Freemasonry, a Living Expression of The Enlightenment

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Much has been said and written by Lutherans in America about Freemasonry and the position which should be taken by the church toward membership in this fraternal society. Even today much is being said about this subject in connection with the present discussions concerning altar and pulpit fellowship between the various Lutheran groups. In fact, any number of excellent studies of Freemasonry in regard to its religious aspects have been written. It is the purpose of this study, however, to look at it in the perspective of its actual history. In so doing, we want to point out the origin of Freemasonry as well as its religious (or philosophical) beliefs. It is the contention of the author, as the title of this study indicates, that Freemasonry in its origin was—and in its present form still is—an expression of the Enlightenment, which spread across Europe in the eighteenth century. That philosophical movement, as will be pointed out more fully a little further on in this discussion, was completely anti-Christian. Its advocates openly rejected the authority of the Bible and were convinced that man has within himself the ability to solve whatever problems he might face. They were looking for a common core of religious beliefs, common to all men, and rejected what they considered the narrowness of the Christian Gospel. These ideas are imbedded in Masonry also because of its origin.

As to its beginnings, then, it should be noted that the introduction of the scientific method into the writing of its history has almost completely eliminated the claims which once were made for the antiquity of the fraternity. Thus the writings of the Rev. George Oliver, who produced dozens of books between 1823 and 1875 in which he popularized the idea that Masonry has Old Testament origins, are largely ignored today. The same is true of the idea of Albert Mackey, the famous Masonic historian and writer of the last century, who felt that the origin of Masonry can be traced back to the Ancient Mysteries. Also rejected by scientific Masonic historians—such as Robert Gould and Delmar Darrah—are the theories of J. S. Ward, a well-known Masonic writer of the first part of our century. He maintained that Freemasonry originated in the primitive initiatory rites of prehistoric man, the same rites on which the Ancient Mysteries have been built.

Instead of these ancient origins, Speculative Masonry is actually an outgrowth of the Operative Masons of the Middle Ages. Theirs was a mobile profession, since they traveled from job to job. The center of their activity was the lodge, a temporary hut put up near the site of the new building. Masons living away from home would eat and possibly even sleep there. Thus they developed customs of their own, as was the case in some of the other medieval guilds.
Because the individual stonemason traveled from place to place, it was necessary for him to have some method of mutual recognition. So it was that the 'Mason Word' was imparted under oath of secrecy to the skillful and initiated craftsmen. It served the same purpose as a trade union card would serve today. Furthermore, as time went on certain ceremonies were attached to the giving of this word. There were test questions and answers connected with it similar to those found in the so-called Masonic catechisms of later years. Thus the rudiments of a ritual developed. From this point it was only one step farther to the speculative element of modern Freemasonry evolving out of the usages and customs of the stonemasons of the Middle Ages.  

The next step in the origin of Speculative Masonry was the custom of permitting gentlemen who had no connection with operative masonry to become "accepted" members of a local lodge. Often the guilds had great influence in the community. Thus if anyone wanted to acquire power in a city, he would do some favor for one of these guilds and in turn would be accepted as an honorary member. This custom continued to grow until in the seventeenth century apparently these "gentlemen Masons" tended to gather in separate lodges. Walton Hannah believes that it was in these Lodges of the Acceptance that the speculative elements and particularly the ritual were developed.  

The union of four of these lodges in London, on June 24, 1717, to form the Grand Lodge is considered by most historians today as the actual beginning of Speculative Freemasonry. However, it should not be considered separately but rather in connection with the publication of Anderson's Book of Constitutions, the first edition of which came out in 1723. This Book of Constitutions, to which more thorough reference will be made later on, was the work of Dr. James Anderson, a Presbyterian minister, and Dr. John Desaguliers, a French Huguenot who was an Anglican minister and a popularizer of the science of Sir Isaac Newton. It set the pattern for modern Freemasonry.  

This brief historical background of the origin of Freemasonry is necessary in order to understand that it is more than a coincidence that the eighteenth century, which was the age of the Enlightenment, also saw the birth and rapid growth to maturity of modern Speculative Masonry. To put it another way, the religion—or as some might say the philosophy—of that organization is of such a nature that it becomes clear that Freemasonry is a child of the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century.  

