

THE

531

SIGNS OF THE TIMES;

A

SERMON,

**DELIVERED IN ROCHESTER, DECEMBER 4, 1828, BEING THE
DAY OF PUBLICK THANKSGIVING.**



BY JOEL PARKER,

R

PASTOR OF THE THIRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH:



ROCHESTER:

PRINTED BY E. PECK & CO.

1828.

Rochester, Dec. 7, 1828.

TO REV. JOEL PARKER :

The undersigned respectfully request a copy, for publication, of the Sermon delivered by you on the 4th inst. in the First Presbyterian Church, in this village.

We are, with sentiments of esteem and respect,

Yours, &c.

ELISHA ELY,
BENJ. CAMPBELL,
O. N. BUSH,
WM. H. WARD,
E. POMEROY,

H. B. PIERPONT,
ROBERT WILSON,
A. WAKELEE,
RUFUS BEACH,
A. W. RILEY.



Rochester, Dec. 8, 1828.

GENTLEMEN:

It seems scarcely respectful to the publick, or just to myself, to issue a Discourse so hastily written as the one which you have politely requested for publication. The circumstances under which it was delivered, and the subsequent excitement, forbid a revision of the subject; and the misapprehensions that already exist with regard to what is said upon the subject of *Free Masonry*, demand a more publick exhibition of those sentiments. I therefore cheerfully yield to your solicitation.

With sentiments of respect,

I am, Gentlemen,

Yours sincerely,

J. PARKER.

To Messrs. Elisha Ely, Benj. Campbell, O.
N. Bush, Wm. H. Ward, E. Pomeroy, H.
B. Pierpont, Robert Wilson, A. Wakelee,
Rufus Beach, A. W. Riley.

SERMON.

MATTHEW, XVI. 1, 2, 3.

The Pharisees also and the Sadducees came, and tempting, desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather : for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day : for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky ; but can ye not discern the signs of the times ?

THE moral defection of man has rendered his character a mass of inconsistencies—its symmetry is destroyed, its beauty defaced ; and it stands like the column of some dilapidated temple of antiquity, great in its ruins. His natural powers remain, but his moral character is prostrated ; his intellect is unshorn of its strength, but his affections are grossly perverted. While he seizes upon the gifts of Providence, and appropriates them to the purposes of life, with a skill almost divine, this very wisdom leads him to know not God. While he traces the connexions of causes with their effects in the physical world ; while he measures the heavens by a sure astronomical observation, and penetrates the earth, and examines its internal structure ; while he enters the secret chambers of Nature, and inquires successfully into her hidden mysteries, he is slow to learn, even from a well attested revelation, and a distinctly marked providence, the character of Nature's God. While he watches the changes of civil governments, and with political sagacity anticipates the future, he is well nigh blind to the great moral changes which God is effecting, that he may establish the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

It was to this culpable inconsistency that our Saviour referred, when he said to the Pharisees and Sadducees, O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times ? As much as if he had said, you can discern the indications of change in nature, but why is it that you cannot mark the footsteps of God in his moral administration ? Prophecies are fulfilled in my character ; the signs of

a divine commission attend me—"the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." Are not these manifest tokens that a new era has arrived, and that the dawn of a brighter dispensation has arisen upon the world? Do the lurid clouds that sometimes skirt the morning horizon portend an approaching storm? Still more clearly do the signs that exist among you indicate the great moral changes that are now at hand. In a similar manner, we fancy, might our Saviour answer the skepticks of this age. He might say to them—true, this is an era of intelligence, of improvement, and of high and successful enterprise. Well may you discover, from existing facts, that the human mind is destined for a great advancement. Well may you predict, that insulted humanity will ere long burst every chain of despotism, and arise in its might, and pour upon the heads of its oppressors the vials of a righteous indignation. But can you discern nothing, in all the changes of this day, that indicates the approaching glory of the Messiah's kingdom? Can you not discern the signs of the times? With this view of the general spirit of the text, it shall be my object, *to exhibit some of the indications of the future destiny of the American people.*

