

‘The Cause of Humanity’: Charles Bradlaugh and Freemasonry

by Professor Andrew Prescott, PhD

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Charles Bradlaugh (1833-90) was the most prominent advocate of republicanism, atheism and freethought in late Victorian Britain. He achieved national notoriety following his election in 1880 as MP for Northampton, when the Speaker refused to allow him, as an atheist, to take the oath, so that he was prevented from taking up his seat for six years. As a young man, Bradlaugh had been influenced by Richard Carlile and was associated with Carlile’s protégé, George Jacob Holyoake. Like Carlile and Holyoake, Bradlaugh was deeply interested in Freemasonry but unlike them he himself became a freemason. He was initiated in the *Grand Lodge des Philadelphes*, an irregular French lodge meeting in London, on 9 March 1859, and three years later joined a regular lodge in Paris. In September 1865 he became a joining member of High Cross L No 754 (EC), which met near his home in Tottenham. In 1875, a report by Bradlaugh in his paper *The National Reformer*, of a lodge meeting in Boston, led to a controversy in the masonic periodical *The Freemason*, as to how an avowed atheist could attend a regular lodge meeting. This debate anticipated many of the issues which received a national airing following Bradlaugh’s election to Parliament. He resigned from English Freemasonry in 1874, in protest at the nomination of the Prince of Wales as Grand Master, but maintained his connections with French Freemasonry. Anxieties about ‘Bradlaughism’ played a significant role in British reaction to the measures of the Grand Orient of France in 1877 allowing its members absolute liberty of conscience in religious matters and Bradlaugh offered a lively commentary on these events, both in *The National Reformer* and in pamphlets published with his associate, Annie Besant.



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‘I affirm that true Freemasonry knows no religion save that of humanity, no degree of dignity save that of pure manhood, and that the true mission of pure Freemasonry is the enfranchisement and purification alike of the human body and the human mind’.

Charles Bradlaugh¹

‘If a single atheist, that is, one who denies the existence of the GAOTU, is admitted a member of our society, such admission will be wholly subversive of its first and most sacred principle.’

The Freemason’s Chronicle, 21 October 1876²

A Hawaiian King visits a Boston Lodge

In December 1874, the King of the Hawaiian Islands, Kalakaua, who was a freemason, visited the United States. Among his engagements was a tour of the New York Masonic Temple, where he saw the third degree exemplified, and kissed the Bible on which George

Washington supposedly took his oath as President. The English masonic journal, *The Freemason*, duly reported the reception accorded by its brethren in New York to this exotic and prestigious visitor.³ A couple of weeks later, a correspondent styling himself 'Reviresco' wrote to *The Freemason*, drawing attention to a description in another journal of a visit of King Kalakaua to a masonic meeting in Boston, which Reviresco quoted at length.⁴

This report was written by a man who had been a guest at the Columbian Lodge in Boston when it had been visited by King Kalakaua. The report explained that, although the Sandwich Islands were not the largest in the world, Kalakaua was the first live king to tour the United States, and was therefore a notability. More than three hundred masons assembled for the lodge meeting, and the king was assigned a seat in the east by the Master. The author of the report was given a place of honour, to the left of the king. The lodge meeting was described as follows:

'The business of the lodge ... was the raising of a fellow-craftsman, to the masters degree, and I had a full opportunity, for about three quarters of an hour, of studying King Kalakaua ... He is a stout, lusty-looking man, with a fairly fine broad forehead, but with thick lips and nostrils and coloured skin, more especially to be found in the negro race ... During an interval of relaxation I was presented to his majesty, to whom I simply bowed, just touching his hand, which he held towards me, no words being used by either ...'

The reasons why Reviresco drew the attention of *The Freemason* to this description of the meeting of the Columbian Lodge were the identity of its author and the paper in which it had appeared. The reporter was Charles Bradlaugh, at that time the most notorious and outspoken champion of atheism, and the report was published in the *National Reformer*, a weekly freethought paper edited by Bradlaugh with Annie Besant, which W. H. Smith had refused at one point to sell, and which had been prosecuted for refusing to give sureties against the publication of blasphemy and sedition.⁵ It was certainly an unusual place for an account of a masonic meeting to appear.

Bradlaugh concluded his report to the *National Reformer* with details of a rousing speech which he had given at the reception for the king after the lodge meeting. Bradlaugh had declared that no greater evidence could be found of how Freemasonry promotes equality than the proceedings of that evening. The presence of black masons had shown how true Freemasonry knows no distinction of colour. That true Freemasonry had no distinctions of class was shown by the way in which both Bradlaugh and the king were on a level in their work, and at the same table in their feast. Bradlaugh continued:

'The majesty that Freemasonry delights to honour is the majesty of earnest manhood, the kingship which comes of effort, not of birth; the heroism of endeavour for human progress. Speaking for an Orient which has on its muster-rolls many uncrowned kings, for a lodge which has had among its brethren Joseph Mazzini, Joseph Garibaldi and Louis Blanc, I venture to hope that all our brethren will understand the true masonic work in the deliverance of humankind from poverty, ignorance and superstition.'

At the conclusion of his speech, Bradlaugh was given masonic honours, and three cheers. He proposed a toast 'The Cause of Humanity', which the king returned, shaking hands with Bradlaugh, 'on the grounds of our common humanity', amidst much cheering. In forwarding a copy of this report to *The Freemason*, Reviresco expressed puzzlement. 'I have heard that Mr Bradlaugh is an atheist. Can it be so, and yet for him to be a mason?... To what lodge and Grand Lodge does Mr Bradlaugh belong? Is he an English freemason or what?'

'Iconoclast'

Bradlaugh's iconoclastic career, punctuated by titanic controversies and extraordinary personal dramas, lasted over forty years.⁶ Bradlaugh achieved prominence as an infidel advocate very young. He was born in the East End of London in 1833, and left school at twelve, becoming an office boy in a law office. He also became a Sunday school teacher. Disturbed by discrepancies in the Bible, he wrote to the clergyman in charge of the parish, who accused him of atheism, and suspended him from his teaching duties in order that he should reflect on the error of his ways. Bradlaugh instead began attending radical meetings, and this confirmed him in his enthusiasm for freethought and opposition to Christianity. At the age of sixteen, he was thrown out of his family home and lost his job because of his outspoken atheist views. He was taken in by Elizabeth Sharples Carlile, the widow of Richard Carlile, who had popularized the ideas of Thomas Paine and had been imprisoned for printing Paine's deistic work, *The Age of Reason*. Richard Carlile's campaign against the ban on printing *The Age of Reason* eventually wore down the government's law officers, and, by establishing the right to publish such attacks on Christianity, Carlile struck an important blow for the freedom of the press. Carlile also espoused other controversial causes, such as birth control, the right to divorce, and vegetarianism.⁷

Elizabeth helped introduce Bradlaugh to the ideas of Richard Carlile, and assisted him in his self-education. Bradlaugh's interest in freethought attracted the attention of two leading radicals and successors of Carlile, George Jacob Holyoake and his brother, Austin. George Holyoake was the chairman of Bradlaugh's first public lecture as an atheist, 'The Past, Present and Future of Theology', given in 1850, when Bradlaugh was just seventeen. In the same year, Bradlaugh also published his first pamphlet, *A Few Words on the Christian Creed*. Bradlaugh was seized with enthusiasm for his new life, but money was a constant problem, and when his growing debts caused some freethinking admirers to take up a subscription for him, his pride was wounded, and he suddenly decided to join the army. He hoped to go to India and make his fortune, but instead ended up stationed in various parts of Ireland. During his time in the army, Bradlaugh continued his study of semitic languages and biblical texts, while first-hand observation of the Irish situation confirmed his radical political opinions. He was discharged in 1853, and returned to London, becoming a solicitor's clerk. He also resumed his career as an advocate of freethought, using the pseudonym 'Iconoclast' to avoid problems with his employers.

'Iconoclast' became a celebrated lecturer both in London and the provinces, quickly rivalling George Holyoake for the leadership of the secular movement. In 1858, Bradlaugh replaced Holyoake as President of the London Secular Society. In 1860, a group of Sheffield freethinkers established a new republican and freethought weekly newspaper, the *National Reformer*, and they offered Bradlaugh the joint editorship. Two years later, Bradlaugh became both proprietor and sole editor of the new newspaper, which appeared without a break until 1893. The *National Reformer* became not only the leading advocate of secular anti-religious values, but also one of the major voices of political radicalism, carrying reports and comment on every contemporary radical movement. Hitherto, the radical and freethought movement had been characterized by short-lived periodicals of limited influence. The relative longevity of the *National Reformer* and its steady sales – more than 6000 per week from 1872 to 1886 – were major achievements. Bradlaugh's success in resisting the prosecution brought against the newspaper for refusing to comply with the laws requiring newspapers to give large sureties that they would not commit blasphemy and sedition struck a further major blow for the freedom of the press. Bradlaugh was conscious of the need for a stable national organization if the freethought movement was to achieve its aims. He became the first President of the National Secular Society in 1866 and was chiefly responsible for turning it into a genuinely

national organization by his barnstorming speaking tours in the provinces which enabled him to persuade local organisations to join the national body.

In July 1874, Bradlaugh received a neatly-written letter from a lady in Norwood asking if it was necessary to be an atheist to join the National Secular Society. The author was Annie Besant, who had begun to feel doubts about Christianity two years previously, and had recently separated from her clergyman husband. Friends had suggested that she should hear Bradlaugh lecture at the Hall of Science and she had been immediately impressed. As soon as Besant met Bradlaugh, she lost any remaining misgivings about atheism and became a fully-fledged convert to the cause. Bradlaugh and Besant became very close, though platonic, friends. For the next decade, they energetically lectured, wrote and campaigned to establish in Britain a secular republican society, free of established religion and hereditary privilege. Bradlaugh's advocacy of birth control, doubtless partly a reflection of Carlile's influence, had already brought him into conflict with some other radicals. Besant was also strongly in favour of increasing awareness of birth control methods, and in 1877 Besant and Bradlaugh together reprinted an old treatise describing methods of contraception published in America in the 1830s, Dr Charles Knowlton's *The Fruits of Philosophy*. The resulting trial for obscenity brought both Besant and Bradlaugh national notoriety and obloquy, but, largely as a result of a brilliant speech by Besant towards the end of the trial, the jury declared the defendants innocent of any corrupt motive though technically guilty. An appeal court later found the pair simply not guilty. However, Besant paid a bitter price for this triumph. Her atheism and advocacy of birth control enabled her estranged husband to allege that she was an immoral woman, who was not fit to retain custody of her daughter. Despite strenuous campaigning by the *National Reformer*, custody of the child was awarded to the father. The judge admitted that Annie Besant was a good mother, but her atheism was the deciding factor in his awarding against her.

Bradlaugh's anti-religious stance was accompanied by political radicalism from an early stage in his career. He was an active member of the Reform League demanding an extension of the parliamentary suffrage in the period immediately before the Reform Act of 1867, and played a prominent part in the Hyde Park demonstration which helped secure this extension of voting rights. Bradlaugh strongly opposed coercive measures in Ireland and was a supporter of Irish home rule, seeing land reform as a major social objective. Throughout his career, Bradlaugh supported the nationalist movements in Italy and Poland, worked with French refugees in rallying opposition to Napoleon III and played a prominent part in encouraging support in Britain for the establishment of a republic in France after 1870. In later life, Bradlaugh took a great interest in Indian affairs, speaking at a meeting of the Indian National Congress. Among his admirers was the young Gandhi.

Bradlaugh first stood for election to Parliament at Northampton in 1868. Finally, in 1880 he was elected as the junior Member of Parliament for Northampton. He was under the impression that recent legislative changes meant that, when taking his seat, he did not need to swear an oath but could affirm. When he arrived at Westminster and formally requested permission to affirm, the Speaker refused, and referred the matter to a select committee, which decided that Members of Parliament were not allowed to affirm. Bradlaugh said that he would not allow an 'idle form' to stand in the way of the mandate of the electors of Northampton, and that he would simply take the oath. The idea that an atheist should take the oath and kiss the bible created uproar, and when Bradlaugh appeared in the House of Commons, a motion was passed declaring that Bradlaugh was not permitted to take the oath. The Prime Minister, Gladstone, considered that Bradlaugh should be allowed to take his seat, but nevertheless he remained excluded from parliament. Mass meetings in support of Bradlaugh were held throughout the country. At one point, Bradlaugh appeared again in the House to take the oath and, when he refused to withdraw, he was arrested by the Sergeant-at-Arms and imprisoned in the Clock Tower.

Attempts to introduce resolutions and legislation allowing Bradlaugh to affirm were met by opposition from both the Tory party and the churches, and were unsuccessful. The controversy dragged on for five years, seriously hampering the work of Gladstone's government and at times virtually bringing the work of the House of Commons to a halt. Bradlaugh repeatedly submitted himself to by-elections at Northampton, in which he was victorious. The problem would not go away. Finally, in 1885, a general election was held. When Bradlaugh appeared as one of the newly elected Members of Parliament, the new Speaker declared that previous resolutions had lapsed, and allowed Bradlaugh to swear the oath and take his seat. Bradlaugh served as a very conscientious Member of Parliament until his death in 1891. In 1888, Bradlaugh was responsible for legislation which secured the right to affirm both in law courts and parliament, and finally ensured that any man would be able to serve as a Member of Parliament, regardless of his religious convictions.

It is for securing the right to affirm that Bradlaugh is best remembered.⁸ The Bradlaugh case can perhaps be seen simply as a footnote in constitutional history, and not necessarily a significant one, since the right to affirm had already been secured elsewhere, and Bradlaugh's problems in Parliament simply exposed a forgotten anomaly. However, this underestimates the impact of the Bradlaugh case. The controversy about Bradlaugh and the parliamentary oath engendered a far-reaching debate about the nature of religion in British society in which church leaders such as the Archbishop of Canterbury and Cardinal Manning played a leading part. Recent scholars such as Joss Marsh have stressed how the anxieties exposed by the Bradlaugh debate as to whether atheism was acceptable in British society and the moral dangers which it posed were of central social and cultural importance in Britain in the 1870s and 1880s.⁹ As such, the controversy in the columns of *The Freemason* in 1875 about Bradlaugh's status as a freemason is significant both in prefiguring many of the arguments which resurfaced at the time Bradlaugh sought to enter Parliament and in shedding significant further light on contemporary anxieties about the threat of atheism. Moreover, this controversy fed directly into the dispute between the Grand Lodges of the Anglo-Saxon world and the Grand Orient of France over the requirement that freemasons should believe in a supreme being which resulted in a permanent rift between the Grand Lodge of England and the Grand Orient of France. The dispute between French and English Freemasonry is another, and neglected, facet of the British debate about atheism at this time, and one in which Bradlaugh himself played a significant role.

Bradlaugh versus *The Freemason*

Following the publication of Bradlaugh's description of the visit of King Kalakaua to the Lodge in Boston by Reviresco, there was a brief flurry of letters in the correspondence columns of *The Freemason* discussing the nature of Bradlaugh's masonic credentials.¹⁰ It was suggested that perhaps he was connected with a spurious French lodge in London, but confirmation of Bradlaugh's claim to be a freemason could only be obtained from the man himself. Readers of *The Freemason* eagerly awaited his return to London to hear more about his masonic career. On 16 March 1875, Bradlaugh sent a note to the editor of *The Freemason* clarifying the position:

'Charles Bradlaugh, born 20th September 1833, was made in the *Loge des Philadelphes*, on the 9th March 1859, was received in the *Loge de la Persévérante Amitié*, Grand Orient of France, 11th March 1862, and was an avowed atheist prior to the first date.

Charles Bradlaugh also joined the Tottenham High Cross Lodge [No. 754], after a discussion on his anti-theological opinions, and he received his regular certificate from the Grand Lodge, which certificate he returned to the Secretary of the Grand Lodge of England last September,

cancelled, in consequence of the accession of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales as Grand Master. The lodge at Tottenham, changing its locale, Mr Bradlaugh only subscribed one year.¹¹

This clear and straightforward explanation of the facts is borne out by the surviving records both in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry in London and in Bradlaugh's own papers, now kept at the Bishopsgate Institute. Bradlaugh cherished his masonic membership, and his certificates were carefully preserved in a large black deed box among his papers.¹² The Bradlaugh Papers include a certificate signed by Marshal Magnan as Grand Master of the Grand Orient of France, dated 11 May 1862 with the number 843, and inscribed 'A La Gloire du G.A. de L'U:', declaring that Bradlaugh had been received as a Master mason by *La Persévérante Amitié* of Paris on 11 March 1862.¹³ Bradlaugh also carefully preserved the certificate of his initiation in the *Loge des Philadelphes*, but it has unfortunately recently been mislaid.¹⁴

The return of the High Cross Lodge No. 754, held at the Railway Hotel, Northumberland Park, Tottenham, for August 1865 to August 1866 declares that on 27 September 1865, Charles Bradlaugh, gentleman, of Tottenham, 'Joined from a French lodge', and paid one pound seven shillings and sixpence for a certificate and registration, together with four shillings quarterage.¹⁵ Bradlaugh's name was duly entered on the Grand Lodge register. On the return for the following year, Bradlaugh, this time described as a solicitor, again paid his quarterage. As Bradlaugh stated, in 1868, High Cross Lodge moved to a new meeting place at the White Hart Hotel, and Bradlaugh ceased to attend the lodge. In the return for 1868-9, he is recorded as a defaulter, and the following year he ceased to appear in the returns of the High Cross Lodge. By this time, Bradlaugh had more substantial complaints against English Freemasonry. His certificate as an English freemason is preserved in the Document Collection in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry. It declares that Brother Charles Bradlaugh was regularly received into Freemasonry in a lodge in France, was admitted to the third degree on 27 September 1865 in the High Cross Lodge, and duly registered. The certificate is dated 8 March 1868 and bears the registration number 1133. However, Bradlaugh's signature in the margin has been crossed through and the following words inserted in Bradlaugh's hand: 'Cancelled on the accession of the Grand Master in succession to Marquis [*sic*] of Ripon'.

The immediate reaction of *The Freemason* was that the word of an atheist cannot be trusted, and it sought to cast aspersions on the regularity of Bradlaugh's admission.¹⁶ It expressed doubt about *La Persévérante Amitié*, claiming that the existence of such a lodge could not be established, although it appeared in the *Calendrier Maçonnique* of the Grand Orient.¹⁷ *The Freemason* was also suspicious of his connection with the High Cross Lodge, pointing out that Bradlaugh did not state which year he joined the lodge. In any case, *The Freemason* pointed out, Bradlaugh had by the time he visited America returned his English certificate. A more substantial objection was the nature of Bradlaugh's original Initiation. Bradlaugh had carefully avoided stating that the *Loge des Philadelphes* met in London, but this was picked up by *The Freemason*, which pointed out that the *Philadelphes* were not recognized by the Grand Lodge of England, and that the Grand Lodge had circulated its members warning them against associating with this 'spurious political and unrecognized order'. For *The Freemason*, Bradlaugh's initiation was 'radically wrong' and 'vicious'. In the considered opinion of *The Freemason*, Bradlaugh was not legitimately a freemason and was merely a member of a spurious fraternity.

This attack outraged Bradlaugh, who replied at length in a leader blazoned across the front page of the *National Reformer*.¹⁸ He was dumbfounded at the inability of the learned editor of *The Freemason* to trace *La Persévérante Amitié*:

'If you had inquired at the proper source, you could not have avoided finding it; and if you do not know where to look, it will be only because your acquaintance with Freemasonry is of a very limited nature.'

Bradlaugh declared that it was under his French certificate that he had visited the lodges in Boston:

'I say nothing of the good taste and masonic feeling which permits you to suggest, through a correspondent, that these respectable and influential American lodges are also spurious assemblies – that is a matter for yourself; but if you had stopped to inquire, you would have well known, and easily ascertained, that it would simply be physically impossible for an irregular masonic lodge to meet in the Boston Masonic Temple.'