This Age of the Enlightenment, one of the greatest periods in the intellectual history of the world because of the far-reaching effects which it has had on the thinking of men, had three major characteristics. (1) It substituted natural law for supernatural law, or, to put it another way, science for religion. (2) It exalted human reason which had made possible the discovery of natural law. (3) It hoped to raise men from the low social estate in which, owing to the reign of superstition and tyranny, he had fallen and to restore him to that
dignity and happiness to which the philosophers of that time felt he had a right as a rational creature.

Out of these views, then, grew a new attitude toward the Christian religion which many considered the most formidable institution inherited from the past. Particularly in England men were sickened by the religious quarrels which had come to a head in the Puritan Revolution. Some of them looked for the common spiritual core in all Christian religions and hoped to use this as a unifying point. They were aided by the contemporary movement in science and philosophy, the Enlightenment. If man was better than the animals because he had reason, then there must be a Supreme Reasoner. Furthermore, if the universe operated as a machine under eternal law, then there must be a Supreme Lawgiver. Worship of such a being required neither dogma nor an organized church. All people could worship the Supreme Lawgiver, the Great Architect of the Universe as Masons came to call him, and live according to his immutable precepts, the laws of nature, as they are expressed in the religions of the world and so also in the Bible.

Religion simplified in this manner received the name "deism." It spread rapidly in England so that by the first half of the eighteenth century a large part of the British upper classes had become deistically inclined. Also many of the leaders of the Anglican Church openly expressed similar views. Thus the philosophy of John Locke (1632-1704), which had made reasonableness the criterion of the age, and the physics of Isaac Newton (1642-1727), which had established natural law, had won over a large number of the clergy and educated people and so opened the way for a partial assimilation of deism to Christianity in eighteenth century England.

One of the main interests of this deism, the so-called "religion of nature," was to improve the moral conditions that prevailed in England at this time. It was felt that somehow the Christian Church had failed because of the low moral standards which prevailed in England at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century. It was hoped by the proponents of deism that this emphasis on morality as part of the "religion of nature" would help to raise the moral standards in England. This must be noted in considering the background for the religion of Masonry.

With this in mind it is easy to see how Speculative Freemasonry became deistic and latitudinarian, especially since its founders wanted to use it as a means of improving the morals of the people and at the same time putting forward the ideas of the Enlightenment. The place to look for proof of this is in the "Charges of a Freemason" as they are found in Anderson's Book of Constitutions of 1723. There the first charge "Concerning God and Religion" is significant. It says:

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 irreverent 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 'tis now 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, or men of honour and honesty, by whatever
denominations or persuasions they may be distinguish'd; where-
by Masonry becomes the center of union, and the means of con-
ciliating true friendship among persons that must have remained
at a perpetual distance.⁸

In these words are summed up the "religion of Masonry"⁹ as it has
continued to this present day. This first Charge is an expression of
the religion of nature, the religion of the Enlightenment, the religion
of natural man, which Masonry continues to champion. This was
also the removal of Christianity from Masonry so that it could become
a universal fraternity that would appeal to men of all religions.
Joseph Newton, the Mason, is correct when he says that in the
Book of Constitutions of 1723 Masonry "severed itself, once for all,
from any one church or sect, making itself henceforth free from any
system of theology."¹⁰ From this time on, Freemasons were to be
held only to "that religion in which all men agree." That religion
according to the Charges is simply "to be good men and true, or men
of honour and honesty." What more is this than the religion of the
Enlightenment or deism? Here is that common denominator of
natural religion that the deists were looking for and which in the
end they made primarily a system of morals that they felt were part
of the law of nature. No wonder this first Charge has been looked
upon as the introduction of a new religion into Masonry.¹¹ Further-
more, the reason given for this change from Christianity, which had
been part of the ritual of the old Operating Guilds of Masons to an
enlightened religion is stated in the words "tis now thought more
expedient." These words seem to indicate that a deliberate change
was being made in the nature of Masonry. That change was to the
deistic universalism which was so popular in England at this time.

