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Title **Freemasonry: Heir To The Enlightenment And Victim Of Post-Modernity.**
Author **Bro Darren Lorente – United Kingdom**

Is there anything new that can be said to showcase the Pro-Democratic and tolerant essence of Freemasonry? One well known example should suffice: Freemasonry allowed the Parliamentarian Elias Ashmole and the Roundhead Henry Manwaring to meet “on the level” in a Masonic Lodge in 1646. It was during this period and in the century that followed, when the Enlightenment project started to emerge, that the ascent and popularization of Freemasonry as an institution promoting freedom of thought and respect for the religious creed of its members commenced. Social distinctions were also erased within the Lodge and this in a period in which many feudal institutions and structures were still present.

Freemasonry, with its Gnostic, Hermetic and Alchemical roots, could appear as a rather paradoxical proponent of the Enlightenment when science and reason were taking over from superstition and ignorance. But this is yet another virtue of this most noble institution: Freemasonry managed to be both a promoter of the humanistic, classical liberalism that today we take for granted whilst holding on to a rich, ancient and mystical tradition where obedience to a Supreme Being was (and still is) a prerequisite for becoming a member. Freemasonry sees no conflict between God and Science.

Freemasonry is, in essence, a pro-Democratic institution and has been so since its official inception in the 17th century, which makes it a force for progress and intellectual advancement without subscribing itself to any particular Political ideology. As with matters of faith, this is down to the individual Freemason’s choice.

It is well documented that Freemasons were behind the Enlightenment in the 18th century and the Industrial and Social revolutions of the 19th and 20th centuries.

From being a force for progress and intellectual advancement, Freemasonry has today become, in the eyes of many non-Freemasons, a stuffy club for reactionary snobs at best and a secret society with a penchant for world domination at worst.

The social and historical contributions of Freemasonry are ignored as are Freemasonry’s noble connections with the ancient past and the mystic tradition of both the West and the East.

Sure, it is only natural - some might say - to react in these distressing times we are living in. Rather than progression the world today is in regression. Culture, mysticism, civility and humanism have been replaced by anti-intellectualism, materialism, chaos and technocracy.

But Freemasonry still has a role to play. Freemasonry embodies universal ideals without waving any banners or colours and does so in a world in which politics have become stagnant and where religious institutions are increasingly seen as dividers of men and a source of conflict.

How can Freemasonry continue to make a difference and contribute to the improvement of the world? By continuing to initiate good men and making them better; by preserving its democratic ethos as well as its links with the ancient past and, at the same time, by continuing to open up and share its privileges with the world.

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