Bradlaugh hotly defended the *Philadelphes*. He pointed out that Garibaldi, then Grand Master of Italy, was a member of the lodge, so that if there was a 'taint' on Bradlaugh's admission, at least he had not sinned in ignoble company. Although the Grand Lodge of England might deny the *Philadelphes* fraternal greeting and co-operation, many lodges in France, Belgium, Italy and Poland had given this recognition. The *Philadelphes*, by helping the poor, the friendless, the oppressed and the exiled, had honoured the true meaning of Masonry.

As far as Bradlaugh's admission to the White Cross Lodge was concerned, he pointed out that he had joined the lodge at the special request of its brethren, among whom he had lived for twenty years. But his most withering criticisms were of the English Grand Lodge:

'Tell me how it is that the very Grand Lodge of England itself could have issued its solemn certificate, duly signed and countersigned, vouching me to be a regular mason, if there is, or could be, any doubt on the matter? Is the system of issuing masonic certificates by the Grand Lodge of England so loose that it may be possible to vouch one who is not a mason? For several years I held this certificate; I returned it of my own motion, but only when a Grand Master was elected to whom I can never pretend to pay masonic allegiance...If your present contention be true, then I must have equally deceived the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of England, or he must be unable, when issuing his certificate to tell a true freemason from an impostor. You ought to know better than this.'

For *The Freemason*, on mature reflection, the question of how Britain's most notorious atheist had been given a certificate as a regular mason by the English Grand Lodge was indeed the nub of the matter. Here the responsibility, in its view, clearly lay with the High Cross Lodge. In a further leader, *The Freemason* pressed the members of the lodge to provide an explanation:

'We would venture to ask the brethren of the High Cross Lodge, for grave responsibility rests upon them, as towards the Craft at large, what certificate did Mr Bradlaugh bring with him when he was admitted a joining member of that lodge under the English Constitution? On what grounds did High Cross Lodge obtain for Mr Bradlaugh a certificate from the Grand Secretary's office? For if we understand Mr Bradlaugh's account correctly, he was never a member of a lawful lodge at all! ... We however await some little explanation from the members of the High Cross Lodge.'¹⁹

There is no indication that the High Cross Lodge ever sought the guidance of the Grand Secretary on any of these points, and, despite the demands of *The Freemason* that the lodge should justify itself,²⁰ no member of the lodge entered the fray. At the end of May, a lengthy report of a meeting of the lodge appeared in *The Freemason*, emphasising its flourishing state and the enthusiasm with which loyal toasts were drunk, which was apparently a belated attempt to distance the lodge from the affair.²¹

In the meantime, the controversy about Bradlaugh's masonic membership had spread beyond the pages of *The Freemason* and the *National Reformer*. It was reported and sagely discussed in the *Birmingham Morning News*, *The Liverpool Weekly Post*, *The Glasgow News*, and other papers.²² These articles were generally unsympathetic to Bradlaugh, and concluded that Freemasonry and atheism did not mix. The most interesting further contributions to the debate, however, were in periodicals associated with foreign masonic jurisdictions. In France, *Le Monde Maçonique* also reported the visit of King Kalakaua to the Columbian Lodge, and reproduced the speech of 'le Frère Bradlaugh' on this occasion.²³ It alleged that *The Freemason* had failed to mention the most notable feature of this meeting, namely that one of those attending had been Joshua Smith, a black man, who had been a mason for about eight years and had recently been made Junior Warden of the Adelphi Lodge in Boston, the first time a black man had been honoured in this way by a white American lodge. Smith was a magistrate and held political office in Massachusetts. He was a devoted friend of Charles Sumner, the American senator, an outspoken opponent of slavery, advocate of black civil rights and pioneering peace campaigner, who Bradlaugh met and admired, writing a memoir of him.²⁴ For *Le Monde Maçonique*, the presence of Smith at the meeting of the Columbian Lodge was an event of very great importance. But, to the amusement and surprise of the French journal, this was not the aspect of the meeting which had caught the attention of its brethren across the Channel.²⁵ It described for its readers in astonished and mocking tones the controversy in England over the attendance of Bradlaugh. *Le Monde Maçonique* noted that English brethren were assiduously investigating the matter, and promised to advise its readers of the findings of 'les graves docteurs de la Maçonnerie Anglaise'. For *Le Monde Maçonique*, there was no doubt about Bradlaugh's credentials as a freemason, and the controversy in England confirmed the French journal's suspicions that Freemasonry in England was more concerned with protecting established religion than with social justice.

More surprising was a letter which appeared in *The Scottish Freemasons' Magazine*, which noted that brethren south of the border were at that time preoccupied by two great matters, the imminent installation of the Prince of Wales as Grand Master, and 'How did it come to pass that Mr Charles Bradlaugh was a member of an English masonic lodge?'²⁶ Reviewing the matter, the Scottish journal came to the conclusion that, if there was blame to be laid anywhere, it was not at Bradlaugh's door. It had no desire to 'join in the wonderful outcry that has been raised by a London masonic contemporary on this subject', but nevertheless declared that:

'Looking at the matter ... from a legal as well as a liberal and fraternal point of view, it would appear that Mr Bradlaugh possessed a proper and formal certificate under the Grand Orient of France, signifying that he was considered by that body to be really and truly a freemason. The Grand Orient of France is recognized by the Grand Lodge of England, the brethren of the Tottenham High Cross Lodge, upon presentation by Mr Bradlaugh of his diploma from the former body...were quite justified in receiving him as a brother, after passing the other usual test, and the officers of the Grand Lodge of England were also justified in endorsing the action of the daughter lodge No. 754.

The article considered that the question of Bradlaugh's status as an avowed atheist at the time was a concern not for the English lodge, but rather for the lodge which initiated him, noting that French lodges did not seem to be as strict in certain points as English lodges. However, unlike *The Freemason*, the Scottish journal was willing to believe the word of an atheist. It declared that it is quite possible for a man to be an atheist and still be true and honest in his convictions:

'If our French brethren honour such a man by making him the brother of our fraternity, they are simply following out of the same line of conduct as is now adopted in our courts of law, where the formal affirmation of an atheist is as good for evidence as the usual oath.'

This is a remarkable article to have appeared in a Scottish masonic journal, not only because of its sympathy with Bradlaugh's position, but also because of the way in which it anticipates many of the arguments which surfaced again when Bradlaugh was elected to Parliament, in respect of the validity of an atheist's declaration and the validity of affirmation.

Bradlaugh rarely received such generous treatment in journals not directly associated with radicalism or freethought, so not surprisingly he reprinted this article in the *National Reformer*. Shortly afterwards, a letter appeared in the *National Reformer*, signed 'A Freemason',²⁷ perhaps by the Scottish masonic scholar W. P. Buchan,²⁸ which welcomed the article in *The Scottish Freemasons' Magazine* as showing a progressive spirit. The letter suggested that the outcry raised at Bradlaugh's admission into an English masonic Lodge would do good, for it would set men thinking, and thought leads to progress. It went on to point out that Anderson's 1723 Constitutions stated that if the freemason 'rightly understand the Art, he will never be a stupid atheist, nor an irreligious libertine'. Bradlaugh was neither stupid nor a libertine. The letter argued that the Constitutions simply required that freemasons should be good men and true, men of honour and honesty, by whatever denominations or persuasions they may be distinguished. The author continued:

'Taking my stand therefore upon the grand old Constitutions, which are the foundation of Freemasonry throughout all the world, I respectfully affirm that the Worshipful Master of the High Cross Lodge did well, and also acted in true conformity with the spirit of Freemasonry, when he held out the right hand of friendship to Mr Bradlaugh and welcomed him as a member of his lodge. It is neither to Freemasonry itself nor to true freemasons that this outcry is due; its real origin is to be found in that religious bigotry which it was the object of Freemasonry to counteract and quench.'

Later in the month, Buchan, a forceful proponent of the view that the origins of Freemasonry cannot be traced back much beyond 1717, contributed under his own name an 'Open Column' in the *National Reformer*, taking issue with comments of Lord Carnarvon at the installation of The Prince of Wales stating that Freemasonry was of great antiquity.²⁹ This led to a further correspondence in the *National Reformer* about the origins of the Craft.³⁰

The Freemason was closely linked to the more conservative wing of English Freemasonry which particularly cherished the connection between English Freemasonry and the established church. Its founding editor was Robert Wentworth Little, who trained to be a clergyman.³¹ At the time of the controversy about Bradlaugh's masonic membership, *The Freemason* was edited by the Reverend Adolphus Woodford, who had been a Provincial Grand Chaplain in Yorkshire, West Riding.³² The enthusiasms of the editors and publisher of *The Freemason* are apparent from the long series of articles published by it in 1872 written by the prolific Biblical commentator William Chambers, who sought to demonstrate that the Anglo-Saxons were a lost tribe of Israel and that the British Empire was the fulfilment of the divine mission of the chosen people.³³ Such fare was not to the taste of all English freemasons, and 1875 also marked the first year of publication of *The Freemason's Chronicle*, which was established partly in reaction to the strongly pro-clerical line of *The Freemason*. In its first number, *The Freemason's Chronicle* declared that:

'... the occasional discussion of social questions, in a free and impartial style in the pages of a journal devoted to the interests of the Craft, cannot but be beneficial.'³⁴

Its second number carried a review of the political situation in Europe, and subsequent issues dealt with such matters as 'Homes and Education' and 'Labour Its Rights and Duties', declaring with regard to the trade union movement that freemasons 'can look upon the movements of the working classes with abounding charity...'³⁵ *The Freemason's Chronicle* was generally more sympathetic to developments in French Freemasonry than *The Freemason*, and its establishment was welcomed by *Le Monde Maçonnique*, which reprinted some of its articles, describing them as remarkable.³⁶ It is striking that *The Freemason's Chronicle* paid no attention to the 1875 controversy over Bradlaugh's masonic membership. 'L'affaire Bradlaugh' was largely generated by the editor and readers of *The Freemason*.

However, *The Freemason* seems soon to have lost heart in its battle with Bradlaugh, and, after a final leader on 24 April 1875 reiterating its belief that Bradlaugh was an irregularly made mason, pinning the blame firmly on the High Cross Lodge, and exonerating the Grand Secretary, it dropped the matter, perhaps for fear of embarrassing the Grand Secretary.³⁷ It was presumably about this time that the entry for Bradlaugh in the Grand Lodge register was annotated in pencil: 'The lodge from which Bradlaugh joined is a spurious lodge'. In November, however, the *National Reformer* returned to the matter.³⁸ While Bradlaugh had been in Boston he was charged by a lodge connected with the *Philadelphes* to present a letter of congratulation to the Adelphi Lodge in Boston on the installation of Joshua Smith as Junior Warden. The Adelphi Lodge had sent a letter of thanks, which Bradlaugh reprinted in full:

'We have received with unfeigned pleasure and appreciation the communication containing your greetings and congratulations on the election of Brother Joshua B. Smith to the office of Junior Warden in Adelphi Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons. His election to this responsible position was hailed by us with special gratification inasmuch as it was done by the unanimous vote of our lodge. The heartiness with which this act was accomplished was significant, marking as it did the progress of liberty and equality, and showing that colour, race, parentage, or any of the accidents of birth, were not hindrances in the way of recognising the services of a good man in describing the place he secured. We in America, by the genius of our institutions, have sought to inculcate the lesson that all men were born free and equal, and that all should have the same privileges and advantages in making the most of life. We are sincerely glad that the recent exhibition we have given of this principle, as a lodge, should have called forth so cordial a response from you...We cherish the hope that so glorious an achievement may be encouraged and hastened by the influence of our ancient and sublime brotherhood, an institution everywhere based on charity and the better promptings of human nature.'

Such an address strikingly demonstrated how the Adelphi Lodge, a regular lodge under the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, was like its fellow, the Columbian Lodge, convinced of the regularity of both Brother Bradlaugh and the French lodges in London which he represented.

Thus drew to a close the 1875 controversy about Bradlaugh's masonic membership.³⁹ This episode is striking for the way in which it prefigures themes which were to resurface on a much larger scale when Bradlaugh was elected to Parliament. For a large and influential group, whose views were articulated in this case by *The Freemason*, an atheist was a pariah, whose word could never be trusted and who could be attacked in the most violent language. For this group, because an atheist was by definition a man who was beyond respectability, without honour or moral code, any form of swearing or affirmation by an atheist was inherently untrustworthy and unacceptable. Those of a more liberal mind, represented in this case by *The Scottish Freemasons' Magazine* and by Buchan (if he was indeed the author of the letter supporting Bradlaugh), felt that an atheist was acceptable, providing he was respectable and honourable. The importance of respectability was a point of which Bradlaugh himself was extremely conscious, and he himself was always in his personal behaviour the epitome of Victorian middle class respectability, taking prompt legal action against anyone who suggested otherwise. As with the dispute about the Parliamentary oath, there was at the

heart of the masonic controversy a legal anomaly, namely that, although Bradlaugh had been initiated in a lodge not recognised as regular by its local Grand Lodge, he had nevertheless received a certificate as a regular mason by another Grand Lodge which was accepted in England. In both cases, Bradlaugh proved a past master in exploiting these anomalies, but the debate in the end resolved itself into one about respectability, and whether an atheist could ever be a man of honour. Many foreign commentators were bemused by the controversy about Bradlaugh's Parliamentary membership, and likewise masons in both France and America, who had readily accepted Bradlaugh as a brother, were amazed at the horror with which the English reacted to the idea of Bradlaugh as a mason.

In the vast literature generated by Bradlaugh's election as a Member of Parliament, it was inevitable that the question of his masonic membership would be again picked up, but it was never a major theme. In May 1881, *The Whitehall Review* used Bradlaugh's masonic connection to snipe at him, and to suggest once more that Bradlaugh was 'utterly unscrupulous', and that for him 'neither oath nor affirmation has the smallest meaning'.⁴⁰ The article assumed wrongly that in becoming a freemason Bradlaugh must have sworn an oath on the Bible and was therefore a perjurer. It complained that Bradlaugh, a sponsor of 'indescribably filthy' books on birth control, felt that The Prince of Wales was not sufficiently virtuous to lead English Freemasonry, and suggested that Bradlaugh should be prosecuted for his impertinence in refusing to accept the Prince as a Grand Master. The question of Bradlaugh's election to Parliament occasionally surfaced in the columns of *The Freemason*. In 1881, Bradlaugh announced at a meeting protesting against his exclusion that he intended to force his way into the House of Commons. This meeting was held at the Surrey Masonic Hall in Camberwell where there was a large lecture room available for general hire. 'Hercules', writing to *The Freemason*, asked whether the letting had been approved by local freemasons, and suggested that it was unmasonic to offer a platform to 'the zany who "has said in his heart there is no God"'. It was pointed out that the original masonic hall company had gone bankrupt, and that the hall, while still available for masonic meetings, was in fact owned by the South London Institute of Music.⁴¹

In October 1881, the *National Reformer* reported that a masonic lodge, *Les Amis de la Parfaite Intelligence*, of Huy in Belgium, had sent an address of sympathy and confidence to Bradlaugh in his parliamentary struggle, concluding with the declaration:

'That it is contrary to liberty of conscience that there should exist the legal necessity for the introduction of supernatural dogma in the sacred formula which binds the honour of the public man in the most solemn fashion to preserve the order existing in this country.'⁴²

A correspondent asking *The Freemason* whether such a proceeding was not unmasonic received the following brisk reply:

'We publish this letter somewhat unwillingly. Mr Bradlaugh, having returned his 'Certificate' to the late Grand Secretary, has nothing to do with Masonry, and cannot be recognized in Anglo-Saxon Freemasonry, and therefore we think that neither his name nor discussions about his proceedings should appear in a masonic journal. We are not surprised at anything the Belgium freemasons may do, or say. In English Freemasonry any such addresses would be instantly prohibited and are *ipso facto* illegal.'

In 1882, another correspondent, 'Puzzled', asked *The Freemason* if Bradlaugh was a mason, and was told, wrongly, that Bradlaugh was initiated in Paris. Nevertheless, Bradlaugh's pariah status was unchanged:

'He is not now receivable in any Anglo-Saxon Lodge, and the only wonder is that he was ever admitted into English Masonry at all. English Freemasonry rejects and sternly repudiates all atheists.'⁴³

A number of the leading figures involved in the dispute over Bradlaugh's Parliamentary oath were freemasons, and it is tempting to think that their attitudes were influenced by knowledge of Bradlaugh's brush with *The Freemason* in 1875. For example, the Speaker, Henry Brand, afterwards 1st Viscount Hampden, whose decision in referring Bradlaugh's initial request to affirm to a select committee precipitated the crisis, was a freemason.⁴⁴ However, the chief influence on the Speaker's actions was not any recollection of a dispute in *The Freemason*, but rather a firm belief that such a matter should be referred to the House for consideration, particularly in view of doubts as to whether the legislation allowing affirmation in law courts applied in Parliament. The Pro Grand Master, Lord Carnarvon, was of course a prominent member of the Tory opposition.⁴⁵ In the Commons itself, two of the Tory leaders opposed to Bradlaugh, Sir Stafford Northcote, 8th Bt, afterwards 1st Earl of Iddesleigh, and Lord Randolph Churchill, were both also freemasons.⁴⁶ However, neither seems to have particularly active masonic connections and there is little indication that they were directly influenced by the earlier controversy. Moreover, masonic representation was, if anything, even stronger in Gladstone's government, which tended to support Bradlaugh. Masonic members of Gladstone's cabinet included Lord Granville, the Foreign Secretary, Hugh Childers, successively Secretary of State for War and Chancellor of the Exchequer (Past Senior Grand Deacon, Yorkshire, West Riding), the President of the Local Government Board, Sir Charles Dilke (Dilke was himself an avowed Republican, who said of Bradlaugh that he 'does the thinking for more minds...than any other man in England...'⁴⁷ and he was also a close friend of such French Republican masons as Gambetta) and Sir George Otto Trevelyan.⁴⁸ There are some occasional hints of masonic influence in some of the language used in the course of the controversy, as for example in the use of the phrase 'supreme being' in some of the draft legislation brought forward to exclude Bradlaugh, but in general the 1875 controversy had little direct influence on the Parliamentary oath crisis.

The 1875 controversy about Bradlaugh as a freemason sheds light on the anxieties about atheism which escalated into a major social crisis in the 1880s, of which the Parliamentary crisis concerning Bradlaugh was the most dramatic expression. However, the 1875 debate did not feed directly into events in parliament. The arena where the 1875 controversy had a far more profound impact was in relations between the Grand Lodges of the English-speaking world and the Grand Orient of France, and in particular on English reaction to the increasing tendency of French lodges to dispense with the requirement for belief in a supreme being and not to use Bibles in lodges. The English reaction to these developments in French Freemasonry provides a further major expression of English anxieties about atheism at this time, which has hitherto been overlooked. Since Freemasonry embraced so many political, religious and cultural leaders on both sides of the Channel at that time, the dispute over the Grand Orient's actions played a significant role in shaping and hardening views in both England and France of the relationship between religion, freedom of conscience and morality.

The Roots of Bradlaugh's Freemasonry

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, English radical thought was intrigued by Freemasonry. At the time of his death, Thomas Paine left unfinished a response to the Bishop of Llandaff's attack on his notorious work, *The Age of Reason*. Part of Paine's unfinished book was a thoughtful *Essay on Free Masonry* which argued that Christianity was a perversion of the ancient worship of the sun, and that Freemasonry preserved these old tenets in a purer form. Paine's thesis that Freemasonry preserved an ancient, uncorrupted religion

was to haunt British radical thought for the next hundred years. Towards the end of his life, Paine lived with the family of a French radical and freemason, Nicholas Bonneville, and his *Essay on Free Masonry* was first published, in an expurgated form omitting offensive comments on Christianity, by Bonneville's widow, Paine's executrix, who had looked after him in his last illness.⁴⁹ The first unexpurgated version of Paine's *Essay* was published by Richard Carlile in 1818, shortly before he produced a cheap edition of *The Age of Reason*.⁵⁰ Carlile was prosecuted and sent to Dorchester gaol for publishing *The Age of Reason*. While he was in prison, Carlile wrote an exposure of Freemasonry which filled nearly a whole volume of his journal *The Republican*. This exposure was remarkable for its accuracy and comprehensiveness, including the ritual of many additional degrees which had never previously appeared in print.

