

# William O. Ware Lodge of Research

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### THE ENGLISH REFORMATION AND MASONIC TOLERATION

Darrin V. Gulla, PhD, Lexington Lodge No. 1

*... Masonry unites men of every country, sect, and opinion, and conciliates true friendship among those who might otherwise remain at a perpetual distance.  
Entered Apprentice Degree, 3<sup>rd</sup> Section*

The most important, if not essential, landmark of Freemasonry is that all Masons must hold a belief in God as the Grand Architect of the Universe and in the immortality of the soul. Further, Anderson's *Constitution of Free-Masons* specifically precludes Freemasonry from endorsing a particular doctrine and even prohibits religious discussion from Lodge in order to maintain harmony within the group.

Such a position was incredibly progressive for that time. So, where did the founders of Freemasonry derive such a stance? A long tradition of religious strife in English history more than likely influenced the development of this non-sectarian posture. While the English Reformation is often considered a benign evolution of Christian thought, especially compared to developments on the European mainland, England during the years 1558-1689 was, frankly, a persecution state committed to maintaining religious uniformity through coercive force.<sup>1</sup> As a result, English society during this period experienced numerous conspiracies and rebellions, six different national religions, and tens of thousands displaced, impoverished, imprisoned, and even executed individuals.

It should be noted that while the continuous religious upheaval within England during the Tudor-Stewart period certainly played a role in shaping the nature of the Craft with respect to religious toleration, it was probably not the sole cause of our perspective. More specifically, religious change within England was more than likely endogenous to the formation of our approach – that is, it was part of the larger Enlightenment movement during the time. We can, however, highlight the religious conflict during this time period and within this particular space to deduce the motives of early Freemasons regarding their positions on religious toleration.

By examining the Tudor-Stewart era of English history, we can conclude that there were a few consistent themes during this time that shaped policy and behavior. Specifically, these years were focused on ideas of conformity, legitimacy, and uniformity which would influence Freemasonic approaches regarding religious toleration in the years to follow.

#### **Tudor England (1485-1603)**

The historical record suggests that all of this essentially began 22 August 1485 at the Battle of Bosworth Field where Henry Tudor deposed King Richard III thus ending the War of the Roses and establishing the Tudor dynasty. Henry VII, through the Beaufort line, held an incredibly tenuous claim to the throne and to solidify his new dynasty, not just in England but abroad as well, arranged for his son, Prince Arthur, to wed Catherine of Aragon tying the family's fortune to that of Spain. Additionally, the new English king

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<sup>1</sup>Coffey 2000, p11

joined the Holy League in 1497 pledging to defend the Papal States from French incursions. The fledgling Tudor dynasty was most certainly a Catholic one and depended on external Catholic powers to solidify its position in England – legitimacy is the primary goal here.

With the untimely death of Prince Arthur in 1502, Henry VII petitioned Rome for a papal dispensation that would allow his youngest son, Prince Henry, to marry Catherine. Given this permission from Rome, Henry VIII, crowned in 1509, continued the connection of the Tudor dynasty with Catholic powers outside of England providing legitimacy to the Tudor reign. This relationship was further strengthened when Henry joined the Holy League in 1511 to once again confront the French, and in 1521 Pope Leo X named Henry the Defender of the Faith for his writings against the teachings of reformist Martin Luther. Henry VIII thus continued the approach of his father in maintaining that England was a steadfast Catholic state.

Henry's disposition towards the Church changed in 1527 when Pope Clement VII amidst significant geopolitical challenges refused to grant an annulment of the king's marriage to Catherine. Fearing an end of the Tudor dynasty without a male heir, Henry desperately wanted this annulment, so after several years negotiating with the Pope, Henry severed ties with Rome. The Supremacy Act of 1534 officially created the Church of England asserting that "The king our sovereign lord, and his heirs and successors, shall be taken, accepted and reputed as the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England, called *Anglica Ecclesia*."<sup>2</sup> Theologian John Foxe reacted to the law by declaring that the Pope had been "abolished, eradicated, and exploded out of this land"<sup>3</sup>

With this action Henry did not wish to introduce doctrinal changes to the Church of England but was adamant about asserting his role as its supreme leader. The king encountered substantial resistance to his claim of ecclesiastic authority from members of the clergy such as the bishop of Rochester, John Fisher, who in his trial for treason asserted that "the king our sovereign lord is not the supreme head on earth of the Church of England."<sup>4</sup> For his recalcitrance Fisher was beheaded in 1535. Six monks of the Charterhouse monastery were also executed that year for refusing to recognize the king's authority over the Church.