I have selected this subject for your consideration, on this day of publick thanksgiving, because I believe it will be seen, as we progress, that the signs of the present times, comprise the richest displays of Divine favour to this nation. There may be seen in the movements of Providence, indications of the civil and moral advancement of this people, which, to a reflecting mind, are as satisfactory as if a miraculous token of our prosperity were granted us from above. Should an angel of God appear in the heavens to-day, unfolding our national banner, and covering with it half the sky; and should we see him write upon it, with a pencil dipt in the sun, "O America, 'the nations shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory; thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hands of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hands of thy God:'" I say, if such a sign were granted us to-day, it would not be a clearer proof that God designs *especially* to bless us, than now appears in the indications of his Providence.

Whence is this continued improvement in the processes of art, and this multiplication of labour-saving inventions? Whence is it, if it be not from a bountiful Providence, that he may enlarge the field of industry, and anticipate the habits of future generations; and that there may be activity enough among the people to confer temporal prosperity

upon as dense a population as the soil can support? Whence this spirit of enterprise, that is kindling in its course, and finding its way into every nook and corner of the nation, if it be not a gift from God, to prepare this people for a high importance among the nations of the earth? Why are the eyes of all the world turned toward America as the asylum of the oppressed? Why is the tide of population flowing on to the west, with a rapidity which assures us that at no distant period, the institutions of our country will be seen, and the hum of business will be heard, over the whole extent of our territory, from the Atlantick to the Pacifick. It is true, there are principles at work that threaten such a moral corruption, and such a division of interests, as may check this surprising progress. But there are other causes strongly operating to counteract these evils. Of these we shall speak in another place.

With all these indications of future national greatness, there are also some peculiar signs of *political prosperity*. The principles of civil liberty are coming to be more thoroughly understood. The number of well educated citizens is greatly increased. This produces a more extensive and spirited competition for offices of trust. Competition provokes important discussion; discussion elicits truth, and weaves it into that system of practical, political wisdom, which, next to the virtue and intelligence of the people, is the best safeguard of a nation.

The power of our free institutions is also beginning to be sensibly felt in promoting the general diffusion of knowledge. A spirit of inquiry is abroad among the people. They watch every political manœuvre, examine every pretension to merit, and with resistless scrutiny, pry into the character of every institution. The press is at once increasing this spirit of inquiry, and pouring a flood of light upon the whole community.

Yet it may be asked, are these the indications of the future destiny of America? What evidence do they afford that she will not become intoxicated with success, and fall under her own hand? None at all. If there were no other and more important signs of the times than any to which we have yet alluded, this nation may, before one hundred years more have elapsed, sink to her grave without even a shroud of glory. But there is evidence that God has not sent us these secular advantages, that he may punish us as he once did his people of old, by cursing our blessings.

The same moral causes that have preserved our country through the waywardness of her youth, are increasing their power, and checking the more obstinate aberrations of her maturer years. She is not to be stupified into a sickly quietness, by the potions of superstition, nor to be

fettered by a church establishment ; but the voluntary and associated efforts of her citizens, in diffusing the light and the persuasive power of a pure religion, furnish a most hopeful indication that she will be found in the path of righteousness for a great many ages to come. There is evidence that the secular advantages, of which we have before spoken, are to be sanctified by a moral influence. The increasing facility of business transactions, is imparting quickness and energy to our moral and religious operations. The increase of wealth is enabling a host of good men to devote time, and money, and influence, to the advancement of sound morals and pure religion. The improvements in travelling are a high-way cast up for the swift messengers of God ; while the freeness and extent of commercial intercourse, and the general diffusion of knowledge, are preparing our whole nation to be moved by one impulse, as a single city now is. As this multitude of minds is rapidly approaching to one mass, the moral means necessary for its purification are also rapidly increasing, and forming it to virtue and happiness.

Look at the BIBLE SOCIETY—what an array of moral power does it exhibit ! As our population rolls onward in a tumultuous swell, this institution sends after it, wave after wave of the waters of life. Already its influence is extensively felt. It “ stilleth the noise of the seas—the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people.” And, if we may rely upon the predictions of the sacred Scriptures, connected with the signs of the times, we may expect that the season is near, when this whole sea of population shall be like a beautiful lake, whose pellucid and peaceful waters reflect the image of heaven.

