS* and *VANDALS*, that had never been conquered by the *Romans*, like a general Deluge, over-ran the *ROMAN EMPIRE*, with warlike Rage and gross Ignorance they utterly destroy'd many of the finest Edifices, and defac'd others, very few escaping; as the

Asiatic and *African* Nations fell under the same Calamity by the Conquests of the MAHOMETANS, whose grand Design is only to convert the World by Fire and Sword, instead of cultivating the Arts and Sciences.

Thus, upon the Declension of the *Roman Empire*. when the *British Garrisons* were drain'd. the ANGLES and other lower SAXONS, invited by the ancient BRITONS to come over and help them against the SCOTS and PICTS, at length subdu'd the South Part of this *Island*, which they call'd England, of Land of the *Angles*; who being kin to the *Goths*, or rather a sort of *Vandals*, of the same warlike Disposition, and as ignorant Heathens, encouraged nothing but War, till they became Christians; and then too late lamented the Ignorance of their Fathers in the great Loss of *Roman Masonry*, but knew not how to repair it.

Yet becoming a *free People* (as the old *Saxon Laws* testify) and having a Disposition for *Masonry*, they soon began to imitate the *Asiatics*, *Grecians*, and *Romans*, in erecting the Lodges and encouraging of Masons; being taught, not only from the faithful *Traditions* and valuable *Remains* of the BRITONS, but even by foreign *Princes*, in whose Dominions the *Royal Art* had been preserved from *Gothic Ruins*. . . .

. . . King JAMES VI. of SCOTLAND succeeding to the Crown of ENGLAND, being a *Mason King*, reviv'd the *English Lodges*; and as he was the *First King* of GREAT-BRITAIN, he was also the *First Prince* in the World that recover'd the *Roman Architecture* from the Ruins of *Gothick Ignorance*: For after many dark or illiterate Ages, as soon as all Parts of Learning reviv'd, and *Geometry* recover'd its Ground, the polite Nations began to discover the Confusion and Impropriety of the *Gothick Buildings*; and in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth *Centuries* the AUGUSTAN STILE was rais'd from its Rubbish in *Italy*, by BRAMANTE, BARBARO, . . . and many other bright *Architects*; but above all, by the *Great PALLADIO*, who has not been duly imitated in *Italy*, though justly rival'd in *England* by our *great Master-Mason* INIGO JONES. . .

. . . But in the Reign of . . . King JAMES II. though some *Roman Buildings* were carried on, the *Lodges of Free-Masons* in *London* much dwindled into Ignorance, by not being duly frequented and cultivated. But after the *Revolution*, Anno 1688, KING WILLIAM, though a warlike Prince, having a good Taste of Architecture, carried on the aforesaid two famous Hospitals of *Greenwich* and *Chelsea*, built the fine part of his royal Palace of HAMPTON COURT, and founded and finish'd his incomparable Palace at LOO in HOLLAND, &c. And the bright Example of that *glorious Prince*, (who by most is reckon'd a *Free-Mason*) did influence the

Nobility, the Gentry, the Wealthy and the Learned of GREAT BRITAIN, to affect much of the *Augustan Style*; as appears by a vast Number of most curious Edifices erected since throughout the Kingdom. For when in the Ninth Year of the Reign of our late *Sovereign ANNE*, her *Majesty* and the *Parliament* concurr'd in an Act for erecting 50 new *Parish-Churches* in *London, Westminster, and Suburbs*; and the *QUEEN* granted a Commission to several Ministers of *State*, the principal *Nobility*, the two *Archbishops*, with several other *Bishops* and dignify'd *Clergymen*, to put the Act in execution; they order'd the said *New Churches* to be raised according to the *ancient Roman Style*. . . ; and the present honourable *Commissioners* having the same good Judgment of *Architecture*, are carrying on the same laudable *grand Design*, and are reviving the *ancient Style*, by the Order, Countenance, and Encouragement of his present *Majesty* KING GEORGE. . . .