While preferring to maintain the Church of England as an essentially Catholic faith with the king at its head, Henry quickly found that by removing the role of the papacy, he provided an opening to reformers within England to advance their doctrinal agenda. Vice-regent Thomas Cromwell and Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer led the push for greater reform within the Church of England. After consultation with the king, Cranmer published the *Ten Articles of the Faith* in 1536 to unify opinion on the new faith. The monasteries in particular were considered by Cromwell the prime agitators against the king and were thus targeted for persecution under the Act for the Dissolution of Monasteries later in 1536; under this law 419 monastic houses were closed, and all their assets were diverted to the Crown.

Henry and his ministers clearly misjudged the reaction of these measures among the people of England, for popular uprisings emerged throughout the country – first in Lincolnshire (the Lincolnshire Rising), next in York (the Pilgrimage of Grace), and last in Cumberland and Westmoreland (Bigod's Rebellion). About five hundred leaders of the conflicts were executed in response, and the few remaining larger monasteries were dissolved.

The reformers, however, were forced to accept a few concessions in that four of the *Ten Articles* were revoked with the publication of the *Bishop's Book* in 1537 marking the end of the movement towards

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<sup>2</sup> Akroyd 2012 p83

<sup>3</sup> Ibid p83

<sup>4</sup> Ibid p86

Protestantism in England. In 1538, Henry through royal proclamation expelled the Anabaptists and began persecuting those advocating unorthodox doctrines. Further, the king officially reversed the work of the reformers with the publication of the *King's Book* in 1543. Throughout his reign, Henry executed roughly fifty individuals for heresy.<sup>5</sup>

Upon the death of Henry VIII in 1547, the nine-year-old Edward VI was crowned king to rule with a regency council until he reached maturity. This council was led primarily by Calvinist religious reformers who moved quickly to implement the doctrinal innovations that king Henry had been reluctant to do. The council first abolished the chantries (endowments made in wills for the procurement of Masses for the souls of the dead) and seized their funds. The following year the *Six Articles* (formerly ten) were overturned, and in the beginning of 1549, the *Book of Common Prayer* was issued outlining the doctrine and liturgy of the Church of England. This work was part of the first Act of Unity which stripped away all older elements of the Mass representing a decisive separation from Medieval Catholic world.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the Act clearly detailed strict punishments for ministers refusing to comply with the tenets of the new prayer book. With these actions the council established compulsory reform on England.

Once again the reformers misjudged the sentiment of the populace, and widespread protests emerged throughout the western part of the country, known as the Prayer Book Rebellion. After quickly suppressing this uprising and killing over five thousand rebels in the process, the reformers pushed even further by updating the *Book of Common Prayer* in 1552 which fully eliminated remnants of the old faith from the Church of England. Furthermore, a Treason Act was enacted to protect the changes under penalty of death. During his reign Edward burned two individuals (radical Protestants) for heresy.<sup>7</sup>

On his deathbed in 1553, the young king and his councilors named his cousin, Jane Grey (third in line), to succeed the throne in order to prevent his half-sister, Mary Tudor from restoring Catholicism to England. Despite these efforts Mary arrived in London with a small body of men and succeeded in deposing Queen Jane in a bloodless coup.<sup>8</sup> Immediately upon being crowned queen, Mary I endeavored to undo the religious reforms in England by issuing the *Proclamation Concerning Religion* which restored the country to true Catholicism with the Pope as its head. Now the Catholic Mass and offices were the only legal forms of worship in England.

