

Introduction

Modern Freemasonry emerged from a milieu of early eighteenth-century London clubs, salons, and similar societies that were coming into existence in private, outside the control of the state. In 1709 the influential British social theorist Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, wrote a letter to a friend describing the emergence of these new forms of social life. Gentlemen who had previously upheld the “Sacred Truths” of the royal court, he recounted, were now meeting in “private” societies. There they engaged in wide-ranging conversations, “unravelling or refuting any Argument” so that greater truths might prevail. These “polite” societies, the English theorist observed, provided a new social space where urban gentlemen were free to discuss all manner of subjects, bound by private friendships characterized by “reciprocal tenderness and affection” that kept a studied distance from the solemn orthodoxies of state and church. These conversations, Shaftesbury warned, could take place only in private among gentlemen who knew one another well. To have such free interchange in public was “above the common Reach.”¹

By embracing one another as brothers joined by love rather than obedience to an authoritarian father, the members of these new societies conducted social relations in new ways. New ideas, put forward most notably by the Earl of Shaftesbury, held that people naturally got along with one another and were genuinely concerned for the well-being of others.² These innate sentiments could do naturally what the

heavy hands of the monarchy and the church could no longer do artificially through coercion. According to their 1723 constitution, the gentlemen who joined the Masonic fraternity saw themselves “as Brethren upon the same level.”³ Within these affectionate bonds of brotherhood, members subscribed only to “that Religion in which all men Agree.” No longer bound as “in Ancient Times” by the “Religion of the Country or Nation,” Masons were free to pursue a variety of religious paths. Politically, aside from an agreement to be “a peaceable Subject to the Civil Powers,” no orthodox position was required.⁴

Freemasonry’s modern constitution, however, is rooted in ancient foundations. Though binding itself to progressive rules and regulations, the fraternity prefaced its constitution with a mythic history that traces Masonic origins to ancient wisdom and occult knowledge. No longer a medieval guild of stoneworkers, the brotherhood nevertheless retained the symbolic language and secret ceremonies of initiation. Within the secrecy of the lodge, members were free to entertain a variety of spiritual perspectives.⁵ Druids, pantheists, skeptics, and deists as well as Jews, Catholics, and Protestants could all be found within the eighteenth-century fraternity. Indeed, the new, speculative Freemasonry embodied the ideals of the age while allowing for alternative possibilities.

The purpose of this book is to weave the story of Freemasonry into the narrative of American religious history. Freighted with the mythical legacies of stonemasons’ guilds and the Newtonian revolution, English Freemasonry came to colonial America with a vast array of cultural baggage, which was drawn on, added to, and transformed in different ways in its sojourn through American culture. This study argues that from the 1730s through the early twentieth century, the religious worlds of an evolving American social order broadly appropriated the changing beliefs and initiatory practices of this all-male society. For much of American history, Freemasonry was a counter and a complement to Protestant churches and a forum for collective action among racial and ethnic groups outside the European American mainstream. As a widely available resource for organizing social relations and ideology, Freemasonry provides an interpretive lens through which to reframe our understanding of the American religious past.

This book comes at a time when the transformation of the field of American religious history has opened new areas of inquiry. In the past thirty years, a divinity school-based concern with the intellectual history of European American Protestants has given way to a religious studies interest in African Americans, Native Americans, Jews, Catho-

lics, and other peoples and practices outside the domain of the Protestant middle class. Much of the new scholarship cuts across boundaries of gender, class, and region while paying particular attention to ritual and popular religion. Like most of the older American religious history, until recently the story of American Freemasonry has been a tale of middle-class European American northeastern male Protestants. Since the 1990s, however, a multicultural story of African American, Native American, Jewish, and Catholic Masons has emerged. In different ways, each of these groups employed elements of Freemasonry to navigate their way through a largely European American society. By assessing the appropriation of Freemasonry within and outside the European American mainstream, this study contributes to the ongoing effort to broaden and diversify our understanding of American religious history.