The one theme that runs through the remaining charges is
that a Freemason should be an upright person. He should live in
such a way that he will be a credit both to himself and to Free-
masonry. This again is a reflection of that attitude of deism which
made morality the center of religion, the one uniting feature in the
various religions and so the central feature in the religion of nature.

That the founders of Freemasonry intended it to teach this
universal religion in which morality and the fatherhood of God and
the brotherhood of man were to be stressed is certainly the conclu-
sion reached by most Masonic writers. Darrah, for example, says that
the early founders of Masonry

conceived a system of moral religion at whose shrine all men
might worship, the Christian, the Catholic, the Protestant, the
Confucion, the Buddhist, the Mohammedan, as well as all
others who are willing to acknowledge a supreme being and live
a life of moral rectitude.¹³

He also points out that Freemasonry rests on a broad spirit of tolera-
tion as a reaction to the religious wars that had characterized England.
That there might be no disputes over religion
the founders of Freemasonry eliminated from the speculative system of the society all references to any but those fundamental religious principles upon which all men could agree; namely, the acknowledgement of a supreme ruler of the universe, subjection to the great law of justice, and the obligation to love one another in service.

In this consideration of the religious significance of the "Charges of a Freemason" it should be added yet that not all Christian elements were done away with immediately. Some lingered on for awhile. In fact, there are those who maintain that during the period of the Great Schism (1738-1813) the Ancients objected to the de-Christianizing policy of the Moderns (the Grand Lodge of London and those associated with it). However, in the compromise that brought about reunion in 1813, the Christian features were sacrificed. Newton alludes to this when he says that at the union of these two groups "the universal religious character of the Craft was finally affirmed, and the last definite trace of dogmatic theological influence vanished from our Fraternity—let us hope forever."  

While this study is concerned primarily with the religion of Masonry as a reflection of the Enlightenment, there is another side of the Enlightenment which was also present in eighteenth century Freemasonry. One of the aims of the Enlightenment was to raise man from his low social estate by freeing him from superstition and tyranny and so giving him that happiness that he deserved as a rational being. There was an optimism about the Enlightenment, a belief that man and society were progressing toward perfection. All that was needed was to learn the laws of nature and then conform to them. These were the ideas that were pursued by the French philosophies and that eventually prepared the way for both the American and the French Revolutions. In this respect, Masonry was also an expression of the Enlightenment, for it preached the universal brotherhood of man and worked toward the end of establishing a fraternity that would make that brotherhood a reality. Throughout the "Charges of a Freemason" a Mason is spoken of as a brother and the lodge as the brotherhood or fraternity. The members are reminded to call themselves by no other name than Brother or Fellow. In the last Charge—"Of Behavior"—it is stressed repeatedly that they are to treat each other as brothers and live as brothers. It is no doubt true, therefore, that the average Mason of the eighteenth century shared in the optimism of his age and hoped through his fraternity to usher in that age of universal brotherhood which the cosmopolitan spirit of the Enlightenment fostered.

It remains yet to be shown how Masonry has not changed. Its advocates maintain that its religious and moral teachings are the same as those put forth in Anderson's Book of Constitutions. This is, no doubt, true. How, then, is the religion of Masonry still reflected in Masonic writings and in its ritual? Listen as Masonic authorities themselves speak.

Darrah summarizes the ideals of the Enlightenment in this striking way as he says the "Mason is taught to see God in everything,
to behold Him in every page of nature's book, to use reason for his lamp, education for his guide, and humanity as his chief interest.\textsuperscript{16} Mackey speaks of the universalism of the Masonic religion in these words: "Its religion is that general one of nature and primitive revelation . . . in which all men may agree and in which no men can differ."\textsuperscript{17} Newton's book, \textit{The Religion of Masonry}, is filled with references to Masonry as the universal religion, the religion of nature. A few brief quotations will be sufficient to illustrate. "Masonry rests upon and lives and builds in the assurance, . . . of the existence of a universal, moral and spiritual world, whose laws are as real, as reliable, as the laws of the physical order in which we live." To him the Bible is itself a symbol as it is used by the lodge. Masonry "teaches us to revere every Book of Faith in which man has found light and help and hope." Furthermore, "Brotherhood is not a mere detail of Religion, but its essence and glory, and the Golden Rule is the principle by which it may be realized."\textsuperscript{18}

