**Freemasonry**

**From The Black Vault Encyclopedia Project**

**The Masonic Square and Compasses.** (*This is found with or without the "G"*)

**Freemasonry** is a [fraternal organization](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Fraternal_organization&action=edit&redlink=1). Members are joined together by shared ideals of both a [moral](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Morality&action=edit&redlink=1) and [metaphysical](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Metaphysics&action=edit&redlink=1) nature and, in most of its branches, by a constitutional declaration of belief in a [Supreme Being](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Great_Architect_of_the_Universe&action=edit&redlink=1). Organizationally, Freemasonry is governed on a geographic basis by independent, [Sovereign](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Sovereign&action=edit&redlink=1) [Grand Lodges](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Grand_Lodge&action=edit&redlink=1) which may, or may not, be in a state of mutual recognition.

Freemasonry is an [esoteric](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Esotericism&action=edit&redlink=1) society, in that certain aspects of its internal work are not generally disclosed to the public. In recent years, it has become less and less a [secret society](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Secret_society&action=edit&redlink=1) and more of a "society with secrets." In fact, most of the so-called "secrets" of Freemasonry were revealed and have been known to the public since as early as the eighteenth century. For this and other reasons, most modern freemasons regard the traditional concern over secrecy as a demonstration of their ability to keep a promiseand as a surrogate for the organization's concern over the privacy of their own affairs. The private aspects of modern Freemasonry deal with elements of ritual and the modes of [recognition](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Recognition&action=edit&redlink=1) amongst members within the [ritual](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Ritual&action=edit&redlink=1).

**Organizational structure**

*Main article:* [*Grand Lodge*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Grand_Lodge&action=edit&redlink=1)

Home of the United Grand Lodge of England.

There are many jurisdictions within Freemasonry, each sovereign and independent of the others, and usually defined according to a national or geographic territory. There is no central Masonic **organizational structure** or authority, and in any event many practices are determined by Lodge custom, so any general description will inevitably be inaccurate in respect of some places.

The authority in any Masonic jurisdiction is vested in a [*Grand Lodge*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Grand_Lodge&action=edit&redlink=1), or sometimes a *Grand Orient*.

Subject to the size of the Grand Lodge the geographic area of coverage may be sub-divided into Provinces, each governed by a Provincial, District or Metropolitan Grand Lodge.

The first Grand Lodge jurisdiction in Freemasonry was the Grand Lodge of England, founded in [1717](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=1717&action=edit&redlink=1) when four existing Lodges met to form the governing body. A competing [Grand Lodge](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Grand_Lodge&action=edit&redlink=1) formed in [York](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=York&action=edit&redlink=1) claiming that the Grand Lodge in London had broken with a number of traditions and was divergent from the principles of Freemasonry. The Grand Lodge became known as the *Moderns* and the York Grand Lodge became known as *Antients*. The two reunited in [1813](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=1813&action=edit&redlink=1), to become the [United Grand Lodge of England](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=United_Grand_Lodge_of_England&action=edit&redlink=1) (UGLE). It is today the only regular Craft jurisdiction in [England](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=England&action=edit&redlink=1), and generally considered to be the oldest Grand Lodge jurisdiction in the world.

The oldest jurisdiction in the [European](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=European&action=edit&redlink=1) Continental branch, and the largest jurisdiction in [France](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=France&action=edit&redlink=1), is the [Grand Orient de France](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Grand_Orient_de_France&action=edit&redlink=1) (GOdF), founded in [1728](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=1728&action=edit&redlink=1). At one time, the two branches bilaterally recognized each other, but most jurisdictions cut off formal relations with the GOdF around 1877. The [Grande Loge Nationale Francaise](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Grande_Loge_Nationale_Francaise&action=edit&redlink=1) (GLNF) is currently the only French Grand Lodge that is in *regular amity* with The United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE), and concordant jurisdictions. In most Latin countries, and in [Belgium](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Belgium&action=edit&redlink=1), the GOdF style of European Continental Freemasonry predominates. The rest of the world, accounting for the bulk of Freemasonry, tends to follow the lead of the English UGLE, and concordant jurisdictions.

So, Freemasonry is often said to consist of two different branches:

* the UGLE and concordant tradition of jurisdictions (termed Grand Lodges) in amity and,
* the GOdF European Continental tradition of jurisdictions (often termed Grand Orients) in amity.

**Regularity**

*Main article:* [*Regular Masonic jurisdictions*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Regular_Masonic_jurisdictions&action=edit&redlink=1)

[Regularity](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Regular_Masonic_jurisdictions&action=edit&redlink=1) is a mechanism whereby Grand Lodges afford one another mutual recognition allowing formal interaction and the opportunity for members to inter-visit within the ritual context.

Regularity is based around a number of *Landmarks* which are not fixed and subject to the interpretation of individual Grand Lodges. As there is no global governing body in Freemasonry this list of Landmarks is not fixed.

Grand Lodges which afford mutual recognition and allow intervisitation are said to be *in amity*.

Notwithstanding formal recognition of regularity many Grand Lodges continue informal relations and a number of vehicles for this exist.

**The Masonic Lodge**

*Main article:* [*Masonic Lodge*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Masonic_Lodge&action=edit&redlink=1)

A **Lodge**, often termed a *Private Lodge* or *Constituent Lodge* in Constitutions, is the basic organization of Freemasonry. Every new Lodge must be warranted by a Grand Lodge, but is subject to its direction only in enforcing the published Constitution of the jurisdiction. A Master Freemason is generally entitled to visit any Lodge in any jurisdiction in amity with his own. He is first usually required to check, and certify, the regularity of the relationship of the Lodge - and be able to satisfy that Lodge of his regularity of membership.

Freemasons meet *as* a [Lodge](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Masonic_Lodge&action=edit&redlink=1) not *in* a Lodge, although Masonic premises may be called *Lodges*, as well as *Temples* ("of Philosophy and the Arts"). In many countries *Masonic Centre* or *Hall* has now replaced these terms to avoid arousing prejudice and suspicion. Several different Lodges often use the same premises at different times.

According to Masonic myth (see [below](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Freemasonry#History_of_Freemasonry)), the *operative lodges* (the Medieval lodges of actual stonemasons) constructed a lodge building adjacent to their work site where the masons could meet for shelter, instruction and social contact. Normally this was on the southern side of the site (in Europe, the side with the sun warming the stones during the day). Hence the social gathering, (the *Festive* or *Social Board*), of the lodge is sometimes also called *the South*.

An early *Speculative Lodge*, (including members not actually stonemasons), would meet in a [tavern](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Tavern&action=edit&redlink=1) or other convenient meeting place with a private annex. The word Freemason may refer to these masons being "free" from work—as they met to talk about Masonic theory rather than practice—or it could relate to the liberal or "free" arts upon which much of freemasonry is based. It may simply refer to the superior grade of masons working in freestone, as used in early English statutes, or it could mean free to travel about the country from job to job. In the middle ages many craftsmen were bound to a lord of a specific region.

Many Lodges are formed by Masons living within a given town or neighborhood. Other Lodges, particularly in urban areas where there are many Lodges close together, are formed by persons who share a particular interest, particular profession or background - certain schools, universities or military units. There are also specialist lodges of "Research and Instruction" (R&I). Membership in these R&I lodges is typically open only to interested Master Masons of other lodges, as R&I lodges usually do not initiate new candidates to Freemasonry.

**Prince Hall Freemasonry**

*Main article:* [*Prince Hall Freemasonry*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Prince_Hall_Freemasonry&action=edit&redlink=1)

In 1775, an [African American](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=African_American&action=edit&redlink=1) named [Prince Hall](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Prince_Hall&action=edit&redlink=1)[[1]](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Freemasonry#_note-0#_note-0) was initiated into an Irish Constitution Military Lodge then in Boston, Massachusetts, along with fourteen other African Americans, all of whom were free born. When the Military Lodge left the [North America](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=North_America&action=edit&redlink=1), the African Americans were given the authority to meet as a lodge, form Processions on the days of the Saints John, and conduct Masonic funerals, but not to confer degrees, nor to do other Masonic Work. In 1784 these individuals applied for, and obtained, a Lodge Warrant from the Premier Grand Lodge of England and formed African Lodge, Number 459 (Premier Grand Lodge of England).

