

A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED

BEFORE THE MASONIC SOCIETY,

YORK, UPPER CANADA,

ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF S^T. JOHN THE BAPTIST,

ON SATURDAY, JUNE 24, 1820.

AND

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BY JOHN FENTON.

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*To the Worshipful Master, Wardens, and Brethren
of Lodge 16, York, Upper Canada.*

BRETHREN,

I have received, through the medium of your deputation, your unqualified vote of thanks for my services, together with an earnest official request ^{for} the publication of the discourse delivered to you on the anniversary of St. John the Baptist, which request I consider in this to be imperative.

I should never have presumed to present it to the public had I not been thus requested by you, and the audience before whom it was delivered. It is not my business to exhibit the defects it may have, or to say any thing to recommend it, but ~~the~~ and the audience have requested me to print it.

However, I feel in duty bound to say, I am indebted to several eminent men for some sentiments I have interwoven into the discourse, particularly Bishops Combeare, Atterbury and Fenelon; Mr. Locke, Mr. Rollin &c. but not having the works of these authors by me, it was impossible for me to give their sentiments in their own words.

As I feel to have no personal vanity to gratify by becoming an author, I hope no one will be so liberal as to tax me with plagiarism.

"In every work regard the author's end."

J. W.

York, Upper Canada, July 10, 1820.

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A SERMON.

"Now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity; these three, but the greatest of these is Charity." 1. Cor. 13, 13.

I have no doubt but a considerable degree of curiosity is excited in the public mind on this occasion. I therefore feel it an indispensable part of my duty to preface the services of this day, by declaring that it is not our intention to divert or amuse by the exhibition of something strange. At the same time I must confess, that our admitting the public on this solemn and important occasion, to a participation of our devotional exercises, is intended to remove prepossession, and weaken the force of that unmerited obloquy cast upon the institution by the rash and unknowing part of society.

It may, however, be proper to say, that when we are considered in a religious point of view, we declare for no sect, nor do we condemn any; we go on the broad principle of believing that "God has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of earth," (Acts xvii 26) and "whoever fears God and works righteousness shall be accepted of him." (Acts x. 35.)

But although we are no sectarians, and therefore impose no particular creed or system of religion, we demand of every man who connects himself with us, to be fully persuaded in his own mind of the existence of a Supreme Being, unto whom we are accountable for our conduct, and who will reward or punish us accordingly. 'Tis on this principle we graft all our ties of friendship, all our moral precepts; and from this arises every motive to virtue, and every check to vice. It is this principle that constitutes the "rough Ashler" of the man, which by our tools we square, and shape, and make ready for the master's use.

It is this principle which prompts us to hold forth this blessed Book (the Bible) as the rule of our faith and practice. And it is this principle which justifies us in saying *the best christian is the best mason*. And bold as the assertion may seem, I hesitate not to be the author and ad-

ducer of it, that a GOOD MASON is not far from the kingdom of God.

Now as I am a decided character, and settled in my sentiments, and am, from a variety of peculiar circumstances, dragged from my native and beloved obscurity, and become a public defender of Christianity. I never intend to let an opportunity of exhibiting its excellence, unfolding its doctrines, establishing its truth, and enforcing its mandates pass unimproved.

My heart glows with gratitude while I contemplate it, as a system divine in its origin, rational in its nature, conciliating in its influence, superlatively sublime in its diction, and transcendently glorious in its results. It is an imperious duty that devolves upon me, on the present occasion, to explain, illustrate, and enforce a certain part of this glorious system, as I am fully assured the more this is done, and its interests advanced, and its spirit imbibed by the members of the united Lodges, the more will the design of this institution be answered: for its ostensible purpose is the subversion of Vice, the promotion of virtue, and the cultivation of every christian grace. "Within these walls (impervious to the vulgar eye) the mind is nurtured in all the soundness of intellect, that discreet and engaging deportment, that benevolence and charity of disposition, and all those blandishments of manners which constitute the most noble appendages of the human character." I now speak from personal knowledge, and not from mere report. If I was inclined to eulogize I might very conscientiously say much more, which, though it might be considered useful, is at present unseasonable, as I must hasten to the more essential services of this day.

