

A

# SERMON,

DELIVERED AT SCHOHARIE,

BEFORE THE

## GRAND LODGE,

*AT THE INSTALLATION OF HICKS LODGE No. 305.*

July 4th, 1818.

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By HOOPER CUMMING, A. M.

*Pastor of the Third Presbyterian Church in the  
City of Albany.*

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1818.

Schoharie, July 7th. 1818.

SIR,

*In addition to the resolution of the GRAND LODGE which we had the honor to communicate to you on the 4th inst. it is now our duty as a Committee, to transmit the following resolution of Hicks Lodge.*

Hicks Lodge, July 4th, 1818.

*“Resolved, That the thanks of this LODGE be presented to the REV. HOOPER CUMMING, for his excellent discourse delivered this day, and that he be respectfully requested to furnish a copy of the same for publication.”*

*In forwarding the above, we would also express our individual feelings with those of the LODGE, and add our individual wishes that a compliance with their request may not be deemed inconsistent.*

*With much respect and personal esteem,  
Your obedient servants,*

HENRY HAMILTON, }  
JOHN LAWYER, } Com-  
G. H. HUBBARD. } mittee, &c.

REV. HOOPER CUMMING.



Albany, August 3d, 1818.

GENTLEMEN,

*In answer to your polite communication of the 7th ult. I remark, that nothing but an unusual and altogether unexpected pressure of professional duties would have prevented me from furnishing my manuscript for publication before the present time, agreeably to the request of HICKS LODGE.*

*With very little leisure for revision and correction, I now transmit the sermon, and hope that a short previous notice of the honour conferred on me by the solicitation of the GRAND LODGE to preach before them, and the constant recurrence of calls incident to the pastoral care of a numerous congregation, will apologize for all the imperfections of the discourse.*

*I am Gentlemen,*

*Very respectfully*

*Yours,*

HOOPER CUMMING.

*To Messrs.*

HENRY HAMILTON, }  
JOHN LAWYER, & } Committee, &c.  
G. H. HUBBARD. }

# SERMON.



JOHN 15. 12. “ *This is my commandment that ye love one another, as I have loved you.*”

**B**ENEVOLENCE is the prominent feature in the character of God. This induced him to create the world which we inhabit and there to place two holy Beings destined to give life to countless myriads, who after beholding on the earth the displays of his glory should be admitted to its full-orbed view in heaven.

OUR first parents were supremely blessed—for they were pure. No restless longings, no perplexing care, no collision of interest, no throb of envy, no pang of disappointment hung around the pursuit or the possession of earthly good. Their hearts dilated with love to their Benefactor, and to all the creatures he had made. But that fatal catastrophe which “brought death into the world, and all our woe,” filled the human heart with rebellion against God, and converted man into the enemy of man.

OUR first parents were probably ignorant of the fact that some of the angels had by transgressing the positive precepts of the Almighty forfeited his favor, and been consigned to everlasting punishment. Therefore, they anticipated no temptation. But these malignant spirits envied their happiness, and resolved on their destruction. The effort was but too successful. In an evil hour, pride enthroned itself in their hearts. They believed the misrepresentation of God’s

designs; they misconstrued his command, and desiring to be all that he was in knowledge and in power, they abandoned their rectitude, and became the prey of enemies the most ferocious.

SINCE that fatal era, jealousy, discord, malignity and war have deluged the earth with crimes and bloodshed.

BUT the gospel presents an antidote which when applied, proves most effectual. It teaches us that all men are our Brethren, and that therefore to all men without exception, our prayers, our good-wishes and our kind offices should extend. It inculcates patriotism, love of kindred, and more than these, universal charity. It enjoins as a vital part of true religion, the most strenuous and persevering efforts to repress malice, envy, revenge, and all manner of evil-speaking.

'Tis the peculiar glory of the christian system, that the benevolence which it exemplifies and enforces, is altogether more refined in its nature, and more extensive in its influence than that which has been embraced by any code of laws ever published to the world. Previous to the advent of the Son of God, love to mankind at large was an idea too vast to be comprehended by heathen philosophers and moralists. They satisfied themselves with inculcating love to our friends and neighbors, and especially to our country. The latter of these, they enjoined, as the first of moral duties, the most sacred of all obligations: and in their representation of that virtue, the refined, philosophical Greeks, and the haughty, imperious Romans perfectly concurred. Accounting all nations but themselves barbarians, they thought that to oppress them, and do them all manner of injuries, when it could be of any advantage to their own country, was not only innocent but meritorious. Hence it happened, that in Greece, the region of philosophy, divided into a multitude of petty states, engaged in perpetual contests, often in bloody wars, patriotism as well as benevolence was confined within very narrow limits.