And now the *Freeborn BRITISH NATIONS*, disentangled from foreign and civil Wars, and enjoying the good Fruits of Peace and Liberty, having of late much indulg'd their happy Genius for Masonry of every sort, and reviv'd the *drooping Lodges* of *London*, this fair *Metropolis* flourisheth, as well as other Parts, with several worthy *particular Lodges*, that have a quarterly *Communication*, and an annual *grand Assembly*, wherein the *Forms* and *Usages* of the most ancient and worshipful Fraternity are wisely propagated, and the *Royal Art* duly cultivated, and the *Cement* of the Brotherhood preserv'd; so that the whole *Body* resembles a well built *Arch*; several *Noblemen* and *Gentlemen* of the best Rank, with *Clergymen* and learned *Scholars* of most Professions and Denominations, having frankly join'd and submitted to take the *Charges*, and to wear the *Badges* of a *Free and Accepted Mason* under our present worthy *Grand-Master, the most noble PRINCE John Duke of MONTAGUE*.

THE
CHARGES
OF A
FREE-MASON,
EXTRACTED FROM
The ancient RECORDS of LODGES
beyond Sea, and those in *England, Scotland,*
and *Ireland*, for the Use of the *Lodges* in LONDON:
TO BE READ
At the making of NEW BRETHREN, or when the
MASTER shall order it.

I. *Concerning* GOD and RELIGION

A *Mason* is oblig'd, by his Tenure, to obey the moral Law; and if he rightly understands the Art, he will never be a stupid ATHEIST, nor an irreligious LIBERTINE. But though in ancient Times Masons were charg'd in every Country to be of the Religion of that Country or Nation, whatever it was, yet now 'tis thought more expedient only to oblige them to that Religion in which all Men agree, leaving their particular Opinions to themselves; that is, to be *good Men and true*, of Men on Honour and Honesty, by whatever Denominations or Persuasions they may be distinguish'd; whereby Masonry becomes the *Center of Union*, and the Means of conciliating true Friendship among Persons that must have remain'd at a perpetual Distance.

II. *Of the* CIVIL MAGISTRATE *supreme and subordinate*

A *Mason* is a peaceable subject to the Civil Powers, wherever he resides or works, and is new to be concern'd in Plots and Conspiracies against the Peace and Welfare of the Nation, nor to behave himself undutifully to inferior Magistrates; for as Masonry hath been always injured by War, Bloodshed, and Confusion, so ancient Kings and Princes have been much dispos'd to encourage the Craftsmen, because of the Peaceableness and *Loyalty*, whereby they practically answer'd the Cavils of their Adversaries, and promoted the Honour of the Fraternity, who ever flourish'd in Times of Peace. So that if a Brother should be a Rebel against the State, he is not to be countenanc'd in his Rebellion, however he may be pitied as an unhappy Man; and if convicted of no other Crime, though the Loyal brotherhood must and ought to disown his Rebellion, and give no Umbrage or Ground of political Jealousy to the Government for the time Being; they cannot expel him from the *Lodge*, and his Relation to it remains indefeasible.

III. *Of* LODGES.

A LODGE is a Place where *Masons* assemble and work: Hence that Assembly, or duly organiz'd Society of Masons, is call'd a LODGE, and every Brother ought to belong to one, and to be subject to its *By-Laws* and the GENERAL REGULATIONS. . . .

The Persons admitted Members of a *Lodge* must be good and true Men, free-born, and of mature and discreet Age, no Bondmen, no Women, no immoral or scandalous Men, but of good Report.

IV. *Of* MASTERS, WARDENS, Fellows, and Apprentices.

All Preferment among *Masons* is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the *Lords* may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the *Royal Craft* despis'd: Therefore no *Master* or *Warden* is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit. . . .

V. *Of the Management of the CRAFT in working.*

All *Masons* shall work honestly on working Days, that they may live creditably on *holy* Days. . . .

. . . The *Craftsmen* are to avoid all ill Language, and to call each other by no disoblging Name, but *Brother* of *Fellow*; and to behave themselves courteously within and without the *Lodge*. . . .

