

Response to the Reports on

Róbert Péter's *The Myteries of English Freemasonry: Janus-Faced Masonic Ideology and Practice between 1696 and 1815*

Dear Professors,

First of all, I would like to express my thanks to the evaluators for their meticulous reading of my dissertation and for their thoughtful suggestions. In particular, I am obliged to Professor Andrew Prescott for accepting the invitation of the Doctoral School to write a report on my work and participate in the public debate on my thesis personally.

Reading the comments on the dissertations, I was glad to learn that the members of the doctoral committee found both the thesis and the major line of argumentation convincing. Since each evaluation identified different issues for reconsideration for a published version of the thesis, in my response I will address them separately.

I am grateful to Professor Prescott for his detailed considered comments and suggestions on both the final and an earlier version of this dissertation. In the latter he helped me with crucial amendments and important stylistic modifications. I am indebted to him for allowing me to use a number of his unpublished articles in the current version.

I agree with his criticism that I should have connected more firmly the history of the Ancient Grand Lodge with the issue of national identity in the 1750s. I plan to elaborate on this theme in an extended edition of the dissertation. As for Thomas Dunckerley, who was a prime mover of a re-Christianizing process in masonic ideology and practice in the latter part of the eighteenth century, I also aim to extend my account of his masonic activities as well as his religious views. As I was researching and writing my thesis, the libraries I had an opportunity to work in contained few primary materials on the religious affiliations of Dunckerley. In the Bodleian Library, Oxford, I could not identify any relevant manuscript. In the British Library, there is only one sermon of his, delivered in Marlborough in 1769, which I plan to consult in the near future.¹ Although, the Library and Museum of Freemasonry in London stores about 120 primary sources concerning Dunckerley, more than 90 % of these are letters between him and the

¹ William Martin Leake, *A Sermon Preached at St. Peter's Church in Colchester on Tuesday, June 24, 1777 : ... Before the Provincial Grand Master, and the Provincial Grand Lodge, of The ... Masons of Essex. By the Revd. William Martin Leake, ... To Which Is Added a Charge Which Was Delivered ... At ... Marlborough, ... By Thomas Dunckerley, ... Also an Address Which Was Delivered by the Rev. Henry Chalmers.* Colchester: printed and sold by W. Keymer; sold also by Mr. Sewell, in Cornhill, and Mr. Robinson, London, 1778.

Another copy of this charge is available in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London. Thomas Dunckerley, *A charge delivered to the members of the Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons held at the Castle Inn, Marlborough: September 11, A. L. 5769.* [Marlborough], [1775].

Grand Lodge, 60 % of which contain correspondence between Dunckerley and William White, Grand Secretary. According to my preliminary research, among these letters there are only three, which vaguely mention some religious issues such as the laying of foundation stones of two churches (St. Paul's Church, Bristol and All Saints' Church, Southampton) or wearing cocked hats in a masonic procession to a church.² Apart from the aforementioned sermon and the sources discussed in the thesis, the biographers of Dunckerley could not identify additional significant material in connection with his masonic religious activities in these libraries, either. Of course, this does not mean that they do not exist elsewhere. For instance, I assume that local masonic libraries in Bath, Hayle or Bristol might have relevant archival documents. However, apart from the fact that these libraries are poorly catalogued, non-masonic researchers are often not allowed to access to the resources.³

Dr. Török suggests that I should extend the dissertation by offering a more detailed analysis of the sociological aspects of the secularization debate and test some recent theories of secularization. This would undoubtedly be an important area for further research as sociologists have paid very little attention to the phenomenon of English freemasonry and its contribution to the ongoing secularization debate. As Dr. Török hints, this analysis was beyond the limits of this dissertation. In the thesis I deliberately provided a restricted definition of the term 'secularization' (p. 70) since this concept has been used very differently among historians and even sociologists.⁴ In the light of the available evidence, it is clear that no study can investigate all the aspects of secularization which I listed in chapter 2. That is why I adopted a working definition of secularization, which

² *Letter of Thomas Dunckerley to William White.* GBR 1991 HC 8/A/36 (26 August 1789). *Letter of Thomas Dunckerley to St. Nicholas Lodge, Harwich.* GBR 1991 HC 8/A/32 (10 May 1787). *Letter of Thomas Dunckerley to William White.* GBR 1991 HC 3/B/16 (8 August 1792).