In the form in which it appeared in *The Republican*, Carlile's exposure was a straightforward materialist attack on Freemasonry, mocking its secrecy and social pretensions, and seeking to undermine it by revealing its rituals. As Carlile proceeded with his work, however, he became convinced that masonic ritual hid religious truths, and that it illustrated how all religions consisted fundamentally of moral allegory. Carlile became determined to teach masons the true meaning of Freemasonry. He was influenced in these views not only by Paine, but also by the writings of the pioneering student of comparative religion and social reformer, Godfrey Higgins, who became a freemason in order to find out how far its ritual concealed information about early religions.⁵¹ Another major influence on Carlile was the renegade clergyman Robert Taylor, with whom Carlile became closely associated after his release from Dorchester gaol at the end of 1825.⁵² As a young clergyman, Taylor had been won over to deism by a member of his congregation, and his mock sermons attacking Christianity earned him the title of 'The Devil's Chaplain'. Taylor was also convinced that all religions derived from sun worship and that Christianity, by substituting Christ for the sun, was blasphemous. He wrapped up these ideas in an elaborate panoply of spurious astrological and etymological learning.

Together, Carlile and Taylor ran a series of extraordinary Sunday lectures on religion at the Rotunda in Blackfriars, which became a main centre of London radical activity during the period leading up to the Reform Act of 1832. Carlile was keen that Robert Taylor should bring his peculiar powers of textual analysis to bear on masonic ritual, and Taylor duly delivered four discourses on Freemasonry, which were printed by Carlile in his collection of Taylor's addresses, *The Devil's Pulpit*. The copy of *The Devil's Pulpit* in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry was published by Bradlaugh and Besant's Freethought Press in 1879.⁵³ To accompany Taylor's lectures, Carlile reissued the material from volume twelve of *The Republican* as a separate book, entitled *An Exposure of Freemasonry: or, a Mason's printed manual, with an introductory Key-stone to the Royal Arch of Freemasonry*, considerably revising and refining his edition of the rituals.⁵⁴ Anxious to stress the allegorical meaning of Freemasonry, Carlile inserted new introductions, omitting the attacks on Freemasonry itself and stressing its spiritual interest. This work ran through many subsequent editions, being issued in a single volume in 1845 under the title *Manual of Freemasonry*, and remaining in print to the present day. Carlile's allegorical interpretation of Freemasonry was a very important thread in the development of his religious thought in his later years,⁵⁵ and also affected his views on political and social questions. His attacks on early trade unions and lack of sympathy for the Tolpuddle Martyrs were due to their use of oaths and ritual.⁵⁶

Although Carlile's first wife, Jane, was willing to suffer prosecutions on his behalf and shared his imprisonment in Dorchester gaol, she found Carlile's religious and political campaigning difficult to bear and the marriage broke down. Elizabeth Sharples was an attractive and cultivated young woman from a well-to-do Lancashire family who became captivated by Carlile's ideas. She came to London to support Carlile in his work, and gave a remarkable series of lectures on women's rights at the Rotunda in 1832. Carlile and Elizabeth

soon began an affair, and she became pregnant. Carlile declared that the two were joined together in a 'moral marriage', an action which horrified many of Carlile's supporters. Elizabeth bore three children by Carlile. Following his death in 1843, Elizabeth, as a common-law wife, was left in a very difficult situation, and was neglected even by the closest of Carlile's supporters. Eventually, some freethinking friends bought a large house in which a coffee shop and temperance hall were established, giving Elizabeth both a home and a potential source of income from the coffee shop. The coffeehouse, however, failed to prosper and Elizabeth remained desperately poor.⁵⁷ When she took in Bradlaugh, he had to share a bed with her eldest son, Julian. Nevertheless, Elizabeth was determined that her children should have a good education, and persuaded friends of Carlile to come and teach them. Bradlaugh enthusiastically joined in the family's educational endeavours.

Freemasonry loomed so large in Carlile's later thought that Bradlaugh would inevitably have heard about it from Elizabeth, and would certainly have encountered Carlile's *Manual of Freemasonry*. But Bradlaugh encountered Freemasonry at many other points in his radical education. The most important source of Bradlaugh's initial scepticism was Robert Taylor's work, *Diegesis*, which sought to prove 'the monks of Egypt the fabricators of the whole Christian system'.⁵⁸ Bradlaugh's early works drew extensively on Taylor, and he was doubtless acquainted with Taylor's colourful analysis of Freemasonry in *The Devil's Pulpit*. Bradlaugh was introduced by Austin Holyoake to his brother George, who had been a close associate of Carlile and had been imprisoned for blasphemy because of his opposition to the use of public money to build churches.⁵⁹ Doubtless as a result of Carlile's influence, Holyoake was also intrigued by fraternal organisations. When the Oddfellows ran a competition for the composition of new lectures for use in their ceremonies, the winning entry was composed by Holyoake, to the great embarrassment of the Oddfellows.⁶⁰ Holyoake's interest in Freemasonry is apparent from his proposal that the London secular guild should be a 'Freemasonry in freethought'.⁶¹

The strand in English radical thought represented by Paine, Carlile and Taylor was deeply interested in Freemasonry, and Bradlaugh encountered Freemasonry as a phenomenon of special interest at an early stage in his radical education. However, it was not these early influences which prompted Bradlaugh to become a freemason in 1859. It was instead the encouragement of French refugees who had fled to London after the revolution of 1848 and the *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon in 1851.

The Loge Des Philosophes

On 14 January 1858, as Napoleon III and his wife were on their way to the theatre, the Italian patriot Felice Orsini and three accomplices threw bombs at the Imperial carriage. The Emperor and Empress were unhurt, but several others were killed or wounded. Orsini had for many years been a prominent protestor against Napoleon's failure to support Italian independence. Bradlaugh had probably met Orsini in 1856, when he was in England lecturing on 'Austrian and Papal Tyranny in Italy'.⁶² Orsini's assassination attempt was greeted with outrage by the English press. The radical publisher Edward Truelove was arrested for publishing a pamphlet in support of Orsini, and, at the insistence of the French ambassador, the French émigré physician Simon Bernard was arrested for allegedly supplying guns and explosives to Orsini. Bradlaugh became Secretary of the Truelove Defence Committee and was himself watched by French spies. On one occasion, sitting in a restaurant with Bernard, Bradlaugh became suspicious of a man pretending to be asleep at the next table, and established that the man was indeed awake and watching him by holding a lighted spill under his nose. Meetings held by Bradlaugh in support of Bernard were closed by the police at the request of the French ambassador. Bradlaugh attended Bernard's trial with pockets full of

sandwiches in case an attempt was made to bring pressure to bear on the jury by refusing them food. Such precautions, however, proved unnecessary, and Bernard was acquitted.⁶³

Such experiences created a close bond between Bradlaugh and Bernard, and Bernard was Bradlaugh's sponsor when in March 1859, the year after Bernard's trial, Bradlaugh joined the masonic lodge which had been formed by French refugees in London, the *Grand Loge des Philadelphes*.⁶⁴ An 1863 directory of the *Philadelphes* discovered by George Draffen⁶⁵ confirms Bradlaugh's membership, and reveals that other members included the lawyer Montague Richard Leveson, who had acted as solicitor for Bernard and was afterwards a business partner of Bradlaugh. Presumably Leveson also joined the lodge at Bernard's instigation. Moreover, Austin Holyoake is also listed as a member of the lodge. Thus, the *Philadelphes* included three of the most prominent figures of the English freethought movement. The *Philadelphes* at that time met at the Eclectic Hall in Denmark Street, which was well known as a venue for freethought and radical meetings.

The history of the *Philadelphes* has been brilliantly reconstructed by Ellic Howe⁶⁶ and, building on Howe's work and drawing on Lodge records in the Bibliothèque Nationale, André Combes.⁶⁷ In 1850, a lodge of the Rite of Memphis, *Les Sectateurs de Ménéès*, was founded in London. Despite the fact that a French-speaking lodge, *La Tolerance* No. 538, had been established in 1847 by refugee members of a Parisian lodge and warranted by United Grand Lodge,⁶⁸ *Les Sectateurs de Ménéès* proved popular with the successive waves of French refugees who fled to London between 1848 and 1851, probably because its fees were less onerous than those set by the English Grand Lodge. A notable early success for *Les Sectateurs de Ménéès* was the initiation of the prominent Socialist Louis Blanc.⁶⁹ After Napoleon's *coup d'état*, the Rite of Memphis was suppressed in France, and in 1853 *Les Sectateurs de Ménéès* became the Grand Lodge of the Order, taking the title *Grand Loge des Philadelphes*.⁷⁰ Between 1853 and 1856, other lodges of the Rite of Memphis were opened in London (*Gymnosophistes*; *Fraternité des Peuples*; *Disciples d'Hermès*; *Conseil des Grands Régulateurs de la Maçonnerie*) and Birmingham (*L'Avenir*). As refugees belonging to the Rite of Memphis moved abroad, further daughter lodges of the *Philadelphes* were set up in New York, Belgium, Switzerland and Australia, where a masonic Temple was built at Ballarat.⁷¹

The Rite of Memphis contained 95 degrees. The French engraver Benoît Desquesnes, imprisoned and exiled because of his work as a member of a cooperative society and as Secretary of the *Société des Ouvriers Typographes du Nord*, was initiated in 1852 as a member of the *Philadelphes* in London under the Rite of Memphis, but argued that the superfluity of higher degrees was undemocratic and inconsistent with masonic ideals of equality. In 1856, Desquesnes published a beautiful lithographed *Vade Mecum* to illustrate his proposal for a Reformed Rite of Memphis containing just three degrees.⁷² Desquesnes's proposal was supported by many members of the *Philadelphes*. The Grand Master of the Rite of Memphis, Jean-Philibert Berjeau, attempted to dissolve the *Philadelphes*, but they carried on regardless, adopting Desquesnes's simplified rite, and appointing as Master Edouard Benoît, a veteran of the workers' uprising in 1848. Thenceforth, the *Philadelphes* worked only three degrees, becoming to all intents and purposes indistinguishable from Craft Freemasonry. The *Gymnosophistes* in London and *L'Avenir* in Birmingham continued to operate under Berjeau's rule, retaining the Rite of Memphis. Despite a reduction in the number of degrees to 33 in 1860, these continuing lodges of the Rite of Memphis failed to prosper, and in 1866 Berjeau dissolved them, most of the members of the *Gymnosophistes* joining the *Philadelphes*.⁷³

One of the first actions of the *Philadelphes* under Benoît's Mastership was to promulgate, on 8 April 1857, a new series of statutes, suppressing the higher degrees and implementing Desquesnes' new system. The first article read as follows:

‘Freemasonry is an institution essentially philanthropic, philosophical and progressive. It has for its object the amelioration of mankind without any distinction of class, colour, or opinion either philosophical political or religious, for its unchangeable motto: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.’

This deliberately echoed the first article used by the Grand Orient prior to the revision of its Constitutions in 1849, when a formulation giving greater prominence to belief in a supreme being was adopted. The second article of the statutes of the *Philadelphes* declared that Freemasonry was composed of:

‘...free and equal men who submitting themselves to the laws conforming to their consciences, work by instruction for the reform of those who offend it.’

The work of the lodge was:

‘...exclusively consecrated to the development of human progress by the study of arts and sciences, and the practice of concord and tolerance.’

To qualify for membership it was necessary to be male, over eighteen, able to read and write, and of ‘irreproachable morality’. Masonic rights were lost on proof of a dishonourable act against the conscience or by breach of masonic fidelity. The first toast of the *Philadelphes* was ‘To the Oppressed of All Nations’. Other usages looked back to the Rite of Memphis. Diplomas issued by the *Philadelphes* at this time bore the inscription ‘*A la Gloire du Sublime Architecte du Monde*’.⁷⁴

Shortly after these reforms, the *Philadelphes* established two daughter lodges in working class areas of London well known as centres of working class radicalism and freethought, Stratford and Woolwich.⁷⁵ The Woolwich lodge was named Progress and the Stratford lodge Equality. All the members of the Stratford lodge were English in 1863, chiefly workers connected with the large railway works there.⁷⁶ The Woolwich lodge was also apparently largely composed of English members. Sometime after 1863, another lodge was established in central London, meeting at Dean Street in Soho, which was named *La Concorde*.⁷⁷

In 1859, an enquiry was received by *The Freemasons’ Magazine* as to the nature of the ‘Grand Orient of Memphis’ in London. The editor replied that such a body supposedly met in London but had nothing to do with the Freemasons of England and had been established by refugees for political purposes: ‘It is in fact nothing but an illegal secret society’.⁷⁸ The *Philadelphes* sent an elaborate official communication to the Editor of *The Freemasons’ Magazine*.⁷⁹ They explained that their Order had been regularly established and acknowledged in France, but had been driven into exile as a result of the *coup d’état*. The *Philadelphes* said that they hoped that English masonic doors were not closed to brothers driven into exile. They stressed that their meetings had been attended by several English masons, and that they had not initiated anyone unworthy of the honour. Members of the Order had visited masonic lodges in England, France and America, and had always received a warm welcome.

‘What can you reproach us with? Is it with our having wished that Masonry should not be the exclusive privilege of the high classes, with having endeavoured to render the initiation accessible to the working man, by lowering the too heavy fees which the English lodges impose upon their members?’

In response, *The Freemasons’ Magazine* reiterated that, according to English law, the *Philadelphes* were an illegal secret society. Desquesnes wrote back in his capacity as Secretary, saying that if they had broken the law it was for want of knowing it, and going on to add:

'We have used in this letter the word excommunication to characterize the penalty with which you threaten English brothers that may visit our lodges. This really smells strongly of the inquisition, and indeed you go beyond the holy society; for you denounce as heretics without going to the trouble of inquiring into our doctrines, and you issue an interdiction against all masons that may be visiting us in order to judge of our merits by themselves. You must acknowledge that this is contrary to the spirit of Masonry. England has left far behind her the days of Henry the VIII, and those of the bloody Mary. The spirit of tolerance and of free examination exists in all her institutions, and we cannot believe that amongst the great bodies of this country, Masonry has alone refused to follow the steps of progress.'⁸⁰

In this way Desquesnes raised a theme which was constantly to recur in the dispute first with the *Philadelphes* and afterwards with the Grand Orient, namely the allegation that English Freemasonry was narrow-minded and intolerant, and far too ready to make papal-style excommunications.

The *Philadelphes* had already caused trouble at Great Queen Street. In January 1859, a gentleman called Stortz had written to the Grand Secretary from Liverpool saying that he had been made and raised to the third degree by the *Grand Loge des Philadelphes*, and asking if he was now allowed to join an English lodge.⁸¹ The following month, Robert Clamp, a mason for more than thirty years, and a Past Master of British Union Lodge No. 114 of Ipswich, was staying on business in Stratford. Hearing that a masonic lodge was meeting at an inn there, he presented himself for admission. He was examined by a member of the lodge, who was satisfied with the result. However, the Master sent word to say that he could not possibly admit Brother Clamp without seeing his certificate. Clamp replied that, in common with most other masons, his certificate was framed and hanging in his room at home, but the Master was adamant that Clamp should present his certificate, so the distinguished Ipswich brother was refused entry. Infuriated, Clamp wrote to the Grand Secretary, asking if the Master had been justified in its actions. He also enquired as to the legality of the lodge, 'being held as the members state under a warrant from the American Grand Lodge'. He was right in his suspicions. The lodge was Equality, held under a warrant from the *Philadelphes*.⁸²

The Board of General Purposes was stung into action. On 24 October 1859, a circular was issued by the Grand Secretary pointing out that the lodge calling itself 'The Reformed Masonic Order of Memphis, or Rite of the Grand Lodge of Philadelphs' [*sic*] holding its meetings at Stratford in Essex was spurious. No member of this body was to be admitted to a regular lodge, and English brethren were to have no contact with it, under penalty of expulsion and liability under the 1799 Unlawful Societies Act.⁸³ This prompted a remarkable protest to the Board of General Purposes by the lodge at Stratford, partly printed by Ellic Howe.⁸⁴ It explained that the area around Stratford contained thousands of skilled mechanics, artisans and engineers, many of whom travelled abroad in connection with their work, and who would therefore find membership of Freemasonry beneficial. Various attempts had been made to establish a lodge under the Grand Lodge of England, but it had been impossible to create an English lodge at Stratford because of the large sums of money required for initiations and raisings. The officers of Equality Lodge went on:

'The matter would probably have rested there, had it not happened that some eighteen months since that several parties now brethren of this lodge were brought into communication with a number of foreign brothers meeting in London and holding a Warrant from the 'Grand Empire of Memphis'. After several conferences and much consideration our present temple was opened and consecrated on the last festival of St John and its labours have been conducted from that period with a success beyond previous anticipation. The works are opened, carried on and closed, with all the formula, decorum and as we trust the true spirit of Masonry, which as we have been taught is like Christianity, universal in its application, in its language and in its aims, and recognizes no distinction of creed or country. We feel honoured therefore by our association with those

intellectual and honourable men to whom we owe our existence as a body, we sympathize with their misfortunes, and regret the causes that have made them exiles from their native land.’

The Board was rattled by this fierce response from the Stratford lodge. In February 1860, Lord Zetland as Grand Master wrote a very circumlocutory letter to Prince Lucien Murat, the Grand Master of the Grand Orient.⁸⁵ Zetland carefully reviewed the evidence relating to the Stratford Lodge and to the *Philadelphes*, and hastened to assure Murat that he believed they had no authority from the Grand Orient of France, and that English masons ‘disclaim any sort of connection or intercourse with them’. Zetland assured Murat he was writing simply because he was anxious to let the French Grand Lodge know what had been going on. The *Philadelphes* evidently got wind of these denunciations by the English Grand Lodge to Grand Lodges abroad, and in December 1860 they issued a pamphlet entitled *Masonic Intolerance*, a ferocious denunciation of the English Grand Lodge.⁸⁶

The pamphlet was published by Edward Truelove, the publisher who had been prosecuted for producing a pamphlet in support of Orsini, and who handled some of Bradlaugh’s most controversial pamphlets.⁸⁷ The pamphlet opens by assuring the Grand Lodge of England that, despite all its efforts, ‘major excommunication, official denunciations to all friendly lodges, throughout all Europe’, the Grand Lodge of *Philadelphes* had not been extinguished. The pamphlet reviewed yet again what the *Philadelphes* felt to be the facts of the situation, seeking to refute suggestions that, because it contained so many refugees, it was of a political character:

‘We do not deny our having received amongst us the flotsons [*sic*] of the wreck of 1851; aye, we glory in it. And why not? Is not England proud of having afforded an inviolable shelter to the exiles of all nations? And *you Masons* ought to be ashamed of being less liberal and more selfish than the profane...And what would it come to, if in the name of Masonry such accusations could be brought against us? At what period, at what time of political strife, when did Masonry close her doors against a persecuted thinker, against a vanquished party? Does it make a distinction between the victor and the vanquished? Are there for Masonry, masters and outcasts, republicans and royalists? Has it not throughout all ages opened its temples to men of all opinions?’

The *Philadelphes* accused the Grand Lodge of cowardice and of an act worthy of the age of intolerance and superstition. They denied that the lodge engaged in politics, if politics meant the ‘infernal diplomacy’ of a Talleyrand or Metternich. However, they freely admitted that the lodge engaged in the philosophical study of questions which might ensure the triumph of justice and brotherhood. Although such politics might not be the object of speculative study in English Freemasonry, the pamphlet argued that nevertheless they were put into daily practice by the great charitable institutions of English Freemasonry, a ‘material proclamation of the duty for the strong to help the weak’. Why, asked the *Philadelphes*, had the Grand Lodge suddenly decided to strike against them?