THE Jews, though blessed with a divine revelation containing an infinitely purer system of morals, were little less contracted in their ideas, and utterly deficient in their prac-

tice of this cardinal virtue. Their favourite maxim was, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy." On this principle, the conduct of every man is formed, until his heart becomes the temple of the Holy Ghost. 'Tis the principle invariably of generous minds, while strangers to the influence of the gospel. But how widely different is such morality from that of Christ and his apostles ! Their uniform doctrine is, that all men being the creatures of one beneficent God, and descended from the same parents, belong to a common family which should never be agitated by the turmoils of selfishness and passion.

HONOURED with a request to speak in my Master's name to a Society formed for benevolent purposes, and whose fundamental principle is brotherly love, I knew not a more appropriate passage of the sacred writings on which to build my remarks, than that to which I now invite your attention. It is selected from the inspired narrative of John—of John, that beloved disciple who leaned on Jesus' bosom—of John, whose writings breathe perpetually a spirit of love the most tender and the most ardent—of John, whose memory Masons honour by a day set apart exclusively with that intent.

I enjoy not the privilege of belonging to your fraternity. I have for some time earnestly desired it ; but a public character must, if he would be useful on an extensive scale, conform in some respects to popular prejudice, however unfounded and unjust. In every community there exist men who oppose with the utmost virulence Institutions of which they are altogether ignorant. But we, who are unacquainted with the *Arcana* of your order, must admit that the Masonic Society exhibits in its principles, so far as they have divulged them, nothing antichristian ; that it encourages the most profound respect for the Supreme Being ; that it unites men of all ranks and conditions, of all nations and religions ; that it inculcates rectitude and moderation of conduct by emblems the most significant ; that its laws carefully exclude all strife, all riot, all intemperance and uncleanness ; that its ears have been ever open to the cry of the indigent and needy ; that

its members are pledged by the most sacred obligations never to violate the laws of sexual purity, never to break up the sanctuary of their Brother's peace, never to throw upon the mercy of Scandal's clamour, the fair fame of female virtue; that it has not deservedly excited, nor can excite the indignation of any but the suspicious despot, or the blood-thirsty inquisitor; and that if it did not stand secure in its own excellence, it might well claim respect from its high antiquity, and the numerous catalogue of great and illustrious names of which it boasts.

“By their fruits ye shall know them,” is a maxim of high authority, and in itself most equitable and judicious. And when we are certified that Masons wipe away the tears of sorrow from the wan cheek of the widow, and exercise a benign and guardian care over the tender years of lispings orphanage; that they admit the authority of the sacred writings; that they enjoin upon each other, the practice of a pure and sublime morality;—it matters not a single moment that their meetings are withdrawn from the stare of public curiosity, that some of their proceedings are veiled in secrecy. This fact has been often urged as an objection—an objection which may well excite fear in the breast of the tyrant whose throne totters under him, and whose feeble arm is unable to wield the scepter which it holds—but an objection, which scarcely deserves attention in a land of freedom where no man has an inquisitorial power over the private opinions and conduct of another man.

LIKE every other Society, Masons have secrets and signs of distinction, which upon application may be made known to the duly qualified; but these regard only themselves. As far as the world is concerned, their grand secret is *Love*—Love, the cement of Society, and the balm of life—Love, that adamant chain, which reaches from heaven to earth, and binds the universe together—Love, eternal as God himself, without beginning and without end.

LET me no longer hear that stale and ill-natured objection, “There are Masons whose lives are proverbially vicious, therefore the order cannot be good.” But let me ask,

