

RELIGIOUS CONFESSIONS AND  
FREEMASONRY  
REFLECTIONS AND REPORTS



HOTEL TORNESE  
MARINA DI CECINA - LIVORNO  
27 SETTEMBRE 2024  
ORE 15

# CERTES

FOUNDER

Metropolitan Grand Lodge of London

PATRON

Masonic Trust for Boys and Girls

PATRON

Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution

PATRON

New Masonic Samaritan Fund



## No. 4606

(Consecrated 25<sup>th</sup> January 1924)



# LODGE

Metropolitan Grand Masters' Silver Award  
London Appeal for the Royal Masonic  
Benevolent Institution

Foundation Lodge of the MMC  
London's Air Ambulance Award

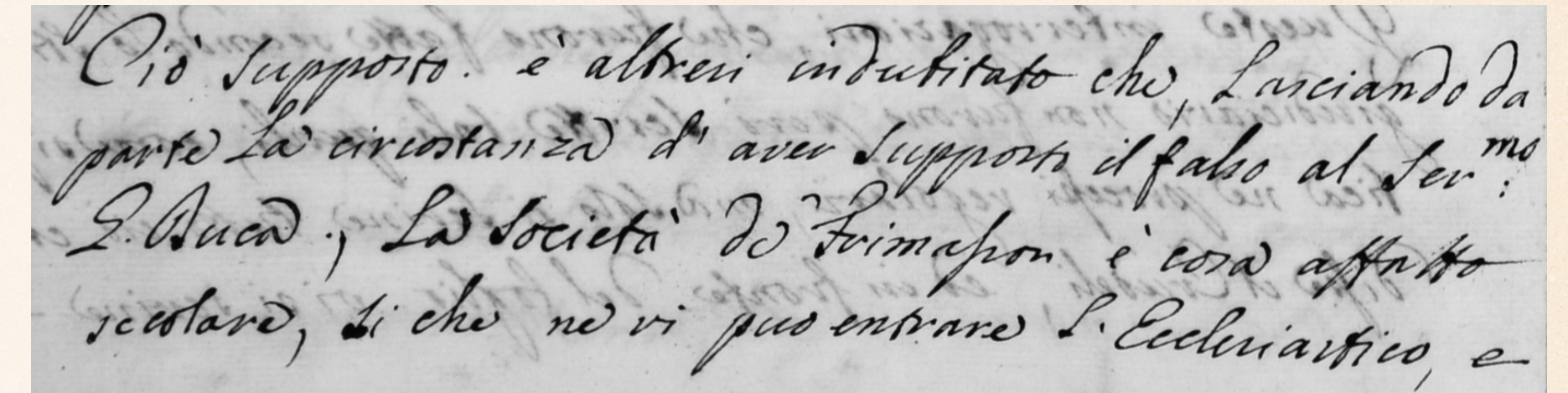
Foundation Lodge of the MMC  
London Fire Brigade Appeal

- ❖ In February 2024, a meeting took place between some of the representatives of the main Italian Masonic lodges and representatives of the Catholic Church.
- ❖ On February 20, 2024, we gathered in London to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Certes Lodge. Christians of various denominations, Muslims, Jews, and Hindus were among those present.
- ❖ There has never been any problem with coexistence among people of different religious faiths. This realization gave rise to the idea for this meeting: to introduce the many different perspectives to Italy.

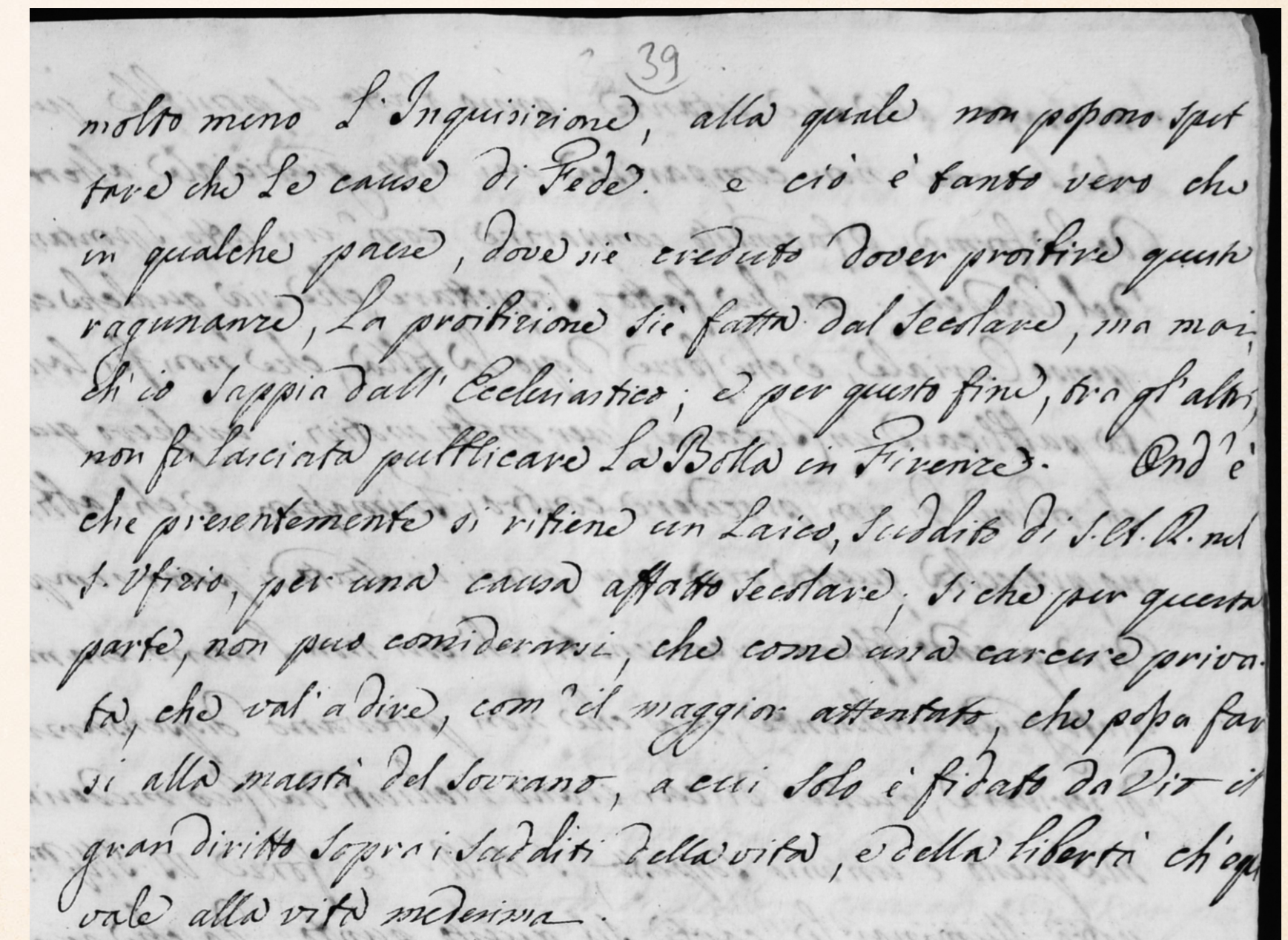
## THE REASONS FOR A CONFERENCE

# THE EXCOMMUNICATION BY CLEMENT XII ON APRIL 28, 1738, SHOWS A SURPRISING CONTINUITY FROM THE 18TH CENTURY TO THE PRESENT DAY

- ❖ The first act against Freemasonry was taken by Clement XII, the Florentine Pope. This is not the appropriate forum to analyze this decree
- ❖ It must be emphasized that the reasons for this excommunication appear more political than religious, as is clear from the words of the Tuscan Minister of Justice, Giulio Rucellai.”
- ❖ **The Freemasons are a wholly secular organization, completely outside the purview of the Church and, certainly, the Inquisition. The Inquisition's authority is limited to matters of faith. This is so evident that in countries where Freemasonry was banned, it was the secular authorities, not the Church, that imposed the prohibition. For this reason, among others, the Papal Bull was not published in Florence.** In fact, a layman, a subject of the King, is currently being detained by the Inquisition for a completely secular matter. Therefore, in this case, the Inquisition functions as a private prison, representing the ultimate violation of the sovereign's authority. It is the sovereign, and not the Church, who has the divine right to dictate the lives and liberties of his subjects.