‘Two years ago we founded at Stratford a lodge of our order, totally composed of English elements. This was shooting on your ground. Blinded by passion, you did not perceive that we were completing your work; that English Masonry, imposing heavy expenses upon its members, was unapproachable to the honest and industrious working man, and thus deprived him of a means of mental improvement and moralisation; that it thus maintains the distinction of classes, and makes of an essentially universal institution for the benefit of mankind, something exclusive, selfish, and we may say dangerous. We had endeavoured to fill up the vacancy, and improve upon your work; but vanity has dimmed your minds – you have trembled for your privileges – you have only considered the material view of the case, the sinking of your funds; and you have raised a hue and cry against those whose object was to instil young and vigorous blood in your exhausted veins.

Having violated the principles of Masonry, you have logically fallen from precipice to precipice. You have turned your back to progress, to your country, to tradition, to the nineteenth century, to play the part of the holy inquisition, the Pope, the Jesuits ... Those sacramental forms of excommunication, that infallibility of Rome she has so much and so often ridiculed, the Grand Lodge of England has invoked them against brothers she has declared to be heretics.

Indeed, your conduct is a real crime against Masonry. You have taken that ancient institution, the mission of which is to instruct and moralize the ignorant, and raise them to the level of man; to efface the distinction of classes, to prepare by peaceable means the social regeneration, and to be the vanguard of progress, an institution which is nothing if it be not this; and you have made it a sort of tontine, of insurance company, of society for festivals and funeral poms, as if those things did not exist in society without you, and better conducted than by you. Away with such; your mourners are ridiculous, and your banquets uninteresting. The insurance companies pay regularly a higher premium than yours. If such be the object of Masonry, let it disappear. Its existence is useless.

Yes, you must introduce Reform to your institution. Else, it is nothing but a corpse. May the sight of what is taking place in your country open your eyes. Meditate on that slow but continuous, steady, and progressive movement which maintains it at the head of civilization. It is what you reject, Reform. You meet it everywhere: in the administration, the army, the navy, commerce, and industry, in civil and political legislation: you perceive reform and progress in every direction. And is it anything else that protects England against revolutions? You, Grand Lodge, alone do not understand the requirements of the day.

The *Philadelphes* pointed out that in just ten years, they had initiated over 300 people, founded lodges in Belgium, Switzerland and England, and raised the first Temple at Ballarat in Australia. Although an impoverished single lodge, they claimed to have achieved almost as much as the English Grand Lodge in the same period. *Masonic Intolerance* is a remarkable document. It is stated that the author lived in Jersey, but the pamphlet was issued in the name of the officers of the *Philadelphes*, and doubtless English members such as Bradlaugh and Austin Holyoake played a part in helping to draft it. *Masonic Intolerance* encapsulated many of the criticisms of English Freemasonry which were to be increasingly repeated in French masonic journals and elsewhere during the years leading up to the crisis of 1877-8. This partly reflects the role played by the *Philadelphes* in supporting and encouraging the reformist Republican wing within French Freemasonry between 1870 and 1877.

The heavy-handed Grand Mastership of Prince Lucien Murat came to an end in 1861. An attempt to elect as Murat's successor the liberally-minded heir to the Imperial Throne, Prince Napoleon, known jocularly as 'Plon Plon', resulted in chaos, so that the meeting to elect the new Grand Master was prevented by order of the police. The new French Grand Master was instead nominated by an Imperial decree, enforced by the Minister of the Interior. He was Marshal Magnan, not at that time a mason. The Grand Mastership of Marshal Magnan was inevitably turbulent, with many lodges closed down because of their Republican activity, but nevertheless Magnan's rule was less oppressive than that of Murat, reflecting the more liberal tone of the later years of Napoleon III's rule.⁸⁸ The *Philadelphes*, spurned by the Grand Lodge of England, increasingly sought to build up closer contact with their French brethren.

In 1862, Bradlaugh served as *Orateur* of the *Philadelphes*. In August of that year, he gave a lecture on 'Freemasonry' under the auspices of the lodge in aid of the family of a deceased brother. In November 1862 Bradlaugh was among the officers of the *Philadelphes* who presented the Lord Mayor of London with a donation of fourteen pounds five shillings (including nine pounds from Garibaldi) to the fund for the relief of workers affected by the cotton famine in Lancashire.⁸⁹ During 1862, the *Philadelphes* made charitable donations of more than 3000 francs, and had some 1500 francs remaining in their account in May 1863.⁹⁰ In the same year, an International Exhibition was held in London and there were many French visitors in the city, including an elected delegation of French workers, whose trip was sponsored by Napoleon, despite the misgivings of the Prefect of Police in Paris. The

Philadelphes opened a free information office in Holborn for French masonic visitors to London. The office was staffed by members of the *Philadelphes*, who acted as interpreters and guides for visiting brethren and gave them any other assistance they needed.⁹¹ This initiative proved a great success and, as a result of friendships formed through this work, a number of French lodges became affiliated to the *Philadelphes*. By 1863, these included five lodges in Paris (*Persévérante Amitié*; *Saint-Pierre des Acacias*; *Bonaparte*; *La France Maçonnique*; and *Le Temple des Familles*), two in Bordeaux (*Amis Réunis* and *La Candeur*) and one in Verviers in Belgium (*Les Libres Penseurs*).⁹² It was doubtless as a result of these affiliations in the wake of the 1862 International Exhibition that Desquesnes, Bradlaugh and others became members of *La Persévérante Amitié*.⁹³

The *Philadelphes* circulated French lodges, seeking further affiliations.⁹⁴ They explained that the aim of their lodge was to spread among the English nation, and particularly the working classes, the spirit of French Freemasonry and its principles of solidarity and fraternity. They declared that the true spirit of Freemasonry was not to be found in English Freemasonry, which was a body without a soul:

‘*Ses travaux sont consacrés a quelques momeries, et surtout à la gourmandaise.*’

This was, in the view of the *Philadelphes*, due to the influence of the church on English Freemasonry. It pointed out that the functions which were undertaken in France by the *Orateur* were in England fulfilled by a clergyman. The result was a kind of Jesuitism; although English Freemasonry had built great institutions for its children, the elderly and the infirm, these were closed to anyone who did not believe in God or was a republican, while the masonic schools did not offer a purely secular education. Above all, English Freemasonry was simply too expensive for the ordinary man. The *Philadelphes* intended to show the English Grand Lodge the error of its ways by seeking affiliations from as many foreign lodges as possible. Having been barred from English masonic temples, they would seek succour from French Freemasonry, and help spread its values in England.

The most important achievement of the *Philadelphes* was the establishment in 1864 of their own journal, *La Chaîne d'Union*.⁹⁵ One of the members of the lodge was a printer, based in Islington, François Tafery, originally from Fontenay-le-Comte, where he had published a revolutionary journal, *L'Oeil du Peuple*. Tafery seems to have been the prime force behind the establishment of *La Chaîne d'Union* and bore most of the trials and tribulations of its early publication.⁹⁶ The first editor of the journal was a former treasurer and Master of the *Philadelphes*, Prosper Simard, an accountant whose premises in Holborn had housed the lodge's 1862 information office.⁹⁷ *La Chaîne d'Union* was widely read in France where it soon became a mainstream masonic periodical. Its respectable character in France is reflected in the fact that from the time of its foundation its French correspondent was Esprit-Eugène Hubert, who, although he had been dismissed in a brutal fashion from his post as Secretary-General of the Grand Orient by the new Grand Master Prince Murat shortly after the *coup d'état*, was nevertheless one of the most widely respected and influential French masons.⁹⁸ On Tafery's death in 1868, Léon Clerc and J. Nancy, at that time Secretary of the *Philadelphes*, took over the publication, but were obliged to give up a year later. At this point, Hubert took over the periodical, switching its publication to Paris. Hubert edited *La Chaîne d'Union* until his death in 1882, establishing it as the pre-eminent French masonic periodical. It is still published, and is undoubtedly the most enduring legacy of the *Philadelphes*.

Increasingly, the *Philadelphes* were treated by lodges abroad, particularly in France, as if they were a regular Craft lodge, notwithstanding the prohibition issued by the English Grand Lodge. As a result of their circulars among French Lodges and the publication of *La Chaîne d'Union*, the criticisms of English Freemasonry made by the *Philadelphes* became more widespread in France during the period 1864-9, but English Freemasonry was largely unaware

of this. Charles Bradlaugh's distinctive contribution to the mission of the *Philadelphes* was to seek to make their view of English Freemasonry more widely known in England itself.

In 1864, the *Concorde* Lodge had considered abandoning references to the Great Architect of the Universe, and consecrating itself 'A la gloire de l'Humanité'. It is not known whether this proposal was implemented. On 7 November 1866, however, the *Philadelphes*, by a large majority, agreed to open their works '*Au nom de la Raison et de la Fraternité Universelle*'.⁹⁹ In January 1868, it was decided to merge the two London lodges, which became known as *Les Philadelphes et Concorde Réunis*. Its first Master was Benoît, who was however upbraided by some members of the lodge for supposedly trying to retain the title of Grand Master beyond the statutory term. Consequently, a minority decided to keep the old *Philadelphes* lodge in existence, so that, confusingly, there were soon again two London lodges: *Les Philadelphes* and *Les Philadelphes et Concorde Réunis*.¹⁰⁰ The Stratford and Woolwich Lodges continued to thrive, and a stray 1869 certificate records that a further lodge, *L'Espérance*, was established in Bristol.¹⁰¹ The charitable work of these lodges among the French community in London also continued. For example, members of the lodge assisted in the establishment of a French dispensary in London.¹⁰²

A Letter from a freemason to The Prince of Wales

The initiation of The Prince of Wales as a freemason in Sweden created a problem for English Freemasonry as to which rank he should be accorded. The precedent of George IV suggested the title of Grand Patron, and this was indeed the course adopted in Scotland. However, the United Grand Lodge of England felt it was more in keeping with the dignity of Prince Albert Edward that he should be made a Past Grand Master. The idea that a neophyte should immediately be given such an exalted rank caused some mild protests from English Masons. A correspondent wrote to *The Freemason* calling into question:

'...the equity of promoting to the high dignity of PGM any personage who had not obtained that honour by passing through the trodden curriculum.'¹⁰³

When the matter was discussed at Grand Lodge, that cantankerous stickler for masonic etiquette, Matthew Cooke, the first editor of the celebrated Cooke Manuscript, protested that the creation of a Past Grand Master was based on relatively recent powers, and argued that a rank of Grand Patron would be more appropriate. Appropriate reassurances were given, and the Prince became a Past Grand Master.¹⁰⁴

On 13 June 1869, a leading article appeared in the *National Reformer*, signed 'A Free and Accepted Mason', which represented Bradlaugh's first foray into masonic journalism.¹⁰⁵ It was reprinted by Bradlaugh and Besant in a slightly expanded form as a separate booklet, and, selling for a penny, ran through two editions.¹⁰⁶ The *Letter to The Prince of Wales* is a prime example of Bradlaugh's republican rhetoric. In its separate booklet form it begins with a supercilious listing of the Prince's titles, and an apology if any have been missed out:

'I have never before written to a Prince, and may lack good manners in thus inditing; but to my brother masons I have often written, and know they love best a plain, fraternal greeting, if the purpose of the epistle be honest.'

So, declared Bradlaugh, they are brothers – voluntarily on the Prince's part, unsought for on Bradlaugh's.

'You, though a Past Grand Master, are but recently a free and accepted master mason, and probably yet know but little of the grand traditions of the mighty organisation whose temple doors

have opened to your appeal. My knowledge of the mystic branch gained amongst republicans of all nations is of some years' older date. You are now, as a freemason, excommunicate by the Pope – so am I ... You have entered into that illustrious fraternity which has numbered in its ranks Swedenborg, Voltaire and Garibaldi...My sponsor was Simon Bernard - yours, I hear, was the King of Sweden.'

Sir Henry Ponsonby, the Queen's Private Secretary, in describing to Queen Victoria Bradlaugh's attacks on The Prince of Wales, noted how Bradlaugh very carefully avoided saying anything actionable.¹⁰⁷ Bradlaugh's tactics are vividly illustrated by the *Letter*. He notes how some Princes of Wales had been 'drunken riotous spendthrifts, covered in debt, and deep in dishonour', but then hastens to add that he was sure this was not true of the present Prince, an erudite member of the Royal Geographical Society and sober support of the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers. Bradlaugh recalls that the Prince Regent was accused of quitting his wife for the endearments of a wanton, and toying the night away in debauchery. He expresses relief that Prince Albert Edward was instead an English gentleman, a good and kind husband, and that with him a woman's honour was always safe from attack and sure of protection.

'Fame writes you as sober and chaste, as high-minded and generous, as kind-hearted and truthful. These are the qualities, oh Albert Edward, which hid your disability as Prince, when you knelt bare-kneed in our audience chamber. The brethren who opened your eyes to the light, overlooked your title as Prince of Wales in favour of your already famous manhood. Your career is a pleasant contrast to that of George Prince of Wales.'

Bradlaugh then goes on to outline his vision of Freemasonry to the novice Past Grand Master:

'I address this epistle to you as fellow-member of a body which teaches that man is higher than king; that humanity is beyond church and creed; that true thought is nobler than blind faith, and that virile, earnest effort is better than dead or submissive serfdom ... Freemasonry is democracy, are you a Democrat? Freemasonry is Freethought, are you a Freethinker? Freemasonry is work for human deliverance, are you a worker? I know you may tell me in England of wine-bibbing, song-singing, meat-eating, and white kid-glove wearing fashionables who say 'Shibboleth', make 'royal salutes', and call this Freemasonry; but these are mere badge-wearers, who lift their legs awkwardly over the coffin in which truth lies buried...'

Bradlaugh suggests that 'instead of going, with some German glutton, to a paltry casino', the Prince should see how masonic lodges throughout Europe had worked for liberty in countries like Italy and Poland. Above all, declared Bradlaugh, the Prince should visit France, where for the past twenty years masonic lodges had been the only institutions where civil and religious liberty had been preached,

'...the greatest enemies of the falling churches, the bravest teachers of heretic thought, and the most earnest inculcators of Republican earnestness.'

The Prince had joined Freemasonry at the right moment, for true Freemasonry was about to become more powerful than royalty. In Spain, Freemasonry was supporting a new republic. In Italy, where Garibaldi was the Grand Master, 'today they dream of a government without a monarch'. In France, the Emperor's days were numbered, and Bradlaugh hoped that the republic of united Germany was not far away. Even in England, they had almost forgotten what a Queen was used for, now she had disappeared from public sight.

'*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*, form the masonic trinity in unity. Do you believe in this trinity? Which will you be, prince or man?... In Freemasonry there are no princes; the only nobles in its

true peerage muster-rolls must be noble men – men noble in thought, noble in effort, noble in endurance... In our Masonry there are no kings save in the kingship of manhood, "*Tous les hommes sont rois*".'

If the Prince was to be a man, he needed to move among the common people:

'Go to Ireland – not to Punchestown races, at a cost to the people of more than two thousand pounds – but secretly amongst its poor, and learn their deep griefs. Walk in London, not in parade at its horse shows, where snobs bow and stumble, but in plain dress and unattended; in its Spitalfields, Bethnal Green, Isle of Dogs, and Seven Dials; go where the unemployed commence to cry in vain for bread, where hunger begins to leave its dead in the open streets, and try to find out why so many starve.'

Bradlaugh concluded by assuring the Prince that, before he died, he would hear cries for a republic in England. The cries for a republic now increasingly being heard in France would create a lightning flash of indignation which would stir all peoples. As a freemason, concluded Bradlaugh, the Prince was bound to promote peace, even when it showed the weakness of princes. As a freemason, the Prince was bound to help the oppressed, even against princes. As a freemason, he was bound to educate the ignorant, even when this meant teaching them that royal authority springs from the people.

'As a freemason you are bound to encourage freethought, but freethought is at war with the church, and between church and crown there has ever been the most unholy alliance against peoples. You were a prince by birth, it was your misfortune. You have enrolled yourself as a freemason by choice, it shall be either your virtue or your crime – your virtue if you are true to its manly dutifulness; your crime if you dream that your blood royalty is of richer quality than the poorest drop in the veins of A Free and Accepted Mason.'

The Freemason, then in its first year of publication, almost immediately fell into the trap carefully laid by Bradlaugh, without apparently realising Bradlaugh's involvement in this publication.¹⁰⁸ It noticed a report in an American masonic journal stating that:

'The Prince of Wales having become a freemason, a brother mason takes the privilege of the Order to write him a letter, assuring him, that if he does not reform the course of his life, the English people will never endure him as a ruler.'

'This item of news is one of the most mendacious ever penned', thundered *The Freemason*.

'No member of the English Craft, however distinguished, would venture to soar to such a sublime height of audacity as that indicated, simply because we are not so credulous as to believe the absurd rumours which daily circle round the lives and actions of our great men. It is a delicate subject to handle, but one thing is clear, that Freemasonry ought never to be coupled, even in a newspaper paragraph, with such an atrocious calumny. We are no apologist for evil doings in high places, but we draw a wide distinction between well-authenticated evidence and the scandals of table-talk.'

Bradlaugh had, of course, gone out of his way to avoid directly suggesting that Albert Edward was another Prince Regent. By hotly denying that there was any resemblance between the two, *The Freemason* had given the game away, and admitted that such rumours were indeed circulating.

Bradlaugh's mother lodge was delighted by his *Letter*, and the *National Reformer* duly carried a copy of the following formal letter of congratulation to Bradlaugh from the *Philadelphes et Concorde Réunis*:¹⁰⁹

‘The Lodge took no immediate action on account of the absence of the Ven. Master, but, on his return, he soon found that some eloquent and thrilling expression had been given to the true principles of universal Freemasonry ... and proposed that we should send you our fraternal greeting for your many services to the cause of freedom and of human progress, that being true masonic work; and especially for your letter to our Brother Albert Edward, known as the Prince of Wales.

We must join to our thanks the request that you produce more of such pieces of architecture; that will compensate us for your absence from lodge on many occasions when we should like to see you there with us.

You have shown by your “Letter” that, though you are a member of some national lodges, you really belong to UNIVERSAL FREEMASONRY, of which our lodge forms a part. You work for the oppressed, and would not drink to an oppressor, be he King of Prussia or Italy, or Emperor of France. You have never seen in our lodge either a Vedas, a Koran, or a Bible: that would be *anti-masonic*, and so is flunkeyism. You have truly said: “Freemasonry is Democracy: Freemasonry is Freethought”. We meet “on the level” as brothers, and no one is above another.

We do not even open our works by an invocation to the Great Architect of the Universe, because we know nothing of such an architect, and to speak of giving him glory would appear, to those who believe in it, as if we had some glory to spare, and he had not enough of it. That might appear ridiculous to some of our brothers, and might be offensive to others. We meet “in the name of Justice and of Reason”, which all freemasons recognize as guides.’

The letter concluded by saying that the lodge had learnt with pleasure that Bradlaugh was being given a complimentary supper. The lodge had voted unanimously that a deputation of at least three of its members would attend in its name and express to Bradlaugh how much the lodge admired his noble, manly and masonic virtues. The number of the *National Reformer* also carried an advertisement for *La Chaîne d’Union, ‘Journal de la Franc-Maçonnerie universelle, de la liberté de conscience, et de toutes les reformes sociales’*.¹¹⁰ The complimentary dinner for Bradlaugh to celebrate his defeat of the attempts to prosecute the *National Reformer* took place in the Old Street Hall of Science a week later.¹¹¹ Over 140 guests attended, with Austin Holyoake chairing proceedings. Prominent among the diners was a delegation from the *Philadelphes et Concorde Réunis*, led by Le Lubez, a republican from the Channel Islands and a member of the First International (where he unsuccessfully locked horns with Marx).¹¹²

Bradlaugh took to heart the request of his mother lodge that he should undertake further pieces of such architecture as the *Letter to the Prince of Wales*. On 19 September 1869, Bradlaugh’s Sunday lecture at the Hall of Science was devoted to Freemasonry, attracting a large audience and being reported in the *National Reformer*.¹¹³ Bradlaugh drew a contrast between on the one hand English Freemasonry, which he argued had wielded little influence and not contributed significantly to the development of national freedom, and on the other continental Freemasonry, which he argued had provided an important means of combating tyranny. He declared that, although Freemasonry, with its belief in a Great Architect of the Universe and a ‘Future State’ had in the past been essentially deistic, it now represented the most advanced views.