When the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) was formed in 1813, all U.S. based lodges were stricken from their rolls – due largely to the [U.S. and British War, 1812 to 1815](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=War_of_1812&action=edit&redlink=1). Thus, separated from both UGLE and any concordantly recognized U.S. Grand Lodge, African Lodge re-titled itself as the African Lodge, Number 1 - and became a *de facto* "Grand Lodge". (This Lodge is not to be confused with the various Grand Lodges on the Continent of [Africa](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Africa&action=edit&redlink=1)). These events led to a tradition of separate and predominantly African American Freemasonry in North America, known as **Prince Hall Freemasonry**. As with the rest of U.S. Freemasonry, Prince Hall Freemasonry soon grew, and organized on a Grand Lodge system for each State.

Prince Hall Masonry has always been *regular* in all respects except constitutional separation. Widespread [racism](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Racism&action=edit&redlink=1) and [segregation](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Racial_segregation&action=edit&redlink=1), in the 19th and early 20th century North America, made it difficult for African Americans to join lodges outside of Prince Hall jurisdictions - and impossible for inter-jurisdiction recognition between the parallel U.S. Masonic authorities. Prince Hall Grand Lodges are, presently, recognized by some UGLE Concordant Grand Lodges and not by others, but appears to be working its way toward full recognition. It is now quite usual for both Mainstream and Prince Hall lodges to have ethnically diverse membership. The majority of Masonic Grand Lodges in the United States now grant at least some degree of recognition to Prince Hall Grand Lodges.

[Template: See also](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Template:See_also&action=edit&redlink=1)

**Other degrees, orders and bodies**

There is no degree in Freemasonry higher than that of Master Mason.

A number of organizations exist which require one to be a Master Mason as a prerequisite for membership, none of which are considered to have any authority over the Craft. These organizations are considered as additional or appendant, membership being discretionary in order to provide a different perspective on some of the allegorical, moral and philosophical content within Freemasonry. These appendant bodies are administered separately from Freemasonry and within each there is a system of offices which confer rank within that order alone, although frequently these bodies style themselves as Masonic due to the membership requirement that one hold the Master Mason degree.

Examples of these appendant orders include:

* Ancient and Accepted [Scottish Rite](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Scottish_Rite&action=edit&redlink=1) (also known as Antient and Accepted Rite), a system of degrees developed in Continental Europe, particularly in France.
* [York Rite](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=York_Rite&action=edit&redlink=1), Predominantly in the United States of America; a system of degrees which includes three distinct sovereign rites: the Holy Royal Arch, Royal and Select Masters (Cryptic Masonry), and [(Masonic) Knights Templar](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Masonic_Knights_Templar&action=edit&redlink=1). These orders are wholly distinct elsewhere.
* [Royal Order of Scotland](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Royal_Order_of_Scotland&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Societas Rosicruciana](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Societas_Rosicruciana&action=edit&redlink=1)
* Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, commonly known as ([Shriners](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Shriners&action=edit&redlink=1))
* Mystic Order of Veiled Prophets of the Enchanted Realm (Grotto)
* [Tall Cedars of Lebanon](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Tall_Cedars_of_Lebanon&action=edit&redlink=1).

The Shrine and Grotto, which are mostly located in North America, tend to emphasize fun and philanthropy.

Different Freemasonic jurisdictions vary in their relationships with such bodies, if at all. Some offer formal recognition, while others consider them wholly outside of Freemasonry. This leads to some such bodies not being universally considered as *appendant bodies*, some being simply as separate organizations that happen to require Masonic affiliation for membership. Some of these organizations have additional religious requirements (e.g. requiring members to profess Trinitarian Christian beliefs), thus putting them beyond the scope of "Craft Masonry".

A number of youth organizations exist, mainly North American, which are associated with Freemasonry, but are not Masonic in their content. These include:

* [DeMolay International](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=DeMolay_International&action=edit&redlink=1), for boys aged 12–21;
* [Job's Daughters International](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Job%27s_Daughters_International&action=edit&redlink=1), for girls aged 10-20 with a Masonic family relationship
* [International Order of the Rainbow for Girls](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=International_Order_of_the_Rainbow_for_Girls&action=edit&redlink=1), for girls who have Masonic sponsorship.

There are some organizations which are commonly perceived as being related to Freemasonry; some of these benefiting from charitable support by Masonic or appendant bodies. In addition a number of organizations and fraternities such as the [Orange Order](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Orange_Order&action=edit&redlink=1) style themselves along Masonic lines, using similar regalia and ritual. However they are not part of Freemasonry and are not accorded recognition as such.

**Membership requirements**

A candidate for Freemasonry must apply to a *Private* (or *Constituent*) Lodge in his community, obtaining an introduction by asking an existing member. After enquiries are made, he must be freely elected by secret ballot in open Lodge. Members approving his candidacy will vote with "white balls" in the voting box. Adverse votes by "black balls" will exclude a candidate. The number of adverse votes necessary to reject a candidate, which in some jurisdictions is as few as one, is set out in the governing Constitution. Lodges conduct these elections in a number of different ways; a wholly secret ballot where every member is given the means to vote either way, or semipublic where members who choose to vote go to the ballot box and cast a secret vote.

**General requirements**

Generally to be a [regular](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Regular_Masonic_jurisdictions&action=edit&redlink=1) Freemason, one must:

1. Be a man who comes of his own free will. Traditionally Freemasons do not actively recruit new members.
2. Believe in a Supreme Being, or, in a few jurisdictions, a *Creative Principle*.
3. Be at least the minimum age (18–25 years depending on the jurisdiction, but commonly 21),
4. Be of sound mind, body and of good morals, and of good repute.
5. Be free (or "born free", *i.e.* not born a [slave](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Slavery&action=edit&redlink=1) or bondsman).
6. Have one or two references from current Masons (depending on jurisdiction).

One must approach an existing member for an application, so Freemasonry is open to all who otherwise fulfill the requirements.

A candidate is asked 'Do you believe in a Supreme Being?', there is no further investigation into the nature of that Supreme Being. Since an initiate is obligated on that sacred volume which is applicable to his faith, a sponsor will enquire as to an appropriate volume once a decision has been made on the applicants suitability for initiation.

A number of Grand Lodges allow a **Lewis**, the son of a Mason, to be initiated earlier than the normal minimum age for that Grand Lodge.

Being of "sound body" is thought to be derived from the operative origins of Freemasonry, an apprentice would be able to meet the demands of their profession. It is today generally taken to mean "physically capable of taking part in Lodge rituals"; Grand Lodges encourage the use of mechanisms within the ritual to mitigate for difficulty.

The "free born" requirement is moot in modern Lodges; it remains for purely historical reasons. Some jurisdictions have done away with it entirely.

Some Grand Lodges in the United States have a residence requirement, candidates being expected to have lived within the jurisdiction for certain period of time, typically six months.[[1]](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Freemasonry#_note-0#_note-0) This requirement may be waived in certain jurisdictions for certain situations.

It is notable that the requirement for the candidate to have a belief in a Supreme Being is not present in some, but not all, [Co-Masonic](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Co-Freemasonry&action=edit&redlink=1) bodies, leading to a significant divergence in organizational direction and philosophy.

**Membership and religion**

Freemasonry explicitly and openly states that it is not a religion, nor a substitute for religion. There is no separate "Masonic God," and there is no separate proper name for a deity in any branch of Freemasonry.

Freemasonry requires that its candidates believe in a *Supreme Being*, the nature of that being subject to the conscience of the candidate. As the interpretation of the term *Supreme Being* is left up to the individual members can be drawn from a wide range of faiths; the [Abrahamic religions](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Abrahamic_religions&action=edit&redlink=1) and other [monotheistic](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Monotheistic&action=edit&redlink=1) religions. Some members of non-monotheistic religions are accepted subject to answering *Yes* to the question asked, these include, for example, [Buddhists](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Buddhism&action=edit&redlink=1) and [Hindus](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Hinduism&action=edit&redlink=1).

