

THE MISSION OF FREEMASONRY



A SERMON

Preached in Worcester Cathedral, October 18th, 1893.

BY

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*Printed at the request of the R.W.P.G.M., Sir E. A. H. Lechmere, Bart.,  
M.P., and Brethren.*



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ANY PROCEEDS FROM SALE WILL BE DEVOTED TO THE MASONIC CHARITIES.

# The Mission of Freemasonry.



## A SERMON

PREACHED IN WORCESTER CATHEDRAL, OCT. 18th, 1893,

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

Annual Festival of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Worcestershire

HELD UNDER

THE BANNER OF THE SEMPER FIDELIS LODGE, No. 529.

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1 St. Peter, chap. iii., 15 ver. (part of)

"Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you."

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**A** PERSONAGE or an institution, appearing in the arena of an industrial, inquisitive, and practical country, must have some definite aim and purpose to propose. In an age critical, incredulous, and unsentimental, credentials of identification and usefulness must be shewn, if respect, sympathy and admiration are to be commanded. What has Masonry to say for herself? What answer has she to give to those who ask for the reason of her hope?

The Masonic Order, I make bold to assert, faces the world as a Prophet. A Prophet, you will remember, was entrusted with two great functions : one was to urge and expound *Truth* in its application to the present time, the other was to foretell things which should be hereafter. Both of these functions the Masonic Order is in a sense concerned with. It is an exponent of that Divine and Heavenly Truth which alone can beautify and irradiate our daily lives and make us truer men, and it continually holds up before us the prospect of the world to come. In its own graphic manner, with its own dramatic eloquence, it admonishes us of death momentarily impending, of that resurrection victory in which death is swallowed up, and of the eternal bliss which we shall know, face to face, when brought to light in the blazing splendour of the Morning Star.

Masonry stands ranged beside the universal Church of God. She does not profess to make men perfect; but She can and does profess to inculcate that morality, that glowing religious morality, (if I may use such a term), which will prepare men for those transforming

and sanctifying powers of the world to come, which religion will bring to bear upon them. It is impossible for me in the few minutes at my disposal this afternoon to dwell on the past history of Masonry; on those guilds, organizations and societies of art and science, which were the roots of Masonry, deep down in the past, from which this wide spreading and fruit laden tree of philanthropy and benevolence has grown. Nor may we stay to dwell on the reminiscence of the lofty exploits of the Crusader's warfare, connecting with the arts of peace, the heroism, the self-sacrifice, and burning love of the Christian soldier. Those wars subsided. The Templar with legs crossed, and the cross hilted sword at his side, lay down in his last sleep. Masonry ceased to be a society of literal Masons. But the Order passed into another and sublimer stage. The spirit of Mason and Templar lived and lives still, and gathering together the golden threads of memory, the Order takes up the legend of craftsmen, and of warrior, and retaining implement, weapon, habit, insignia and language, relates the parable of human life phrased

in these outward symbols of the inner and imperishable Truth. But I venture to assert, Brethren, that the future of Masonry depends on its maintenance of its illustrious past, or rather, let me say, on its loyalty to the spirit which has made the past so illustrious. With its enduring influence before it, in its prominent position as an element of life, and with all the questions bearing on life, and thought, and character, and conduct which this age is asking, Masonry has a mighty mission open before it. But if we would have the world outside our walls understand and estimate us aright, we must properly understand and estimate ourselves. We need to comprehend the gravity of the mission on which Masonry goes forth among men. She goes out in the Name of God as a religious institution. We need to realise this fact, and live as if it were something that we thoroughly believed, and as if it were something profoundly worth the living for, and the believing in. God forbid that one should use the Name of God as a mere form, as a convenient name to conjure with before the world, while practically we ignore it and allow it

no place or power in our thoughts or affections. Let us use the Order in a high-minded way—as a Missionary to the lives, the immortal lives of men. Masonry, even as the Church, suffers from the intrusion of unworthy motives, and of glaring inconsistencies. I am not prepared to deny the naked fact that there may be some few Masons who are very indifferent members of society, and some few who use Masonry as a means of acquiring worldly influence, or for the accomplishment of selfish ends, or perhaps for the fading crown of a short lived personal popularity ; but because it is sometimes so abused, is that a reason for its universal condemnation? As well might Christianity be denounced as a fiction and an absurdity, because all who profess and call themselves Christians do not always, at all times, and everywhere, prove themselves to be so. As well might that holy religion of which we declare ourselves members be vilified and branded as a monstrous tissue of falsehoods, because some portions of the world maintain the grossest superstitions, and have overloaded its plain and comprehensive teaching with the traditions of men, and the perversion of false doctrines.

