

Among his other religious ideas, this wonderful evangelist taught the people that nothing was more detrimental to the true progress of truth and vital piety among them than the existence of secret societies. He taught them that they were essentially sinful, and contrary to the genius of all progress, as well as all free governments. He insisted that no such people should be tolerated among them, and that all church members should come out from among them.

Ignorant and bigoted as this evangelist was he made converts among the churches, for many soon partook of his spirit, and in a short time a large portion of the church of which our brother was a member were anxious, yea, even zealous, for the total extermination of all secret societies, and more especially of the society of Freemasons, as it was supposed to be the most ancient of them all, and the mother of the whole brood of anti-Christian institutions.

The bitterness of spirit engendered was relentless and vindictive, and within a brief space a crusade was inaugurated of men, women and children to exterminate the last vestige of "the whore of Babylon," as the evangelist termed all secret societies. The church became the head-quarters, and the pastor himself assumed the leadership of the inquisition. Meetings were held weekly, and most devout prayers were offered for divine aid in the glorious work of driving from the land the secret organizations of the devil. Every one who had any connection with them was exhorted to come out from among them, on the pains and penalties of even "eternal damnation." If any persisted in remaining members of such godless institutions they were proclaimed as being infidels, or what was worse, they were proscribed as men unfit for any pure or social intercourse. All such were not to be dealt with, not to be employed, and above all, they were not to be *communed* with in the Holy Sacrament, as they were of their master, the devil. Under such circumstances the hero of our story was made to feel very sad, for he was told that unless he left the Masonic Order he would be "counted out" in his church membership, and that, too, without much ceremony. This seemed to be the decree adopted by the church, and from the spirit of the pastor and people, appeared to be as firm as the laws of the Medes and Persians, incapable of change or modification.

Of course he was deeply depressed in spirit, and at a loss what course to pursue. His advisory friends seemed to be few, and he waited with as much patience as he could muster up, to see the cloud blow over, but it was all in vain, for when he was at work one day in his shop he received the following note from his pastor, which he saw at once meant business of the most serious character:

PASTOR'S OFFICE, FAIRFIELD, March 25, 1749.

BRO. JOSEPH GRAFTON,—Our Congregational Association which held its session for this State during the past year, declared that no Christian could remain a member of a secret society, and as you are a member of the Masonic Fraternity, my church demands that you withdraw from such fellowship, or they will have to exclude you from the church.

Your brother,

WM. THOMPSON.

The reception of such a note from his pastor brought great sorrow to the heart of "Brother Joe," as he was called generally among his brethren, and after a night of deep thought and sound sleep he returned to his pastor the following answer:

FAIRFIELD, March 26, 1849.

To the Rev. WM. A. THOMPSON—Dear Sir,—I have been requested to meet you and the brethren in church-meeting to-day, in order to explain the cause of absenting myself from the meetings and ordinances of the church. I will endeavor, my dear brother, to do so, simply in writing. It is well known to you all that I am connected with one of the secret societies of the day, and it will also be remembered that the Association of the Congregational Church, which held its session in this place in 1848, passed a resolution denouncing such societies in the strongest language, and condemning all members of the church who were connected with any such secret organization. I look upon these resolutions as a direct vote of censure upon myself and others, but being conscious of my own integrity in the matter, and that the church, in this particular, has stepped aside from the path of duty to aim a blow at an institution whose principles are drawn from the Great Light of all truth, I have and still feel a reluctance in continuing my connection with the church.

You will remember, brethren, that at the time of my connecting myself with the church it was well known to some of you, if not to all, that I belonged to the Order of Freemasons, and as such I was admitted among you.

As it is now thought that a secret-society man cannot be a Christian, I would respectfully ask of you a certificate of dismissal from the church.

JOSEPH GRAFTON

Such was the result of a church crusade of ignorance and bigotry against secret so-