In the [*irregular*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Regular_Masonic_jurisdictions&action=edit&redlink=1) Continental European tradition, since the early 19th Century, a very broad interpretation has been given to a (non-dogmatic) Supreme Being — usually allowing [Deism](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Deism&action=edit&redlink=1) and naturalistic views in the tradition of [Spinoza](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Baruch_Spinoza&action=edit&redlink=1) and [Goethe](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Johann_Wolfgang_von_Goethe&action=edit&redlink=1) (himself a Freemason), or views of [The Ultimate](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=The_Ultimate&action=edit&redlink=1) or Cosmic Oneness, along with Western atheistic [idealism](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Idealism&action=edit&redlink=1) and agnosticism. This leads some anti-Masonic pundits to suggest that even *regular* Freemasonry will, in practice, accept certain kinds of atheists — willing to adopt quasi-spiritual language.

In some jurisdictions (mostly English-speaking), Freemasonry is actually less tolerant of naturalism than it was in the 18th Century, and specific religious requirements with more [theistic](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Theism&action=edit&redlink=1) and orthodox overtones have been added since the early 19th Century (mostly in North America), including belief in the immortality of the soul.

The Freemasonry that predominates in [Scandinavia](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Scandinavia&action=edit&redlink=1), known as the [Swedish Rite](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Swedish_Rite&action=edit&redlink=1) accepts only Christians.

**US Roman Catholic View**

[Template: POV-section](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Template:POV-section&action=edit&redlink=1)

*Main article:* [*Catholicism and Freemasonry*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Catholicism_and_Freemasonry&action=edit&redlink=1)

In the letter of April 19, 1985 to U.S. Bishops Concerning Masonry, by [Cardinal Bernard Law](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Bernard_Cardinal_Law&action=edit&redlink=1), he states a Roman Catholic definition of (Craft, or Blue Lodge) Freemasonic Jurisdictions from an “American context”:

“We should understand that worldwide Freemasonry shares many beliefs and customs but is not a unified organization; it includes the United Grand Lodge of England; the 50 independent grand lodges in the United States; lodges in Canada, Australia and New Zealand; Prince Hall Masonry; the so-called Christian Masonry of Germany and three Scandinavian countries; the various Grand Orients of Europe and Latin America; co- Masonic bodies; irregular lodges such as the Italian P2 lodge; and others.”

It reiterated the view of the then [Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Cardinal_Joseph_Ratzinger&action=edit&redlink=1) in a [clarification](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Clarification_concerning_status_of_Catholics_becoming_Freemasons&action=edit&redlink=1) sent in 1981 that Catholics are forbidden to join any Masonic lodges.

**Women and Freemasonry**

*Main article:* [*Co-Freemasonry*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Co-Freemasonry&action=edit&redlink=1)

The position of **women and Freemasonry** is complex, although traditionally, only men can be made Freemasons, in [*Regular*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Regular_Masonic_jurisdictions&action=edit&redlink=1) Freemasonry.

A supposed exceptional, (very [irregular](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Regular_Masonic_jurisdictions&action=edit&redlink=1) and perhaps unique), account of a woman being admitted to Freemasonry in, 18th century, is the case of [Elizabeth Aldworth](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Elizabeth_Aldworth&action=edit&redlink=1) (born St. Leger), who is reported to have viewed the proceedings of a lodge meeting held at Doneraile House - the private house of her father, first [Viscount](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Viscount&action=edit&redlink=1) Doneraile - a resident of [Cork](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=County_Cork&action=edit&redlink=1), [Ireland](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Ireland&action=edit&redlink=1). In the early part of the 18th century, it was quite customary for lodges to be held in private houses. This lodge was duly warranted for use by Lodge number 150 on the register of the [Grand Lodge of Ireland](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Grand_Lodge_of_Ireland&action=edit&redlink=1).

Apparently, she removed a brick and saw the ceremony in the room beyond. After being discovered, Elizabeth's situation was discussed by the lodge. It was decided that she should be initiated into Freemasonry. The story is supported by other accounts of her being a subscriber to the Irish Book of Constitutions of 1744. She frequently attended, wearing her Masonic [regalia](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Regalia&action=edit&redlink=1), and gave entertainments, under Masonic auspices, for the benefit of the poor and distressed. She married Mr. Richard Aldworth of Newmarket, and it is reported that when she died she was accorded the honor of a "Masonic" burial.

The systematic admission of women into International [Co-Freemasonry](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Co-Freemasonry&action=edit&redlink=1) began in [France](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=France&action=edit&redlink=1) in 1882 with the initiation of [Maria Deraismes](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Maria_Deraismes&action=edit&redlink=1) into the Loge Libre Penseurs (Freethinkers Lodge), under the Grande Loge Symbolique de France. In 1893, along with activist Georges Martin, Maria Deraismes oversaw the initiation of sixteen women into the first lodge in the world to have both men and women as members, from inception, creating the jurisdiction [Le Droit Humain](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Le_Droit_Humain&action=edit&redlink=1) (LDH). Again these are regarded as irregular bodies, by *Regular* Freemasonry.

In [North America](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=North_America&action=edit&redlink=1), women cannot become Freemasons *per se,* but rather join an associated separate body with its own traditions. [Order of the Eastern Star](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Order_of_the_Eastern_Star&action=edit&redlink=1) (OES) was created in the United States in the mid-19th Century for female Masonic relatives and Master Masons. Its members are mainly the wives and daughters of Master Masons.

In the [Netherlands](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Netherlands&action=edit&redlink=1), there is a completely separate, although masonically allied, sorority for women, the [Order of Weavers](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Order_of_Weavers&action=edit&redlink=1) (OOW), which uses symbols from weaving rather than stonemasonry.

The GOdF and other jurisdictions, in the Continental European tradition, give full formal recognition to Co-Freemasonry and women's Freemasonry. The UGLE, and other jurisdictions concordant in that *regular* tradition, do not formally recognize any Masonic body that accepts women. The UGLE, has stated - since 1998 - that two local women's jurisdictions are regular in practice, except for their inclusion of women, and has indicated that, while not formally recognized, these bodies may be regarded as part of Freemasonry, when describing Freemasonry in general.

**Principles and activities**

Both [1911 Encyclopædia Britannica](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica&action=edit&redlink=1) and [1913 Catholic Encyclopedia](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Catholic_Encyclopedia&action=edit&redlink=1) agree that Freemasonry, according to the official English, Scottish, American, etc., Craft rituals, is most generally defined: *A peculiar* (some say *particular* or *beautiful*) *system of morality veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols.* The continued use of this definition is illustrated in the example of the 1991 printing of the English Emulation Ritual.

As such Freemasonry uses ritual to convey the principles of "Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth" - otherwise related, as in France: "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity".

Moral lessons are communicated in a ritualized manner, the candidate progressing through *degrees* gaining in knowledge and understanding of himself, his relationship with others and his relationship with that Supreme Being to which he adheres.

Outside the ritual context the fraternity is widely involved in charity and community service activities, as well as providing a social outlet for the members.

The balance between ritual, philosophical and spiritual, charitable service and social interchange aspects varies subject to the cultures of the various Grand Lodges which govern Freemasonry around the world. Some Continental European Grand Lodges require the candidate to demonstrate philosophical competence as he advances through the degrees where this requirement is not overwhelmingly present in Britain, North America, and the anglophone parts of the world; charity tending to balance philosophy. There is a growing movement of lodges throughout the anglophone world tending towards the more philosophical and spiritual aspects of the craft.

Nevertheless, philosophy and esoteric knowledge remains a deep interest to many individuals. The philosophical aspects of the *Craft* tend to be discussed in Lodges of Instruction or Research, and sometimes informal groups. Freemasons themselves frequently reprint the scholarly studies that are available to the public.

