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ford. 1829.

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LETTER

TO

**THE MEMBERS OF THE
GENNESEE CONSOCIATION, N. Y.**

BY JOSEPH EMERSON,
PRINCIPAL OF THE FEMALE SEMINARY, WETHERSFIELD, CONN.
Late Pastor of the Second Congregational Church in Beverly, Mass.

Fourth Edition.

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THE writer of the following letter is extensively known in this city. The meekness and simplicity of his character, and deportment; his fervent piety; and his high reputation as a theologian of extensive, and discriminating research, give to his opinions on the much controverted subject which is here discussed, a powerful, and, to the candid mind, an overwhelming force. We use this strong language because we believe that no one who is acquainted with Mr. Emerson, will deny to him the ability thoroughly to investigate the tendencies of masonry; and certainly, no such person will doubt the *honesty or sincerity* of his solemn declaration, that there is nothing in the institution "CONTRARY TO THE WORD OF GOD, OR THE RIGHTS OF MAN."

The attempt which has recently been made in this city to make this institution an object of popular odium, can only be countenanced by three classes of men, viz. seceding masons, demagogues, and those who, relying on the representations made by the first named class, have been conscientiously induced to believe that masonry is ruinous to public morals, and subversive of the institutions of religion. So far as our observation has extended, we are led to believe that this latter class is confined almost exclusively to that portion of the religious community denominated orthodox; and to their serious and deliberate attention, this letter is respectfully recommended. Written by a distinguished divine of *their own faith*; one whom they know, and love; it cannot but be entitled at their hands to greater weight, and more consideration, than the declarations of men, who, by their own confessions, have violated the most solemn obligations; and who are seeking to shield themselves from the consequences of their perfidy, by exciting public indignation against the fraternity from which they have apostatized. Mr. Emerson's character as a man, and as a christian, is pledged for the truth and honesty of the exposition which he has made; and he appeals, confidently, and solemnly, to "the judgment bar of God." Let this appeal not be forgotten by our orthodox friends; especially, let it be remembered in contrast with the recorded declaration of that man,* who, more than any other, was instrumental in producing that state of things which has existed in the western part of the State of New York—"With God there can be no *difference or distinction* between beauty and deformity; *virtue and vice*; perfection and imperfection. *Prayers are but mockery to his name, and ought not to be encouraged*—MY VIEWS ARE NOT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE BIBLE, for that book represents the Deity as vindictive, revengeful, and inconsistent"!!

It would obviously be useless to recommend this letter to the notice of those who are hoping to acquire political distinction by embarking in the crusade against masonry. It may be well, however, for such men to remember, that political influence, to be permanent, must be sustained by something more substantial than popular excitement; and that in proportion to the height to which they rise, will, when the bubble bursts which has buoyed them, be the celerity of their fall.

It is proper to say, that the writer of these remarks is not a mason, and has no connection whatever with the masonic institution. Circumstances have made him somewhat intimate with the progress and effects of the excitement in New York, and it is because he is anxious that the scenes which have there been exhibited, may not be acted over again in this city, that he has procured the republication of this letter.

*The person referred to is Edward Giddins, the man whose declarations are relied upon to prove the murder of Morgan, but whose testimony was not admitted in a court of justice.

LETTER

TO THE

MEMBERS OF THE GENNESEE CONSOCIATION.

REVEREND AND BELOVED—Possibly I have had the honor of a personal acquaintance with some one of your number. If so, that brother must be deeply grieved, to learn, that I am a Mason. Such brother will not wonder, and surely none of you will wonder, that I should be so much grieved and distressed by your Resolves, which lately appeared in the *Boston Recorder*; especially the first. It is in the following words :

“Resolved, That the Consociation will neither license, ordain, or install, those who sustain any connection with the institution of Masonry, or who will not disapprove and renounce it; nor will we give letters of recommendation in favor of such persons to preach in any of the churches in our connection.”

Dear Brethren, by this resolve, I consider myself as excluded from your pulpits, and cut off from your ministerial fellowship; and I should rejoice to learn, that I might be admitted to participate at the holy table under your ministration. I would willingly make a great effort, to mingle in your feasts of charity. I should hope, that such a measure might conduce to heal the incipient breach, which now threatens to be more wide and dreadful, than any that has yet desolated the fields of our Zion. Could I be admitted to the privilege, without first renouncing the Masonic fraternity?

Dear Brethren, it struck me like thunder from an unclouded sky. Excommunication for my secret sins, without a moment's warning, would have been scarcely more surprising. I had indeed judged from an infuriated newspaper, that the prince of the power of the air was apparently pouring forth the storms and tempests of his wrath, upon our fraternity. But “they passed by me, as the idle wind.” Not so with a solemn denunciation from beloved

brethren, whom I regard as the excellent of the earth, and the glory of Christ. And can it be, that I have lived, to receive such a blow from such a hand?

Dear Brethren, your implied anathema (O that I could be convinced, that it does not deserve the dreadful name,) your implied anathema, does not fall upon me alone.

In such a case, it would have been, comparatively a trifle. Even then, however, justice to myself and faithfulness to you, might have forbidden my silence. Doubtless hundreds of clerical brethren, as ready as yourselves to die for the gospel, are under the same condemnation. Among these, I suppose, are Dr. Miller, of Princeton, and some of our missionaries in India.

Dear Brethren, I dare not judge you. God forbid, that I should impeach your motives. From the character of the ministers in your region, I cannot but regard you as ardent friends to the Redeemer, and friends to my soul, willing to make a great and painful effort, to deliver me from what you doubtless consider as the synagogue of Satan; and willing, if convicted of your error, to retrace your steps, and make all possible reparation.

Dear Brethren, is it not possible, that you may have erred in judgement?—that in your zeal for God, you may have injured man?—that in your indignation against the wicked, you have condemned the innocent? Is it certain, that your decree was not too hasty? Did you fast and pray and deliberate, as much as you ought, before you passed the momentous resolve? Did you consider well—did you try to conjecture, how much pain and bitter anguish it might occasion to many thousands? Did you consider well the magnitude, the importance, the amazing bearings of the deed you were performing?

Dear Brethren, was it necessary to pass upon us this tremendous sentence? Would it not have satisfied your consciences, and answered your purpose as well to have said, "Though we cannot break fellowship with our brethren of the Masonic fraternity, merely for their connection with that institution, yet under existing circumstances, we deem it expedient to license, &c." This would have perfectly satisfied my feelings, and probably saved all the evil, that has resulted from this unhappy measure, and perhaps ten thousand times more, that is yet future. Or had you without a preamble, voted it inexpedient, you would never have heard from me upon this subject.

Dear Brethren, on what evidence did you act? Is it certain that you had sufficient reason for judging, condemning, and virtually excommunicating, myself and many more, unconvicted, unheard, unaccused, and utterly ignorant, that our character was in jeopardy?

Dear Brethren, why did you cast us off, before you had taken one step to reclaim us? Was it not practicable to address us by a circular stating your views, your feelings and your fears, and

thus giving us an opportunity to make our confession, or our apology?

Dear Brethren, my character is my life, and more than my life. If I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die. But let me die like any other felon. Let me be regularly and solemnly executed according to law. Do not murder me. What felon in our country was ever treated as I am? If I be an offender, let me have a fair trial. Arraign me before some tribunal, either civil or ecclesiastical, to which I am amenable. Specify my crimes. I shall doubtless plead, *Not Guilty*. Bring forward your witnesses. Let me have my accusers face to face. Plead against me. Convict and condemn, if you can.

But be assured, if you do condemn me, you will condemn the innocent, and the blood of my character will cry to Heaven against my persecutors. I know not, what high crimes you may lay to my charge. But I know I am innocent. Neither against the temple of God; neither against the rights of man, nor yet against the laws of my country, have I as a Mason, offended any thing at all; at least, I am not conscious of having committed any such offence. Are my crimes of such a nature, that you cannot convict me? What then? This is doubtless the case with many real offenders. Will you murder the man, you cannot convict? What then is to be done? Refer the whole to the judgment day. To God the judge of all. I am perfectly willing to make my cause.

Dear Brethren, (I reiterate this tender appellation, because I feel it, and would continue to feel it. Too well I know, that I am in great danger of feeling otherwise,) I am going to my long home; the almond tree is blossoming; those that look out of the windows, are darkened; the grinders have ceased; the grasshopper is a burden. Soon the silver cord will be loosed, and the golden bowl broken. Very soon a complication of incurable diseases will hide me in the grave, and introduce my spirit into the presence of my Judge. May God sustain me in the awful hour, and give me grace to trust in Christ alone.

Dear Brethren, you are robbing me of my rest and my necessary food. You are conducting to shorten the short remnant of my pilgrimage. It is only for you to continue your hostile operations, to enlist all the religious newspapers and other forces under your banners, and to complete the crusade which you have commenced, and you may soon bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

Dear Brethren, are you prepared to meet me in the world of retribution? Though probably all of you are younger and much healthier and stronger than myself; you must soon follow, if not precede me. Are you prepared to meet your God upon this subject? Have you no fear that I shall be called to witness against you, at the bar of Immanuel? There you must be tried; and there

your trial of Masonry (if trial it can be called) will be tried again. Have you no fears for the result? Have you no fears that your condemnation of your brethren will there be condemned, when it is too late for reparation, or repentance?

Dear Brethren, I do consider the censure you have passed upon Masonry, as most unmerited and unjust. Not that I would accuse you of intentional wrong. Doubtless you verily thought, that you ought to do these things against our institution, and supposed, you were doing God service, in denouncing your brethren. No doubt you were sincere. But is it not possible, that you were sincerely wrong, and erred exceedingly?

You have condemned Masonry in the gross. Did you mean to denounce all the degrees of Masonry indiscriminately, and every thing appertaining to the institution, as alike abominable? Did you mean to pour the same tide of abhorrence upon our secrets, our avowed principles, our charities, our mutual attachments, our deviations from our principles?

Dear Brethren, did you presume to try our secrets? How did you learn them? By our unfaithful brethren, who went out from us? How could you know, that apostates would be disposed to tell the truth? If from their own confession, they had violated the most solemn obligations to secrecy, what confidence could you place in their simple affirmation? If disposed to tell the truth, how could you know, that they would tell the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? Suppose an apostate Christian should declare to a heathen, that the grand object of Christ's coming into the world, was to promote discord and war; and to prove his assertion, should mention the following words, Matt. 10: 34. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I come not to send peace, but a sword; would not the heathen be likely to form a most incorrect and unfavourable opinion of our religion? Suppose the secrets of Christianity (you know Christianity has secrets, at least such as are not generally known to the world—the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him,)—suppose the secrets of Christianity should be tried by those who had known nothing of them, with only apostate Christians for witnesses, and enemies for counsellors, what would be the result? Would it not probably be decided, that our religion is unspeakably worse than any other. Would it be strange, if in such a case, it should

*It has been said, that some worthy Christians have disclosed the secrets of Masonry. I should like to meet the worthy Christian, who has professed to do this. Possibly he might soon induce me to confess, that I have done him great injury. At present, however, I cannot imagine any cause that would justify me in divulging any masonic secret that I know. I say this with the fullest conviction that cases may occur, in which a man ought to reveal secrets, that he had most solemnly sworn to keep. If any mason ever did divulge any of our secrets, my opinion is, that in so doing, he sinned against God; though it might indeed have been a sin of ignorance, and I will not say, that no real Christian ever committed such a sin.

be concluded, that though all other religions might be tolerated, yet Christians ought to be put to death as enemies to mankind? That your trial of our secrets was in all respects like this, I dare not be confident. That it did resemble it, and that your decision was wide from justice, I have not the shadow of a doubt. I cannot think you were by any means competent to try our secrets. Nor do I believe any human tribunal competent for such a purpose, except a company of calm, judicious, intelligent, well informed, and true-hearted Masons. When our secrets shall be condemned by such a court, then let all the people say, *Amen*. But surely such an honourable court will not, even in such a case, divulge them. It would be sufficient warning to others, to condemn them as secrets, and let them continue secrets till the judgment day. You may indeed judge upon the question, whether it is right to form secret societies. Of their intrinsic lawfulness, I cannot doubt. For any government to forbid them, would, in my view, be rank tyranny. Whether they are now expedient in our country, is quite another question. For one, I should rather be in favour of their abolition, though not by law. But as far as honourable persuasion can effect the object, let them cease as secret societies.*

You cannot expect me to be very particular in discussing the subject of our secrets. If they injure no one, from their very nature, they must be referred to the day when all secrets will be disclosed. At least, faithful Masons cannot discuss them with those that are not Masons, except in such respects as imply no temptation to disclosure.