Intimately connected with the circulation of the Holy Scriptures, is the MISSIONARY CAUSE. It is true there is not, in this work, such a perfect concert of action among all the friends of religion, as there is in the society to which we have just alluded ; but still, all are agreed in prosecuting substantially the same end, in their own way. This nation has honourable testimonies to her missionary zeal, scattered up and down through the heathen world. India has been blessed by America ; the islands of the northern Pacific have been visited by the Christian compassion of this people ; a nation of savages, within our own territory, has been quickened to civilization and Christianity, by the missionary efforts that have been already made ; and in spite of the discouraging predictions of so many, who have resounded it through the length and breadth of the land, that indians can never be civilized, the Cherokees have actually awoke from the slumbers of heathenism ;

the noise of the arts is heard among them ; the chase is beginning to be forsaken, for the employments of husbandry ; schools are extensively established ; and the press is sending forth, at this time, in a weekly journal in their own language, the influence of both knowledge and religion.

We do not design to-day to speak of these efforts only as they stand related to the interests of our own country ;—their influence in this respect, however, is incalculable. The streams of charity which have flowed forth from this country, are exhaled and brought back to refresh our American Zion. And who can estimate the results of this glorious reaction ? Who can calculate the effect of the Sandwich Islands, alone, turning to our country as she does, with a smile of gladness, like a grateful mendicant, blessing her benefactress ?

But, whatever the precise effects of our efforts for foreign missions may be, one thing is certain ; since these successes have been realized, a new and much increased zeal has been manifested in behalf of Christianizing our home population. The Home Missionary Associations of the different sects of Christians, are enabling those who are anxious for the moral improvement of the people, to erect the standard of the cross, and sustain Christian ordinances, in every place where the providence of God has thrown together a little company of Christian disciples.

Another religious institution of the age, which stands as a sign of the times, tending also to produce a high state of moral culture, is the TRACT SOCIETY. Its publications are from the ablest pens and the most devoted Christians of this and past ages. The testimony of their worth is found in the attention which they receive from an intelligent people. In general, they cannot be perused without reflection, nor reflected on without deep emotion ; nor can this emotion be long indulged, without a reformation of life and manners. This is altogether a very curious institution ; for while it seems to have arisen almost without design, and while its influence is of the most unsystematized and desultory cast, yet facts declare it to be one of the most powerful moral engines of the age. It throws out the truth, by a leaf at a time, much as the revelation of God was first given from heaven ; while, like that, it seems to be preserved, and directed, and made effectual, by a peculiar Providence. In short, it is as if the tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, had shed its foliage at once, and the breath of the Divine Spirit had wafted it profusely over the whole land.

Last, but not least, among our religious institutions, is the SABBATH SCHOOL. Here is a systematick and most adroit attack upon the ene-

my. It is stealing the march upon him, and commencing the war before he has had time to fortify himself and discipline his troops. To show the moral power of this institution, I will only mention two facts. After the Sunday school had been in successful operation for a long time in England, a careful inquiry was made in all the prisons, to learn if there were any there who had ever enjoyed Sabbath school instruction, and not one could be found. A similar inquiry has also been made in the prisons in New-York city, and among the vast number of juvenile delinquents, not one can be found from the Sabbath schools. The inference is plain—if this institution becomes universal, crime ceases, and henceforth our prisons stand as the empty monuments of the depravity of a past age.

It is possible that the thought may here suggest itself to some, that, notwithstanding the power of these institutions, and the practical test that we have had of their utility, yet there may be such an opposition to their influence, that they will never effectually secure the moral purity of this nation. So far from this, however, is the truth, that I am going to notice this opposition itself, as one of the most favourable indications of ultimate success.