There is another important primary source in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London, which is not strictly concerned with T. Dunckerley, but would be worth consulting with regard to the history of the Knights Templars. Baldwin Encampment [Knights Templar], Bristol. *The service of Masonic Knights, of St. John, of Jerusalem, Rhodes, Palestine, and Malta likewise of Masonic Templars, of the Encampment of Baldwin, from time immemorial stationed in Bristol: to which are annexed the regulations of this Encampment* (Bristol: Printed by Brother Joseph Routh, 1814).

³ In 2001 Trevor Stewart, a leading masonic historian, noted that "In the UK most masonic materials still remains securely held in masonic hands and access is still not granted readily to non-masons. The oldest Lodges do tend to guard their documentation very carefully indeed few of them managed to produce catalogues. The exceptions are in Worcester, Sheffield and York." T. Stewart, "European Periodical Literature on Masonic Research: A review of two decades of achievement." In R. W. Weisberger, W. McLeod, S. B. Morris eds., *Freemasonry on Both Sides of the Atlantic. Essays Concerning the Craft in the British Isles, Europe, the United States, and Mexico* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2002), 809.

⁴ For example, C. John Sommerville provides five different uses of the term "secularization" in his "Secular Society/Religious Population: Our Tacit Rules for Using the Term 'Secularization'" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37.2 (1998): 249-253. Cf. also S. Hanson.. 'The secularization thesis: Talking at cross purposes.' *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 12 (1997): 159-79.

It must be noted that I never argued in the dissertation that sociologists have managed to find a new master narrative to replace the old secularization thesis. I attempted to make it clear that they still have diverse views on this issue as well as on the definition of religion.

could be utilized in my work and also why I touched upon only those aspects of the recent sociological debate on secularization that were relevant for my objectives.⁵ This also explains why I did not explore the different reinterpretations of the secularization thesis by Peter Berger and Bryan Wilson—it was the historical and religious changes of the last three decades of the twentieth century rather than those of the long eighteenth century (my area of investigation) that forced them to modify their earlier views on the secularization thesis.⁶ One relevant argument between the defenders of the secularization thesis, such as Steve Bruce, and its opponents, including Rodney Stark, can be related to my project focusing on the age of Enlightenment.⁷ Stark argues that there never was a Golden Age of Faith in the Middle Ages, dominated by the monopoly of the Catholic Church, for which he provides a long list of evidence. Bruce does not share Stark's view and attacks the objectivity and reliability of Stark's use of historical sources. The main problem of this debate can also be extended to the age of Enlightenment and the history of freemasonry: how does the development of the religiosity of English freemasonry reflect the modified attitudes to religion at a private and institutional level from the Middle Ages to the present day? Although, there are some hints to the answer to this question in the thesis, it requires much further research. Having pondered Dr. Török's comments, I thought of two future areas of research: what elements of English freemasonry and more specially its 'irregular' offspring such the different theosophical or Rosicrucian societies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries contributed to the tendency to secularisation? Can we interpret these quasi-religious groups as substitutes for traditional religiosity, indicating a trend within the secularisation process?

I also thank Dr. Török for his recommendation to test Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart's recent theory of secularization.⁸ Having consulted their work, I am a bit uncertain as to how the study of eighteenth-century English freemasonry could be used as a valid test for a new secularization thesis, which is based essentially on the social and religious changes in the second half of the twentieth century. Because of their chosen period for investigation, in Norris and Inglehart's

⁵ That is, in the thesis I referred to a common argument shared by historians and sociologists of secularisation in the 1960s and 1970s, according to which modernity and religion are binary oppositions. Apart from the early advocates of this view, Peter van der Veer, Talal Asad and Philip Jenkins, among many others, discredited this hypothesis. Cf. Peter van der Veer, *Conversion to Modernities the Globalization of Christianity, Zones of Religion*. (New York: Routledge, 1996). Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular. Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003). Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom. The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁶ It was Bryan Wilson who contributed most to the formation of the modern secularization thesis in his *Religion and Secular Society* (London: Watts, 1966).