*Ciò supposto. è altresì indubitato che, lasciando da parte la circostanza d'aver supposto il falso al Ser.<sup>mo</sup> S. Aued., La Società de' Frimason è cosa affatto secolare, sì che ne vi può entrare l'Ecclesiastico, e*



*molto meno l'Inquisizione, alla quale non possono spettare che le cause di Fede. e ciò è tanto vero che in qualche parte, dove si creduto dover proibire queste ragunanze, la proibizione sia fatta dal secolare, ma mai, ch'io sappia dall'Ecclesiastico; e per questo fine, tra gli altri, non fu lasciata pubblicare la Bolla in Firenze. Ond'è che presentemente si ritiene un Laico, suddito di S. M. R. nel S. Ufficio, per una causa affatto secolare; sì che per questa parte, non può considerarsi, che come una carcer d'privatità, che val' a dire, com'el maggior attentato, che possa farsi alla maestà del Sovrano, a cui solo è fidato da Dio il gran diritto sopra i sudditi della vita, e della libertà ch'è uguale alla vita medesima.*

Su concessione del Ministero della Cultura- Archivio di Stato di Firenze - Consiglio di Reggenza filza n.339 - Lettera del Ministro Rucellai al Ministro Richecourt datata 26 agosto 1739

ENGLISH LODGES IN ITALY. RECORDS FROM LONDON SHOW THAT ALMOST ALL OF THEM WERE REMOVED FROM THE ENGLISH REGISTERS IN 1813 BUT HAD BEEN INACTIVE FOR SOME TIME. THIS WAS THE RESULT OF NAPOLEON'S CONQUEST AND LED TO THE SPREAD OF HIS "FREEMASONRY

Some notes list all the English Lodges in Italy in the 18th century, and also all the provincial Grand Masters. The most relevant note is that of the archivist and historian J. M. Hamill and it provides us with a useful starting point on the Italian Lodges registered in the U.G.L.E. registers. Here is the original text:

«English Freemasonry in Italy

English Provincial Grand Masters in Italy

1740 Marquis des Marches for Savoy and Piedmont

1766 Niccolò de Manuzzi for Italy

1770 Caesar Pignatelli, Duke of Rocca for Naples and Sicily

1773 Count de Berney for Piedmont

English Freemasonry in Italy

1. English Provincial Grand Masters in Italy

- 1740 Marquis des Marches for Savoy and Piedmont
- 1766 Niccolo de Manuzzi for Italy
- 1770 Caesar Pignatelli, Duke of Rocca for Naples and Sicily
- 1773 Count de Berney for Piedmont

**Lodges in Italy on the English Registers**

Premier Grand Lodge

1768 Lodge of Perfect Union No. 433 in His Sicillian Majesties Regiment of Foot, Naples

1769 Well Chosen Lodge No. 444, Naples

1771 Lodge of Perfect Union No. 410, Livorno

1771 Lodge of Sincere Brotherly Love No. 412, Livorno

1772 Union Lodge No. 438, Venezia

1772 Loggia No. 439 (no name) Verona

1775 Loggia Saint Jean de la Nouvelle Esperance No. 479, Turin

1778 Loggia No. 510 (no name), Messina

1780 Loggia no. 525 (no name), Naples

1781 La Loggia della Verità No. 440, Naples

1782 Old British and Ligurian Lodge No. 444, Genoa

Antients Grand Lodge

1763 Loggia No. 117 (no name) at Livorno

1765 Loggia No. 138 (no name) at Salutation Tavern, Grand Street, Livorno.»

The two main Italian Lodges, the one of the English in Florence and the one connected to the Stuarts in Rome, they were not found in the English records

UNDER NAPOLEON I'S RULE, THE SCOTTISH RITE SPREAD THROUGHOUT ITALY AND BECAME THE MOST PREVALENT. FREEMASONRY TIED TO FRANCE WAS SUBSERVIENT TO THE NEW RULERS.

WITH GIUSEPPE GARIBALDI, ENGLISH FREEMASONRY RETURNED, AND ITALY ACHIEVED UNIFICATION.