It was one of the promising signs of the times, in the days of our Saviour, that he was despised and rejected of men, and crucified, that he might make atonement for the sins of the world. In a later age, the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church. In the time of the reformation, when priestcraft fell under the power of truth, the very infidel men that had rested quietly under the reign of superstition, cried out the more bitterly as the work advanced, and aimed their shafts not at the corrupt hierarchy, but joined with it in persecuting the saints of the most high God. But what was the effect of opposition in these circumstances? It taught the disciples of Christ to have no fellowship with the world. It showed them that the enemy of all righteousness was alarmed for the safety of his dominions, and was uniting a corrupt church and a wicked world in his defence.

The effect of opposition is the same now. It drives timid Christians as with a whip of scorpions, to their Master; it encourages the more bold and decided friends of God to believe that the set time to favour Zion has come; while it disheartens hypocrites, and turns them back into their own company. But yet there is another aspect in which these religious institutions ought to be viewed.

If the Bible Society had existed alone, it might have exerted a happy influence; but it would not have expressed clearly any great design of

Providence. It might have stood like a mighty barrier to resist for a season the torrent of iniquity; but it would not have shown that God had designed this nation for a great moral advancement. But now we have before us such a group of kindred institutions, originating one after another, without any dependence upon human foresight, enlisting men of such diverse habits and sentiments in other respects, that the very mode of their origin, and the characters which compose them, plainly set them forth as one great system of moral means, devised and prosecuted by an allwise Providence.

When we say, therefore, that the moral and religious institutions of the age are clear indications of future good to this nation, let it be remembered, that we take into the account their individual fitness to produce important results; the purifying influence which opposition exerts, and the courage and confidence with which it inspires the friends of these institutions; and the systematick manner in which God has raised them up, and marshalled them, as if for a decisive battle with the enemy of all righteousness.

Instead, therefore, of representing the prospects of this nation as some of our political orators have done, by painting before you the temple of liberty, supported by Grecian columns, to signify the firmness and durability of our constitution; having within it the Genius of America, attired in a Republican dress, bearing the arts in one hand, and the scrolls of science in the other; and the whole scene graced by the presence of the father of his country, unfolding the Declaration of American Independence; instead of representing it by such a scene, I would represent it by a very different spectacle. I would present before you, in one group, the moral means which are operating to enlighten and purify the nation. I would show you a vast amphitheatre, where the *three hundred thousand* Sabbath school children of America should be placed on the ascending seats, rank above rank, and extending on all sides as far as the eye can reach. As they were engaged in their song of praise, the guardian angels of the other moral and religious institutions should hover around, as if to secure as early an interest as possible in their respective objects. In addition to these circumstances, a company of angry assailants should be seen approaching them, scoffing at the religion of Jesus, and crying out, as if in the very bitterness of despair, "Bigotry!" "Priestcraft!" "Superstition!" "Union of Church and State!" The infant throng should hear the calumny, and answer it only by shouting in louder strains, Hosanna to the Son of David! Hosanna to the Son of David! Hosanna in the highest!

Yet it may be inquired, are there no great evils counteracting all this fancied good? Is there no domestick sin silently operating to undermine both private and publick virtue? Is there no political crime whose tendency it is to bring the judgement of God upon the nation? Is there no mischievous institution, attired like an angel of light, but yet operating slowly and surely against the cause of truth and righteousness? We answer, all these evils exist; but another peculiar sign of the times is, that every one of these evils is opposed by such a combination of moral means, as promises their utter extinction.

Look at the evil of *Intemperance*, and you see one domestick sin, of power sufficient, if unresisted, to ruin the American people. It is a widespread evil, entering every condition of life, destroying the base not only, but also debasing the virtuous; it walks in high places; it is dignified by rank; it is arrayed in the splendour of wealth, and decked with the finery of fashion; it reels and stammers in our state and national legislatures; it paralyses genius in the halls of learning; it has entered the sanctuary of God, and sat down at the communion table, with the mark of the beast burnt in upon its forehead. It has even entered the sacred desk, and in its mutterings and its madness has been heard to say, "Drunkards *shall* inherit the kingdom of God." But look one moment at the influence of the American Temperance Society. Already it has almost totally destroyed the common use not only, but also the manufacture and vending of ardent spirits over a large extent of territory in New-England. It steadily progresses in its work, and is making, every month, some new and noble achievement. The reading population is also coming to be extensively furnished with able productions on the subject. Sober men of every class and denomination are combining their efforts, and the periodical presses are uniting their influence to destroy the evil.