‘Religion is ever narrow and sectarian; Freemasonry broad and cosmopolitan. The latter has outgrown its theological formularies, and many lodges have expunged from their rules the requirements that their members should subscribe to a belief in a “Great Architect of the Universe”... They inculcate love of humanity, national freedom, and individual justice. But in England Freemasonry means a gathering of respectable society with but little purpose beyond the distribution of charity, or the conferring of one of its highest honours upon an undeserving prince.’

This piece again caught the attention of *The Freemason*, and a contributor under the *nom-de-plume* 'Cryptonymous', who seems to have been Kenneth R. H. Mackenzie, discussed Bradlaugh's ideas in a piece called 'Masonry and Secularism'.¹¹⁴ Mackenzie was unaware that Bradlaugh at this time held certificates as a master mason from both English Grand Lodge and the Grand Orient, and described Bradlaugh's comments as unfair and ill-informed: 'As a lecturer he speaks ex cathedra of what he scarcely can know, or knowing should not utter.'

Mackenzie asked if there:

'...is not a dogmatism of materialism equally at variance with common sense as the dogmatism of infallibility?...such a method of seeking truth, I must individually opine, is even more offensive than the a priori arguments used by the sandalled surrounders of monkish traditions. It seems to say we, not they, are the true light ...'

Mackenzie protested that the existence of a supreme being could only ever be inferred. Historical matters could be proved, but anything else would always remain metaphysical.

'This is as applicable to the dim legends of Freemasonry as to anything else, and Mr Bradlaugh in stating his views of the subject is bound by the same rules that should be the guide-line of us all. Although we may reject – as many do – and none can so more emphatically than myself – the literal construction of the Old Testament; although we may impeach the authority by which a number of puerile and obscene legends have been fastened upon society, it is still our clear duty to endeavour to see what remnant of verity remains hidden amidst the fog of traditionary narrative. Should it be proved that the legends respecting the Tower of Babel – the building of King Solomon's Temple – nay, the very existence of a Jewish polity itself are legend and nothing more, still there lurks in the background some intelligible groundwork on which such legends are founded.'

Mackenzie took issue with Bradlaugh's claim that English Freemasonry was not of high importance:

'True it is that the world could have got along in some fashion without the institution, but still those who are attentive to its silent action cannot deny it a social significance.'

However, Mackenzie found one point on which he could 'cordially coincide' with Bradlaugh, namely in Bradlaugh's declaration that 'Religion has ever been narrow and sectarian; Freemasonry broad and cosmopolitan'. Mackenzie discussed how Freemasonry drew together those of different faiths around a common table, recommending to Bradlaugh a book by a Dr Inman, *Ancient Faiths and Ancient Names*, and concluding with some garbled thoughts on how religious differences are caused by human frailty.

Five years later, the Marquess of Ripon unexpectedly resigned as Grand Master following his conversion to Roman catholicism, and the Prince of Wales was nominated as his successor. Unnoticed by *The Freemason*, Bradlaugh returned his certificate as an English freemason to Great Queen Street.

'A Regrettable Occurrence'

On 31 July 1870, the *National Reformer* carried a report of a special meeting of the *Philadelphes et Concorde Réunis* held to honour the veteran French revolutionary and workers' leader in 1848, Armand Barbès, who had recently died.¹¹⁵ Speeches in memory of Barbès were made by Brothers Jourdain, Rattazzi, Massac and Le Lubez. The speech of Le Lubez was reported at length:

‘Among the fundamental principles of Freemasonry, as well as democracy, one, above all, stands prominent, and is admitted by all true masons - that is equality. Though admitted by some freemasons in theory only (for even English freemasons all meet upon the level), that principle is admitted by all...’

War had recently broken out between France and Germany; shortly afterwards came the disaster of Sedan. Members of the French masonic lodges in London had helped establish there a *Société Française d'Angleterre pour les Blessés Français*.¹¹⁶ Bradlaugh hated Napoleon III and welcomed the proclamation of a republic in France in September 1870. He was asked to help rally support for the fledgling republic in Britain, and did so enthusiastically. Bradlaugh was even a candidate for Paris in the elections for a new French government in February 1871.¹¹⁷ These elections brought to power Adolphe Thiers, whose republicanism was widely considered half-hearted, while a majority in the National Assembly were monarchist. On 28 March 1871 the commune was declared.

Bradlaugh had very mixed views on the commune, largely staying silent, ‘unable to approve, but refusing to condemn’.¹¹⁸ He attempted to go to France to act as a mediator between Thiers and the commune but was stopped by police at Calais. Above all, Bradlaugh was distressed by the personal tragedies of the commune. Two members of the *Philadelphes et Concorde Réunis* were elected to the commune, while others, such as Edouard Benoît, fought on its behalf.¹¹⁹ On 9 July 1871, a further announcement appeared in the *National Reformer*:

‘A committee has been formed from amongst the members of the *Loge des Philadelphes* for the purpose of assisting the victims of the late events in Paris, some of whom are in the most extreme straits. Any subscriptions may be sent to our friend Le Lubez, 23 Bedford Sq., Commercial Road E, and we can guarantee that they will be properly used. The widow of Dombrowski, who died fighting, is now in London, almost penniless, with two little children, aged 5 and 3, and in a few days will be again a mother.’¹²⁰

Ellic Howe suggested that the establishment of the Third Republic resulted in the return home of the refugees from France and the collapse of the *Philadelphes*. In fact, many French Republicans in London were unable or unwilling to return home while Thiers was still in power and the future of the Republic was uncertain, while the proscription of the *communards* meant that a new wave of French political refugees appeared in London. The old *Philadelphes* lodge which had continued in existence after 1868 as a protest against Benoit’s proceedings, fizzled out in 1871,¹²¹ but the *Philadelphes et Concorde Réunis* continued to be very active throughout the 1870s. Moreover, in 1872 some veterans of the commune established an avowedly revolutionary Lodge, *La Fédération*, which met first at the Canonbury Tavern in Islington and afterwards in respectable Holloway.¹²² According to a French police report of 1873, two Polish Republican Lodges were also established in London, *La Persévérance Patriotique* and *La Révolution Universelle*.¹²³ Relations between these groups and the *Philadelphes* were cordial, but there were no formal links between them. The police report concluded that the activities of these lodges, including the *Philadelphes*, were essentially philanthropic, and posed no serious political threat to the government in France.¹²⁴

The Third Republic was established almost by accident, and, as Roger Magraw has commented, until 1876 it existed almost by default.¹²⁵ The majority of the National Assembly was in favour of a return of the monarchy but, divided between legitimists, Orleanists and Bonapartists, was unable to achieve this end. The process whereby a republican consensus was achieved by the 1880s was a complex one in which provincial capitalists and professional classes formed an alliance with peasants and small producers.¹²⁶ It involved the propagation of secular, lay values, accompanied by attacks on the catholic right, which increasingly retreated

into a religious obscurantism reinforced by anti-semitic and anti-masonic fantasies. A key plank of the republican platform was the secularisation of education.¹²⁷ The way in which French Freemasonry played a vital role in helping to secure support for the new republic can be seen in its promotion of non-religious educational activity.¹²⁸ The struggles within French Freemasonry between 1871 and 1877 reflected this wider campaign to secure republican values. A focal point was the position accorded to the Supreme Being, and the triumph of the Republican Party was expressed in the final adoption in 1877 of a revised first article removing references to the Great Architect of the Universe and belief in a future state. Appropriately, this took place at exactly the time that the Republican Party finally established a firm grip on power, following the crisis provoked by President McMahon's attempt to dismiss a republican government.¹²⁹

It was the revision of the first article of the Grand Orient's Constitutions which, of course, prompted the breach with the Grand Lodges of England and other English-speaking countries. Developments in French Freemasonry had been watched with anxiety by English freemasons for many years before 1877. The most striking feature of the increasing tension between English and French Freemasonry was the extent to which it appears to have been exacerbated – if not generated – by the masonic press on both sides of the Channel. As has been seen, *The Freemason* saw Freemasonry and the church (and particularly the Anglican Church) as complementary. It was convinced that French Freemasonry had been hijacked by a small group of freethinkers and atheists, singling out the positivist Alexandre Massol as a particularly malign influence.¹³⁰ *The Freemason's Chronicle* took a line that was more sympathetic to developments in France, enthusiastically reporting the secular education initiatives undertaken there.¹³¹ The difference between the editorial line of the two journals is reflected in their view of the initiation of the famous French positivist, Emile Littré by the Parisian Lodge *La Clémentine Amitié* in July 1875. *The Freemason* saw this as marking the apotheosis of the degradation of French Freemasonry by atheism, freethought, and socialism;¹³² for *The Freemason's Chronicle* the initiation of such a well-known member of the French Academy reflected the flourishing state of French Freemasonry.¹³³ However, although *The Freemason's Chronicle* carefully avoided contributing to the war of words so enthusiastically pursued by *The Freemason*, when the crisis came, *The Freemason's Chronicle* was unable to accept the changes made by the Grand Orient, and sought, in some measured editorials, to explain why atheism was unacceptable to English Freemasonry and to persuade the Grand Orient that Freemasonry should not be split.¹³⁴ It was, however, too little, too late.

In France, the chief sparring partner of *The Freemason* was *Le Monde Maçonique*, edited by the French positivist and republican, Jean Marie Lazare Caubet.¹³⁵ The dialogue between *The Freemason* and *Le Monde Maçonique* vividly illustrates the cultural disjunction between English and French Freemasonry in the years leading up to 1877. For *The Freemason*, morality sprang from religion, and freedom of conscience was synonymous with atheism and infidelity. For *Le Monde Maçonique*, English Freemasonry was in hock to the aristocracy and the clergy, and had betrayed the secular mission of Freemasonry. These were, of course, the criticisms that had previously been raised by the *Philadelphes*, and during the period 1871-1877 *Le Monde Maçonique* regularly carried news about the French refugee lodges in London and published articles written by members of these lodges. By encouraging and promoting these suspicions of English Freemasonry in France, the *Philadelphes* contributed substantially to the rift between the two Grand Lodges.

A characteristic exchange between *The Freemason* and *Le Monde Maçonique* took place between October 1874 and February 1875.¹³⁶ *The Freemason* had carried an article on 'The True Mission of Freemasonry', which it described as a 'simple and straightforward enunciation of the universality of Freemasonry, and yet of the happy possession in all our

lodges of God's holy and inspired word'. It portrayed continental Freemasonry as chimerical and English Freemasonry as more solid, grounded in recognition of the Supreme Being, with the bible as its touchstone. *Le Monde Maçonique* described the article in *The Freemason* as complacent and self-satisfied, and asked what exactly was the more practical aim of English Freemasonry with which continental Freemasonry contrasted so unfavourably. The French journal declared that, for all its faults, it preferred the continental system of Freemasonry to English utilitarianism. Caubet also printed a lengthy critique of *The Freemason* by Henri Valleton, who was described as London correspondent of *Le Monde Maçonique*. Valleton had been the Master of a Lodge in Bordeaux,¹³⁷ a popular speaker in the Republican clubs of Paris in 1848, and was now *Orateur* of the *Philadelphes*. Valleton denounced the piece in *The Freemason* as full of contradictions, illogicalities, sophistry, enormities and nonsense: '*les Maçons Anglais ne sont ni illuminés, ni mystiques, ni philosophes, ni logiques*'. Valleton declared that English Freemasonry was under the direction of the Anglican clergy, and described *The Freemason* as the organ of sacerdotal Freemasonry in England. For Valleton, English Freemasonry was anti-liberal and reactionary.

The Freemason in turn was outraged. It expressed puzzlement as to who Valleton was, assuming he must be very junior in the Craft. *The Freemason* loudly proclaimed that English Freemasonry would never give up its bibles and, in an interesting twist of Valleton's words, said that English Freemasonry was proud to be anti-infidel and tolerant. 'Infidel' was of course the label proudly adopted by atheists such as Bradlaugh. Valleton had claimed that:

'There is in England as in France, a Freemasonry free, philosophical, scientific, positive, which proclaims, as we do, that all men are brethren, beyond all religion and nationalities.'

This statement puzzled *The Freemason*, but he was, of course, referring to the *Philadelphes*. *The Freemason* signed off by declaring proudly that:

'Though we accept in our Order all men except the atheist and the libertine, and look with compassion and sympathy on all mankind, we have no leaning for the expansive notion of continental positivism or any other ism. We have nothing to do with these new philosophies which are undermining social order elsewhere, neither can we manifest any, even the slightest approval, of those subversive dogmas which end in either a positive infidelity or the offensive assertion of a *morale sans Dieu*.'

For *Le Monde Maçonique*, the urgent need was to keep the clergy at bay; for *The Freemason*, the threat came from the atheist. Each journal provided plenty of ammunition to confirm the other's prejudices. *The Freemason* urged English masons to be at the forefront of the movement for the reconstruction and repair of historic churches; *Le Monde Maçonique* reported on progress in opening up Freemasonry to blacks in the United States.¹³⁸ Increasingly, *The Freemason* pinned its hopes for French Freemasonry on *La Chaîne d'Union* (ironically the journal founded by the *Philadelphes*), which, under the direction of the more conservative Hubert, who was himself apparently a catholic,¹³⁹ tried to pour oil on troubled waters. However, Hubert's concern was to ensure that French Freemasonry remained as broadly based as possible and he was by no means inclined to undertake the kind of evangelical campaign which *The Freemason* clearly thought was necessary. When the changes came, he followed the official line.

In November 1873, *Le Monde Maçonique* reported that a group of French masons in London had provisionally formed a lodge under the title *L'Union Maçonique*.¹⁴⁰ It had petitioned for a warrant from the Grand Lodge of England, but the petition had been refused. Caubet assumed this was because the Grand Lodge objected to an English lodge working in French. The lodge was nevertheless still meeting, and a subsequent report of its elections

shows that most of its members belonged to the *Philadelphes*. In fact, the petition for *L'Union Maçonnique* had been turned down not because it wanted to work in French, but because the Grand Secretary, John Hervey, had referred it to the police, who had submitted the following report:

'With reference to attached application from French masonic Lodge, I beg to report that careful enquiries have been made by Chief Inspector Drurcovich and P. C. Marchand, and find that "La Loge Les Philadelphes et Concorde Réunis", was held at 71 Dean Street, Soho, in 1870, and at that time, "Marc Ratazzi", "Massac", "Delpeche", "Poirsou", and "Jourdain", were the principal office bearers of the Lodge. These men I am informed are all of extreme Republican opinions.

I have also ascertained that at that time the Lodge was visited on more than one occasion by Messrs Bradlaugh, Odger,¹⁴¹ and Gustave Flourens, who were on intimate terms with most of its members, and as further proof of their Republican principle, I may mention that when Barbes (a noted Communist) died about two years ago, the members of this Lodge buried him in effigy.

The result of this enquiry leads me to believe that this Lodge was instituted for political motives under the disguise of Masonry.

F W Williamson
Supt.¹⁴²

In 1874, members of *L'Union Maçonnique* were reported as joining *Les Philadelphes et la Concorde Réunis* at the funeral of Prosper Simard, a former Master of the *Philadelphes*, the first editor of *La Chaîne d'Union*, and another veteran of the workers' rising of 1848. Valleton gave a moving funeral oration which was reported in full in *Le Monde Maçonnique*.¹⁴³

Le Monde Maçonnique continued to carry regular news of *Les Philadelphes et Concorde Réunis*, prompting *The Freemason* to point out that this was 'a surreptitious meeting of a secret society, not in any sense of the word masonic'.¹⁴⁴ At the time when the revision of the first article was under active discussion in the Grand Orient, *Le Monde Maçonnique* ran a long series of articles on religion and philosophy by Valleton, which took a broadly positivist perspective.¹⁴⁵ *Le Monde Maçonnique* also watched carefully for evidence of pro-clerical tendencies in English Freemasonry. It noted with particular interest an incident in the English Grand Lodge in 1876, when a proposal that the Grand Lodge should make a large donation for the restoration of the Cathedrals of St Paul and St Albans was defeated because this was considered an inappropriate use for masonic funds, and it was agreed to use the money instead for the purchase of lifeboats.¹⁴⁶ Among the opponents of this proposal in Grand Lodge was the radical Unitarian John Baxter Langley, who had been a close associate of Bradlaugh on the Reform League¹⁴⁷ and had been a member of his defence committee at the time of the 'Fruits of Philosophy' trial.¹⁴⁸ Langley caused uproar by suggesting, in a letter to *The Freemason*, that carvings on the cathedrals were the remnants of ancient phallus worship.¹⁴⁹

The Freemason's Chronicle had carefully avoided commenting on the French situation. In September 1876 the annual assembly of the Grand Orient decided that the first article of its constitutions should be revised, and that lodges should submit proposals for a new wording which allowed greater liberty of conscience. *The Freemason's Chronicle* finally felt constrained to comment, and declared that the proposed changes would be:

'...in direct antagonism to the fundamental principles of the Craft. Freemasonry as we understand it in England does impose one limit on freedom of conscience. It requires all its disciples to recognise the existence of a supreme being and a future state. They may adopt any form of religious worship they please, but they must believe in God.'¹⁵⁰

Thus far, the dispute between English and French Freemasonry had been conducted entirely through the masonic press. The Grand Officers now felt a need to intervene. On 11 November 1876, a new lodge was consecrated by John Hervey as Grand Secretary and he made a speech

on the developments in French Freemasonry. He seems to have chosen the occasion for this speech very carefully. The lodge being consecrated was Crichton Lodge No. 1641, a lodge founded by teachers and officers of the London School Board¹⁵¹ – education had been both in England and France a battleground for the establishment of secular values.¹⁵² The ceremony was held in the new Surrey Masonic Hall in Camberwell, intended to provide a venue for masonic activities in the new urban area of South London. *The Freemason* had strongly supported the building of the Surrey Masonic Hall and had published a print of the building, which *Le Monde Maçonique* thought inappropriate in style.¹⁵³

In his speech to the Crichton Lodge, Hervey began by reviewing the condition of English Freemasonry. It was the second time in a few weeks that he had visited the Surrey Masonic Hall to consecrate a new lodge. In recent years, the number of English lodges had increased by an average of about fifty a year.

‘That was a great increase in the number of new Lodges, and he trusted on behalf of the Craft he loved so well, that so long as those lodges were properly conducted, and they acted together as masons, that they would be glad to see them increase in number. (Hear, hear.) He wished he could say as much as regarded lodges in foreign countries, for he was sorry to say that their late increase in numbers did not bring with it a corresponding increase in respectability. It was well known that for some time past in France the sacred volume had been banished from their lodges, while in some other French lodges they would admit men whether they believed in the existence of a supreme being or not. Therefore, speaking entirely as an individual he thought it would be for the Grand Lodge to consider whether they would receive the members of foreign lodges with that state of things before them. He spoke merely as a member of Grand Lodge, but he thought the time would come when they would seriously have to consider whether they would admit foreigners into their lodges as visitors, when they would not admit members of their own lodges under similar terms. This was a subject which must occupy the attention of the Craft, and which we trust would necessarily demand their serious consideration. Having taken the first step to banish the bible from their lodges, it was only an easy step they were taking to admit those who had no belief whatever in the existence of a supreme being. Whatever these foreign lodges might do, whatever might be the men whom they chose to admit, he hoped that no such step would be taken in this country, for if it was so, it would strike at the very root and existence of Freemasonry, and the sooner the Craft fell to the ground the better.’