That portion of revealed truth which I have selected for my Thesis on this occasion, is of no private interpretation, its application is universal, whether we be men, or masons, or christians. It contains in itself a body of divinity: it is the essence of christianity, and the concentration of all religion. These words are often repeated but too seldom considered, nor will they ever be fully fathomed until the

disembodied spirit enters into the full fruition of its heavenly inheritance.

They stand recorded in the first Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, Chapter xiii. verse 13.

Now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity.

While I am reading over these words, there appears rays of celestial light diverging from them, on every word there seems to hang clusters of truths divine—I seem surrounded by a profusion of delicacies ; I feel to hesitate and make a pause—where shall I first begin ? however I must proceed. And as a traveller in a rapid car, sees beauteous prospects presenting themselves in quick succession, on which he cannot dwell, but takes a hasty glance and leaves them with regret ; so I must pass almost unnoticed, many of those delightful and rational beauties that are closely associated with this subject and this service.

Your attention I need not solicit, it is already granted ; of the exercise of your candour I have no reason to doubt ; but that which most nearly concerns yourselves in this, and every other public religious service, is the mixing of faith with what you hear that it may profit you.

I propose in the following discourse,

I To glance at the manifest design of the Apostle, by shewing the bearing of these words upon the christian scheme.

II. To explain the import of the several virtues or graces mentioned in the text, viz. Faith, Hope, Charity.

III. To support the doctrine of the apostle, that Charity is more excellent than Faith or Hope.

IV. And lastly, apply the subject to the two distinct class of society here assembled.

I. I am first to glance at the manifest design of the Apostle, by shewing the bearing of these words upon the christian scheme. St. Paul was by birth a Roman, by lineage a Jew, by circumstance a scholar ; he understood every minutia of the Jewish system, and was madly zealous for the religion of his fathers : but it is certain at that time, he understood not that it had received its consumma-

tion in Jesus Christ ; and that he was become the end of law to every one that believed.

He must also have had a very extensive knowledge of the religion of the surrounding heathens. He was born at Tarsus, the metropolis of Cilicia, a city equal to Rome in its privileges, and after it had pleased God to reveal his Son in him, he travelled much among the idolatrous nations, lived two years at Corinth, where lewdness was a proverb, and where idolatry was the established religion. He had been instrumental in planting a Christian church there, and unto them had been imparted those extraordinary gifts they had abused, and in this Epistle and in this chapter, his intention seems to be the correction of those abuses by shewing the true nature and proper use of those gifts.—that the religion he had taught among them, and which they had espoused, might be fixed on a firm basis : The grand palladium of which, he holds forth in the words of the text. And this is not like the palladium of Troy, or Rome, or Athens, a wooden statue, but the principal and most essential part of christianity, Charity !

The apostle saith now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity.—The Jewish economy, though of divine origin, was but temporary, “the shadow of good things to come.” (Heb. x. 1.) Now shall these burthensome rites, oblique illusions, types, shadows, ceremonies, and formalities, be removed. As it is said “from the days of John the Baptist even until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force,” but now shall the true worship of the true God be established, and they who worship him shall do it in spirit and in truth, unto us is the last and most perfect dispensation revealed. “Upon us the ends of the world are come,” (Cor. x. 11.) And this dispensation hath in it three things, viz faith, hope and charity. We will then proceed to explain,

II. The import of these several virtues, or graces, which have amongst us, very significantly been compared, “to the three principal rounds in Jacob’s ladder, by the help of which, we hope to arrive at the celestial lodge above, Faith fixes the foot, Hope lifts her eyes and views the different gradations and eagerly aspires, and Charity sup-
*+ peculiar to Christianity in those days
 which gifts she had abused*

ports her on her way. Faith—this is the *pedestal*. What then is Faith? not what is my faith but the faith meant by the apostle. Volumes have been written on this subject, and many have been so tenacious of their sentiments as to give full proof they had not that Faith which purifies the heart, and works by love.