If the *Church of Christ* be not dishonoured by some of the most abandoned miscreants that ever disgraced their species? men, full of malignity toward their unoffending Brethren; men of covetousness, deceit, envy, slander; men, who scruple not to adopt the most degrading, the most covert, the most villanous measures for the sake of supplanting him who is the obstacle to their ambitious purposes; men, rather should I say, devils incarnate, who, that they may sacrifice an offensive object, will deliberately *perjure* themselves; who, while publickly professing the religion of Jesus Christ, and while honoured with an exalted station in the Church, and after having been seated at the table of the holy supper with the very man they are determined to destroy, hesitate not by *false testimony* to blast his character? *such unhallowed beings exist within the pale of the visible church.* But, what man of ordinary sense or candour will pretend that this fact proves the religion of Jesus Christ to be a system of imposture and of fraud?—the religion which most unequivocally and pointedly condemns their abominations. Tell me, did the treason of Judas Iscariot prove that the system taught by him whom he betrayed, was the cunning device of knavery and bottomed upon falsehood; or, that the other disciples were rotten to the core? Tell me, did the political apostasy of Benedict Arnold, prove Washington and Green and Gates and Schuyler and Morgan and Wayne, and the rest of those who sacrificed there all for the cause of Liberty, destitute of patriotism and evince that the cause of the American colonies was unrighteous? Who supposes, that because there are some who disgrace by their ignorance the profession of the law, there are no fixed and equitable principles in legal science? Who is that besotted one ready to contend, because there are quacks in medicine, the healing art possesses no systematick, settled rules of procedure, is invested with no certainty of successful operation, and cannot boast of any who are its ornaments and the ornaments of society at large. The very best institutions have been attacked by misrepresentation, suspicion and ignorance. But of all the folly which has been arrayed against the Masonic order, that is most conspicuous which would impeach the Institution itself, because some who pro-

less attachment to it, violate its principles. As the misconduct of those within the pale of the church who walk not worthy of their high vocation, serves but as a foil to render more illustrious the purity of that system which opposes their ungodliness; so the improper deportment of those Masons who live not according to the rules of the fraternity sets off to greater advantage the correct morality which those rules enjoin.

To a Society avowing such principles as have been already hinted at, and assembled for the purpose of extending the influence of those principles, it cannot be unacceptable to hear from an ambassador of the Prince of peace exhortations to the practice of brotherly love in its utmost purity—that love, which is the fulfilling of the law of God; which where it exists in full force secures a conscientious and perpetual discharge of all the social duties; and to which, however diversified by external circumstances, every species of active virtue may be traced; that love which where it meets with suffering and distress shines forth in the exercise of compassion; which, where it meets with poverty and want appears in works of charity and mercy; which, where it is called to judge of the actions of others, decides with impartiality and candour; which, in cases of insult and injury, becomes meekness and leads to the forgiveness of wrongs; which, where discord and divisions prevail, cultivates a quiet and peaceable behaviour; which, when our friends are interested, performs with alacrity the kindest offices; which, when our country is in danger, shines forth under the names of patriotism and public spirit; and which to superiors shews respect, to equals kindness and affection, to interior gentleness and condescension.

“**LOVE** worketh no ill to his neighbour.” ’Tis opposed to all manner of injustice. More than this: ’Tis a principle of universal good-will and kindness—a principle which prompts us to desire, and as far as we are able, to promote the temporal and spiritual prosperity of all men. In that breast where Brotherly love resides, envy can find no place, for “*charity envieth not.*” Love is a foe to all pride and vain glory: for “*charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave*

*itself unseemly.*" It stops the mouth of the censorious: for "love thinketh no evil," and "charity covereth a multitude of sins."

THE love of which we speak, is a principle far more pure and elevated than any of the natural affections, and is essentially different from the friendships of the world; from all friendships founded on a similarity of natural taste, community of interest, or interchange of favours. 'Tis a noble and expanding principle, not confined and fettered by the narrow and contracted spirit of self-love. It cheerfully recognizes the doctrine inculcated by our Lord in that most beautiful and affecting history of the good Samaritan, that we are bound to be benevolent and beneficent toward those who have a different religion from our own; who are strangers and natural enemies; that *wherever there is man, there is my neighbour*. It gives energy to the voice of nature, which vicious customs and prejudices has long silenced, and teaches that our benevolence should embrace within its ample range, the whole human family, however diversified by nation or colour, government or religion, sect or party. It teaches that those who bear the name of Christ should consider each other as having the same common Father, as animated by the same spirit, as supported by the same hopes, as heirs of the same promises, as fellow-citizens of the same country, and as travellers in the same journey which they expect will at last conduct them to the same blessed abodes where no discord enters.