One thing, however, I feel free to say, and most solemnly to declare, that I know nothing in our secrets which appears to me contrary to the word of God, or the rights of man; and that I never had the least suspicion, that there was any Masonic penalty worse than expulsion.

Do you ask me, how I can defend such or such a Masonic secret? It is manifest that I cannot discuss the subject, like most others, nor give the least intimation, whether the thing mentioned, is, or is not, one of our secrets, any farther than is implied in the solemn declaration, that if it is such, I never understood it as violating any obligation, natural, civil, or religious. Of many

*As some of you are doubtless members of the Phi Beta Kapa Society, I shall subjoin a few words respecting that institution. A few years ago some of its members proposed its abolition, at least as a secret society. I was then opposed to the measure. I should now favor it. Not that I would have this numerous, respectable and useful institution annihilated. As far as possible, let its exercises proceed, as before, with the exception of secrets. In these, let no more be initiated. Even in such a case, however, I should still feel myself bound to keep all its secrets, with which I have had the honour to be intrusted. Nor could I think of making the disclosure without a kind of horror. Nor should I think it a light matter for any one to solicit me to such a deed, or to encourage me in the perpetration.

things in Masonry, I know not any thing, nor ever shall. God is now giving me a much more important work to do, than the work of Masonry, except when he calls me to bind her broken heart, or staunch her bleeding wounds. Like most of the fraternity, I have taken but three degrees. By no means would I speak good or evil of what I know not. You will bear it in mind, then, that I speak of the grand essential parts of Masonry, that I know, and as I understand them, when I aver, that in my view, they contain nothing materially evil. Did I understand Masonry, as being what you consider it, it is possible, I might hold it in equal detestation.

If any thing unscriptural has been discovered in our avowed principles, our charities, our mutual attachments, I would fain have it designated.

If the conduct of Masons has often fallen below their avowed principles, this has been much more the case with professed Christians. He that is faultless in this respect, let him cast the first stone.

I consider Masonry, a moral, pacific, benevolent, humane, and social institution. As such, it has doubtless been productive of incalculable benefit to the world. Nay, I regard it as one of the mighty causes, which, under God, has introduced the present day of improvement and hope.

Has Masonry been horribly perverted? Christianity much more. If Illuminism has crept into some of our European lodges, from how many churches have their candlesticks been removed, leaving them but the synagogues of Satan, no better than lodges of Illuminism, enlightened by "darkness visible," and cheered by the ghastly smiles of eternal death. Have the most appalling crimes been perpetrated by Masonry perverted? Perhaps a thousand times more are charged in the register of heaven to abused Christianity. Did perverted Masonry seize and murder the wretched Morgan? It was abused Christianity, that with the symbols of the holy supper, sealed the powder plot. It was abused Christianity, that kindled the flames of Smithfield, and hurried to heaven the choicest spirits of England. It was abused Christianity, that transformed Europe into a moral volcano, which at seven eruptions poured forth as many millions of her sons to desolate the fair fields of Asia, to crimson them with their blood, and fatten them with their flesh. It was abused Christianity, that contrived and established that master-piece of infernal inventions, "the holy Inquisition," that seized every victim, that presided in every court, that pronounced every sentence, that digged every cell, that filled every dungeon with darkness, and crowded it with misery, that forged every chain, that riveted eve-

*I believe it has not been proved, that Morgan was murdered by Masons. Still, I am willing in my argument, to assume it as a fact.

ry bolt, that echoed in every groan, and moulded every tear. Whom see I yonder, riding upon a scarlet beast, arrayed in purple and scarlet, decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abomination and filthiness—drunken with the blood of saints and martyrs? It is the mother of harlots; it is abused Christianity.

Had these things been known, and well considered by our seceding brethren, Dodge and Clap, they might have continued and died the cordial members of our fraternity. They would undoubtedly have avoided the incorrect and unhappy conclusion, which they drew from "recent facts," which they represent as the grand cause of their separation. Their renunciation of Masonry, they have published to the world. In this publication, I greatly rejoice. It gives me a most precious document, which solemnly corroborates my testimony to the innocence of Masonry. I never can be sufficiently thankful to the wonder-working Providence, which most unexpectedly conferred upon me this inestimable gift at the very moment, when it was most to my purpose. It is so important to complete my defence, that I should be most unjust to myself, if I did not here insert it.

RENUNCIATION OF MASONRY, BY MESSRS. DODGE AND CLAP.

— "TO THE PUBLIC.

"The design of the institution of ancient Freemasonry, we have been taught to believe, was good and moral. Under that impression, we became members of the Masonic society, and have taken in it, three degrees. As explained to us, we thought, that Masonry taught its members to be moral and upright, and to keep inviolable the laws of their country. Under these impressions, we have met and associated with the lodge. If Masonry was rightly explained to us, if the society was ever pure, then it follows, that it has become greatly contaminated. Recent facts are a proof of this—acts the most detestable and outrageous, have been perpetrated by Masons, in contempt and defiance of the laws of our country, and, appalling to our feelings in the extreme. The society being secret, naturally gives those without, suspicions and fears, disturbing their peace and quiet; and from what has taken place, what may they not expect or fear? We never joined nor met with the society to do evil. Whatever may be urged in favour of secret societies, we see no good reason, why they should have existence in our country. Under these considerations, we

cease to consider ourselves members of the institution, and to withdraw and absent ourselves from the Masonic society.

JOHN DODGE,
ELLIS CLAP.

York, Feb. 18, 1828."

Upon this document it may be proper for me to make a few remarks, by way of comment, that if I have misunderstood it, my error may be corrected.

1. Their good opinion of Masonry induced them to join a lodge.

2. On entering the lodge, they received Masonry, as explained to them, and still retained their good opinion. They "still thought that Masonry taught their members to be moral and upright, and to keep inviolable the laws of their country."

3. Their good opinion does not appear to have been diminished by their "meeting and associating with the lodge." They "never joined nor met with the society, to do evil."

4. It does not appear that they had the least suspicion of any evil in Masonry, from all their observation and experience as Masons.

5. Their unfavorable opinion of Masonry, appears to have been founded entirely upon an inference, drawn from statements, that they had read or heard. I cannot think they had witnessed the facts, which had filled them with such horror. If they had, however, their inference would have been equally incorrect. "Recent facts are proof of this;" proof that Masonry is not now pure, as it had been explained to them, as they had received it, and continued to regard it, till the disclosure of these dreadful facts,—"facts the most detestable and outrageous have been perpetrated by Masons, in contempt and defiance of the laws of our country, and appalling to our feelings in the extreme." They thence inferred, that they had been deceived—That masonry was rank abomination, from which they must immediately flee, as a lion from the swelling of Jordan.

6. This inference appears to have been incorrectly drawn. That such deeds were perpetrated by Masons, I do not deny. But I do deny, that they authorize any inference unfavorable to Masonry.

1. I do not understand that the perpetrators ever pretended, that they did these things in compliance with Masonic obligations.

2. If they did make such pretension, it would be no evidence, that this was really the case. The wickedness that could perpetrate such deeds, could easily ascribe them to the most innocent cause.

3. If they really felt bound by Masonic principles to commit such crimes, there is no doubt in my mind, that they misunder-

stood, and horribly perverted the genuine principles of **Masonry**; and while they verily thought, they were doing her service, they perpetrated enormities, from which her soul shrunk back with the most pungent abhorrence. No doubt crusaders and inquisitors have generally been as fully persuaded, that they were actuated by the religion they professed—that they were as really doing God service, as was Saul of Tarsus when he made havoc of the church. Are we then, as Christians, accountable for all their deeds, which they really intended, as Christians, to perform?

4. If they were Masons of higher grades, and as such, had become greatly contaminated, and had done these things agreeably to their doctrine of devils, it by no means follows, that their guilt should be imputed to their unoffending, unknowing, unsuspecting brethren, who will most cordially unite in reprobating such principles and such conduct. If it can be clearly proved to me, that any grades or lodges, or individuals of our fraternity, have been corrupted by principles so nefarious, I will say, "O my soul, come not thou into their secret, but instantly denounce them, as the blackest synagogue of Satan, come out and be separate; hold no more communion with such workers of iniquity. But do not denounce thy faithful brethren, much better than thyself." Such was the conduct of the immortal Luther. After long and most prayerful deliberation, and the clearest evidence, he denounced the Pope, and separated from the Romish communion, as far as he had power to separate. But he did not denounce Christianity; he did not separate from those whom he regarded as the faithful followers of Christ. No; they were dearer than ever.

If I can gain decisive evidence, that any lodge has become entirely corrupt, and can honestly and honorably exhibit such evidence to the world, I ought openly to denounce such lodge. I ought also to cry aloud to faithful brethren, "Come out from among them, that ye be not partaker of their sins, and that ye receive not their plagues." But I must not expect my brethren to see with my eyes, nor suppose that they will at once see all the abominations that I have discovered. And I must be willing to wait for them to deliberate and consider well, before they denounce brethren that they had been accustomed to regard as their superiors. How long I ought to wait in a given case, cannot be decided, except by the Omniscient. How long I should actually wait, I know not. But I now feel, as though I never could cast off dear faithful brethren, though I should consider their conduct in some respects exceedingly erroneous.

But I have no fear that I shall have the trial. I have supposed the worst merely to try the argument. And I do feel most confidently assured, that Messrs. Dodge and Clap have drawn a most false and injurious inference—that in point of logic, they have erred exceedingly, and that their consequent conduct in withdrawing has been incorrect. Should they ever candidly examine

my reasons, I cannot but hope, they will think so, and be willing to make some reparation to their injured brethren, to whose innocence they have implicitly testified.

Dear Brethren, you would doubtless rejoice to restore me to your fellowship, if I could but bring my mind to renounce the Masonic Fraternity. Nay, such renunciation would of course restore me; and you would probably hail me as a brother, restored from captivity, or raised from the dead. But my difficulties in the way of such a measure, seem utterly insurmountable. Should I adopt it with my present views, I feel as though I should never enjoy another moment's peace in life or in death. And that surely would be worse than all the calamities that have been clustering upon me for half a century. You may possibly suppose, that, as there is a vast difference between Masonry and Christianity, that one should be cast off for its abuses, but not the other. That Christianity is immeasurably superior to Masonry—that the latter is no more to the former than the feeblest reflected sunbeam to the sun himself, I hardly need tell you, I most freely admit. That I *may* be called to renounce Masonry, but cannot possibly be under obligation to renounce Christianity, I also concede. If it were possible to renounce Masonry, without any unfavorable and unjust imputations upon worthy Masons, the case would be altered. But how can I denounce my brethren whom I sincerely love in the Lord? And how can I do injustice to one of the least of my brother Masons?—“*Fiat justitia; ruat coelum.*”^{*} Could there be a general and harmonious agreement to relinquish Masonry, against such a measure I should not be disposed to lift a finger. Masonry has done well, and done much; though by no means so well or so much as she ought. Her merited praise is in every quarter of the world. The widow's thanks, and the orphan's grateful tear, are her grateful encomium. Courtesy and friendship can hail her with gratitude. She has promoted the kind intercourse of nations. She has softened the asperities, and diminished the woes of war. She has smiled upon science and literature. In concert with other institutions, she has aided Christianity in introducing this distinguished era of light and salvation. She was the almoner of the divine bounty, to make me a member of the American Bible Society. While I freely pour forth these encomiums from a full and grateful heart, I am free to acknowledge, and honesty requires me to confess that the genius and habits of Masonry are not the most happily adapted to the exigencies of the present time. I did once make an effort, perhaps the greatest I ever made, to move and melt and remould her heart, in view of the spiritual woes of a bleeding world. But though she listened most kindly, I fear she was very little affected. It might have been inconsistent for her to have complied

^{*}Let justice be done, should the Universe sink.

with my wishes. She was born in another age, and for other purposes. No doubt to Christian eyes, glowing with love to the Saviour, and moistened with grief for a world in sin, her younger sisters are fairer than she. You have doubtless noticed, that Masons, who have appeared most engaged in promoting the benevolent and evangelical institutions of the present age, have in general manifested very little Masonic ardor. From this some have concluded that Masonry is absolutely bad. The inference is unfounded. The fact undoubtedly is, "not that they love Masonry less, but these institutions more."

