

minds certain of the ancient principles of our institution. By a firm adherence to the ancient landmarks, we shall best answer our own consciences, and best command the general confidence.

The Craft of Freemasons is not, in the dangerous and offensive sense of the word, a secret society. The roll of our membership may be known to all men. The principles of our organization, the rules and policy of our government, the spirit and method of our operation, and the nature of the objects we seek, are open to the critical observation of all who may be interested in the examination. These are all fully and at large set forth in our printed publications. The purpose of our society may be stated in a single word—it is to cultivate the knowledge of moral truth, and to recommend the performance of useful and virtuous actions, by the means of visible and ceremonial symbolism. We deem it proper and necessary to confine the knowledge of these symbols and ceremonies to our own membership, because we conceive that they can yield their fruit of instruction only to the careful and deliberate contemplation of the members of a society separately and especially devoted to that purpose. Beyond this, we have no secret mystery. We have no hidden purpose, for the present or for the future.

Nor do we seek to separate ourselves from the beneficent influences of modern thought and civilization. So far as wisdom and prudence from without can warn, instruct or admonish us, so far as it may be given to us to promote concord, justice, and the knowledge of the truth in the world about us, for the free passage of such influences as these, the gates of our mystic temple stand wide open night and day.

With the conflicts of political parties we have no concern, nor with any manner of plots or conspiracies against the established order in civil affairs. To the observance of this

rule we are bound by an unalterable, organic statute. We gratefully recognize the favor and protection we have received, and we desire for ourselves the character of good citizens in whatever station we may be placed. I have great confidence to say that no man could more surely forfeit the confidence and provoke the resentment of our members than he who should attempt to direct the influences of our society, in public affairs, for the advantage of any person or of any party.

But we are not without a settled opinion in political affairs. We believe that in rational liberty is the surest foundation of civil order; and when a steady denial of justice has made necessary the stern remedy of revolution, our brethren have not been wanting in the secret councils of patriotic conspiracy, or upon the open field of battle.

For yet weightier reasons we decline to be either the rival or the enemy of any church. We are unwilling that our teachings should seem in any degree to supply the place of the ministrations of religion. We do not presume to claim that our society is the channel of revelation of any essential truth; we but teach in our own way, truths which are the common heritage of all. We offer no sacrifice but the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to Him whom we revere as the Supreme Architect of the universe. In the words of our constitutions, "though in ancient times Masons were charged in every country to be of the religion of that country or nation, whatever it was, yet, 'tis now thought more expedient only to oblige them to that religion in which all men agree, leaving their particular opinions to themselves; that is, to be good men and true, or men of honor and honesty, by whatever denominations or persuasions they may be distinguished; whereby Masonry becomes the centre of union, and the means of conciliating true friendship among persons that must