Although Freemasons rarely claimed that their fraternity was a religion, many both within and outside the brotherhood recognized its religious character. The society's modern constitution states that Masons cannot be atheists.⁶ While denying that Freemasonry was a religion, most members appear to have been comfortable calling the order a handmaid of religion (that strove to make men better). Outside the fraternity, in 1972 Sydney Ahlstrom, the then-dean of American religious historians, observed that "for many they [the lodges] seemed to satisfy social needs and a yearning for rites and ceremonies that Protestantism lacked. For many others they seem to have provided a religious alternative to the churches."⁷ More pointed were Freemasonry's major Catholic and evangelical religious opponents, who accused the fraternity of creating a veritable church of the Antichrist.

Since Masons did not understand their beliefs and practices as constituting a religion, to claim that Freemasonry was a religion imposes an interpretive lens that inevitably distorts Masonic practices. Once the brotherhood is declared to be a religion, then how *religion* is defined determines what in the fraternity is described as religious. As Jonathan Z. Smith has pointed out, "'Religion' is not a native term; it is a term created by scholars for their intellectual purposes and therefore is theirs to define."⁸ Moreover, we know that academic definitions of *religion* were first developed in the context of colonialism and deployed as justifications for the marginalization of some social groups.⁹ When academics employ the term to identify the idioms of people who claim not to be religious, these definitions can't help but skew our understanding of those practices.¹⁰ However, the fact that the category of religion is inflected with power does not render it useless. Rather, we can explore

how this category was rejected and transformed by Masons and mobilized against them by others in the American religious arena to make boundaries and create identities. But this exploration cannot take place without some conceptualization of what we are talking about. To reap the analytic benefits of placing American Freemasonry into the context of American religious historiography, we need to adopt a broad and flexible definition of *religion* that can allow for the inclusion of a variety of voices. To that end, in this book I define *religion* as shared ideologies and practices that help people become human in relation to transcendent realities.¹¹ By expanding and complicating the terrain of American religious history to include a group not usually seen as a carrier of religious beliefs and practices, this book intends to show how Freemasonry's American history contributes to a broader understanding of the multiple influences that have shaped religion in American culture.

Freemasonry's quest for primeval truth, for example, helps to reveal an enduring attraction to ancient wisdom throughout the American past. Fragments of broader, older ways of believing and acting, some predating Christianity, suffused colonial Protestantism.¹² Studies of early nineteenth-century Protestant primitivism, in turn, have unearthed a yearning to restore the church's ancient foundations.¹³ Inquiries into early Mormonism have revealed its occult and hermetical origins.¹⁴ Explorations of African American race histories, the Cherokee Keetoowah Society, Jewish efforts to create a modern Ararat, and antimodernism at the end of the nineteenth century have uncovered searches for intense spiritual experience among the archaic, medieval, and Eastern sources of the past.¹⁵ Freemasons participated in all of these pursuits.

In its efforts to cross political and religious boundaries, Freemasonry rivaled Protestantism in influencing the creation of the new American society.¹⁶ As one of the oldest and most pervasive American voluntary associations, Masons were more successful than the members of any other colonial organization in joining together disparate political and religious leaders. While regional denominational disputes stymied Revolutionary War chaplains, Masonic military lodges built ties among Continental Army officers. Perhaps even more than the Protestantism that emerged from the Revolution, a newly Christian and republican Freemasonry became closely identified with the new American nation. Where colonial leaders had invited Protestant ministers to sanctify their assemblies, by the early days of the new republic, American citizens were calling on Masons to bless their new institutions.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the fraternity began to develop its private, ritual life. Though scholarship has most frequently seen the expanding economy's creation of boundaries between public and private as most influencing women's lives, these changes had far-reaching effects on both men and women.¹⁷ Emerging alongside rather than replacing the public activities of the lodge, Masonic ritual life contributed to the creation of a male private sphere that preceded the appearance of a private world of piety and domesticity among nineteenth-century Protestant women. Compared to colonial Freemasonry, in which men of good breeding and upright character attained the honor of membership as a means of entry into "polite" society, the early nineteenth-century version was a private world of warmth and intimacy, separated from an increasingly cold, competitive, and uncertain public sphere, with rituals that spoke to the struggles and anxieties of young men living amid widespread social change. In creating these rituals, moreover, Masons contributed to a new understanding of the inner, "true" self, which could be realized only through emotional assault on outward defenses. Where studies of women and Protestantism have described the evolution of a pious women's domestic sphere that encompassed the church, the growth and development of Freemasonry's rich ritual life suggests the parallel evolution of a private haven of intimacy and ritual among growing numbers of men as the century progressed.