The Rev. Robert Simpson, Past Grand Chaplain, echoed Hervey’s comments:

‘...he grieved to read the terrible changes contemplated with regard to their brethren in France. That country had gone through many troubles, but when it entered upon the perilous course of ignoring the existence of God, the great founder of the universe, he ventured to say that she had many and much greater troubles in store for her, and when the subject came to be considered in the Crichton Lodge, he believed that its voice would be heard with no uncertain sound, but would be to the honour of the Great Master Builder, as the author of their being, and the God whom they adored.’¹⁵⁴

Le Monde Maçonique responded to Hervey’s speech in terms which had been pioneered by the *Philadelphes* many years beforehand. It began by stressing the religious components of the ceremony which had taken place in Camberwell, how a prayer had been read, hymns sung and passages from the bible read by the chaplain. It then reported Hervey’s speech and made the following declaration to its readers:

‘Thus we are warned. If the French masons do not get rid of the unbelievers who are among them, if they do not make a sufficient provision of bibles (there exists in England a society which can furnish them at the cheapest price), they must expect to be excommunicated by English Masonry,

and the United Grand Lodge of England will have nothing for them but contempt, perhaps worse, so long as Brother Hervey is the all-powerful Grand Secretary.

This comment by *Le Monde Maçonnique* sparked off a furious series of exchanges with *The Freemason*.¹⁵⁵ Not surprisingly, in the course of this controversy between the two masonic journals, the question of the *Philadelphes* came up again.¹⁵⁶ Valleton wrote for *Le Monde Maçonnique* an article supporting the revision of the first article and reviewing some possible models of wording, including the statutes of the *Philadelphes* themselves.¹⁵⁷ This prompted *The Freemason* to unleash some extremely personal invective against Valleton.¹⁵⁸ Exasperated with *Le Monde Maçonnique*, *The Freemason* increasingly carried reports from *La Chaîne d'Union*, in the hope of suggesting that opposition to the change in France was greater than it in fact was.¹⁵⁹ One interesting letter to Hubert on which *The Freemason* seized was from Léon Clerc in London, expressing concern that changes in France might create a rift with English Freemasonry.¹⁶⁰ Clerc, *The Freemason* failed to point out, was a member of the *Philadelphes*.

The Grand Orient of Egypt was the first to issue a formal protest against the proposed changes, in the hope of preventing their implementation.¹⁶¹ On 22 September 1877, The Freemason carried the following report:

'The recent "Convent" of the Grand Orient of France, which opened on the 10th and closed on the 15th instant, has ended, in our opinion, in giving one of the greatest blows to French Freemasonry which it has ever received. The lodges, by 135 to 76, and the Grand Orient, by a large majority, have determined to suppress the mention of the name of God. Whereas formerly belief in God and the immortality of the soul were publicly recognised as the great basis of French Freemasonry, now, the second section of Article I is to be reformed to this effect: *Elle a pour principe la liberté absolue de conscience, et la solidarité humaine*, whatever that may mean... The principles of Massol are at last sanctioned by the Grand Orient of France, and the consequences of the act are most serious, and widely extending.'¹⁶²

The *Loge des Philadelphes et Concorde Réunis* passed a resolution congratulating the French Lodges on the adoption of the new Constitution, which was printed in *Le Monde Maçonnique*:

'In putting an end to this glaring contradiction between the spirit of Freemasonry which prescribes for us study, free examination and absolute liberty of opinions, and a tyrannical system imposing an article of faith on the very ones whom it calls to study, a system which excludes from Freemasonry any man who does not admit limits to the exercise of his right to scientific enquiry, in bringing an end to this contradiction, your delegates have brought about an act of justice.'¹⁶³

At the beginning of November 1877, the Grand Lodge of Ireland, which itself had suffered recently from Ultramontane attacks and was anxious to head off further trouble, resolved that it no longer recognized the Grand Orient as a masonic body, and instructed its lodges to refuse to admit visitors from the Grand Orient of France.¹⁶⁴ In Scotland, Mother Kilwinning, seeing itself as the font of all Freemasonry, was keen to enter the fray and communicate direct with France. However, it was eventually agreed that the matter should be considered by the Scottish Grand Lodge. The Grand Committee corresponded with the Grand Orient, but was not satisfied by the response, and at the end of November the Grand Committee recommended that fraternal relations with the Grand Orient should cease, a decision ratified by the Grand Lodge the following February.¹⁶⁵

The constant refrain of English-speaking critics of the Grand Orient's decision was that it was promoting atheism: 'nothing but moral nihilism and avowed atheism', 'infidelity and communism', 'the propaganda of atheism, materialism and communism, triplet devils of the mind'.¹⁶⁶ Inevitably, critics of the French decision quickly made connections with Bradlaugh. A correspondent writing to *The Freemason* described the Grand Orient as 'a licensed infidel

community – of Bradlaughism'.¹⁶⁷ The *Philadelphes* had been effective in conveying their criticisms of English Freemasonry in France, but had little impact in England. In order to defend itself in England, French Freemasonry looked to its most prominent English representative, Charles Bradlaugh. It may have been hoped that Bradlaugh would be as successful in defending republican values in Freemasonry as he had been in supporting the Third Republic at its birth, but in fact the involvement of Bradlaugh simply confirmed English suspicions that the changes in France were a Freethought *coup*.

The subject of relations with the Grand Orient was scheduled for consideration at the December Quarterly Communication of the English Grand Lodge.¹⁶⁸ The leading article in the *National Reformer* on 9 December 1877 was a lengthy address to the Prince of Wales as Grand Master on behalf of French Freemasons, protesting against the sanctions of the Grand Lodge of Ireland against the Grand Orient, and urging the English Grand Lodge not to follow a similar course:

'What have the French Freemasons done that you should exclude them from your lodges, and that you break off all communication with them? Have they shut out any man on account of his religious creed? Not one; all that they have done is to erase from their constitution words which were a barrier against, and a penalty on, honest heretics. Do you say that belief in a deity is essential for masons? Which deity? The Christian trinitarian deity? Then be consistent, and with the Prussian lodges drive out the Jew... If it be the Christian God alone, what becomes of your brethren, Mahomedan, Buddhist, or Brahman? Are you going to break with their lodges also? If you reply that it is not the God of any particular sect, but some unknown deity for whom you repeat the famous declaration of the Egyptian temple, "whose veil no mortal ever yet has raised", then I warn you that your act will carry religious controversy amongst the whole of your lodges...

The French order has introduced no religious dispute, it has proclaimed "absolute freedom" for the human mind. It has declared for "the brotherhood of mankind". You English freemasons if you curse the Frenchmen for their progress, will hardly bless yourselves. At present no strife has been sought in your temples, but if you curse we must try to rob your anathema of its force, by instructing English freemasons as to why the change is made. And in this struggle we must win. "Freedom of conscience" dare you denounce it? "Brotherhood of mankind" dare you oppose it? Leave theology to the priests, and creeds to the churches; the mission of Freemasonry is the redemption and elevation of humanity, or it has no right to exist. Religious texts belong to yesterday; humanity lives into tomorrow; its yesterday's relics are corrupt and mouldering. We are for the future. To which will you belong?'

The *National Reformer* continued to keep a close eye on the issue. In January 1878, Bradlaugh had some fun with a clergyman who had preached against the action of Grand Orient:

'The Rev. John Thomson of St Mary's Church Hawick is a member of the St John's Lodge of Freemasons. This masonic parson lately preached a sermon against his French brethren... He said that:

"Those who write atheist after their name, as Shelley once did, or reject their belief in God, as the members of the Grand Orient of France have done, must be unable to consider evidence as they ought to do – in other words, they must be fools, poor weak dottery drivelling idiots, upon whose minds the clearest evidence can make no impression."

The courtesy of expression in the above passage leaves nothing to be desired; we preserve the paragraph as an illustration of nineteenth-century pulpit oratory and Christian charity in Hawick. The Rev. Brother John Thomson of St John's Lodge, Hawick, is not only a preacher, he is also a profound logician, and he argues about theism in a way to carry conviction home to every "dottery drivelling idiot" his words may reach. He says that God:

"...was watching over the things created, still over-ruling all his creatures and all their actions in a way that was holy, just and good. Under this beneficent government we see good brought out of evil; peace out of war; health out of sickness; light out of darkness. Under the Great Creator's direction little things accomplish great events; great events

come to nothing; and wars, famines, and vast complications taking place in different parts of the world at the same time, are in a most extraordinary way dove-tailed into each other."

Pleasant this – a family starves on the Duke of Norfolk's Hallamshire estates, and this starvation "dovetails" in with the plenty at the ducal mansion. There is a famine in India, with thousands dying, but *per contra*, there is a masonic banquet in Hawick, and the "little thing" is dovetailed by "the Great Creator" with the great event. There is war and misery in Bulgaria, and comfort and peace in St John's Lodge. Earthquake in Peru, and golfing in north Britain. Can anything be better managed? A smallpox epidemic, a plague, a succession of fevers, all beautifully arranged for the special benefit of those who do not suffer from them; and yet there are "fools, poor weak dottery drivelling idiots" who will not be convinced!¹⁶⁹

At the December 1877 Quarterly Communication, a committee was appointed to consider the changes made by the Grand Orient of France.¹⁷⁰ At the next Quarterly Communication on 6 March 1878, the report of the committee was considered and it was agreed unanimously that all lodges under the English Grand Lodge:

'...be directed not to admit any foreign brother as a visitor unless first he is duly vouched for, or unless he has been initiated according to the ancient rites and ceremonies in a Lodge professing belief in the Great Architect of the Universe, and secondly that he shall not be admitted unless he himself shall acknowledge that this belief is an essential landmark of the Order.'¹⁷¹

The passing of these resolutions led to a brief but belated flurry of support for the Grand Orient from a few English freemasons writing to *The Freemason*. One suggested that the changes in France were no different from those introduced by the English Grand Lodge in 1813 when the right of non-Christians to join Freemasonry was affirmed. Another took issue with the way in which Lord Carnarvon had chaired the meeting of Grand Lodge, and expressing support for the French position. Referring to the 'elimination' of references to a future state, he pointed out that:

'...it is well known that a large proportion of our Jewish brethren do not believe in the immortality of the soul, but I was never in a lodge where an Israelite was refused permission to enter it upon this account.'¹⁷²

Nevertheless the great battle promised by Bradlaugh never happened. Possibly the Grand Orient may have realized that Bradlaugh's involvement was counter-productive and simply polarized opinion. Or perhaps the fight actually did take place, but on wholly different territory. The actions of the French Grand Orient had stirred up anxiety about the perceived threat of atheism among many English freemasons, who comprised a substantial section of the English upper and middle classes. As such the dispute between French and English Freemasonry paved the way for the tumultuous national debate sparked off two years later by Bradlaugh's election to parliament.

What Freemasonry Is, What It Has Been, and What It Ought To Be

In July 1884, the English Grand Lodge received a petition for the formation of a new lodge. An accompanying letter from Eugène Monteunis, a French businessman in London who was a former Grand Officer of the Province of Middlesex, outlined the reasons for the proposed new lodge:

'We are all members of the Société Nationale Française, a society founded some four years ago the object of which was of uniting the elements of which the French colony in England was

composed and fostering among its members a social and friendly intercourse by giving them the opportunity of becoming better acquainted with one another.

It has occurred to the petitioners who are masons under the Grand Lodge of England that if we were allowed to unite in one lodge, we would much assist in carrying out the above great principles which accord so well with those of the Craft.

We would further urge upon you that many of our countrymen find themselves deprived of the benefits of Freemasonry, being reluctant to join the Grand Orient under its present constitution but would gladly avail themselves of those great privileges if allowed to obtain them under the Grand Lodge of England...

We hope further that at no distant period we, with the permission of the MW the Grand Master, may be able to work the English Ritual in the French language...'

A supporting letter from Frank Richardson, as Master of St Luke's Lodge No. 144, pointed out that:

'[The Lodge] is started by the French colony in London, many of whom are Masons, and are anxious to have some lodge, wherein to meet, but are not able to use their own lodges as you are aware. The real founder of the lodge is Bro. Monteunis, PM of the Tuscan, although you will see he does not become First Master... It appears to me a capital thing, and one which would conduce to a good feeling between the masons of both countries, and might ultimately bring about a good state of affairs in France...'

The petition was approved, and La France Lodge No. 2060 was consecrated in October 1884, having received permission to work in the French language. In reporting the consecration, *The Freemason* made the following comments:

'Considering the change which has latterly come over the spirit of French Freemasonry, as now and for some years past interpreted by the Grand Orient of France, it is certainly desirable that enlightened Frenchmen should have afforded to them the opportunity of learning what Freemasonry is at is understood and practised in the original home of the Craft. It cannot be otherwise than an advantage to the fraternity generally, and must help to dissipate those silly charges of atheism and immorality which are being constantly levelled against it, when foreign masons learn, as doubtless they will through the medium of 'La France' Lodge, that there is nothing incongruous between the practice of our ancient system of Masonry and the moral and religious observances of law-abiding men.¹⁷³

The Freemason also reported at length an oration at the consecration of the lodge by the Revd Ambrose Hall, a Past Grand Chaplain:

'Although at present our guests in Britain, you, doubtless, from time to time visit your own country, and however occupied here you all, like good sons, look forward to end your days in your mother land, and when you go back, and as you go back, you will I am sure carry with you confirmed opinions of what the Great Architect does for us, and how, under his almighty care, we are permitted to diffuse and carry out some of the purest principles of piety and virtue ever entrusted to the care of finite beings; and who knows but that you, masonic brethren of Lodge La France, may have before you a glorious future in pouring balm upon the now troubled waters of Masonry; that you may be the "little leaven", the "grain of mustard seed", to call back our wandering and mistaken brethren to their Father's and rest.'¹⁷⁴

One of the first members to join the Lodge was Léon Clerc, who of course had been initiated in the *Philadelphes* and had been an editor of *La Chaîne d'Union* while it was published in London. He joined La France Lodge by virtue of a certificate of the Grand Orient de France issued in 1863 at the request of *La Persévérante Amitié* of Paris – exactly the same basis on which Bradlaugh had joined the High Cross Lodge all those years previously. Clerc was

Master of La France Lodge from 1889-90 and became Secretary of the Lodge in 1897. Clerc wrote a letter describing the consecration of La France Lodge which was published in *La Chaîne d'Union*, where Hubert noted that Clerc had been one of the original founders of the journal.¹⁷⁵

The Grand Orient had earlier in the year made an appeal to those masonic jurisdictions which did not recognize it, pointing out that there was a common bond of fraternity and urging reconciliation.¹⁷⁶ The Grand Orient was alarmed by the establishment of La France Lodge, which seemed to presage an attempt by the English Grand Lodge to try and sow the seeds of English Freemasonry on French soil. On 28 November 1884, the Grand Orient wrote formally to the Prince of Wales as English Grand Master, stating once again its case. A copy of the Grand Orient's letter in the archives of the English Grand Lodge has some interesting annotations, by the Grand Secretary, Colonel Shadwell Clerke.¹⁷⁷ In response to the Grand Orient's protest that its changes to the first article had been misinterpreted by the English Grand Lodge as 'a profession of atheism and materialism', Clerke commented 'We have never said so'. The letter from the Grand Orient went on to quote from the official circular which had been sent to French Lodges in 1877:

'Nothing has been changed in either the principles or practice of Freemasonry. French Freemasonry remains what it has always been: a tolerant and fraternal organisation. Respecting the religious and political beliefs of its members, it allows each one, in these difficult matters, freedom of conscience. Working towards the moral and intellectual perfection and well-being of mankind, French Freemasonry demands that those who wish to join it are honest and lovers of the good...'

Clerke added a further comment: 'That is does *not* require a belief in God!'

The English Grand Lodge's response to this letter was finally issued in Clerke's name on 12 January 1885:

'The Grand Lodge of England never imagined that the Grand Orient wished to make a formal profession of atheism and materialism; but the Grand Lodge of England maintains and has always maintained that belief in God is the first great mark of all true and genuine Masonry, and that any association which lacks this professed belief as an essential principle of its existence has no right to claim the heritage of the traditions and practices of ancient and pure Masonry. The abandonment of this landmark, in the opinion of the Grand Lodge of England, removes the foundation stone of any masonic edifice; and that is why this Grand Lodge has marked with sincere regret that the Grand Orient of France has effaced from its Constitutions, by the modification admitted in 1877, the affirmation of the existence of God, and as a result we came to a unanimous conclusion that the fraternal relations so happily existent between the two masonic constitutions hitherto could continue no longer. The principle so strongly maintained by the Grand Lodge of England appears to be still unrecognized by the Grand Orient of France, but the Grand Lodge would welcome the reestablishment of this old Landmark in the Constitutions of the Grand Orient, and then would be in a position to renew fraternal relations with the latter.'¹⁷⁸

Anticipating such a rebuff, the Grand Orient laid the ground for a public campaign to put its case in England, and contacted Bradlaugh. Bradlaugh had by this time been embroiled in the parliamentary oath controversy for nearly four years. He seems to have neglected Freemasonry during this time; many of the French refugees had returned home and the *Philadelphes* had been dissolved. Nevertheless, exhausted though he was after his hard struggles in Parliament, Bradlaugh was once again willing to take up the cudgels on behalf of what he considered true Freemasonry. In November 1884, Bradlaugh visited Paris and became a member of the Lodge *Union et Persévérance*. On his return he made the following report to an executive meeting of the National Secular Society, attended by among others Annie Besant, Le Lubez and Bradlaugh's daughters:¹⁷⁹

‘Mr Bradlaugh reported that he had visited Paris, and it was possible that an effort would be made on behalf of the Grand Orient of France to explain real Freemasonry in this country. Mr Bradlaugh pointed out that Masonry was condemned as irreligious by the Pope of Rome in every country, while the Earl of Carnarvon and other English aristocratic freemasons affirmed it to be Christian, and excommunicated French Freemasons. As a matter of fact it was essentially non-religious and democratic. The Grand Orient of France had banished all religious texts and formulas from its ritual while not opposed to any form of religion, leaving nothing which ought to offend either believers or unbelievers, who would all be members. It was probable that a public meeting on this subject would shortly be held at St James Hall.’

On 1 March 1885, the *National Reformer* carried a leading article by Bradlaugh on ‘Freemasonry in England and France’.¹⁸⁰ It described how a ‘grave difficulty’ had arisen between the masonic authorities of the Grand Lodge of England and the brethren belonging to Lodges under the jurisdiction of the Grand Orient of France.

‘Efforts having been ineffectually made by the Supreme Council of the Grand Orient to remove this difference by fraternal action, it becomes absolutely necessary to submit the whole question to the judgement of an enlightened public opinion.’

Bradlaugh proceeded to repeat the key points of the Grand Orient’s case, and reproduced Shadwell Clerke’s response to the Grand Orient’s letter. Bradlaugh promised a series of articles which would examine the matter in more depth.

Two articles by Bradlaugh on English and French Freemasonry duly appeared in the April and May numbers of *Our Corner*, a new Freethought journal edited by Annie Besant.¹⁸¹ *Our Corner* reflected the impact of a recent ruling in a blasphemy case against G. W. Foote, a supporter of Bradlaugh, which stated that blasphemy depended on the nature of the language used. With its thoroughly respectable, even prudish, appearance, and its ‘Scientific Corner’ and ‘Gardening Corner’, *Our Corner* was intended to show how Freethought could be combined with respectability.¹⁸² Bradlaugh’s two *Our Corner* articles on Freemasonry were afterwards reprinted by the Freethought Press as a single pamphlet: *What Freemasonry Is, What It Has Been, and What It Ought To Be*.¹⁸³ This pamphlet was to be Bradlaugh’s final testament on Freemasonry.

Bradlaugh begins by reviewing the wide variety of opinions about the relationship between Freemasonry and religion. He cites a speech made by the Prince of Wales in November 1883, who had said that Freemasonry must be religious and that:

‘...as long as religion remains engrafted in the hearts of the Craft in our country, the Craft is certain to flourish; and be certain of this, brethren, that when religion in it ceases, the Craft will also lose its power and stability.’

