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## Alexander Gillies and Adam Smith: Freemasonry and the Resonance of Self-Love

### ABSTRACT

In 1766 at the Lodge of Kilwinning, Alexander Gillies, a young Scottish minister, delivered a discourse that not only manifested the influence of Adam Smith's moral theory but articulated how Christianity and freemasonry proposed distinct but complementary responses to the problem of self-love. This article, part intellectual history and part biography, examines Gillies's discourse, taking into account details of Gillies's life and establishing that he was in fact a student of Smith's at the University of Glasgow. The article then considers Smith's influence, as evident in Gillies's discourse, and reveals how a Calvinist notion of self-love resonated into the late eighteenth century. In the discourse, Gillies invoked subjects redolent of Smith's moral theory: the force of social interaction, the power of sympathy and the negative influence of self-love (a theme also manifest in some sermons of Smith's colleague, William Leechman). Like Smith, Gillies also worried about partiality and faction. Gillies forwarded the institution of freemasonry as a means—complementary to Christianity—of counteracting the tendency to partiality, born of self-love. In a later satirical composition, published in 1774 in the *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, Gillies extended another critique of the power of self-love. Forged in part from his relation to Smith, Gillies's concern with self-love and his fresh stance on freemasonry yield a distinct perspective on eighteenth-century Scottish culture and ideas and offer insight into the complex relations of university, kirk and masonic lodge.

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### *Introduction*

In late December 1766 in a town south-west of Glasgow, a young man named Alexander Gillies delivered a sermon in the church of Kilwinning. Only twenty-three years old, Gillies had received his licence to preach scarcely a year before. But this day, the twentieth of the month, was not the Sabbath, and those seated in the pews were not parishioners but members of the Mother Lodge of Scottish Freemasonry, assembled for their annual meeting. For over an hour, Gillies set forth a sophisticated theory of individual and society that not only reflected elements of Adam Smith's moral theory but also articulated how freemasonry and Christianity offered complementary but distinct tactics for approaching self-love, an emblem of a fallen humanity. Just as Smith understood the chief challenge to moral conduct to stem from the partialities of self-love (a disposition to favour the self and to perceive the world in relation to self), so too did Gillies. In fact, Gillies had been one of Smith's students.<sup>1</sup> Although Smith posited the impartial spectator to remedy our partial perspectives, Gillies offered, alongside an appeal to Christianity, a more institutionalised body: the Freemasons. Eight years later, Gillies remained concerned about the distorting, even destructive, effects of self-love. In 1774 he published, in the *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, a satirical essay, 'A Modest Defence of the Accomplishment of Blasphemy', that attacked the infidelity of those who indulge their love of self.<sup>2</sup> This is the same Gillies who is purported, at the moment of receiving his licence to preach, to have signed the Westminster Confession with the phrase, '*erroribus exceptis*'.<sup>3</sup>

With his intellect and verve, Gillies is more than the sum of his parts. His life offers a fresh perspective on ideas and relations central to Scottish culture in the eighteenth century. His discourse to Kilwinning Lodge, for example, diverged from standard defences of freemasonry encountered during this epoch. Gillies's endorsement of freemasonry comes with no appeal to masonic symbols or privileged

<sup>1</sup> Some of Smith's students have been identified, but, until now, not Gillies. See Ian Simpson Ross, *The Life of Adam Smith* (2nd edn, Oxford, 2010), 129–39; Alison Webster, 'Adam Smith's students', *Scotia* 12 (1988) 13–26. Our Alexander Gillies is not the Alexander Gillies who served as amanuensis for Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. See William Robert Scott, *Adam Smith as Student and Professor* (New York, NY, 1965), 360; Ross, *Adam Smith*, 250.

<sup>2</sup> 'A Modest Defence of the Accomplishment of Blasphemy', *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, William Zachs (intro), 5 vols (Bristol, 1998, repr. 1773–6 edns), i and ii (1774), serial instalments §I–XV.

<sup>3</sup> The Latin phrase (for 'excepting errors') is recorded in *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae: The succession of ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation [Fasti]*, 12 vols, Synod of Glasgow and Ayr (new edn, Edinburgh, 1920), iii. 114. The evidence for the attribution remains obscure, as noted below, and see note 41.

moral knowledge.<sup>4</sup> In addition, as a Moderate minister, he eschewed some of the doctrinal pronouncements in the Westminster Confession. In this respect, Gillies echoed the views of another professor at the University of Glasgow, William Leechman, who cautioned, in his lectures on sermons, against both ‘party’ and ‘metaphysical disputes’.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, if Moderate clergy were often ‘silent on the great themes of Calvinism’,<sup>6</sup> Gillies recognised the sinful sway of self-love, a concept associated (though not uniquely) with Calvinism, not to mention Augustine.<sup>7</sup> The presence of this particular feature of Calvinism—or the notion of depravity to which it alludes—in mid-eighteenth-century Scottish thought suggests that the sweeping historiographical statement of five decades ago, that ‘Calvinism held no place in the minds of the moderates’, merits some qualification.<sup>8</sup> If Gillies manifests the confidence of an enlightened clergy, his surety comes with at least some Calvinist residue. A worry about the power of self-love takes Gillies from his Presbyterian upbringing to Adam Smith’s classroom, then to the Lodge at Kilwinning and to the publication of a multi-part satirical tract in the *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*. The story of Alexander Gillies incorporates both history and the history of ideas, biography and philosophy. It is worth telling, for it not only amplifies our understanding of mid-eighteenth-century Scottish intellectual and religious culture, including a continuing disquiet over the sway of self-love,<sup>9</sup> but it also illuminates further the reach of Adam Smith as a

<sup>4</sup> On Scottish freemasonry, see David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland’s century, 1590–1710* (New York, NY, 1988), along with David Stevenson, ‘Four hundred years of freemasonry in Scotland’, *SHR* 90 (2011) 280–95; and Mark C. Wallace, *The Great Transformation: Scottish freemasonry 1725–1810* (Washington, DC, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> As recounted by James Wodrow, ‘The life of Dr. Leechman, with some account of his lectures’, in *Sermons by William Leechman*, ed. James Wodrow, 2 vols (London, 1816), i. 1–102, at 65.

<sup>6</sup> Colin Kidd, ‘Subscription, the Scottish enlightenment and the moderate interpretation of history’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 55 (2004) 503.

<sup>7</sup> The notion of self-love, at least in its Augustinian variety, is also emphasised by Catholic Jansenists, such as Pierre Nicole and Blaise Pascal, along with thinkers associated with Jansenist thought, such as François de la Rochefoucauld, as well as Nicolas Malebranche. More notably, Bernard Mandeville utilises a variant of this notion in his account of the development of human society in *The Fable of the Bees*, esp. vol. ii. Mandeville’s notion of ‘self-liking’ includes the overvaluation of self and the desire for praise invoked by Augustinian thinkers. *The Fable of the Bees: or Private Vices, Publick Benefits*, ed. F. B. Kaye, 2 vols (Indianapolis, IN, 1988), ii. 130. Jean-Jacques Rousseau employs self-love, or *amour propre*, to refer chiefly to the desire for esteem. *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, trans. Judith Bush *et al.* (1993), iii., in *The Collected Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, eds Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly, 13 vols (Dartmouth, NH, 1990–2010).

<sup>8</sup> Andrew L. Drummond and James Bulloch, *The Scottish Church, 1688–1843: The age of the Moderates* (Edinburgh, 1973), 110.

<sup>9</sup> It has been argued that the ‘selfish hypothesis’—the thesis that all motivations are inherently self-interested—was no longer a matter of contention by the mid-eighteenth century. However true, Smith’s appeal to self-love is distinct from the thesis of self-interested motivation. As invoked in this essay, self-love is less a first-order *motive* to action than a second-order *affection* that guides, prioritises and situates one’s first-order passions. A discussion of the demise of the ‘selfish hypothesis’, along with a

teacher and introduces an individual whose account of freemasonry is distinct from that set forth in contemporaneous manuals.

The sections that follow commence with what is known about Gillies's discourse at the Lodge, including the scant details that have been found of his life. A consideration of his discourse exhibits how it reflects elements of Smith's moral thought, including Smith's emphasis on the role of social interaction and sympathy in the constitution of moral consensus. It is proposed that Smith's concern regarding the partiality of self-love finds expression in Gillies's assessment of how Christianity and freemasonry each offer distinct paths to counter an affection for self. Further scrutiny of Gillies's (later) satirical essay reveals how Gillies continues a not-so-veiled attack on the problem of self-love. Perhaps the moral philosophy of Adam Smith provided Gillies with an understanding of self-love in relation to society, though Gillies's recommendations for resolving the difficulties of this affection are distinct from Smith's.

### *Kilwinning to Kilmaurs*

Known as the 'Mother Lodge' because of its claim to be the first masonic lodge in Scotland,<sup>10</sup> the Lodge of Kilwinning drew members from a wide geographical area.<sup>11</sup> With no dedicated building, lodge meetings were typically held in a tavern.<sup>12</sup> However, as recorded in lodge minutes, the meeting of 20 December 1766 convened in the church of Kilwinning. Gillies's address began with a short scripture, 'Beloved, let us love one another' (1 John 4:7), and continued for approximately 13,000 words. The minutes characterised the discourse as a sermon and indicated that lodge members were impressed, agreeing unanimously, on the basis of the address, to admit Gillies as an 'Honorary Member' of their lodge.<sup>13</sup> The page for these minutes bears Gillies's signature confirming his

<sup>9</sup> (*Continued*) defence of Smith as rehabilitating a 'positive' conception of self-love, can be found in Christian Maurer, *Self-Love, Egoism and the Selfish Hypothesis: Key debates from eighteenth-century British moral philosophy* (Edinburgh, 2019), esp. 186–95.

<sup>10</sup> Stevenson, *Origins*, 44–9.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 209; Harry G. Carr, *Lodge Mother Kilwinning No. 0: A study of the earliest minute books 1624–1842* (London, 1961), 265.