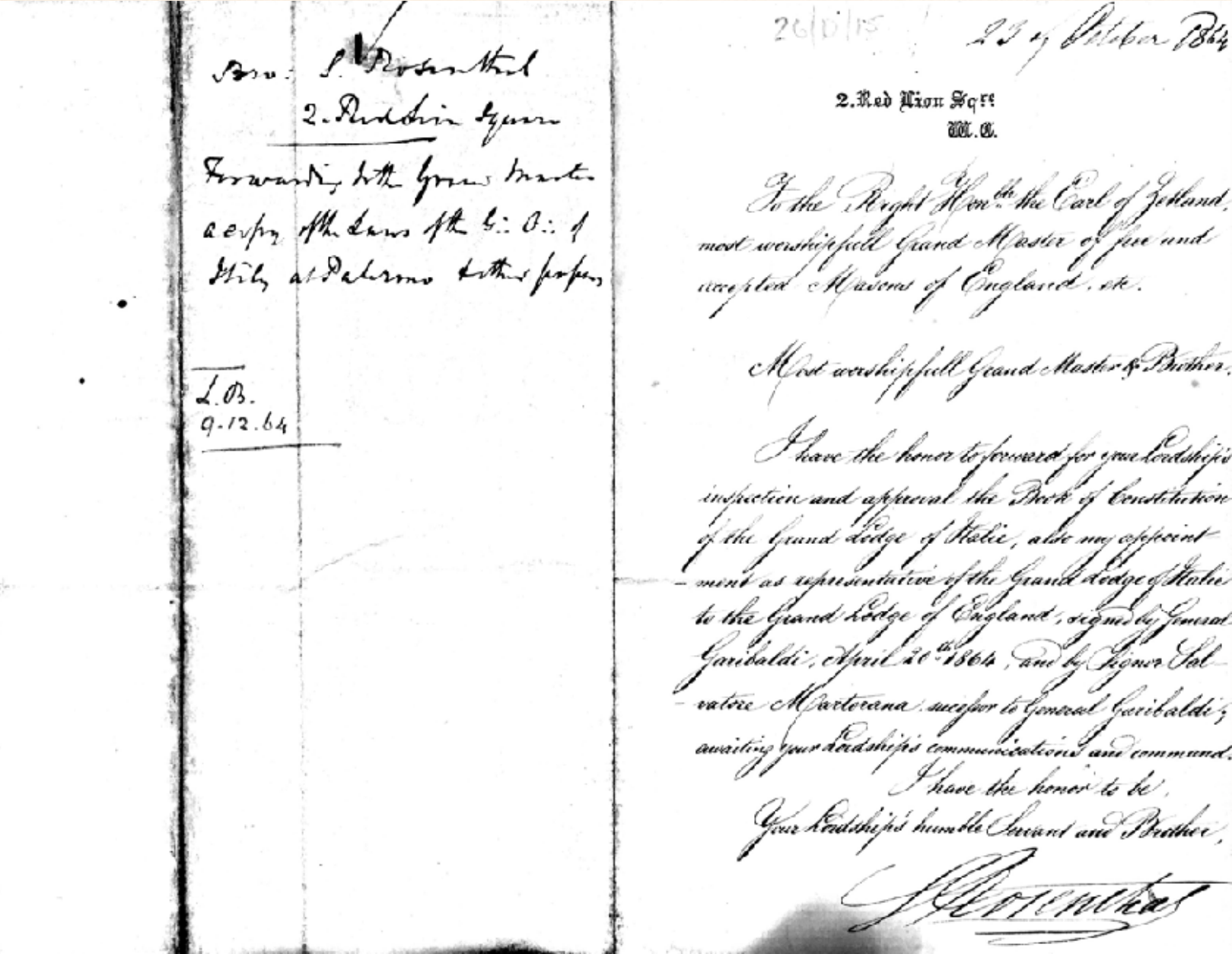
## A Questioning Eye on Freemasonry



John Belton

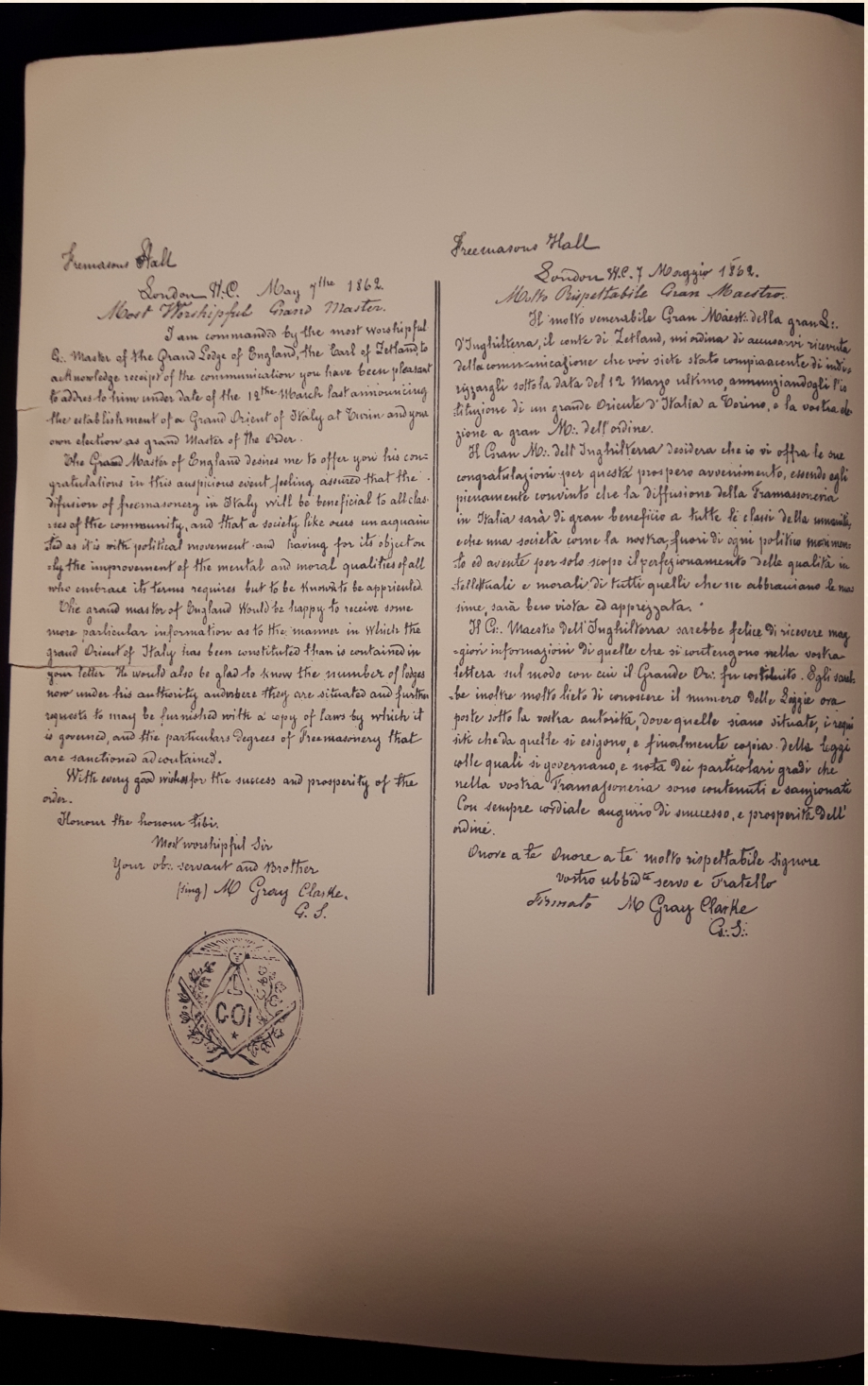
- **Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807-1882), a leading figure of the Risorgimento, is affiliated with an English Masonic lodge and his Expedition of the Thousand receives significant support from British Freemasonry."**
- **In his book 'A Questioning Eye on Freemasonry,' John Belton argues that Giuseppe Garibaldi was the central figure, militarily speaking, in the unification of Italy. Belton writes that Garibaldi 'was and is both a national hero and a Freemason in Italy, but was also a member of the Philadelphes in London. Members of this same group founded a British brigade that went to fight in Italy. British support is perhaps an untold part of the story". Garibaldi never belonged to an Italian Masonic lodge.**
- Belton elucidates that British interest in Italian politics may appear incongruous in the present day.. 'however, in the mid-nineteenth century, it constituted a significant issue across Europe, including Great Britain'. Garibaldi, in particular, was a veritable celebrity. Upon his visit to London in 1864, his popularity was so immense that it is reported that between 100,000 and 500,000 individuals thronged the streets..
- **Garibaldi maintained his affiliation with the London Lodge throughout his lifetime: 'Garibaldi never became a member of an Italian Lodge... He perceived Freemasonry as a political entity and was frustrated by its apparent inability to function as such. Conversely, Freemasonry employed Garibaldi as a figurehead to advance its own agenda'.**
- **British support for Garibaldi was fundamental to the success of the expedition. When the general attempted a new and similar expedition on Rome, he was first stopped by the Piedmontese and seriously wounded, then by French troops, and effectively ended up exiled in Caprera. When the Municipality of Palermo wanted to create a commemorative medal, a special inquiry was carried out by the Minister of the Interior to find the 1084 who accompanied Garibaldi to Sicily and fought at his side, because it was not known where they had ended up. Those who had risked their lives.**
- **These events took place as Freemasonry's influence over political and public bodies grew stronger.**

Following Italian unification, Costantino Nigra, the Grand Master of the GOI, headquartered in Turin at the time, sought recognition from London in 1862. In December 1864, as the English had requested, the Grande Oriente sent its bylaws to London, accompanied by the letter you see.



In London, the characteristics of the newly formed Italian Freemasonry became clear from the outset. One of the first Grand Masters of the Grand Orient of Turin, Costantino Nigra, wrote to the United Grand Lodge of England in 1862, communicating the establishment of the Masonic Community. Also in 1862, Grand Secretary Gray Clarke of the United Grand Lodge of England replied, on behalf of the Grand Master, the Earl of Zetland, to Nigra's letter, clearly stating what English Freemasonry was. ‘The Grand Master of England wishes me to convey to you his congratulations on this auspicious occasion, being fully convinced that the spread of Freemasonry in Italy will be of great benefit to all classes of humanity, and that a society such as ours, outside of any political movement and having as its sole purpose the improvement of the intellectual and moral qualities of all who embrace its principles, will be well regarded and appreciated’

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- It wasn't until 110 years later that the Grande Oriente was recognized.
- Garibaldi's part in this rejection is still unclear, given his involvement in English Freemasonry. It's noteworthy that this request was denied at a time when Garibaldi was extremely popular in England and had a significant role in Freemasonry.
- I understood the situation thanks to the historian Arrigo Petacco, who in a conference cited a letter from Nigra to Cavour. According to Petacco, the Piedmontese plan, in agreement with Napoleon III, was to create a Kingdom in the North, another in the center with Jerome Napoleon, leaving the South and the Papal States largely unchanged. Cavour was not interested in the South, in fact, he was worried because Garibaldi was bringing about a revolution. Nigra, ambassador to Paris, protested against Garibaldi's actions, which Petacco described as 'filibustering'. Cavour responded with a metaphor: 'the oranges are already on the table, the pasta is almost cooked...'. So, were the plans of the Italian Freemasonry linked to France in conflict with Garibaldi's actions? For more information: <https://youtu.be/Fo-edFBtewE?si=kKJOKOs5izafRS4I>

# THE INTERSECTION OF EVANGELICALISM AND FREEMASONRY IN ITALY: 1860-1908. KEY FIGURES: SAVERIO FERA, WILLIAM BURGESS, TEOFILO GAY.

Initially supported by the Pope, the 1848 uprisings saw the participation of many Catholics, even priests. Exiled after the revolution, some sought refuge in Reformed Churches, returning to Italy as advocates for Italian unification but also as promoters of Reformed religions. This led to the coinage of the term 'massoevangelism'.

Three evangelicals played significant roles in Italian Freemasonry:

- Saverio Fera, a pastor in both the Free Church and Methodist Church, and a Freemason;
- William Burgess, who led the Methodist Church in Italy and belonged to the Anglo Saxon lodge of Rome;
- Teofilo Gay, an Episcopal and later Waldensian pastor, who was a prominent member of the Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite.



GRUPPO DI ALCUNI MEMBRI DELLA XXIII<sup>a</sup> ASSEMBLEA — OTTOBRE 1867 (a)

1865. — Nel 1870, a Milano, formularono una confessione di fede, prendendo da quell'epoca il tempo Chiesa Cattolico-Romana, col nome di S. Jacopo tra' Fossi.