Faith seems to be used in so general a sense, as even to include hope itself, see (Heb. xi. 1.) when it is called “the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.” But in a more strict and proper sense, it signifies assent upon testimony, in cases where that testimony deserves it.

Faith relates either to persons or to things, to the one as the ground of men’s assent, to the other as the subject matter of their belief. There is still another notion of Faith observable in the New Testament, and to which the text seems to refer. I mean such a strong persuasion of divine concurrence as prompted the apostles and other early christians to exert themselves in the operation of miracles.— This was very necessary in those days, for the confirmation of that religion which was to supercede all others, and spread through all the world. But we have no need in our times for such evidence. The ordinary influence of the Holy Ghost, the immutable, self evident truth of God’s word, his visible church, and extraordinary interferences in the course of his all-wise Providence for its preservation and prosperity, answer the same end; we live under the best dispensation “*upon us the ends of the world are come*,” (1st Cor. x. 11.) Perhaps the most interesting definition of Faith, as it regards us individually, is that which describes it as a “saving grace wrought in the soul by the spirit of God.” “This is the Faith whereby we receive Jesus Christ as offered to us in the Gospel, not only as the saviour of the world, but as our (personal) mediator and saviour.” This definition is supported by these and other such passages of scripture. “By grace are ye saved, through faith.” (Eph. ii. 8.) Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have access into this grace, wherein

we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. It is said to "work by love" (Gal. v. 6.) and to "purify the heart," (Acts xv. 9.) it is said be the common faith, (Tit. i. 4.) this is an act of the understanding, (Acts viii. 37.) and its fruit is righteousness, Rom. x. 10. So we see that Faith is something more than a belief upon testimony, for Paul vouches for the faith before Agrippa. But Agrippa declares "he is only almost persuaded to be a christian." (Acts xxvi. 27, 28.) Although I am certain this subject is essential to our decision of Character, our peace of mind, and eternal salvation, yet the time allotted me on this occasion will not allow me to expatiate as my feelings prompt me. I must proceed to shew what is meant by Hope. It is, properly speaking, a desire of the mind for some real, or supposed good, not yet possessed; grounded on such probable reasons, as are sufficient to warrant such desire, or expectation. This is what is meant by hope in general: a religious or divine hope, must be founded on divine reasoning; which are such intimations of divine favours, as God has thought fit to grant us, and these are either express promises, or else those rational deductions drawn from the order and scheme of providence; a capability for which is one distinguishing characteristic of a rational creature.

Hope was represented by the ancients by a beautiful child, arrayed in loose flowing white robes, standing on tiptoes, holding a trefoil in its right hand and a silver anchor in its left. These emblems I need not explain. There seems no passion more natural to man than hope: and surely none more useful. It is this which buoys up his sinking soul when struggling beneath the mighty pressure of clustering woes. It is this which enables him to bear, "The oppressors wrong, the proud man's contumely, the insolence of office, and the law's delay," indeed it "springs eternal in the human breast." It is predicated in Scripture in the most exalted manner as it applies to the christian, it is called pure† as it is resident in the heart that is cleansed from sin. It is said to be good‡ (in distinction from the hope of the hypocrite) as deriving its origin from

† 2 Thes. ii. 16. ‡ 1 Pet. i. 9

God, and centering in him. It is called lively,|| as it proceeds from spiritual life, and renders its possessor vigorous and active in good works. It is courageous,¶ because it excites fortitude in all the troubles of life, and yields support in the hour of death. It is called sure,* its foundation is firm, and it will not disappoint us at the last. It is joyful,§ because it produces the greatest felicity in anticipation of complete deliverance from all evil. I am sorry we cannot stay to pick up some of these precious gems and examine their beauties. However, let us not forget to admire and adore our creator and saviour, for having so revealed himself to the world, as to excite in us both faith and hope ; by the one enlarging and gratifying our understanding, and by the other supporting our will, and by the help of both, carrying us on through all the paths of religion and virtue, to the more perfect knowledge of those things, which we at present only believe, and the consummate enjoyment of that happiness for which we now hope.