Though divided by gender into church and lodge, respectively, women and men were nevertheless joined together within a larger relational system. The masculine world of Freemasonry could never be totally separated from the feminine domain of the home. Moreover, late nineteenth-century efforts to resolve the tensions between lodge and home suggest a growing interest in closer cooperation between men and women. In contrast to scholarship that has emphasized antagonism between the sexes, this inquiry finds a growing acceptance of Freemasonry within the churches and an accommodation of women in lodge activities.¹⁸ Between the brotherhood's female auxiliary, who supported it, and the radical evangelical women who attacked it were the great majority of Protestant women, who said little about Freemasonry. More than a story of the subjugation of women by men, relations between the sexes involved challenges to and accommodations of each other's understanding of social life.

When placed alongside American Protestantism, the changing ideas and practices of the Masonic brotherhood suggest a religion not well known to the field of American religious history. At its eighteenth-century

origin, the modern fraternity endorsed the Enlightenment theory which holds that people are naturally concerned for one another's well-being. In the hands of influential Anglican clerics, this inclusive new social vision placed less emphasis on revelation and more on reason. In the revolutionary period, Freemasonry joined Protestantism in adopting the republican and democratic impulses of the new American society. Ministers from the leading Episcopal, Unitarian, and Congregational denominations joined the fraternity, which made internal efforts to Christianize its beliefs and practices. The ritual exposures of the Anti-Masonic movement, however, broke the identification of the postwar fraternity with the special providence of the new American nation, leading the fraternity to retrench to a more general Protestant conservatism. Though consistent with the rationalism, commonsense realism, and antirevivalism of antebellum liberal Protestantism, Freemasonry diverged from the expansive mood it fostered. The optimistic faith in the immanent love of God that pervaded the new society stood strikingly apart from the brotherhood's awareness of human limitations.

The Protestant themes running through the history of American Freemasonry should not obscure the fact that other than atheism, the modern constitutions proscribed very little with regard to religion. Moreover, with no central authority imposing ideological orthodoxy, what it means to be a Mason has always been susceptible to cultural shifts, regional variations, and individual interpretations. Over the course of their brotherhood's fabled history, Masonic writers have generally worked to reflect the religious ethos of a lodge's particular setting. Yet despite this apparent conformity to surrounding religious life, Freemasonry carried within it a vast array of cultural elements that paralleled and diverged from Protestant religious beliefs and practices. Moreover, beyond the European American, old-stock, cultural Protestants who composed the great majority of the fraternity's North American adherents, the African Americans, Native Americans, Jews, and Catholics who joined the brotherhood adapted its resources to their particular needs and desires.

Excluded from European American Masonry, African Americans formed the Prince Hall Masons in the late eighteenth century. The records of this black fraternity have become a site for expanding our knowledge of African American history. Scholars have employed this resource to better understand black class formation, the construction of African American masculinity, and the institutions of black civil society.¹⁹ Through a consideration of the origins of African American

Masonry and the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) in North Carolina, I suggest that this fraternity not only came into existence alongside and complementary to black churches but also, like the churches, provided symbolic, ideological, and organizational resources for African Americans to resist racism and find their way through contested terrain of American civil society.

Native American interactions with Freemasonry similarly date from the late eighteenth century. Older approaches to Native American history have understood Freemasonry, when mentioned at all, as part of a larger, “civilizing” process that emphasized the inevitable assimilation of Native tribes into the values and practices of white society. More recent approaches, in contrast, have stressed Native American resistance to Euro-American hegemony.²⁰ Moving with this more recent historiography, I hold that Native Americans adapted Masonic ideals and practices as part of a larger effort to both preserve Native identity and employ new spiritual resources to confront the challenges of accommodation to American society. At the turn into the twentieth century, moreover, when white, middle-class Masons were drawn to Native American wisdom in their quest for primeval truth, modernizing Indians sought within Freemasonry a means for finding their place in middle-class American society.

Jews and Catholics have an even longer history of membership in the Masonic brotherhood. Jews were admitted shortly after the creation of the modern fraternity’s 1723 constitution, while Catholics formed the original medieval membership of what was then a confraternity of practicing stoneworkers. In the nineteenth century, Jews rose to prominence in the fraternity, while a series of papal attacks warned Catholics away from fraternal involvement. By the late nineteenth century, I argue, the desires of immigrant Jews and Catholics for organizations that responded to their needs both to assimilate into American society and to retain their ethnic and religious identities resulted in the creation of their own fraternal orders based on the Masonic template.

THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Beyond the ways in which Freemasonry has shaped and been shaped by American culture, this study explores its participation in the “public sphere,” the realm of social life where citizens set aside coercive external religious and state authority and individual status distinctions to create collective opinion through rational communication. As conceived

and developed by the German theorist Jürgen Habermas, the public sphere allows for its participants to arrive at a consensus based on “the authority of the better argument,” which might then become the public will. In Habermas’s formulation, the public sphere emerged in the late seventeenth century from the struggle against arbitrary state authority. Using England as his case study, he argues that the development of “rational-critical” debate grew out of the movement of people and ideas in London clubs and societies. Mediating between society and the state, private clubs were instrumental in the formation of the public sphere, and their modes of discourse necessary to the creation of public opinion. Through the rapid establishment of print media, especially newspapers, and private societies characterized by literary and critical discourses, this “classical public sphere” spread through eighteenth-century Britain, France, and Holland. It continued, Habermas holds, until the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the power of large corporations, the rise of state interventions, and social fragmentation eroded the independence of public opinion and undermined the legitimacy of its institutions.²¹

Consistent with Habermas’s conception of the public sphere, Freemasonry was one of a variety of “polite societies” that formed in English and American cities between the 1690s and the 1760s. These voluntary organizations nurtured sociability through amiable conversation, literature, and polite pleasures. In contrast to older notions of hospitality, which reinforced traditional ties of family, ethnicity, church, and local community, the new sociability practiced by these societies promoted friendship and common interests among disparate people in the emerging public spaces of coffeehouses, taverns, and elegant homes. David Shields has persuasively argued that the various colonial American private and polite societies—including Freemasonry—helped to hold the social order together in an era that had moved beyond hereditary aristocracy yet came before the development of the middle class.²²

To differing degrees and at different times, the cultural template of Freemasonry gave shape and content to the American public sphere. Emerging in coastal cities in the 1730s, the first American Freemason lodges were participants in a nascent American “polite” society. In a colonial America where, unlike Habermas’s conception of eighteenth-century England, religious discourse predominated, Masons contributed to a rationalization if not a secularization of the emerging public sphere. In the early nineteenth century, the brotherhood created a white male private sphere, apart from its well-regarded public face, that paralleled

and at times dueled with a white women's private sphere fractured by class and religious divisions. In the 1820s, the immediate and widespread emergence of Anti-Masonry witnessed to the rapid expansion of the public sphere through newspapers and other print media. The movement of late nineteenth-century affluent, educated women into the public sphere, moreover, can be viewed through the lens of the emergence of female affiliates, such as the Eastern Star wives of Freemasons. Beyond these and other involvements in the public sphere, this study discusses how African Americans, Native Americans, Jews, and Catholics each created "counterpublic" forms and uses for Freemasonry in a rapidly expanding and diversifying nineteenth-century American society.²³

SCHOLARSHIP ON AMERICAN FREEMASONRY

This book comes at a time of growing appreciation for the impact of Freemasonry on major developments in American life. Earlier historians dismissed the fraternity as too obscure or exotic to have substantially influenced the course of events. Some explained away Anti-Masonry as social paranoia.²⁴ Social scientists, in turn, focused on the fraternity's sociological and economic benefits while taking little interest in Freemasonry's beliefs and practices.²⁵ Compounding the problem has been the historical writing of Masons themselves, which has been primarily concerned with the origins and meaning of the fraternity's social and ritual life and less interested in the lodge's interactions with the surrounding society. Recently, however, Masonic writers have demonstrated a broader understanding of Masonic history, while a new generation of historians has contributed to a growing appreciation of the influence of Freemasonry on American life. This study draws together much of this new scholarship while advancing arguments that offer a more complete picture of the influences of Freemasonry on American culture.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, Masonic antiquarians have produced multivolume chronicles, regional histories, and more narrowly focused monographs. In America, this includes the regional histories and related works of Albert Gallatin Mackey (South Carolina), Edward T. Schultz (Maryland), Charles T. McClenachan (New York), and Julius F. Sachse and Norris S. Barratt (Pennsylvania). Each of these histories, and the more general early twentieth-century overviews provided by Melvin Maynard Johnson and Jacob Hugo Tatsch, makes selective use of what is still a massive amount of undigested individual and Grand

