

# 20th Century French Freemasonry

## A Global Historical Perspective - Scission & Coalition I/II

In 1877, **French Freemasonry** begins a new phase following the amendment of the **First Article of the constitution**. The revised article states that 'Freemasonry, an essentially philanthropic, philosophic (*naturalist, adogmatic*) and progressive institution, has for its object **the search after truth, the study of universal morality, of the sciences and arts and the practice of beneficence**. It has for its principles absolute liberty of conscience and human solidarity. It excludes none on account of his belief. Its motto is **Liberty, Equality, Fraternity**'.

The new paragraph of the Constitution does not forbid lodges to continue to work under the **Great Architect of the Universe**, but, the new direction creates an anti-Masonic backlash. **L'Ordre Moral** uses the occasion to revile the Order. **Léo Taxil**, at first a notorious anti-clerical mason, writes about a *Satanic Brotherhood* and his books are considered as facts by the **Catholic Church**. This belief persists even after his final confession as a hoaxer.

Against this adversity, **Freemasonry** represents the 'Spirit of the Republic' and many laws are passed under Masonic influence: Free, Obligatory and Public Education, Divorce culminating in 1905 with the separation of the **Church and State**.

The **Traditional Aspect of the Order** is on collision course with **Social and Technological Progress**. Many Masons are in favour of a simplification of the Rituals and Degrees. An explosion of Constitutions, starting with the **Grande Loge Symbolique Ecossaïse**, emancipates masonry from the central control of the **Suprême Conseil**. 1913 marks the creation of the **Grande Loge Nationale Indépendante et Régulière pour la France et les Colonies Françaises** created from two lodges working under the **Rectified Scottish Rite**. In 1948 the name changes to the now familiar **Grande Loge Nationale Française**.

**Masons** are high ranking civil servants, **Paul Doumer** in Indochina and even president **Félix Faure**. Only the army escapes the 'Masonic Republicanism' but not for long; **General André** uses the **Grand Orient** database to promote the republican officers, the **Corinthian File** and to put under surveillance the monarchists and the catholics of the **Carthaginian File**.

The affair happens in the middle of the **Dreyfus Trial**. **General André** and **Emile Combes**, the initiator of the 1905 law previously mentioned are forced to retire from politics. The sinister **Charles Maurras** declares that 'in the third republic ministers follow one another but serve only one and unique institution: **Freemasonry**'.

The disaster of 1914 creates a **Union Sacrée** to support the war effort; **Brother Joffre** is victorious at the **Battle of the Marne**. The armistice in 1918 makes most of the masons conscious of the fragility of the international situation. Many **Italian, German and Russian** lodges are forced to close. The Marxist Leninists are the first to ban the brotherhood in 1922 joining, in a curious twist, the Vatican in the **Witch-hunt**. Mussolini eradicates the brotherhood by 1925. In the 1930s, the fascist triumvirate begins to destroy the *Order* throughout *Europe*. **Franco** enacts a law condemning any brethren to **30 years of prison** or worse. Hitler in agreement with the notorious fake **The Protocols of Zion**\* conflates Zionism and the Order in a world wide conspiracy theory. **Pétain**, the Vichy government, blindly follows the Germans in their persecutions.

During the early 1940s, the black years, masons are on the same level as the **Jews**, banned from working and sent to concentration camps. Many take part in the **Résistance** and some submit, voluntarily or otherwise, to the Francisque for a so-called 'New France'. The Grand Orient in 1939 has a membership of 29000 brethren. By 1945, this is reduced to 5500.

From 1953, the **Annual Assembly of the Grand Lodge of France** imposes the Bible in all working; in 1959 all relations with the **Grand Orient** cease in order to be recognised as regular by the **Grand Lodge of England**. The affiliation is short lived; many French masons see it as a submission. A minority quits in 1958 to found the **Grande Loge Traditionnelle Symbolique**. In parallel, 1952 sees the creation of the first constitution for Women: **La Grande Loge Féminine de France**; it's a Masonic world first and quickly prospers beyond national borders. Numerous constitutions are created between the 1960s and 1970s representing the cultural diversity and dynamism of a country which has greatly inspired **worldwide democracy**.

\* The Protocols of the (Learned) Elders of Zion, also The Protocols of the Sages of Zion or The Protocols of Zion, is a text purporting to describe a plan to achieve global domination by Jews.

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## A Global Historical Perspective - Chronology & References II/II

- 1726** - Foundation of the Lodge *Saint-Thomas* by three English Masons
- 1728** - Creation of the *Grande Loge de France*, the first French Masonic Federation
- 1735** - French translation of the Anderson Constitutions entitled: *Devoirs Enjointes aux Maçons Libres*
- 1757** - First use of the term *spéculatif* in a modern perspective
- 1766** - Concordat between the *Grand Lodge of England* and the *Grand Loge de France*
- 1773** - Foundation of the *Grand Orient de France*
- 1774** - Recognition of the *Maçonnerie d'Adoption for Women* by the *Grand Orient*
- 1793** - Resignation of *Philippe-Egalité*, Grand Master of the *Grand Orient de France*
- 1799** - Absorption of the *Grande Loge de France* by the *Grand Orient de France*
- 1848** - Freemasons becoming involved in *Revolutionary Actions*, disgrace of the Brotherhood by *Napoléon III*
- 1855** - *International Masonic Congress* in Paris
- 1877** - The *New Constitutions* of the *Grand de France* abolish the obligation to believe in a *Supreme Being*
- 1878** - Rupture between the *Grand Lodge of England* and the *Grand Orient de France*
- 1893** - Foundation of a mixed constitution: *le Droit Humain*
- 1895** - Foundation of the *Grande Loge de France*
- 1913** - Creation of the *Grande Loge Nationale Française*
- 2000** - All the *French Constitutions* are assembled in a *espace souple* answering to the name of *La Maçonnerie Française*
- 2003** - Commemoration of 275 years of *French Freemasonry*

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**GODF**  
1050 Lodges  
47000 Brethren



**GLNF**  
1450 Lodges  
35500 Brethren



\* A compilation of the most important early Freemasonic writings concerning the beginnings of the brotherhood: from the 1248 *Status of Bologna* to the 1782 *Convent at Wilhelmsbad*.