The *Master*, knowing himself to be capable of *Cunning*, shall undertake the *Lord's* Work as reasonably as possible, and truly dispend his Goods as if they were his own; nor to give more Wages to any *Brother* of *Apprentice* than he really may deserve.

Both the *MASTER* and the *Masons* receiving their wages justly, shall be faithful to the *Lord*, and honestly finish their Work, whether *Task* or *Journey*; nor put the Work to *Task* that hat been accustom'd to *Journey*.

None shall discover *Envy* at the Prosperity of a *Brother*, nor supplant him, or put him out of his Work, if he be capable to finish the same; for no Man can finish another's Work so much to the *Lord's* Profit, unless he be thoroughly acquainted with the Designs and Draughts of him that began it.

When a *Fellow-Craftsman* is chosen *Warden* of the Work under the *Master*, he shall be true to *Master* and *Fellows*, shall carefully oversee the Work in the *Master's* Absence to the *Lord's* Profit; and his Brethren shall obey him.

All *Masons* employ'd, shall meekly receive their Wages without *Murmuring* or *Mutiny*, and not desert the *Master* till the Work is finish'd.

A *younger* *Brother* shall be instructed in working, to prevent spoiling the Materials for want of Judgment, and for encreasing and continuing of *Brotherly Love*.

All the Tools used in working shall be approved by the Grand Lodge.

No *Laborer* shall be employ'd in the proper Work of *Masonry*; nor shall FREE MASONS work with those that are *not free*, without an urgent Necessity; nor shall they teach *Laborers* and *unaccepted* Masons, as they should teach a *Brother* or *Fellow*. . . .

VI. *Of* BEHAVIOUR, viz.

1. *In the* LODGE *while* CONSTITUTED.

You are not to hold private Committees, or separate Conversation without leave from the *Master*, nor talk of anything impertinent or unseemly, nor interrupt the *Master* or *Wardens*, or any Brother speaking to the *Master*; nor behave yourself ludicrously or jestingly while the *Lodge* is engaged in what is serious and solemn. . . .

If any Complaint be brought, the Brother found guilty shall stand to the Award and Determination of the *Lodge*, who are the proper and competent Judges of all such Controversies, (unless you carry it by *Appeal* to the GRAND LODGE). . . . You must never go to Law about what concerneth *Masonry*, without an absolute Necessity apparent to the *Lodge*.

2. BEHAVIOUR *after the* LODGE *is over and the* BRETHREN *not gone*.

You may enjoy yourselves with innocent Mirth, treating one another according to Ability, but avoiding all Excess, or forcing any Brother to eat or Drink beyond his Inclination, or hindering him from going when his Occasions call him, or doing or saying any thing offensive, or that may forbid an *easy* and *free* Conversation; for that would blast our Harmony, and defeat our laudable Purposes. Therefore no private Piques or Quarrels must be brought within the Door of the *Lodge*, far less any Quarrels about *Religion*, or *Nations*, or *State Policy*, we being only, as *Masons*, of the *Catholick Religion* above-mention'd; we are also of all *Nations*, *Tongues*, *Kindreds*, and *Languages*, and are resolved against ALL POLITICS, as what never yet conduc'd to the Welfare of the *Lodge*, nor ever will. This *Charge* has always been strictly enjoyn'd and observ'd; but especially ever since the *Reformation* in BRITAIN, or the Dissent and Secession of these Nations from the *Communion* of ROME.

3. BEHAVIOUR *when* Brethren *meet without* Strangers, *but not in a* LODGE *form'd*.

You are to salute one another in a courteous manner, as you will be instructed, calling each other *Brother*, freely giving mutual instruction as shall be thought expedient, without being overseen or overheard, and without encroaching upon each other, or derogating from that Respect which is due to any Brother, were he not a Mason: For though all *Masons* are as

Brethren upon the same *Level*, yet *Masonry* takes no Honour from a Man that he had before; nay rather it add to his Honour, especially if he has deserv'd well of the Brotherhood. . . .