I now come to the third virtue, or grace mentioned in our Text, viz. Charity. As we have often been deluded by taking the effect for the cause, I think it proper to be a little particular here. Charity is something more than casual, or even liberal alms-giving ; this is sometimes an effect of, but never can be considered as true charity, for it is motive and intention that are the true characteristics of virtue or vice. St. Paul tells us a “ man may give all his goods to feed the poor and his body to be burned and yet have no genuine evangelical charity.” It is properly a habit, or disposition of loving God with all our heart and our neighbour as ourselves. “ Charity” says an able and modern writer consists not in mere speculative ideas of general benevolence, floating in the head, and leaving the heart untouched, and cold ; neither is it confined to that indolent good nature which makes us rest satisfied with being free from inveterate malice, or ill will to our fellow creatures, without prompting us to be of service to any.—It is not properly a single virtue ; but a disposition residing in the heart as a fountain ; whence all the virtues of benignity, candour, forbearance, generosity, compassion,

|| Rom. vi. 5. ¶ 1 Th. v. 19. § Rom. x. 2.

and liberality flow, as so many native streams. From general good will to all, it extends its influence, particularly to those with whom we stand in nearest connection, and who are direct within the sphere of our good offices. From the country or community to which we belong, it descends to the smaller associates of neighbourhood, relatives and friends ; and spreads itself over the whole circle of social and domestic life. I mean not that it imports a promiscuous undistinguishing affection which gives every man an equal title to our love. Were we to carry it so far, Charity would be an impracticable virtue, and would resolve itself into mere words. True charity attempts not to shut our eyes to the distinction between good and bad men ; nor to warm our hearts equally to those who befriend and those who injure us. It reserves our esteem for our friends and our complacency for good men. It inspires towards our enemies forgiveness and humanity. It breathes universal candour and liberality of sentiment ; it forms gentleness of temper and dictates affability of manners.— It prompts corresponding sympathies with them who rejoice and with them who weep. It teaches us to slight and despise no man. Charity is the comforter of the afflicted, the protector of the oppressed, the reconciler of differences, the intercessor for offenders. It is not like a meteor that occasionally glares, but a luminary that is regular in its course, perpetually dispensing its benignant influence. It assumes every shape in which it is possible to benefit mankind. It is faithfulness in the Friend, public spirit in the Magistrate, equity and patience in the judge, moderation in the Sovereign, and loyalty in the subject.— In parents it is attention and solicitude ; in children it is reverence and submission. In a word, it is the soul of social life ; it is the sun that enlivens and cheers the bodies of men.” Were I to attempt to personify charity, I would say she has a heart to feel for, and pity misfortune ; she has eyes which dart round the world in quest of wretchedness, whose keen celestial gaze inspires delight ; she has feet which run with eagerness to bear the needed alms, and she has a hand that liberally bestows ; she has ingenuity and prudence that are exerted to rescue and to save.

But alas ! how poor is language and how faint the impress we receive from words describing heavenly objects. The delight I feel while speaking on this subject impels me to enter on the third part of my discourse, which is III, to support the doctrine of the apostle, that charity is more excellent than faith or hope. This will appear by considering the following particulars. 1. That charity is the end of faith and hope. 2- That it is absolutely essential to salvation. 3- That it will constitute our enjoyment in heaven. And lastly that it hath a place among the divine perfections. 1st, Charity is the end of faith and hope, it is said "the end of the commandment is charity," and faith and hope are only means by which this end may be attained. Faith in all its operations converges to this point ; hope hath the same tendency, the very condition of hope is charity, for the thing hoped for is a reward, and this reward is promised for, and suspended on the performance of some duty. And what is that duty but a concurrence with the divine measures in carrying on the general good of mankind ; so we see the reciprocal influence of faith and hope, their uniform tendency and ultimatum, is charity.