PERFECT love regards the sins and errors of another man, even when they are pointed against ourselves with the same compassion we feel in view of our own, without any of the censoriousness or bitterness either of party spirit or personal resentment. Whatever of Christ he has, it values and it honours. Whatever of sin he has, it is ready to forgive. At the same time, it indulges no evil surmisings against its neighbour. It gives all his doubtful acts the most favourable construction. It imputes no bad design where it is possible supposed to another. It "speaks evil of no man." It banishes all tale-bearing, backbiting and slander. In a word, whatever provocations it meets with, it suffers no feeling to rise which is inconsistent with the kindest wishes for the

welfare of the offender. If it feels indignation, 'tis because he has sinned against God. It does not wish him harm, nor rejoice at his calamities. It indulges no personal ill-will, no malice, no revenge, no anger, no peevishness, no impatience.

**METHINKS** I hear some exclaim, what abject and spiritless characters would such a religion form! There could be no men of letters, no poets, no orators, no statesmen! But tell me, was Jesus of Nazareth so abject? Was not he who spake as never man spake, eloquent? Was not Isaiah a sublime poet? Were not Moses and David and Solomon profound statesmen? Did you ever contemplate the fervour, the activity and the eloquence of the apostle Paul? Do you know any who in these respects surpass the holy angels? Indeed, what other temper has God himself? Were we influenced by perfect love, we should do that which is good and excellent with all our might, because it is commanded, and that which is not good and excellent, ought to be left undone. If so much care exercised about our feelings, words and actions would check the boidness and the ardour of eloquence, or, in any respect moderate decision of character, it would only prove these to have been supported by wrong principles. Let them then be checked, till divine love coming in the place of wrong principles, make us active eloquent and decided as "the rapt seraph that adores and burns."

**MY** hearers, I am awed into reverence, as I approach the religion of Jesus Christ! What a pure and exalted system of morals! The Bible is the only book on earth which exhibits a perfect character! This sublime morality of loving one another to the extent in which we have surveyed the virtue, how infinitely superior to the sordid selfishness of heathen codes! What are your Senecas and Platos, but glow-worms by the side of the meridian sun! This is the religion which makes men truly great and good. This is the religion which would form a happy world. The harmony and bliss of heaven are nothing else. Let men universally be influenced by this noble and divine principle, and you may remove your prisons and your stocks—you have done with halls of legislation and with courts of justice—all animosities are extract-

ed from the human heart, and nothing but peace and concord and universal felicity remain.

MASONS need no argument to impress upon them the obligation of this duty. Yet, would I in a few words stir up your minds by way of remembrance.

CONSIDER then in the first place, that by obeying the direction which your Saviour gives you in the text, you most resemble him. The circumstances under which this benign precept was enjoined, were peculiarly tender and affecting. Jesus and his small society of friends were now assembled in expectation of that tragical event which was soon to deprive them of his presence, by means of his excruciating death. For the last time, he now addresses them. His instructions therefore must contain all that is most important and most useful. In this interesting crisis, what directions does he give to his afflicted followers. "This is my commandment" says he, "my *peculiar* commandment, concerning the observance of which I am of all things else most anxious—my *last and dying* commandment, which therefore ought to sink deepest in your hearts—my *most important* commandment, which will be specially useful to you, when in consequence of my departure, you shall be left as sheep without a Shepherd in the midst of wolves—*that ye love one another*. 'Tis the request of one who loves you, and who is on the eve of affording the most convincing proof of that affection by laying down his life for you. I cannot suppose you so ungrateful as to disregard my commandment, or so insensible to every generous sentiment as to feel no emotion of love toward him, whose person, whose talents and whose all have been dedicated to your service and the good of mankind. But no other return do I require for this kindness, than, *that ye love one another*. Let the regard which you owe to me be transferred to your Brethren, and whatever kindness and affection you show to them, I will consider as done unto myself." Generous, disinterested Saviour! who will not obey thee? Engrave on our inmost heart, as with the pen of a diamond, all thy precepts, and make us to consider it the height and sum of all glory, to tread in all thy footsteps!

We remarked, that by loving our fellow men, we should

most nearly imitate the Son of God. His affection for his followers, you perceive, was the motive which he urged upon them. And oh! how tender and how energetic was that affection. 'Twas his love for the human race which prompted him to leave the celestial mansions and sojourn upon the earth—love, which all the fires of persecution could not consume, nor the waters of perpetual reproach and ignominy quench. Exposed to the most shocking ingratitude and to every species of insult and of injury, yet did his love to man continue unabated. When his followers forsook him and fled; when malice directed against him all her envenomed shafts; when cruelty assailed him in forms the most terrible; when justice refused to listen to his cry; when pity seemed to have fled forever from the society of men; then, even then, his countenance beamed with love and with compassion—then, even then, meekness and patience, the constant companions of his sorrows did not desert him, but dictated his last words, which breathed no spirit of malevolence, which contained no harsh threatening, which indicated no purpose of revenge, but were a fervent prayer for his enemies and his persecutors.