4. BEHAVIOUR *in the Presence of* STRANGERS *not* MASONS.

You shall be cautious in your Words and Carriage, that the most penetrating Stranger shall not be able to discover or find out what is not proper to be intimated; and sometimes you shall divert a Discourse, and manage it prudently for the Honour of the *worshipful Fraternity*.

5. BEHAVIOUR at HOME, *and in your* Neighbourhood.

You are to act as becomes a moral and wise Man; particularly, not to let your Family, Friends, and Neighbours know the *Concerns* of the *Lodge*, &c. but wisely to consult your own Honour, and that of the *ancient Brotherhood*, for Reasons not to be mention'd here. You must also consult your Health, by not continuing together too late, or too long from home, after Loge Hours are past; and by avoiding of Gluttony or Drunkenness, that your Families be not neglected or injured, nor you disabled from working.

6. BEHAVIOUR *towards a strange Brother*.

You are to cautiously examine him, in such Method as Prudence shall direct you, that you may not be impos'd upon by an ignorant and false *Pretender*, whom you are to reject with Contempt and Derision, and beware of giving him any Hints of Knowledge.

But if you discover him to be a true and genuine *Brother*, you are to respect him accordingly; and if he is in want, you must relieve him if you can, or else direct him how he may be reliev'd; You must employ him some Days, or else recommend him to be employ'd. But you are not charged to do beyond your Ability, only to prefer a poor *Brother*, that is a *good Man* and *true*, before any other poor People in the same Circumstances.

FINALLY, All these CHARGES you are to observe, and also those that shall be communicated to you in *another way*; cultivating BROTHERLY-LOVE, the Foundation and Cape-stone, the *Cement* and *Glory* of this ancient *Fraternity*, avoiding all Wrangling and Quarrelling, all Slander and Backbiting, nor permitting others to slander any honest Brother, but defending his Character, and doing him all good Offices, as far as is consistent with your *Honour* and *Safety*, and no farther. And if any of them do you Injury, you must apply to your own or his *Lodge*; and from thence you may appeal to the GRAND LODGE at the *Quarterly Communication*, and from thence to the *annual* GRAND LODGE, as has been the ancient laudable Conduct of our Fore-fathers in every Nation; never taking a *legal Course* but when the

case cannot be otherwise decided, and patiently listening to the honest and friendly Advice of the *Master* and *Fellows*, when they would prevent your going to LAW with *Strangers*, or would excite you to put a speedy Period to all *Law-Suits*, that so you may mind the *Affair* of MASONRY with the more Alacrity and Success; but with respect to *Brothers* or *Fellows* at Law, the *Master* and Brethren should kindly offer their Mediation, which ought to be thankfully submitted by the contending Brethren; and if that Submission is impracticable, they must however carry on their *Process* or *Law-Suit*, without Wrath and Rancour (not in the common way) saying and doing nothing which may hinder *Brotherly Love*, and good Offices to be renew'd and continu'd that all may see the *benign Influence* of MASONRY, as all true *Masons* have done from the beginning of the *World*, and will do to the End of *Time*.

AMEN SO MOTE IT BE.

The earliest published notices of Masonry in the colonies appeared in Benjamin Franklin's Pennsylvania Gazette in 1730. Franklin, at this time still very much the rising young outsider in Philadelphia, had evidently sought admission to one of the informal lodges operating in the city. Turned away, he penned the following satirical item, which both ridiculed the order and threatened to give away its secrets.

Pennsylvania Gazette, December 8, 1730

As there are several lodges of Free-Masons erected in this Province, and people have lately been much amused with conjectures concerning them, we think the following account of Free-masonry from London will not be unacceptable to our readers.

