



TIMELINE OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE FREEMASONS

1680

Age of Enlightenment begins in England. Characterized by:

1. Rationalism. (Reason is the only guide to wisdom.)
2. Mechanistic universe. (Newtonian influence.)
3. Desirability of simplest structure for society.
4. Rejection of *original sin*, accepts infinite perfectibility of human nature, therefore of society.

Voltaire advances the idea of equal rights under the law, Considers the Church to be among greatest evils because of its absolutism. Montesquieu promotes separation of powers into legislative, executive, and judicial branches with checks and balances.

1690

John Locke publishes his *Second Treatise on Civil Government*, rejecting government as coming from Divine influence; it is a human compact invented to encourage individual liberty and rights. Rejects absolutism in any form*Second Treatise* provides the theoretical underpinning for both the American and French Revolutions.

February 1717

Grand Lodge of England was formed by the four then-existing London Lodges. Anthony Sayre was elected Grand Master at the next feast day of St. John the Baptist.

1733

(From "The Freemason At Work" by Harry Carr, Lewis Masonic, rev. 1992) The first Masonic Lodge in Florence was instituted in 1733 by the Earl of Middlesex, apparently self-constituted and certainly without Warrant from the Grand Lodge of

England. (From Mackey) Founding was by Charles Sackville, Duke of Dorset. There was no Duke (Earl) of Middlesex at this date. Sackville initiated Grand Duke of Tuscany, which improved the prestige of the order.

1735

Lodges were established in Milan, Verona, Padua, Vicenza, Venice and Naples.

June 1737

The membership of the Lodge at Florence in 1738 represented the best of local English and Italian society, like men of liberal education, learning and culture, poets and painters, priests and politicians, including a few high-ranking but dubious or shady characters. The advanced views of some of the members had already attracted the attention of the Inquisition authorities and in June 1737, at a conference of Cardinals in Rome under the Chief Inquisitor of Florence, the Bull ["In eminenti"] was drafted, ...(Mackey) Freemasonry banned by John Gaston, last of the Medici; dies shortly thereafter. Grand Duke of Lorraine succeeds him, declaring himself protector of the Craft.

April 28, 1738

"In eminenti" published by Clement XII. The stated object of the Bull was "to block the broad road that the influence of the Society might open to the uncorrected commission of sin" The faithful were forbidden " to enter, propagate or support the Freemasons, or to help them in any way, openly or in secret, directly or indirectly ..." or to be present at any of their meetings, "Under pain of excommunication ... from which none can obtain the benefit of absolution, other than at the hour of death...".

January 1739

Cardinal Firrao issues edict inflicting death penalty on any disobeying In eminenti. Many arrests made in Florence, but set free on the intervention of the Grand Duke.

May 18, 1751

"Providas" published by Benedict XIV (Condemnation of secret societies) Confirms the In eminenti of Clement XII (28 Apr. 1738) condemning Freemasonry on the grounds of its naturalism, demand for oaths, secrecy, religious indifferentism, and the possible threat to Church and State. Thus forbids Roman Catholics to seek membership in any Masonic group.

1783

(Mackey) Lodges exist at Naples, Leghorn, Venice, Verona, Turin, Messina, Sicily, Genoa and Modena. Quoting Smith (Use and Abuse), Mackey states "At present most of the Italian nobles and dignified ecclesiastics are Free-masons"

September 13, 1821

"Ecclesiam a Jesu Christo" published by Pius VII. Specifically condemns the society of the Carbonari burners"]; applies to its members the penalty of excommunication and other censures contained in earlier disapprovals of Freemasonry, gives as reasons for the censure the oath-bound secrecy of the societies and their conspiracies against Church and State.

March 13, 1825

"Quo graviora mala" published by Leo XII. (Condemnation of the Carbonari) confirms condemnations of the teachings of the Carbonari, Freemasonry and Carbonari as secret societies, with oath binding secrecy and conspiracies against Church and State.

March 25 1830

"Litteris altero" by Pius VIII (To the bishops of the Province of Cologne: the problem of mixed marriages) Renews earlier papal condemnations of Freemasonry, this letter replies to a letter from the bishops of Cologne. This comment on difficulties arising from mixed marriages caused by Prussian civil laws, and the influence of Freemasonry in education and the lax morals of the new generation.