<sup>13</sup> 'Mr. Alexander Gillies, preacher of the gospel, formerly entered in another lodge, having this day preached before the brethren in the Church of Kilwinning, to their great edification, and with universal applause, the brethren, in consideration of the learning, sobriety, and sound divinity of the said Mr. Gillies, do unanimously receive and admit him as an honorary member of the Mother Lodge of Kilwinning, and he obliges himself to obey the rules of the lodge.' Kilwinning, Lodge Mother Kilwinning: Minutes, 20 Dec. 1766. These same flattering words were used two years later, 20 Dec. 1768, to characterise the presentation of another guest, Rev. Alexander Cunningham, minister of Symington parish, who was also admitted to honorary membership in Kilwinning Lodge. I thank David Wilson, Past Master, Secretary, Lodge Mother Kilwinning, for making available digital images of the minutes, Dec. 1766–Dec. 1778. I have modernised capitalisations.

receipt of this honour.<sup>14</sup> These same minutes state that Gillies, who addressed his listeners as 'brethren and Christians', was 'entered as a mason' in another lodge, a phrase that suggests he was an 'Entered Apprentice' (the first degree) of that lodge.<sup>15</sup>

Two years later, in 1768, the discourse was published as a fifty-eight-page soft-cover pamphlet, *The Principles of Free Masonry Explained*, with a full title affirming its delivery to the Lodge of Kilwinning, 'in the Church of that Place', in the year 1766, though without a specific date.<sup>16</sup> Priced at sixpence, the author identified only as 'a Brother'; it was dedicated to George Murdoch, a merchant in the wine trade, Grand Master of the Lodges in Glasgow and Lord Provost of Glasgow. There is scant evidence that the pamphlet garnered the attention paid to other works of Scottish freemasonry, such as the manual printed in 1765 by Auld and Smellie or that compiled by William Preston seven years later.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, in 1794 the discourse was published (without the dedication), in two instalments, in *The Freemasons' Magazine*, having been submitted by James Somerville, a freemason who had contributed other articles to that journal.<sup>18</sup> Again, the author is indicated only as 'a Brother'. Perhaps one reason for the re-publication was to counter, in the last decade of the century, a growing public concern, fuelled by the French Revolution, that masonic lodges were brimming with radicals. The discourse would have provided evidence that Scottish lodges were hardly 'hotbeds of sedition'.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> That signature is similar to signatures of Gillies in the library receipt books used at the University of Glasgow Library. See Glasgow, Glasgow University Library [GUL], Special Collections, MS Lib 2: Library Receipt Books, 1757–60. These receipt books, including subsequent years to 1771, have been recently digitised: Matthew Sangster, Karen Baston and Brian Aitken, *Eighteenth-Century Borrowing from the University of Glasgow* (University of Glasgow, 2020; <https://18c-borrowing.glasgow.ac.uk>; accessed 28 Nov. 2023). See also Matthew Sangster, Karen Baston and Brian Aitken, 'Reconstructing student reading habits in eighteenth-century Glasgow: enlightenment systems and digital reconfigurations', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 54 (2021) 935–55.

<sup>15</sup> The identity of that lodge remains obscure. D. Murray Lyon, a nineteenth-century historian of freemasonry, asserts it was the lodge at Montrose. 'Masonic bibliography', *The Freemason*, 17 Jan. 1874, 39. Membership rolls for Montrose show otherwise. I thank Iain D. McIntosh, a masonic historian, for sharing this lodge information.

<sup>16</sup> 'A Brother', *The Principles of Freemasonry Explained. In a Discourse Delivered, before the very antient Lodge of Kilwinning, in the Church of that Place, And in the Year MDCCLXVI* (Glasgow, 1768). Available in: London, United Grand Lodge of England, Museum of Freemasonry, Library and Archives; and in Philadelphia, PA, Pennsylvania Masonic Temple, The Masonic Library and Museum of Pennsylvania.

<sup>17</sup> *The Freemasons Pocket-Companion* (Edinburgh, 1765); William Preston, *Illustrations of Masonry* (London, 1772).

<sup>18</sup> *The Freemasons' Magazine*, Jan. and Feb. 1794, 5–19, 88–97 (available at [www.masonicperiodicals.org](http://www.masonicperiodicals.org); accessed 28 Nov. 2023).

<sup>19</sup> Wallace, *The Great Transformation*, 162. See also Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580–1800: The origins of an associational world* (Oxford, 2000), 180; Stevenson, 'Four hundred years', 287–9. On the radical potential of continental freemasonry, see Margaret C. Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and politics in eighteenth-century Europe* (Oxford, 1991).

It is improbable that the discourse published in 1768 was written or delivered by any person other than Alexander Gillies.<sup>20</sup> If we suppose that, in 1766, someone *other* than Gillies delivered a discourse to the lodge at Kilwinning, then he would have done so, as the 1768 title page attests, ‘in the Church of that Place’, but on a date other than 20 December. Such a combination is unlikely.<sup>21</sup> Although the Lodge had no dedicated building until the 1770s there is no reason to think meetings were held at the church as a matter of practice.<sup>22</sup> The one plausible occasion on which the lodge would meet in the church would be the annual meeting at which the members would elect officers,<sup>23</sup> initiate new associates<sup>24</sup> and enjoy a festive banquet.<sup>25</sup> This ‘anniversary meeting’, as typically designated in the minutes, would take place precisely on 20 December, the date on which lodge minutes testify to Gillies’s presence.<sup>26</sup>

If Gillies was the author, why did he not affix his name to the pamphlet of 1768? The answer probably lies in the words of the preface indicating that freemasonry remained under suspicion, a point Gillies iterated in the sermon when he admitted that he could be reprovved even for suggesting that this form of association could be conducive to good.<sup>27</sup> Gillies was a young man trying to establish himself and secure a ministerial position, not to define himself as a spokesman for freemasonry.

It is not known how or when Gillies became a freemason, but he may have acquired an interest at the University of Glasgow,<sup>28</sup> where he matriculated in 1755. That year, recorded in the matriculation album,<sup>29</sup> provides the clue to Gillies’s date and place of birth. Neither the matriculation album nor the ministerial record of the Church of Scotland states a birth date, nor do their assignations of paternal names

<sup>20</sup> Lyon drew on lodge minutes to affirm, ‘The author was the Rev. Alexander Gillies’. ‘Masonic bibliography’, *The Freemason*, 17 Jan. 1874, 39. See also Carr, *Lodge Mother Kilwinning*, 263. I thank Susan Sommers for referring me to Lyon’s notice.

<sup>21</sup> There is little evidence that Kilwinning had a practice of inviting guests to give talks. In my review of minutes, Dec. 1766–Dec. 1778, I found only one other record of a discourse at the lodge, that of Rev. Alexander Cunningham, 20 Dec. 1778 (see above, note 13).

<sup>22</sup> Stevenson, *Origins*, 209.

<sup>23</sup> Lyon, ‘Mother Kilwinning’ (IV), *Freemasons Magazine and Masonic Mirror* 221, 26 Sep. 1863, 233–8, at 233 (available at [www.masonicperiodicals.org](http://www.masonicperiodicals.org); accessed 5 Jan. 2024).

<sup>24</sup> Stevenson, *Origins*, 207.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 209; Lyon, ‘Mother Kilwinning’ (VII), *Freemasons Magazine and Masonic Mirror* 231, 5 Dec. 1863, 433–6, at 435.

<sup>26</sup> The chief meeting dates for Scottish freemasonry were 24 Jun. and 27 Dec. As an exception, the Lodge of Kilwinning met on 20 Dec., not 27 Dec. Stevenson, *Origins*, 43–5.

<sup>27</sup> *The Freemasons Magazine*, Jan. 1794, 10.

<sup>28</sup> Borrowing records of the university library show that in 1759 he twice borrowed René-Aubert de Vertot’s *History of the Knights of Malta* (Paris, 1726), a book of interest to freemasons. See GUL, Special Collections, MS Lib 2: Library Receipt Books, 1757–60.

<sup>29</sup> W. Innes Addison, *The Matriculation Albums of the University of Glasgow from 1728 to 1858* (Glasgow, 1913), 52 (§1696).

coincide—the matriculation album assigns one name (John) to the father, the Church of Scotland another (Alexander).<sup>30</sup> Resolving this discrepancy in favour of church records, and taking into account the typical age of matriculation to the university, allows an inference to a birth date of 7 March 1743, in Lanark, to Alexander Gillies and Jean Patoun.<sup>31</sup>

An additional, confirming, reason for placing Gillies's birth in Lanark emerges from university records. Once at Glasgow, Gillies acquitted himself well, receiving two bursaries. In his final, or *magistrand*, year he obtained the Captain Ross Bursary; a few months later, 'Alexander Gillies A.M.' received a King's Bursary, awarded in place of John Robison, the future Professor of Natural Philosophy at Edinburgh, who was away in Quebec.<sup>32</sup> For the King's Bursary, faculty minutes document that Gillies took the 'Oath of Allegiance and signed the assurance, as appears from Mr. Weir the Sheriff Deput[e] of Lanark's Attestation'.<sup>33</sup> That Gillies was administered this oath in Lanark substantiates the place, and thus the year, of his birth.

The bursaries attest to the faculty's high regard for Gillies, who remained at the university to study divinity.<sup>34</sup> As typical of divinity students,<sup>35</sup> he became a tutor, in this case to the family of Charles Hamilton, Provost of Irvine.<sup>36</sup> Located in an area once known for feuds between the Montgomeries of Eglinton and the Cunninghams of Kilmours, Irvine enjoyed close ties with the University of Glasgow.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *Fasti*, iii. 114.

<sup>31</sup> In the matriculation album, the paternal name was entered by the professor of the student's class, not the student. Addison, *Matriculation Albums*, xii. From 1725–48, the only record of a birth of an Alexander to a father named John occurs in 1732, a date that would ensure a matriculation to the university at age 23. There are six records for an Alexander born to a father similarly named. Of these, the only plausible location and date would be Barony, 1737, or Lanark, 1743. The date of 1743 accords with the average age of matriculation (12–14 years), and the town of Lanark enjoyed an economic and geographic orientation to Glasgow, the city listed as the origin of the father in both university and church records. Edinburgh, National Records of Scotland [NRS], Old Parish Records (available at [www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk); accessed 28. Nov 2023).

<sup>32</sup> For the Ross Bursary, see GUL, GUA 26640: Faculty Senate Minutes, 16 Jan. 1759; for the King's Bursary, see GUL, GUA 26641: Faculty Senate Minutes, 27 Nov. 1759. I thank Moira Rankin (Senior Archivist, GUL, Library Services) for bringing these to my attention.

<sup>33</sup> GUL, GUA 26641: Faculty Senate Minutes, 27 Nov. 1759. These minutes also testify that Gillies was to be paid 'four pounds sterling for inserting a great many books into the Library Catalogues'. Present at this meeting was Adam Smith who, as Ross notes (*Adam Smith*, 147), had been responsible for library finances since 1755.

<sup>34</sup> Confirmed by GUL, Special Collections, MS Lib 2: Library Receipt Books, Register 3, in Sangster *et al.*, *Eighteenth-Century Borrowing*.

<sup>35</sup> Jack C. Whytock, 'An Educated Clergy': *Scottish Theological Education and Training in the Kirk and Secession, 1560–1850* (Eugene, OR, 2007), 98.

<sup>36</sup> Anon., 'Directory of Ayrshire, 1750–1800', in Annie I. Dunlop, *et al* (eds), *Ayrshire at the Time of Burns*, Collections of the Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society (Ayrshire, 1959), 95–136, at 116.