Their Grand Secret is *That they have no secret at all*; and when a man finds himself obliged, *se defendendo*, to carry on the Jest with as solemn a Face as the rest. We shall not use

many Words to persuade the Publick that the following piece is genuine; if carries all the Marks of Truth in itself; we would only refer the Reader to the Conduct of the Brotherhood upon this occasion:

LONDON, August 12

BY the Death of a Gentleman who was one of the Brotherhood of FREE-MASONS, there has lately appeared a Discovery of an abundance of their secret Signs and Wonders, with the mysterious Means of their Admission into that Fraternity. The following is a true Copy of a Manuscript which the Deceased had written for the Benefit of his own private Remembrance, and which was found conceal'd among his choicest papers in the most hidden Part of his Cabinet. The World has long admir'd, that such a numerous Company, many of them not remarkable for Taciturnity, there has been no one found, that in his Cups, or in any other Circumstance, would discover their Mysteries:

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We shall not use many Words to persuade the Publick that the following Piece is genuine; refer the Reader to the Conduct of the Brotherhood upon this Occasion; if they *ridicule* it, or look *very grave* upon it, or if they are *very angry* and endeavour to *decry* it, we may be satisfied it is the *real Truth*.

Franklin's threat evidently had the desired effect. Within three months of the piece's appearance, in February of 1731, he was inducted into the order. The following day, he formed a business partnership with one of the colony's leading Masons, Thomas Whitebread. Masonry powerfully influenced Franklin's ideas about voluntary organizations as mechanisms for changing society. It was during the early months of

his membership that he began sketching out his plans for "a united party for virtue." In May of 1731, he published the following article, evidently in an effort to make amends for his earlier squib.

Some Information concerning the society called
Free-Masons (May 13, 1731)

To give the reader What information we can concerning the Society called Free-Masons, we have inserted the following extract from Chambers' great Universal Dictionary of all Arts and Sciences, printed in 1728:

FREE & ACCEPTED MASONS, a very ancient Society of Men so called; either from some extraordinary Knowledge of Masonry or Building, which they are supposed to be Masters of, or because the first Founders of that Society were Persons of that Profession. They are now very considerable, both for Honour and Character; being found in every Country in Europe, and consisting principlly of persons of Merit and Consideration. As to Antiquity, they claim to a standing of seven Thousand Years; and it is said can trace up their Original as early as the building of Solomon's Temple. What the end of their Institution is, seems still in some measure a Secret; tho' as much of it as is known appears to be good and laudable, as it tends to promote friendship, Society, mutual Assistance, and Good Fellowship. The Brethren of this Family are said to be possessed of a great number of Secrets, which have been strictly observed from Age to Age. Be their other virtues what they will 'tis plain they are Masters of one in a very great degree, viz, Secrecy.

The spread of Masonry was rapid. By the Revolution, almost any city of any size, North and South, boasted a lodge. And, its secrecy notwithstanding, the implications of the order's doctrines for the growth of civil society in general and for secular philanthropy in particular seem to have been well-understood, as the following excerpt from the sermon preached by Rev. Enoch Huntington to the members of the Masonic lodge of Middletown, Connecticut in 1797. Comparing Huntington's discussion of charity to Cotton Mather's suggests that Masonry had brought about a curious reversal of the relationship between religion and philanthropy. For Mather, benevolence was validated by religious faith; for Huntington, benevolence was validated by human actions and, in particular, by "instrumentalities" like the Masons which served God's purposes. Moreover, Huntington is quite explicit about the role of Masonry in providing a forum in which citizens can view and deal with the problems of society outside the strictures of partisanship and denomination. This suggests the kind of generalized civic stewardship which is the foundation of concepts of trusteeship and community stewardship as they develop through the nineteenth century. Finally, note the universalistic themes in Huntington's interpretation of Masonic benevolence: its influence was not restricted to the members of the fraternity, but extended to all of mankind in all parts of the world.

