



CRITICS OF MASONRY

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There probably have been critics of Masonry for as long as it has existed. Our most serious critics generally fall into groups such as those with religious objections and totalitarian and repressive governments.

An example of present day religious critics are Pat Robinson and John Ankerberg who also have a significant financial interest in their anti-Masonic activities. The anti-Masonic horrors of Nazism and communism are all too well remembered. Perhaps less well known was the slaughter of many members of the Grand Lodge of Iran by the radical Islamic regime that replaced the Pasha of Iran.

Therefore it is somewhat surprising that the government of a friend and ally is orchestrating an anti-Masonic campaign. The Rt. Honorable Jack Straw, MP, who was the Home Secretary was ready to introduce legislation to require disclosure of Masonic membership under compulsion of law. The practical effect of Straw's anti-Masonic campaign was that an unprecedented number of Masons resigned their membership, especially those working in the justice system as many believed their careers would suffer.

The United Grand Lodge of England has now undertaken a campaign to counter act these charges and criticisms. Efforts by the Craft to respond to false accusations are frequently viewed with suspicion at best and out right dismissal of our facts as being completely untrue and self-serving.

Some of our most effective allies are well-known and respected authors and historians, with academic appointments, who are not

Masons, that have published scholarly articles and books on Masonic history. Their research is of a serious and scholarly nature and has been published in peer reviewed books and journals which can be found in our libraries and book stores here in Grand Junction.

The following four authors are good examples.

Margaret C. Jacob, Professor of History and Sociology of Science at the University of Pennsylvania wrote **LIVING THE ENLIGHTENMENT: FREEMASONRY AND POLITICS IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY EUROPE.**

Steven C. Bullock, Associate Professor of History at the Worcester Polytechnic Institute author of **REVOLUTIONARY BROTHERHOOD: FREEMASONRY AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE AMERICAN SOCIAL ORDER 1730-1840.**

John J. Robinson, author of **PILGRIM'S PROGRESS.**

The most recent historical work is a book copyrighted in 2001 by Jasper Ridley, a British historian and author of **THE FREEMASONS: A HISTORY OF THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL SECRET SOCIETY**

This book is an easy to read and well-documented source of information on the history of Freemasonry. In the Acknowledgements he stated "although I am not a Freemason they allowed me to

work in their library and gave me the benefit of their expert knowledge and efficient assistance, without, of course making any effort to influence the opinions about Freemasonry which I would express in my book.”

He effectively answers the current accusations against English Freemasonry in a few short paragraphs in the introduction which I will summarize:

“In Britain in 1999 the Freemasons are once more under attack. The accusation leveled against them is that they are a secret society of men who take the most solemn oaths, enforceable by horrible penalties, to further their own interests against those of the cowans (non-Masons); who recognize each other by secret signs; and who extend favors to each other even though this conflicts with their public duties. It is therefore improper that Freemasons should be in positions of authority, particularly in the police force or the judiciary. Police officers will help Masonic criminals to escape. When judges are sitting in court, the prisoner in the dock, or a witness in the witness box, will make a secret sign to the judge, who, recognizing him to be a Mason, will give judgment in his favor, because the Masonic oath overrules his public duty as a judge.”

“The Masons, on the other hand, deny that they are bound by oaths to help Masonic brothers at all costs. They say that the oaths to help a brother is subject to the overriding duty to obey the law, and that a brother must never be helped to break the law.”

“Which of these arguments is correct? If we examine the history of the Freemasons in the last 300 years, it is quite clear that the Freemasons are right, and that fears that they constitute a society whose members help each other to break the law, are unfounded. During 250 years of wars, revolutions and political upheavals, Masonic oaths and obligations to help their Masonic brothers, except in a very few cases where special circumstances existed, have counted for nothing when they have come into conflict with national allegiance, class interest, ideological zeal, or the personal ambition of the Mason.”

“The anti-Masons and their supporters in the media demand that Freemasons should be compelled to disclose the names of their members. If it had not been for the reforming enthusiasm of earlier MPs, this would have been unnecessary; for by the Unlawful Societies Act of 1799 Freemasons were required to give their names to JPS. They duly complied with this requirement until it was abolished in 1967 by the Criminal Law Act at a time when a large number of obsolete Acts of Parliament were repealed by the Statute Law Revision Acts. As the Unlawful Societies Act 1799 was designed primarily to suppress Radical organizations and trade unions, the MPs abolished it without pausing to reflect on what the consequences might be. Now they wish to re-enact some of its provisions. The Freemasons do not really object to this, they were happy enough to comply with the Act until 1967, but they do object to being singled out as different from a golf club or any other similar association.”

So mote it be.