And now, Brethren, I am free to make the further concession, that in all probability, the great work of Masonry is done; at least, that she has very little more of importance to accomplish. As her dutiful son, I am now heartily willing she should immediately close her operations—that she should never enter another apprentice, nor again wield her trowel, nor extend her plumb-line, nor lift her hammer. Let these utensils be laid up in the choicest cabinet of her sons, for an everlasting memorial of her industry and her alms. Let her consign over all her stock, her labors and her responsibilities, to her vigorous successors. Let her then withdraw to the shades of honorable retirement; and having gently sunk to her eternal rest, let her modest marble present the indelible inscription, **PEACE TO HER ASHES, AND GLORY TO HER NAME.**

You may wonder, that with such views and feelings, I should ever think of becoming a Mason. You must be sensible, that times have somewhat altered within 12 years; yet not so much as very materially to affect the expediency of such a measure. I will state to you my chief motive. In one of the southern states, where I was spending a few months, a great and respectable portion of my hearers were Masons. One of the most distinguished of these, was a man who appeared still more distinguished as a Christian. Indeed he was almost the only person of my denomination, with whom I could take sweet counsel upon spiritual things. But for the influence of his example, I might never have harboured a serious thought of entering a lodge. I trust that my chief motive was to benefit the souls of my hearers. I did think, that from the lips of a brother, they would be likely to hear the truth with more attention, understanding, and candor, and with the greatest prospect of spiritual benefit. For I have never found the person who would pretend (as we have been slanderously reported) that Masonry would save the soul without repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. I did, therefore, to the Masons, become a Mason, that if possible I might save some of them. Dear Brethren, which of you would not have done the same? I was particularly desirous to be under the best possible advantages to address to them a discourse on an annual celebration; for which they had made request. Such was my chief mo-

tive for becoming a Mason—a measure, which has been grievous to some of my friends. But I have never regretted it; no not in my bitterest moments, under the lash of your denunciation. It gives me advantages, better perhaps in some respects, than are possessed by any other person, to plead the cause of injured, persecuted innocence—to make my appeal in behalf of an ancient, numerous, and respectable Society, over which, clouds of odium are gathering and blackening, and more than seven thunders are striving to utter their voices.

Dear Brethren, you are by no means to suppose, that I approve of every thing appertaining to the Masonic institution any more than of every invention, that men have added to the circumstances of our holy religion. Upon the subject of religion, I have no doubt, that my views and feelings would be found to coincide with yours in almost every particular—that our differences would be found as nothing, compared with our points of agreement. If we could fully understand each other, perhaps our agreement might be nearly equal upon the subject of Masonry.

And now, Brethren, I wot that through ignorance, ye did this dreadful deed; and therefore, I cannot only pray, but most confidentially hope, that you may obtain mercy. I cannot but hope, that you will soon be convinced of your error. In such a case, I doubt not that you will make haste and delay not, to make all possible reparation. You will rescind your unrighteous decree; you will restore to favor the discarded brethren; you will make the reparation as public as you have made the injury, and endeavor in all respects, to bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

Dear brethren, pray for me. I need your prayers, especially, that I might be enabled to cherish right feelings and to pursue right conduct, under the great trial which God has laid up for me by your hands. Let me entreat you, if possible, to call upon me, if you should visit this region. You may expect a most grateful welcome to my heart, to my house, and especially to my Seminary, if you can give my pupils a word of exhortation.

And now, Brethren, I must commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, that is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified. If any part of this communication shall seem to express aught of malice, bitterness or unkindness, it is certainly the very reverse of my intention; and I have tried to avoid it. Never before, perhaps, did I make so great an effort to avoid every thing that might justly offend. Feeling that I had received a very great injury, and knowing my temper to be constitutionally irritable, I have endeavored to watch it most cautiously, and I hope devoutly. If you should wonder that I have not been more successful, perhaps it may occur to you, that your situation in reading is scarcely less trying, than mine in writing. You will be in the utmost danger of imputing evil where none was intended—where none exists. If I am not deceived, I

have written every word with a heart, that would rejoice to extend to you the hand of a brother, and to unite with you in the most solemn and affectionate acts of devotion. And I do hope that I have been enabled to write with some sense of my responsibilities—with some sense that I was writing for eternity. And yet I do not know that I should now dare to send this communication without the approbation and advice of others. I have read the most material parts to several of my most judicious and pious friends, most of them ministers, and some of them in their views and feelings have been sufficiently opposed to Masonry. Their unanimous opinion is, that it contains nothing contrary to the Christian spirit, and that I ought to send it. Most of them encourage me to hope the good Western Brethren will make some retraction. If you should still think, that some parts are harsh and severe, I can only say, that I shall exceedingly regret it, and I hope you will be enabled in your reply, to set me an example of what a communication should be, from brother to brother, under circumstances exceedingly trying. I hope I shall not be unduly solicitous, as respects the time and the tenor of your answer. You may well suppose, that I must be desirous to hear from you, at least from some of you. May the God of Peace and Love rule in your hearts, direct your deliberations, and lead you to such decision as may be most for his glory, and the advancement of his kingdom. Beloved Brethren, FAREWELL.

Yours in the most sacred bonds,

JOSEPH EMERSON.

Wethersfield, Conn., July 26, 1828.

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A

REPLY

OF THE

GENESEE CONSOCIATION,

New York

TO THE LETTER OF

**THE REV. JOSEPH EMERSON,
OF WETHERSFIELD, CONN.**

Addressed to them on the subject of their resolution
relative to Masonic Ministers, and Masonic
candidates for the Ministry.



HARTFORD:

HUDSON AND SKINNER, PRINTERS.

1829.

1860, Mar. 8.
Gift of
Sherman Wolcott Adams,
of
Wethersfield, Conn.

PRELIMINARY NOTICE.

IT may be proper to state, that at the meeting of the Genesee Consociation in June last at Mendon, the following Resolution was adopted among their proceedings.

"*Resolved*, that the Consociation will neither licence, ordain, or install those who sustain any connexion with the Institution of Masonry, or who will not disapprove and renounce it; nor will we give letters of recommendation in favour of such persons to preach in any of the Churches in our connection."

In consequence of this Resolution, the Rev. Joseph Emerson addressed a letter of twenty pages to the members of the Consociation, in which he seriously remonstrates against the resolution above quoted. To this letter the following pages furnish the Reply of the Consociation as adopted by them.

A REPLY, &c.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

We cannot but regret to learn that you are a Mason, and we still more seriously regret to find, that under all the circumstances of the case, at the present time, you are willing to come before the christian public and the world at large, as the advocate of Masonry. Had this been done three years ago, it would have excited no surprise; but the times have since changed. And had you been aware of the posture of things in this part of our state, respecting the amount of light which has issued from the interior of the Masonic Temple, disclosing all that it contains; and had you known the popular feeling in relation to these disclosures, it is not probable, in our judgment, that you would have hazarded such a public expression as that of your letter.

As to the *temper* and *spirit* of the letter, so far from having any complaint to make on this ground, we are, on the other hand disposed to say that it is a considerable recommendation in favour of its author. We should be happy indeed, could we express the same feelings of cordiality towards the sentiments of the letter. In what *manner* and to what *extent* we dissent from the opinions which it expresses, will be collected from our reply.

In the *first* place, we have a few remarks to make on your *misconstruction* of our resolution. Almost the *whole* of what you have written, is founded on an *incorrect assumption*. We sincerely regret that you were not aware of this fact, for it would have saved you from many painful sensations, and also from this public expression of them. We could have relieved you by a few words of explanation; for it has not been our desire to disturb the repose of the innocent, nor to bring down the gray hairs of any with sorrow to the grave.

In reference to the resolution, you say, "I consider myself excluded from your pulpits and cut off from your ministerial fellowship." &c.—We say that this is a *misapprehension* of our meaning. Your inference is not correct: nor do we see any statement in our resolution which implies this. And such a construction published abroad to the world is calculated to do us an injury—and it is this, which more than

any other consideration, induces us to give this public answer. We say therefore that your inference is by no means according to our original intention—nor is it according to *fact*—for the *fact* is, we still exchange with masonic ministers, and masonic communicants are still unmolested in our churches. Were you to visit us, we should certainly invite you to preach in our pulpits; but were you to ask for letters, for the purpose of going into the *regularly authorised* service of our churches, with your present views on the subject in question, we should not give them. Or were any young man to avow the same opinions, and then apply to us for licence or ordination, we should not grant it. The jurisdiction of an ecclesiastical nature which we have assumed in that resolution, is only over our own actions. *We touch not the present standing of any of our Masonic brethren*, nor do we question the validity of the acts of other ecclesiastical bodies that have not deemed it expedient as yet, to adopt the same resolution—but for ourselves, we will not put, nor will we assist in putting into the ministry any more masons. This measure was founded on the evidence before us, which in the clearest manner exhibited the nature of your institution. Agreeably to this evidence, it is extremely *corrupt*—such that no minister of God ought to join it—and all of those who have joined it, ought immediately to disapprove of it and renounce it. As ministers of Jesus Christ, we are placed in a state of responsibility to God, to watch over the purity of the ministry. It is therefore inconsistent with our principles and conscientious scruples on this question, to recede from the resolution which we have taken in the fear of God. And while it is not even *attempted* by yourself nor any other person to *invalidate* the testimony on which we have acted, can it reasonably be expected that we will *recede*? We did endeavour with care, to decide on the merits of the great question before us, in view of evidence—and we are to be justified or condemned, according to the soundness or unsoundness of our premises. And we seriously profess to you and to all men, that, the moment the testimony on which we acted which demonstrates the corruption of the masonic institution and its inconsistency with christianity is invalidated, we shall be happy to change our decision, and to announce to the world such change as publicly as we have announced our resolutions.

But since we positively disclaim the inferences which you have drawn from our resolution, you may perhaps be disposed to consider that it is *inconsistent* for us to *act* upon, this

resolution as thus explained—if so, we reply, that precedents of great extent and general application, render it a perfectly consistent and proper mode of proceeding.

Take the following example from a variety of others which might be adduced as precedents. We, together with our Presbyterian brethren, would neither license, ordain or install those who embrace the theological opinions of the Methodists, and yet, at the same time, we all extend ministerial fellowship to those among the Methodists, who are put into the ministry by their own proper authorities; and we do not assume it as our right to *annul* their acts. But were these persons to make application to us to be put into the ministry, it would then not only be our *right* but also our *duty* to assume jurisdiction over our own actions—therefore, before complying with such a request, it would be our duty to examine the applicant, and then decide whether to grant the request or not, according as such examination was satisfactory or otherwise. *Particularly with ourselves therefore, there is a new TEST adopted for admission to the sacred ministry—but we do not prescribe that test to other ecclesiastical judicatories. We leave them to act on a sense of their own responsibility to God in relation to the purity of the Gospel ministry.*

The ground on which we now stand in relation to masonry, partakes more of *neutrality* than that on which we stood before. For if we had maintained *silence* and gone on in the usual course, it would have been extending to the order precisely the favour which would have tended to strengthen and build them up.

