

**FREEMASONRY: SKETCH OF ITS ORIGIN
AND EARLY PROGRESS, ITS MORAL AND
POLITICAL TENDENCY; A LECTURE
DELIVERED BEFORE THE HISTORICAL
SOCIETY, CONNECTED WITH THE CATHOLIC
UNIVERSITY, ON THE 26TH MARY, 1862**

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Freemasonry: sketch of its origin and early progress, its moral and political tendency; a lecture delivered before the Historical Society, connected with the Catholic University, on the 26th Mary, 1862 by James Burton Robertson

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JAMES BURTON ROBERTSON

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. A LECTURE,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, CONNECTED WITH THE
CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY,

ON THE 26TH MAY, 1862.

BY JAMES BURTON ROBERTSON, ESQ.,

Professor of Modern History and Geography in that University.

WITH APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

A SYNOPSIS OF THE PAPAL BULLS RESPECTING SECRET SOCIETIES

BY THE

REV. DR. MURRAY, OF MAYNOOTH.

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TO HIS GRACE
THE MOST REV. JOSEPH DIXON,

LORD ARCHBISHOP OF ARMAOH, PRIMATE OF ALL IRELAND, ETC., ETC.

MY DEAR LORD ARCHBISHOP,

In dedicating to your Grace the following Lecture, I have been influenced by motives of a public, as well as a personal nature.

In the first place, no Prelate, I think, in the United Kingdom is more alive than your Grace to the dangers threatening European society, or has combated with greater energy the demon of revolution, whether at home or abroad.

Secondly, our University, amid all the struggles of its infancy, has possessed no truer or more enlightened friend and protector than your Grace.

Then, as regards personal considerations, I wish here to record my deep sense of gratitude for the great kindness I have invariably experienced from your Grace, as well as for your encouragement of my humble labours in the Institution, with which I have the honour to be connected.

These public lectures form, I think, a special bond of sympathy between the professors and the students of our University, as well as between that University

and the public at large. The excellent youth, who frequent our halls, take an especial interest in the treatment of historical subjects; and the enlightened Catholic public of Dublin, like that of the Provinces, ever anxious to further the interests of religion and letters, have on many occasions given the kindest marks of encouragement not only to the lectures of the humble individual, who now addresses your Grace, but to those of his able colleagues.

In combating the religious and the social errors of secret societies, I am acting, I believe, in the spirit of the memorable address of the Prelates of Ireland, lately referred to by a very respectable Protestant member of the Dublin Corporation, and which bears the date of Thurles, 9th of September, 1850. In this address it is said "that the youth of Ireland shall, with God's blessing, be saved from the taint of a mischievous philosophy by a thoroughly Catholic education. And this is one of the grand objects of a Catholic University". And, again, the venerable Prelates declare, "In the revolutions which recently agitated the Continent, who were every where the apostles of rebellion, the standard-bearers of anarchy? Were they not students of colleges and universities, in which, according to the modern fashion, every thing is taught but religion? God forbid that so baneful a system should ever take root in our country.

"Should the sovereign of these realms ever have to

invoke the loyalty of the well-disposed against the designs of turbulent men, the youth brought up in a Catholic University would be found in the front rank of the defenders of order".*

A Christian University should carefully eschew the party politics of the day; but it should, at the same time, strenuously uphold and proclaim the eternal principles of social order. In other words, it should preach the Gospel in its integrity, and in all its applications, as determined by holy Church.

The important subject of the following Lecture I have endeavoured to discuss with the requisite moderation; and I have striven to reconcile the claims of charity with those of truth.

I beg leave here to tender my sincere thanks to the eminent Divine, who has had the kindness to furnish me with a valuable analysis of the Papal Bulls respecting Secret Societies. It will be found in the Appendix.

Begging your Grace's blessing on my labours,

I remain, my dear Lord Archbishop,

With many thanks,

Your Grace's most obedient and devoted servant,

THE AUTHOR.

Dublin, 8th July, 1862.

* See Address to the people of Ireland, p. 7, 8.