In response to these actions, Protestant reformers under the leadership of poet Thomas Wyatt revolted in what has become known as Wyatt's Rebellion. The forces of the queen put down the rebellion in 1554 and executed nearly one hundred rebels including Wyatt himself and Lady Jane Grey. Following the rebellion Mary wed Phillip II of Spain and reinstated the Heresy Laws of 1414. At the queen's death in 1558, nearly three hundred men and women had perished under her persecution and thousands of dissidents had fled England. This death toll despite the short timeframe represented roughly ten percent of all Protestant martyrs in Latin Christendom.<sup>9</sup>

Following the death of Mary, Elizabeth I was crowned queen, and Protestant reformers moved quickly to restore the gains they had previously made. In 1559 they passed a number of acts in Parliament collectively known as the Elizabethan Religious Settlement. First, the Act of Supremacy reasserted the monarch as the head of the Church of England and repealed the Heresy Laws. Second, the Act of

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<sup>5</sup> Coffey 2000 p99. Coffey also notes that on a single day in July 1540, Henry engaged in a 'murderous ecumenism' by burning three Protestants for heresy and beheading three Catholics (p79).

<sup>6</sup> Akroyd 2012 p211

<sup>7</sup> Coffey 2000 p80

<sup>8</sup> Queen Jane's reign lasted only nine days after which she would spend her remaining months in the Tower of London.

<sup>9</sup> Coffey 2000 p81

Uniformity reestablished the updated *Book of Common Prayer* (1552) as the guideline for religion and the punishments for violating its terms. Last, the Royal Injunctions banned any traditional forms of Catholic worship even in private. Conformity was the basis of the religious settlement and relied on the assumption that the true Protestant religion and its particular form of worship had to be imposed on the entire nation without exception.<sup>10</sup> Religious practice was further defined in 1563 with the publication of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*.

The approach adopted by Elizabeth and her advisors where uniformity in religious practice was deemed the only way to maintain order in the realm led to a degree of persecution broader in scope than that of the Marian regime. But what Elizabeth found was that while England became a Protestant state in 1559, it would take decades for its population to become a Protestant people.<sup>11</sup> Those who clung to the Catholic traditions and denied her authority over the Church of England were viewed with mistrust and possibly treasonous while more radical Puritan reformers were considered agitators whose sermons were subversive to national order. Elizabeth thus saw nonconformists everywhere who placed her reign in jeopardy and employed espionage, relentless interrogation, surveillance, the suppression of dissent, robust treason law, torture, and propaganda to maintain stability.<sup>12</sup> This reliance on conformity was probably related to questions of legitimacy on account of the queen being unmarried and without a direct heir.

While most Puritans in Elizabethan England accepted that the Church of England was the true church, they also believed that its reformation had not gone far enough in eliminating all elements of popery. In particular they believed that some elements of the church that conformists considered not stipulated in Scripture (*adiaphora*) such as clerical dress, mode of receiving communion, and church organization had indeed been determined by scripture and was thus under the purview of individual conscience.<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth's insistence of uniformity, however, was incompatible with his view, and many Puritan ministers were removed from their positions. Some of these Puritans left England in exile, but most learned to live with an incompletely reformed church. Some remained in England and became even more recalcitrant advocating for a separation from the Church of England. Not surprisingly, these separatists were treated as seditious schismatics challenging the established Church and were imprisoned and executed (six).

Catholics faced a much more serious form of persecution in Elizabeth's reign than their Puritan counterparts. Initially, those who practiced their Catholic faith in private merely faced fines for failing to attend services as outlined in the Act of Uniformity. This situation changed dramatically for Catholics in England with the return of Catholic Mary Queen of Scots to England from France in 1568, the Northern rebellion in 1569, and the publication in 1570 of the papal bull *Regnans in Excelsis* by Pope Pius VI formally excommunicating the queen. Elizabeth and her advisors interpreted these events as an indication of the level recusancy rates (private practicing Catholics) within England which in conjunction with external threats from Catholic nations placed Elizabeth's reign in a clear and present danger and implemented a series of decrees aimed directly at these recusants. Fines for failing to attend church services were increased. Since most English Catholics were loyal to Crown, they simply avoided persecution by meeting the requirements for church attendance. The more militant Catholics in England, particularly those connected to Jesuit missionaries accused of orchestrating a number of plots to depose the queen, were hunted down and executed as traitors to the Crown. During her reign, Elizabeth executed almost two hundred Catholics for treason many of whom were priests and missionaries.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid p82

<sup>11</sup> Ibid p84

<sup>12</sup> Alford 2012 p11

<sup>13</sup> Coffey 2000 p93-4

<sup>14</sup> This number does not include the hundreds of people executed following the Northern Rebellion.