Lodge records, sermons, and orations.²⁶ In Great Britain, the landmark work is Robert Freke Gould's *History of Freemasonry*, first published in the 1880s and edited by Dudley Wright in 1936. The midcentury British team of Douglas Knoop and G. P. Jones produced the best histories of early modern Masonry, while the University of Saint Andrews historian David Stevenson has written the most authoritative account of the brotherhood's origins in Scotland.²⁷ Two Masonic research journals, the longstanding *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* (founded in 1886) and the more recent *Heredom* (founded in 1992), have published articles and reprinted primary materials on a wide range of topics. Within the past two decades, a new generation of American Masonic historians has produced a more scholarly literature. The best of these include Wayne A. Huss's Pennsylvania Grand Lodge history, Mark A. Tabbert's overview of American Freemasonry, and two volumes edited by Brent Morris and others that bring together essays by Masonic antiquarians and professional historians.²⁸ With the 2007 inauguration in Edinburgh of the annual International Conference on the History of Freemasonry, this intermingling of Masons and academic scholars has grown.²⁹

Just as Masonic writing has more thoroughly engaged the available sources and broadened in scope, since the late 1970s scholars have shown a growing interest in the American brotherhood's social and cultural significance. In 1977, Dorothy Ann Lipson published her pioneering study *Freemasonry in Federalist Connecticut, 1789–1835*. In that book, she establishes that the revolutionary-era fraternity provided a sense of corporate identity for an emerging class of men whose entrepreneurial and political activity, mobility, and latitudinarian spirit conflicted with the verities of the old Connecticut “standing order.” Lynn Dumenil's 1984 *Freemasonry and American Culture, 1880–1930* focuses on how the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century ideology of Masonic writers mirrored the religious and moralistic content of American society's concerns and values while providing a “sacred asylum” from the immoral, competitive, and commercial world beyond the temple. In 1987, the American religious historian Anthony D. Fels finished his dissertation, “The Square and the Compass: San Francisco's Freemasons and American Religion, 1870–1900,” which traces the religious parameters of the late nineteenth-century San Francisco brotherhood. Two theory-driven books appeared in 1989. In *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism*, the sociologist Mary Ann Clawson uses a neo-Marxist approach to explore the relationship

between fraternalism and conceptions of class and gender. She argues that the social and ideological resources of fraternalism provided a basis for unity among men of different social statuses. At the same time, in their efforts to preserve male autonomy, these all-male societies offered an alternative to female domesticity. An interpretive framework informed by gender theory and cultural anthropology guides *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America*. In this provocative book, Mark C. Carnes delves into the content of late nineteenth-century fraternal rituals to argue that the growth of these orders can be largely attributed to their providing rites of passage from the domestic world of women to the masculine workplace.³⁰

The book you are reading is most indebted to Steven C. Bullock, for his 1996 *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730–1840*, a watershed in historians' efforts to articulate the impact of Freemasonry on colonial and early nineteenth-century American society and culture. Bullock's study was the first to trace the contours of American Masonry's early history. It argues that colonial Freemasonry exemplified the cosmopolitan ideals of provincial elites and was then transformed by the artisanal ideals of liberty, democracy, and public virtue. Employing the methods of quantitative social history and ethnographic cultural history, Bullock sees the fraternity as shaping and being shaped by momentous developments in nineteenth-century America, including democracy, individualism, sentimentalism, and the emergence of public and private spheres. Moreover, the fraternity provided resources for artisans, women, African Americans, and churches to respond creatively to extraordinary social changes. Rather than explain away the motives of Masonic brothers and those opposed to them, Bullock takes their beliefs and activities seriously and through this approach provides the most convincing argument to date for the social and cultural significance of early American Freemasonry.³¹ Though the early chapters of my book build on many of Bullock's insights, my interpretation diverges from his in placing American Freemasonry in the context of the religious history of the period.