(a) Il gruppo non è completo. Esso venne eseguito dopo sciolta l'Assemblea e quindi taluni erano già assenti.  
I<sup>a</sup> linea (superiore): - 1. *Evangelista* Gandolfi - 2. *Sig.* Allasio - 3. *Sig.* 8. Conti - 4. *Sig.* Campanella - 5. *Sig.* De Turris - 6. *Mastro Evangelista* Sannoni - 7. *Evangelista* Pierotti - 8. *Pastore* Parodi - 9. *Pastore* Contino - 10. *Sig.* 1. *Sig.* Bagnoli.  
II<sup>a</sup> da. - 1. *Pastore* Lagomarsino - 2. *Evangelista* Collosi - 3. *Colportore Evangelista* Furlanetto - 4. *Pastore* Grisanti - 5. *Prof.* Ravi - 6. *Pastore* Cav. Fera - 7. *Prof.* Rodio - 8. *Pastore* Manin - 9. *Mastro Evangelista* Valentini - 10. *Pastore* Spigno.  
III<sup>a</sup> da. - 1. *Pastore* Buggelli - 2. *Evangelista* Marini - 3. *Pastore* Lenzi - 4. *Rev. Dr.* Mac Dougall - 5. *Pastore* Conti - 6. *Rev.* Giddins - 7. *Prof.* Fischer - 8. *Pastore* Wigley.  
IV<sup>a</sup> da. - 1. *Pastore* Blasi - 2. *Evangelista* Pantaleo - 3. *Pastore* Notarbartolo - 4. *Pastore* Silva - 5. *Sig.* R. Conti.

*Su concessione del Ministero della Cultura -  
Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze immagine  
proveniente dal libro di Saverio Fera, Pietro  
Carnesecchi, gentiluomo fiorentino arso in  
Roma*

# IN 1908, THE UNITY OF ITALIAN FREEMASONRY WAS BROKEN WHEN THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE SCOTTISH RITE WITHDREW ITS DELEGATION TO ADMINISTER THE CRAFT LODGES FROM THE GRAND ORIENT. - FASCIST REGIME

The Grand Orient has issued a worldwide circular accusing Fera of using Freemasonry to promote his own beliefs.

The rise of Fascism led to a resurgence of persecution against Evangelicals.

The most significant event was the closure of the Methodist College, built on Monte Mario to educate the children of the liberal elite.

Purtroppo però alle false accuse formulate contro di noi dal gruppo del Fera, potrebbero contrapporsi e dimostrarsi vere quelle che noi saremmo in grado di rivolgergli, di aver tentato che la sua scarsa ed esautorata compagine divenisse docile strumento di una determinata parte politica: purtroppo non manca chi dubiti, e con qualche ragione, che l'addebito calunnioso, che sia la nostra una associazione atea ed antireligiosa, enopra nel Fera la smania e la necessità di accrescere proseliti, attraverso la iniziazione massonica, alla Chiesa speciale della quale è Ministro.

Ma di questo non giova occuparsi. La Massoneria Italiana sa e sente da qual parte sieno, non soltanto le forze, ma le dottrine vere e le legittime aspirazioni dell'Ordine: essa ha già pronunziato, e da tempo, il suo sovrano verdetto, e non dispera che, nei riguardi del dissidio che la molesta, anche il giudizio di tutti i Supremi Consigli del mondo, o prima o poi, riconosca e sanzioni il nostro diritto e renda solenne omaggio alla verità.

Ed ora mi sia permesso avvertirvi, Potentissimi Venerati e Cari Fratelli, che, fino a questo momento, al Supremo Consiglio da me presieduto, non pervenne l'invito di intervenire al Congresso, che sarà tenuto in Washington nel prossimo autunno. Saverio Fera afferma, e l'affermazione fa ripetere nella stessa persona, che quell'invito già fu

faisait partie du Grand Orient et du Suprême Conseil des 33... S'il y a cependant des accusations qui ont un fondement de vérité, ce ne sont point celles que le groupe du F. Fera nous fait mais celles que nous pourrions, en toute conscience lui adresser c. à. d. celles d'avoir tenté d'assujettir son faible groupe à un parti politique. Et il y a bien des Frères qui croient que les fausses accusations que le F. Fera nous lance, c. à. d. de vouloir faire de la Maçonnerie une association antireligieuse et athée, ont tout juste pour but de cacher la manie qu'il a de faire des prosélites à l'Eglise spéciale dont il est le pasteur, par le moyen de l'initiation maçonnique.

Ce n'est cependant pas de cela que nous nous occuperons.

La Maçonnerie Italienne sait et sent de quel côté se trouvent, non seulement ses forces, mais encore les vaines doctrines et les légitimes aspirations de la Maçonnerie Universelle. Elle a déjà prononcé, depuis longtemps, son verdict et elle garde l'espoir que tôt ou tard, tous les Suprêmes Conseils du monde reconnaîtront, en ce qui concerne le désaccord qui l'afflige, notre droit et rendront hommage à la vérité.

Je me prends maintenant la liberté, Très Puissants, Vénérés et Chers Frères, de vous avertir que jusqu'à présent le Suprême Conseil, que j'ai l'honneur de présider, n'a pas encore reçu l'invitation pour prendre part au Congrès qui aura lieu à Washington l'automne pro-