We are happy sir, to perceive that the labour of discussion is very materially abridged by your own concessions. In page 5th you have the following.—“ Would it not have satisfied your consciences, and answered your purposes as well to have said, ‘ Though we cannot break fellowship with our brethren of the masonic fraternity, merely for their connexion with that institution, yet under existing circumstances, we deem it inexpedient to license &c.’ This would have perfectly satisfied my feelings, and probably saved all the evil, that has resulted from this unhappy measure, and perhaps ten thousand times more, that is yet future.” We say then to all this, your feelings *are* satisfied; we freely adopt your preamble—and if we could have known from the beginning, that it would have had such soothing efficacy over feelings, which we are not disposed to trifle with, it certainly would have been published. Here then, you can easily perceive our *agreement*—and where is the ground for controversy?

In page 17th, you make the following concession. "And now brethren, I am free to make the further concession, that, in all probability, the great work of Masonry is done; at least, that she has very little more of importance to accomplish. As her dutiful son, I am now heartily willing she should, immediately close her operations—that she should never enter another Apprentice, nor again wield her trowel, nor extend her plumb-line, nor lift her hammer. Let these utensils be laid up in the choicest cabinet of her sons; for an everlasting memorial of her industry and her alms. Let her consign over all her stock, her labours and her responsibilities to her vigorous successors. Let her then withdraw to the shades of honourable retirement; and having gently sunk to her eternal rest, let her modest marble present the indelible inscription, *peace to her ashes and glory to her name.*"

Here you express a wish which in the main coincides with our own—that the masonic institution might be disbanded or wholly laid aside—though we should not be disposed to do this with that profound respect and veneration which you evince. It cannot be expected that we are pleased with your *style* in this sentence, in avowing yourself "*her dutiful son.*" We had much rather had you speak of the relation which you sustain to our common Father, and to the church of the living God; for when our houses are full of Gods, the worship of the true God is liable to be neglected.—Nor do we understand what you mean by the "vigorous successors" provided it is seriously you wish to have masonry abolished—and shall therefore make no comment on the expression.

You now have a view of the main points in your letter in which we agree—for as to the resolution, we would cheerfully adopt your preamble as our own—and also as to the entire termination of masonry we are agreed—The question then arises, wherein do we differ? The difference may be seen by the following strictures on some of your sentiments.

Some of your concluding remarks intimate that you expect some retraction from us—and perhaps the foregoing exposition of our resolution, the statement which we have made of the facts, going to show that your letter was founded upon a wrong construction, will be deemed satisfactory, on your part. You certainly cannot hope for a retraction of any other nature so long as you stand so much aloof from discussing the merits of the main question—So long as you do not attempt to invalidate our testimony—and so long as neither yourself nor any one else ever presumes to commence a process of censure against any of your seceding

brethren, whether ministers or laymen who stand before the world as witnesses against masonry. Some such steps, we are inclined to think, are necessary before we can be called upon to change our ground.

You have declined entering upon any discussion respecting the secrets of masonry—and in doing this, you shun the merits of the question.—There is only one other point which can be discussed, which respects the validity of that testimony on which rests the truth of the late disclosures. But to speak as you have, of the *secrets of masonry* is calculated to excite a smile among the people in this region, who have well understood the fact for many months, that those secrets are now published to the world, and have become *common stock*. If any person is disposed to take a stand different from what is implied in these remarks, his extreme distance would be an insult to our understanding. For we do wish to declare only what we do *know*, what we *have seen*—and heard with our *ears*—and what is well *authenticated*. If you or any one else has conscientious scruples still, on account of your oath, as to the propriety of an intercourse with us of this nature, we hope it may be understood, that we have never claimed the privilege. If however the discussion proceeds, we as a party concerned in it, shall prescribe as a condition, that it *must touch the merits of the question*, i. e. the *secrets of masonry*, or the validity of the testimony on which rests the truth of these disclosures.

It was hardly necessary therefore for yourself, considering the nature of our act, to assert your innocence as if we had, even by implication, arraigned you before us for some crime. We have not charged you with iniquitous conduct and political speculations, in the prosecution of which masonry has been used as the concealed and labour saving machine, but we feel that you have inflicted upon yourself a serious injury, by avowing yourself a friend of that institution which has become the cage of every unclean bird, and from which has proceeded crimes that have stained our land. How strong soever may be your claim to our sincere respect, yet we can never admit that the claim is founded upon your avowed attachment to masonry.

When we adopted this resolution which is so offensive to many, our situation was such as to render it impracticable with an adversary to impeach our motives—because it would be infinite folly to put ourselves in such a perilous situation for secular advantage or personal aggrandizement. If any good can be effected, if our ministerial brethren can be won,

or prevailed on, to come out from a bad institution; if our churches can be purified; if the present commotions can be stayed—if this storm can be reduced, on right principles, to a calm—and if the arrogant who walked in pride “can be abased,” then let all the glory be ascribed to God—and let every honour be laid at the feet of Jesus. We consider not ourselves as being entitled to the claim of *originality* in our conceptions and moral judgments on this question, for in our estimation, we speak only the common sense of honest, independent and unshackled men; and we hope for the countenance of the honest and the good among all classes. Let the facts of which we have been possessed, be also in the possession of others, and the coincidence of opinions would be wonderful. Let it therefore not be in vain, that we lift up our voice to our brethren and our sister churches.

In our resolution which you condemn, we proceeded upon this principle, that if a minister's example ought to have weight, he ought by no means to become a mason. Your own example and policy in becoming one of the Fraternity, meets with our decided disapprobation—for after that event, you knew no more about the gospel nor the best means to be used in converting souls than before. You graced and honoured the institution, but you debased the office of the sacred ministry. Christ has never required the intervention of such a power as an auxiliary for carrying forward his glorious work—“Go teach all nations—and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” All who receive this commission, ought to trust in this promise. And they who look to any other being, to any other source for help in this work to which they are called of God—betray a criminal want of faith, and of attention to the nature of their commission and to the only authorized means to be adopted in the prosecution of the work. They certainly would rob God of the glory due to him alone, in the great work of saving souls and of evangelizing the world. Ministers are to trust simply in the promise of that Great Head of the Church, who says, “Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,”—this is to be exclusively their confidence—and masonic patronage and helps are to be *excluded*. It is vain therefore, that you now point us to great names in the ministry, that are also connected with your institution, while the commission of our Lord and Master is plainly before us—we think that we understand it, and the faith which it requires—and the further you extend your citations, the more you disgrace and soil the ministry and the names of those persons you are pleased to cite.

Should you ever put pen to paper again on this subject, allow us to express the hope, that for the honour of those concerned, you will give no more names. We hope also that the progress of masonry in some of our theological institutions will be arrested. It much more becomes those venerable professors, who have been consecrated to the labour of instructing young men in the knowledge of the scriptures, to give themselves *exclusively* to that work, than to lead their pupils into the profane mysteries of your order. There are the most *urgent* reasons why ministers ought to have nothing to do with it. There are not many churches in this region, that will not first of all ask the question, when a candidate presents himself, "Is he a 'mason?'" And if he is, qualifications in other respects avail him nothing. Ministers have been induced to join the institution by flatteries, and by offers of gratuitous initiation—for the purpose of *sanctifying* it in the eyes of the people, as Saul wished to be sanctified by Samuel the prophet, before the people. The masons well understand what will be the effect of this course, that it enhances the value of the craft more than one hundred per cent.—and whenever they have performed an act of benevolence, it has been pharisaically sounded abroad for the same purpose. That this has been the policy in taking in so many ministers need not be denied, on the ground that it is contrary to their principles to ask men to join them—for we ourselves have been invited, strenuously urged by arguments and flatteries to join the lodge—and we can give the names of *living* men who have done it. Ministers are now the greatest props to this tottering fabric, of which it can boast. For if masonry is called in question, why, the reply is instantly and gravely made, "the Rev. ———, is a mason; and if it were a bad institution, do you think he would belong to it?" And therefore it still passes off under the sanction of these names, as though they were of infallible authority. And you yourself have resorted to the same argument in your letter, by giving us some *names*, which for the credit of the persons concerned, we shall not repeat, as we wish to do them no injury. But in all you have been disposed to say in behalf of your favorite institution, we give you entire credit for *sincerity*. Nor do we impute to you or to any of your agitated brethren in the ministry, any pre-concerted iniquity. You have been "*hood winked*" to answer purposes, which we fear, you have not penetrated.

When you commenced your attack upon us, you probably regarded us with a kind of pity on account of the ignorance

which is to be imputed to us in relation to the subject which we had taken in hand. And indeed, we by no means wish to make extravagant claims, as though we were adepts in the science of masonry; nor are we quite sure, that were we to make farther advances in these "sublime mysteries," that our attachment to it would be increased. As the case now is, our estimation of masonry is as different from yours as can be conceived. It has induced us to put very different constructions from yours upon some recent events. "We never can be sufficiently thankful to that wonder working Providence," which has so unexpectedly enabled us to see the nature of your institution, and has given us such a strong assurance, that it is "a plant which our Heavenly Father hath *not* planted," and that, therefore it "shall be rooted up." In vain therefore is your reference to the renunciation of Dodge and Clapp, and your remarks upon it—nor do we think those remarks will be sufficient to bring those gentlemen, with penitence back to the fraternity. They are not to be *gulled* by mere encomiums, without proof concerning the *ancient purity* of the institution. As men of sound sense and "*logical*" minds, they must know, that when you sow tares you must reap tares. They reasoned as Christ taught them—it was therefore "*logical*." The fruits of masonry discloses the nature of the tree. They have lately seen its *proper* fruit, and therefore conclude, that their old opinion of the tree before they saw its fruits was *erroneous*; and like honest men they "*logically*" reject it.

Asto your "*avowed* principles," your "*charity*" is one. And need there be constructed such an extensive apparatus as *masonry*, to dispense such a pittance of charity? Is masonry the mother of charity, and if not, is she to enjoy, unmolested the exclusive praise of it? But speak not of charity,—for masonry is an institution more *decidedly and thoroughly selfish* than any other that was ever invented by the craft of men; and there would have been a far greater amount of charity in the world, if it had never existed. There is not in the known world an institution of equal extent and means, from which the charitable disbursements have been so small. Her gifts are almost in every case, *exclusive* in their objects. A rigorous investigation of facts on this point, can be attended with no advantage to your cause. As to your show of charity, or in any other of your "*avowed*" principles, we are not ignorant that they are goods displayed at the windows of the shop for a *show* to induce the passers by to enter and purchase. Experience and observation have taught us such

maxims as these—that error has always a lurking place—and that lurking place *is by the side of truth*. Satan himself never attempts to lead men astray, without making an artful use of truth. There is no vice that can be named in which he plunges his servants, which has not in their view, some *seeming* good, and which is not allied with some apparent advantage. The prince and power of the air influences men to disobey—as the skillful physician, who, when administering a bitter medicine to those of delicate stomachs, has an admixture with something sweet. Here we take it for granted, that with respect to what is simply true or false, virtuous or vicious when it stands alone, or unconnected with masonry, there is a perfect agreement between us—nor do we consider that you have said any thing, which your oath as “a true hearted mason” did not oblige you to say.

The grand object of the institution is distinguished for its *selfishness*. Your obligations are unlawful, or morally wrong; your ceremonies puerile, indecent and profane. Before this bubble burst, and while many of your honest brethren were advancing from step to step in your mysteries, their feelings and principles within, which ever ought to be listened to with deep attention, raised only a feeble voice of remonstrance.—What conscience said in whispers on the evils of masonry, was scarcely heard—it was not closely inspected, nor faithfully analyzed, for there was not the fair play of mutual freedom to inquire, to object, or to call any thing in question. The oath “forever to hail,” precluded discussion on the most vulnerable points. The free, honest, unrestrained, and correct voice of the common sense of mankind was not permitted to be heard on these principles—but on the contrary, by artful glosses and by “*avowed principles*,” the institution was almost universally praised and flattered by those without and those within. All this had the effect to produce the impression that she was too venerable and sacred to be touched. Hence it now seems to all her votaries, that something strange has happened to her—for *all* her secrets are *revealed*—all now possess them as common stock, and all men enjoy the liberty of expressing freely their opinion, and there is here and there established in our country a *free press* to declare the truth. Such having been the late events; it now frequently occurs, that a mason and anti-mason, meet and converse on the subject. When this happens, there is no *poison* so mortal to the mason as the truth in relation to *these secrets*, which the anti-mason is able to assert, and authenticate beyond the power of contradiction.