There is also a *political* sin lying heavy upon the nation. The coloured population of this country, fettered as they are in bonds of affliction and iron, in the midst of a free people, are crying to heaven for redress. They are already becoming so numerous as to excite the fears of their masters. Some of our southern cities find it necessary to adopt a police of the most strict and rigorous character, to save the white population from a general massacre, by the hands of their slaves.

If something be not done in a peaceful yet vigorous manner, to remedy this evil, we may well expect that it will embroil the nation in a civil war; or that some Moses will be raised up to visit the nation, under God, with summary vengeance. But we trust that a redeeming spirit

is already gone forth in behalf of Africa. The benevolent are awaking to the great work of emancipation. And though little has been done, yet a nation of freemen has begun to reflect; publick sentiment is becoming corrected; and we may hope that the time is not far distant when this great national sin shall be wiped away.

I notice but one more wide-spread evil, which the signs of the times plainly indicate must be destroyed—I mean the institution of *Free Masonry*. I am well aware that this is a delicate subject. Personal feelings have so often been insulted and abused, that men expect, when the subject of Free Masonry is introduced, to hear some bitter invective, or some terrible anathema, against themselves or their friends. We hope there will be no occasion for such feelings to-day, for we come here not to trifle with the personal feelings of our friends, but to investigate the truth. Yet objections may arise against introducing this subject into the pulpit. On this account, it seems desirable that we should, as a preliminary object, give a brief attention to these objections.

It may be said that this is a political question, involving a great party strife, and on this account ought not to be introduced into the pulpit. The principle here assumed is undoubtedly true. Party politicks, *as such*, ought never to be brought into the sacred desk. But still, a subject on which there is much political excitement, may have such a moral bearing, that the minister of Christ cannot innocently keep silence. For instance, suppose that the Catholick church were secretly gaining ground in this nation, till, after a time, some manifestations of the oppressive principles of that corrupt hierarchy began to appear. Our political men take the alarm, and a contest ensues, in which wicked men act wickedly, and deal in calumny and misrepresentation on both sides. Yet the termination of the question is to decide the point whether we are to have liberty of conscience, or to submit to the horrors of the Inquisition. What shall the watchman upon the walls of Zion do? Shall he look about himself on every side, to see how a publick expression of his sentiments will affect his interest? Shall he advise with timid friends, and muffle his conscience, with saying—it will be preaching politicks—it is not my duty? Or, shall he seek to become enlightened on the subject, and then, as a favourable opportunity presents itself, shall he endeavour to enlighten his flock, and lead them in the paths of righteousness? Plainly, the mere fact that any subject has been the occasion of political attention, does not forbid a discussion of the moral bearings of that question from the pulpit. But it may be said that this course is inconsistent with Christian charity, as it seems to condemn

good men who are conscientiously attached to Free Masonry. To this we reply, that we have nothing to do with the characters of those who are conscientiously attached to the Masonick fraternity, unless it be to protect them from the imputation of unworthy motives.

That there are good men on both sides of this question, no cool and reflecting mind can possibly doubt. That there are bad men on both sides, is also perfectly obvious. Our business, however, is neither with the one nor the other, but with the moral character of the institution itself.

One more objection ought to be noticed. It is often suggested, in the form of an inquiry, as if the objection were unanswerable, "If Masonry be an injurious institution, why was it not declared before? The abduction of Morgan has not changed the character of the institution; and all good men among Masons, as well as others, disapprove of that transaction." It is true the character of the institution is not changed; but that act, whether it be considered as a legitimate result of Masonick principles or not, excited attention; attention produced investigation; and investigation has produced a change of sentiment. Precisely as thousands came out from the Catholick church, in consequence of a certain individual's being somewhat imprudent in the sale of indulgences to sin. It was not the conduct of Tetzal that effected that wonderful change, and shook all Europe to its centre; yet his conduct was the occasion of the change. It led men to reflect; reflection produced a change of sentiment in a few; this change in a few, and their exertions, kept up the spirit of inquiry, till the whole face of the moral world was changed.