**Charitable effort**

Freemasons collect money internally which is attributed to charitable purposes. A number of structures exist within Freemasonry to disburse this money, a proportion of which goes to non-Masonic charities either locally or on a provincial or national basis.

Masonic charities include

* Homes which provide sheltered housing or nursing care.
* Education with both educational grants or residential education which are open to all and not limited to the families of Freemasons.
* Medical assistance

**Contemporary challenges**

As with other fraternal organizations in the 21st Century, Freemasonry in some districts of the United States, the UK and other jurisdictions has been losing members, faster than it can replenish them. In contrast, the number of Masons is generally on the rise in South America and Continental Europe.

The Masonic Service Association of North America (MSANA) attributes the loss to six possible causes:

* A downward cycle
* Loss of the Vietnam generation
* Busy lifestyles
* Joining organizations is no longer fashionable
* Loss of Masonic identity
* Lack of energy invested in Masonry

Other theories exist as to the cause declining membership:

* A consequence of changing social mores and recognizable in other similar organizations.
* A return to a more natural level following an unsustainable increase in membership following WWII.

Many Grand Lodges in the U.S. have tried a variety of, often-controversial, measures to address declining membership. These have included "one-day ceremonies" of all the three degrees for large groups of candidates, (as opposed to individual degree conferrals taking months or years to complete); advertising on billboards, and even active recruitment of new candidates by members, (as opposed to the tradition of considering only those who actively seek membership for themselves). Some Masons object to the traditions and principles of Freemasonry being diluted by these changes, feeling that the Fraternity has survived centuries of social change without changing itself; others cite a need for Freemasonry to modernize and make itself relevant to new generations.

**Ritual and symbolism**

Freemasonic **Ritual** uses the [architectural](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Architecture&action=edit&redlink=1) symbolism of the [medieval](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Medieval&action=edit&redlink=1) *operative* [Masons](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Masonry&action=edit&redlink=1) who actually [worked in stone](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Masonry&action=edit&redlink=1). Tools from operative masonry are used by Freemasons to teach moral and ethical lessons and to encourage the development of a relationship with the Supreme Being. Two of the principal **symbols** always found in a lodge are the *square and* [*compasses*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Compass_(drafting)&action=edit&redlink=1). However, as Freemasonry is non-dogmatic, there is no general interpretation for any of these symbols.

The square and compasses are displayed at all Masonic meetings, along with the open *Volume of the Sacred Law* (VSL). In English-speaking countries, this is frequently the [King James Version of the Bible](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=King_James_Version_of_the_Bible&action=edit&redlink=1) or another standard translation (there is no such thing as an exclusive "Masonic Bible"). It is otherwise whatever book a particular jurisdiction authorizes. In many French Lodges, the Masonic Constitutions are used.

A candidate for a degree will normally be given his choice of religious text for his Obligation, according to his beliefs. UGLE alludes to similarities to legal practice in the UK, and to a common source with other oath taking. Christian candidates will typically use the Lodge's Bible while those of other religions may choose another book that is holy to them, to be displayed alongside the Lodges' usual VSL. In lodges with a mixed religious membership it is common to find more than one sacred text displayed representing the beliefs of the individuals present.

In keeping with the geometrical and architectural theme of Freemasonry, the Supreme Being is referred to in Masonic ritual by the attributes of *Great Architect of the Universe* (G.A.O.T.U.), *Grand Geometer* or similar. Freemasons use a variety of forms of words in make clear that they are reference is generic, not about any one religion's particular God or God-like concept.

**Degrees**

The degrees of *Craft* or *Blue Lodge* Freemasonry are those of:

1. Entered Apprentice (EA)
2. Fellow Craft (FC)
3. Master Mason (MM)

As a Freemason works through the **degrees**, and studies the lessons they contain, he interprets them for himself. No Mason is dictated to as to the interpretation he personally gives, bounded only by the Constitution within which he works. A common structure of speaking symbolically, and universal human archetypes, provides for each Freemason a means to come to his own answers to life's important philosophical questions. Especially in Europe, Freemasons working through the degrees are asked to prepare papers on related philosophical topics, and present these papers in an open Lodge.

There is no degree of Freemasonry higher than that of Master Mason. Although some Masonic bodies and orders have degrees named with higher numbers, these degrees are considered to be supplements to the Master Mason degree rather than promotions from it. Nevertheless, it is essential for one to be a Master Mason in order to qualify for these further degree bodies, each of which is organized and administered more or less similarly to Freemasonry itself. In each organization there is a system of offices which confer rank within that degree or order alone.

**Signs, grips and words**

Freemasons use signs (hand gestures), grips (handshakes) and passwords to gain admission to their meetings and identify that a visitor is legitimate. Over the years many exposés have been written claiming to reveal these signs grips and passwords for the uninitiated. However, as each Grand Lodge is free to create its own rituals, the signs, grips and passwords can and do differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, as noted clearly by [Christopher Hodapp](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Christopher_Hodapp&action=edit&redlink=1). Furthermore, according to historian [John J. Robinson](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=John_J._Robinson&action=edit&redlink=1) Grand Lodges can and do change their rituals frequently, updating the language used, adding or omitting sections. The logical conclusion of Hodapp's and Robinson's assertions is that any exposé is only valid for a particular jurisdiction at a particular time, and therefore may or may not be accurate with respect to modern ritual.

**Landmarks**

The **Landmarks** are the ancient and unchangeable precepts of Masonry, the standards by which the regularity of a Freemasonic Lodge and Grand Lodges are judged. Each Grand Lodge is self-governing and no single authority exists over the whole of Freemasonry. The interpretation of these principles can and do vary, leading to controversies of recognition.

The concept of Masonic Landmarks appears in Masonic regulations as early as 1723, and seems to have been adopted from the regulations of operative masonic guilds. Nowadays the term *Landmark* is generally understood by the definition of Dr. Albert Gallatin Mackey, who laid down three requisite characteristics, namely: (1) immemorial antiquity (2) universality (3) absolute irrevocability.

In 1856, Mackey attempted to set down the actual Landmarks as he saw them. He determined there were 25 in all. Seven years later, in 1863, George Oliver published Freemason's Treasury in which he listed 40 Landmarks. In the last century, a number of American Grand Lodges attempted the daunting task of enumerating the Landmarks, ranging from West Virginia (7) and New Jersey (10) to Nevada (39) and Kentucky (54).

**History of Freemasonry**

*Main article:* [*History of Freemasonry*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=History_of_Freemasonry&action=edit&redlink=1)

**Origin theories**

Freemasonry is a *system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbol* and in the ritual context employs an allegorical foundation myth of foundation of the fraternity by the builders of King Solomon’s Temple.

Beyond myth, there is a distinct absence of documentation as to Freemasonry’s origins, which has led to a great deal of speculation among historians, both from within and from outside the fraternity. Hundreds of books have been written on the subject. Much of the content of these books is highly speculative, and the precise origins of Freemasonry may very well be permanently lost to history.

Freemasonry has variously been attributed to:

* an institutional outgrowth of the medieval guilds of stonemasons
* a direct descendant of the "Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem" (the [Knights Templar](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Knights_Templar&action=edit&redlink=1))
* an offshoot of the ancient [Mystery schools](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Mystery_schools&action=edit&redlink=1),
* an administrative arm of the [Priory of Sion](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Priory_of_Sion&action=edit&redlink=1),
* the intellectual descendants of the Roman Collegia,
* the intellectual descendants of the [Comacine masters](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Comacine_masters&action=edit&redlink=1),
* the intellectual descendants of [Noah](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Noah&action=edit&redlink=1) or [Enoch](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Enoch&action=edit&redlink=1),
* survivor of late 17th Century, enlightenment period, fashion for fraternal bodies with no real connections at all to earlier organizations (although various documents pre-dating the 17th Century tend to disprove this theory).