Ward also expresses this universalism clearly. Freemasonry holds that there be many paths that lead to the throne of the All-loving Father which all start from a common source. Freemasonry believes that though these paths appear to branch off in various directions, yet they all reach the same ultimate goal, and that to some men one faith is better and to others another; and so with tender tolerance and real Christian charity it bids all its children God-speed on the mystic Quest; which ends in union with the same God whether we call Him Jehovah, Allah, Trimurti, or just "Our Father which art in heaven."\textsuperscript{19}

Also the idea of the Enlightenment that man and society are capable of reaching perfection (man is not inherently sinful) is a part of Masonic teaching. Thus one of its exponents says clearly that it does not teach "that human nature is a depraved thing, like the ruin of a once proud building."\textsuperscript{20} So also in the lecture directed to the Entered Apprentice he is reminded that he who enters the order as a rough stone, can "be adjusted by the working tools of the Fellow Craft" into a perfect stone. Furthermore, all of this "reminds us of that state of perfection at which we hope to arrive by a virtuous education, our own endeavors, and the blessing of God."\textsuperscript{21} Another Masonic writer puts it very plainly when he says that "human nature is perfectible by an intensive process of purification and initiation."\textsuperscript{22}

Apparently even the messianic complex that was present in eighteenth century Freemasonry did not die. Freemasons continued to dream of a universal brotherhood of all people in the world. They worked toward that goal. Writing after World War I, Ward speaks of Freemasonry as the force that can unite the world. In it "all that is best in religion and nationality is united with all that is best in internationalism."\textsuperscript{23} He also expresses the opinion that we are moving into a new age and that when the consummation comes, Freemasonry will be there to lay the broad foundation on which the new religion of that age will be built.\textsuperscript{24} Apparently the Masonic doctrine of progress which looks toward a perfected world was not even killed by World War II. At any rate, Darrah, writing in 1954, says that
at the present time there are strong indications of a tremendous revolution in the moral and religious world, the universal result of which points to the establishment of a religion of humanity. When that time shall come it cannot be doubted that Freemasonry will shine with a lustre undimmed.  

In another passage, speaking of the same thing, he waxes almost poetic as he traces the onward march of evolution.

In the evolution of man, we have passed from the individual to the family, to the community, to the state, and interstate alliance, and in due time will pass to a united group of nations; the dream of Freemasonry; the fulfillment of God's plan, in the parliament of man; the federation of the world.  

There is yet one major area to be pointed out in considering the religion of Masonry as an expression of the Enlightenment—the rituals themselves with their symbolism. Much has been written and much could be said about the mysticism which has often been connected with this ritual. Much could also be said about the appeal which secret societies had for people in the eighteenth century—and which they apparently still have for some people today. However, our final concern will be Masonry's religion as expressed in the ritual, as well as the way it is expressed, and how this, too, is an outgrowth of the Enlightenment.

The symbolism of Masonry is very evident in the initiation of a candidate. He is stripped of all his valuables to indicate that he comes in poverty. The blindfold he must wear typifies a state of spiritual as well as material darkness. The cable-tow (a rope noose) placed about his neck with the end hanging down his back is a symbol of humility. In answer to the question: Whom have you here? the Tyler says:  

Mr. A. B., a poor candidate in a state of darkness who has been well and worthily recommended, regularly proposed and approved in open Lodge, and now comes of his own free will and accord, properly prepared, humbly soliciting to be admitted to the mysteries and privileges of Freemasonry.