With feelings analogous to these which we have partially described; you express your astonishment, that we "presumed to try your secrets!" We surely were thus presumptuous. And if you desire to know from whom we obtained them, we answer, from men of *truth*, men on whose veracity we have as strong a reliance as on that of your own—whose praise in the churches extends as *widely* as yours—from ministers, deacons, elders, and laymen belonging to various christian denominations. We do not give their names in this place, but we have intercourse with them, and they approve of our proceedings—and if you will make an excursion to the *west* in "search of light," we shall be happy to introduce them to your acquaintance. But were you to speak in this region of masonic *secrets*, you would excite a smile on the countenance of every honest and intelligent mason. Their assumption is, when we converse with them, that we know the truth. A different stand would render them ridiculous. So far as the *truth* is concerned, your own brethren in this quarter have helped us to it, some intentionally, and others unintentionally. The *broad seal of masonry*, consisting of the abduction and murder of Morgan, is appended to his book. You can point us to no work of modern times, which is so unquestionably and sacredly authenticated. This is the mark that will not lie, and here too is an act of injustice which should not be forgotten. That book so far as it goes, contains your secrets. The trials of the kidnappers and conspirators have been published to the world, which so far as they go, confirm the same point. The narrative of the Lewiston committee, has had a wide circulation, and stands uncontradicted in all its material statements. The published renunciations of ministers of the gospel, have also widely circulated; and we are happy to learn that in your *own state*, there is established a *free press*, for the circulation of the truth. The Le Roy Convention of the 4th of July last, has also published the upper degrees of masonry. And, sir, we well understand the nature of our ground, when we say, you *dare* not assert that these revelations are *not* true. So that your queries and insinuated doubts on this point respecting the extent of our knowledge and the ample testimony on which it rests, only serves to press the truth more *thoroughly and undoubtingly* on the minds of those who do not wish to hear it, and who in unavailing anguish and chagrin lament its revelation.

With respect to the propriety of revealing the secrets of masonry *originally* we leave to others to decide in view of their formal but unlawful obligations on the one hand, and on

the other, the security of society, and the purity of the church. We throw out no temptations for any one to violate the dictates of his conscience. But since these secrets are exposed to the world, the nature of the relation which the initiated now sustain to the uninitiated is very different from what it was before. Though your masonic brethren in this quarter, did not at first, yet they *now* begin to feel the weight of this truth. They awkwardly attempted to preserve a silent tongue, according to the prime virtue of masonry, but the truth was more and more confirmed by witnesses of unquestionable veracity, and by a course of events which spoke a still more unequivocal language. Many persons who understood their obligation as well as yourself, entered into discussions on various points, in which they *tacitly* at first, and afterwards *directly*, admitted the truth of what has been revealed. This perhaps you may look upon with displeasure, but it is more than probable, we think, that had you been here, you would have been led into a similar course. For example you confide to us an important matter as a *secret*, which we faithfully keep as such, agreeably to promise; but in process of time, the secret, not by our means or consent, is *widely* divulged.

Our obligations to you then *cease*. We may then speak of the matter freely; because we can no longer do what we promised to do, were we ever so much *disposed*. We cannot keep that as a secret which is known to every one. And were we to attempt to make an impression, that what is revealed is *not* true, either in letter or spirit, it would be of the nature of *falsehood*—and the guilt of falsehood and imposture would be upon our souls at the day of judgment. The case is precisely the same with those whom you would style “true hearted masons” who put on a face of mystery, and insinuate, that their secrets are not divulged. They must feel, that the taint of falsehood cleaves to them and that this course enhances their condemnation.

In the trial of your secrets, therefore, as you have been pleased to term it, we were not alone, nor were we the *first*. They who have taken more degrees than yourself, entered first upon their trial. If they must be reproached and calumniated who presume to call in question, what you still revere, we shall not stand alone you perceive, under this calumny.

But sir, we feel prepared, to take what you may consider *high ground*, that secret societies are *unlawful*. We do not mean to assert it as a fact, that we have any special statutes which prohibit them—but we mean that such an institution

as yours is highly dangerous in its tendency to the best interests of society. What we have to state here may be offensive to some of your brethren, but we hope not to yourself. We say therefore that, towards masons we indulge no hostile feelings. If we give offence to any, it is from an imperious sense of duty—not from personal resentment.

We here remark again that we are unable to perceive how we can discuss this question with you and come to the point in hand, which is to vindicate the propriety of our resolution, without freely examining the nature of your institution, which now stands all unguarded by the Tyler's sword.

FIRST—We do not regard your institution with any friendly feeling. We wish it prostrated to the ground never to rise again. We are not in favor as you are, of having its “implements &c. laid up in the choicest of cabinets,” nor of having the least vestige of it left to her “vigorous successors”—but we wish it to come to a complete and an everlasting end. You have something to say in favour of the lawfulness of secret societies. In page 9th, you say, that “of their intrinsic lawfulness, I have no doubt,” and that “for any government to forbid them, would in my view, be rank tyranny.”

1. We oppose this opinion, first, by a view of some circumstances of the case. In this country, the people, who are always the best judges of their own interest, govern—and if they are disposed to prohibit by law, the existence of secret societies, there is no tyranny in the case; for it is absurd to suppose that the people, in the free exercise of their prerogatives, will oppress themselves. Therefore should it ever become the *popular* opinion, that secret societies ought not to exist, the omission to prohibit them by law would be “rank tyranny” because this omission would give indulgence to the *few* without an express right, to trample on the privileges of the *many*. As the case now is, and has been, for many years in our country, the masonic institution is an “imperium in imperio.” The prerogatives which it has assumed are *unchartered*. It has grown up by mere *indulgence*. Society at large should never be exposed, to be *practised upon* by a *few* “sons of light.” Masonry has been the instrument in the hands of bad men, of piratical depredations on the people. If the people have foes, it is right that they should see them and their weapons, and understand their plans—that they may have an equal chance for their lives. Masonry is such an instrument as we have in part described it; and there are many in whose hands it has been entrusted, who

were not dull in apprehending *for what purpose* the instrument is made.

2. Another argument against the "intrinsic lawfulness" of this secret society is the great *facility* which it affords for secret transactions of an immoral character. This forms a solid objection to it which can never be passed over. These transactions which are to be kept secret under the sanction of the severest penalties, is a temptation to the greatest enormities and affords precisely such securities against detection and punishment as the vilest of men desire. The good can never need such securities, and the bad do not deserve them, nor is it safe for society that they should have them. If a man is always obliged to act *openly*, he is strongly induced to act *honestly*. But give him an opportunity to act *secretly* and the security against punishment, which masonry guarantees, with great strength and a dreadful energy, and he will act more agreeably to the selfish propensities of a sinful heart. Continue in existence your society, and many will be disposed to cultivate the bad principles of their nature; abolish it, and they will be disposed to cultivate the better principles. Thieves, robbers, and counterfeiters do not mature and discuss their plans in open assemblies, but in *secret*; "neither come they to the light because their deeds are evil." They may cultivate the "friendships and honour" peculiar to themselves, as masons may cultivate the dispositions peculiar to their unlawful compact, but on the whole, the *character* is greatly impaired, and society is injured.

3. In maintaining your views, you hypothetically say, page 9, "if these secrets injure no one from their very nature, they must be referred to the day when all secrets will be disclosed." But we reply, that such is the *nature* of your secrets, when joined with the *selfish nature* of man, that they will be injurious to society. To this rule there may be exceptions, but the rule itself is founded upon the broad and philosophical view of the *human character*. A *dagger*, from its *very nature*, injures no one; but put daggers into the hands of such men as those with whom you have confided your secrets, and they are dangerous instruments. We do not approve of their being worn, for the purpose of practicing upon others who wear them not. Harmless as the instrument of masonry is in itself, good men ought not to wish for it—and bad men do not deserve it. Our safety in our lives, character and property, in our prosperous application to business, and in our various privileges, guaranteed to us by the government under which we repose, requires that this instrument be

wrested from the hands of bad men—and consequently from all—because in constitutional provisions, distinctions are impracticable. As the case now is, with masonic magistrates, jurors, &c. &c. if we must appeal to such a court, with a *mason* for an antagonist, we go not with equal hopes or privileges for success. We may be wronged in such a manner as to obtain no redress by legal process; because perhaps, we cannot show that these masonic officers have in a *tangible* manner violated the *letter* of the law, although its *spirit* has been most corruptly disregarded.

We have another remark to make on the manner in which you are disposed to express yourself, concerning these secrets, that “they must be referred to the day when all secrets will be disclosed.” What is your *meaning* here? Is it, that your secrets cannot be known? Deceive not yourself, nor vainly attempt to deceive others—for they *are* known. Or, do you mean, that if they are known, the public cannot touch them now—that they are not to enjoy the liberty of examining the *nature* of this extraordinary code, thus thrown out before their gaze? And if so, by what legitimate authority is this liberty abridged, and this silence of the tongue imposed? In our view, these revelations *are things of this world*, and men will judge them according to the light which God hath given to them.

But you proceed page 9, and make the following declaration, in favour of the *lawfulness* of your society, “that I know nothing in our secrets which appears to one contrary to the word of God or the rights of men—and that I never had the least suspicion that there was any masonic penalty worse than expulsion.”

With respect to this first clause, we have already remarked in substance, what we deem sufficient—on the last clause, we say, that such assertions are by no means new things to us,—we have, long since, understood them. We know what is pledged to those who are about to be initiated, when in the preparation room, that nothing is to be imposed which will injure their “religion or their politics.” We also understand how masonry is “explained” to some candidates, who are horror struck at the oaths? we grant that there is a favourable commentary on such passages—yet we also understand the commentary on those same oaths, whenever there is an intended revelation of your secrets—we have the commentary in the murder of Morgan—it is written in blood—Perhaps you and your conscience rest easy under the *one* comment, but *we* cannot under the other. But on this point,

there is a wide difference of opinion in the interpretation of those tremendous oaths; among your own brethren the most of them understanding the penalties according to the legitimate construction of the language. While therefore there is the difference of opinion on this fundamental article, among your own brethren, and while you are still disposed to defend masonry in the gross, you cannot expect us to feel satisfied with the continued existence of an institution which contains such provisions; for whenever a great occasion arises the penalties are inflicted by some of your brethren, (the rest standing by,) and if the deed comes to light, nothing is more convenient for you to say, that those executioners did not *properly interpret their obligations*, and still you go on and support the institution? An institution from which such outrages will proceed more or less frequently, as naturally as water runs down hill. Where are the men to be found who will support your institution? We reply, that they must never be found among the number of those whom we may in future ordain to the work of the ministry. Now sir, with all these facts and considerations before you, can you not possibly see any thing against the "intrinsic lawfulness of such secret societies?" But such is the strange infatuation of men on some questions and on particular occasions, that possibly you will come out again and attempt to say some plausible things in favour of *masonry in the gross*—that the conduct of a great number of your brethren has fallen below their "avowed principles" and that we here only discover the abused principles of masonry, as in many instances we may notice the abused principles of christianity—all this may pass off with the negligent and superficial as being very fine; though in our estimation, it is neither *solid* nor safe. For you may grace the hilt of the *dagger* with as many sparkling diamonds as you please, but they do not blunt the point.

But masonry, like the responses of the heathen oracles, is on some points exceedingly indefinite and flexible—with some it is a very mysterious thing indeed, and with those who look upon it with a stupid and unsuspecting wonder, there is nothing which takes so happily as your fine eulogiums coming from "a full heart." It is so ancient, so venerable—such great names on the list of membership—so much like christianity!! But when we ask, what man has it made wise; what is the answer, but silent confusion? The *general* rule is this, that could the nature of this mysterious thing be known before hand, wise and good men would not have been juggled into it. On the unsuspecting; it has play-

ed off mere tricks and practised more impostures than any thing else excepting the church of Rome. See the simple, the wise and great ones of this world in their passage from one degree to another, hoping to catch something by and by, and sometimes thinking they were close to it—one more step, and then! and what then? why then, all this reminds us of the ludicrous chase of our childhood to catch the rainbow.