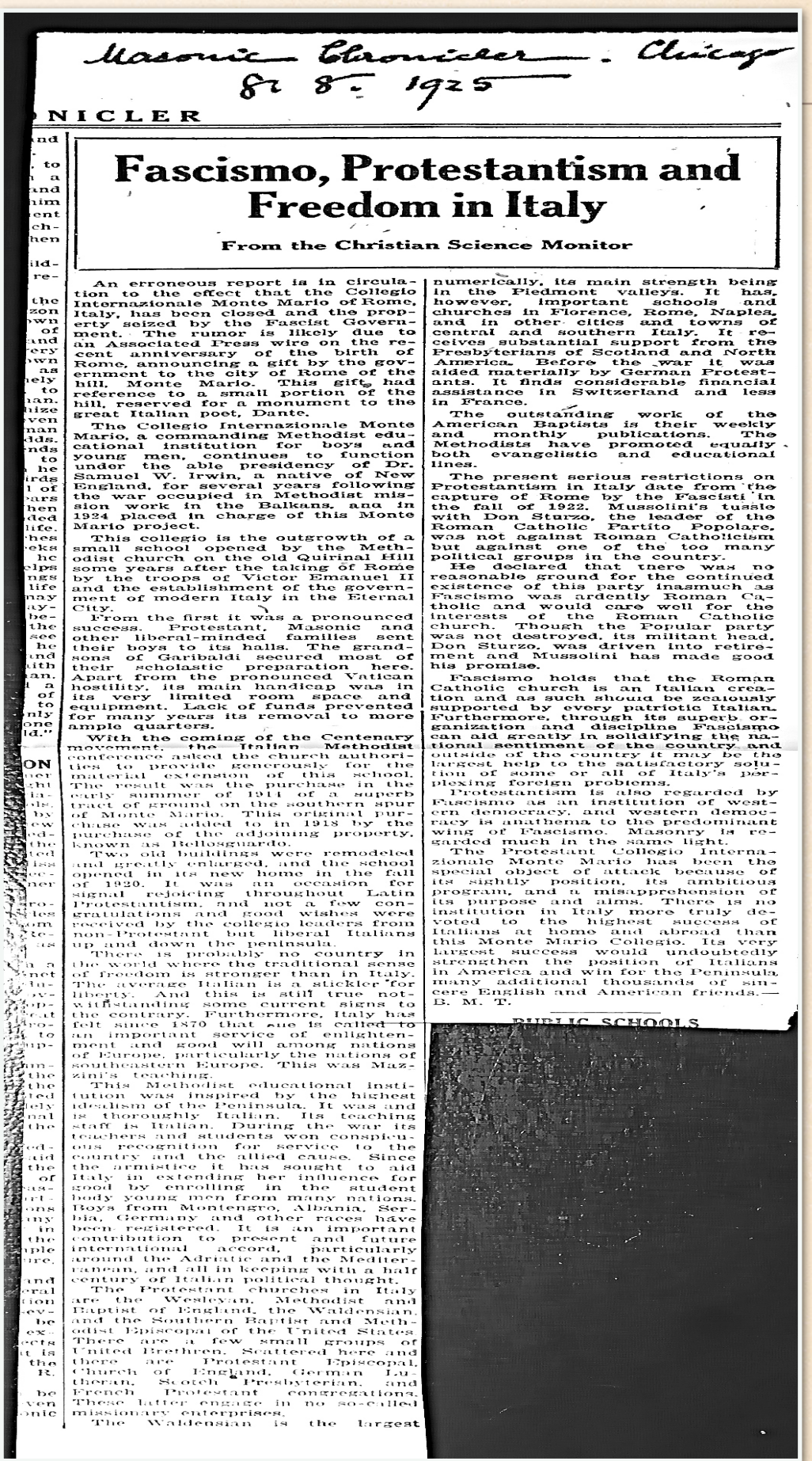
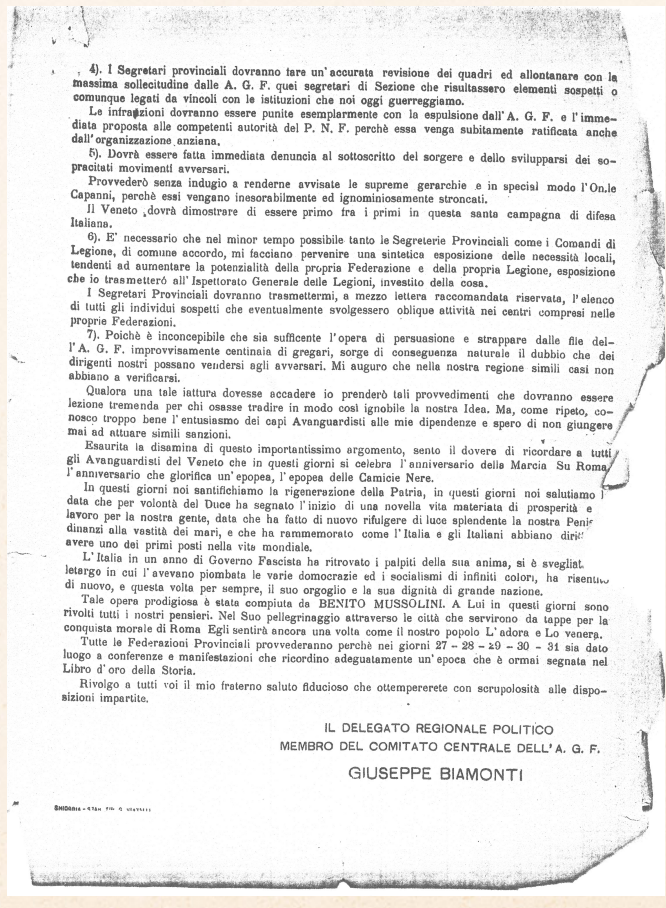
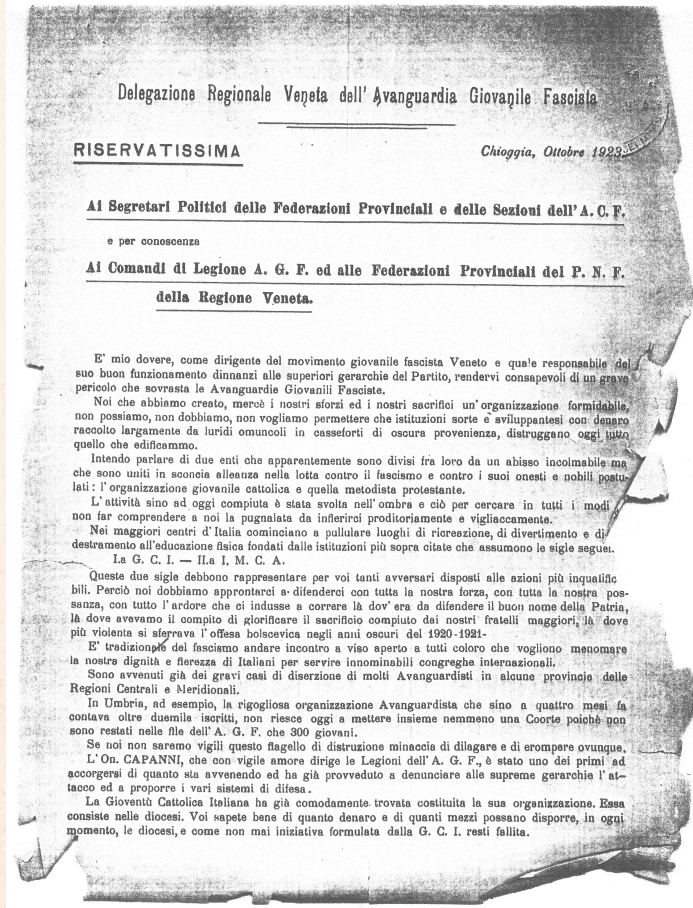
This legislation, and these rules and regulations in the Italian jurisdiction, have existed, as I have stated above, since the most remote past; and were in action when Signor Fera formed part both of the Great Orient and of the Supreme Council of the 33... In opposition to these false accusation brought against us by Signor Fera's group, those which we could bring against him can unfortunately be proved to be true; and that is to have attempted to make his poor and unauthorised group become the docile instrument of a determined political cause; and there are several who have their doubts, and with a certain amount of reason, that the uncalled for assertion made, that our Brotherly Family is an atheistic and antireligious association, is but to screen, on the part of Signor Fera, the unavowed desire and means for increasing the number of proselites, through a kind of massonic initiation, for the particular Church, of which he is a Minister.

We gain a thing however by giving any further consideration to this matter. Italian Freemasons know, and feel, in which direction lies not only the strength, but the true doctrines and legitimate aspirations of Our Order: it has also passed, and a long time ago, its sovereign verdict on the matter in question; and feels no doubt but that, as regards this dissention, the Supreme Councils, all the World over, will, sooner or later, recognise our rights, and render official homage to truth.

'In Fera, there is a mania and a need to increase proselytes, through Masonic initiation, for the special Church of which he is a Minister'.

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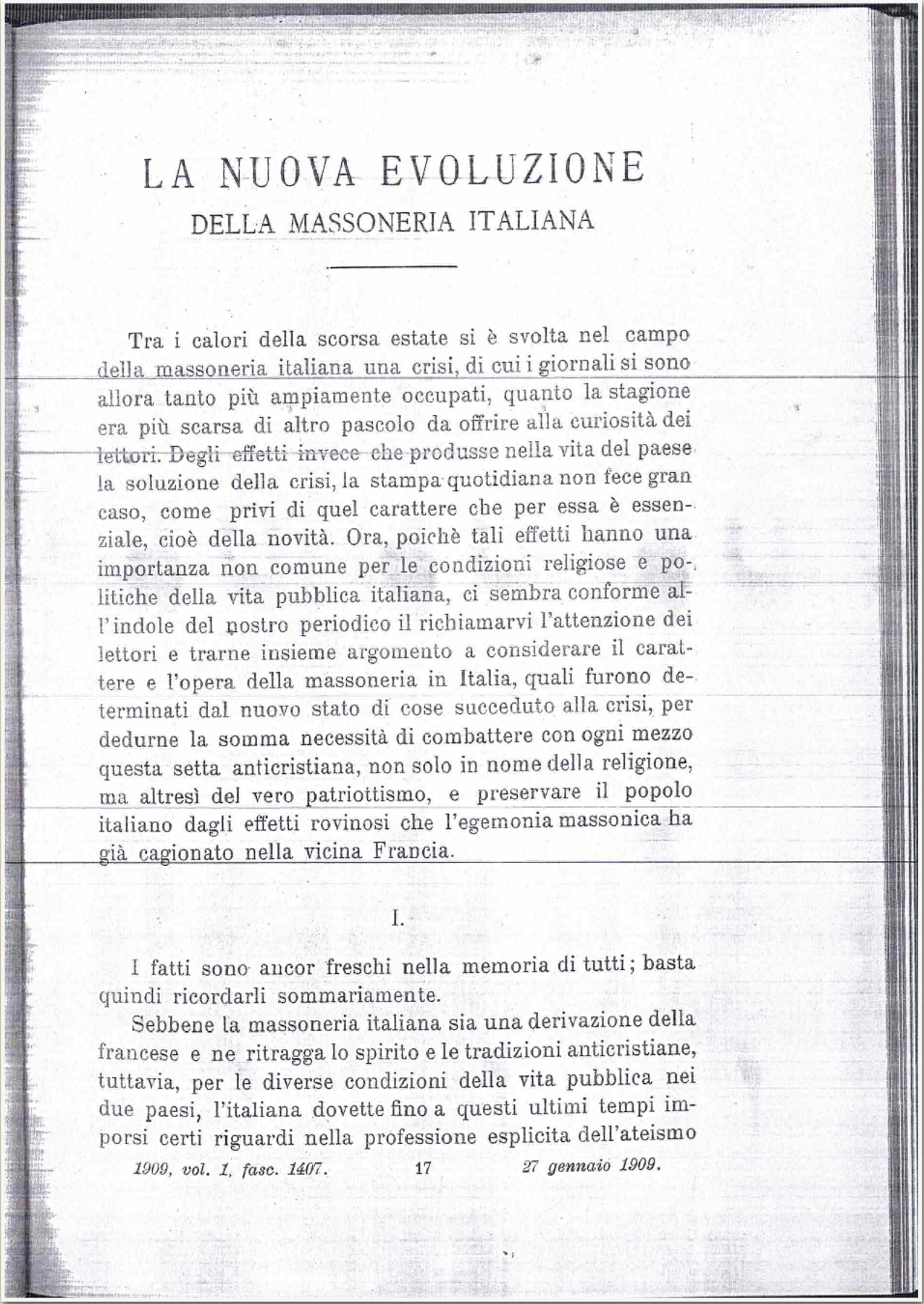
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# THE EVENTS OF 1908 THE OPINION OF CIVILTA' CATTOLICA