**Enoch Huntington, A SERMON PREACHED AT MIDDLETOWN, JUNE 18, 1797, ON
THE CELEBRATION OF THE FESTIVAL OF *St. John the Baptist***

WHENCE come wars and fightings amongst nations called christian? Whence the din of arms? Whence the battles of warriors "with confused noise and garments rolled in blood?" Whence the lordly claims of despotism? "*The enormous faith of many made for one?*" The insolence and cruelty of wealth and power, the fighting of prisoners and the cries and miseries of the poor and oppressed? Are not all derived from the "lusts of men that war in their members," and expel love from their breasts, and give the reins to opposite, impious, wicked passions which hurry them on in ways of infidelity to God, and injury to one another?

BUT let not an antichristian spirit, in whatever shape it may appear amongst mere nominal christian nations and professors, be improved to the purposes of infidelity, and to discard all religion: But, as the scriptures direct, to make us more watchful and diligent. And would we be truly religious, and have the comfortable evidence that we are so, we must be conscious to ourselves that this affection of love, which is the *essence* of religion, governs our hearts and lives. This cannot be where the soul feels not a universal benevolence, and is not elevated above selfish and party views. And nothing is so opposed to it as a spirit of dissimulation and hypocrisy, prostituting a religious profession and practices to a mere selfish, party and temporary purposes. By *their Fruits* we are to judge of the reality, or worth of this great principle, in all who profess religion. The little appearance of its influence among nominal christians, considered collectively, or as individuals, is lamentable. The general destitution of it is the *forest* "evil under the sun." And it is impossible a viler, a more impious and mischievous conceit should enter the hearts of mortals than the thought of being religious without love.

IN the Illustrations of Masonry by *William Preston* I find the 8th section of book 1st, intitled, *Charity the distinguishing characteristic of Masons.*

IN this section we read, "Charity is the chief of every social virtue, and the distinguishing characteristic of our order. This virtue includes a supreme degree of love to the great creator and governor of the universe, and an unlimited affection to the beings of his creation, of all characters, and of every denomination. This last duty is forcibly inculcated by the deity himself, who liberally dispenses his beneficence to unnumbered worlds.

"THE bounds of the greatest nation, or the most extensive empire, cannot circumscribe the generosity of a liberal mind. Men in whatever situation they are placed, are still, in a great measure, the same. They are exposed to similar dangers and misfortunes. They have not the wisdom to foresee, or power to prevent, the evils incident to human nature. They hang as it were in a perpetual suspense, between hope and fear, sickness and health, plenty and want. A mutual chain of dependence subsists throughout the animal creation. The whole human species are therefore proper objects for the exercise of human charity. Beings who partake of one common nature, ought to be actuated by the same motives and interests. Hence, to soothe the unhappy, by sympathizing with their misfortunes, and to restore peace and tranquillity to agitated spirits, constitute the general and great ends of the *masonic* institution. This humane, this generous disposition fires the breast with manly feelings, and enlivens that spirit of compassion, which is the glory of the human frame, and not only rivals, but outshines, every other pleasure the mind is capable of enjoying.

"POSSESSED of this amiable, this godlike disposition, *masons* are shocked at misery under every form and appearance. When we behold an object pining under the miseries of a distressed body or mind, the healing accents which flow from our tongue, alleviate the pain of the unhappy sufferer, and make even adversity, in its dismal state, look gay. Our pity excited, we assuage grief, and cheerfully relieve distress. When a brother is in want, every heart is proud to ache, when he is hungry, we feed him; when he is naked we clothe him; when he is in trouble, we fly with speed to his relief. Thus we confirm the propriety of the title we bear, and demonstrate to the world at large, that *brother* among *masons* is something more than an empty name."

SUCH principles are certainly from above, and can be derived from no other source than the "Father of Lights," and the revelation he hath been pleased to make to the children of men. . . .

THE principles of love and charity, under consideration, most certainly, in their nature, operation and tendency, are truly excellent and divine, and everyone who feels their force, and acts under, their divine influence is *a plant of our heavenly father's planting*, and shall not be rooted up. . . .

EVERY institution, that tends to promote benevolence, friendship, and beneficence amongst mankind, is very important and commendable. . . . I look upon mankind as one brotherhood, children of one common father and creator, even God; and as brethren in general; but all whose professions and endeavours are to diffuse benevolence and beneficence amongst

mankind, I esteem as brethren, in a particular sense, as one with me, in the great design and important purpose, of carrying into accomplishment the grace and blessings of the gospel. . . .

