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Documents on Freemasonry from the Archive of Archimandrite Photius (Spassky)

Abstract

The article introduces into scientific use an analytical note on Freemasonry addressed to Alexander I. In Europe in the 18th – 19th centuries, there was extensive anti-Masonic literature. In Russia, such works were rare. Reputedly, the greatest Russian extirpator of Freemasonry was Archimandrite Photius (Spassky). The ban of Masonic lodges in 1822 is attributed to his influence on Alexander I. Photius was one of the leaders of the social movement of the Russian Orthodox opposition. Among other objects of its criticism were the Masonic lodges. However, a consolidated anti-Masonic action failed to materialize. Now it has been made possible to explain the opposition's restraint in its attitude to Freemasonry. Four volumes of documents belonging

to archimandrite Photius have been found in the Russian State Historical Archive. These are the materials from 1817-1832. The collection includes personal documents of Photius, messages and letters of Metropolitan Seraphim (Glagolevsky), A.A. Arakcheev, A.S. Shishkov, Metropolitan Filaret (Drozdov). Many of these documents were handed over to Emperor Alexander I and influenced his change of heart in the politics. An anonymous note on Freemasonry from the Photius collection is included in the article in its entirety as a rare example of an anti-Masonic message to the Emperor. The note gives a retrospective of the Masonic movement in Russia. It describes what influence the masons of the 18th century had on Freemasonry of the 19th century. Most mentioned Masonic leaders belonged to the "Rosicrucian" system of Freemasonry (Order of the Golden and Pink Cross). The author of the note assured the emperor that there were Rosicrucians in his inner circle. He named Senator I.V. Lopukhin, publisher and translator A.F. Labzin, R.A. Koshelev, and the tsar's friend, Minister A.N. Golitsyn. Photius's documents show that criticism of Freemasonry was not the focus of the Russian Orthodox opposition activities. Among the opposition there were people who shared the idea of a worldwide Masonic conspiracy: S.I. Smirnov, M.L. Magnitsky. In Archimandrite In the Photius's documents references to Freemasonry are very rare. At the time of the opposition's action in 1824, the issue of Freemasonry was no longer relevant, since Freemasonry was subjected to a government ban in 1822.

Keywords

Historical source, Russian State Historical Archive, Freemasonry, Russian Orthodox opposition, political struggles, book publishing, anti-Masonic literature, clergy, Russian Orthodox Church.

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