

A DEFENCE OF FREEMASONRY

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A defence of freemasonry by A. F. A. Woodford

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A. F. A. WOODFORD

**A DEFENCE OF
FREEMASONRY**

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OF
FREEMASONRY.

BY
A. F. A. WOODFORD, M.A.,
PAST GRAND CHAPLAIN.



" If all the social virtues of the mind,
If an extensive love to all mankind,
If profitable welcome to a guest,
And speedy charity to the distress :
If true regard to liberty and laws,
Zeal for our king, and for our country's cause ;
If these are principles deserving fame,
Let Masons then enjoy the praise they claim."

Old Masonic Poem.

Published by
GEORGE KENNING, 198, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.

1874

223. i. 116.

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DEDICATION.

DEAR BROTHER KENNING,

I had great pleasure in asking you to accept the Dedication of this little pamphlet, and still greater on obtaining your kind acceptance of my request.

I dedicate, therefore, this little defence of our common Order to you, because it seems to be the outcome of many fraternal conversations in which your views and mine appeared greatly to harmonize, and because also I am glad in so dedicating this little labour of love to yourself, to record my own deep and grateful appreciation of your laudable desire to encourage in every way the diffusion of a sound Masonic literature in our Craft.

In placing your name then at the head of this dedicatory page, I do it with much personal regard, subscribing myself,

Yours always most fraternally,

A. F. A. WOODFORD.

10, Upper Porchester Street,
Hyde Park Square,
London, W.
St. John's Day, 1874.



P R E F A C E .

It has seemed to the writer of this pamphlet that the time had fairly arrived when a few humble words might fitly be said in defence of our good old Craft. For at this moment, though without any apparent reason for it, attacks upon its teaching, its constitution, and its practice seem to abound on every side of us, and to proceed from different schools of thought, and from the most antagonistic bodies of men.

At home and abroad, in Germany and the United States, in Belgium and Brazil, in France and Italy, in Spain and Portugal, the assailants of Freemasonry are many and virulent, and the language alike of diatribe and depreciation, of incrimination and condemnation, is marked by greater bitterness of tone and temper than at any period since 1717.

And yet the banner under which this host of adversaries to Freemasonry is fighting to-day, is a very motly one indeed!

It seems a little absurd, and it would be very amusing were it not so painful a matter, to find, for instance, Roman Catholics, Reformed Presbyterians, Ritualistic Anglicans, and American Baptists all "rowing in the same boat." And still, nevertheless, so it is.

The Masonic bystander is no doubt anxious to ascertain how this controversial crew will get on, whether like the happy family they will proceed in harmony and dignity, or whether (which is far more likely) they will soon run aground on a mud bank, and "come to grief," and go to pieces!

But be this as it may, in the meantime the attacks on Freemasonry proceed, each succeeding the other in violence of vituperation and acrimony of language, and though I do not say or see that they do Freemasonry or Freemasons much harm in any way, yet it almost appears as if some answer were needed amid this din of controversy, which may encourage our friends and confute our opponents. For the allegations which are made to-day are precisely the same as those made over and over again before by illogical adversaries, and which, though fully answered, are revived in all the greenness of a fresh growth, and flourish still in the land of the living.

One old adversary of Freemasonry is as usual to the fore, the Roman Catholic Church.

"Semper eadem" is still her motto in respect of her hatred and intolerance as regards Freemasonry.

Latterly, too, the jubilant tone of the Roman Catholic press, and also of the Ritualistic press, at our late Grand Master's melancholy secession, and at what they both so poetically term the "De profundis" of Freemasonry, has caused that astute religious body, the Roman Catholic Church, to throw off the mask, and to express itself openly in verbiage and views which must startle as they impress every thoughtful mind.

It is quite clear that it is only the want of power which prevents as of old the persecutions and iniquities of the Inquisition.

Rome is still unchanged, and above all things in her hatred to Freemasonry, to light, culture, self-education and toleration. So, rightly or wrongly, I have determined "favente" Bro. Kenning to issue a concise but comprehensive resumé of the principal attacks on our order, accompanying it I trust with a not altogether unsuccessful reply.

If my defence of Freemasonry shall meet with the countenance and approval of my brethren, I shall be amply rewarded, as after a membership of thirty-two years, I am glad to be able to avow myself

as clearly persuaded as ever, even, perhaps, I may say, more than ever, of the intrinsic excellency, and value, and importance, and need of our fraternity in the present condition of society, and of the world.

I am also desirous in this pamphlet of protesting, once for all, against that prevalent unfairness of our opponents of basing their unjustifiable condemnation of our peaceable Order, of our tolerant confraternity, of our philanthropic organization, on the "ex parte" statements of the ignorant, on the ridiculous parodies of the apostate, on the accumulated rubbish of unreasoning accusers, and on the mendacious calumnies of a bye-gone age, hashed up anew to-day, "usque ad nauseam," by the impugner, the sceptic, the malevolent, and the Jesuit.

So, in all of fraternal sincerity and sympathy, in all of loyalty and elevation to our famous order, I say like the old writer, with some needful little adaptation,

Go forth, little book, and truly thou me commend
 Unto all "Masons" that desire to learn or understand,
 And specially to them that have experience, praying them to amend
 And correct what is amiss, either as a fault or offence,
 And if that any faults be found as prove my negligence,
 Cast the same on my "efforts," rude and bare of eloquence,
 Which to draw out I have done my best diligence,
 And readily to reform "them" by reason and better sentence.

John Russell's Book of Nurture, 1460.

A. F. A. W.,
St. John's Day, 1874.