Most religious dissenters executed during Elizabeth's reign were condemned for treason and sedition (Catholics and radical Puritans, respectively), but heretics like the Anabaptists, Anti-Trinitarians, and Arians were burned for their contrary beliefs. A total of six heretics were put to the flames in Elizabethan England.

### **Early Stewart England (1603-42)**

With the death of Elizabeth in 1603, James VI of Scotland was crowned James I of England beginning the Stewart dynasty. James was the natural successor to Elizabeth (Henry VIII was his great-uncle) and was warmly welcomed to the throne by all parties – the Reformists noted his experience in the more reformed Scottish *Kirk* while Catholics were optimistic on account of his being the son of Mary Queen of Scots and the husband of the Catholic convert Anne of Denmark. Throughout his reign James would prove these groups both right and wrong.

While a committed Calvinist, James had little taste for persecution and less patience for more populist Reformists who he felt encroached on his ecclesiastical authority as the monarch. To James, efforts to diminish the hierarchy of the episcopacy represented a direct challenge to the legitimacy of his reign but in a different way than that experienced in Tudor England. More specifically, James held a firm position on the Divine Right of Kings which he was more accustomed to in Scotland and was thus committed to establishing conformity and uniformity within the episcopal church much to the dismay of the Reformists. In 1604 the king ordered all clergy to fully conform to the Book of Common Prayer and authorized bishops to replace any non-conformist clergy from their positions (90 were deprived of their benefices). This type of persecution was a fairly mild form of punishment, and most Puritan reformers ultimately chose to comply leading to a broader Church of England that better reflected James' disposition. More recalcitrant Reformers like Separatists and Baptists, however, were not so compliant and, fearing prison, fled the country while Anabaptists and Anti-Trinitarians were condemned as heretics with Edward Wightman being the last heretic burned at the stake in English history (1612).

Early in his reign, James took a more benign position regarding Catholics in the realm by remitting recusancy fines (fees assessed for not attending Church of England services). This outreach, however, did not last long. In 1604 James expelled all Jesuits in the country, executed one priest and two laymen for treason, and reinstated the recusancy fines. In the following year, the infamous Gunpowder Plot was thwarted resulting in the execution of all the conspirators (two were killed during capture). A number of priests were banished from England, and recusancy fines were increased substantially. A total of twenty-five Catholics were executed during the reign of James I, a considerable decline from the levels of the Elizabethan era.

During the remaining years of James' reign, the king softened his approach towards Catholics in effort to arrange a marriage for his son Charles with a daughter of one of the Catholic kings on the continent (France and Spain). The ultimate arrangement to marry Princess Henrietta Maria of France to Charles involved a suspension of recusancy fines and a release of any recusants from prison. The Jacobean government was now content to tax and tolerate instead of crushing Catholicism as the Elizabethan statutes had suggested.<sup>15</sup>

The ascension of Charles I and his Catholic wife Henrietta Maria in 1625 set forth a series of events that would ultimately lead England into civil war. As part of his marriage agreement, Charles suspended all actions against Catholic recusants but faced resistance from Parliament and the Privy Council and was forced to concede the point. Despite his Catholic wife and the heavy Catholic presence now in Court, Charles chose to continue the tax and tolerate approach albeit with much higher recusancy fees. Just two

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid p119

Catholics were executed throughout the reign of Charles and by its conclusion the Catholic population had increased by roughly fifty-percent to 60,000.<sup>16</sup>

The perception of growing Catholic influence was elevated by the degree of persecution of the Puritans during Charles's kingship. Whereas his father fostered a broader and more tolerant church, Charles committed himself to a campaign against Puritanism which ultimately proved disastrous.<sup>17</sup> He took such a strong position in defense of his own legitimacy based on the Divine Rights of Kings – Charles, however, took a much firmer stance on the matter than had his father. Charles furthered this goal by promoting the High Church beliefs of Arminianism which Puritan reformers considered a crypto-papery within the Church that paralleled the open papery in the court which sought to undermine and possibly reverse the Reformation in England<sup>18</sup> During this period even moderate Puritans within the Church increasingly came under pressure.