Bradlaugh contrasted with this a Papal Encyclical of 1884 which stated that Freemasons were supporters of the doers of evil:

‘Publicly and in the face of Heaven they undertake to ruin the Holy Church, in order, if it be possible, to completely rob Christian nations of the benefits owing to the Saviour Jesus Christ.’

How can these two statements be reconciled, asked Bradlaugh? Surveying a wide range of statements about Freemasonry and religion, citing commentators ranging from Hutchinson and Mackenzie to Louis Blanc and Dr Louis Aimable, the *Orateur* of the Grand Orient, Bradlaugh illustrates how different masonic bodies having taken opposite views on issues of religious belief:

'Is Freemasonry an institution atheistic and revolutionary in its tendencies, such as is painted from the Vatican? Or as denounced by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Nottingham? Or is it fairly presented as an almost orthodox Christian fraternity, as by the declarations and practices of the Grand Lodge of England? or is there one Freemasonry of England and the English colonies and another of the European continent? and if it be true that there is difference of doctrine and of practice in any of the great masonic bodies, then which of these represents the truer Freemasonry? Is Freemasonry real in England as an institution on the whole fairly charitable, but specially noteworthy for its lodge dinners and social gatherings, and its high aristocracy of office? or is it real as in France, Italy, Belgium, as an institution in which equality is advocated and sought in fraternity by the education of the ignorant, the enfranchisement of the enslaved, the strengthening of the weak?'

The explanation was, declared Bradlaugh, that there were two masonic currents drifting in very different directions. In England and Scotland, the spirit of the Stuart and Jacobite period had survived in masonic circles, so that all British masonic lodges supported Royalism and respectability. Thus, in the Tory reaction of 1819, Freemasonry had been exempted from the legislation against all kinds of associations. In France, since the time of the French Revolution, Freemasonry had preserved a strongly democratic tradition.

'In England, since the cessation of Jacobite plots, the carefully guarded forms, signs, and pass words have concealed nothing that all the world, enemies and friends, might not have known; they were as the elaborate letter lock to the empty iron chest. In France and Italy the lodge doors served as shields to the proscribed; the grip and word often sufficed to denote and guarantee the imperilled brother struggling for human redemption under conditions always of great difficulty, and sometimes of serious danger. In England an advertisement card or signboard showed that the brethren expected commercial preferences. On the continent the help given was to the fraternal worker for human freedom.

For Bradlaugh, the spirit of modern Freemasonry was summed up by a recent speech at the annual assembly of the Grand Orient, which stated that the purpose of Freemasonry was the preparation of mankind for the solution of the many and complex issues making up what was known as the social question, namely the many forms of human suffering. Freemasonry would help solve these not by revolution or predetermined systems, but by the application of principles of charity, tolerance and brotherhood, so as progressively to reduce human suffering. But, above all, for Bradlaugh true Freemasonry was a means of affirming tolerance and of saving mankind from bigotry:

'True Freemasonry should be of no religion. The Scotch Chaplain who, in his printed speech, points to the Bible used in the lodges and accepted as the word of God, forgets that this cannot be true for such Jews as are brethren – at any rate as far as the New Testament is concerned – nor for the Mahommedan brother. Yet there are most certainly hundreds of Jewish and Mahommedan freemasons. In Constantinople, in Odessa, in Cairo, as in Paris, Berlin, and London; in Ceylon and the Hawaiian Islands, as in Italy and Spain, there are masonic temples where those who are ranged to either pillar, as well as the illustrious seated in the east, are avowedly of distinct and often of opposing faiths. But under the temple roof the strife of creeds should be hushed, work should be the only worship: work for the redemption of long-suffering mankind.'

Once again, Bradlaugh's intervention failed to spark off the public debate about the nature of Freemasonry for which he longed. This was probably due as much as anything to the ineffectual nature of La France Lodge as a weapon against the Grand Orient. La France prospered as a lodge, but its members took little interest in Freemasonry in France. In 1899, a Grand Orient Lodge, Hiram, was established in London.¹⁸⁴ Among those invited to attend the consecration of Hiram Lodge was the Master Elect of La France, who wrote in a puzzled way

to Great Queen Street asking if masons holding a certificate from the English Grand Lodge were allowed to visit the new French lodge.¹⁸⁵ However, perhaps Bradlaugh's efforts on behalf of the Grand Orient did bear some fruit. A recent article by Raymond Salzmann has described how, in 1893, a group of Freethinkers in Swansea established the Tawe Lodge, the first Grand Orient Lodge to be established on British soil.¹⁸⁶

It is tempting also to think that Bradlaugh's enthusiasm for Freemasonry influenced Annie Besant and was partly responsible for her interest in co-masonry. Certainly Bradlaugh helped lay the foundations of Besant's knowledge of Freemasonry. She was joint publisher of his masonic pamphlets and was present at the meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Secular Society in 1884 when Bradlaugh reported on his visit to the Grand Orient in Paris. However, Besant became a co-mason long after Bradlaugh's death and her Initiation was probably due far more to her theosophical interests than any residual influence of Bradlaugh.

Patron of the Royal masonic Institution for Boys

The mourners at Bradlaugh's funeral in 1891 reflected the bewildering variety of his interests and connections. There were representatives of the Women's Franchise League, the Vaccination Commission, the Markets Rights and Tolls Commission, the Financial Reform Association, the Good Templars, Toynbee Hall and the Brighton Anarchists, as well as delegates of political groups and secular societies from all over the country. But perhaps the most surprising delegate at the funeral was a representative of the Royal Masonic Institution for Boys.¹⁸⁷ The letters of condolence received by Bradlaugh's daughter included the following dated 23 February 1891 from the Secretary to the RMIB:

'I beg to inform you that at a recent meeting of the Council of the Institution it was resolved That the Council expresses its deep sympathy and condolence with the relations of the late Charles Bradlaugh M.P. and Patron of this Institution, in the loss they have sustained by his early death.

Permit me at the same time to add my personal sympathy, having learnt from close acquaintance to admire the conscientiousness and generosity of your lamented Father.'¹⁸⁸

Bradlaugh had first made a donation of five guineas to the RMIB in 1866, becoming a Life Governor.¹⁸⁹ He continued to make this annual donation for the rest of his life, so that he had, at the time *The Freemason* described his admission into Freemasonry as 'vicious', been a Life Governor of the RMIB for ten years. In the years immediately before his death, Bradlaugh had substantially increased his contributions, making him one of the largest individual donors to the RMIB. Bradlaugh was frequently in desperate financial straits, which makes his generosity and commitment to the RMIB even more striking. This was not at all, as the following report from *The Freemason* (which even after Bradlaugh's death could not resist a jibe suggesting that the ideas of conscience and atheism were incompatible) records:

'Many of our readers are probably aware that the late Mr Bradlaugh, junior MP for the borough of Northampton, was once upon a time a freemason, though it is so many years since he threw up his connection with the Craft that the fact^{1,3,5} has probably been overlooked or forgotten. It may not, however, be generally known that by his death the Royal Masonic Institution for Boys has lost a staunch friend and generous supporter. Of late years Mr Bradlaugh has found it necessary on sundry occasions to seek a remedy at law against people who libelled him. These cases were generally settled in his favour, and a sum of money as a kind of solatium for his wounded honour was paid over to the late honorable member. But to his credit, be it said, Mr Bradlaugh, though commonly reputed to be far from a rich man, never used any of this money for his own purposes. Instead of this he handed over the amount to our boy's school and by his successive donations

constituted himself a Patron of that institution. To the end of December 1888, he had given it over sixty pounds, and was a Vice-President; in 1889 he gave a further one hundred pounds, and became a Vice-Patron; last year he added to his previous payments fifty two pounds ten shillings, and thus became a Patron.¹⁹⁰

Acknowledgements

Ellic Howe, the most remarkable of English masonic researchers, first suggested that Bradlaugh's masonic career deserved investigation and noted that the British Library held pamphlets by Bradlaugh on Freemasonry which were not at Great Queen Street. I am sad that I never met Ellic Howe, but would like to dedicate this paper to his memory. As with all research into English Freemasonry, this paper could not have been completed without the unfailingly friendly and efficient service of Rebecca Coombes, Katrina Jowett and the team in the Library at Great Queen Street. I am also grateful for the assistance and advice of Michel Brodsky, Professor Máire Cross, Robert Gilbert, John Hamill, Pierre Mollier, Professor Aubrey Newman, Raymond Salzmann and Estelle Stubbs. The responsibility for all errors is, of course, entirely mine. This paper not only bears testament to the remarkable collections at Great Queen Street, but also to the importance of the masonic holdings of the British Library. The prescience of the 19th-century librarians at the British Museum in ordering runs of *Le Monde Maçonique* and *La Chaîne d'Union* covering the key years in the history of French Freemasonry can only be marvelled at. The only disappointment at the British Library is that François Tafery apparently failed to deposit in the British Museum the numbers of *La Chaîne d'Union* printed in London.

All petitions, correspondence, subject files and other archival material are in the collections of the United Grand Lodge of England in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry at Freemasons' Hall, London, unless otherwise stated.

Notes

¹ *National Reformer* (9 December 1877), p. 817.

² *The Freemason's Chronicle* (21 October 1876), p. 259.

³ *The Freemason* (20 February 1875), p. 75. On King Kalakaua, who ruled from 1874 until his death in 1891, see Helena G. Allen, *The Betrayal of Liliuokalani, Last Queen of Hawaii 1838-1917* (Glendale, Ca., 1982), which includes (p. 136) a photograph of Kalakaua in his masonic regalia. The ceremony of the laying of the cornerstone of the Iolani Palace built by Kalakaua was performed with full masonic honours, and Kalakaua received a masonic funeral: *ibid.*, pp. 162, 236-7. Kalakaua was initiated in 1859, and his masonic career is summarized by Harold W. Kent, 'Masonry and Royalty in Hawaii', *The New Age*, August 1968, pp. 23-26.

⁴ *The Freemason* (6 March 1875), pp. 98-9.

⁵ David H. Tribe, *President Charles Bradlaugh M.P.* (1971), pp. 81, 101-2. The report of the visit of King Kalakaua to the Columbian Lodge appeared in the *National Reformer* on 7 February 1875, p. 82. The surprising thing is that Reviresco read the *National Reformer*. Indeed, subsequent references to the *National Reformer* in *The Freemason* and elsewhere indicate that it was not unusual for men of very conservative opinions to read the *National Reformer*, and that its readership was by no means restricted to radicals and freethinkers.

⁶ The standard modern biography is Tribe, *op. cit.* There are useful short accounts of Bradlaugh's life in *Biographical Dictionary of Modern British Radicals*, 3 (1870-1914), ed. Joseph O. Baylen and Norbert J. Gossman (1988), pp. 111-118; and *Dictionary of Labour Biography* 7, edited Joyce M. Bellamy and John Saville (1984), pp. 18-26. Bradlaugh's papers, held by the Bishopsgate Institute, were published in a microfilm edition by EP Microform in 1975, with a descriptive index by Edward Royle, which includes a brief summary of his life. The two volume life of Bradlaugh by his daughter, Hypatia Bradlaugh afterwards Bonner, *Charles Bradlaugh. A Record of his Life and Work* (1902) remains a valuable source, and includes (1, pp. 203-6) a short chapter on Bradlaugh as a freemason.

⁷ See *n* 50 below.

⁸ A comprehensive study of the Bradlaugh case is Walter L. Arnstein, *The Bradlaugh Case: Atheism, Sex, and Politics Among the Late Victorians* (rev. ed., Columbia Missouri, 1984).

⁹ Joss Marsh, *Word Crimes: Blasphemy, Culture and Literature in Nineteenth-Century England* (Chicago, 1998), particularly pp. 3-17, 127-268. Marsh gives limited weight to the impact of Darwin's ideas and of historical materialism generally, but Peter Fraser, in reviewing Arnstein's book, comments that 'the nature of the crisis of the 1880s of which the Bradlaugh case formed a part is entirely misconceived. It was not just a "religious" struggle but the first popular encounter between religion and scientific materialism': Arnstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 341-2. This theme is particularly evident in examining the dispute between English and French Freemasonry in 1877-8, where English objections to positivist philosophy are prominent.

- ¹⁰ *The Freemason* (13 and 20 March 1875), pp. 109, 119.
- ¹¹ *Op. cit.* (20 March 1875), p. 119. This information was repeated in the Answers to Correspondents section of the *National Reformer* on 21 March 1875, Bradlaugh declaring that he did not pretend to be an English mason but did pretend to be a member of *La Persévérante Amitié* and the *Philadelphes*.
- ¹² Bishopsgate Institute, Bradlaugh Papers No. 3337.
- ¹³ Bishopsgate Institute, Bradlaugh Papers No. 91. Reproduced in the microfilm edition of Bradlaugh's papers.
- ¹⁴ Bishopsgate Institute, Bradlaugh Papers Map Folder G. Noted as missing 25 July 2001; unfortunately this item was not included in the microfilm edition of Bradlaugh's papers.
- ¹⁵ F. W. Ordish, *The High Cross Lodge No. 754 (1858-1948)* (3rd ed. 1948), p. 13 notes that 'Although there is no evidence that he ever took an active part in the working of the Lodge... Charles Bradlaugh, who gained some eminence in Gladstonian days, was at one time a member of High Cross. His name, in fact, appears as a dining member on the roll of 1865'.
- ¹⁶ *The Freemason* (27 March 1875), p. 126.
- ¹⁷ *Calendrier Maçonnique du Grand Orient de France...1860*, p. 81.
- ¹⁸ *National Reformer* (11 April 1875), p. 225.
- ¹⁹ *The Freemason* (10 April 1875), pp. 146-7.
- ²⁰ Repeated in *The Freemason* (24 April 1875), pp. 166-7: 'The High Cross Lodge had received him, and were alone responsible for his admission into our English order'.
- ²¹ *The Freemason* (23 May 1875), p. 207.
- ²² *Op. Cit.* (24 April 1875), p. 166; *National Reformer* (18 April 1875).
- ²³ *Le Monde Maçonnique* 16 (1874-5), 503-6.
- ²⁴ *Five Dead Men Whom I Knew When Living* (London, 1877), pp. 19-23.
- ²⁵ The suggestion made by *Le Monde Maçonnique* that Smith's presence at this meeting was completely ignored by *The Freemason* was not accurate. In his original letter, Reviresco states that Bradlaugh had also attended the meeting in New York at which Sumner was elected, and added 'We say all honour to the Boston freemasons for so doing, and we thank Mr Bradlaugh for the information'. Nevertheless, it is true that this issue was not mentioned again in the subsequent editorials and correspondence in *The Freemason*.
- ²⁶ *National Reformer* (25 April 1875), p. 265.
- ²⁷ *Op. cit.* (2 May 1875), p. 284.
- ²⁸ Buchan was evidently a regular reader of the *National Reformer*, and afterwards contributed to it. He had already noticed Bradlaugh's account of his speech in Boston, and taken issue with his statement that masonic lodges existed in Europe in the seventeenth century: *National Reformer*, 21 February 1875; *The Scottish Freemasons' Magazine* (6, 15 March 1875), p. 72.
- ²⁹ *National Reformer* (21 May 1875), p. 335. This was also published in *The Freemason's Chronicle* (8 May 1875), p. 295, prompting a subsequent leader affirming the antiquity of Freemasonry: *The Freemason's Chronicle* (15 May 1875), p. 305 (with a rejoinder by Buchan, p. 326).
- ³⁰ *National Reformer* (4 July 1875), pp. 12-13; (25 July 1875), p. 61.
- ³¹ *The Rosicrucian and Masonic Record*, (April 1878), pp. 398-9; *The Freemason*, (20 April 1878), pp. 201-2.
- ³² Woodford was Editor from 1873-85: John A. Seed, 'A.F.A. Woodford – Progenitor of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076', *AQC* 93 (1980), pp. 119, 122.
- ³³ Reprinted by Kenning as *The Israelites Found in the Anglo-Saxons* (1872). Chambers was an active agitator for political reform in the 1830s, editing *The Political Letter*, and was also a supporter of many other causes, such as chancery reform.
- ³⁴ *The Freemason's Chronicle*, (2 January 1875), p. 1.
- ³⁵ *Op. cit.* (9 January 1875), pp. 24-7; (16 January 1875), pp. 34-5; (30 January 1875), pp. 67-8.
- ³⁶ *Le Monde Maçonnique* 17 (1875-6), pp. 469-71.
- ³⁷ *The Freemason* (24 April 1875), pp. 166-7.
- ³⁸ *National Reformer* (21 November 1875), p. 321.
- ³⁹ It resurfaced many years later in 1934 when 'Mancunian' wrote to *Notes and Queries* noting a reference to Bradlaugh as a freemason in a book marking the centenary of Bradlaugh's birth. He noted that, although Bradlaugh was a member of the Grand Orient, it was also stated that he belonged to a lodge in Tottenham. Declaring that an atheist freemason in England was an 'impossible situation', he asked for clarification. Bradlaugh's daughter replied explaining how Bradlaugh joined the High Cross Lodge, and giving an extract from the letter supporting Bradlaugh in the *Scottish Freemasons' Magazine*. She added 'Some lodges definitely exclude non-believers in Christianity; others do not. The *Loge des Philadelphes* [sic], which Mr. Bradlaugh joined in 1859, had upon its rolls the name of Giuseppe Garibaldi. Garibaldi was also Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Italy. But he was likewise President of Honour of the Atheist Society of Milan': *Notes and Queries* 166 (1934), pp. 370, 411-12.
- ⁴⁰ A copy is on the biographical file for Charles Bradlaugh.
- ⁴¹ *The Freemason* (23 July 1881), pp. 335-6, 345, 366. On the Surrey Masonic Hall, see further *n* 153 below.
- ⁴² *Op. cit.* (1 October 1881), p. 438.
- ⁴³ *Op. cit.* (18 November 1882), p. 643.
- ⁴⁴ *Op. cit.* (10 February 1883), p. 77.

⁴⁵ In opposing a bill to allow affirmation in 1882, Carnarvon said of Bradlaugh: 'Who was he that Parliament should allow him this privilege? Was he one with a tender conscience, with scrupulous conscientious doubts? Had he not avowed himself an atheist, and then expressed his readiness to take an oath which would have no binding effect on his conscience?' Carnarvon's views on atheism seem to have been muddled. He declared himself happy to admit honest atheists to Parliament, but nevertheless declared that once the country became godless, its legislation could not be wise: *National Reformer*, 16 July 1882. Carnarvon's willingness to admit 'honest atheists' (but not Bradlaugh) to parliament contrasts with his firm line with regard to the Grand Orient in the Quarterly Communications of December 1877 and March 1878.

⁴⁶ *The Freemason* (4 July 1885), p. 329.

⁴⁷ Tribe, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

⁴⁸ *The Freemason*, *ibid.*

⁴⁹ Moncur Conway, *The Writings of Thomas Paine* (1896), 4, pp. 290-303. Paine's Essay was first published in its expurgated form in *The Theophilanthropist* (New York, 1810), and then as a separate pamphlet: *De L'Origine de la Franc-Maçonnerie, Ouvrage Posthume de Thomas Paine* (Paris, C.F. Patris, 1812). Pierre Mollier points out that, apart from Bonneville, Paine was also influenced by Charles-François Dupuis, *Origine des tous les cultes* (1794), which was also afterwards cited as an influence by Carlile.

⁵⁰ The standard biography of Carlile is Joel H. Wiener, *Radicalism and Freethought in nineteenth-century Britain: the Life of Richard Carlile* (1983). Wiener is unusual among labour historians in that he gives full weight to Carlile's interest in Freemasonry. Carlile's *Manual of Freemasonry* is discussed in detail in the remarkable pioneering article by S.J. Fenton, 'Richard Carlile: His Life and masonic Writings', *AQC* 49 (1952). A talk by me discussing Carlile and Freemasonry is also available on the web site of the Centre for Research into Freemasonry at the University of Sheffield: www.shef.ac.uk/~crf.