In the same manner, has one act of violence awakened the attention of men to this subject; a great political excitement has been created; this excitement has led men to reflect; and a great many honest men have become convinced that Masonry is an injurious institution. If it had been the religion of Christ, the result of reflection had been far different. It would have led more to embrace than to forsake it. But this institution has something in its character which is peculiar—something which makes it to appear the worse, the more it is thought of.

We ought, however, in candour, to state, that many of the charges which are made against that class of men, from whom we conscientiously differ, are certainly unkind, as they are not founded in fact: such as this—that Masons *intend* to put their lives into one another's hands, and expect the precise penalties of their obligations to be executed upon them, if they should violate them. I have for several years been conversant with many of the lodges and chapters in this state, and

never had reason to suppose that any of my acquaintances held such sentiments, or so understood their obligations.

It is also said, that Masons endeavour to check free inquiry, especially so far as it respects the moral character of their institution; and that they endeavour to intimidate men, by threatenings of loss of influence, and some indefinite and mysterious calamity. Now, that bad men will act wickedly on this as on other subjects, we do not doubt: but, for myself, I have often freely exchanged sentiments with good masons on this subject, for a year past, and never experienced any fear from this source. The truth undoubtedly lies here—that every good man in the Masonick fraternity is not only willing, but desirous, that all the light should be thrown upon the moral bearings of this institution, that can possibly be obtained. I am now prepared to show you *wherein* Masonry is an institution of immoral tendency.

I. FREE MASONRY IS AN IMPOSTURE.

If this be shown, no matter how good the institution is in other respects—as we do not allow of pious frauds in this age of light—if it be an imposture, it is morally injurious. Yet it makes several imposing and false pretensions.

1. *It pretends to have been instituted by good men in an early age, and Scripture history is perverted to make it speak in its favour.* And yet it appears from Masonick books, that it originated in a mechanics' society in the city of London. Not one hundred and fifty years ago, there were a great number of mechanics' societies in that city, all bidding as fair for immortality as this. They, too, had their *worshipful masters* and wardens. But while the Masonick society was rather declining, a plan was suggested for *accepting* of other professions into the Masonick fraternity—hence the origin of *Accepted Masons*. It was accordingly fitted up with antique rites, and mystical emblems, and henceforth it became speculative Free Masonry.

2dly. *It pretends to be divine.* That is the word used by Masonick writers, to signify the sacredness with which Masonry is invested. By some, and we believe by the greater part, it is understood to be an institution from heaven; by others, as a peculiarly wise and sacred institution, founded upon the Holy Scriptures, and receiving the protection of a special Providence. Thus is it recommended to men, while there is no evidence that it has existed for one hundred and fifty years, and it originated in a company of brick-layers.

3dly. *Masonry pretends to give a clue, at least, to some important knowledge.* It talks of geometry and astronomy, as if it were the de-

sign of Masonry to give some important helps to these sciences ; yet there is not so much knowledge of the sciences exhibited in the first seven degrees, as may be learned from one page of Webster's spelling book. And when its *science* is acquired, if it may be said to have any, it is all something which every man of intelligence knew before. I shall be understood by masons, when I say, that an ignorant man may become a "*bright mason*," and be an ignorant man still. In a Catechism of Masonry, published under the sanction of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania and the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, it is boldly asserted, that "Masonry teaches the art of finding out *new arts*," and enables men "to foretell future events." Whether such imposing pretensions, founded in the most unblushing falsehood, entitle this institution to be considered the handmaid of religion, or whether they be marks of the beast, characterizing the institution as an imposture, candid and intelligent men will judge.