This movement towards a High Church regime with its focus on liturgy and communion over the sermon gained further momentum with the appointment of William Laud first as Bishop of London in 1628 and then as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633. During this Arminian transformation led by Laud, the ecclesiastical toleration of the Jacobean church was replaced by a drive for rigid conformity.<sup>19</sup> The peak of this Laudian persecution occurred in the 1630s with the prosecution of Puritan writers for sedition by the Star Chamber. The victims of the Star Chamber faced punishments such as life imprisonment, having their ears cropped, their noses slit, the branding of S.L. (seditious libeler) branded on their cheeks with a hot iron. By inflicting such violence on conscientious Protestants, the Caroline regime reinforced the growing perception that it was reversing the Reformation and returning England to papery.<sup>20</sup>

It should be noted that during this period Charles was operating outside of any Parliamentary oversight. Frustrated by resistance against not just in Church policy but also financial and foreign policy, Charles dissolved parliament and established what is commonly referred to as the Personal Rule (1629-40). This exercise would ultimately collapse under its own weight when in 1637 Charles looked to extend uniformity in the Scottish Kirk by introducing a new Scottish Prayer Book based on Laudian interpretations. Presbyterian clergy along with many of the nobility overthrew the Scottish bishops in 1638 and in 1639 invaded England known as the Bishops Wars (1639-40). In order to finance a military response, Charles was forced to recall parliament effectively ending the Personal Rule. With a Parliament more sympathetic to the Scottish a settlement was reached concluding the war.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid p122

<sup>17</sup> Ibid p125

<sup>18</sup> Ibid p125

<sup>19</sup> Ibid p126

<sup>20</sup> Ibid p129

The Laudian campaign to suppress Puritanism and impose High Church uniformity, ironically, had provoked a protest movement in both countries led by militant Protestants.<sup>21</sup> Sensing leverage over the king following the Bishops Wars, more radical Puritans in Parliament led by John Pym published the strongly worded Root and Branch petition in late 1640 attacking the religious persecution of the Personal Rule essentially removing one kind of intolerance and replacing it with another. The heated rhetoric by militant Protestants in England and in Scotland led to an uprising of Irish Catholics in late 1641 out of persecution fears killing roughly 5,000 Protestants.<sup>22</sup> As a result of the rebellion, Pym and his radical Puritan supporters issued the Grand Remonstrance echoing the language of the Root and Branch petition of the previous year passing through Parliament with a slim majority of 159-148 thus suggesting that it was the religious militants who dragged the rest of the nation into civil war.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid p130

<sup>22</sup> Ackroyd 2014 p227

<sup>23</sup> Coffey 2000 p138

### **Interregnum England (1649-60)**

The English Civil Wars extended over a nine-year period (1642-51) with three distinct phases though Charles was captured in the first phase. The Royalist party lost all three phases, and Charles I lost his life to execution in 1649 after the second phase. Additionally, the last phase actually took place after Charles' death in an effort to raise his son as Charles II to the throne and took place in Scotland and Ireland – Charles II fled to France in exile. While the butcher's bill is difficult to ascertain, some estimates claim that it was severe with the direct and indirect casualty percentages around 4%, 6%, and 41% of the population in England, Scotland, and Ireland, respectively.<sup>24</sup>

With the execution of King Charles I in 1649, the existing government as well as the official Church of England was dissolved, and the country was, at least immediately, constructed as a Commonwealth under the direction of the Parliament.

The victors quickly asserted themselves in the religious life of England. Approximately 2,800 clergymen were stripped of their positions within the Church by the new regime. Catholic clergy in the country were quickly rounded up, and by the end of the Civil Wars, twenty-four Catholic priests were executed. Furthermore, the Puritan New Model Army under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell returned to Ireland in 1649 and slaughtered thousands of Catholics at Drogheda and Wexford. By 1653 the Commonwealth fell apart, and the Protectorate was established under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell.