God forbid, my Brothers, that any of us should so degrade our society. It is a society of men. It is an Apostle going out to persuade men to love God, and to love each other more. Let us so perceive the mission of the Masonic Order, and so labour in and for the love of God, to win men, the manly nature, to God. That I believe to be the real truth, the fullest truth as to the mission of the Masonic Order. If I did not believe that, I should not be occupying the position I do to-day. It is embarked upon a mission to men, to preach true manhood, not the counterfeits and imitations of it, which pass for genuine in common circulation, but true manhood, that manhood which deems its greatest glory to be measured by its fear and love of God. Be Masons for the good which you can do by being such. Be Masons for the love of God, which you may thereby spread abroad among your brother men, making them men of faith, men of devotion, men of honour, men of charity, men of good will, to whom the peace of God came in the accents of a song from heaven.



One favourite objection to Free Masonry is, that it is a secret society, and therefore ought to be suppressed, and strange to say, this senseless cry is re-echoed by the Sovereign Pontiff of the Church of Rome. True, Free Masonry is a secret institution ; but although in the abstract a secret institution, I maintain its leading tenets are no secrets. It is no secret, for instance, that the genuine principles of Masonry are of Divine origin. It is no secret that the system embraces and inculcates evangelical truth. It is no secret that there is not a claim made, nor vow required, incompatible with man's civil, moral, or religious duties. It is no secret that we feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, that we maintain our schools, and protect the widow and orphan. It is no secret that we make provision for the aged and distressed, and in all things, according to our ability do good to the whole human family ; and above all, it is not, neither can it be a secret, that a good Mason aims at the appropriate discharge of all his Christian duties.

Masonry has been suspected unjustly, and accused

most falsely of hostility to the Church of God. Whatever grounds men may have had for forming such opinions, these grounds were formed in individuals, and not in any avowal or disposition of the Order itself. The Masonic Order is the ally, and the handmaid of the Church. Only in such a position can she do her work freely, and as master workmen ought to do it. There is no rivalry, there can be none. The Church is a society formed by God, Masonry is a society formed by man. When we have said that, we have uttered the best possible disclaimer of anything antagonistic to the Church. Masonry is not a religion, and whoever would attempt to substitute it for religion, or for the Church, has misconceived its intention and its spirit, and will never rise into the strength and glory of its teaching. A moment's thought will tell us that the Masonic Order can be strong, and deserve and receive confidence only as she works steadfastly with the Divine Society. The key note of Free Masonry is, and I would sound it once again, that it is founded *on God, and on the Bible.*

Many great and strong kingdoms, widespread societies, and firmly rooted institutions, have amidst the storms of the world sunk and perished, and the waves of time have gone over them. But there is one Society which shall never be destroyed, one ship which shall never sink, because in that ship is God, and that ship is our time-honoured institution ; but take away the pilot, as, alas ! is the case in France, tear away the foundation on which Free Masonry rests, and she becomes the ship without the helm, the shell without the kernel, the husks that the swine do eat without the wheat, the body without the soul. My Brothers, is it not something in these days, when Atheism, the enemy of all peace, is holding up its head in our Legislature ; when Religion, which alone makes education worth the having, is being separated from her, and she becoming more and more mere secular instruction ; when Socialism is rampant throughout the country, deriding order and submission to anyone or anything, as antagonistic to freedom and intelligence ; is it not something, I ask, to have planted in our midst an in-

stitution embracing men of various ranks in life, and holding various religious and political creeds, which puts God in the forefront and never meets without His Name being frequently and reverently uttered, and the Bible—"The Centre Light of Masonry,"—open in the Lodge? Is it not something, in these days when revolutionary and republican doctrines are being sown broadcast, to have an institution presided over by the Heir to the throne, which sets forth the beauty and power of discipline, obedience, and submission? And does it not require from us, who are members of such an institution, to be more and more circumspect in our lives and conversation, and careful to hand on the legacy left us by our fathers, as pure and unsullied as we received it?

My Brothers, if the Masonic Order be true to itself, true to those influences which have made it great and good, if it continue to drink of that sacred fountain of its purest and sweetest inspiration, it will lose none of its beauty, its magnetism, or its energy. It ought to be a mighty influence for the things which are above. It

depends for the present on us to see that it gives no uncertain sound, and that it rises to, and acts in the true sense of what it is, of what it has been, and of what, please God, it shall for ever be. S.M.I.B.



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