Again: *Masonry pretends to be a charitable institution.* Now these are the facts. Masonick lodges receive no members but men of hale constitution, industrious habits, and of some regular business. To this body of men—men not likely to come to want—to its members, its charities are extended. Sometimes a poor mason's widow receives its aid. Often an unfortunate member has been relieved from its funds. It is true, that some instances have occurred of Free Masons' lodges bestowing donations upon other persons, and other objects ; but yet, the principles of Free Masonry bind men only to relieve a worthy brother. Its charity—of which so much has been said—is like this : a company of men have thrown into a common stock, from four to sixty dollars a piece, with this express understanding, that if any of these members should come to want, they should be entitled to relief from this common fund. If one of our religious institutions should conduct its affairs on such principles, and then should *trumpet* its charities, the cry of "Priestcraft" would ring through the whole land. And there would be justice in charging it with recommending itself by a foul imposture.

I notice but one thing more in the moral character of this institution. *Its religious worship is purely theistical.* Free Masonry makes many prayers, but they are prayers offered without the acknowledgement of a Saviour. Christians are deceived by them, on account of the air of seriousness and piety which seems to breathe through their devotions. And yet we believe there are few sincere Christians that do not at times feel troubled to think themselves united with men in acts of worship, without an acknowledgement of that Saviour who has purchased all

their mercies. Let me invite every believer in Christ to reflect well on this point. What is it to address God as the "Master of the Grand Lodge above?" What is it to approach him without honouring the Son even as you honour the Father? We know it is said this is the form of prayer used before Christ. And here comes in the imposture of the institution, with respect to its antiquity, to support a theistical worship, where the light of Christianity shines in its glory. Will it be said that this is intended to unite Christians and deists on a common ground, where they can both agree? Ah! there is the evil. Our Saviour has not told us that we may worship God without mentioning his name, merely that we may have the privilege of joining in worship with his enemies.

With these remarks on the imposture and the theistical principles of Masonry, we leave it for political men to settle its political bearings. Among the other extensive evils in this country, Free Masonry must fall before the power and the light of free inquiry. A spirit has gone forth on this subject that will not rest till this institution is levelled with the dust. Whatever motives the political party may be actuated by, in opposing it, that party, like a battle-axe of the Almighty, has cut down the groves, and hewed away, with tremendous power, the outworks of the Masonick temple, and opened its boasted sanctum sanctorum to the gaze of vulgar eyes. It now remains for Christians and moral men, belonging to the institution, to finish the work. And here it may be asked, What shall we do? Shall we renounce? Shall we state our obligations over and over again, and declare to the publick that we are bound by them no longer? To this I answer, decidedly, No. If you investigate the subject thoroughly, you will most likely be convinced that it can scarcely consist with tenderness of conscience, to make such a sort of game of oaths as this course seems to do. Besides, all the good effect of revealing secrets, and renouncing oaths, (if any good results from it,) has been produced already, that would be, if a thousand more should follow the same course. Yet if Masonry is an institution of bad moral tendency, good men are bound to oppose it—to oppose it in the spirit of meekness, but with Christian decision. It is not enough for Christians to say we will let the evil alone, and let it die a natural death. Is this the purpose for which Jesus Christ called you into his kingdom and glory, merely to escape evil yourselves? Or are you to be trained soldiers to oppose every power of sin that has heretofore held you in bondage?

In this age of light and inquiry, I think I hear God saying, with regard to this imposture, as he says in regard to another: "My people, come out of her." Let Christians, then, as they become enlightened on this subject, act openly, and agreeably to their convictions, and make *a united, publick declaration* of their purpose, henceforth, to lend their influence against the institution of Free Masonry. But at the same time, let them avoid that uncharitable and anathematizing spirit, which, instead of enlightening, only provokes those who may differ from them on this subject.

Finally, let us all evince our thankfulness to Almighty God, that he has crowned this nation with so many secular advantages; that he has, in his Providence, given us such institutions, and set such moral means in operation, as lead us to expect that our blessings will be perpetuated; and that he has set in array such a counteracting influence against the great evils that threaten to cloud our future prospects. Let us evince our gratitude, while we contemplate the signs of the times, by becoming workers together with God, in procuring the very blessings which we so fondly anticipate.

21 30 68