

Canon Knowles said Masonry could not show its continuity throughout the 16th century, to which Canon Bagot said :

"You (*Freemason*) have dealt fully with these objections, and a very short answer will suffice from me. We live in an age when every institution, no matter how sacred or venerable it may be, is fiercely attacked, and when neither age, prestige, historical continuity, nor a long line of ancestral descent can save it from the remorseless attacks of criticism, and the passionate assaults of reckless iconoclasm. The question is asked 'Is it worth preserving?' and the answer depends upon its intrinsic worth and merit. It is these features of Masonry which more than any long line of historical descent or past record of noble and charitable actions now entitle her to the support and loving affection of all who value her work, and the bearing and attitude of all who respect and honor the powers that make for righteousness in this land should be those of gratitude and respect to the Craft, and their interests should ever prompt them to strengthen her cords and lengthen her stakes. 'The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried, grapple them to thy soul with hooks of steel.' I have never heard that the continuity of Freemasonry in England has been doubted. It flourished under Henry the VII. His famous chapel at Westminster was, if I mistake not, inaugurated with Masonic honors.

"In the reign of Henry the VIII., Cardinal Wolsey was Grand Master, and Queen Elizabeth became the Patroness of the Craft. At the beginning of the 18th century it ceased to exist as an operative Brotherhood, but it has never ceased to enjoy the favor and support of the noble, the cultured, the great, and the good. In its work and scope, and in its long line of patrons and supporters, Masonry can point to her active architectural accomplishments, and to her consultative and speculative energy, which has built up the no less enduring fabrics so widely known and highly valued educational, charitable,

and benevolent homes. On these foundations of past years the brethren desire to raise with more and more skilful hands the superstructure of greater and more efficient life and activity. If the learned Principal of St. Bees would join the ranks of our builders, and help us to carry upward the pile, instead of standing aloof and discharging hostile missiles at the earnest workmen who are plying their toil, it would be more productive of benefit, and more worthy of a good man's heart and brain."

Canon Knowles held that, "Freemasonry was one with foreign societies which are honeycombed with infidelity and socialism." This is a statement which is frequently stalked out as an objection to Freemasonry. The successive Popes of Rome trot it out periodically; and now it is repeated by the Principal of St. Bees. It hardly requires any serious refutation. Masons never meet without acknowledging the name of God, and reverencing His sacred laws and precepts. They place the Being and attributes of God in the forefront of all their proceedings, and the volume of His revealed words, and register of His almighty acts lies open in all their lodges.

"Masons were instructed that hereafter they must give an undisguised account of their lives and actions to the Divine Being; that to the just and upright death had no terrors equal to the stain of falsehood and dishonor; and that no imposture or imperfection shall pass muster hereafter on the great and awful day of judgment.

"The members of the Craft were taught to be peaceable subjects of whatever country they might reside in, to obey the laws of the State, to maintain the fabric of social order and decorum, to honor all men, to love the brethren, to fear God, to honor the King. The charitable principles of Masonry strike directly at the root of socialism. They recognise that there are and must be ever distinction of society, that it has its inequalities of necessity, and that nothing can alter them. 'The poor ye have always with you,' is an averment