<sup>37</sup> John Strawhorn, *The History of Irvine: Royal Burgh and New Town* (Edinburgh, 1985), 65, 63. Perhaps it is self-reference when Gillies, in his satirical essay, 'A Modest

After completing divinity studies, Gillies received his licence to preach, on 1 January 1766, from the Presbytery of Stranraer, Wigtownshire, where Hamilton had inherited an estate.<sup>38</sup> However, on signing the Westminster Confession of Faith—the doctrinal document of the presbyterian kirk to which every minister (and professor) was required to subscribe<sup>39</sup>—Gillies supposedly added the phrase, ‘*erroribus exceptis*’.<sup>40</sup> As explained below, Gillies held views of the Confession that *could* have led him to sign with the qualifying phrase. However, the minutes of the presbytery of Stranraer mention no such modification.<sup>41</sup> (The attribution of this phrase to Gillies has its own interest but its uncertain source renders discussion rather speculative.) Almost twelve months after his licensure, Gillies delivered his sermon in the church whose congregation was served by Rev. Alexander Fergusson, a minister whose views of the Confession were similar to those of Gillies, and who had been, or remained, a member of Kilwinning lodge.<sup>42</sup>

From 1767 to 1778 Gillies’s comings and goings remain obscure. In the early 1770s he had gained the acquaintance of William Smellie, the master printer and natural historian, and Gilbert Stuart, the writer and historian noted for his study of Mary Queen of Scots (1782).<sup>43</sup> Evidence suggests that Gillies and Smellie collaborated to compose two satirical

<sup>37</sup> (*Continued*) Defence of . . . Blasphemy’, characterises a tutor as ‘a strange compound of theology and philosophy’, *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, i (Mar. 1774), §VIII, 298.

<sup>38</sup> Strawhorn, *The History of Irvine*, 65.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Ahnert, *The Moral Culture of the Scottish Enlightenment, 1690–1805* (New Haven, NJ, 2014), 26; Kidd, ‘Subscription’, 503.

<sup>40</sup> As recorded in *Fasti*, iii. 114: ‘licen. by Presby. Stranraer 1<sup>st</sup> January 1766, though he signed the Confession of Faith only *erroribus exceptis*’. Drummond and Bulloch cite *Fasti* in *The Scottish Church*, 110. In turn, Drummond and Bulloch are cited by A. C. Cheyne, *Transforming the Kirk: Victorian Scotland’s religious revolution* (Edinburgh, 1983), 11 and Johannes van den Berg, ‘The Synod of Dort in the balance’, in Jan de Bruijn, Pieter Holtrop and Ernestine van der Wall (eds), *Religious Currents and Cross-Currents: Essays on early modern Protestantism and the Protestant enlightenment* (Leiden, 1999), 6.

<sup>41</sup> The presbytery minutes for 1 Jan. 1766 state that the presbytery, having considered his ‘former tryals’, did licence him to ‘preach the Gospel’: ‘he then subscribed the confession of faith & formula’. NRS, Records of Presbytery of Stranraer, CH2/341/6: Minutes, 101. Perhaps Gillies also signed the Confession on his ordination at Kilmaurs, but there are no church records for Kilmaurs during the years 1718–96. The minutes, from 11 Mar. 1778, of the Irvine Presbytery make no mention of any such qualified signature, recording only that there was no objection to Gillies’s ordination among parishioners or others. NRS, Records of Irvine Presbytery, CH2/197/6: Minutes, 374.

<sup>42</sup> As mentioned by Lyon, ‘Mother Kilwinning’ (IV), *Freemasons’ Magazine and Masonic Mirror*, 237; and in ‘Mother Kilwinning’ (V), *Freemasons’ Magazine and Masonic Mirror* 226, 31 Oct. 1863, 333–8, at 334.

<sup>43</sup> See Stephen W. Brown, ‘William Smellie and the printer’s role in the eighteenth-century Edinburgh book trade’, in Peter Isaac and Barry McKay (eds), *The Human Face of the Book Trade: Print culture and its creators* (Winchester, 1999), 29–43, along with Brown, ‘William Smellie and the culture of the Edinburgh book trade, 1752–1795’, in Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, *The Culture of the Book in the Scottish Enlightenment: An Exhibition with Essays by Roger Emerson, Richard Sher, Stephen Brown, and Paul Wood* (Toronto, 2000), 61–87. On Stuart, see William Zachs, *Without Regard to Good Manners: A biography of Gilbert Stuart 1743–1786* (Edinburgh, 1992).



articles inserted as preface and introduction to a manual on falconry: Gillies penned the preface, Smellie the introduction.<sup>44</sup> Gillies also began to write for the newly established *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, edited by Stuart and Smellie. Stuart recognised Gillies's abilities. In August 1774 after Gillies had published instalments of his 'Modest Defence of ... Blasphemy,' Stuart penned a letter to Smellie regarding a potential division of their journal into a review and a magazine or newspaper:

There must therefore be some person in Edinburgh on whom we can fully rely, and who, on a moments notice, can buckle to work and do his business expeditiously. Such a person is Blasphemy Gillies; and that he may be acquired is, I think, obvious from the present poorness of his situation.<sup>45</sup>

However, the division of the journal came to naught. It is unclear why Stuart described Gillies's situation so bleakly, but he was now in his

<sup>44</sup> James Campbell, *A Treatise of Modern Faulconry, to which is prefixed, from authors not generally known, an Introduction, Shewing the Practice of Faulconry in certain Remote Times and Countries* (Edinburgh, 1773). The book commences with a 'Preface' devoted almost wholly to a satirical critique of Lord Monboddo's first volume of *The Origin and Progress of Language* (Edinburgh, 1773), but the subtitle refers to an 'Introduction', which itself contains hyperbolic tales of ancient falconry. A contemporary of Gillies, Rev. James Wodrow, in writing to Samuel Kenrick, refers to 'Sandy Gilles a preacher in Airshire' as the author of a 'high piece of ridicule' on Lord Monboddo. Letter 50, Wodrow to Samuel Kenrick, 5 Apr. 1774, in Martin Fitzpatrick, Emma Macleod and Anthony Page (eds), *The Wodrow-Kenrick Correspondence 1750-1810, volume 1: 1750-1783* (Oxford, 2020), 320. (I thank Emma Macleod and an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this correspondence and Wodrow's reference to Gillies.) However, others have attributed authorship of both preface and introduction to Gillies: Joseph Haslewood, Introduction to Dame Juliana Berners, *The Book of Saint Albans* [1496], 3-104, edn of 1810 (New York, NY, 1966), 29; William Thomas Lowndes, *The Bibliographer's Manual of English Literature*, 2 vols (London, 1834), i. 338. Emily Cloyd seems to follow Haslewood's account: *James Burnett, Lord Monboddo* (Oxford, 1972), 49-50. Further complicating matters is the early nineteenth-century biographical account of William Smellie in which the author, Robert Kerr, contends that Smellie wrote both preface and introduction. Kerr's evidence is a letter from Gillies to Smellie in which Gillies stated, 'You have hit off our ancient falconer inculpably well'. However, it is *only* the introduction, not the preface, that portrays an 'ancient falconer'. Kerr, *Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Correspondence of William Smellie*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1811), i. 417-18. The attribution by Wodrow along with differences of style, substance and context between preface and introduction suggest that Gillies authored the preface, Smellie the introduction. A more complete account is in Eugene Heath, 'Strange and Whimsical Performances: William Smellie, Alexander Gillies, and the Paratexts to *A Treatise of Modern Faulconry*', forthcoming, *The Library: Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*.

<sup>45</sup> Stuart to Smellie, in Kerr, *Memoirs*, i. 429. The tag by which Stuart refers to Gillies is evidence that Gillies was, in fact, the author of the anonymous satire 'A Modest Defence of ... Blasphemy'. Another item of evidence would be the notations that Smellie recorded as to who had written which anonymous entry in the *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*. See Kerr, *Memoirs*, i. 407. William Zachs also regards Gillies as the author of 'A Modest Defence of ... Blasphemy', in *Without Regard to Good Manners*, 70.

early thirties, without ministerial position or wife.<sup>46</sup> These circumstances would change soon enough.

In March 1778 Gillies received a ministerial position, having been presented in October 1777, by the eleventh earl of Eglinton, Archibald Montgomerie, to St Maurs Glencairn, the church at Kilmours, just east of Kilwinning.<sup>47</sup> There is no record of opposition to his appointment even though he was 'a very advanced churchman considering the times in which he lived'.<sup>48</sup> Two years after assuming his post, in June 1780, at the 'manse of Auchinleck', Gillies married Isabella Dun, twenty years old and the younger of two daughters of Rev. John Dun and Mary Wilson.<sup>49</sup> Having served as chaplain to the family of Alexander Boswell (Lord Auchinleck) and tutor to James,<sup>50</sup> Rev. Dun was that 'rare bird' who espoused theological moderation with opposition to patronage.<sup>51</sup> Nothing in his sermons—which emphasised Jesus as mediator, intercessor, advocate and redeemer<sup>52</sup>—would suggest that Dun would not welcome Gillies into his family. Dun's position that religion need not be 'dressed in a gloomy garb' could only buttress the cause of a wit such as Gillies.<sup>53</sup> Alexander and Isabella brought forth two children, a son and a daughter who died before her first year.<sup>54</sup> Isabella lived long into the next century. Gillies died a young man, in November 1786, and rests in the churchyard of Kilmours.<sup>55</sup>

#### *Adam Smith's student at the Lodge of Kilwinning*

In 1755 when Gillies entered the University of Glasgow, Adam Smith had been teaching for four years. Responsible for the moral philosophy class, Smith was lecturing on ideas that would appear in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759).<sup>56</sup> On the basis of the typical sequence of study at the university—from Latin to Greek, then Logic, Moral Philosophy and Natural Philosophy—it is likely that Gillies was a student in Smith's

<sup>46</sup> Gillies had substituted for regular ministers 'w[i]th Approbation, and . . . had behaved suitably to his Character'. NRS, Records of Irvine Presbytery, CH2/197/6: Minutes, 25 Nov. 1777, 366.

<sup>47</sup> *Fasti*, iii. 114–15.

<sup>48</sup> David M'Naught, *Kilmours, Parish and Burgh* (Paisley, 1912), 158.

<sup>49</sup> *Scots Magazine*, 42 (Jun. 1780), 333.

<sup>50</sup> *Fasti*, iii. 4.

<sup>51</sup> Richard Sher, 'Scottish divines and legal lairds: Boswell's Scots presbyterian identity', in Greg Clingham (ed.), *New Light on Boswell: Critical and historical essays on the occasion of the bicentenary of The Life of Johnson* (Cambridge, 1991), 34. For Dun's address against patronage, see *Scots Magazine*, 29 (Jan. 1767), 12–14.

<sup>52</sup> Dun, *Sermons*, 2 vols (Kilmarnock, 1790).

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, i. Appendix, 232.

<sup>54</sup> *Fasti*, iii. 115.

<sup>55</sup> *Scots Magazine*, 48 (Dec. 1786), 622. His burial place was confirmed to me by John Urquhart, a representative of the St. Maur's Glencairn Parish Church (the Church at Kilmours).