Sometime later on in the initiation after he has taken his oath, the Worshipful Master says to the candidate: “Having been kept for a considerable time in a state of darkness, what in your present situation is the predominant wish of your heart?” To this the candidate answers “Light.” As the brethren clap their hands, the blindfold is removed. The implication is obvious. Now that he has entered Masonry he will receive light. He will be shown that through the uprightness of his life he will be able to work out his own salvation and so enter into the Grand Lodge above. In the course of his initiation, he is also presented with a pure white lambskin apron, the symbol of a Mason, and reminded that it is “the badge of innocence and bond of friendship.” This is certainly a way of reminding the candidate that it is by his own good life that he will get to heaven—the rewards and punishments idea the deists held. It
is this idea that is emphasized in various ways in the charge to the candidate as well as in the Tracing Board lectures as they occur in the three basic degrees. In the Third Degree, in which the candidate is raised from a figurative death to a reunion with his former companions, he is also reminded that "the light of a Master Mason is darkness visible, serving only to express that gloom which rests on the prospect of futurity." In that connection he is encouraged in the following words:

Be careful to perform your allotted task while it is yet day; continue to listen to the voice of Nature, which bears witness that even in this perishable frame resides a vital and immortal principle, which inspires a holy confidence that the Lord of Life will enable us to trample the King of Terrors beneath our feet, . . .

This is nothing more than the pagan appeal to the rebirth of nature as proof of immortality and an exhortation on that account to live a good life.

The working tools of Masonry also fit into this picture. Just before the Tracing Board lecture in the Second Degree, the Worshipful Master presents the candidate with the working tools of a Fellow-Craft Freemason. He then says:

But as we are not all operative Masons, but rather free and accepted or speculative, we apply these tools to our morals. In this sense, the Square teaches morality, the Level equality, and the Plumbrule justness and uprightness of life and actions. Thus by square conduct, level steps and upright intentions we hope to ascend to those immortal mansions whence all goodness emanates.

There is a similar section in the Tracing Board Lecture of the Third Degree. After being presented with the working tools of a Master Mason, the candidate is told that these tools are applied to morals.

In this sense, the Skirret points out that straight and undeviating line of conduct laid down for our pursuit in the Volume of the Sacred Law. The Pencil teaches us that our words and actions are observed and recorded by the Almighty Architect, to whom we must give an account of our conduct through life. The Compasses remind us of His unerring and impartial justice, who, having defined for our instruction the limits of good and evil, will reward or punish as we have obeyed or disregarded His Divine commands. Thus the working tools of a Master Mason teach us to bear in mind, and to act according to, the laws of our Divine Creator, that when we shall be summoned from this sublunary abode, we may ascend to the Grand Lodge above, where the world's Great Architect lives and reigns forever.

Perhaps a few quotations from Masonic writers in regard to the significance of the symbolism of their order would suffice to close off this section. Mackey says:
We as Speculative Masons, symbolize the labors of our predecessors by engaging in the construction of a spiritual temple in our hearts, pure and spotless, fit for the dwelling-place of Him who is the author of purity—where God is worshipped in spirit and in truth, and whence every evil thought and unruly passion is to be banished, . . . 35

Newton sums it up in this sentence. “Masonry is a system of moral mysticism, expressing faith in God and the eternal life in old and simple symbols of the building art, awakening the better angels in the nature of man and teaching the brotherly life.” 36

The Enlightenment was very much concerned with the new scientific discoveries. As a result, it was very much interested in physics and mathematics. It was also interested in building a better world and improving the morals of people without resorting to the Christian religion. In that respect, the Operative Masonic Lodges became a perfect means through which to carry out these objectives. The science of architecture could be given a symbolic or spiritual meaning. The working tools of the Mason could also be treated in the same way. The ideas of fraternity and equality could be fostered through such a group. Mathematics, particularly geometry, could also be given a prominent place in the whole symbolism of the order. Thus the god of Freemasonry became the Great Architect of the Universe, or as he is called in the Second Degree, the “Grand Geometrician of the Universe.” 37

Bernard Fay is, no doubt, correct in saying that Desaguliers, the great popularizer of Newtonian science, as well as those associated with him, decided to use a system of religion and morals founded on the science of the day to bring about a compromise between opposing religious factions and so usher in the dawn of equality and fraternity for all. 38 Some may call this theism; some may call it deism; some may call it Newtonian Christianity—but in reality it was the religion of the Enlightenment which became—and still is—the religion of Freemasonry. Needless to say, this religion is not Christianity. It is rather the exact opposite. It has substituted for the narrow way of Christ’s cross the broad way of salvation by works.