2. Charity is absolutely essential to salvation. Here I could wish to be understood with favour and not as intimating that faith or hope may be dispensed with. But influenced by that charity of which I am speaking, I would not exclude from heaven all who have not the Gospel, and have not therefore the proper reasons for, and objects of, faith and hope, at the same time, I am fully convinced that all who live under the Gospel shall be judged by the Gospel. But, 3dly Charity will constitute our enjoyment in heaven ; "prophesies shall fail, tongues shall cease, knowledge shall vanish away, but charity never faileth." 1Cor. 13, 8. Hope shall cease when enjoyment begins. Faith shall be lost in sight, but charity (or love) shall accompany us through the infinite variety of enjoyments in endless life. When we "are clothed upon with our house which is from heaven ;" and have entered on a state unchangeable ; and are put in possession of that inheritance which is incorruptable, undefiled, and that fadeth not away ;

where we shall be permitted to drink the living streams of bliss close to the fountain head ; and are privileged to gaze on the full blaze of Deity, and are changed from glory into glory by the spirit of the Lord ; then shall our affections in full tide like rivers tend to their source, and love shall constitute our everlasting heaven. 4thly And lastly, Charity has a place among the divine perfections. This cannot be said of either faith or hope, for as God knows all things he has nothing to believe ; and as he possesses all things he cannot be said to hope for any thing. But all things rise in proof of this grand truth, that God is Love. The whole scheme of human redemption, the complete economy of nature, the uniform direction and perpetual government of Providence, elicit the clearest demonstration. And so complete and absolute is this divine attribute that when it found not an object whereon to display itself it made one ; at once manifesting an infinitude of power and an infinitude of goodness. And now he hath created us, hath he left us to ourselves ; without any friendly power to support and guard us ? Hath he not furnished the world in which he has placed us with every thing needful either for our subsistence or delight ? And do not the circumstances in which we are placed, and the accidents to which we are exposed, prove to us that charity is the noblest feeling of our nature. Were this disposition universally diffused and uniform in its operation we should have heaven in the way to heaven, and this will actually be the case when the gospel of our God and of his Christ hath accomplished that which it is intended to accomplish ; when “righteousness shall cover the earth as the waters cover the face of the great deep.”—Then shall the full meaning of those words be understood “He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him, for God is love.” And the more we drink into the spirit of the gospel, the more we participate of the divine nature ; and the more we are conformed to the image of God, the more happy we are. I feel it difficult to tear my mind away from contemplations so glorious and enrapturing as the poet says ;

“Such contemplations mount us, and should mount

The soul still higher and never glance on man,
Unraptured uninflamed." NIGHT THOUGHTS

As there are two distinct classes of persons before me viz. those who are, and those who are not Masons, my application must be both general, and particular.

I have but little doubt of your being convinced of the truth of the text, that the last and most perfect dispensation is established, and now abideth faith, hope, and charity, these three, and that the greatest of these is charity. But permit me to enquire as one that careth for your souls, have we all that faith which is essential to salvation? We may believe the word of God, as being of divine origin, and as the "rule of our faith and practice," and yet it may have no more influence on the heart and life, than believing that there was once such a person as Alexander the Great or Julius Cæsar. We may understand religion as a science and be what is called orthodox in our heads, and yet our knowledge and our faith be as unavailing as that mentiond by St. James, ii, 19. True faith always produces the fruits of righteousness, and is said to be a living principle, John vii, 38, and to shew itself by emanations of goodness and without these it is dead and useless, James ii. 20, 26.

We may have hope, but it may be a hope that will perish, Job viii, 13, 14. We may have built on the sand of our good works, and intentions, and a presumption that God is infinite in mercy forgetting that "a God all mercy is a God unjust."