1840

Italian war of unification begins. Sardinia sends troops to assist in ousting Hapsburgs from Tuscany. Period leading to and during the war was characterized by rising anti-clericalism in Italy, reflecting the mood of all Europe.

November 9, 1846

"Qui pluribus" published by Pius IX. (To all bishops: on contemporary errors and the means to combat them) Declares objective is to protect religion; to guard papal possessions, rights and privileges. Attacks compromises of indifferentism; condemns rationalism and unlimited "progress"; condemns assault on celibacy of clergy; warns against false teachers; points out communism as contrary to natural law. Reminds rulers of duty to protect, encourage, and foster Religion. He expresses his concern over the philosophical perversion of the young; warns against the contamination of anti-Catholic society.

1861

Unification of Italy (with the exception of the Papal States) essentially complete under the *Freemason* Garibaldi. Grand Lodge established at Turin. Grand Orient (Scottish rite) also by Garibaldi; later moved to Florence.

December 8, 1864

"Quanta cura" published by Pius IX (To all bishops: condemning current errors) Announces the Jubilee of 1865, discussing the errors of liberalism and rationalism. Recalls the care exercised by the papacy in instructing the faithful with true doctrine and preserving them from error, appeals to the Fathers of the Church in order to combat the errors.

[The Syllabus of Errors was attached to this encyclical.]

Syllabus erratum

(Condemnation of a series of propositions containing modern errors)

A set of eighty theses grouped under ten heads: 1) pantheism, naturalism, absolute rationalism; moderate rationalism; indifferentism and false tolerance in religious matters; socialism, communism, secret societies, Bible societies; liberal clerical associations; errors regarding the Church and its rights; errors on the State and its relation to the Church; errors on natural and Christian ethics; errors on Christian marriage; errors on the temporal power of the pope; and errors in connection with modern liberalism.

September 25, 1865

"Multiplices inter" published by Pius IX.(At the Consistory: condemnation of Freemasonry and other secret societies) Accuses Masonic association of conspiracy against the Church, God, and civil society; reproves Catholic sovereigns for not uprooting this sect; attributes revolutions and uprisings to Masonic activity. Warns against designs of secret societies; denounces clandestine meetings, secret oath, sanctions against violation of rules; renews previous condemnations.

October 12, 1869

"Apostolicae sedis moderationi" published by Pius IX. Clarifies the procedure regarding censures in canon law; abrogates some, changes others, and establishes a new list of censures.

1870

Franco-Prussian War breaks out. Napoleon III forced to withdraw protection from Papal States. Italian army enters Rome. Church stripped of its temporal domains and authority.

1871

Rome declared capital of united Italy under Victor Emmanuel II. Pope withdraws into voluntary exile inside Vatican.

April 28, 1873

Masonic Constituent Assembly held in Rome and Installation of the "Grand Lodge of Freemasons of Italy.

June 29, 1881

"Diuturnum" published by Leo XIII (On the origin of civil power)

Maintains Christianity is safeguard to political order; right to rule comes from God; people respect legitimate authority; rulers seek common good. Denies theory that civil society has arisen from free consent of men; asserts all authority comes from God even though men have a certain freedom to choose such forms of government as they deem necessary; condemns naturalism as culminating in socialism, communism, nihilism, leading to government based on force and fear. It urges bishops to instruct laity, to warn them against forbidden sects, secret societies.

February 15, 1882

"Etsi nos" published by Leo XIII. (To the bishops of Italy: on conditions in Italy)

Dangers on Catholicism: Interference with Church; expulsion of religious from convents; confiscation of Church property; sanction of civil marriage; elimination of Church control of education. Maintains Catholicism and nation fall together: Christianity inherent in public life, source of unity, safeguard of justice. Urge bishops to stir people to work for preservation of the faith by: 1) promotion of associations for religious instruction, Catholic life, charity; 2) use of press to disseminate truth; 3) care in selection and education of priests

April 10, 1884

"Humanum genus" published by Leo XIII. (On Freemasonry)