Recent years have brought the beginnings of an exploration of the influence of Freemasonry beyond the white middle class. The sociologists Theda Skocpol and Jennifer Lynn Oser have statistically documented the origins and development of African American fraternalism.³² Nick Salvatore, Joanna Brooks, Cory D.B. Walker, and Stephen Kantrowitz have argued for the significance of fraternalism in the late nineteenth-century

American black community.³³ Philip J. Deloria, Joy Porter, and Patrick N. Mingos have researched Freemasonry among Native Americans.³⁴ Daniel Soyer has explored the development of Jewish fraternal orders, and Christopher J. Kauffman has written on the Catholic Knights of Columbus.³⁵ These and other studies are bringing into focus the wide-ranging influence of Freemasonry on American culture and society. The efforts of these scholars and others to understand fraternalism have provided valuable pathways in my attempt to incorporate Freemasonry into the narrative of American religious history.

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My telling of the story of American Freemasonry now unfolds in two parts. The first includes five broadly chronological chapters focusing on the European American fraternity. The second part consists of three thematic chapters, on African Americans, Native Americans, and Jews and Catholics. The book ends with an epilogue on developments since 1900.

The first chapter of part 1 begins with the grand arrival of Freemasonry in colonial coastal cities as part of the Anglicization of colonial life. I review the origins and multiple meanings of the society prior to its arrival before considering the influence of Masonic ideals and practices on the colonial elite. Crossing political, ethnic, and religious boundaries, the fraternity's social ideals and initiatory practices provided the basis for common ground among elite European American men. Moreover, the brotherhood contributed to the rational religious discourse of the nascent public sphere. At the same time, because it drew from Christian and non-Christian sources, the Masonic world view provided resources for the larger religious world that many eighteenth-century Americans inhabited.

The second chapter considers the transformation of the fraternity in the revolutionary period and its impact on the nascent American society. Beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century, a growing number of working men, outside the elite, joined a new and more democratic, "ancient" variant of the fraternity and directed it toward an embrace of the republican ideals of the new American society. "Ancient" military lodges more than Protestant chaplains knit together the officers of the Continental Army. Masonic military parades and public rituals, culminating in President George Washington's laying of the cornerstone of the new nation's capital with full Masonic trappings, signaled the identification of the fraternity with the new American society. At the

same time, enlightenment influences on religious thought expanded the boundaries of Christianity to include Freemasonry, while the fraternity made efforts to become more Christian. Positioned to the left of orthodox Calvinism and its evangelical descendants and to the right of Enlightenment rationalism, a more overtly Christian and republican Freemasonry was seen by many as embodying the values of the new American society.

After the Revolution, the fraternity began to evolve its private, ritual life. The abbreviated initiations of colonial days now became lengthy dramas shrouded in layers of deepening meaning. The new ritual quest for primeval truth was part of a larger Christian Restorationist, Primitivist, and Mormon attraction to ancient wisdom. The third chapter begins with the origins and development of these new degree rites, their relationship to John Locke's epistemology, and their contribution to a new psychology of the self, which could be reached only through emotional assault. The Masonic use of strong emotions to reach an inner self occurred at the same time that the revivalists of the Second Great Awakening sought to break open the hearts of "sinners." Moreover, both the new rituals and the new evangelism anticipated the romantic embrace of emotion to reach the depths of one's identity. Further, at a time when some leading women were attracted to the fraternity's public embrace of republicanism and Christianity, the lodge was becoming a place of private retreat from the public world, broadly paralleling the development of women's private, pious, domestic sphere.

At the peak of the fraternity's influence, in the 1820s, the lodges were brought to their knees by the purported murder of someone who threatened to reveal their secrets, in what became known as the Morgan affair. Within a matter of months, as the fourth chapter recounts, Freemasons were "revealed" to be a political and religious threat to the "common man" and evangelical Christianity. The ensuing Anti-Masonic campaign, spurred by an expanding print culture and a democratizing ethos, laid bare a larger battle over Christian identity. At the same time that radical evangelicals sought to purge Masons from their churches, the fraternity's liberal religious themes were gaining ascendancy within most Protestant churches. The conflict over Freemasonry further revealed developing class and religious divisions within "women's sphere."