It behoves us to enquire whether we have divine reasons for our hope, and what is its foundation and confirmation? If our hope is in the Lord do we know any thing of the blessedness of the man whose hope the Lord is?—Jer. xvii, 7, 8. Did our experience ever accord with what St. Paul say to the Galatians, v, 5. "For we through the spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." And to the Romans v, from the 1, to the 6, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom we have access by faith unto his grace wherein we stand and reign in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; know—

ing that tribulation worketh patience ; and patience experience, and experience hope ; and hope maketh not ashamed ; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Is our hope assumed, or is it given unto us of God ? May I address you in the words of St. Paul, 2 Thes. ii, 16.—“ Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, who hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.” If our hope be of this nature it is ‘ our anchor to the soul,’ (and is) ‘ both sure and steadfast,’ and this alone is the hope that will bear the test. We may make an error in mathematical calculations, or we may err in science, and those things on which our honor, interest, and pleasure are suspended, yet the loss sustained thereby may be repaired and not prove ruinous, but an error in religion may be fatal to our peace and everlasting interest. O let us take the advice of St. Paul, “ be not deceived,” Paul vi, 7.

I feel it my duty, by way of applying this subject more closely, to enquire have we Charity, that divine principle, which has for its object God, his cause, his people, and the perishing souls of men ? Can we say “ we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.” Our knowledge will avail us little, and every other grace and fancied excellence will amount to nothing without this ; even our faith, and our hope, are but shadows or creations of our imaginations without this, as their centre, and their end. This is the end of the commandment. This is the fulfilling of the law.

I would now address myself particularly to those who have undertaken to reduce morality to a system and make the arts and sciences to bear upon this noble purpose. To those who are distinguished from the rest of the world by mutual pledges of the most tender friendship. I would observe to you, that those pledges and distinctions founded on them, lay on each of you a great weight of responsibility ; how you support that responsibility is best known to yourselves. But you know the honor of this institution is suspended on you individually, and unless its excellence

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can be read by the world in your exterior, all arguments in its favor are vain. Unless the conduct of the members is such as to prevent or wipe off reproach from the institution, 'tis useless to talk of the correspondence of Masonic principles with divine revelation, neither can it answer any better purpose to speak of its institution and its charities, nor can the oft repeated and fondly considered colossal arguments of antiquity, number and popularity, erase from the public mind the prejudicial opinions imbibed by observing the irregularities and immoralities too frequent amongst us.

If you wish to increase in number and maintain the respectability of the institution, the cause of which you have espoused, something more convincing must be exhibited to the public than such specious decorations. I know it is your wish that men of sound judgment, deep thought, and close reflection, should attach themselves to your order. Such men will pause, ponder, sift and examine for themselves. Let us see how much these arguments amount to in our favor, I mean the arguments of antiquity, number, and popularity. It is said, our order is of long standing, and has therefore a claim on reverence, esteem, and union; but may not the Pagan, the Jew, the Chinese, and the Mahomedan say the same. This argument applied to visible, social, or religious establishments, concludes equally for error as for truth, for the rites of the Mosaic, the infidelity of the Mahomedan, and the Idolatries of the Pagan system. On this principle the Jew can demonstrate the reasonableness of his conduct in adhering to Mosaic ritual; the Mahomedan, for his submission to the absurdities of the Koran; and the Pagan, the obligations he is under to tread in the steps of his forefathers, in worshipping the Sun, Moon, and Stars. This is one argument totally insufficient in itself for the furnishing of any certain criterion, either of purity of doctrines or rectitude of practice. On this principle the Church of Rome endeavours to make good her claim to supremacy. But it is not a very convincing mode of argumentation to say "we are the only true Church and have our credentials to show and every

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one that is not conformed to our modes of worship, and faith, is a renegade and a schismatic." This savours more of bigotry and a persecuting spirit than good sense and charity. The consideration of number is the same in its nature, concluding equally for error as for truth. It exhibits systems totally opposed to each other as having been rendered successful by divine interposition. It represents God as now engaged for one and then for another; in our quarter of the world establishing Heathenism, in another Judaism, and Christianity in another. If we admit this reasoning to be conclusive, and apply it to the general religious systems in the world even at present, it will decide against christianity itself and bind us over to the profession of paganism.