[Saverio Fera, head of traditional and spiritual Freemasonry](#)  
[and for this reason accused during the crisis of 1908 of being](#)  
**“Agent of Protestant biblical societies”**



Su concessione del Ministero della Cultura -  
Biblioteca Marucelliana di Firenze - raccolte de La Civiltà Cattolica - anno 60 - 1909 -  
Volume I - 27 gennaio 1909 – Divieto di riproduzione.

In the schism between the GOI and Piazza del Gesù, Civiltà Cattolica claims that the GOI emerged victorious, a claim that is unfounded. The magazine asserts: 'Among the most significant outcomes of this conflict, the conservative or moderate faction, composed of spiritualist or deist Masons and anti-subversive opportunists, was expelled from the official Masonic organization and marginalized in Italian public life. Fera, the leader of the spiritualists, accused of being a Protestant agent, and Camera, the leader of the opportunists, seen as a government stooge, were excommunicated along with their followers from the Grand Orient, which now dominates both the symbolic and Scottish Rites.

## PIAZZA DEL GESU' A SMALL ORGANIZATION

But unfortunately, as the pastor Gay had predicted in his conversation with an editor of Momento, the Ferians remained few and soon dwindled to a minimum; in his circular of August 24, the Grand Master Ferrari could triumphantly count on his fingers the lodges and chambers disobedient and therefore demolished by the Grand Orient, affirming that 'there was no schism', that 'the attempt of the secessionists had completely and miserably failed' and that 'time would open the eyes of the very few deluded'. And La Ragione di Roma repeatedly declared that 'the Ferian attempt had definitively passed into the realm of memories with a first-class funeral, but without excessive shedding of tears’

## THE ROLE OF THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT AND FRENCH FREEMASONRY:

**‘And the discord was destined to become more bitter, the more French Freemasonry, puffed up with its victories, incited its younger sister of Italy to follow worthily in its glorious footsteps, and the French government, with its moral means, blew on the fire of Italian anti-clericalism, to create a public opinion favorable to itself and drag Italy behind it in the war against Christianity...’**

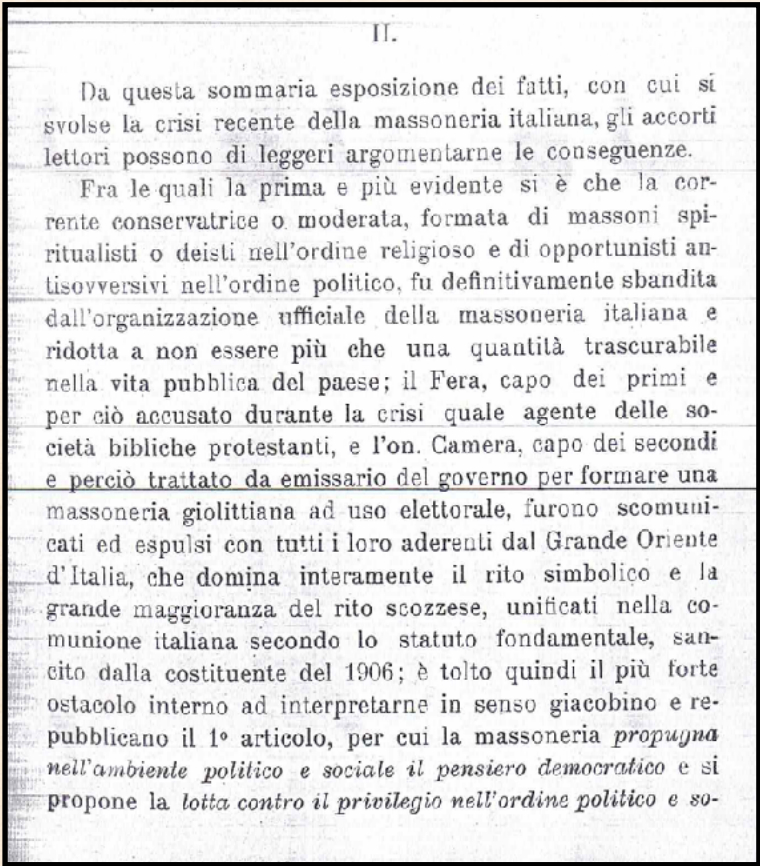
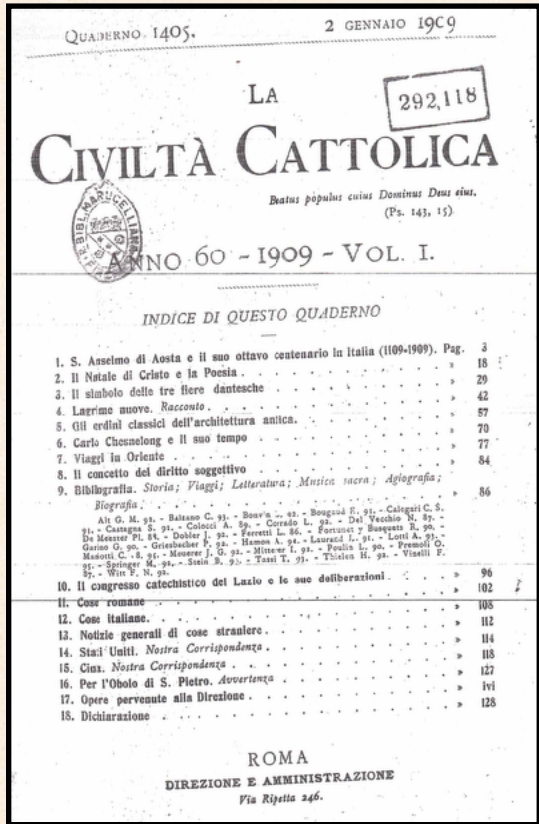
## THE GRAND ORIENT IS DOMINATED BY ANARCHISTS, JACOBINS AND SOCIALISTS:

**"And just as the Republicans and Radicals, so too the Socialists and even the Anarchists, already hostile to Freemasonry, considered as a dark sect of the exploitative bourgeoisie, not only reconciled and formed alliances with it against the common enemy, clericalism, but, especially after the victory of the popular bloc in the municipal elections of Rome, entered in large numbers into the lodges to strengthen its Jacobin element and make it predominant, forming what the pastor Gay called a 'radical and socialist mixture, with which it is impossible to agree', since 'Braccialarghe (a famous anarchist agitator who joined Freemasonry) cannot have respect for the Bible and the Bible must be found on every Masonic altar.'"**

**The historical truth, however, was different from what the Jesuits proclaimed: at the international conferences of Washington in 1912 and Lausanne in 1922, the Communion of Piazza del Gesù was called to represent the Scottish Rite in Italy. The exact opposite of what the Jesuits wrote happened, although the Grand Orient remained for a long time the organization with the largest number of members.**

CATHOLIC CIVILIZATION: THE JESUITS' REVIEW

"IN 1908, A NEW SCHISM WOULD ROCK ITALIAN FREEMASONRY, AS THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE SCOTTISH RITE WITHDREW THE GRAND ORIENT'S AUTHORITY TO OVERSEE THE SCOTTISH RITE LODGES AND ESTABLISHED ITS OWN GRAND LODGE. THIS NEW SUPREME COUNCIL, KNOWN AS PIAZZA DEL GESÙ, WOULD COME UNDER SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE FROM EVANGELICAL CHURCH LEADERS."



Su concessione del Ministero delle Cultura -  
Biblioteca Marucelliana di Firenze - raccolte de La Civiltà  
Cattolica - anno 60 - 1909 - Volume I - 27 gennaio 1909 –  
Divieto di riproduzione.