It is thought by many that Freemasonry is unlikely to be a straightforward outgrowth of medieval guilds of stonemasons. Amongst the reasons given for this conclusion are the facts that stonemasons lived near their worksite and thus had no need for secret signs to identify themselves, and that the "Ancient Charges" of Freemasonry are nonsensical when thought of as being rules for a stonemasons' guild.

Alternatively, it is widely thought that stonemasons, unlike virtually all Europeans except the clergy, were not bound to the land on which they were born, and were, thus, "free". The various skills required in building ever more complex stone structures, especially churches and cathedrals, allowed skilled masons to travel and find work at will. They were "lodged" in a more temporary structure either attached to, or near, the main building. In this lodge, they ate, slept and received their work assignments from the master of the work. The freedom they enjoyed was beyond price. To maintain such freedom required exclusivity of skills, and thus, as the apprentice was trained, his instructors attached moral values to the tools of the trade, binding the young man to his fellows.

Especially amongst York Rite Freemasons, Freemasonry is said to have existed in the 10th century CE, at the time of King Athelstan of England. Athelstan is said to have been converted to Christianity in York, and to have issued the first Charter to the Masonic Lodges there. The story of his conversion is unsubstantiated, as that royal dynasty had been Christian for centuries.

Current theory suggests that the development of Freemasonry has two distinct growth periods.

**Stage 1** Freemasonry being operative in nature and likely to have been associated with the craft guilds. Ritual elements are simple and there is no evidence of a sophisticated philosophical outlook.

**Stage 2** emerges in the 18th Century with a gentrification process and is evidenced by an increasing non-operative membership notable for their social position and position in English, particularly London based, society. The Prestonian ritual and lectures demonstrate an infusion of enlightenment philosophy and increasing use of ritual as a vehicle for the communication and exploration of that philosophy.

**From foundation to 1717**

A more historical source asserting the antiquity of Freemasonry is the Halliwell Manuscript, or Regius Poem - believed to date from ca. 1390. This makes reference to several concepts and phrases similar to those found in Freemasonry. The manuscript itself seems to be an elaboration on an earlier document, to which it refers.

There is also the Cooke Manuscript, dated 1430 - the Constitution of German stonemasons. The first appearance of the word 'Freemason' occurs in the Statutes of the Realm enacted in 1495 by [Henry VII of England](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Henry_VII_of_England&action=edit&redlink=1), however, most other documentary evidence prior to the 1500s appears to relate entirely to operative Masons.

By 1583, the date of the Grand Lodge manuscript, the documentary evidence begins to grow. The Schaw Statues of 1598-9(4) are the source used to declare the precedence of [Lodge Mother Kilwinning](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Lodge_Mother_Kilwinning&action=edit&redlink=1) in [Kilwinning](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Kilwinning&action=edit&redlink=1), Ayrshire, Scotland over Lodge Mary's Chapel in [Edinburgh](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Edinburgh&action=edit&redlink=1). These are described as Head and Principal respectively. As a side note, following a dispute over numbering at the formation of the [Grand Lodge of Scotland](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Grand_Lodge_of_Scotland&action=edit&redlink=1) (GLS) - Kilwinning is numbered as [Lodge Mother Kilwinning](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Lodge_Mother_Kilwinning&action=edit&redlink=1) Number 0 (pronounced 'Nothing'), GLS. Quite soon thereafter, a charter was granted to Sir William St. Clair (later Sinclair) of Roslin (Rosslyn), allowing him to purchase jurisdiction over a number of lodges in Edinburgh and environs. This may be the basis of the Templar myth surrounding [Rosslyn Chapel](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Rosslyn_Chapel&action=edit&redlink=1).

From the early 1600s references are found to Freemasonry in personal diaries and journals. [Elias Ashmole](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Elias_Ashmole&action=edit&redlink=1) (1617-1692), was made a Mason in 1646, and notes attending several Masonic meetings. There appears to be a general spread of the Craft, between Ashmole's account and 1717, when four [English](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=England&action=edit&redlink=1) Lodges meeting in [London](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=London&action=edit&redlink=1) [Taverns](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Taverns&action=edit&redlink=1) joined together and founded the Grand Lodge of England (GLE). They had held meetings, respectively, at the Apple-Tree Tavern, the Crown Ale-House near Drury Lane, the Goose and Gridiron in St. Paul's Churchyard, and the Rummer and Grapes Tavern in Westminster.

With the foundation of this first Grand Lodge, Freemasonry shifted from being an obscure, relatively private, institution into the public eye. The years following saw new Grand Lodges open throughout Europe. How much of this growth was the spreading of Freemasonry itself, and how much was due to the public organization of pre-existing private Lodges, is uncertain.

**The first great schism - 1753**

In 1723, [James Anderson](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=James_Anderson_(minister,_author,_Mason)&action=edit&redlink=1) wrote and published [The Constitutions of the Free-Masons](http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libraryscience/25/), *For the Use of the Lodges* in London and Westminster. This work was reprinted in Philadelphia in 1734 by [Benjamin Franklin](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Benjamin_Franklin&action=edit&redlink=1), who was that year elected Grand Master of the Masons of Pennsylvania.

The Grand Lodge of England (GLE) expanded the degree system from two — Entered Apprentice and Fellow Craftsman — to three. This was done by adding the Master Mason degree, around the year 1725; and by reorganizing, adding and dispersing ritual elements. The GLE along with those jurisdictions in amity with it, came to be known colloquially as the *Moderns*, (or the Premier Grand Lodge), to distinguish them from a newer, rival group within Freemasonry, known as the *Antients*, (or the Antient Grand Lodge). The Antients broke away in 1753, prompted by changes to the Ritual and a wish to have a fourth *Holy Royal Arch* (HRA) degree within Craft Masonry. [Benjamin Franklin](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Benjamin_Franklin&action=edit&redlink=1) was a Modern, but by the time he died, his lodge had gone over to the Antients and would no longer recognize him as one of their own — declining to give him Masonic honors at his funeral.

The schism was healed in when the competing Grand Lodges were amalgamated into the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) in 1813, by virtue of a delicately worded compromise that returned the modes of recognition to their pre-1753 form, but kept Freemasonry *per se* as consisting of three degrees only, and while still allowing the Antients to view the HRA degree as the completion of the third degree. Both the Antients and the Moderns had *daughter* lodges throughout the world, and because many of those lodges still exist, there is a great deal of variability in the ritual used today, even between UGLE-recognized jurisdictions in amity. Most private lodges conduct themselves in accordance with an agreed-upon single Rite.

**The second great schism - 1877**

The second great schism in Freemasonry occurred in the years following 1877, when the Grand Orient de France (GOdF) started accepting atheists unreservedly. While the issue of atheism is probably the greatest single factor in the split with the GOdF, the English also point to the French recognition of women's Masonry and co-Masonry, as well as the tendency of French Masons to be more willing to discuss religion and politics in Lodge. While the French curtail such discussion, they do not ban it as outright as do the English. The schism between the two branches has occasionally been breached for short periods of time, especially during the [First World War](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=World_War_I&action=edit&redlink=1) when American Masons overseas wanted to be able to visit French Lodges.

Concerning religious requirements, the oldest constitution found in Freemasonry — that of Anderson, 1723 — says that a Mason *"will never be a stupid Atheist nor an irreligious Libertine"* if he *"rightly understands the Art"*. The only religious requirement was *"that Religion in which all Men agree, leaving their particular Opinions to themselves"*. Masons debate as to whether *"stupid"* and *"irreligious"* are meant as necessary, or as accidental, modifiers of *"atheist"* and *"libertine"*. It is possible the ambiguity is intentional.

In 1815, the newly amalgamated UGLE modified Anderson's constitutions to include: *"Let a man's religion or mode of worship be what it may, he is not excluded from the Order, provided he believes in the glorious Architect of Heaven and Earth, and practices the sacred duties of morality."*

In 1849, France (GOdF) followed the English (UGLE) lead by adopting the *"Supreme Being"* requirement, but pressure from Latin countries produced by 1875, the alternative phrase *"Creative Principle"*. This was ultimately not enough for the GOdF, and in 1877 it re-adopted the original Anderson document of 1723. They also created an alternative ritual that made no direct reference to any deity, with the attribute of the Great Architect of the Universe. This new Rite did not replace the older ones, but was added as an alternative, as Continental European jurisdictions, generally, tend not to restrict themselves to a single Rite — offering a menu of Rites, from which their lodges may choose.