Reviews warnings of previous pontificates; recalls own refutations of Masonic opinions, treats specifically of Masonic society and of organized groups bound to Freemasonry by community of purpose and thought. Defines aim as overthrow of Christian order; teaching as naturalistic:

human reason supreme, teaching and authority of Church of no civil consequence; no possible certainty about God, soul, immortality; complete equality of all men; State control of marriage, education; moral license. Confirms previous condemnations of Freemasonry; forbids Catholics to join Masonic sect; prescribes Christian philosophy as protection against error; urges clergy and laity to win men to the Church; recommends membership in Third Order of St. Francis, restoration of Catholic guilds or associations.

Humanum genus" contains the following:

"Nay, there are in them many secrets which are by law carefully concealed not only from the profane, but also from many associated, viz., the last and intimate intentions, the hidden and unknown chiefs, the hidden and secret meetings, the resolutions and methods and means by which they will be carried into execution. Hence the difference of rights and of duties among the members; hence the distinction of orders and grades and the severe discipline by which they are ruled."

December 7, 1884

Third plenary council of Bishops, held in Baltimore issues a pastoral letter completely supporting "Humanum genus", condemning Freemasonry and all "secret societies". Strongly discourages any lay questioning of the matter, apparently blocking any possibility for exception or compromise; "Whenever, therefore, the Church has spoken authoritatively with regard to any society, her decision ought to be final for every Catholic. He ought to know that the Church has not acted hastily or unwisely, or mistakenly; he should be convinced that any worldly disadvantages which he might derive from his membership of such society, would be a poor substitute for the membership, the sacraments, and the blessings of the Church of Christ;"

December 22 1887

"Officio sanctissimo" published by Leo XIII (To the bishops of Bavaria: on the condition of the Church in Bavaria)

Surveys history of Bavaria; deploras present hostility toward Church; offers advice emphasizes obedience to hierarchy, respect for civil authority. Urges education of children under auspices of Church; warns against Freemasonry.

October 15, 1890

"Dall'alto dell'Apostolico seggio" published by Leo XIII. [Ab Apostolici] (To the bishops and people of Italy: on the destructive work of the Freemasons in Italy)

The warfare of the Masons against Church, Which includes Overthrow of civil power of papacy; suppression of religious orders; obligatory military service for clerics; confiscation of Church property; proclamation of civil marriage; State control of education. It Enumerates remedies: formation of learned and holy clergy; Christian education of youth; extirpation of evil doctrines: defense of Catholic truths; restoration of Christian family life; exposure of conflict as essentially an attack on religion.

1891

Leo Taxil begins publishing "Satanic" side of Freemasonry, which has been supposedly invented by him, but see above (Humanum genus).

December 8 1892

"Custodi di quella fede" published by Leo XIII (to the Italian people: Freemasonry in Italy)

Particular methods to work against Freemasonry: Warns Christians to be on guard against Freemasonry; parents to guard homes against infiltration; laity to shun non-religious societies. Urges setting up Catholic schools in opposition to neutral; charity against philanthropy; religious asylums against houses of debauchery; Catholic against impious press; Catholic congresses against sectarian gatherings; Catholic circles against lodges; mutual aid societies against Masonic counterpart.

December 8 1892

"Inimica vis" published by Leo XIII (To the bishops of Italy: Freemasonry in Italy) Reiterates urgent necessity of combating evils of Freemasonry; condemns claim that State is superior to Church and can control property and functions of Church; entreats bishops to work for conversion of victims [sic] of sect, to arouse in clergy and people zealous love for religion.

June 20, 1894

"Praeclara" published by Leo XIII. (To the rulers and nations of the world: appeal for religious unity) Urges union with Church of Rome; calls for unity of faith and government and appeals to separated Eastern churches and to the recent schismatic groups, especially those in union with Rome (as safeguard). Warns against Regalism and Freemasonry; enumerates benefits of unity.