BRETHREN, can we imitate a more perfect pattern than him who is “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person?” Can any thing be more noble, than that which assimilates us to him who is the origin of every thing that is good and amiable and excellent in human nature? him, who is the source of all perfection? “God is love: and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.” But “he that loveth not knoweth not God, neither dwelleth the love of God in him: for, he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”

CONSIDER in the second place, that by obeying the precept before us, we imitate the best and the most highly honoured of the human family. Who is there that ever traced the steps of a Howard, or a Hanway; a Thornton, a Clarkson or a Wilberforce whose heads were constantly devising and whose hearts were incessantly prompting them to execute schemes for the benefit of mankind, and did not applaud their exertions, did not glow with admiration of their

virtue, did not enter in all their feelings, did not suppose himself acting with them the generous and disinterested part? If then it be worthy of attention to imitate such god-like examples, let us be benevolent as they were.

AGAIN, who would not imbibe the spirit and possess the very essence of the Christian code? Every system whether of government or religion has some prevailing principle, which pervades the whole, and gives life and animation to its respective parts. Thus *fear* has been said to be the discriminating feature of despotism, *honour* of monarchy, and *patriotism* of a republick. The ruling principle of Christianity is love. In this, the whole scheme originated. The manner of its accomplishment displays the most wonderful and unequalled love. The state of happiness to which it leads, is described as a state of perfect harmony and love. Love is commanded and represented as the characteristic of all its disciples. To love one another—to be at peace with all men—to be daily employed in acts of goodness—to be slow to wrath—to forgive the wrongs of the injurious—to cultivate meekness, gentleness, long-suffering and kindness are the constant precepts of that charitable religion which proceeded from the God of love and was proclaimed by the blessed Saviour—that religion whose benign influences have dispelled the barbarity and ignorance which had hitherto overspread the greatest portion of the earth, enlightened and civilized the human mind, softened and refined the manners of society, restrained the ravages and cruelties of war, promoted peace on earth, and good will among men, mitigated the severity of punishment, and taught us to consider all men as the children of one universal parent, who is “good unto all,” and whose “tender mercies are over all his works.”

FINALLY, we ought to love one another, if we consider how much this principle contributes to the happiness of the world, and the perfection of the human character. 'Tis not the man of towering talent, but the man of a good heart, who is most useful to his fellow-creatures. To perform acts of public and extensive utility, to scatter plenty o'er a land, to raise a fallen or support a sinking state, are indeed noble exertions.

and call forth the admiration and gratitude of mankind. But they are the lot of a few men only in any age or nation. Whereas, the situation of no man prevents him from cultivating a benevolent heart. There is not a day nor an hour of our lives when we may not wish well, and do good to our neighbour. Indeed, did this principle universally prevail, the labors of the legislator, the hero and the patriot would be in a great measure superseded. Were men actuated by brotherly love, they would respect the rights of their neighbour, without the injunctions of law, or the fear of punishment. Oh yes! Wars and rumours of wars would be heard no more. No longer would be cherished that infuriate ambition which hurls desolation o'er the earth, and fertilizes her fields with the blood of men. And can we conceive greater perfection in human nature than the cultivation and constant exhibition of that spirit which produces such beneficial and benign results. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity? It is as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended on the mountains of Zion, where the Lord commanded his blessing, even life forevermore." Indeed, we cannot form a more exalted idea of the happiness of the higher mansions, where every thing like the calm and untroubled ocean reflects the serenity of God's countenance, where the angers, the quarrels, the dissensions and the storms which render this sea of life so tempestuous and so troublesome, are all blown over, and where the reign of universal peace and harmony and love and joy has began, never, never to terminate.

By all the variety and by all this cogency of motive, we are pressed upon to love one another. If obedient and faithful, tranquility and happiness will light up the features of our countenance—peace and joy dilate our bosoms—an Eden bloom around us;—sure and unequivocal presages of that indescribable and inconceivable felicity which shall be our portion when the mystery of providence shall be finished, the company of the accepted brought in, and the shout of final redemption thunder through the temple of God. Amen and Amen.