We have only to add here to the preceding remarks, on the “intrinsic lawfulness” of your institution, that if you permit the question to be decided by scriptural maxims, the decision will be against you. Every thing which is thus secret does not meet with the approbation of the New Testament. The principle which induces any company to perpetual secrecy, must be selfish and corrupt—or it would not have received the direct denunciation of our Lord who knew what was in man—and therefore renders the true reason for secrecy, when he said “neither come they to the light because their deeds are evil.”

Your comparison of the man who renounces masonry, with him who apostatizes from christianity, can avail you nothing, provided the intention is to insinuate that there is a similarity of *guilt* accompanying the oaths—because christianity has no secrets in the same sense which masonry has. Your intention is to show that each injures his brethren whom he leaves behind—and that you could not renounce masonry for that reason—a position which is wholly indefensible—for if when you leave masonry, you do not tell the truth, it cannot injure those who still abide by it—it injures yourself.—But if when you renounce masonry you *do* tell the truth, it cannot injure those whom you leave behind, because the truth injures no one, but is just to all men—but if you still maintain that the truth *does* injury to those whom you leave behind, then the valid conclusion is that your institution is bad—and you ought to come out from it, at all events. Take either route, you run into this dilemma.—Because when one apostatizes from christianity and does not tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, faithful christians whom he leaves behind, can correct it, and they are willing to do so—and the Bible is before all men, for an examination. So also when one renounces masonry, and does not tell the truth, “true hearted masons” can correct it and the secrets of masonry are now before all men for examination. No one can apostatize from Christ, and yet be a good man. But for one to renounce masonry (we do not say that he shall reveal special secrets) on conscientious principles, as many have

done; particularly when about to make a public profession of religion, or enter the ministry, adds lustre to his character as a christian. One of ourselves had such a Father, who, when he became a christian, left masonry and masons and walked no more with them. The radical principles of christianity are such as strongly unite a good man to this course, who wishes for a conscience void of offence. These considerations which respect *his time, his habits, his companions*, and which respect the *nature and object* of the *one* institution when compared with those of the other, clearly lead to such a course. You sir, and ourselves agree in a number of cases, we all detest an apostate from Christ, and we all love apostates from heathenism, Judaism, and Mahomedanism to *christianity*. You detest the man that renounces masonry—but we love him—and here we *differ*.

After all, we are glad that you are now willing to give your suffrage against the *continuance* of secret societies—and your expressions in favor of christianity when compared with masonry, do honour to your understanding and your heart.

Christianity conceals nothing precious, but it seeks to dispense light, mercy and happiness to the whole world. On the contrary, much as has been given to masonry for its decoration, it gives nothing back.—And now sir, if you have seen any truth, purity or loveliness *appended* to masonry, we would most affectionately invite you to pause and inquire, from whence were they derived? Is not the *Lord Jesus Christ* the supreme religious teacher of all men? Has there any other light which is equivalent to this, come into the world? All truth on moral and religious subjects come from God; and therefore give God the glory. If then you appropriate any moral excellence to masons, we hope that you will not do it because they are indebted to masonry, but because they have been taught of God. On this point, we adopt the same process of inquiry with a mason as with a Mahomedan. We ask him, is there any truth and goodness in your Koran? He answers in the affirmative. But you will unite with us in the opinion, that all this truth and goodness are from the Scriptures. If then there is a correct process of argumentation with a follower of the false Prophet, why not correct in its application to a friend of masonry? We shall therefore surely come to the conclusion, that every thing excellent which is appended to it, is derived from Divine revelation.

In this political hurricane, which agitates the waters, you are not to suppose that we justify every thing which anti-masons say and do.—We are in favour of the freedom of

the press, and the truth may be heard—that capital crimes may not be concealed—that religion and law may be respected—that the people may not be entangled in a masonic web, and that masonry may cease to be the machine to acquire wealth, or the ladder to office. And when this object is obtained, there will be found but few who will cleave to it, solely for its intrinsic merits.

As to the cause which the people have espoused, it is their constitutional right to pursue it. We say to them go on—be bold, be just and inflexible. Shrink not before the wand of masonic patronage and power. And imbibe in yourselves the good spirit of your revolutionary fathers who were never indifferent to the fortunes of their country.

We have heard from not a few of your brethren, very severe remarks directly to the discredit of masonry as though its fall would promote the best interests of society—and in the next breath, have spoke as decidedly against anti-masonry. If anti-masonry is to be put down in this way, masonry will rise, because it will struggle for a pretracted existence. Can any friend of humanity inform us, how masonry is to be abolished, but by the spirit of anti-masonry? Whoever is in favour of the abolition of masonry—and at the same time condemns anti-masonry is inconsistent with himself. Whoever expresses these wishes and yet *does* nothing to effect the object, either has no moral courage to differ openly in his opinions from the masons, or is an unprincipled and time serving man, to whom neither the church of Christ nor his country can look for aid in a time of trial and of danger.

Can you pray for the abolition of heathenism, and at the same time oppose Christianity? And if your opposition to christianity is successful, how is heathenism to be abolished? What foe has heathenism which will ensure its abolition except christianity? And what foe has masonry which will ensure its abolition, except anti-masonry? The cases are equally plain—and here we wish to strengthen the minds of friends who are surrounded by sophists, whose object is, to scatter darkness and not light on the paths of men—and to weaken the best of their purposes.

Towards the conclusion of your letter, you have made, as well as in other places some very singular remarks. Page 19th. "And now Brethren I wot that through ignorance, ye did this dreadful deed." viz. We judged it unbecoming the purity and dignity of the gospel ministry, to put masons into the office of the ministry—and this from the well known

corruption of the masonic institution—this is our “dreadful deed.” You then proceed and say “and therefore I cannot only pray, but most confidently hope that you may obtain mercy.” With respect to such observations as these, we are not inclined to make any severe remarks—and only say in reply, that the time has been, when we said nothing against masonry simply because we professed to know nothing of it; but our claim now is, that our situation for judging of its merits is *changed*—we can see the image of the *Beast* as distinctly as any one, and the imputation of ignorance can no longer be so triumphantly urged—Your *first*, and only *legitimate* and *fair* proceeding is, to invalidate the testimony on which our resolution is founded. If you undertake this, you undertake a great work—one, to which you nor no other man is competent. Consider, we seriously ask you, for one moment, the spirit of your institution which induces one of its devoted friends to treat us in this manner. For you have assumed in your letter—1st, that no one can judge of your secrets but yourselves, (yet they are revealed) and 2d, that we can come to no conclusion respecting the nature of your institution. To adopt the softest terms in reply—we say that this is an *arbitrary* mode of treating ministerial brethren who are supposed to be endowed with reason, but which will by no means impose silence upon the speech of freemen.

Again you say on page 8th, “that your decision was wide from justice, I have not the shadow of a doubt.”—In reply to this ovacular judgment, we say, that when we see an object with our own eyes, we only claim the humble privilege of deciding about its dimensions, figure and color; and when we come to the knowledge of the truth concerning any institution or code, we in like manner, only claim the humble privilege of deciding upon the nature of that institution or code, according to the common dictates of the human understanding and the lights of the present age. The moral faculty with which we are endowed in common with other men, brings us with unerring accuracy to right decisions on many questions of right and wrong, as you yourself will admit—and why not in this? The question then arises, whose judgment, in this case ought to be set aside, *yours* or *ours*? We say that you are *committed*, and cannot decide impartially—or if in your own breast, you have at the present time right judgment, yet with your present singular scruples about what you style “the secrets of masonry”—you dare not express that judgment. But setting aside our own judgment in this case on the ground of our incompetency or ignorance, which you

are pleased to impute to us, we will resort solely to masonic authority.—We can bring against the authority of your own name, that of those who are four degrees or more beyond yourself in masonry, who are the ministers of Zion in the Presbyterian Church, and who have not yet publicly renounced masonry, and who assure us that our decision *is just*. Now on whose judgment then shall the public rely, *yours*, or *theirs*, or our *own*.

When we adopted that resolution, which is styled a “dreadful deed” there had been passing before us a flood of evidence irresistibly clear and strong, which no one has attempted to impeach—we had prayed to the great Head of the Church—and in that act, committed ourselves to his care, with a conscience, in this thing void of offence.

If the secrets of your institution were of such a nature that you and your brethren could *glory* in them, would you be so seriously disturbed by their revelation? Is not this the source of your perturbation, that the revelation of your secrets necessarily tends to bring those to shame who avow an attachment to them? If any thing honourable to your sacred profession had been brought to light, would your quiet have been disturbed? and would you not have looked on with self-gratulation that one more item was to be passed to your credit?

In attempting to praise masonry, you have said things in commendation of excellent men who have been so unfortunate as to become members of the institution, that they have aided in introducing “this distinguished era of light and salvation” and have been “the almoners of the divine bounty to make you a member of the American Bible Society,” yet after all the excellencies ascribed to them, masonry is by no means the source of them. And so far as you succeed in making an impression upon any one in favour of *Masonry* itself, that these benefits flow from it, you rob the author of revelation, of the glory which is due to him alone. By whose spirit, and by what system of moral and religious truth, were these masons moulded into this fair image? One moments reflection will be sufficient to convince one of your reputed orthodoxy, that to ascribe these excellencies to the intrinsic influence of masonry is perfectly indefensible.

When you make assertions without proof, that masonry has, on the whole done good, we wish you not to be offended when we call this in question. You speak as though it had been the means of accelerating the progress of science, literature, the arts and religion, but you have not told us *how* this has been done.

We do not pretend to say that the murder of Morgan was officially authorized by any Lodge, Chapter or Encampment, that all of your honest brethren were consulted on the question concerning his disposal.—Nor did the horrid deed naturally proceed from the kind dispositions of many of your brethren, but it very naturally proceeded from the rules of your institution, by which your brethren supposed themselves to be bound. According to these plain rules of masonry, we do say, that many of your brethren did, in this case, assume a jurisdiction over the liberty and life of an American citizen to which they were not entitled—that, after the fatal deed was perpetrated, they, together with many more of their brethren, did their utmost to conceal a crime—that they have since pursued a course which justifies every honest man in regarding them as the enemies of our country—for by their instrumentality our laws have been trampled to the dust. The freedom of the press is as favourable to civil liberty in our country, as the freedom of mind in the individual, is, to the acquisition of truth. In common cases of murder, the press has been permitted to proclaim it far and wide, but in this case the censorship of European despots was never more extraordinary—the channel of communication was choked up, and ridiculous falsehoods were spread in every direction, to “hoodwink” the people.—Masonic patronage was immediately withdrawn from those editors who presumed to publish the truth. Some were threatened with vengeance, and many of them turned pale at the wand of masonic power. On the opening of this novel scene, masons uttered strange and inflammatory speeches, like the following.

“Morgan was a perjured wretch”—“he deserves to have his throat cut”—“it is wholly a masonic concern, the people have no business to meddle with our rules of discipline”—“if Morgan has revealed the secrets of Masonry, he can’t live.” Such and many other similar speeches, we have heard with our own ears. There can be no doubt with respect to any matter of fact which we state, for there are thousands of our fellow citizens who are witnesses of the same, or of similar facts.—We have been in the midst of the scene and profess to know what events have passed before us. When we first opened our eyes, we were astonished to see the masonic chain in its dreadful strength by which we were bound. Our constables, justices, jurors and sheriffs were mostly masons. Only a few criminals have been convicted—and considering the conspicuous part they took in the tragedy, those criminals were very slightly pun-

ished. The masons cling to the guilty for their defence, as if they were the dearest members of their family ; for if they were to do otherwise, these guilty conspirators would come out, and tell the whole truth, which would cast over the front of masonry a deeper blush of shame than all the revelations of Morgan.