<sup>56</sup> Scott, *Adam Smith as Student and Professor*, 120; Ross, *Adam Smith*, 118–19; and D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie, 'Introduction', in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, eds D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Indianapolis, IN, 1982), 4–5.

course. No lists exist that document the students in each professor's class, but another record confirms Gillies's presence in Smith's class. To track the borrowing of books from the university library, the Keeper of the Library maintained a receipt book—a lined ledger—with distinct columns specifying a student's name, the class for which he withdrew a book, its title, withdrawal and return dates and the name of the professor(s) authorising the request. The specification of a course indicates the student's enrolment in that class. A professor's name often, but not always, indicates that the student was *currently* in that professor's course. The extant receipt books, extending from 1757 to 1771, include all but the first two of Gillies's years of study at Glasgow. These books reveal that Gillies was not only an inveterate user of the library but a member of Smith's class: from the autumn of 1757 into September 1758, he withdrew works for 'Moral [Philosophy]' (or, as in one instance, 'Ethic') and typically Smith gave the authorisation.<sup>57</sup> The receipt book establishes that Gillies was in Smith's class.<sup>58</sup>

Indeed, the books suggest something else—that Gillies enjoyed good rapport with Smith. During the last three years of Gillies's undergraduate study (1757 to January 1760),<sup>59</sup> the receipt book shows that among professors who validated Gillies's library withdrawals, Gillies received Smith's authorisations at least eighteen times, second only to the nineteen received from John Anderson, Professor of Natural Philosophy, and James Moor, Professor of Greek. By the time Gillies completed his divinity studies (1765) he had received a total of twenty-five authorisations from Smith, second only to Moor at thirty-one. (Of the three professors who, in 1766, provided 'testificates' for Gillies's licensure, Professors Leechman and James Clow are on record with seven authorisations, Professor Robert Trail with one.<sup>60</sup>) Alternatively, reviewing only Adam Smith's authorisations for students reveals that from 1757 to 1765 Smith granted more authorisations to Gillies than to any other student. During Gillies's undergraduate study, the only other student to equal the number of endorsements given by Smith

<sup>57</sup> GUL, Special Collections, MS Lib 2, Register 2: Library Receipt Books, in Sangster *et al.*, *Eighteenth-Century Borrowing*. The receipt books—which do not extend to 1755, the date of Gillies's matriculation—show that Gillies was, over the course of his undergraduate and divinity studies, the second most assiduous borrower: from 1757–1765 Gillies withdrew 111 books, second only to a Harry Stevenson who, over the range of ten years (1761–71), withdrew 203!

<sup>58</sup> That library receipt books could corroborate Gillies's presence in Smith's moral philosophy class was suggested by Sarah Hepworth and first confirmed to me by Samantha Gilchrest, both in GUL, Special Collections.

<sup>59</sup> The dates of Gillies's studies are inexact. The Captain Ross Bursary was bestowed in his *magistrand*, or final, year, 1759. This detail would suggest that by Jan. 1760 he had entered divinity study at Glasgow, a fact supported by the withdrawal, in early 1760, of works whose class is designated as 'Theology'. The last record of Gillies withdrawing a book is Mar. 1765.

<sup>60</sup> The 'testificates' affirming Gillies's character are noted in NRS, Records of Stranraer Presbytery, CH2/341/6: Minutes, 19 Jun. 1765, 69. The book authorisations are from GUL, Special Collections, MS Lib 2: Library Receipt Books, Registers 2 and 3, in Sangster *et al.*, *Eighteenth-Century Borrowing*.

to Gillies (18) was Thomas Fitzmaurice (with 18, plus two additional authorisations after 1760). Interestingly, Fitzmaurice, a boarder in Smith's house (and first introduced to Smith by Gilbert Elliot of Minto) has been depicted as a student over whom Smith exercised much 'solicitude'.<sup>61</sup> Given the evidence of the library receipt books, it is not unreasonable to think that Smith tendered solicitude to Gillies as well and that the two shared an amicable relationship. During Gillies's *total* years at Glasgow, including his study of divinity, no other student received from Smith as many library authorisations (25) as did he.<sup>62</sup>

In 1766 when Gillies delivered his sermon at the Lodge of Kilwinning, Smith's persona, not to mention his lectures (if not his book) would have remained fresh in his mind. Addressed to 'My Brethren' and divided into six thematic units, Gillies's sermon had the stated intention of providing 'an explication of Free Masonry and Brotherly Love'.<sup>63</sup> It is chiefly in the first portion—devoted to the principles that underlie society—that Gillies seems to draw on themes redolent of Smith's theory of morals. In a second segment Gillies discusses self-love as the source of social evils and, in a third, he explores how Christianity and freemasonry offer distinct ways to ameliorate such baleful problems. In the last three sections Gillies takes up the nature of brotherly love, examines its effects, and offers counsel as to how one might become the object of such love.<sup>64</sup> Gillies's sermon manifests several affinities with Smith's ideas: that self-love and benevolence play a reciprocating role in society, that spectators and agents may adopt the perspective of each other and communicate sentiments to one another, that the objects of one's affections depend in part on social interaction and, as developed in the second section of the talk, that overweening self-love leads to faction. Additionally, as discussed below, Smith's insight that partialities should be set aside in order to judge matters rightly bears affinities with Gillies's understanding of the masonic demand to put away particularities that inhibit respectful friendship (a theme set forth in the third portion of his discourse).

<sup>61</sup> Ross, *Adam Smith*, 135. Fitzmaurice matriculated in 1759 and departed Glasgow for Oxford in 1762. *Ibid.*, 134–5.

<sup>62</sup> In this context, it is important to recall that Smith was devoted to his professorial duties. Two years into his professorship, David Hume wrote to Smith, the 'Fatigues of your Class have exhausted you too much, and . . . you require more Leisure and Rest than you allow yourself'. Hume to Smith, letter no. 13, 26 May 1753, in *Correspondence of Adam Smith*, eds Ernest Campbell Mossner and Ian Simpson Ross (Indianapolis, IN 1987), 9. Towards the end of his life, upon receiving the honour, bestowed by vote of faculty and students, of Lord Rector of the University of Glasgow, Smith confessed that his years teaching were, 'the most useful and . . . happiest and most honourable period of my life'. Smith to Dr Archibald Davidson, letter no. 274, 16 Nov. 1787, *Correspondence*, 309.

<sup>63</sup> *The Freemasons Magazine*, Jan. 1794, 5.

<sup>64</sup> It is not unusual that freemasons might seek a discourse on brotherly love. In his own correspondence, William Smellie remarks that he had been invited, by a 'Society of Masons', to deliver remarks on 'Charity' but his recompense was nothing more than 'a very long and very loud clap'. Kerr, *Memoirs*, i. 158–9.

If any one of these notions might be found in other thinkers of the period, they are not integrated systematically by anyone other than Smith.<sup>65</sup>

Even so, it seems plausible to think that William Leechman also may have influenced Gillies, perhaps underscoring the significance of self-love and the concomitant demand for self-denial and humility.<sup>66</sup> Leechman recognised that self-love was so strong a tendency that efforts of self-denial were ‘required of us at all times and in all circumstances’.<sup>67</sup> Like Smith, Leechman did not see self-love merely as a desire for esteem but as a tendency to ‘prefer ourselves to others’.<sup>68</sup> This ‘unjust’ affection is not only the foundation of ‘that manifest partiality which we too frequently shew to ourselves and to our own interests’<sup>69</sup> but is also the basis for the self-deceit that fashions a ‘fanciful self’ while ignoring the ‘real self’.<sup>70</sup>

The influence of Leechman cannot be discounted, but his approach is not only less systematic than Smith’s but unmindful of the appeals to society crucial to Smith’s account of morals and to Gillies’s presentation at the lodge.<sup>71</sup> In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* Smith theorises how reciprocating social interaction encourages an imaginative point of view, the impartial spectator, that overcomes our natural tendency to adopt a partial perspective born of a love of self. Gillies relies on principles of human nature and society that appear to draw from Smith without merely repeating him.

<sup>65</sup> Rousseau’s *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* appeared in 1755, but it is not obvious that his notion of *amour propre*, the love of esteem, equates to that of Smith or Gillies, neither of whom focus on self-love merely in terms of social esteem. Moreover, Gillies emphasises concepts of reciprocity and mutual adjustment redolent of Smith’s understanding of how social interaction contributes to the constitution of moral consensus and moral judgement.

<sup>66</sup> By the time Leechman became Principal of the University (1761) he had ceased teaching, though he did continue to give some lectures (see Wodrow, ‘Life of Dr. Leechman’, I, 74–7). It would seem likely that Gillies was a student in one of Leechman’s theology classes; however, the authorisations in the library receipt books show a number of authorisations for such a class in 1759 and 1760, with only a few coming from Leechman. See also Thomas D. Kennedy, ‘William Leechman, pulpit eloquence’, in Andrew Hook and Richard B. Sher (eds), *The Glasgow Enlightenment* (East Linton, 1995), 56–72.

<sup>67</sup> Leechman, ‘The necessity of self-denial as the foundation of virtue’, in *Sermons by William Leechman*, ii. 284.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 305.

<sup>69</sup> Leechman, ‘The excellence and advantages of humility’, in *Ibid.*, ii. 355.

<sup>70</sup> Leechman, ‘On humility’, in *Ibid.*, ii. 387.

<sup>71</sup> In this context it is interesting to note how, in one of his letters, Wodrow distinguished Leechman’s views of social and historical change from those of Smith and John Millar. Whereas Smith and Millar, observed Wodrow, draw from Montesquieu and describe social change as ‘natural, gradual & uniform’, Leechman regards history as owing to individuals of ‘excellent spirit’ as guided by Providence. Wodrow to Kenrick, 21 Jan. 1786 in Martin Fitzpatrick, Emma Macleod and Anthony Page (eds), *The Wodrow–Kenrick Correspondence, volume 2: 1784–1790* (Oxford, expected 2024).

Smith's course was divided into four parts: natural theology, ethics, jurisprudence and government administration and political economy.<sup>72</sup> We can employ the first edition of Smith's moral treatise to outline relevant elements of his teaching on ethics. For that portion of the course, Smith probably considered two questions: what is the nature of virtue? and what motivates us to virtue? Smith examined this first question at the opening of his course (now, Part VII, *Moral Sentiments*) by recounting theories that understood virtue in terms of propriety, benevolence or self-love.<sup>73</sup> To introduce this history, Smith made plain that in general 'the great division of our affections is into the selfish and the benevolent'.<sup>74</sup> Smith employed this sort of distinction on several other occasions. For example, the dichotomy of self-interest and benevolence received conspicuous mention in Smith's typification of two hypothetical societies, one founded on benevolence, the other on self-interest. We may assist one another through love or friendship, said Smith, but we may also subsist without such affection, 'as among different merchants'.<sup>75</sup> Similarly, observed Smith, benevolence may 'be the sole principle of action in the Deity . . . so imperfect a creature as man . . . must often act from many other motives'.<sup>76</sup>

The thematic distinction between self-regard and regard for others is clearly present in Smith but he was hardly the first to draw it. His teacher, Francis Hutcheson, had differentiated the selfish affections and the benevolent.<sup>77</sup> Unlike Hutcheson, Smith recognised a role for a variant of self-interest, understood as a kind of prudence, but Smith also understood a specific notion of unconstrained self-love—an 'omnipresent theme' in his moral treatise—as problematical.<sup>78</sup> As distinct from a self-interested passion, Smith's conception of self-love suggests an affection for self that drives us not only to overvalue our own passions and preferences but to misrepresent (in ways that favour self) the circumstances, needs and desires of others. This is the self-love of partiality and blindness. Perhaps the sermons that Smith would have heard as a boy would have stressed how the human being was, as John Calvin described, beset by an innate but 'blind self-love'

<sup>72</sup> Dugald Stewart, *Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith, L.L.D.*, ed. I. S. Ross, in W. P. D. Wightman and J. C. Bryce (eds) *Essays on Philosophical Subjects* (Indianapolis, IN, 1982), I.18 (274).