In the late nineteenth century, a chastened Freemasonry continued its growth, though now within a profusion of new fraternal orders. Though never again to hold a prominent place in American public life, the brotherhood continued to cultivate and elaborate a private world of

ritual meaning separate from the tumult of early industrial capitalism and the pious, female world of the home. Over time, the fifth chapter suggests, these two gendered worlds moved more closely together. By the end of the century, though the fraternity's antimodernist beliefs and practices diverged from the liberal Protestantism of the time, few Christians remained noticeably opposed to Freemasonry. The early twentieth-century remasculinization of some Protestant churches underscored this acceptance of, even attraction to, Freemasonry.

Beyond the European American middle class, African Americans, Native Americans, Jews, and Catholics appropriated Freemasonry for their particular purposes. The sixth chapter begins the second part of the book by turning to the nexus of African American Freemasonry and black churches in the late nineteenth century. Prince Hall Masonic lodges originated in the northern cities of Boston and Philadelphia in the late eighteenth century. After the Civil War, they were planted throughout the South alongside newly established African American churches. In North Carolina, the male membership and leadership of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church closely overlapped with that of the state's Prince Hall lodges. In fact, the Northern missionary James Walker Hood was both the bishop of the North Carolina Conference of the AME Zion Church and the grand master of the North Carolina Grand Lodge of Prince Hall Masons. Though these two interwoven social institutions were at times at odds with each other over relations between church and lodge, women and men, and the impact of the Holiness movement, together they provided black Americans with ideological and ritual resources that countered white racial narratives of African American inferiority. Moreover, unlike European American Masons and their churches, Prince Hall Masons worked with black churches in a common African American struggle to oppose racism and determine their destiny in American society.

The seventh chapter's tale of Native Americans and Freemasonry begins with the Mohawk leader Joseph Brant's 1776 journey to London, where he joined a Masonic lodge. Brant and subsequent Native American Masons employed the resources of Freemasonry to advance the interests of their people. Following the mid-nineteenth-century forced removal of southeastern Indians to the "Indian Territory" of what became Oklahoma, most of the area's Native American leaders joined the fraternity. The "civilization" program that the Washington administration initiated and which continued until the presidency of Andrew Jackson promised acceptance to Native Americans in return

for their assimilation to the ways of European American society. Freemasonry was part of this process. At the same time, Native Americans appropriated Freemasonry in an effort to make use of new spiritual assets to retain their Indian identity and help steer their way through the challenges of living in the new American society. By the late nineteenth century, when Native American leaders were assimilating to white society and joining Masonic lodges, European American fraternalists were pursuing Native American wisdom, some going so far as donning Indian costumes and creating what they thought to be Native American ceremonies. For these members of the white middle class, Native American ways offered one means of responding to the dislocations of the modernizing American social order. For modernizing Native Americans, in contrast, Freemasonry provided an avenue for finding their place in early twentieth-century American society.

The eighth chapter turns to the involvement of Jews and Catholics in Freemasonry. Cosmopolitan English Jews became members soon after the 1723 formation of the modern fraternity, and their presence in the brotherhood grew in tandem with the expansion of participation of Jews in European and American society. In colonial America, Jewish Masons joined lodges founded within Jewish coastal settlements. After the Revolution, Jewish elites expanded beyond coastal cities and were chosen as leaders in the fraternity. Catholics, in contrast, trace their Masonic origins to medieval stoneworkers' guilds. In the early 1800s, American lodges included men from the upper reaches of the small immigrant Irish, English, and French Catholic communities. After the large-scale Irish, German, and Italian immigration in midcentury and the enforcement of new papal condemnations, American Freemasonry's attitude toward the Catholic Church began to change. The presence of Jews and Catholics in the Masonic fraternity was at times unsettling, and by the second half of the nineteenth century the needs of new immigrants for organizations that fostered a commitment to America while retaining Old World ethnic and religious identity led to the creation of exclusively Jewish (B'nai B'rith) and Catholic (Knights of Columbus) orders from the ideology and initiatory rituals of Freemasonry.

In the early twentieth century, as the epilogue briefly recounts, Freemasonry adopted the characteristics of a modern service club. New emphases on life insurance and recreation challenged an older embrace of honor and noble purpose. New interests in practical community involvement undercut the pursuit of deep and personal moral truths through ritual drama. Today the fraternity, like many American civic

associations, is in decline.³⁶ Along with voluntary organizations throughout society, it has seen membership plummet. For much of American history, however, the Masonic lodge helped to shape a diverse and expanding religious culture. How all of this came about is the story to which we now turn.