- In the 1909 collection of issues of La Civiltà Cattolica, year 60, volume I, pages 257 and following, we find an article entitled 'The new evolution of Italian Freemasonry'. The events of 1908, according to the review, have an importance '... unusual for the religious and political conditions of Italian public life...', therefore it is necessary to bring to the attention of readers what has happened '... to deduce the need to combat this anti-Christian sect with every means, not only in the name of religion, but also of true patriotism...'"
- The history of Italian Freemasonry is correctly traced: it is of French origin, but it has never pushed the excesses of the French, claiming atheism in religion and radical republicanism in politics. In fact, maintaining relations with Anglo-American Freemasonry, which is more conservative, it has not abolished the formula that refers to the Great Architect of the Universe and maintains the prohibition of discussing politics and religion in the lodges.
- A Freemasonry that has thus concentrated, following the Garibaldine and Mazzinian traditions, its activity in: ‘... war against the Papacy and the Law of Guarantees, against religious orders, against catechism in schools, against religious marriage and funerals, against the clergy and the Church in general, in order to obtain, with the triumph of secularism, the destruction of clericalism, that is, of Catholicism in Italy; all this, naturally, in the name of freedom of conscience ...’.
- However, a more traditionalist Freemasonry remained, which had necessarily clashed: ‘... with the center and the left, both devoted to French Jacobinism and eager to transplant it into Italy, especially after the triumph of Freemasonry with the Combes government, the abolition of the concordat, the separation of Church and State, and the rehabilitation of Dreyfus.’
- **The article claims that French Freemasonry had acted on Italian Freemasonry by fomenting conflicts in order to bring Italians to their own positions.**
- **The clash was made public by newspapers and the Jesuits attacked the Grand Orient, declaring that the moderates: "... were excommunicated and expelled from the Grand Orient of Italy which entirely dominates the symbolic rite and the great majority of the Scottish Rite ...". The article concludes by highlighting that in this way any internal obstacle to considering that art in a Jacobin manner has been removed. The Statutes were modified in the sense that Freemasonry had to pursue democratic thought and the struggle against privilege.**

# IN THE AVERSION TO FREEMASONRY, POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS PREDOMINATE - SOMETHING THAT DOES NOT EXIST WITH OTHER RELIGIOUS

## VATICAN COUNCIL II: THE NEGOTIATION WITH THE GRANDE ORIENTE AND ITS FAILURE.

Father Rosario Esposito (1921-2007) wrote a book detailing the events, titled 'The Reconciliation between the Church and Freemasonry', published by Longo Editore in 1979

In the 1970s, immediately after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council with its openings to non-believers and other Christian religions, some meetings were initiated between Masonic organizations and representatives of the Catholic Church, particularly in Austria, Germany, and Italy, to the point that one could say that a real negotiation opened.

In Italy, the meetings were initiated by the Grand Orient of Italy and, on the Church side, by Jesuit Father Antonio Caprile, Pauline Father Rosario Esposito Franco, and Monsignor Vincenzo Miano, who headed the 'Secretariat for Non-Believers and Freemasonry'

Professor Augusto Comba (1923-2009) attended some of these meetings and discusses them in his book 'Valdenses and Freemasonry - Two Minorities Compared'. Comba, who participated in the meetings as a member of the Grand Orient's delegation, highlights their mutual instrumentalism: '**... I was aware of the instrumental, diplomatic, and media-oriented nature of the initiative for both parties. After all, they were essentially interested in the repercussions of the affair on the United Grand Lodge of England. If the Grand Orient of Italy could represent Freemasonry to the Vatican, it probably did so through whispered authorizations from London. And what interested Gamberini was the start of the process, which would be continued the following year by his successor Salvini, towards British recognition.**'

### THERE WAS GREAT CONFUSION:

Don Miano recalls in his text that in 1965, Pope Paul VI established the Secretariat for Non-Believers. By 'non-believers', they meant those who 'have no or reject any religious faith', and Freemasonry was commonly considered to fall into this category. **It was only in 1979 that Don Miano realized that 'Masons are not and cannot be considered non-believers'. It is clear that the belief was that Freemasonry was not represented by the so-called regular or Anglo-Saxon-oriented Freemasonry, but by the branch linked to the atheistic Grand Orient of France, aimed at promoting progressive ideals in secular society**



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THE UNITED GRAND LODGE OF ENGLAND'S POSITION ON RELIGION IN LONDON  
REMAINS STEADFAST. I BELIEVE THIS IS NOT WIDELY KNOWN IN ITALY.  
LET US REITERATE IT.

**Grand Lodge approved the following statement in September 1962 and the Board sees no reason to recommend any variation to it.**

### **RELATIONSHIP OF MASONRY AND RELIGION**

The Board has been giving the most earnest consideration to this subject, being convinced that it is of fundamental importance to the reputation and well-being of English Freemasonry that no misunderstanding should exist inside or outside the Craft.

**It cannot be too strongly asserted that Masonry is neither a religion nor a substitute for religion. Masonry seeks to inculcate in its members a standard of conduct and behaviour which it believes to be acceptable to all creeds, but studiously refrains from intervening in the field of dogma or theology.** Masonry, therefore, is not a competitor with religion though in the sphere of human conduct it may be hoped that its teaching will be complementary to that of religion. **On the other hand its basic requirement that every member of the Order shall believe in a Supreme Being and the stress laid upon his duty towards Him** should be sufficient evidence to all but the wilfully prejudiced that Masonry is an upholder of religion since it both requires a man to have some form of religious belief before he can be admitted as a Mason, and expects him when admitted to go on practising his religion.

**Adrian Marsh Grand Secretary**

# Pro Grand Master's address - Quarterly Communication of Grand Lodge -

December 2023 - The constitutions reflect the values and traditions.

*You may wonder, Brethren, why a document of such relative antiquity should be worth celebrating. The answer is simple and straightforward: the 1723 Constitutions encapsulate the Enlightenment values on which Freemasonry, as practised by the Regular Grand Lodges represented in this room, is founded. These values are themselves centred on notions of human happiness, intellectual enquiry, self-improvement and the pursuit of knowledge for itself based on reason, and with ideals including liberty, religious tolerance, constitutional government, and a meritocratic society. These values are further underpinned in our Freemasonry by belief in God, according to our own Faith: they are surely as relevant today in 2023 as they were in 1723.*

*Regrettably many of those values are under constant threat in today's world. We must constantly strive to ensure that the beacon of enlightenment which Freemasonry represents and the values of the Enlightenment thinkers and philosophers is not buried by intolerance, superstition and violence.*

*Brethren, we all have a duty to be faithful to our obligations and to conduct ourselves in this life according to Masonic principles. We try to articulate a modern statement of how we should live our lives with four words, "Integrity, Friendship, Respect, Service". This is deliberately laconic, or, if you prefer, brief and easy to remember, but it captures the essence of what it is to be a Freemason in the twenty-first century. It is important we remember this for all of us, whatever our rank or position is in Society or indeed within Freemasonry, need to act accordingly.*

*As you saw last week, Brethren, in our First Rising, we also find ourselves having to state publicly again that Freemasonry, as practised by this Grand Lodge and the others represented here today, is secular, non-religious, and non-political. It is neither a religion nor a substitute for religion. Our members must profess a belief in God, a faith that remains personal to them. Our proud history of religious tolerance has nothing to do with the "indifferentism" of which we are wrongly accused. As our members from every creed recognise, we are firm in supporting religious faith and the principles I have already stated, of Integrity, Friendship, Respect and Service, inspire our members to endeavour to be better people and better citizens proudly engaged in the communities in which we live.*

*Lest anybody say that this is an innovation in Freemasonry, I will conclude by quoting two distinguished Freemasons from the 18th Century, the Century of the Age of Enlightenment. George Washington commented: 'The grand object of Masonry is to promote the happiness of the human race'. While King Frederick II, or The Great, of Prussia said that his support of the Craft came from its objectives being: "the intellectual elevation of men as members of society and making them more virtuous and more charitable".*

*I do not think that those views can be bettered. Brethren, Thank you.*

COUNCIL FOR FREEMASONRY IN ENGLAND AND WALES:  
THE UNITED GRAND LODGE OF ENGLAND, ORDER OF WOMEN FREEMASONRY  
AND HONORABLE FRATERNITY OF ANCIENT FREEMASONS  
THE VALUE OF TRADITION

English Freemasonry has been criticized and accused of having single-gender organizations. It has been uniquely required that its members declare their public affiliation, a fact evident from photographs in magazines and numerous public events organized by the association.