<sup>73</sup> Raphael and Macfie, 'Introduction', 4.

<sup>74</sup> *Moral Sentiments*, VII.ii.intro.4.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, II.ii.3.1–2.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, VII.ii.3.18.

<sup>77</sup> *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense* (1728), ed. Aaron Garrett (Indianapolis, IN, 2002), e.g., 136.

<sup>78</sup> Charles L. Griswold notes the omnipresence in his *Adam Smith and the Virtues of Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1999), 138. Smith's use of self-love does vary: he employs the term to suggest a Calvinist (and Augustinian) view akin to French moralists, including La Rochefoucauld, but he also, on occasion, appears to equate self-love with simple self-interest. See Eugene Heath, 'Adam Smith and self interest', in Christopher J. Berry, Maria Pia Paganelli and Craig Smith (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Adam Smith* (Oxford, 2013), 242–9.

that functioned as ‘an eager inclination of [one’s] heart’, encouraging and stimulating vices.<sup>79</sup> For Calvin, as for Augustine, this sort of self-love operates in opposition to the love of God; it is an orientation of valuation and understanding more than a particular self-interested desire.<sup>80</sup> Smith’s conception of human nature reflects this Calvinist residue: he notes our ‘littleness and weakness’, characterises the human being in terms of ‘depravity’ and even suggests a recognition of fallen humanity (referring, at one point, to our ‘present depraved state’).<sup>81</sup> As Smith explains,

[E]ven when we are endeavouring to place ourselves in the situation of another, and to regard the objects that interest us in the light in which they will naturally appear to him, the fury of our own passions constantly calls us back to our own place, where every thing appears magnified and misrepresented by self-love.<sup>82</sup>

Smith’s thematic distinction between self-interest and benevolence, as well as his more specific sense of self-love as a steady form of affection that yields partiality and misrepresentation, obtains its own formulation in Gillies’s discourse to the lodge. Perhaps reinforced by his own presbyterian upbringing, Gillies would describe an ongoing reciprocal adjustment between affections of benevolence and self-love. He introduces this complementary attunement by focusing—as did Smith and other theorists of his day—on ‘the principles on which human society is founded’. Just as Smith ascertained such principles through introspection and observation, so does Gillies, who proclaimed these to be,

Benevolence and Self-Love. From the one arise a set of affections, which make us enter into the concerns of our fellow-creatures: and from the other, a set which interest us wholly in our own. Actuated by the former, we rejoice with the fortunate, or mourn with the afflicted; but the latter engage us directly in the pursuit of our own private happiness.<sup>83</sup>

Gillies employed benevolence and self-love less to indicate, as might be traditional, the content of an intention or the end of an action than to specify the psychological basis by which we ‘enter into’ the circumstances of others and desire that others do the same for us. Notably, such perspectival communication mirrors Smith’s use of the imagination to encourage sympathy, the similitude of feelings that may arise as distinct individuals experience or contemplate the same

<sup>79</sup> *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols (Philadelphia, PA, 1960), II.i.2, II.iii.5.

<sup>80</sup> ‘In the one city, love of God has been given pride of place, and, in the other, love of self. Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge, 1998), XIV.13.

<sup>81</sup> *Moral Sentiments*, III.3.4, I.iii.1.7 and II.i.5.8, respectively.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, III.4.3.

<sup>83</sup> *The Freemasons’ Magazine*, Jan. 1794, 5.

circumstances. The desire to share similar sentiments pushes each of us to alter our imaginative perspective so that we may take into account how a situation is understood by another person. When we sympathise with that individual, we approve that person's reaction; when we fail to sympathise, we disapprove. As Smith recognised, however, we have 'peculiar' relations to persons, things and circumstances,<sup>84</sup> and these—'magnified and misrepresented by self-love'—render difficult our attempts to place ourselves in the situation of others. Nonetheless, as enough individuals adjust their perspectives in distinct circumstances, society coalesces around a common imaginative point of view. With the publication of a second edition of the *Moral Sentiments* (1761), this perspective becomes that of the impartial spectator; but even in the first edition Smith appealed to a vantage point that set aside particularities of preference, interest and belief. Such a perspective is, as shown below, essential to Gillies's conception of freemasonry.

Thanks to 'Divine wisdom', Gillies explains, benevolence and self-love complement each other and make society possible. In his account Gillies seems to postulate a self-regulating society, at least prior to the emergence of an unconstrained self-love. We were created so that a legitimate self-love (or self-preservation) would function reciprocally with the benevolence of others in accord with 'the adjustment which God gave to the human affections'.<sup>85</sup>

This adjustment of Benevolence and Self-love to each other is, my Brethren, the foundation on which the grand and beautiful fabric of human society is erected. The reciprocal workings of these principles cement mankind together in the strongest manner, and draw from them more than half of those virtues that reflect the highest honour on their nature. People of true humanity feel no pleasure so delicious as that of beholding or promoting the welfare of their fellow-creatures: no anguish pierces them so deeply, as that of seeing their distress without power to relieve it. Were it not for such candid and generous tempers, the prosperous would enjoy little satisfaction in their condition; nor could the miserable indulge the pleasing hopes of seeing their sorrows at an end.<sup>86</sup>

At the close of this passage, Gillies implies that we enjoy prosperity, and maintain hope despite tribulation, precisely because we imagine that others may enter into our circumstances. As already mentioned, Gillies's principle of benevolence is distinguished less in terms of what we *do* than as foundation for fellow feeling. A benevolent principle 'moves them [spectators] to sympathise with our distress, or to rejoice at our welfare'.<sup>87</sup> Gillies's declaration, 'In adversity we solicit their pity; and

<sup>84</sup> *Moral Sentiments*, I.i.4.1.

<sup>85</sup> *The Freemasons' Magazine*, Jan. 1794, 9. Augustine recognised that prior to the fall of humanity we enjoyed a legitimate self-love, or self-preservation. *Confessions*, trans. F. J. Sheed (Indianapolis, IN, 2006), I.xx.31; *City of God*, XIV.1.

<sup>86</sup> *The Freemasons' Magazine*, Jan. 1794, 6.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.



in prosperity we court their smiles',<sup>88</sup> calls to mind Smith's confession, 'nothing pleases us more than to observe in other men a fellow-feeling with all the emotions of our own breast'.<sup>89</sup> Each individual desires a commonality of feeling and endeavours to moderate his or her feelings to attain it. For Gillies, our 'benevolence tallies with the emotions of theirs'—at least so long as no 'unsocial passion' intervenes,<sup>90</sup> a categorisation borrowed from Smith's own nomenclature of social, unsocial and selfish passions.<sup>91</sup>

Another affinity between Smith's outlook and that of Gillies is the idea that social interaction leads to the constitution of moral consensus. For Smith, interaction and the commonality of sentiments yields approbation: when the passions of the agent are in 'concord with the sympathetic emotions of the spectator, they necessarily appear to this last just and proper'.<sup>92</sup> Gillies also understood interaction among individuals to have moral effect: 'It is only in society, that these affections [arising from benevolence and self-love] can meet with their *proper* objects: solitude is an enemy to both sets.'<sup>93</sup> In social interaction we locate or fix the ends of our passions, their tenor and tone. Smith explained moral consensus in terms of a mutual adjustment of passions 'sufficient for the harmony of society'.<sup>94</sup> Gillies recognised a similar accommodation as a 'noble and admirable effect' arising out of a contrivance 'plain and simple', an encapsulation, perhaps, of Smith's seemingly Newtonian understanding of the social: a simple set of principles function to create patterns that are not only complex and interesting but, as Gillies would say, indicative of a Deity we view with 'wonder and gratitude'.<sup>95</sup>

There is an additional similarity between Smith and Gillies. As noted above, both men recognise that self-love has specific and negative tendencies.<sup>96</sup> When Smith employs the language of self-love he does so with negative attributions: one must 'humble the arrogance of . . . self-love', which creates 'delusions' and 'partial views'.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, for Gillies self-love leads to attention to oneself and not others—their happiness is

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Moral Sentiments*, I.i.2.1.

<sup>90</sup> *The Freemasons' Magazine*, Jan. 1794, 6.

<sup>91</sup> *Moral Sentiments*, I.ii.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, I.i.3.1.

<sup>93</sup> *The Freemasons' Magazine*, Jan. 1794, 5 (emphasis added). One may compare Gillies's judgement to that of Smith's: 'Were it possible that a human creature could grow up to manhood in some solitary place, without any communication with his own species, he could no more think of his own character, of the propriety or demerit of his own sentiments and conduct . . . that of the beauty or deformity of his own face.' *Moral Sentiments*, III.i.3.

<sup>94</sup> *Moral Sentiments*, I.i.4.7.

<sup>95</sup> *The Freemasons' Magazine*, Jan. 1794, 7.

<sup>96</sup> As did Professor Leechman who, as noted above, linked self-love to partiality and blindness. 'The Necessity of Self Denial as the Foundation of Virtue', in *Sermons of William Leechman*, ii. 283–306.

<sup>97</sup> *Moral Sentiments*, II.ii.2.1, III.4.7 and III.4.12, respectively.

viewed with a 'rapacious eye'.<sup>98</sup> As self-love swells, so do 'pride, malice, and avarice' take 'possession of the human mind'. In this way, self-love overcomes the 'natural adjustment of [our] affections', and gains 'the ascendant over . . . benevolence'.<sup>99</sup> As self-love over-reaches, so is 'the adjustment which God gave to the human affections' upset.<sup>100</sup> Although it remains unclear, from Gillies, when or how self-love gains this ascendancy (whether, for example, the account is intended to mirror the fall of humanity), it is due to self-love that we require a sovereign and divide into states. Within these groupings, self-love persists, yielding 'different parties and sects', both political and ecclesiastical, and these 'under pretence of serving the public, frequently hurt it, in order to gratify their pride'.<sup>101</sup>

Gillies's worries about sects and factions may reflect a larger eighteenth-century discussion,<sup>102</sup> or his own observation of how theological doctrine fuelled division.<sup>103</sup> Yet his connection between self-love, as partial attachment to self, and faction is similar to Smith's link between partiality and faction, 'whether civil or ecclesiastical'.<sup>104</sup> To combat self-love, Smith insists, an impartial perspective can be constructed and maintained through the give and take of social interaction. Actual spectators push the individual out of his or her blinkered estimates of self and world. We desire not only the approval of our 'brethren' but to be what they would approve if they had our knowledge.<sup>105</sup> In the second edition of the *Moral Sentiments*, Smith describes how in 'faction and fanaticism' we surround ourselves with the like-minded, thereby corrupting an impartial perspective.<sup>106</sup> One may justifiably speculate whether Smith's worries about faction, expressed in later editions, had found their way into remarks to Gillies's class prior to 1759.