⁷ Since, among others, these sociologists and their works are mentioned in the dissertation, it is not correct to state that I only referred to Peter Berger and Bryan Wilson as sociologists studying secularization.

⁸ P. Norris and R. Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular. Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge University Press, 2004). The book is also available at http://ksghome.harvard.edu/~pnorris/ACROBAT/Sacred_and_Secular

book, there are no references to any eighteenth-century historical phenomena or movements. Their oversimplified view of the Enlightenment, focusing on rationalism⁹, reflects research paradigms which were dominant prior to the 1970s.¹⁰ Furthermore, my thesis provided evidence, which seriously questions the “eroding... observance of ceremonial rituals”¹¹ in the age of Enlightenment. It is incorrect to conclude from the neglect of traditional church ceremonies that people in the so-called Age of Reason did not look for ritual satisfaction in other places such as masonic lodges. As Norris and Inglehart are well aware, religion could take a variety of forms prior to the twentieth century, too. This interpretive deficiency indicates that more active collaboration is required between sociologists and historians, who are researching such interdisciplinary themes as the secularization thesis.

However, as Norris and Inglehart’s secularization thesis rests on a universal human phenomenon, namely, existential security, the examination of this in the Age of Enlightenment would be an intriguing research project. Furthermore, a major argument of the book -- according to which, religiosity persists most strongly among vulnerable populations, especially those in poorer nations, facing threatening even personal survival -- *might* be applicable to the more pious Irish freemasons of low social standing, who migrated to England in the middle of the eighteenth century. It was these Irish immigrants who greatly contributed to the re-Christianizing of masonic practice from the 1750s onwards.¹²

One should face certain methodological difficulties when trying to test Norris and Inglehart’s secularization thesis in the eighteenth century: Most methods used by current sociologists including Norris and Inglehart simply cannot be applied to eighteenth-century phenomena such as English freemasonry. For example, the recent widespread questionnaire-based interviews or value surveys are naturally impossible to carry out because of the time gap. The classical indicators of secularization including the development of church attendance, confirmation and baptism rates, private and institutional support for churches as well as the changes in the number of religious professionals *among eighteenth-century freemasons* require an enormous amount of grass-root research since no such surveys have ever been carried out in masonic lodges.¹³ This I hope makes it

⁹ P. Norris and R. Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular...*, 4-5. Pagination relies on the internet-based edition.

¹⁰ Chapter 2.1 provided a summary of how the master narratives of the Enlightenment have moved away from the position represented by P. Norris and R. Inglehart in the last thirty years.

¹¹ P. Norris and R. Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular. Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 4. Pagination relies on the internet-based edition.

¹² However, the study of eighteenth-century English freemasonry does not seem to support the main thesis of their work, according to which a systematic erosion of religious practices, values and beliefs has occurred among the more prosperous sections of society in rich nations. The new masonic religiosity was mostly popular and affordable to the propertied and educated in the prosperous England of the long eighteenth century, from where it spread to the four corners of the earth primarily among the ruling elite.

¹³ Such research should start with the examination of the lives of individual freemasons, which, at the very minimum, presupposes the openness of masonic archives. The latter is another problematic point in many countries. For example, when Stephen Yeo was researching the history of religious and voluntary

clearer why I did not adopt a more inclusive definition of the term secularization in the dissertation. Still, in my view, this basic research would give many new insights not only to the history of freemasonry but to the process of modern secularization, too.

It is true that in its present form, the dissertation contributes primarily to the debate on secularization among historians, which I probably should have indicated more clearly in an earlier phase of the dissertation. I fully agree with the historian Hugh McLeod who in an influential volume entitled *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis* has emphasized the complex of historical factors in any interpretation of secularization and implied that secularization theory is not a theory but a description of a process covering certain places and times. Along with Callum Brown, he stressed in the same volume that thorough historical analysis is needed to determine the circumstances under which the various forms of secularization took place at different times and places. In accordance with these views, my dissertation also attempted to investigate a secularization process manifested, for example, in the modifications of the masonic constitutions from the Middle Ages to 1815.¹⁴ Similar de-Christianization processes are analysed in the works of sociologists such as S. Acquaviva and S. Berger, who were studying secularization.¹⁵

organisations between 1890 and 1914, he was not allowed to consult the local records at Reading. Stephen Yeo, *Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), 341. It may be noted that Yeo's work implicitly challenged the sociological theory of secularization. Jeffrey Cox, "Provincializing Christendom: the case of Great Britain (Modern European Historiography Forum)" 73.1 (2006).