Under such abuses, it would be improper for American citizens not to apply the constitutional remedy in the case. It would be to their perpetual disgrace, if they were not to seek the redress of their wrongs, by rendering masonry wholly unprofitable and by never more extending to masons the favour of their suffrage. No sound man can admit it to be the right of masons to prescribe to our citizens the candidates for their patronage. We take from no one the right of suffrage, but are disposed to defend this right on those principles which constitute the safety of our country. There is on this point, a threadbare assertion that we disfranchise masons—but we do it no more than Jackson-men disfranchise Adams-men—or than Adams-men disfranchise Jackson-men. The truth is that in this contest, so far as it is politically concerned, each party goes to the extent of his power, to keep the members of the other out of office. While the masons stand thus arrayed against us for the most selfish of purposes, and while their institution is so well known to be of the most dangerous tendency, they will and ought to be opposed by all the firm friends of freedom ; and where they find that the hope of their gains is gone, they will not be disposed to adhere to masonry, simply on the ground of its intrinsic merits. And thus it will happen with this institution which has been built up and enlarged on the principles of the most consummate selfishness, it will be brought down to ruin by the same principles.

With respect to the vicious and dangerous tendency of the multiplication of oaths, there are many who remember the historical fact, that in this state, a few years since, when the new constitution was under consideration, there was a general outcry against the introduction of so many oaths as had been administered under the old constitution. If, therefore, during that period of profound peace on the subject of masonry, such was the common sense of our citizens, what ought it to be now, in view of the huge piles of oaths which masonry discloses, and from which we shrink with horror? Is here not an impartial decision against the very basis of your institution?

It has been often remarked, that in consequence of the

excitement among the people, ministers and professing christians, ought not to speak upon the subject, nor introduce the question, in any shape into our churches. They are masons or their dupes who speak this language, and they represent, that if their advice is not complied with, the church will be divided—that there will be *masonic and anti-masonic churches*. In reply to all this *frightful stuff*, (for it deserves no better name,) we say that if there are any men in the church, who are disposed to adhere to masonry in preference to christianity, let them depart at once, for they are unfit to be in the church of Christ. They are no more wanted to advance the cause of pure religion in the world, than Gideon wanted a multitude of cowards to obtain the victory over the Midianites. The friends of the Redeemer should never be influenced by scare crows of this nature. Every church member or minister therefore who insinuates that he meditates such a schism, is to be suspected of rottenness at heart; for it must evidently be the decision of every real Christian to adhere to the church of God in all her vicissitudes. We may possibly have an opportunity of testing the character of some of our church members, as to their integrity, and the object of their love, whether it is masonry or christianity. If masonry is the object of their preference, they will adhere to it, although their christian brethren are offended—they will defend it where it is attacked—they will attend Lodges—become the associates of *Lodge-going-men*, whatever their character, spend their time unprofitably, and engage in childish, indecent and profane ceremonies. In such a case as this, where the interests of masonry clash with those of pure religion, we have supposed it to be no small impropriety for professing christians or ministers to adhere to the interests of masonry. By so doing, they injure their christian character; and your letter may serve to strengthen many in this great error.

We have observed the manner in which some have looked upon this excitement for two years, without committing themselves to either side—and at the same time, they have undoubtedly known the truth as clearly as ourselves. Some perhaps have been influenced to adopt this easy course by their *fears*—others, by a desire of *peace*, (tho' it is a peace on corrupt principles,) others by what they deemed to be the rules of prudence, and others, by an attachment to pecuniary and political advantage. And perhaps others were disposed to stand aloof, till it should be ascertained whether this anti-masonic stream would swell to a magnitude sufficient to

bear along on its waters the rest of the world; and if so, they might then enjoy plain sailing. This is the policy adopted by many in relation to reformatations which extensively and deeply affect the interests of men. In such cases, a few, as pioneers, go ahead to determine and clear the way, and when by their enterprise and industry it is thus prepared, the rest of the world are then ready to travel on the easy road. Our great ones in church and state, have showed too much of this time serving policy and degenerate style of action, which evince neither purity nor decision of character. They would have done honour to themselves, to the cause of truth and to their country, and have received the gratitude and blessing of thousands, if they had on this subject declared their minds as soon as the truth was known, *because all men are under obligations to give their attention more earnestly to the TRUTH than to the TURN of TIMES.*

LETTER OF THE
HON. CADWALLADER D. COLDEN,

UPON THE SECRET ORDER OF FREE-MASONRY.

Extracted from the sixth number of the Anti-Masonic Review and Monthly Magazine.

At a meeting of the citizens held at No. 66 Nassau-street, on the evening of the 20th inst. MR. ERASTUS ELLSWORTH, was called to the Chair, and C. C. BLATCHLY, chosen Secretary.

On motion of HENRY DANA WARD, Esq. resolved, unanimously, that a committee of three be appointed to address one or more of the most eminent men of this state who are Free-Masons, soliciting their opinion upon the general character and tendency of Masonic Societies, accompanied with such explanations and remarks as they may choose to make on the subject.

Resolved, unanimously, That the Chairman appoint that committee.

Whereupon, Mr. ELLSWORTH appointed Col. RICHARD VANICK, THOMAS FESSENDEN, Esq. and SAMUEL St. JOHN, Esq. to constitute that committee.

New-York, April 21st, 1829.

HON. CADWALLADER D. COLDEN,

SIR.—The undersigned, the committee appointed in pursuance of the above resolutions, recollecting you as a distinguished member of a sagacious and discriminating profession; having reason to remember you with respect and gratitude as Mayor of this city, and as their Legislative Representative at Albany and at Washington;

and reposing confidence in you as a MAN; and, being informed, moreover, that you are intimately acquainted with Free-Masonry, and have attained to its most elevated degrees, beg leave, in discharge of the trust committed to them, to solicit the communication of your opinion and judgment upon the tendency and effects of that institution, accompanied with such explanations and remarks as you may choose to make upon so interesting a subject. Entertaining opinions unfavorable to Masonic associations, on general principles, with much sincerity, and without a particle of hostility to Masons as individual men, the committee, as well as those they represent, are not only willing, but desirous to obtain light and truth upon a question, which, at present, so deeply agitates the community, from any quarter, Masonic or otherwise, whence it can be communicated, and from which it may be confidently anticipated, it will come unperturbed, as far as it is communicated at all.

With great respect, we are,

Your fellow-citizens, and ob't serv'ts.

RICHARD VARICK,
THOMAS FESSENDEN,
SAMUEL ST. JOHN.

MR. COLDEN'S ANSWER.

GENTLEMEN,

I do not think I ought to object to communicate in this manner, the sentiments I have long held, and have frequently expressed, in relation to Free-Masonry.

It is true that I have been a mason a great number of years, and that I have held very high masonic offices and honors. It is equally true, that I have, for a long time, ceased to have any connexion with the institution, because, I have believed, and do now believe, it is productive of much more evil than good. It is also true that I have on no fit occasion hesitated to express this sentiment.

It would not do any thing inconsistent with any obligation I may have, however inconsiderately, assumed. But I know nothing of masonry to render it so horrible as it would be in my estimation, if it obliged me to be silent when I thought its influences were pernicious. It would be detestable if it did not leave me at liberty to warn others from following my example, in becoming a member of an institution, of which, from its very nature, I must have been ignorant until I was initiated, and, of which, a just estimate can only be formed from experience.

I shall disclose none of the secrets of masonry, (if it now has any secrets,) nor shall I say any thing inconsistent with what is due to the eminent living, and illustrious dead, whose names are recorded as members of the fraternity. I have had a just pride in being associated with many of these, and now feel that I make a sacrifice in pursuing a course which may separate me from men, for whose pure motives and righteous principles, I shall never cease to entertain the most profound respect.

Discussions and expositions of the principles of masonry, of its origin, its religion, its morals, and its science, have not been considered as betraying any obligation; but on the contrary, have been sanctioned by the highest masonic authority. It is true that, till of late, masonry has always been a theme of panegyric; but if the advocates of the institution are free to speak of its merits, it cannot be a violation of duty in those who hold different opinions, to express them with becoming respect and deference.

I desire that it should be understood, that the sentiments I now entertain on this subject do not result from the alleged murder of Morgan. It is true this horrible event has induced me to think more, and more seriously than I should otherwise have done, of the society; but I have long entertained my present opinion, *that a man who would eschew all evil, should not be a Free-Mason*. Perhaps I cannot give a stronger evidence that this is not an opinion recently formed, than to mention that my son, by my advice, has never joined the fraternity.

I cannot mention the deplorable event to which I have referred, without exculpating, so far as any thing I can say will do it, the masonic fraternity from any participation in that outrage. For a long time I did not believe that Morgan had been put to death. But I find myself obliged to yield to the force of evidence. I yet entertain the most entire confidence that the fraternity did not participate in this crime. On the contrary, I do not doubt, but that all the guilt of that transaction, is confined to those infatuated men who assailed and slew him. The rest of the craft, I am entirely convinced, are as innocent of the blood of Morgan as I am. I fully believe that they hold the perpetrators in just abhorrence; they would rejoice if the guilty were discovered, and would aid in bringing the murderers to condign punishment.

I do not believe that those who committed this crime, had any intention to take the man's life when they first assailed him. Under the influence of an enthusiasm which the forms and mysteries of masonry are so likely to excite in weak minds, they thought it would be meritorious to inflict some punishment for what they considered his delinquency. But they proceeded from step to step, until they found they had involved themselves in a responsibility that would be ruinous, if Morgan should be left to call them to account. A frantic interpretation of their masonic obligations, and their fears, assisted, probably, by corporal stimulants, led them to stain their hands with the blood of their victim. If these conjectures be well founded, however little they will extenuate the crime of the murderers, the proof of such facts, would exonerate the great body of the craft from any participation in the guilt. But an institution, the forms, or obligations, or mysteries of which, can be so perverted, or so misunderstood, even by the weakest minds, as to induce a belief, that it may be meritorious to murder an apostate brother, no good man, on due consideration and reflection, can think deserving of his countenance and support.

If it be asked, what are the advantages of Masonry? It seems to

me the answer may be given in these very few words: It often, by its charity, relieves the distressed. But at what an enormous expense is this charity dispensed? When all the machinery of Lodges, Grand Lodges, Chapters, Encampments, Councils, Visitors, &c. &c. is taken into consideration, it must be obvious, that the charitable contributions of masons are but trifles in comparison with the sums devoted to these objects. It may be doubted, whether all that has ever been applied to the charitable funds of the institution, would equal a hundredth part perhaps I might say a thousandth part, of what has been expended by masons, for their temples and their decorations, for personal trappings, for jewelry, for funerals, for processions, for festivals, and in the conviviality so inseparable from the meetings of the fraternity.

Let it be admitted, however, that the institution does relieve the poor and distressed to the greatest extent. Are the secrecy and the ceremonies of masonry necessary for the exercise of any virtue? Is it necessary that any set of men to be charitable, should do their deeds by night, in hidden places? That they should, by awful ceremonies, establish a relationship among themselves, which many of them believe imposes duties and obligations in reference to each other, different from those by which they are bound to the rest of mankind? Many of the fraternity feel themselves obliged, in whatever situation they may be placed, to suffer an appeal from a brother mason to have an influence. Offenders have persuaded themselves they could claim an exemption from punishment as masons; and even at the bar of a court of justice, a criminal has thought the secured impunity, by revealing to the judge, who was about to pronounce his sentence, their masonic relationship.

If masonry separates the members of the craft from their fellow-citizens; if masons are led to believe that their duty towards each other is different from what it is to the members of the community not connected with them; if a mason is bound to shield another from the general operation of the laws, or if he be subjected to any penalties beyond those denounced by the legislature; nay, if even a feeble minded man is made to believe that by becoming a mason, he enlists in an isolated corps, the members of which may claim privileges through their brethren, and must perform duties which do not belong to other citizens, it cannot be a fit institution in our country, where no man in the discharge of his duties to the community, should act from fear, favor, or affection.

It is often alleged that masonry engenders and cherishes the social affections, by bringing men together with kindly feelings towards each other. It is not to be doubted but that a well regulated social intercourse, has a beneficial influence on the disposition and character of mankind. But again, it must be asked, why is the secrecy, the parade, and the obligations of masonry necessary, if their objects be so virtuous? It is to be feared, however, that these meetings have not always a happy influence. Admitting that the utmost decorum and propriety are observed, while a lodge is open, yet the craft seldom separate without refreshment; and it often happens, that

more is taken than is necessary to repair the exhaustion of their labors, and too frequently, more than is consistent with temperance.