The religious situation under the Protectorate was rather peculiar in that its spirit represented a genuine tendency towards religious toleration, as envisioned in John Milton's *Aeropagitica*, but in reality, only extended to the right kind of Protestantism – it had no brief for any kind of practice like the Arminianism of Laud which in its view smacked of Popery. Cromwell was no enthusiast for a multi-faith society, but he had no problem with the pluralism within the evangelical Protestant community.<sup>25</sup> Cromwell, like every other ruler of the Tudor-Stewart era, also attacked separatist and heretical groups such as the Ranters, Socinians, and Quakers.

The Protectorate years, asserting a radical Puritanism, ultimately wore down the people of England with its moralizing and overbearing position on the everyday behavior of the populace. Thus, when in 1658 Oliver Cromwell passed away the country did not react favorably to the assumption of his son, Robert Cromwell, to the leadership of England. After just a little over a year, Robert stepped down from the role as Protector, and Parliament invited Charles II to assume the throne thus restoring the Stewart dynasty in 1660.

### **Late Stewart England (1660 – 1714)**

Upon his coronation Charles II moved to establish order within England by issuing the Declaration of Breda promising a free and general pardon to all enemies of Charles I outside of those responsible for his death. Twenty-eight of the fifty-nine commissioners still living were convicted of regicide with twelve being publicly executed and the remainder sentenced to life in prison. Four of the deceased commissioners were posthumously convicted of high treason.<sup>26</sup> The Declaration further indicated a greater degree of toleration and freedom of conscience in Church policy

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<sup>24</sup> Carlton 1992 p213

<sup>25</sup> Coffey 2000 p148

<sup>26</sup> In 1661 the corpses of three of these four including Oliver Cromwell were exhumed and beheaded with the heads displayed on spikes above Westminster Hill.



After settling scores and suppressing the Fifth Monarchist uprising in London (early 1661), Charles II walked back any ideas of toleration and assembled what was known as the Cavalier Parliament composed primarily of hardline Anglicans and former supporters of Charles I. This Parliament passed a series of laws collectively referred to as the Clarendon Code (1661-65) in an effort to compel conformity and uniformity. The Act of Uniformity 1662 reestablished the Church of England and mandated compulsory use of the Book of Common Law leading to the removal of roughly 2,000 Puritan clergymen. The other pieces of legislation (Corporation Act 1661, Conventicle Act 1664, and Five Mile Act 1665) focused on restricting non-conformists from holding public offices and from gathering together. The Quaker Act of 1662 required all subjects to swear allegiance to the King or face penalties of fines and/or imprisonment; this legislation was, as its title suggests, directed at Quakers whose faith precludes oath taking. The combined effect of these laws resulted in the imprisonment of thousands of Dissenters (Quakers and Presbyterians) for refusing to conform representing a persecution of Protestants by Protestants without parallel in seventeenth-century Europe.<sup>27</sup>

As Charles became entangled with foreign policy issues, he strengthened ties with his cousin King Louis XIV of France. This French assistance, however, came with strings which insisted relief for English Catholics. Charles complied by issuing a Declaration of Indulgence in 1672 suspending all penal laws against Dissenters and Catholics. Parliament was strongly opposed to this measure and forced the King to revoke them, and in 1673 Parliament passed the Test Act requiring all civil and military offices to take oaths of supremacy and allegiance, sign a declaration against transubstantiation, and receive Anglican communion. A second Test Act passed in 1678 extended the requirements to Members of Parliament. These Test Acts revealed that Charles' brother, James, had in fact converted to Catholicism upon his marriage (his second) to the Catholic Princess Mary of Modena. Around this same time, a specious rumor, commonly referred to as the Popish Plot, quickly spread throughout England involving the assassination of the King and the elevation of his Catholic brother James the Duke of York to the throne thereby dismantling the Protestant Church of England. As a result, England experienced a new wave of Catholic persecution leading to the imprisonment of one hundred Catholics of which twenty-three died in prison and eighteen were executed.<sup>28</sup>

An additional outcome of this wave of Catholic hysteria was the introduction of the Exclusion Bill 1679 in Parliament which removed the Duke of York from the line of succession in favor of the King's Protestant illegitimate son James Scott Duke of Monmouth. The Bill struggled through Parliament as Tories who opposed the effort battled with Whigs who favored the measure.<sup>29</sup> Fearing that the Bill would pass through Parliament, Charles dissolved Parliament and never reconvened the body before his death in 1685.