A good starting point for a sociological research covering certain lodges of the second half of the *twentieth century* would be the analysis of membership statistics by two amateur masonic researchers John Belton and Kent Henderson. John Belton and Kent Henderson, "Freemasons – an endangered species?" *AQC* 113 (2000): 114-150.

¹⁴ The latter date is significant because since then the regulation concerning God and religion has not been changed.

¹⁵ S. Berger, "Religious Transformation and the Future of Politics." *European Sociological Review* 1(1985): 23-45. S. S. Acquaviva, "The psychology of de-christianization in the dynamics of the industrial society" *Social Compass* 7 (1960): 209-25. For historical works on the de-christianization of religious practice, see for instance Jean Delumeau, "Au sujet de la dechristianisation." *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 22 (1975): 52-60. Michel Vovelle, *The Revolution against the Church* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1991). Suzanne Desan, "The Role of Women in Religious Riots During the French Revolution." *Eighteenth Century Studies* 22.3, Special Issue: The French Revolution in Culture (1989): 451-68. Caroline Ford, "Religion and Popular Culture in Modern Europe." *The Journal of Modern History* 65.1 (1993): 152-75. Edward T Gargan and Robert A. Hanneman. "Recruitment to the Clergy in Nineteenth-Century France: "Modernization" And "Decline"?" *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 9.2 (1978): 275-95. James N. Hood, "Patterns of Popular Protest in the French Revolution: The Conceptual Contribution of the Gard." *The Journal of Modern History* 48.2 (1976): 259-93. Michael Khodarkovsky, "Of Christianity, Enlightenment, and Colonialism: Russia in the North Caucasus, 1550-1800." *Journal of Modern History* 71.2 (1999): 394-430. James F. Mcmillan, "Politics and Religion in Modern France." *Historical Journal* 25.4 (1982): 1021-27. Hugh McLeod and Werner Ustorf, eds., *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750–2000* (Cambridge, U.K. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

For P. Norris and R. Inglehart, the “decline of *collective* religious practices in everyday life” is also an integral part of the secularization process.¹⁶ Thus, my definition of secularization, relying on the de-Christianization of everyday thought and practice, is far from being unprecedented in sociology.¹⁷ However, as Andrew Prescott noted in his evaluation, the thesis provided evidence for a re-Christianizing process in masonic ideology and practice, which partially ran counter to the secularization of masonic worldview and praxis. Chapter 4.4 also attempted to offer five reasons for the appearance of this process (pp. 164-166), which, though not stated explicitly, might have some relevance to reconsideration of the secularization thesis, too. In addition to this, the last chapter tried to adopt a theoretical framework, that is, Ninian Smart’s seven dimensional framework of religiosity, mostly used by sociologists rather than historians, to reconstruct the nature of a new form of masonic religiosity. These examples might indicate that the present dissertation hopefully not only highlights some interesting facts, as has been noted in Dr. Török’s report, but might contribute to the secularization debate between historians and sociologists, too.

In response to Dr. Török’s minor criticism that I devoted only one footnote (745) to the discussion of “the close relationship between the Church of England and English freemasonry”, may I point out that this significant subject is mentioned and explored in the dissertation elsewhere. For example, chapter 5.2.1 (The Social and Institutional Dimension) not only compares masonic titles with those of the Church of England but also provides two brief case studies highlighting the strong relationship between English freemasonry and the established church.

At this point it is interesting to note that when the General Synod of the Church of England issued its warnings about the compatibility of Christianity and English freemasonry, as late as 1987, the Working Group, established by the General Synod, was chaired by a sociologist, namely, Dr. Margaret Hewitt (1928-1991). It is telling that in the 56-page document accepted by the General Synod no reference is made to the contribution of English freemasonry to any form of secularization. This is not surprising if one considers that there have been many Anglicans including Archbishops (e. g. Geoffrey Fisher¹⁸), bishops and clergymen who were initiated into freemasonry and their joint membership did not cause any problems for them.

