

working of the Masonic Body will confess, that while its principles would encourage conscientious devotion and loyalty to both Church and State, and every other relation of life, it would be quite impossible for any of its formal meetings to assume the character of a caucus.

It is not strange of course that Masonry should suffer this opprobrium in the minds of people who do not know, and from the nature of the case cannot fully know, her principles; since other benevolent societies have become such an easy prey to political adventurers. There is hardly any organization that has achieved numerical success, which has escaped the designs of these schemers. Societies established on principles of benevolence, for the amelioration of the race, have had all the virtue sucked out of them by these political vampires, Institutions which might have been the glory of any land, have crumbled into dust before the persistent and bare-faced energy of demagogues. And Masonry has lived three thousand years, and glows with her perpetual youth to-day, because she has shut her doors in the face of all fanaticism, and choked the first whisper of political preference within her walls. Let these two features of the comprehensive character of our Order suffice.

I shall not pause to answer the common objection, "If the principles of Masonry are so pure and the standard of morality so high and the obligations so sacred, why do we find so many Masons living immoral lives?" I will only say that Christianity is open to the same objection, and that if Christians and Masons alike lived more closely in accordance with their profession, we should have better Masons and better Christians.

Besides its instructive and comprehensive character, Freemasonry claims our attention because of its benevolent designs. It aims to succor the needy, relieve the distressed, and bind up the wounds of the afflicted. It seeks to promote Brotherly Love, that divine principle so conspicuous in the lives of Christ and His saints. One of the pillars on which the Institution rests is the Apostle St. John, the disciple whom, on account of the loveliness of his character, Jesus loved. That disciple whose constant theme was the love of God for His creatures, whose urgent appeal was that men should cultivate that love; and when age and weakness had disabled him from preaching, yet in every meeting of the Christians he raised his voice and said, "little children love one another." It is the purpose of our Order to carry out this heavenly precept, not merely adopting it as a motto on our banners, but giving it practical application in *works of beneficence*. How many a cold hearth has been lighted by Masonic torch. How many a weary widow's sighs and sorrows and cares have been alleviated by the holy ministries of the Order. How many an orphan has found a home under Masonic roof. How many a prodigal and dissolute liver has been brought back to a better mind and better life, because he found shelter from the scorching rays of sin and the world's bitter scorn, in the shadow of the Masonic altar. How many a house of mourning has been cheered by the tender and delicate attentions of men who, next to the bereaved family, had claims of love to honor the memory of the departed. All this is known to the God of the widow and fatherless and outcast. The good deeds were not paraded in the streets by brazen trumpets. Only a silent, modest spirit of beneficence, moving with loving steps, east, west and south in the lodge room, gathered with her wings the substantial tributes of affection, and under cover of the darkness, bore them to the needy, *Secrecy*, yes, but the *secrecy of love*: not loving others less, but loving some more. Christ loved all mankind, especially the twelve disciples; and yet but *one* of these was called the disciple whom Jesus loved, and lay upon his bosom. The same principle was enunciated by the apostle "do good unto all men, but especially unto them that are of the household of faith."

All mankind are the proper objects of our love. The question of race or religion or color or language should not exclude from the operations of our love, any who come within the reach of it. Yet in the practical application of this principle we shall necessarily, meet with limitations. Our efforts for unity and Brotherhood will sooner be crowned with success, if we begin the cultivation of love with those who surround us, rather than attempt in some utopian way to exercise it upon all men. What gives unity to a drop of water? What holds our earth together as one mass? What makes this vast universe a marvellous unit? Is it not the mutual dependence and attraction of a few particles of matter that lie next to each other? Would not confusion, aye another chaos, result from any change in this law of nature. Hence it is a good way, if not the best, to bind together into corporate effort, the natural longings of the heart for companionship and love, and with the added strength which unity imparts, inscribe the lesson upon the age. If it be called exclusiveness, we point to the tens of thousands in every land who swell the ranks. If it be said that our benevolence is narrow, let the answer be for those who scorn our system: Prove to the world by your own abundant charities that we have not reserved the patent to do good.

My friends, I have thus briefly and in general terms, brought to your notice some of