In Smith's secular theory, interaction provides a sufficient remedy for the partialities of self-love, but Gillies suggests that something else is required, either the repair of human nature, or focused encounters with those who uphold explicitly the standard of impartiality. The first is the road to Christian salvation, the second, incorporating aspects of Smith's impartial spectator, the path to the lodge.

<sup>98</sup> *The Freemasons' Magazine*, Jan. 1794, 7.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> Joseph Addison, *The Spectator* 125, 126, 24 and 25 Jul. 1711; Hume, 'Of Parties in General' (1741), in *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (rev. edn, Indianapolis, IN, 1985), 54–63.

<sup>103</sup> Ahnert, *Moral Culture*, 38–9.

<sup>104</sup> *Moral Sentiments*, III.3.43.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, III.2.5.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, III.3.43.

*Christianity at the Lodge of Kilwinning*

In the third portion of his discourse, Gillies sought to explain how Christianity and freemasonry offer distinct strategies for countering self-love. Gillies maintained that Christianity offers a means to conquer ‘temptations’, overcome ‘infirmities’ and afford ‘glory, honor and immortality’.<sup>107</sup> Just as Smith held that actual spectators could draw one away from the partialities of self-love, so Gillies believed Christianity could reorient one’s attention away from self by offering a ‘view of the divine wisdom, power, and goodness’ that ‘excites’ in the mind ‘admiration, fear, and gratitude’.<sup>108</sup> In appealing to the contemplation of God as a means of turning one’s attention, Gillies expressed a theme of piety, endorsed as much by John Calvin as by William Wishart, one of the first to challenge the orthodox Calvinism of the Church, and by William Leechman, who stressed the importance of ‘a frequent and lively contemplation of God’.<sup>109</sup> However, Gillies did not omit the fallen nature of the human being in its ‘weakness, folly, and perversity’. These infirmities entail that the ‘mere sense of duty’, even the hope of immortality, cannot fully support moral endeavour, so the Holy Spirit must ‘assist and direct’ us.<sup>110</sup> In closing his discussion on Christianity, Gillies evoked Augustine, who first theorised the two loves, that of self and that of God: Christianity may ‘repair the ruins of human nature’ and turn our attention from the ‘Worldly’ to the ‘heavenly’.<sup>111</sup>

Along with a reorientation of attention, Gillies also suggested that a restoration of human nature demands understanding the ‘gospel’ and effecting good conduct—‘squar[ing] their lives’, a masonic expression recognisable by his audience.<sup>112</sup> But he made no mention of the Westminster Confession or adherence to its doctrines. In a later review of Adam Gib’s *The Present Truth: A Display of the Secession-Testimony*<sup>113</sup>—a collection of documents from defenders of parishes that, in 1733, seceded from the established church—Gillies clarified his assessment of the intellectual status of doctrinal pronouncements. He mocked the Seceders, expressed hope for church unity, and appealed to ‘law and order,’<sup>114</sup> echoing the (Moderates’) contention that Seceders were attempting to evade a decision of the very body they had

<sup>107</sup> *The Freemasons’ Magazine*, Jan. 1794, 10.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> William Wishart, *The certain and unchangeable Difference betwixt Moral Good and Evil* (London, 1732), 19; Leechman, ‘The temper, character, and duty of a minister of the gospel’ [1741], in *Sermons by William Leechman*, i. 103–35, at 116. See also Ahnert, *Moral Culture*, 35–9, and Carlos M. N. Eire, *War against the Idols: The reformation of worship from Calvin to Erasmus* (Cambridge, 1986), 232–3.

<sup>110</sup> *The Freemasons’ Magazine*, Jan. 1794, 10.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 11. In his *Confessions*, Augustine says of his soul, ‘It is all in ruins; do Thou repair it’, I.v.6.

<sup>112</sup> *The Freemasons’ Magazine*, Jan. 1794, 11.

<sup>113</sup> ‘Gib’s display of the Secession Testimony’, *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, ii (Jul. 1774), 477–83; (Aug. 1774), 543–53.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.* (Jul. 1774), 481.

voluntarily joined.<sup>115</sup> Gillies then pressed further, decrying intolerance and defending the corrigibility of human reason. Intolerance pays no heed to how human beings are blessed with different ‘degrees of reason’ as affected by ‘education, temper, bodily constitution, company, and employment’. These differences entail that we ‘view the same objects in different light . . . and hence will naturally arise, a multitude of jarring opinions’.<sup>116</sup> In contrast, the preface to the Westminster Confession stipulated ‘the intended uniformity of religion’, an aim that Gillies expressly denied: ‘uniformity is absolutely impossible . . . with regard to doctrines that are dark or perplexed’.<sup>117</sup> A confession of faith, complains Gillies, is ‘full of the most bewildering metaphysics’, but salvation cannot depend on ‘subtleties about orthodoxy’, including whether God has created some ‘number of human creatures for damnation’.<sup>118</sup>

One may understand Gillies’s view as a continuation of his understanding of our nature as fallen: under the mastery of self-love, human weakness is not simply affective infirmity but rational and perceptual debility.<sup>119</sup> In effect, these frailties reduce doctrinal formulations to perspectival expressions. Gillies’s rejection of such formulations suggests a man of Moderate theology,<sup>120</sup> but he also clarified that Christian resolution demands no sophistication or education (‘The scriptures were delivered for the instruction of mankind’<sup>121</sup>), a position compatible with views of evangelical thinkers<sup>122</sup>—not to mention Calvin himself.

Under whose auspices, for what reason, was Gillies invited to deliver his sermon to the Kilwinning Lodge? We do not know who arranged for Gillies’s discourse. The Montgomeries of Eglinton enjoyed long association with the Lodge; several had served as officers.<sup>123</sup> It is not altogether implausible to think that the tenth earl, Alexander—who,

<sup>115</sup> Richard Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: The moderate literati of Edinburgh* (Princeton, NJ, 1985), 53.

<sup>116</sup> ‘Gib’s display’, *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, ii (Aug. 1774), 544.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 545.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 532, 549 and 552, respectively.

<sup>119</sup> Peter Harrison, *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science* (Cambridge, 2007).

<sup>120</sup> Clark, ‘From protest to reaction’, 205; Ahnert, *Moral Culture*, 96–108. The secession movement was about patronage and theology: Colin Kidd, ‘The Fergusson affair: Calvinism and dissimulation in the Scottish enlightenment’, *Intellectual History Review* 26 (2016) 341. Gillies’s association with Gilbert Stuart and the *Edinburgh Magazine and Review* offers additional reason to think that Gillies was *not* affiliated with the Popular Party. Although Stuart did attack some orthodox positions, as well as the works of Robert Henry (who was not a Moderate), Stuart’s views on theological matters indicate some complexity. Stuart’s antipathy towards one notable Moderate, William Robertson, had less to do with theology than with questions of history and personal grievance. On Henry, see Sher, *Church and University*, 162; on Stuart and religion, see Zachs, *Without Regard to Good Manners*, 75–6; on Stuart and Robertson, see also Zachs, 101–8, 166–8.

<sup>121</sup> ‘Gib’s display’, *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, ii (Aug. 1774), 552.

<sup>122</sup> Friedhelm Voges, ‘Moderate and evangelical thinking in the later eighteenth century: differences and shared attitudes’, *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 22 (1985) 142–3.

<sup>123</sup> Stevenson, *Origins*, 200; Carr, *Lodge Mother Kilwinning*, xiii.

in London during the 1760s, had served as a rather 'libertine' mentor to James Boswell<sup>124</sup>—played some role in securing the opportunity for Gillies to speak, perhaps ensuring that the lodge meeting was held in the church.<sup>125</sup> This speculation is matched by another which springs from a controversy surrounding the minister of Kilwinning church, Alexander Fergusson. Installed with the permission of the ninth earl of Eglinton in 1721,<sup>126</sup> Fergusson was by the beginning of the 1760s an increasingly controversial figure, despite his advancing age. In a letter written in autumn 1766 and published in the *Scots Magazine* in spring 1767, Fergusson denied the supposition of human depravity, challenged the idea that anything other than scripture was the 'rule and standard of faith' and asserted—'against the Advice of every body'<sup>127</sup>—that there was nothing amiss in signing the Westminster Confession without believing each of its propositions. Fergusson also affirmed that our minds are 'differently formed' so that we take distinct views on things,<sup>128</sup> a position Gillies would defend in his review of Gib's book. Fergusson's letter provoked controversy.<sup>129</sup> Whether, as has been asserted, his 'congregation had been listening without complaint to his sermons for close on half a century'<sup>130</sup> cannot be assumed: after all, some had already seceded in 1759, leading Fergusson to preach harshly against them and compose pamphlets (1759, 1761) to warn others against their errors.<sup>131</sup> It is in this context that Gillies delivered his sermon 'in the Church of that Place'. What remains unknown is whether he was invited to do so to support the outlook of Fergusson, to offer a moderated alternative, or for reasons altogether distinct.

This question remains open. Gillies was no threadbare deist of the sort sometimes associated with freemasonry.<sup>132</sup> We have no record of his views of patronage, which Fergusson supported, but Gillies embraced a Christianity grounded in scripture, by which the Trinity is affirmed, and endorsed the fall of humanity, though not a complete removal of the will to good. The doctrine of atonement, often omitted by

<sup>124</sup> Having matriculated in autumn 1759, the following spring Boswell left the University of Glasgow and spent several years in London. 'Editor's Introduction,' *Boswell's London Journal 1762–1763*, ed. Frederick Pottle (New York, NY, 1950), 5–7; Addison, *Matriculation Albums*, 59 (§1808).

<sup>125</sup> Alexander Montgomerie, tenth earl of Eglinton was not only a member of the lodge but as of 1767 its Grand Master. Lodge Mother Kilwinning: Minutes, 21 Dec. 1767.

<sup>126</sup> *Fasti*, iii. 117–18.

<sup>127</sup> Wodrow to Kenrick, 25 Jan. 1769, *Wodrow–Kenrick Correspondence*, i. Letter 45, 295.

<sup>128</sup> *Scots Magazine*, 29 (Apr. 1767), 171–5. See Kidd, 'The Fergusson affair'; Introduction, *Wodrow–Kenrick Correspondence*, i. 159–62.

<sup>129</sup> Subsequent letters to the *Scots Magazine*, by Philorthodoxus, were published as *Kilwinning Divinity Weighed and found Wanting; or The Grand Secret of the New Kilwinning Lodge, concerning Subscription to the Confession of Faith, Tried and Cast* (Glasgow, 1768). The title insinuates, perhaps knowingly, the masonic connection of Fergusson. See above, note 42.

<sup>130</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church*, 106.

<sup>131</sup> Kidd, 'The Fergusson Affair', 341–2.

<sup>132</sup> Drummond and Bulloch, *The Scottish Church*, 47.