Attendance upon lodges sometimes leads to habits which are inimical to the prosperity and happiness of the members and their families. Every meeting of a lodge is attended by visitors, and as there are generally, even in the country, several lodges within the compass of ten or twenty miles, opportunities for these visitations frequently occur. Often the habit of making them renders a man, who would otherwise have been content with his own fireside, impatient at home, and desirous to exchange for the excitement of a masonic banquet, those enjoyments of his domestic circle with which he would have been perfectly content had it not been for the seductions of the craft.

Did I know of any other advantage than these two, charity and the cultivation of social dispositions, which any rational man at this day, imputes to masonry, I would not fail to mention it.

But, it is to be objected to masonry, not only that no good comes of it, but that it is productive of positive evils. To some of these I have already adverted, and will notice others which have presented themselves very forcibly to my mind, and I may say to my conscience.

If masonry is arrogant and impious in her pretensions, and delusive in her promises, surely she deserves to be discountenanced. If she claims to be coeval with the world, and to be of divine origin, when in truth she is but as of yesterday, and springs from the dust of the earth, what obligation can there be that should induce any man to hesitate to speak of her according to her demerits?

That operative or practical masonry was one of the earliest arts practised by mankind, is very probable. We may suppose that masons, as well as other trades, very soon formed themselves into separate societies, and adopted regulations, the better to establish and secure their interests. The employment of Masons naturally brought them, as builders and architects, more than the members of any other trade, in contact with the wealthier and higher orders of society. Men as distinguished for their science as for their rank, were placed at the head of congregations of operative masons. It then became an honor to be an associate of these bodies. Members were admitted who were not operatives. These soon changed the nature of the institution by which they had been adopted, or as their term is, accepted; and, instead of the objects of the assemblies of masons being operative masonry, they were converted to lodges of speculative Masons, in which the tools and instruments of the former humble trade were retained to be transmuted into symbols of all the virtues and duties of mankind.

No man, at this day, who has taken the least pains to examine the subject, can doubt that this is the origin of Free-masonry, or that the change from operative to speculative masonry took place in very modern times. The masonic society has no more pretence to a divine origin, than the societies of stationers, butchers, bakers, carpenters, or any other trade. These, for ages, have had, like operative

masons, their assemblies, in which their worshipful masters and wardens have presided; but they have been left in obscurity because their occupations did not bring them in familiar intercourse with men of wealth and power.

The first three degrees of masonry, when traced back to the actual labors of the craft, may claim some sort of antiquity; but as to all the numerous grades above these, (I think to the number of fifty,) they are of very modern invention, and are but the contrivances of ambitious or artful men to gratify their own vanity, or to obtain money from the vanity and folly of others. They have raked from the bigotry and chivalry of the dark ages of the old world, the names of certain orders, which never had any connexion with ancient masonry. These modern institutions are no more branches of the masonic system, than they are of the orders, whose titles they assume.

The pretence that masons are possessed of any peculiar knowledge, is as fallacious as their claim to a supernatural and antediluvian origin. But if they possess all they pretend to have, of what advantage is it to themselves or to mankind? Suppose some cabalistic words have been preserved and transmitted by masons through ages, and that the fables they recite were true histories, how would it benefit themselves or their fellow men? The world must again be covered with that darkness which excluded all moral and scientific light, before such knowledge can be of any use even to the possessors.

But it is pretended that lodges are schools of the moral and physical sciences, and instruction in these is promised to those who join the fraternity. I have never heard of any attempt to impart any other moral instruction than that which could be conveyed by precepts like these; That masons must live within the compass; walk upright as the plumb; must deal on the square, and other such mystical advice. As to the sciences, the whole scope of instruction goes no further than frequently to remind the brethren that, the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, and rules the day, and that the moon rules the night.

That we may be in no danger of violating the secrets of masonry, of having our judgments biased by the antiquity it claims, or by respect for the many great and good men whose names are on the list of its votaries, let us for a moment put it out of view, and suppose that it were now proposed to establish a society, which, with awful solemnities, and dreadful denunciations, should impose secrecy on its members; that they should separate themselves from the rest of mankind, and establish an intelligence by which they could, under any circumstances, make themselves known to each other; and that the duties of the members, in regard to themselves, should be incompatible with the general order of society; that when a member of the association should make himself known to another, he might look to that other for special favor, whether it was to be dispensed at the polls of an election, from the jury-box, or from the bench. Suppose that the members of the association were bound

to screen each other, as far as in their power, from all evil, by concealment; or by more active exertions, to relieve them from all dangers and difficulties, however they might arise from demerit. Let us suppose that all these obligations were to be imposed with awful religious ceremonies, and with sanguinary and horrible penalties, of which each member should consider himself pledged to be the executor. We may suppose this institution to have many grades, and that, at every advance, there are new ceremonies, new oaths, and new penalties, the higher differing from the lowest only in grossness of absurdity, and impiety of imprecations. That the members of this new institution, decorated themselves with the trappings of royalty, and bestowed on each other sacerdotal, aristocratic, and even royal titles. If such a society were now to be proposed, who would hesitate to say that it would be profane and inconsistent with our religious, moral, social, and political institutions. One of the most serious objections which might be urged to such an institution, would be its frequent administration of oaths. There would be danger that even these obligations, however solemnly imposed, would become so familiar as to be little regarded; and the simple adjurations of a court of justice, administered with the least possible ceremony, would appear, when compared with the awful ceremonies of the society, to deserve but slight consideration. If the supposed oath imposed obligations which could not be fulfilled without a violation [of the duties of a citizen, and indeed without crime, every honest man would shrink from the literal interpretation of it, and would find a refuge in construing it so as to reconcile it to his conscience; rejecting such parts as he did not find acceptable. Oaths, with which there must be so much tampering, could not but have a pernicious effect on society. But these effects would be still more deplorable, were the oaths to be observed according to their letter.

Masonry disclaims all interference in political matters. If, in this country, she has taken any part in the contentions of politicians, it has only been of late. While I was connected with the society, I had every reason to believe that she observed the forbearance she avows. But it must be obvious, that the whole machinery of the institution is peculiarly adapted to political intrigue; and though, in our country, its influence may not have been perceived by any party, yet we see that in a sister republic, so far from its being considered the duty of the fraternity to keep apart from politics, the parties whose dissensions distract the commonwealth, are arranged under different masonic denominations. Scotch masons and York masons, in that country, no less designate masons of different sects, than they do partizans of different politics. If lodges may be converted into secret political clubs, they ought to be feared in a free country.

It has often occurred to me as a little extraordinary, that in this republican country of ours, where we claim to be such pure democrats, there should be manifested in those who become masons, such a passion for finery, pageantry, dignities and titles. One who affects to despise the blue or red ribband, the star and garter of an English lord, or the coronet of a foreign prince, clothes himself with the ut-

most complacency, in all the colors of the rainbow, and decorates himself with as many jewels and medals, as are worn by an Indian chief. He expects from the fellows of his community, to be addressed by the titles of Worshipful, Most Worshipful, Excellent, Most Excellent, Illustrious, and Most Illustrious, with as much certainty as the greatest despot in the world requires from his slaves a recognition of the rank he assumes. We see from the masonic notices daily published in our papers, that knight, prince, and even king, are familiar titles by which those to whom they belong are always addressed by their brethren in their assemblies. "To his most illustrious highness,—prince of the royal secret of the thirty third degree," is a title which emblazons the name of many a good republican in this community. Foreigners must think we are not less fond of the show, and trappings, and titles of aristocracy and royalty, than any other people; when they see that we are so eager to adopt them, in the only way tolerated by our political constitutions.

It is true there is something of equality in this, inasmuch as every man, of every grade, and every complexion, may be invested with all the finery, and the magnificent titles of the order. All others, however, are rivalled by the splendor of the black lodges of this city, headed by their respectable and worshipful masters.

I have known many persons whose brains have been turned by their elevation from humble occupations to royal titles and imaginary thrones. Indeed I have never known a very great mason, who was not a very great fool. I beg to be understood. I do not mean by very great masons, those who have stood highest in the estimation of the craft, and who have attained the highest masonic honors. I do not forget that the names of Washington, Clinton, Warren, La Fayette, Franklin, Robert R. Livingston, Jackson, and Marshall, are justly the boast of the fraternity; nor is it possible that I should ever forget that I have seen many venerated clergymen, sanctifying by their presence and their prayers, the labors, as well as the refreshments of a lodge. But I mean by great masons, those who are proud of their pompous titles; who are fond of decorations; who persuade themselves that the affairs of the world turn upon masonry; that without it, society could hardly exist, or if it did, would be deprived of its fairest ornament, and most beneficial arrangement.

It may be asked how it happens that I should have been so long a mason and not until this time expressed my disapprobation of the institution.—It is true, it is nearly forty years since I became a member of the masonic fraternity, but I began to question its utility long ago. It must be fifteen or twenty years since I belonged to any lodge, and some eight or ten years that I have not been within the walls of a lodge room. During this time, I have not hesitated to express opinions in accordance with what I have now written. When I was hardly twenty-one years of age, I was initiated in a lodge in New-York, which was distinguished for the respectability of its members. All of these I knew must have submitted to whatever would be required of me. My confidence that they would not have done any thing wrong, induced me to pass through the required forms with very little—too little consideration. A like deference for the example of others, led me from step to step, with the same inconsiderateness. It was not till the buoyancy of youth had passed, that I began

to see the vanity and folly, and as I thought, the evil tendency of masonry. Morgan's fate has, I acknowledge, strengthened the unfavorable impressions I entertained previously to his murder. Since that event, I have thought the institution not only idle and useless, but this horrible catastrophe has evinced that its mysteries may engender infatuation that will stop at no crime. Since that event I have believed it would be a relinquishment of a duty I owed to society, if I suffered my respect for those venerated men who have left the world to believe that Masonry was approved by them, to prevent me from expressing the convictions of my own mind of its merits. The example of the many who have stood as high in the ranks of masonry as in the estimation of the world, would have induced me to have buried my own thoughts in silence. I should have been awed by their opinions could I be sure that these patrons, of whom masonry so justly boasts, deliberately examined the merits of the institution; but when I reflect how many years of my life were passed before I gave the subject due consideration, I cannot but suppose that they, like myself, for a long time, may have been content to rest on the example of their predecessors, and that they have left their successors free to express their opinions. If these are unfavourable to masonry, no one can say that they are in opposition to what would have been the deliberate judgment of the persons whose great examples are considered of such authority.

I am happy that the letter I have had the honor to receive from you, affords me an opportunity to express, in such a manner as I presume will give them publicity, my sentiments on this subject. I have reason to believe they are in accordance with those of many good and respectable men who are masons; and who, I hope, will not by their silence, suffer their example in becoming masons to have an undue influence. I come forward the more readily at this moment, when I think no party, or unworthy motive can be imputed to me; when the excitement occasioned by the murder of Morgan, has subsided into a just abhorrence of the guilty; and when the question is not whether every mason is not a bad man, but whether masonry is not a bad institution. I believe that it does no good that might not be accomplished by far better means. Its secrecy and extensive combinations are dangerous. Its titles and trappings are vain, foolish, and inconsistent with our republican institutions. Its pretensions are absurd, fallacious and impious; and its ceremonies and mysteries are profane, and lead many to believe that they impose obligations paramount to the laws.—However limited the influence of my opinions might be, I should be sorry to end my life, leaving it to be believed that I had lived and died the advocate of an institution of which I entertained such views.

Having, agreeably to your request, freely expressed myself on the subject to which your letter refers, I have only to add, gentlemen, assurances of the respect with which I have the honor to be,

Your obedient humble servant,

CADWALLADER D. COLDEN.

COL. RICHARD VARICK,
THOMAS FESSENDEN, Esq.
SAMUEL ST. JOHN, Esq.

Committee, &c.

New-York, May 4, 1829.