There is some controversy, originating in the Roman Catholic Church, over how divided the jurisdictions were, with some American Freemasons in the early twentieth century (before the partial reconciliation of Freemasonry in the First World War) stressing the unity of Freemasonry, which was viewed as evidence that the schism was only partial.

**Criticism, persecution, and prosecution**

*Main article:* [*Anti-Masonry*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Anti-Masonry&action=edit&redlink=1)

Freemasonry has historically attracted criticism and suppression from the politically [extreme right](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Far_right&action=edit&redlink=1) (i.e. [Nazi Germany](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Nazi_Germany&action=edit&redlink=1)) and the [extreme left](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Far_left&action=edit&redlink=1) (i.e. the former [Communist](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Communist&action=edit&redlink=1) states in [Eastern Europe](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Eastern_Europe&action=edit&redlink=1)). The fraternity has encountered both applause for “founding” - and opposition for supposedly thwarting - [liberal](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Liberal&action=edit&redlink=1) [democracies](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Democracy&action=edit&redlink=1) (such as the United States of America). It has also attracted criticism and suppression from [theocratic](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Theocracy&action=edit&redlink=1) [states](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Islam&action=edit&redlink=1) and organized religions for supposed competition with religion, or [heterodoxy](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Heterodoxy&action=edit&redlink=1) within the Fraternity itself.

**Case studies in politics and crime**

Perhaps influenced by the assertion of Masons that many political figures in the past 300 years have been Masons, Freemasonry has long been the target of [conspiracy](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Conspiracy&action=edit&redlink=1) theories, which see it as an [occult](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Occult) and evil power. Often associated with the [New World Order](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/New_World_Order) and other "agents", such as the [Illuminati](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Illuminati&action=edit&redlink=1) - the fraternity is seen, by conspiracy theorists, as either bent on world domination, or already secretly in control of world politics.

In [1799](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=1799&action=edit&redlink=1) English Freemasonry almost came to a halt. In the wake of the [French Revolution](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=French_Revolution&action=edit&redlink=1) the *Unlawful Societies Act, 1799* banned any meetings of groups that required their members to take an [oath](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Oath&action=edit&redlink=1) or obligation. The Grand Masters of the Premier Grand Lodge and the Antients Grand Lodge called on the Prime Minister William Pitt, (not a Freemason) and explained to him how Freemasonry was a supporter of the law and lawfully constituted authority and was much involved in charitable work. As a result Freemasonry was specifically exempted from the terms of the Act, provided that each Private Lodge's Secretary placed with the local "Clerk of the Peace" a list of the members of his Lodge - once a year. This continued until [1967](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=1967&action=edit&redlink=1) when the obligation of the provision was rescinded by [Parliament](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Parliament&action=edit&redlink=1).

Due to the appearance of secrecy, and the possibility it might be implicated in rebellion, *regular* Freemasonry inserted into its core ritual a formal obligation; to be a quiet and peaceable citizens, true to their lawful government of the country in which they live and not to countenance disloyalty or rebellion. A Freemason makes a further obligation, before being made Master of his Lodge, to pay a proper respect to the civil [Magistrates](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Magistrate&action=edit&redlink=1). The words may be varied across Grand Lodges, but the sense in the obligation taken is always there in *regular* Freemasonry. No one citation can be given, even historically, since the actual text is not specified, nor is the whole of Freemasonry given to such an undertaking. In fact this has historically been the cause of Grand Lodges calling others *irregular*.

In [1826](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=1826&action=edit&redlink=1), [William Morgan](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=William_Morgan_(anti-mason)&action=edit&redlink=1) disappeared in the [U.S.](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=United_States&action=edit&redlink=1), after threatening to expose Freemasonry's secrets. His disappearance caused claims that he had been murdered by rogue Freemasons. No evidence was ever brought forward, however.

In [*Mein Kampf*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Mein_Kampf&action=edit&redlink=1), [Adolf Hitler](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Adolf_Hitler&action=edit&redlink=1) writes that Freemasonry has "succumbed" to the Jews and has become an "excellent instrument" to fight for their aims and to use their "strings" to pull the upper strata of society into their alleged designs. He continues, "The general pacifistic paralysis of the national instinct of self-preservation begun by Freemasonry" is then transmitted to the masses of society by the press.

The *Enabling Act* ([*Ermächtigungsgesetz*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=De:Erm%C3%A4chtigungsgesetz&action=edit&redlink=1) in [German](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=German_language&action=edit&redlink=1)) was passed by Germany's parliament (the [*Reichstag*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Reichstag_(institution)&action=edit&redlink=1)) on [March 23](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=March_23&action=edit&redlink=1), [1933](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=1933&action=edit&redlink=1). Using the "Act", on [January 8](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=January_8&action=edit&redlink=1), [1934](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=1934&action=edit&redlink=1) the [German](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Nazi_Germany&action=edit&redlink=1) [Ministry of the Interior](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Ministry_of_the_Interior&action=edit&redlink=1) ordered the disbandment of Freemasonry, and confiscation of the property of all Lodges; stating that those who had been members of Lodges when Hitler came to power, in January 1933, were prohibited from holding office in the Nazi party or its paramilitary arms, and were ineligible for appointment in public service. Consistently considered an ideological foe of Nazism in their world perception (*Weltauffassung*), special sections of the Security Service (SD) and later the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA) were established to deal with the Freemasonry. Freemasonic Concentration Camp inmates were graded as “Political” prisoners, and wore an inverted, (point down), [*red triangle*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Nazi_concentration_camp_badges&action=edit&redlink=1).

On [August 8](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=August_8&action=edit&redlink=1), [1935](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=1935&action=edit&redlink=1), as [Führer](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=F%C3%BChrer&action=edit&redlink=1) and [Chancellor](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Chancellor_of_Germany&action=edit&redlink=1), Adolf Hitler announced in the [Nazi](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=National_Socialist_German_Workers_Party&action=edit&redlink=1) Party newspaper, *Voelkischer Beobachter*, the final dissolution of all Masonic Lodges in Germany. The article accused a conspiracy of the Fraternity and “World Jewry” of seeking to create a “[World Republic](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/New_World_Order)”.

In modern democracies, Freemasonry is still sometimes accused of being a [network](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Old_boy_network&action=edit&redlink=1), where political influence and illegal business dealings take place. It is held that individuals become Freemasons through invitation, [patrimony](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Patrimony&action=edit&redlink=1), or other non-democratic means. This is actually officially and explicitly deplored. An individual must ask freely and without persuasion to become a Freemason in order to join the fraternity.

In Italy, the [*illicit*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Illicit&action=edit&redlink=1) and [*irregular*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Regular_Masonic_jurisdictions&action=edit&redlink=1) P2 lodge (aka [Propaganda Due](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Propaganda_Due&action=edit&redlink=1)) has been investigated. In the wake of financial scandals that nearly bankrupted the [Vatican Bank](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Vatican_Bank&action=edit&redlink=1) in the late [1970s](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=1970s&action=edit&redlink=1), there is suspicion of involvement in murders, including the head of [Banco Ambrosiano](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Banco_Ambrosiano&action=edit&redlink=1), [Roberto Calvi](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Roberto_Calvi&action=edit&redlink=1). He was found hanging under [Blackfriars Bridge](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Blackfriars_Bridge&action=edit&redlink=1) in [London](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=London&action=edit&redlink=1), [England](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=England&action=edit&redlink=1). In [Nice](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Nice&action=edit&redlink=1), [France](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=France&action=edit&redlink=1), the Head [Prosecutor](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Prosecutor&action=edit&redlink=1) has accused some judges and other judicial personnel of deliberately stalling or refusing to elucidate cases involving Freemasons.