Moderate ministers<sup>133</sup> was defended by Gillies, as confirmed some years later by James Boswell,<sup>134</sup> who had sampled a selection of sermons delivered by various ministers.<sup>135</sup> References scattered throughout Gilles's sermon to the lodge demonstrate, as noted previously, that Gillies prized the virtue of piety—our attention and duties to God—and condemned impiety and blasphemy.<sup>136</sup> Along with his characterisation of Christianity as reorienting the self, Gillies used his discourse to suggest that freemasonry also provided a counter to self-love.

*Freemasonry at the Lodge of Kilwinning*

Almost a century after Gillies delivered his sermon, the nineteenth-century historian of freemasonry D. Murray Lyon denounced the Lodge of Kilwinning for bestowing on Gillies its 'first recorded *honorary* member[ship]' based on the 'sound divinity' of his discourse. Such an award, said Lyon, served to 'ignore [the] cosmopolitan characteristic of the [masonic] Order', though Lyon added that Kilwinning was doing nothing 'peculiar to themselves',<sup>137</sup> an admission that Scottish freemasonry had, in practice, made concessions to a membership overwhelmingly Christian. In effect, the credal propositions of freemasonry—with its Newtonian view of a universe created by a divine architect<sup>138</sup>—were, like those of the Westminster Confession, followed more in the breach than the observance. This qualification does not invalidate the claim that freemasonry, unlike many eighteenth-century societies, espoused 'a specific social ideology of fraternity, equality and rule-governed conduct within the lodge'.<sup>139</sup> However, the creed endorsed by the lodge might not be the motive that impelled individuals to membership. In Scotland, masonic lodges also appealed to men who sought a place and time for occasional and 'convivial'

<sup>133</sup> Luke Brekke, 'Heretics in the pulpit, inquisitors in the pews: the long reformation and the Scottish enlightenment', *Eighteenth Century Studies* 44 (2019) 84.

<sup>134</sup> Writing of his experience at the Kirk's annual celebration of the Lord's Supper, Boswell remarked, 'I heard Mr. Gillies from the tent on "We are bought with a Price", etc., and was pleased that he maintained the doctrine of Christ's Atonement' (Sunday 27 Aug. 1780). 'Journal at Auchinleck, 1780', in *Boswell: Laird of Auchinleck 1778–1782*, eds Joseph W. Reed and Frederick Pottle (Edinburgh, 1993, repr. New Haven, NJ, 1993), 233–4. Given that Boswell was 'pleased' to witness Gillies's adherence to the doctrine of atonement, and on the assumption that Boswell himself held views compatible with much of Moderate theology, it is plausible to think that Gillies embraced a notion of general atonement rather than one exclusive to the elect. There is nothing in the discourse to the lodge that endorses any form of election. On Boswell's religious outlook, see Sher, 'Scottish divines and legal lairds', 32–3.

<sup>135</sup> Samuel J. Rogal, 'James Boswell at church: 1762–1776', *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 41 (1972) 415–27.

<sup>136</sup> *The Freemasons' Magazine*, Feb. 1774, 95.

<sup>137</sup> 'Mother Kilwinning' (VII), *Freemasons Magazine and Masonic Mirror*, 433, 434.

<sup>138</sup> The Newtonian interpretation is advanced by Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, 57.

<sup>139</sup> Margaret C. Jacob, 'The radical enlightenment and freemasonry: where we are now', *Philosophica* 88 (2013) 17.

gatherings.<sup>140</sup> This was certainly the justification for some notable freemasons to join the society.<sup>141</sup> Despite Gillies's confessed worry about public attitudes towards freemasonry, even the Scottish church expressed an 'astonishing lack of concern' about the lodges.<sup>142</sup>

What Lyon depicted as the 'cosmopolitan' nature of freemasonry was in fact part of the creed articulated in 1723 by James Anderson, who characterised freemasonry as obliging its members only 'to that Religion in which all men agree'.<sup>143</sup> Similarly, observed Gillies, the foundation of freemasonry encompasses convictions universally embraced: a Divine being, worthy of worship, created and 'presides' over a world in which it is impermissible to hurt 'the character, life, or fortune of [one's] neighbour' and is obligatory to be temperate, sober, chaste and 'accountable to God'. Since our agreement to these claims does not yield a full understanding of them, disagreements arise: for example, whether God is 'incomprehensible' or 'corporeal', or whether God saves some select few and condemns the rest.<sup>144</sup> However, if freemasonry incorporated universal convictions, Gillies did not treat these as the only or even vital aspirations of humanity. In his discourse at the church of Kilwinning, Gillies proceeded to demarcate a division of moral labour that construed the masonic order as but a complement to Christianity: where Christian belief cannot reform human nature and reorient the tendencies of self-love, freemasonry may amend conduct.

If Gillies's account of freemasonry diverged from 'cosmopolitan' rhetoric, so did it set aside emphases found in popular defences of the order. Gillies attributed to freemasonry no title to ancient wisdom or secret knowledge.<sup>145</sup> He offered no appeal to the ethical instruction found, for example, in geometry, nor did he suggest that masonry offers 'a complete system of moral virtue'.<sup>146</sup> Gillies's omissions contrast with another, more notable, introduction to freemasonry, appearing in 1772, that alleged, 'Masonry is a moral science' offering a 'gradual

<sup>140</sup> Wallace, *The Great Transformation*, 72–6. By mid-eighteenth century, Lyon writes, a 'convivial element' became 'the chief if not the only inducement' to attending lodge meetings. 'Mother Kilwinning' (IV), *Freemasons Magazine and Masonic Mirror*, 234.

<sup>141</sup> As John Robison confessed, 'I had seen a Mason Lodge considered merely as a pretext for passing an hour or two in a sort of decent conviviality, not altogether void of some rational occupation.' 'Introduction', *Proofs of a Conspiracy against all the Religions and Governments of Europe* (4th edn, London, 1798), 2. Robert Burns enjoyed the 'sociability of the Masonic Lodge' but 'had only a limited interest in the more philosophical aspects of Freemasonry'. Andrew Prescott, "'Tinsel & Glitter & High-Sounding Titles": Robert Burns, James Hogg, and Scottish freemasonry in the romantic period', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 124 (2011) 153–78.

<sup>142</sup> Stevenson, *Origins*, 124.

<sup>143</sup> Anderson, 'The charges of a free mason', in *The Constitutions of the Free Masons* (London, 1723), 50.

<sup>144</sup> *The Freemasons' Magazine*, Jan. 1794, 11.

<sup>145</sup> Jacob, *Radical Enlightenment*, 85.

<sup>146</sup> 'You ought particularly to study that first and noblest of the sciences, I mean Geometry; by this we shall improve ourselves indeed.' Charles Leslie, 'A vindication of masonry and its excellency demonstrated', 15 May 1742, in *The Freemasons Pocket-Companion*, 162, 164.

progression of knowledge' and 'a complete system of moral virtue'.<sup>147</sup> Gillies mentioned no claims such as these, perhaps for the same reason that he eschewed the 'subtleties' of the Westminster Confession. Offering no special knowledge, freemasonry, for Gillies, could not provide the 'sovereign medicine to purge' one of vice,<sup>148</sup> only a secondary source of ethical conduct. Freemasonry was incapable of transforming human nature, an aim otherwise implied in a popular companion of the time.<sup>149</sup>

In Gillies's estimate, freemasonry, like Christianity, considers humanity 'as in a state of depravity', a Calvinist perspective not altogether optimistic.<sup>150</sup> Instead of appealing to 'masonic lore' about the founding of masonry,<sup>151</sup> Gillies admitted to 'no certain accounts' of its origins. Perhaps following the example of his teacher, Adam Smith, he offered a conjectural history of the order, albeit one with an intentionalist element.<sup>152</sup> In ancient days, explained Gillies, 'wise and benevolent men' discerned the disastrous combination of conflicting opinions, in 'religion, politics, and manners', with the power of self-love, 'the most fallacious of all standards'.<sup>153</sup> The wise men devised an idea for a society that would exclude 'particularities in opinion', accepting only the 'general truths in which every man of common sense was agreed'.<sup>154</sup> Nothing in this plan demanded that anyone relinquish particularities of nation or religion; the aim was only to 'regulate' one's 'partiality' in order to live 'in friendship and respect' with those who differed.<sup>155</sup> In this way, the brotherhood of freemasons came into being.

Gillies's history reveals an affinity with Smith's concern that the chief challenge to moral judgement is partiality to self:

So partial are the views of mankind with regard to the propriety of their own conduct . . . and so difficult is it for them to view it in the light in which any indifferent spectator would consider it.<sup>156</sup>

Moral judgement demands that one set aside partialities and adopt the perspective of an impartial spectator. To Gillies, the society of

<sup>147</sup> Preston, *Illustrations of Masonry*, 11, 52, 91.

<sup>148</sup> Laurence Dermott, 'Ahimon Razon', in *Ahimon Razon: or a Help to a Brother* (New York, NY, 1805, orig. publication, London, 1756), 78.

<sup>149</sup> 'Now, is Masonry so good, so valuable a science? Does it tend to cultivate the mind, and tame each unruly passion? Does it expel rancour, hatred, and envy? . . . In short, are its precepts a complete system of moral virtue? Then, hail, thou glorious craft, bright transcript of all that is amiable! Hail, thou blest moral science, which sets such fair copies of virtue!' Leslie, 'A vindication', 164.

<sup>150</sup> *The Freemasons' Magazine*, Jan. 1794, 15. Cf. Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, 53–5.

<sup>151</sup> Stevenson, *Origins*, 105. See, for example, the doubtful history of freemasonry, from Adam to the eighteenth century, in Anderson, *The Constitutions*, 1–48; or see *The Freemasons Pocket-Companion*, chapters I–VII.

<sup>152</sup> On conjectural history, see Stewart, *Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith, L.L.D.*, II.44–8.

<sup>153</sup> *The Freemasons' Magazine*, Jan. 1794, 12.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> *Moral Sentiments*, III.4.5.



freemasons offers, in effect, a transformation of Smith's impartial spectator into an organisation, an institutionalised body committed to countering partialities. A masonic lodge required no one to 'renounce those particularities by which his nation and religion were distinguished', only that he 'regulate his partiality for them'.<sup>157</sup> Within the lodge 'the Christian and the Mahomedan treat the religious opinions of each other with respect; here the Orthodox sit peaceably by the side of Heretics'.<sup>158</sup>

Gillies begins his discussion of freemasonry from an assumption—human depravity—embraced by presbyterians; however, as noted, he sets aside masonic appeals to a privileged moral knowledge. Indeed, in closing his discourse Gillies characterised his treatment of freemasonry as 'new . . . [at least] in the light and extent' to which he had 'considered it'.<sup>159</sup> If, perhaps, the admission of novelty reflected Gillies's sense of his deviation from widely promulgated views, it also disclosed a deft employment of Smith's idea of the mutual adjustment of sentiments among individuals. For Gillies, both Christianity and freemasonry, each shorn of abstruse doctrines, offered distinct responses to the challenge of self-love, with freemasonry also exemplifying the sociable impartiality that Gillies encountered in his classes with Adam Smith.