¹⁶ P. Norris and R. Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular. Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge University Press, 2004) ch. 2.

¹⁷ There are clear commonalities between the second and fourth definitions listed by Sommerville in his aforementioned paper.

¹⁸ Colin Bissell, “The Masonic Archbishop of Canterbury — Geoffrey Fisher” in *Freemasonry and Religion: Many faiths – One Brotherhood. Canonbury Papers* Vol. III. (London: Canonbury Masonic Research Centre, 2006) forthcoming.

I am also indebted to Professor Kontler for his invaluable remarks on broader theoretical questions of the thesis such as the nature of and relationship between the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment.

As for the relationship between the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment, a question has been raised as to whether the Counter-Enlightenment is “within” or “without” the Enlightenment. It is clear that the answer to this question depends entirely upon how we define these terms. This is not the place to summarize the different interpretations of these essential concepts, which I attempted to do in the thesis. Thus, for purposes of convenience, I suggest we accept my *working* definitions used in the dissertation. On page 71 I associated the concept of the Enlightenment “with the ideas of equality, toleration, individual rationalism, deism and secularization, which were lived out and popularised in coffee-houses, literary clubs, masonic lodges and the new journals of the time such as the *Spectator* edited by Addison and Steele.” As for the Counter-Enlightenment, I identified its representatives in Britain and Ireland as the guardians of orthodox Christianity upholding faith against individual rationalism, deism and atheism.¹⁹ Hopefully, it is clear from these working definitions that they are meant to be binaries of each other.

¹⁹ To defend the usage of such working definitions, may I note that Cadoc Leighton, Briane Young, David Berman, Derya Gurses and Patricia O’Riordan in their recent articles and books on the British and Irish Counter-Enlightenment operate with very similar dichotomies. Cf. C. D. A. Leighton, “Hutchinsonianism: a Counter-Enlightenment Reform Movement.” *Journal of Religious History* 23 (1999): 168-184; Idem., “The Non-Jurors and the Counter-Enlightenment: Some Illustration.” *Journal of Religious History*, 22/3 (Oct. 1998): 270-286; Idem., “William Law, Behmenism and Counter-Enlightenment.” *Harvard Theological Review* 91.3 (July 1998): 301-320; Idem., “Anciennete among the Non-Jurors: a study of Henry Dodwell” *History of European Ideas* 31 (2005): 1-16. B. W. Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in 18th century England* (Oxford: OUP, 1998); David Berman and Patricia O’Riordan eds., *The Irish Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment* (London: Thoemmes, 2002). Derya Gurses, “The Hutchinsonian Defence of an Old Testament Trinitarian Christianity: the controversy over Elahim, 1735-1773” *History of European Ideas* 29 (2003): 393-409.

It is also interesting to note that Professor Yuri Stoyanov in a recent conference paper, using similar definitions of the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment in the Russian context, came to almost identical conclusions as of mine in England. He writes, “One of these principal assumptions is that early Russian Freemasonry (from its beginnings to the late 1770s) was dominated by the rationalistic and deistic currents of the Enlightenment, related to the contemporary popularity of Voltairianism, free-thinking, the ideas of natural law, etc. The mystical trend in the Russian Masonic movement, occasionally accompanied by Counter-Enlightenment tendencies, is posited according to this view to have gained prominence with the introduction of the higher degree rites in the 1780s and the early 1790s. This dichotomy in Russian Freemasonry is usually interpreted through references to the analogous interplay between Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment trends in Europe and European Freemasonry.... Within this context its further exploration will make it possible to test the validity (in the case of Russia) of one of the major presumptions in the study of eighteenth-century European Freemasonry, positing that while the craft lodges were usually enthusiastic proponents of Enlightenment ideologies, the attitude of the higher degrees rites to their tenets was more ambiguous, on occasions hostile or closely linked with the Counter-Enlightenment.... The Swedish Rite played its role in this process, as its explicit Christian ethos and the type of Christian material present in the grades made available to its Russian offshoot, apparently proved particularly attractive to those Russian Freemasons, noble and non-noble alike, who felt intensely Christian but were not entirely content with the current state of the church and the formalism of its ritual. For some Freemasons the Swedish Rite could provide a near-substitute for the church ritual and indeed some of the