The [UK](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=United_Kingdom&action=edit&redlink=1) [Labour](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Labour_Party_(UK)&action=edit&redlink=1) Government , in the late [1990s](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=1990s&action=edit&redlink=1) and early [2000s](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=2000s&action=edit&redlink=1), attempted to require all members of fraternal organizations who are public officials to make their affiliation public. This was challenged under [European](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=European&action=edit&redlink=1) [Human Rights](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Human_Rights&action=edit&redlink=1) legislation, and the Government in enacting the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law, [[1]](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php/Freemasonry#_note-0#_note-0) had to curtail the scope of their requirements. An unexpected result of [the UK Holocaust Memorial Day](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Holocaust_Memorial_Day_(UK)&action=edit&redlink=1) is that the UK Government honors Freemasons amongst those who suffered and died (see *Holocaust*, below).

**Christian religious opposition**

*Main article:* [*Christianity and Freemasonry*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Christianity_and_Freemasonry&action=edit&redlink=1)

Although sections of other faiths cite objections, in general, there are three doctrinal objections to Freemasonry cited in common by some Christian denominations:

* [Syncretism](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Syncretism&action=edit&redlink=1); in that the religious aim of Freemasonry is the creation of a new 'super' or 'universal' religion created by combining various deities and teachings, many of which are pre-Christian.
* [Non-dogmatism](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Dogmatic&action=edit&redlink=1), being at odds with the claims of Christian exclusivity.
* [Esoteric](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Esoteric&action=edit&redlink=1) gloss put onto Masonic ritual, cited as being synonymous with [Gnosticism](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Gnosticism&action=edit&redlink=1).

Those Grand Lodges in amity with UGLE explicitly and adhere to the principle that Freemasonry is not a religion, nor a substitute for religion; There is no separate "Masonic god", and there is no separate proper name for a deity in Freemasonry.

While regular Masonry has always tended as much to [rationalism](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Rationalism&action=edit&redlink=1) as it does to [mysticism](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Mysticism&action=edit&redlink=1), the very existence of the possibility of [hermetic](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Hermeticism&action=edit&redlink=1) interpretations within Freemasonry has led Anti-Masonic activists to quote works such as [Albert Pike's](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Albert_Pike&action=edit&redlink=1) *Morals and Dogma* to try to show Freemasonry as [Satanic](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Satanic&action=edit&redlink=1).

However, since it is not a religion, Freemasonry is [non-dogmatic](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Dogmatic&action=edit&redlink=1) and [constitutionally](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Constitution&action=edit&redlink=1) governed. Pike's opinions are his own personal - and now somewhat outdated - interpretations. Most tellingly, Pike himself admits that his book is culled more from other sources than being his original work. Most importantly, Pike is but one commentator amongst many, and no one voice has ever spoken for the whole of Freemasonry.

**Holocaust**

[**Forget-me-nots**](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Forget-me-not&action=edit&redlink=1)

The majority of those who suffered during the [Holocaust](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Holocaust&action=edit&redlink=1) were [Jews](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Jews&action=edit&redlink=1) and [Poles](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Polish&action=edit&redlink=1). Freemasons were categorized as political prisoners and treated as such, and many were executed under the Nazi regime. It is estimated that between 80,000 and 200,000 Freemasons died. There is a high degree of ambiguity about the figure because no one knows the number of Freemasons from Nazi occupied countries who were executed, either as Freemasons or who died for other reasons. The [United Kingdom](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=United_Kingdom&action=edit&redlink=1) Government established [Holocaust Memorial Day](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Holocaust_Memorial_Day_(UK)&action=edit&redlink=1) to recognize all groups who were targets of the Nazi regime, and counter [Holocaust denial](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Holocaust_denial&action=edit&redlink=1).

German Freemasons are believed in to have worn blue [Forget Me Not](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Forget-me-not&action=edit&redlink=1) flowers as a secret badge of recognition. The little blue [Forget Me Not](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Forget-me-not&action=edit&redlink=1) flower, or badge, is today worn in the coat lapel to remember all those that have suffered in the name of Freemasonry, and specifically those during the Nazi era.

In [1948](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=1948&action=edit&redlink=1) this emblem was adopted as a Masonic emblem at the first Annual Convention of the United Grand Lodges of Germany, Ancient Free & Accepted Masons Two UGLE Lodges, with armed forces connections to Germany, are named after the flower.