While this has been primarily a study of Freemasonry as an expression of the Enlightenment, a few concluding remarks in a more pointed way are in place. First of all, that the Enlightenment was anti-Christian in many of its ideas, methods, and aims is obvious to any student of eighteenth-century Europe. Secondly, if as this study contends, Freemasonry was—and still is—an expression of the Enlightenment, then there are some definite conclusions that must flow from this.

This historical approach, like so many other studies that have been made of Freemasonry from different angles, shows that a Christian cannot logically also be a member of this fraternity. Its attitude toward the true God, the way of salvation, the nature of man, and the Holy Scriptures is just the opposite of that of historic Christianity. Yet many unsuspecting Christians are drawn into this organization not at all realizing what is involved. Even many Christian churches
have closed their eyes to the compromise of their confession of Christ as the only way to heaven that is involved in Masonic teaching. For these reasons Christians both in and outside of the lodge must continuously and clearly be shown how the words of Paul in 2 Cor. 6: 17: "Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord," apply to their membership in the Masonic Order. If this brief historical study has been of any help in leading those who read it to see this a little more clearly, then it will certainly have achieved its purpose. Our Lord's words still ring out clearly across the centuries as He reminds us in no uncertain terms: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14: 6).

FOOTNOTES


2. See Douglas Knoop, et. al., eds., The Early Masonic Catechisms (Manchester University Press, 1943) for sixteen such manuscripts and printed catechisms that cover the period from 1696-1730.

3. Darrah, p. 76, points out the origin of the word "Freemason." He says that at the time of the cathedral builders "the Pope extended to them many privileges such as exemption from taxation, as well as independence of the sovereign in whose domain they might labor" in order to encourage them. Thus they were called Freemasons.


5. See Albert Mackey and William Singleton, The History of Freemasonry (New York and London: Masonic History Company, 1906, 7 vols.), IV, 890-909. Mackey states that 1717 does not mark the "revival of Masonry" as Anderson maintained in his Book of Constitutions, for there was nothing like it before. He cites several important changes that were made and then concludes: "The establishment of the Grand Lodge of England in June, 1717, was not a revival of the old system of Freemasonry, which soon after became extinct, but its change into a new system." Darrah, p. 92, points out that from that time on "the term Freemason assumed a new significance—that of 'free of the guilds.'"

6. The importance of the Book of Constitutions in connection with the beginning of modern Freemasonry cannot be stressed too much. Darrah, p. 97, says that "it is to James Anderson and John T. Desaguliers, that we are indebted for the present system of Freemasonry." Mackey and Singleton, History of Freemasonry, IV, 916-20, speak of the significance of the changes which were made from the Old Charges and how the new regulations are fitting to a lodge wholly speculative in character. Mackey in his article on "Hiram Abif" in his Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, II, 1259-62, also indicates that this marked a real change. He points out that nothing was known of Hiram Abif, the central figure in the Third Degree ritual, until Anderson referred to him in his Book of Constitutions.

7. Those "Charges of a Freemason" are reproduced in facsimile form in Mackey and Singleton, History of Freemasonry, IV, following p. 996. They are also reproduced in more modern English in Darrah, pp. 99-109.