March 18, 1902

"Annum ingressi" published by Leo XIII. (To the bishops of the world: review of his pontificate)

Reviews twenty-five years of pontificate; warns that liberty, peace are illusory apart from religion. Recalls instructions on Christian philosophy, human liberty, Christian marriage, Masonry, nature of the State, Christian constitution of States, socialism, labor question, duties of Christian citizens, and analogous subjects. Encourages bishops to continued resistance of persecutions. Describes existing conditions: Disorder in social relations, in family life; prevalence of socialism and anarchism; unjust warring of strong nations against weak; increase of armaments. Urges resistance to atheism and Freemasonry; calls on press for defense of Church; exhorts parents and teachers to give Christian education to children, public officials to demonstrate firmness in defense of principle, integrity of life.

1917

Benedict XV promulgates new code of Canon Law containing Art. 2335: it condemns Freemasons to automatic and irrevocable excommunication.

I have been unable to find the text of Canon 2335 (1917) in English.

The following is a precise prepared for use by the Catholic faithful.

Those that enroll themselves in Masonic sects or other similar associations, the very purpose of whose being, or at least whose activity is concerned with plotting against all lawful authority, and especially against that of the Church, are also guilty of a crime of disobedience. The penalty in these cases is excommunication, reserved simply to the Holy See. Clerics and religious are to be punished as set down in the previous paragraph, besides the fact that such cases are also referred to the Holy Office.

November 21, 1964

"Unitatis redintegratio" published by Paul VI.

Decrees positive Catholic response to ecumenism as a means to bring non-Catholic believers into the Church.

October 28, 1965

"Nostra Aetate" published by Paul VI.

Decrees tolerance for, and an exchange of ideas with, non-Catholic beliefs and philosophies.

December 7, 1965

"Dignitatis humanae" declaration published by Vatican II, on religious liberty.

1968

"La Masoneria Despues del Concilio" (Masonry since the [Vatican] Council) published in Spain. Author, J.A. Ferrer Benimeli, S.J.; " regular Freemasonry, 'based on belief in God, could not stand condemned under the Papal Bulls', whose charges should be directed only against the irregular Grand Lodges which preach and practice atheism and anti-clericalism."

1971

Two English Freemasons are permitted by the Vatican to join the Church without renouncing their Masonic affiliations, at the request of Cardinal Heenan.

July 19, 1974

Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith pulls the teeth from Art. 2335.

"The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith ... has ruled that Canon 2335 no longer automatically bars a Catholic from membership of Masonic groups ... And so, a Catholic who joins the freemasons is excommunicated only if the policies and actions of the freemasons in his

area are known to be hostile to the Church ". This document was signed by Cardinal Seper, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

" ... Suffice to say that in July 1974 Cardinal Heenan received a communication from the Holy See announcing that the Papal ban had been lifted. Roman Catholics everywhere [but not Officers of the Church of Rome] are now able to join the Craft without the penalty of excommunication, especially already a number of excellent Roman Catholic Candidates have joined the Craft in England." [See Carr's, "The Freemason at Work" pages 277-281].

1983

Canon 2335 replaced by new Canon 1374 which condemns only "association(s) which plot(s) against the Church," and no longer mentions Freemasonry or "secret societies."

Following is the text of Canon 1374 (1983) in an English translation prepared for use by the Catholic faithful.

Can. 1374: A person who joins an association which plots against the Church is to be punished with a just penalty; one who promotes or takes office in such an association is to be punished with an interdict. In [this same year (1983)] in a statement by [The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith] then under a new Prefect, Cardinal Ratzinger, the 1974 letter was "clarified", saying, that Masonic principles are still considered irreconcilable with orthodox Catholic doctrine, and Catholics are still prohibited from joining Masonic bodies. Official opposition appears since 1983 to be limited to two points:

1. The erroneous view that Freemasonry is a religion, and contending that no Catholic can be a member of another religion. The view is that Freemasonry *competes with*, rather than *supports*, religion.

2. The ceremony of the 3rd Degree in Freemasonry has been misinterpreted as supporting belief in the resurrection of one other than Christ, rather than the simple disinterment and reinterment of a dead body.

1985

Debate (informal, as far as is known) reopened by Italian television and the Vatican press.

The position now seems to be that Catholics wishing to join Masonic bodies should approach their local Bishop to see if there is any explicit objection forthcoming.