**Unlike what often happens in Italy, it does not deal with politics, it does not have an external hierarchy that is binding on the internal Masonic one, it claims merit as a selection criterion, and it carries out continuous public activities.**

In response to these criticisms, often linked to contemporary cultural trends, a Council uniting male and female Freemasonry has been formed, and traditional values have been reaffirmed.

**Saturday 29 June 2024 - First Rising – the official newsletter for members of United Grand Lodge of England:**

Having determined that both Women's and Men's Freemasonry wish to maintain single-gender Lodges, we believe that the creation of a Council for Freemasonry in England and Wales will provide a formal process around the strong collaboration with Women's Freemasonry that we have always had. The Council is comprised of The United Grand Lodge of England, Order of Women Freemasonry and Honourable Fraternity of Ancient Freemasons. Whilst it is a formal collaboration, it will have no powers over individual Grand Lodges, nor is it in any way a merger and will not impact the regularity of any or all of them.

**The main purposes of the Council will be:**

- **To ensure that the founding principles of merit, tolerance, diversity and inclusion are advanced and respected;**
- **To ensure that common values, such as community service, can be optimised through scale;**
- **To align and coordinate communications and engagement with government, regulators, religious authorities, and the press;**
- **To promote and support the membership challenges of each of the Grand Lodges;**
- **To, where appropriate, make available and allocate resources and facilities for the good and general benefit of male and female Freemasonry.**

## An ancient cultural context

It is evident that the origins of the confrontation between Freemasonry and the Catholic Church can be traced to three main reasons:

- The new Academy appealed to the European ruling classes,
- It valued scientific knowledge and defended Galileo's method over traditional conceptions, and was composed of people who traveled and were familiar with new worlds and cultures,
- Finally, it could become a vehicle for the entry of Evangelical religions into Italy.

The Catholic Church has always had to contend with a tension between its spiritual soul and a resistance to temporal powers, seeking support from secular governments to which it provides cultural legitimacy.

Consequently, in the 18th century, the Church did not want to lose control over the ruling classes and cultural institutions, nor did it want communities linked to Evangelical Churches to consolidate in Italy. It is no coincidence that in the 19th century, the Church opposed the Freemasonry of Piazza del Gesù, whose leadership included members of Reformed Churches.

Should conversion be sought through example and preaching, or with the help of secular power?

**I agree with Minister Rucellai's solution: Freemasonry is a secular organization that should be of no concern to the Catholic Church. As a dialogue between the two is underway, this principle should serve as its foundation. Any other path, particularly a mutual recognition of worldly power, would be detrimental harmful.**

## KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE, EAST AND WEST, NORTH SOUTH

**Undoubtedly, the scientific method, the Academies, Galileo, and a novel approach to understanding the natural world paved the way for the Industrial Revolution. While Tuscany witnessed a halt in this progress, England, with institutions like the Royal Society, continued to foster scientific inquiry. This period coincided with extensive travel and cultural exchange. This crucial cultural interchange is often overlooked, replaced by imaginative reconstructions.**

**WE ARE PART OF THIS EXCHANGE, and we find traces of it in Masonic writings.**

**Freemasonry is a secular institution committed to the study of the philosophies of eminent thinkers, past and present, and does not prescribe to religious dogmas or rituals:**

- He knows Confucius who gave China its moral doctrine.
- He knows Zoroaster who taught the Aryans of Bactria to worship the omniscient Lord Ahura Mazda.
- He knows Gotama Buddha who renounced all privileges to open the path that leads to the end of suffering.
- He knows Moses, saved from the waters and who will worship the one God.
- He knows Hermes Trismegistus, thrice great, possessor of the science of Ancient Egypt.
- He knows Rabbi Jeshua who gave his life for the salvation of mankind.
- He knows Muhammad who explained that Allah imposes justice, benevolence, and generosity.
- He knows he who will come tomorrow: for the chain of inquiry has never been broken, nor will it ever be broken.

# RELIGIOUS CONFESSIONS IN THE WORLD

- ❖ IF WE SEARCH FOR THE NUMBERS OF RELIGIOUS CONFESSIONS ON GOOGLE, HERE IS THE ANSWER: Christians 29.6% (Catholics 17.1%, Evangelicals and other Christians 9.9%, Orthodox 2.6%), Muslims 23.1%, Jews 0.2%, Eastern religions 26.2% (Hindus 15.2%, Buddhists 5.1%, other Eastern religions 5.9%), traditional religions 2.6%, other groups and those not stating 3.5%, atheists and agnostics 14.8%..

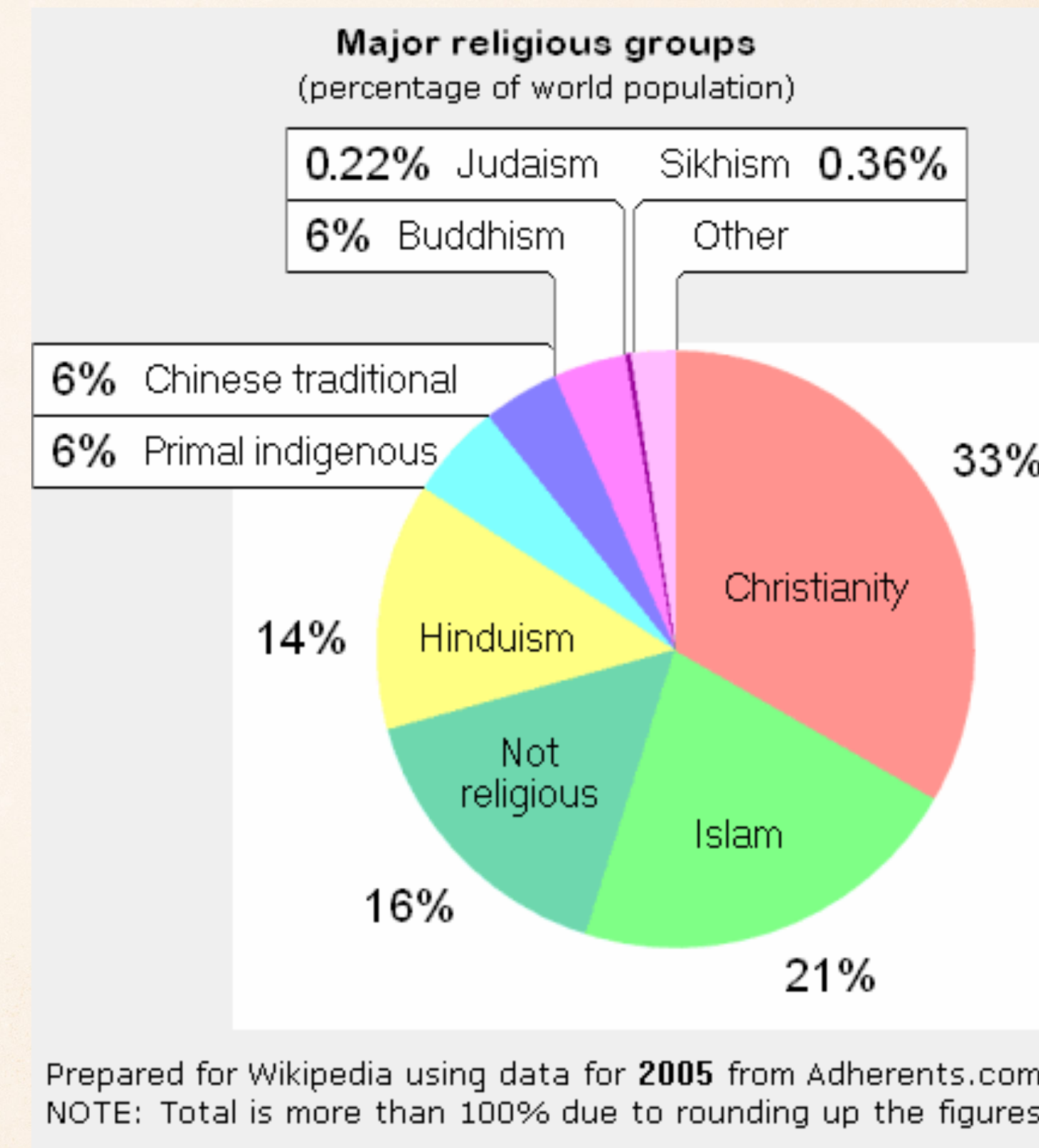


Image taken from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia - entry on major religions