LECTURE ON FREEMASONRY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

In resuming these Public Lectures, which have been delayed longer than I could have wished, I had purposed to do for Portugal what I had already done for Spain, by tracing her history from the fifteenth century, down to the last War of Independence.

But revered members of the Irish clergy having requested me to treat of Secret Societies, which are now the curse and bane of European nations, I have begun with the venerable parent of all secret societies, the Masonic Order. But, before entering upon the subject, I wish to make a few preliminary remarks.

In the first place, our Protestant brethren, not being interdicted by the authorities in their different communions from becoming members of this society, incur not by such a step the same responsibility as Catholics who join it. In the second place, many excellent Catholics, on being made acquainted with the judgments of the Church on Freemasonry, have given up all connection with the Order. In the third place, there are in all countries, estimable individuals belonging to the lower degrees of Masonry, and who are not cognizant of its ultimate tendency, which I shall show to be anti-Christian and anti-social. And lastly, this remark is especially applicable to these three countries—England, Scotland, and Ireland, where Masonry has generally, but not always, retained a more innocuous character.

In our East and West India colonies, where hospitality is, as it were, a necessity of life, this society is

found to possess great attractions. And so, likewise, in that noble Profession of arms, where friendships are so warm and generous, this institution is thought to knit closer the ties of fellowship.

Thus an English or Irish Catholic young gentleman, finding, in Protestant England for example, Masonry in its lower grades comparatively harmless, proceeds to Belgium, expecting to find in that very Catholic country the order in a most satisfactory condition. Yet it is precisely because Belgium is such a Catholic country, that the bad elements of society there have settled in Masonic lodges. The depravity of those lodges may be estimated by a single fact. A few years ago, they were shameless enough to present a golden pen to the most infamous writer of the present age, the late M. Eugène Sue. So the English or Irish Catholic young gentleman, who has, as I have supposed, visited these Belgian lodges, will return to his country either disgusted with Masonry, or with his faith and morals ruined.

But it is time, after these preliminary remarks, to enter upon the subject.

As Freemasonry professes in its higher grades to restore what it calls the pure Religion of Nature; and again, as it promises under the specious names of "Liberty and Equality", to make men better and happier than Christianity has made them; it throws down the gauntlet on all the great problems of moral and social life. Whoever attempts, therefore, to oppose its pretensions, must take up the gauntlet it has thrown down.

Under these circumstances, I have been compelled to point out the nature of primitive religion, the defection of heathenism, and the relations of the celebrated Eleusinian Mysteries, from which Masonry claims to derive its system, both to the primitive Revelation on the one hand, and to paganism itself on the other. The appeal which this institution makes

to what it calls the more spiritual Judaism, is then examined.

Next, I give a rapid historic sketch of Masonry, showing how it evolved from the associations of architects in the middle age, till, in the times of the English Commonwealth, it assumed a political form. Then I trace its history from that period down to the middle of the last century, when it incurs the formal censures of the Church. Afterwards, I endeavour to justify the judgments of the Church in respect to all secret societies, and especially to those, who, like the higher Masons, the Illuminati, the Jacobins, and the Socialists, aim at a total religious and social revolution. I show how utterly inconsistent with the Christian revelation are the very pretensions of Masonry. Then I explain why so many estimable individuals, and some holding a high social position, were members of the Masonic Order. Afterwards, I show that a large portion of Masons in every country, and especially in this empire, as they occupied the lower grades of the Order, knew nothing of its ultimate tendencies. The dangers of Masonry, even to those in the inferior degrees, are then considered.

Next I analyze its constitution, and then its religious, and subsequently its political, doctrines.

Here occurs an episode on the Knights-Templars, in which I show how their history fits in to that of the Masonic Order. I prove how the corrupt tenets of the bad portion of the Templars perfectly correspond to those of the higher grades of Masonry. I then go off into an excursus on the social and intellectual blessings which the Catholic Church has actually conferred on mankind, compared with those which Masonry promised, but could never realize. I conclude with a comparison between the religious and political tenets of the deistical Masons, of the atheistical Illuminati and Jacobins, and of the pantheistic Socialists. Such is the wide field I purpose