⁵¹ Godfrey Higgins, *Anacalypsis* (1836), 1, p. 712; in the opening paragraphs of *The Manual of Freemasonry*, Carlile states that 'The late Godfrey Higgins once observed to me, without explanation, that there were but two masons in England – himself and the Duke of Sussex. I put in a claim to be a third. He asked me to explain, on the condition that he was not to commit himself by any observation. I did so, as here set forth. He smiled and withdrew...'

⁵² On Taylor, see I.D. McCalman, 'Popular Irreligion in early Victorian England: Infidel Preachers and Radical Theatricality in 1830s London' in *Religion and Irreligion in Victorian Society: Essays in Honour of R.K. Webb*, ed. R. W. Davis and R. J. Helmstadter (1992), pp. 51-67.

⁵³ The reprint was advertised in the *National Reformer*, (6 July 1879), p. 447, describing the book as 'The Famous Astronomico-Theological Discourse'.

⁵⁴ *The Prompter* (9, 16 and 23 April 1831).

⁵⁵ See for example *Carlile's Political Register*, 1839, p. 64: 'The Manual of Freemasonry, published in three parts, is not only an accurate account of what passes in masonic lodges; but is a beautiful illustration of the mythological foundations of modern religions. ... The whole subject is the restoration of the most ancient science of the human mind. In a phrase – Mythology was Ancient Metaphysics.'

⁵⁶ See for example *The Gauntlet* (9 March 1834); (23 March 1834). The last number of *The Gauntlet* includes a caricature of the initiation ceremony of the Tolpuddle Martyrs. Carlile advises the Tolpuddle unionists that if they want such nonsense, they can get it very cheaply in his *Manual of Freemasonry*.

⁵⁷ Tribe, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-2.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-1.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁶⁰ Marsh, *op. cit.*, pp. 242-3.

⁶¹ G. J. Holyoake, *The Principles of Secularism Illustrated* (1874).

⁶² Tribe, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-6.

⁶⁴ Charles Bradlaugh, *Letter to the Prince of Wales* (1869), p. 2.

⁶⁵ *Annuaire pour l'exercice 1863-4 Orient de Londres* (1863). It was presented by Draffen in 1984 to The Library and Museum of Freemasonry in London, where it has the classmark BE 682 PHI: subject file 'Rite of Memphis'.

⁶⁶ 'Fringe Masonry in England 1870-85, *AQC* 85 (1972); 'The Rite of Memphis in France and England 1838-70', *AQC* 92 (1978).

⁶⁷ 'Des Origines du Rite de Memphis à la Grande loge des Philadelphes 1838-1870', *Chroniques d'Histoire Maçonnique* 34 no. 1 (1985), pp. 39-61; 'Les Philadelphes et les autres loges de Communards réfugiés à Londres 1871-80', *Chroniques d'Histoire Maçonnique* 34 no. 2 (1985), pp. 37-51. I am extremely grateful to Pierre Mollier for providing me with photocopies of these articles.

⁶⁸ Combes, 'Des origines du Rite de Memphis', p. 45. According to a note by John Hamill on the 'Rite of Memphis' subject file, this lodge was gradually taken over by French-speaking English Masons between 1863-6.

⁶⁹ Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 46. In the *National Reformer* (10 December 1882), p. 417, Bradlaugh noted the death of Blanc: 'Louis Blanc was an honest earnest Frenchman. Except that we were both twenty four years ago members *des Philadelphes*, our paths have lain wide apart, but I claim – with the thousands of countrymen who will mourn at his tomb - my right to lay one white flower gently and in all reverence on the coffin which holds the dead'.

⁷⁰ For the chronology, see Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

- ⁷¹ Combes, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-51.
- ⁷² *Vadé-Mecum de l'initié aux Trois Grades Symboliques d'Apprenti, de Compagnon et de Maître de la Maçonnerie Universelle* (Londres, 1856). A copy of the second volume is in the British Library: 1785.bb.57(4).
- ⁷³ Combes, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-5.
- ⁷⁴ Copies of the first two editions of the statutes are in The Library and Museum of Freemasonry, under the classmark BE 680 PHI.
- ⁷⁵ Both Stratford and Woolwich had very active secular and freethought societies whose proceedings were regularly reported in the *National Reformer*. P. Le Lubez, who held offices in various Lodges associated with the *Philadelphes* was active in the Stratford secular society.
- ⁷⁶ George Draffen, in a letter to John Hamill of 29 July 1984, comments that 'The membership list could well have passed for a Scottish lodge on Clydesdale at the same date': Subject File 'Rite of Memphis'.
- ⁷⁷ Combes, *op. cit.*, pp. 52, 55.
- ⁷⁸ *The Freemasons' Magazine*, 9 March 1859, pp. 450-1.
- ⁷⁹ *Op. cit.* (1 June 1859), pp. 1031-4: 'The document which follows is neatly written on a large sheet of parchment, adorned with masonic emblems, apparently one used for the certificates of the "Order of Memphis". It has the following heading, 'Au nom du G. conseil Gen. de l'Ordre Maç. Réformé de Memphis, sous les auspices de la G. Loge des Philadelphes, à tous les Maçons répandus sur les deux Hémisphères; Salut, Amitié, Prospérité, Courage, Tolérance...'
- ⁸⁰ *The Freemasons' Magazine* (27 August 1859), pp. 150-1.
- ⁸¹ Original letter in subject file, 'Rite of Memphis'.
- ⁸² Original letter in subject file, 'Rite of Memphis'.
- ⁸³ Copy of circular on subject file, 'Rite of Memphis'.
- ⁸⁴ 'Fringe Masonry', pp. 245-6. The original letter from Equality Lodge is on the 'Rite of Memphis' subject file.
- ⁸⁵ Historical Correspondence (Foreign).
- ⁸⁶ Noted by Howe, 'Rite of Memphis', pp. 6-7. The pamphlet is in the British Library, pressmark 4784.aa.38(7).
- ⁸⁷ The author's address is given as Clear View Cottage, St Lawrence, Jersey, and the printer used was also from Jersey. A Lodge, *Amis de l'Avenir*, had been established in Jersey by French refugees in 1862, but had been refused recognition by the Provincial Grand Master because of its refusal to use a bible: Combes, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60. Probably members of this Lodge were involved in the production of *Masonic Intolerance*.
- ⁸⁸ Pierre Chevalier, *Histoire de la Franc-Maçonnerie Française* (Paris, 1974), 2, pp. 396-411.
- ⁸⁹ Hypatia Bradlaugh afterwards Bonner, *op. cit.*, p. 203.
- ⁹⁰ Photocopy of circular of 18 May 1863 in Bibliothèque Nationale: 'Rite of Memphis' subject file.
- ⁹¹ Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 56; circular of 18 May 1863 on 'Rite of Memphis' subject file. French refugees in London organized a number of social events for French visitors during the Exhibition. These included a soirée held at the Freemasons' Tavern. These events laid the basis for the establishment of the First International, in which some members of the *Philadelphes*, such as Le Lubez, took a prominent part: Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 57; Henry Collins and Chimen Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement: Years of the First International* (1965), pp. 26-8 (these meetings presumably took place at the Freemasons' Tavern, not Freemasons' Hall).
- ⁹² These affiliations are listed in the 1863 directory in The Library and Museum of Freemasonry. A recent study of the lodge in Verviers is Armand de Hagen, *Maçonnerie et Politique au XIXe siècle, la Loge Vervétoise de 'Philadelphes'* (Brussels, 1986).
- ⁹³ Benoît Desquesnes, *Esquisse Autobiographique* (1888), p. 22. Desquesnes also describes (p. 24) a reception thrown by the *Philadelphes* for Garibaldi in 1864.
- ⁹⁴ A copy of a circular dated 18 May 1863 in the Bibliothèque Nationale is on the 'Rite of Memphis' subject file in The Library and Museum of Freemasonry.
- ⁹⁵ Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 56; *La Chaîne d'Union* 1 January 1870, p. 113. The first London correspondent of *La Chaîne d'Union* after its publication transferred to Paris was Prosper Simard, a member of the *Philadelphes* who had been the first editor of the journal in London: *La Chaîne d'Union* 5 (1869), p. 25.
- ⁹⁶ Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
- ⁹⁷ 'Rite of Memphis' subject file.
- ⁹⁸ Hubert had been a member of the governing body of the Rite of Memphis in France after 1848: Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
- ⁹⁹ Combes, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-8.
- ¹⁰⁰ Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 58.
- ¹⁰¹ It is in the document collection at The Library and Museum of Freemasonry.
- ¹⁰² Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 59.
- ¹⁰³ *The Freemason* (12 June 1869), p. 7.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Op. cit.* (4 September 1869), pp. 115-6.
- ¹⁰⁵ *National Reformer* 13 June 1869, pp. 369-70.
- ¹⁰⁶ A copy is in the British Library, pressmark 4782.f.5(9).
- ¹⁰⁷ Frank Prochaska, *The Republic of Britain 1760-2000* (2000), p. 129.
- ¹⁰⁸ *The Freemason* (28 August 1869), p. 1.

- ¹⁰⁹ *National Reformer* (8 August 1869), p. 85.
- ¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 96.
- ¹¹¹ *Op. cit.* (15 August 1869), p. 97.
- ¹¹² On Le Lubez, see further Collins and Abramsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 26, 28, 32-3, 35-7, 40-4, 60, 64-5, 67, 101-3, 110-3, 165, 182, 190, 206, 237, 285; Tribe, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-6, 188, 212.
- ¹¹³ By W. Willis: *National Reformer* (26 September 1869), p. 204.
- ¹¹⁴ *The Freemason* (12 June 1869), p. 8. For identification of Mackenzie as Cryptonymous, see *The Freemason* (2 May 1874), p. 263.
- ¹¹⁵ *National Reformer* (31 July 1870), p. 76.
- ¹¹⁶ Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 59.
- ¹¹⁷ Tribe, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-6.
- ¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 123.
- ¹¹⁹ Combes, 'Les Philadelphes et les autres loges de Communards réfugiés', p. 37.
- ¹²⁰ *National Reformer*, (9 July 1871), p. 17.
- ¹²¹ Combes, 'Des Origines du Rite de Memphis', p. 58.
- ¹²² Combes, 'Les Philadelphes et les autres loges de Communards réfugiés', pp. 40-2. The venue is given as the Canterbury Tavern, but the description of the location (north of Islington) makes it clear that the Canonbury Tavern is meant.
- ¹²³ Combes, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-8. The 1857 statutes of the *Philadelphes* in The Library and Museum of Freemasonry were printed by Bro. Zeno Świętosławski of Holborn, suggesting that these Polish Lodges were in existence before 1870.
- ¹²⁴ Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
- ¹²⁵ Roger Magraw, *France 1815-1914: The Bourgeois Century* (Oxford, 1983), p. 209.
- ¹²⁶ Magraw, *op. cit.*, pp. 209-24.
- ¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 216-8.
- ¹²⁸ Chevalier, *op. cit.*, 3, pp. 56-71.
- ¹²⁹ Magraw, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-3.
- ¹³⁰ *The Freemason* (19 January 1884), p. 25.
- ¹³¹ *The Freemason's Chronicle* (23 December 1876), p. 419.
- ¹³² *The Freemason* (19 January 1884), p. 25.
- ¹³³ *The Freemason's Chronicle* (25 December 1875), p. 410.
- ¹³⁴ See, for example, *The Freemason's Chronicle* (10 November 1877), pp. 305-6.
- ¹³⁵ Chevalier, *op. cit.*, 2, p. 449.
- ¹³⁶ *The Freemason* (31 October 1874), pp. 676-7; (13 February 1875), pp. 66-7; *Le Monde Maçonique* 16 (1874-5), pp. 155-7, 204-6, 219-225.
- ¹³⁷ Chevalier, *op. cit.*, 2, p. 536.
- ¹³⁸ *Le Monde Maçonique* 15 (1873-4), pp. 186-7; 16 (1874-5), pp. 119-125.
- ¹³⁹ Chevalier, *op. cit.*, 2, p. 545.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Le Monde Maçonique* 15 (1873-4), pp. 334, 430, 514; Combes, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-9.
- ¹⁴¹ George Odger, English radical shoemaker, trade unionist and socialist.
- ¹⁴² Subject file 'Grand Orient of France'
- ¹⁴³ *Le Monde Maçonique* 16 (1874-5), pp. 175-83. *L'Union Maçonique* was still active in 1875; it was this Lodge which had sent by means of Bradlaugh a letter of congratulation to the Adelphi Lodge on the election of Smith as Junior Warden.
- ¹⁴⁴ For example, *Le Monde Maçonique* 17 (1875-6), pp. 472; 18 (1876-7), p. 101.
- ¹⁴⁵ *Le Monde Maçonique* 16 (1874-5), pp. 279-283, 318-322, 358-366; 17 (1875-6), pp. 84-94, 179-188, 269-81, 377-79, 438-445, 528-53; 18 (1876-7), pp. 41-5.
- ¹⁴⁶ *The Freemason* (10 June 1876), pp. 258-9; (17 June 1876), p. 278; (1 July 1876), pp. 304-5; (8 July 1876), pp. 317-8; (22 July 1876), p. 329; (9 September 1876), p. 403; (6 January 1877), pp. 1-3; (13 January 1877), p. 16; *Le Monde Maçonique* 18 (1876-7), pp. 157-9; *The Freemason's Chronicle* (3 June 1876), pp. 353-4, 369-70. *Le Monde Maçonique* welcomed the outcome of this controversy as evidence that English Freemasonry (which it felt had used the legends of Freemasonry as a means of justifying support for the church) had not entirely forgotten the true traditions of Freemasonry. The institution of masonic lifeboats was a cause which had been specially promoted by *The Freemason's Chronicle* since its inception. However, in this controversy it preferred that the money should instead be given to masonic charities.
- ¹⁴⁷ Charles Bradlaugh, *The Autobiography of Mr Bradlaugh: A Page of His Life* (1873), p. 18.
- ¹⁴⁸ *The National Reformer* (29 April 1877), p. 269.
- ¹⁴⁹ *The Freemason* (1 July 1876), pp. 304-5; (8 July 1876), pp. 317-8; (22 July 1876), p. 329. A letter in support of Langley was published by *The Freemason's Chronicle* (15 July 1876), p. 37. On Langley, see further *The Era of the Reform League: English Labour and Radical Politics*, ed. J. Breuilley, G. Niedhart and A. Taylor (Mannheim, 1995), p. 333.
- ¹⁵⁰ *The Freemason's Chronicle* (21 October 1876), p. 259.

¹⁵¹ The petition for the Crichton Lodge states that the founders: 'are associated either professionally or sympathetically with the work of Education, and that they had been led to meet at Camberwell for consultations and as members of committees and otherwise. Finding so many masons among themselves and worthy men desirous of becoming masons, united with them in common educational efforts, they have determined to ask for a warrant to meet at the Surrey Masonic Hall.'

¹⁵² See, for example, John Lawson and Harold Silver, *A Social History of Education in England* (1973), pp. 292-296, 314-324, 350-5; Magraw, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-8.

¹⁵³ See, for example, *The Freemason* (6 July 1872), p. 468; (15 March 1873), p. 192; (24 May 1873), p. 346; (19 July 1873), p. 463; (29 May 1874), pp. 341-2; (17 July 1875), pp. 310-11. A lithograph of the hall was printed in *The Freemason* (20 February 1875), facing p. 80. *Le Monde Maçonnique* 16 (1874-5), p. 502, criticized the octagonal tower, with 'its elongated dome in the shape of an egg', as a pointless and extravagant addition.

¹⁵⁴ *The Freemason* (25 November 1876), p. 522.

¹⁵⁵ *The Freemason* (6 January 1877), p. 7; (10 February 1877), p. 56; (17 February 1877), pp. 67, 74; (24 March 1877), p. 117; (31 March 1877), pp. 126-7; (5 May 1877), p. 176; (2 June 1877), p. 221. Eventually, after the final breach, *The Freemason*, declaring that in France a body such as the *Philadelphes* would be shut up in twenty four hours, refused further controversy with *Le Monde Maçonnique*: (23 February 1878), p. 105.

¹⁵⁶ *The Freemason* (7 February 1877), pp. 56-7.

¹⁵⁷ *Le Monde Maçonnique* 19 (1877-8), pp. 15-22.

¹⁵⁸ 'This ingenuous [*sic*] and ingenious youth'; 'masonic socialism, revolution with a vengeance, and anything more childish, ridiculous, or pitiable we have never seen, and we can only suppose that the writer is seriously suffering from "communism on the brain"', *The Freemason* (2 June 1877), p. 221.

¹⁵⁹ For example, *The Freemason* (7 April 1877), pp. 136-7; (12 May 1877), pp. 190-1; (9 February 1878), p. 78; (13 April 1878), p. 196.

¹⁶⁰ *La Chaîne d'Union* 13 (1877), pp. 305-6; *The Freemason* (23 June 1877), pp. 255-7.

¹⁶¹ *The Freemason* (16 December 1876), pp. 564-5.

¹⁶² *Op. cit.* (22 September 1877), p. 392.

¹⁶³ *Le Monde Maçonnique* 19 (1877-8), pp. 407-9.

¹⁶⁴ *The Freemason* (10 November 1877), p. 479.

¹⁶⁵ *Op. cit.* (9 February 1878), p. 75.

¹⁶⁶ *Op. cit.* (10 November 1877), p. 482; (17 November 1877), p. 492.

¹⁶⁷ *Op. cit.* (1 December 1877), p. 522.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 513, 520.

¹⁶⁹ *National Reformer* (20 January 1878), p. 922.

¹⁷⁰ *The Freemason* (8 December 1877), pp. 527-9, 534.

¹⁷¹ *Op. cit.* (9 March 1878), p. 125. Copies of the Committee's report and the resolutions are on the subject file 'Grand Orient of France'.

¹⁷² *The Freemason* (23 March 1878), p. 162.

¹⁷³ *Op. cit.* (25 October 1884), p. 493.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 494.

¹⁷⁵ *La Chaîne d'Union* 20 (1884), pp. 438-9.

¹⁷⁶ *The Freemason* (12 January 1884), pp. 11-12; (19 January 1884), p. 25; (26 January 1884), p. 39.

¹⁷⁷ Subject file 'Grand Orient of France'.

¹⁷⁸ A translation of Shadwell Clerke's reply is in the subject file 'Grand Orient of France'.

¹⁷⁹ *National Reformer* (7 December 1884), p. 375.

¹⁸⁰ *Op. cit.* (1 March 1885), pp. 193-4.

¹⁸¹ *Our Corner* 5 (Jan.-July 1885), pp. 193-198, 257-260.

¹⁸² Marsh, *op. cit.*, pp. 133, 229.

¹⁸³ A copy is in the British Library, pressmark 4783.cc.11(4).

¹⁸⁴ Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

¹⁸⁵ The letter is filed with the lodge returns. It prompted a circular from Letchworth as Grand Secretary to the Masters of all lodges reminding them that English masons were barred from visiting Hiram Lodge, and that English lodges should not receive members of the Hiram Lodge as visitors: subject file 'Grand Orient of France'.

¹⁸⁶ Raymond Salzmann, "'Tawe"/"Harmony Lodge" (GODF): *La vie et mort d'une loge du Pays de Galles*', *La Revue de l'Institut d'Étude et de Recherches Maçonniques Septentrion* 2002 no. 1, pp. 97-105.

¹⁸⁷ Tribe, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

¹⁸⁸ Bishopsgate Institute, Bradlaugh Papers, No. 2220. Reproduced in the microfilm edition of the Bradlaugh Papers.

¹⁸⁹ Bradlaugh's donations are recorded in the annual reports of the RMIB.

¹⁹⁰ *The Freemason* (7 February 1891), p. 75. See also Tribe, *op. cit.*, pp. 169, 268, and Hypatia Bradlaugh afterwards Bonner, *op. cit.*, p. 206.