The ascensions of James II to the throne marked the first time a Catholic monarch had ruled England since Mary I. The Anglican Tories who helped bring James to power by opposing the Exclusion Bill would ultimately become the group that would drive him from power. While the English people seemed happy to support the Catholicism of the King, they did not want to extend it to others. James was unable to recognize this distinction because two rebellions erupted one of which was led by his nephew the Duke of Monmouth who had proclaimed himself as king. After subduing these uprisings, James moved to protect his position by enlarging his standing army and appointing Catholics to positions in civil offices and the military circumventing the Test Acts. James also tried to broaden his support by advocating for a repeal of the penal laws against Catholics and Protestant Dissenters but face resistance by his base of support among Anglican Tories. Frustrated, James issued a general pardon to all Protestant Dissenters

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<sup>27</sup> Coffey 2000 p169

<sup>28</sup> Ibid p186

<sup>29</sup> See John Dickie's *The Craft: How the Freemasons Made the Modern World* for an excellent exploration of the effects of this struggle on early Freemasonry.

and issued a Declaration of Indulgence suspending the penal laws and the Test Acts. With these positions James pushed further by appointing even more Catholics to important positions and began purging Anglican officials.

James' loyal Anglican supporters were starting to lose patience with the King and completely abandoned him when his wife Mary in 1688 gave birth to a son whose Catholic claim would supersede that of James' Protestant daughter Marry from his first marriage. Parliament chose to reach out to Mary and her husband William, Prince of Orange and invited them into England to take the crown. When William and Mary invaded England, James abdicated his throne and fled in exile to France.

The Glorious Revolution of 1688 established William III and Mary II as coregents of England. One of their primary goals as rulers was to reduce the religious division within the country, and to further this goal, Parliament passed the Toleration Act 1688 which rolled back persecution against Catholics and Dissenters. If 1689 marked the end of the persecutory society, it did not mark the beginning of the secular state.<sup>30</sup>

After the deaths of Mary (1694) and William (1702) the throne passed to Mary's sister Anne who became the first Queen of Great Britain. At her death (1714) the Stewart dynasty concluded.

## Conclusion

Anderson's Constitution notes in its Charges of a Freemason:

But though in ancient Times Masons were charg'd in every Country to be of the Religion of that Country or Nation, whatever it was, yet 'tis now thought more expedient only to oblige them to that Religion in which all Men agree, leaving their particular Opinions to themselves; that is, to be *good Men and true*, or Men of Honour and Honesty, by whatever Denominations or Persuasions they me distinguish'd; whereby Masonry becomes the *Center of Union*, and the Means of conciliating true Friendship among Persons that must else have remain'd at a perpetual Distance.

The examination of the roughly two hundred thirty years of the Tudor-Stewart era in England above suggests that the common religious practice of a country can not only change considerably but it also may not have many aspects with which all agree. About the only thing on which English Christians of this time seemed to agree is that it was perfectly acceptable to persecute non-Christian heretical beliefs.

The most peculiar aspect of the English Reformation which necessitated the approach adopted by Freemasonry is the number of vectors of persecution during the period. There was the Catholic-Protestant persecution with the direction depending upon the particular monarch in power and was common throughout Europe. The more complicated dynamic unique to England was the Protestant-Protestant persecution which again depended on the monarch. These vectors were reliant upon the particular time and place whether the traditional Catholicism at the onset of the Tudor era, the subsequent evolution of Protestant practice of Tudor England with its brief resurgence of heavy-handed Catholicism, the High Church Anglicanism of Early Stewart England, the Radical Puritanism of the Interregnum, or the chaotic Late Stewart England creating a great deal of uncertainty to everyday life. The only possible solution for early Freemasons was to extricate the Craft from this mess by committing itself to non-sectarian religious toleration.

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<sup>30</sup> Coffey 2000 p 201

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