No societies, but those whose capital feature and distinguishing characteristic is the love of God, and of mankind, were ever formed, were ever known, or heard of, so calculated, and professedly designed, to seek and improve the most friendly acquaintance and connections; and spread their own benevolent principles and practices amongst *all the kindreds, and tongues, and people, and nations* of the earth.

THEIR temper and charity tends, above every thing, to subdue that national, as well as more private selfishness, pride and antipathy, which has such a baneful influence upon human happiness; and instead thereof, to introduce the most friendly intercourse and harmony, and the mutual exchange of the most sincere affection, and the ready performance of mutual good offices.

To subserve and promote such purposes affords scope to the most laudable ambition that can enter the heart of man; and the most pleasing exercise to the godlike temper which raises human nature to his highest perfection.

THE love which the religion of Jesus enjoins upon his followers, and *masonic* charity as explained in conformity to it, embraces in its exercise and influence the whole brotherhood and family of mankind; and if acted out, and carried into all its benevolent designs and effects, would put a final period to wars and the effusion of human blood in them, to all deceitful intrigues and cabals, and all injurious passions and conduct amongst men. Willful, wicked, hurtful machinations cannot consist with *undissembled love*. Under the influence of this divinely amiable spirit, the sword can never be taken up, but with reluctance, and only to defend, preserve, and secure the rights of peace. *This end* accomplished, it will most joyfully be laid aside; and enemies reduced to reason, humanity and a peaceful temper, will most readily be received to the fraternal embrace of the benevolent heart, in the exercise of *love without dissimulation*, infinitely distant from *Punic* and *Gallic* frauds, and British duplicity, and all the wily perfidies to be found amongst the deceitful tribes of men.

MY BRETHREN AND FRIENDS,

The present age of the world is certainly very remarkable, the events taking place very momentous, the changes in the kingdoms and states of this world very uncommon and extensive, and in their influence and consequences likely to reach through all the habitable earth. To

wise observers, the prophecies of holy scripture, are unquestionably fulfilling, in an eminent degree, and preparing the way for the universal spread of light, and love, amongst mankind, through all the various parts, and different nations, of the world; and in this way, I trust, will gradually be brought on the glory and peace, so clearly, and often, predicted, in the latter day. And for this end, the great and blessed God, according to the usual methods of his providential government, will, undoubtedly, make use of men and their exertions and instrumentality -- among them he will raise up, qualify, and incline one another, individual, and bodies of men to such pursuits and endeavours; and excite them to such labors of love, as shall have a proper tendency, and thro' his almighty blessing be effectual, to answer the design of the spirit of the prophecy, in the actual accomplishment of its predictions. Happy they in every age, and among every denomination and society of men, who are thus honored in the providence of God!

THE light that has been springing up and increasing, ever since the memorable reformation from Popery, and which in such a distinguishing degree hath shone, and still shines, with increasing lustre in our land. --The influence of the American revolution not only among ourselves, but in foreign countries, and the still greater influence it may likely have till it reaches all the extremities of the earthly globe. --The many useful and eminent worthies we have been blessed with -- the character of the personage [George Washington] who was raised up for us by God, and has been our chief in the council, and in the field, our triumphant leader thro' all the dangerous scenes of war, and our faithful guide in those of peace, who hath given such proof of his benevolence and beneficence to mankind, and exhibited such a living example of *christian* and *masonic* principles of the religion which is divine; --And these principles having a direct tendency, by promoting amongst all nations, sects, and parties, pure benevolence and *love without dissimulation*, to put an end both to tyranny and anarchy, war and bloodshed -- to mortify all sinful and injurious passions, and give full scope to the exercise of the contrary affections of love and charity, in all its blessed emotions and influence; and so bring on the happy time when *there shall be no more harm or hurting*. . . .

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