9. Much has been written on the "religion of Masonry," both for and against. When Christians have objected to the Masonic Order because they have maintained it is a religion which is competing with an opposed to Christianity, Masons have often denied that their fraternity is a religion. Perhaps a few quotations from Masonic authorities are therefore in place. Darrah, p. 294, says: "It can never be said that Masonry is not religious, for the religious element enters so largely into it as to be its most distinguishing characteristic." Mackey in his Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, I, 56, in an article on "Altar" says: "It is a sacred utensil of religion, intended, like the altars of the ancient temples, for religious uses, and thus identifying Freemasonry, by its necessary existence in our Lodges, as a religious institution." Likewise J. S. M. Ward, Freemasonry: Its Aims and Ideals (Philadelphia: David McKay Co., 1925), pp. 182-8, argues that Freemasonry is a religion. Also Joseph Fort Newton, the editor of the Master Mason, has a whole book called the Religion of Masonry (Washington, D.C.: The Masonic Service Association, 1927) in which he shows what the religion of Masonry is. A very recent Masonic authority takes the same view. Henry Wilson Coil, Masonic Encyclopedia (New York: Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Company, 1961) says concerning Masonry as a religion: "Some attempt to avoid the issue by saying that Freemasonry is not a religion but is religious, seeming to believe that the substitution of an adjective for a noun makes a fundamental difference. It would be as sensible to say that a man had no intellect but was intellectual or that he had no honor but was honorable" (p. 512). Furthermore, in pointing out that Masonry has become and is a religion, he says that "only by judging from external appearances and applying arbitrary gauges can we say that Freemasonry is not a religion" (p. 513).


11. The noted Masonic authority, J. Ward, is even more outspoken in regard to what happened in Anderson's Book of Constitutions. He calls this a revolution which altered Freemasonry from a Christian to a vaguely deistic basis. He thinks this was all to the good. He then points out the magnitude of this change in these words: "We interpret it as meaning Deism, and our rituals are drafted in accordance with this belief; but the clause can just as easily be interpreted as implying—not Atheism, but Agnosticism, or at any rate pure indifference to the question as to whether a man does or does not believe in God" (Freemasonry: Its Aims and Ideals, p. 177). Mackey also sees in this change that "cosmopolitan feature in religion which has ever since been characteristic of Freemasonry" (History of Freemasonry, IV, 942).


14. This is the view of Hannah, Christian by Degrees, pp. 29-32. He cites the Constitution of the Ancients to show that Christian references did remain in the writings of that group.

15. Newton, p. 16.


26. Ibid., p. 49.
27. Walton Hannah, Darkness Visible, a Revelation and Interpretation of Freemasonry (London: Augustine Press, 1952), p. 32. This book is a recent and scholarly interpretation of Freemasonry. It contains the complete ritual of Craft Masonry as well as that of the Royal Arch as they are carried out in England today. I am indebted to this book for the quotations of the ritual that follow.
28. Ibid., p. 95.
29. Ibid., p. 100.
30. Ibid., p. 104. In the American ritual the significance of the apron is spelled out in much more detail. "Let its pure and spotless surface be to you an ever-present reminder of a purity of life and rectitude of conduct," a never-ending argument for nobler deeds, for higher thoughts, for greater achievements. And when at last your weary feet shall have come to the end of life's toilsome journey, . . . may the record of your life and actions be as pure and spotless as this fair emblem which I place in your hands tonight; and when your trembling soul shall stand naked and alone before the Great White Throne, may it be your portion to hear from Him, who sitteth as the Judge Supreme, the welcome words, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of the Lord.’" (King Solomon and His Followers, Ohio, A Valuable Aid to Memory, New York: Allen Publishing Company, 1952, p. 22). Mackey in his Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, I, 96, in an article on "Apron" says that this is the most important symbol of Freemasonry. According to him "by the lamb’skin, the Mason is reminded of that purity of life and rectitude of conduct which is so essentially necessary to his gaining admission into the Celestial Lodge above, where the Supreme Architect of the Universe forever presides."

31. Hannah, Darkness Visible, p. 140.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., p. 124.
34. Ibid., p. 148.
35. Mackey, Symbolism of Freemasonry, p. 6.
37. In this connection a passage in Newton is quite significant. He says: "Truly God is always geometrizing, as Plato said; and these signs and designs, everywhere present in nature, must be the thought-forms of the Eternal Mind, else they would not be the self-sought forms of matter and motion" (p. 105). He applies this in a spiritual way in these words: "Happy is the man—memorable is the day for a young man—when he learns the Geometry of the heart, and vows to square his thought and action by the laws of the moral life, as he is taught in every lecture and obligation of his lodge" (p. 110).