It is known that there were tensions and conflicts among the advocates of the Enlightenment (as well as the Counter-Enlightenment) itself (as defined above). Just think of the debates between the representatives of deism (radical versus constructive). So one may be tempted to argue that the Counter-Enlightenment occurred within the Enlightenment. However, it follows from my *working* definitions that the mere presence of this Counter-Enlightenment shows that my inclusively defined concept of the Enlightenment cannot simply be equated with the intellectual, cultural or social history of the eighteenth century as a whole since, historically speaking, there was simultaneously a rival movement in the making.²⁰ In other words, in my dissertation the Counter-Enlightenment arises in opposition to the Enlightenment, that is, it is outside the Enlightenment.

This answer leads to another important question, that is, why did I not define the Counter-Enlightenment in the traditional Berlinian sense. As Professor Kontler correctly noted, I did not give a proper explanation for this divergence. Before answering this question, let me invoke Professor John Pocock, who in a recent lecture on “The Redescription of the Enlightenment” at the British Academy, addressing the same theoretical problems, offered three different definitions of the Counter-Enlightenment, especially with regard to its relationship to the Enlightenment. At the end he concluded that all these definitions might be valid in the sense that they are applicable to one or other actors of the eighteenth century. I fully agree with this pragmatic conclusion. And this explains why I was unable to adopt Berlin’s classical definition of the Counter-Enlightenment. Unlike his characteristic Counter-Enlighteners such as Vico and Hamann, English freemasons *as freemasons* were not theorists, who employed a special model of thinking to subvert the ideas of the *philosophes*. In other words, they never published any *masonic* treatise, in which they refuted, for example, the accusations

traditional objections raised against Swedish-system Freemasonry in Russia since the days of the Elagin-Reichel union were provoked by the ostentatious and “church-like” character of its ceremonies.... Other elements in the Russian version of the Swedish Rite such as the aims of the order, declared at various stages of its initiatory procedures, to fight the enemies of Christianity and combat “free-thinking” related well with the strong Counter-Enlightenment currents in Russian Masonic Rosicrucianism, which in the wake of the French Revolution intensified their vigorous attacks on Voltairianism, deism, “blind” rationalism and materialism.... The processes of re-Christianization and increasing Counter-Enlightenment tendencies in late eighteenth-century Russian Freemasonry find immediate parallels in contemporary Western European Freemasonry but were also accompanied occasionally by steps towards further rapprochement with Orthodoxy and perceived notions of Russian-ness.... As already indicated, while many Russian Freemasons, usually belonging to craft Freemasonry, retained their rationalistic and deistic beliefs, many others developed a deep interest in the hidden mystical knowledge, supposedly residing in higher degrees systems or in the then fashionable quest for the “wisdom of the ancients”” I am grateful to Professor Stoyanov for sending the manuscript of his forthcoming paper. Yuri Stoyanov, “The Swedish Rite in Eighteenth-Century Russia: Observations on its Adoption and Impact on the Russian Enlightenment and Mysticism” in Andreas Önnersfors and Henrik Bogdan eds., *Between Mysticism and Power Politics: Swedish Freemasonry and the European Enlightenment* forthcoming.

²⁰ Before providing this working definition of the Enlightenment in chapter 3.2.1, I sometimes used the term in a wider and more general sense, which explains some of the ambiguities highlighted by Professor Kontler.

of atheism or deism. Unlike the German or Italian Counter-Enlighteners mentioned by Berlin, they, as members of the fraternity,

- did not criticize “the reality of natural laws... governing inanimate and animate nature, facts and events, means and ends... [which] could be known.” For Berlin, this was the “central dogma of the entire Enlightenment.” For him, the Counter-Enlightenment “was the attack upon this that constitutes the most formidable reaction against this dominant body of belief.”²¹
- did not see mathematics as only a method of human invention, which is merely concerned with *what* happened in the world rather than *why or to what end*.²²
- never proclaimed that “all truth is particular”²³ (J. G. Hamann)
- did not fight against “the spreading of ideas regarded as dangerous to the authority of church and state”
- did not preach “the uniqueness of cultures” (Vico)²⁴
- did not see any conflict “between an Enlightenment devoted to the rational study of all phenomena of nature including the human, and a counter-Enlightenment presenting the latter in a context of history.”²⁵