*'Blasphemy Gillies' and self-love*

Over the course of his short life Gillies made several contributions to public letters, one of which revealed a continuing concern with self-love and its threats to the moral life. Yet before he returned to that theme, he first composed, as noted above, a preface to a book on falconry.<sup>160</sup> In that preface, Gillies said little about the sport, offering instead a burlesque of the first of the six volumes of James Burnett, Lord Monboddo's *The Origin and Progress of Language* (1773). The critique of Monboddo continued the next year in the *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, with Gillies and Gilbert Stuart each contributing sections of a multi-part review of Monboddo's work.<sup>161</sup> That same year, 1774, the journal ran fifteen instalments of Gillies's satirical essay, 'A Modest

<sup>157</sup> *The Freemasons' Magazine*, Jan. 1794, 13.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 1794, 97.

<sup>160</sup> On Gillies's authorship of the preface to Campbell's *A Treatise of Modern Falconry*, see above, note 44.

<sup>161</sup> For Gillies's review of vol. II of Monboddo's treatise, see *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, i, 1774: Mar., 320–8; Apr., 367–72; ii, May, 423–30. For Stuart's reviews of vol. III of Monboddo's work, see v, 1776: Mar., 88–97; Apr., 155–64; May, 208–16; and Jun., 249–67. With relentless invective, these reviews, especially Stuart's, alienated readers, bringing about the demise of the journal. See: Zachs, *Without Regard to Good Manners*, 63–95; Kerr, *Memoirs*, i, 410–12, 422–5. However, Stephen Brown cautions that the *Edinburgh Magazine and Review* 'owes its demise as much to Smellie's lack of persistence as a business man, as to its scandalous reputation'. 'William Smellie and the culture of the Edinburgh book trade', 76. Cloyd regards Gillies's reviews as 'models of tact and decorum'—at least as compared to those of Stuart: *James Burnett*, 54.

Defence of the Accomplishment of Blasphemy'.<sup>162</sup> The essay manifests some wit but no defence of blasphemy—which is perhaps not surprising since only eight years prior, in his sermon to the lodge, Gillies had denounced impiety with its 'contempt or neglect of the sacraments; the prophanation of the sabbath; and customary cursing and swearing'.<sup>163</sup> That said, it is here that Gillies returns to the theme of self-love, the challenge to good conduct that also worried Adam Smith.

Gillies's critique of self-love emerges obliquely, as the satire fixes its sight on various targets (whether the satire is inspired by a current provocation remains unclear). Authored ostensibly by Sir Simeon Sink'em, the sixty-year-old knight offers a cascade of recollections and observations, including appeals to the religion of nature, the artificial character of morality, the unleashing of passions and even blasphemy itself (understood largely in terms of profane language and swearing). Along the way the knight pokes fun at sundry matters, including the organisation of sermons into 'First, Secondly, Thirdly'.<sup>164</sup> However, in advocating the indulgence of the passions, at least for those of 'rank' and 'taste' like himself,<sup>165</sup> Sir Simeon puts forward a theory of virtue, the 'capital artifice of priestcraft', borrowed from Bernard Mandeville's conjectural history of morals, according to which 'lawgivers'—striving to influence self-loving creatures—deployed praise for those who constrained their passions, condemnation for those who indulged them.<sup>166</sup> In place of 'lawgivers' Gillies substituted 'priests' who utilise praise and flattery to favour piety and moderation, thereby fashioning standards of conduct amenable to them. The theologians and priests,

collected and arranged under the title of Virtue, those very qualities to which themselves were confined by their indigence and pusillanimity, and gave the name of Vice to that assemblage of accomplishments and pursuits whereby wealth and courage enabled people of real fashion to distinguish themselves. The former they loaded with the most fulsome praises, the latter with the most injurious invectives; and hence the veneration which not only the vulgar, but too many persons of family and condition, pay, even at this hour, to piety, benevolence, and moderation; and hence, likewise, the abhorrence wherewith they regard irreligion, inhumanity, and licentiousness.<sup>167</sup>

<sup>162</sup> *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, 1774, with numbered instalments (§I–XV) appearing in i, Jan., §I–III, 185–90; Feb., §IV–VI, 246–52; Mar., §VII–IX, 295–302; Apr., §X–XII, 353–8; and in ii, Jul., §XIII–XV, 505–10.

<sup>163</sup> *The Freemasons' Magazine*, Feb. 1794, 95.

<sup>164</sup> *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, i (Jan. 1774), §II, 188.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>166</sup> Sir Simeon's quip may be found in *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, i (Feb. 1774), §IV, 249; for Mandeville's remarks on 'lawgivers', see 'An enquiry into the origin of moral virtue' [1714], in *The Fable of the Bees*, i, 39–57.

<sup>167</sup> *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, i (Feb. 1774), §IV, 249.

That Gillies's portrayal of Sir Simeon drew inspiration from Mandeville is indicated when the knight admits his 'obligations to some late philosophers of high merit and loud celebrity, who have preceded me'.<sup>168</sup> The 'late philosophers' would have included those noted by David Hume in the introduction to his *Treatise*; of these, the philosopher of 'loud celebrity' could only be Mandeville.<sup>169</sup>

Sir Simeon then suggests that 'people of the better sort' may indulge what he views as 'fashionable vices,' including blasphemy:<sup>170</sup> language, which from 'inferiors' would be rude, 'changes its nature when it flows from [a gentleman]'.<sup>171</sup> The hold of the clergy must be weakened to ensure 'freedom of thought and action' and to annihilate all but 'natural religion'.<sup>172</sup> Sir Simeon never specifies the rudiments of his natural religion. Versions of natural religion, whose basic propositions (as to God's existence and providential action) were well known, had been defended by orthodox presbyterians.<sup>173</sup> The universal assumptions of freemasonry, limned by Gillies in his sermon to the lodge, exemplified as much. Even the most 'pared-down' versions of natural religion were thought to generate duties of piety.<sup>174</sup> But Sir Simeon, having argued against the reality of moral virtue, makes clear that talk of piety is 'nonsense'.<sup>175</sup> In fact, the gout-ridden knight hardly champions natural religion, a point made clear when he recounts conversations with French and Italians who 'sacrificed popery' as 'I sacrificed Protestantism, to deism or atheism, according to our different humours'.<sup>176</sup>

Gillies's satire seeks to attack less a 'pared-down' natural religion than a genteel class that has slid into faithlessness, pretence and vice—the effects of self-love. The name of the knight, and that of his father, Timothy, would provide clues to Gillies's readers. In the book of Luke, Simeon, described as 'just and devout', is waiting in the temple when Mary and Joseph enter with the infant Jesus, whom Simeon recognises as the Messiah (Luke 2:25–32). Sir Simeon's father, Timothy, evokes the biblical personage who received Paul's charge to ensure that no novel doctrines reach into the church (2 Timothy 1:13). John Calvin understood this commission in terms of purity of doctrine,<sup>177</sup> but Gillies

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>169</sup> Among 'some late philosophers in England, who have begun to put the science of man on a new footing', Hume includes 'Dr. Mandeville'. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch (rev. edn, Oxford, 1978), xvii. Smith twice characterised Mandeville as having 'made so much noise in the world', *Moral Sentiments*, VI.ii.4.13, VI.iii.1.4.

<sup>170</sup> *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, i (Feb. 1774), §VI, 251.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, ii (Aug. 1774), §XV 509.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, §XIII, 505.

<sup>173</sup> Ahnert, *Moral Culture*, esp. chapter 4, 'Orthodoxy'.

<sup>174</sup> Colin Heydt, *Moral Philosophy in Eighteenth-Century Britain: God, self, and other* (Cambridge, 2018), 127.

<sup>175</sup> *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, i (Apr. 1774), §XI, 355.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, i (March 1774), §IX, 301.

<sup>177</sup> *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, trans. Rev. William Pringle (Edinburgh, 1856), 2 Timothy 1:13 (201–2).

approaches it in terms of attitudes. Sir Timothy and Lady Sink'em encouraged, if inadvertently, young Simeon to self-love, the indulgence of appetites that blinds perception. Unlike his biblical namesake, Sir Simeon cannot recognise what is true or pure. The consequences for the knight, manifest in Gillies's satire, had already been registered explicitly in Paul's second epistle to Timothy: 'For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy' (2 Timothy 3:2). This verse describes, in effect, the character of Sir Simeon.

Gillies's 'defence' of blasphemy returns us to its origin in overweening self-love, a concern articulated, in his discourse at the lodge, in terms redolent of Augustine's distinction between love of God and love of self. The discourse at the lodge highlighted the potential of freemasonry to provide an institutional obstacle to the power of self-love. Alternatively, Gillies's satire focuses the reader's imagination: over numerous instalments the reader comes to anticipate and to contemplate the sort of person who has turned fully, if not irrevocably, from God to self. Sir Simeon stands for an upper class whose own attention, shifted from the divine to the earthly, downplays Christian belief, religious observance and the moral life:

Our fortunes were given us to very little purpose indeed, if . . . we should exchange the noise and show of life for the tasteless drowsy pastimes of retirement; such as deeds of generosity and compassion, and the mortification of our sprightly senses and appetites.<sup>178</sup>

In the persona of Sir Simeon, Gillies targeted a self-love that had fashioned for itself a faithless natural religion eviscerated into libertinism. Claiming that reason is on his side, Sir Simeon fails to realise that the downfall of substantial religious beliefs also implies the demise of the very blasphemy by which he so flatters himself.

*Conclusion: The resonance of self-love*

It would be easy to diminish a figure such as Alexander Gillies as but another divinity graduate who did a bit of journalism and pastored a country parish. Yet the life and work of Gillies, extended across the heart of the enlightenment, illustrate a complication of features emblematic of the period but also unanticipated. A Moderate minister who applied elements of Adam Smith's ethics in a discourse to a masonic lodge, Gillies eschewed the 'bewildering metaphysics' of the Westminster Confession,<sup>179</sup> not to mention the esoteric ones of freemasonry. The problematic knot of self-love links Gillies's application of Smith's ideas with presbyterian belief and Scottish freemasonry. Although Gillies did not embed self-love within a notion of complete depravity, he

<sup>178</sup> *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, i (Feb. 1774), §VI, 252.

<sup>179</sup> 'Gib's display', *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, ii (Aug. 1774), 552.

approached it as a powerful disposition that not only turns us from the divine but orients us away from the impartial perspective urged so eloquently by Smith and upheld by freemasonry. Perhaps the portrayal of self-love that found a place in the *Moral Sentiments* received in Smith's lectures a prominence that reinforced, in the youthful Gillies, the significance of this troublesome affection. Smith's impartial spectator is, after all, a normative perspective designed to overcome the partiality of self-love.

The discovery of Alexander Gillies reveals that a conception of self-love—Calvinist but not Calvin's—remained in the late eighteenth century a resonant concern. Gillies felt comfortable invoking the notion in his discourse before the lodge and confident that his satirical character, Sir Simeon, would be recognised as manifesting this signal flaw of a fallen humanity. These details suggest that the problem of self-love reverberated with a larger audience, whether freemasons or readers of the *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, and that this element of Calvinism could still hold 'place in the minds of the moderates', not to mention those of the public.

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