

Jean-Paul Lefebvre-Filleau, *Les Premiers Franc-Maçons face à la Répression Policière*, éditions du Rochet, Monaco, 2018. Paperback. ISBN 078-2-268-09923-1, 179 pages, 15.50€.

Reviewed by Bro Christopher Powell

Since he retired as a senior police officer, Jean-Paul Lefebvre-Filleau has written a number of books on a wide range of subjects. This is his fourth book in the field of French Masonic history. He writes well and his books are popular because of that. The focus of his text is the Masonic events that occurred in Paris in the 1720s, 30s and 40s, especially in the decade between 1735 and 1745: the founding of the Coustos-Villeroy Lodge, the Police raids, the Papal Bull of 1738, and the early Parisian lodges. Particularly useful is a full transcription of the Register of the Coustos-Villeroy Lodge from the manuscript copy in the *Bibliothèque nationale* in Paris *Fonds Joly de Fleury*, no.184, ff.132-146 that Lefebvre-Filleau includes as an Appendix, pp.155-170. Earlier in the text he gives brief biographies of those members of the lodge he has managed to identify.

Lefebvre-Filleau's approach is historically sound: he has gone back to the original sources and based his work upon them. He has not, as so often happens, relied on secondary sources, copied out received opinions, re-arranged them and called it 'history'. Fortunately, many of the primary sources in English from the Regius MS onwards have recently been translated into French by French historians such as Philippe Langlet and Guy Cassagnard. Lefebvre-Filleau has also studied the manuscript sources in the *Bibliothèque nationale* in Paris and other French national archives. His book is fully footnoted, but not indexed sadly.

Lefebvre-Filleau's first chapter sets the scene with a general introduction to the origins of Freemasonry. This is followed by a chapter on life in Paris between 1720 and 1750. The subsequent chapters get down to the meat of the book: the period between 1725 and 1745. The final chapter of the book 'Le pape à Rome, dernier obstacle à la Franc-Maçonnerie' brings things up to date as far as the attitude of the catholic church to Freemasonry is concerned. As a recently-ordained Orthodox priest, Lefebvre-Filleau has a particular interest in religious matters.

For any Masonic historian interested in the important Masonic events that occurred when English Speculative Freemasonry took its first steps on the continent of Europe, this book is, in my opinion, a 'must read'.