**Cultural references**

* [Rudyard Kipling](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Kipling&action=edit&redlink=1) used Masonic symbols and characters in some of his writings, most notably [*The Man Who Would Be King*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=The_Man_Who_Would_Be_King&action=edit&redlink=1), which was later made into a film. Two adventurers are taken to be Masonic representatives of [Alexander the Great](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Alexander_the_Great&action=edit&redlink=1).
* One of the main characters in [Edgar Allan Poe](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Edgar_Allan_Poe&action=edit&redlink=1)'s [*The Cask of Amontillado*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=The_Cask_of_Amontillado&action=edit&redlink=1) is a Freemason.
* One of the main characters in [Leo Tolstoy's](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Leo_Tolstoy&action=edit&redlink=1) [*War and Peace*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=War_and_Peace&action=edit&redlink=1) becomes a Freemason.
* The plot of the opera "[Die Zauberflöte](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Die_Zauberfl%C3%B6te&action=edit&redlink=1)" ("The Magic Flute") contains several references to Masonic ideals and ceremonies. [Mozart](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Wolfgang_Amadeus_Mozart&action=edit&redlink=1) and his librettist [Emanuel Schikaneder](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Emanuel_Schikaneder&action=edit&redlink=1) were both members of the Masonic Lodge of the Nine Muses.
* [Joseph Smith](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Joseph_Smith&action=edit&redlink=1), the founder of the [Mormon](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Mormon&action=edit&redlink=1) religion, was a Freemason, as were the first five presidents of [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints&action=edit&redlink=1): Smith, [Brigham Young](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Brigham_Young&action=edit&redlink=1), [John Taylor](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=John_Taylor_(1808-1887)&action=edit&redlink=1), [Wilford Woodruff](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Wilford_Woodruff&action=edit&redlink=1), and [Lorenzo Snow](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Lorenzo_Snow&action=edit&redlink=1).
* The [Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Hermetic_Order_of_the_Golden_Dawn&action=edit&redlink=1) was a society founded by at least one Mason who also was a member of the [Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Societas_Rosicruciana_in_Anglia&action=edit&redlink=1) (a research and study group focusing on symbolic [alchemy](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Alchemy&action=edit&redlink=1), the mystical [kabbalah](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Kabbalah&action=edit&redlink=1), [tarot](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Tarot&action=edit&redlink=1), and Christian Symbolism). The Golden Dawn was never a Masonic body, and was open to membership from non-Masons and women.
* The [graphic novel](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Graphic_novel&action=edit&redlink=1) [*From Hell*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=From_Hell&action=edit&redlink=1) by [Alan Moore](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Alan_Moore&action=edit&redlink=1) - and the movie based upon it - feature as their basic premise a [conspiracy theory](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Jack_the_Ripper_royal_conspiracy_theories&action=edit&redlink=1) linking "certain Freemasons" to the [Jack the Ripper](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Jack_the_Ripper&action=edit&redlink=1) murders. The story is that "Freemason" [Sir William Gull](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=William_Withey_Gull&action=edit&redlink=1), the then British Royal Household's physician, covered up a child of [Prince Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Prince_Albert_Victor,_Duke_of_Clarence&action=edit&redlink=1) born to a Catholic shop girl - "by killing her, and all the women who knew about the baby". The story depends on the assumption that such figures as the [Marquess of Salisbury](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Marquess_of_Salisbury&action=edit&redlink=1), Sir William Gull and [Sir Robert Anderson](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Sir_Robert_Anderson&action=edit&redlink=1) were Freemasons - but there is no actual record of their initiation into Freemasonry in any Lodge.
* Freemasons feature heavily in [Robert Shea's](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Robert_Shea&action=edit&redlink=1) and [Robert Anton Wilson's](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Robert_Anton_Wilson&action=edit&redlink=1) satire, [*The Illuminatus! Trilogy*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=The_Illuminatus!_Trilogy&action=edit&redlink=1).
* [John Cleese](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=John_Cleese&action=edit&redlink=1), and other cast members, portray [spoof](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Parody&action=edit&redlink=1) Freemasons in the *How to recognize a Freemason* sketch of [*Monty Python's Flying Circus*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Monty_Python%27s_Flying_Circus&action=edit&redlink=1).
* The Freemasons are [spoofed](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Parody&action=edit&redlink=1) in an episode of [*The Simpsons*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=The_Simpsons&action=edit&redlink=1)*,* titled "[Homer the Great](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Homer_the_Great&action=edit&redlink=1)," as [The Ancient Society of Stonecutters](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Stonecutters&action=edit&redlink=1), a secret organization that controls everything from the [British Crown](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=British_Crown&action=edit&redlink=1) to the [Academy Awards](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Academy_Awards&action=edit&redlink=1) (thereby securing [Steve Guttenberg](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Steve_Guttenberg&action=edit&redlink=1)'s stardom).
* Another episode of [*The Simpsons*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=The_Simpsons&action=edit&redlink=1)*,* entitled "[$pringfield (or, How I learned to stop worrying and love legalized gambling),](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=$pringfield_(or,_How_I_learned_to_stop_worrying_and_love_legalized_gambling),&action=edit&redlink=1)" has a scene where [Mr. Burns](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Montgomery_Burns&action=edit&redlink=1), obsessed with germs and having become a "[Howard Hughes](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Howard_Hughes&action=edit&redlink=1)"-like recluse, sees germs on [Smithers'](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Waylon_Smithers&action=edit&redlink=1) face. The germs chant "Freemasons run the country."
* [Dan Brown's](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Dan_Brown&action=edit&redlink=1) novels, [*Angels and Demons*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Angels_and_Demons&action=edit&redlink=1), [*The Da Vinci Code*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=The_Da_Vinci_Code&action=edit&redlink=1) and [*The Solomon Key*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=The_Solomon_Key&action=edit&redlink=1) draw heavily on supposed Masonic and Christian lore and symbolism.
* [*Foucault's Pendulum*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Foucault%27s_Pendulum_(book)&action=edit&redlink=1) by [Umberto Eco](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Umberto_Eco&action=edit&redlink=1) also deals with Freemasonic themes.
* [The Cremaster Cycle](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=The_Cremaster_Cycle&action=edit&redlink=1) films by [Matthew Barney](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Matthew_Barney&action=edit&redlink=1) use Masonic imagery.
* The plot of the 2004 movie [*National Treasure*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=National_Treasure_(film)&action=edit&redlink=1) revolves heavily around the Freemasons and is somewhat unusual in that it depicts them in a benign light.
* In *The Baron in the Trees* Italian writer [Italo Calvino](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Italo_Calvino&action=edit&redlink=1) includes Masonic lodges branching out into the lands of Ombrosa with the protagonist of the novel, Cosimo di Rondo, mysteriously and supposedly involved with them.
* [Katherine Kurtz](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Katherine_Kurtz&action=edit&redlink=1) and Deborah Turner Harris use Freemasonry in their series *The Adept*, most notably in *The Adept Book Two: The Lodge of the Lynx*, and in Kurtz's [American Revolution](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=American_Revolution&action=edit&redlink=1) [historical novel](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Historical_novel&action=edit&redlink=1) *Two Crowns for America*, which links Freemasonry and [Jacobitism](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Jacobitism&action=edit&redlink=1).
* In [John Steinbeck](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=John_Steinbeck&action=edit&redlink=1)'s novel [*East of Eden*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=East_of_Eden&action=edit&redlink=1) Adam Trask, the main character, is mentioned as becoming a Freemason later in life.
* In [Robert A. Heinlein](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Robert_A._Heinlein&action=edit&redlink=1)'s short novel [*"If This Goes On—"*](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=%22If_This_Goes_On%E2%80%94%22&action=edit&redlink=1), the lead character becomes a Freemason and Freemasonry figures largely in the plot.

**Notes**

**See also**

* [Anti-clericalism](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Anti-clericalism&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Anti-Freemasonry](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Anti-Freemasonry&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Anti-Masonic Party](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Anti-Masonic_Party&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Catholicism and Freemasonry](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Catholicism_and_Freemasonry&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Co-Freemasonry](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Co-Freemasonry&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Gnosticism](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Gnosticism&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [List of Freemasons](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=List_of_Freemasons&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [List of Masonic Grand Lodges](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=List_of_Masonic_Grand_Lodges&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Masonic Knights Templar](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Masonic_Knights_Templar&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Pigpen cipher](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Pigpen_cipher&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Prince Hall Freemasonry](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Prince_Hall_Freemasonry&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Propaganda Due](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Propaganda_Due&action=edit&redlink=1) - The P2 Masonic Lodge Scandal
* [Taxil hoax](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Taxil_hoax&action=edit&redlink=1)

**Appendant bodies**

* [York Rite](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=York_Rite&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Royal Order of Scotland](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Royal_Order_of_Scotland&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Scottish Rite](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Scottish_Rite&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine (Shriners)](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Shriners&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Societas_Rosicruciana_in_Anglia&action=edit&redlink=1) in England
* [Societas Rosicruciana in Scotia](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Societas_Rosicruciana_in_Scotia&action=edit&redlink=1) in Scotland
* [Swedish Rite](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Swedish_Rite&action=edit&redlink=1)

**Organizations with Masonic affiliations**

* [Ancient Egyptian Order of Sciots](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Ancient_Egyptian_Order_of_Sciots&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Daughters of the Nile](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Daughters_of_the_Nile&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [DeMolay International](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=DeMolay_International&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [International Order of Job's Daughters](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=International_Order_of_Job%27s_Daughters&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [International Order of the Rainbow for Girls](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=International_Order_of_the_Rainbow_for_Girls&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Ladies Oriental Shrine of North America](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Ladies_Oriental_Shrine_of_North_America&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [National Sojourners](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=National_Sojourners&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Order of the Eastern Star](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Order_of_the_Eastern_Star&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Order of the Amaranth](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Order_of_the_Amaranth&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [The Philalethes Society](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=The_Philalethes_Society&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Tall Cedars of Lebanon](http://www.theblackvault.com/wiki/index.php?title=Tall_Cedars_of_Lebanon&action=edit&redlink=1)

**External links**

**Masonic Resources, Publications, & Education**

* [Web of Hiram](http://www.brad.ac.uk/webofhiram)
* [A Page About Freemasonry](http://MasonryPage.org)
* [PS Review of Freemasonry made by Freemasons for Free Masons](http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com)

**Masonic Texts, Art, & Symbolism**

* [Masonic Books On-Line](http://www.geocities.com/stlaasr/masonic-books-online.html)
* [Webb's Freemason's Monitor — including the first three degrees](http://internetloge.de/masmon/masmon.htm)
* [Masonic art & clip art](http://altreligion.about.com/od/masonicclipartgraphics)
* [Illustrations of Masonry](http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/preston_illustrations_masonry.html)

**Masonic Responses to common criticisms of Freemasonry**

* [Is It True What They Say About Freemasonry?](http://www.srmason-sj.org/web/SRpublications/DeHoyos.htm)
* [The Real Secret of Freemasonry](http://users.marshall.edu/~will2/freemasonry.html)
* [Discussion of Anti-Masonry](http://www.masonicinfo.com)
* [Anti-Masonry Frequently Asked Questions](http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/anti-masonry/anti-masonry_faq.html)

**Miscellaneous**

* [Hiram's Oasis](http://www.kena.org/hirams)
* [Harun Yahya: Global Freemasonry](http://www.harunyahya.com/globalfreemasonry01.php)
* [Phoenixmasonry.org web page](http://www.phoenixmasonry.org)

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