Although, there are some common elements between Berlin’s and my definition, these examples illustrate why I could not adopt his definition of the Counter-Enlightenment as it is to interpret the ideas and activities of freemasons in England. English freemasonry was and is a pragmatic institution. Certain freemasons’ disagreement with the de-Christianization of masonic practice and ideology were “only” manifested at the level of ritual formations and celebration of saints’ days etc.. Some freemasons, as a reaction to the secularization and modernization of crucial masonic writings, for example, created new ceremonies which were heavily embedded in a Christian context. That is why I deliberately designated them as representatives of a *popular* Counter-Enlightenment, when comparing their attitudes to other British, Irish or German “high” Counter-Enlighteners.

Professor Kontler’s emphasis on the definition of the Enlightenment in terms of “knowledge, communication and improvement” is also very useful. I will

²¹ Isaiah Berlin, “The Counter-Enlightenment.” Idem ed., *Against the Current. Essays in the History of Ideas* (London: Hogarth, 1979), 3-4.

²² Ibid., 4.

²³ Ibid, 7.

²⁴ Ibid., 5.

²⁵ Idem., "The Redescription of the Enlightenment" Isaiah Berlin Lecture at the British Academy (30 October 2003). Available: <http://britac.studyserve.com/home/Lecture.asp?ContentContainerID=87>, access: April 3, 2005.

definitely reconsider the dissertation with such a definition in mind.²⁶ Indeed, several masonic lodges popularised the “new science” and members taught one another about architecture, and its basis, geometry.²⁷ English freemasons not only improved and corrected the ancient regulations of the past but were dedicated to improving society in general by their charitable work and, most importantly, providing a forum for men of different social strata to discuss freely social and political issues.²⁸ This was a realm of social life, a “public sphere”, which helped freemasons, leaving behind their religious persuasions, to formulate constructive criticisms of society. Finally, masonic lodges of different countries formed pan-European networks of communication and sociability, where the new ideas about science and religion could easily spread and immediately evaluated.

I admit that my one-sentence reference to the general intellectual debate between the Ancients and Moderns in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is overly simplistic. I provided a more balanced and detailed comparison on pages 188-189, which clarifies several problems mentioned in Professor Kontler’s report.

For reasons of time, I cannot discuss other important suggestions of Professor Kontler such as his remarks on Adorno and Horkheimer, which I will incorporate in the published version of the thesis.

By way of conclusion, I would like to thank the Professors of my doctoral committee again for reading my thesis and for their constructive criticisms and suggestions for further areas for research. These thoughtful remarks will not only help me to improve my thesis but make me reconsider fundamental questions about the history of freemasonry, the secularization thesis as well as the nature of the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment.

Róbert Péter

²⁶ *Within* the preconceived methodological framework of this dissertation the only problematic aspect of this definition of the Enlightenment is that its antithesis, that is, the Counter-Enlightenment, -- whose advocates, following this logic, aimed to fight against the increase, systematization and publication of knowledge with the objective to deteriorate the social and moral environments of humanity – would point to historically obscure phenomenon. I am not aware of any eighteenth-century freemason with such ambitions. However, to explain the tensions within masonic ideology and practice, for my mathematically inclined mindset at least, I needed pragmatic and valid coordinate axes such as the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment, in the system of which I could place the ideological conflicts of the supposedly universal fraternity.

Of course, it must be stressed that this does not mean that applying other theoretical frameworks would be unable to explain the disagreements between English masonic rhetoric and practice.

²⁷ “Let our Knowledge shine as formerly for our own Honour and the Edification of others. No man ought to attain to any Dignity in Masonry who has not, at least, a competent Knowledge in Geometry and Architecture; and if the Sciences were more follow’d in the Lodges, what is unhappily substituted in their Places would not prevail as it does.” William Smith, *A pocket companion for free-masons...* (London: printed and sold by E. Rider, 1735), 6.

²⁸ Having completed the ritual “work”, these informal debates took place in pubs and inns during the “festive boards.”