The population of the world has lately been stated to be eight hundred millions, ranged under these four denominations. 1. Pagans, which comprehend all those who have not the knowledge of the true God, but worship either no God or Idols. 2. Jews, comprehending all those who reject Jesus Christ as the Messiah, but expect one to come. 3. Mahomedans, including all those who believe Mahomet to have been a prophet sent of God. 4. Christians, under which we class all those who believe that the promised Messiah is already come, that Jesus Christ is that Messiah and the Saviour of the world. The respective members of these general denominations have been stated as follows: Mahomedans, one hundred and forty millions; Christians, one hundred and seventy five millions; Jews two millions five hundred thousand; Pagans four hundred and eighty two millions. So that we see that the Pagans rise in number superior to Christianity nearly in the proportion of three to one. Are we therefore to conclude that they are the only favoured of the Lord because of their number? I infer your answer from a belief of your good sense.

Popularity answers no better purpose than antiquity and number. 'Tis only like an ignis fatuus calculated to mislead. 'Tis an argument which may be made to serve almost any purpose be it ever so extravagant and base.

But admitting this superior popularity as attaching to scientific systems or religious establishments, does it establish the fact, that the doctrines taught amongst them should be received as axioms, and not be investigated? Are we to swallow their tenets by wholesale, and satisfy our conscience by saying it is enough for me to believe as the multitude believe? We had better follow the advice of the town clerk of Ephesus "and do nothing rashly," Acts xix, 36. and the example of the noble Bereans, "examine and search for ourselves and not from appearances receive with all readiness of mind, and neglect to satisfy our own reason and judgment. Acts xvii, 11.

We cannot so far impose on our own reason and judgment, as to admit this argument to decide; for we are assured the reverse has often been the case, and public defamation, instead of public esteem, has often been the portion of those who have had truth, reason, and revelation on their side.

I shall not lead you back to the opinion formed by heathens concerning the Jews, the ancient church of Jehovah: but I would direct your minds to the Saviour. The utmost purity of motive, the most profound wisdom in teaching, and the most unbounded benevolence of heart! were no sufficient securities to him against the torrents of prejudice and the shafts of malevolence. For though at one time we see by the splendour of his miracles, and the power of his teaching the tide of popular applause turned strongly in his favour, and we hear the multitude with rapture crying "Hosannah to the son of David, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord;" Yet soon the tide is turned and they clamour for his blood. And was it not so in the days of the Apostles? They were represented as being impious and profane, as practicing in their religious meetings gluttony, drunkenness, adultery and incest, with worshiping the head of an ass, and on the admission of a member into the privileges of their community with murdering a child and drinking its blood as a pledge of their mutual and inviolable secrecy. But coming down to the Reformation, a similar scene presents it-

** Torrents*

self, and the same despicable conduct is pursued. No sooner did a Wickliffe, a Jerome, a Husse, and a Luther, stand forth as opposers of papal imposition and absurdity, than they were exhibited to the world as apostates, perverters of the truth, and called by their bitter *Christian* enemies "the spawn of the bottomless pit."

But has it not been the same with science? has not error often been popular and truth scouted as preposterous and absurd? That error has often been popular I need only refer you the peripatetic philosophy which was once received and taught in all the popular schools, but is now laid aside. The opinions of Plato and the Copernican system of astronomy are all superceded by modern discoveries.

On the other side we see truth has been in obscurity blooming like a flower in the wilderness, wasting its balmy fragrance. Witness the fate of Socrates. I could swell this discourse beyond its proper limits, by adducing instances on both sides, but enough has been said to prove that popularity is no certain criterion by which we are to judge of the truth and excellence of sentiments and systems. Now as none of these arguments serve our purpose we naturally turn our attention to another sort of proof, in favour of this venerable, this ancient, this excellent but much abused institution. This proof must be elicited by the demeanour of its members. To those in authority I would address myself. (Here all the officers stand up.)

To you I would observe that your responsibility is great. It behoves the man at the helm to be sober, and the man in command to be cautious, courageous, and persevering.

It is your duty to search into the records of this institution: and while you do this let your emulation be excited. You lead on your Registers men in the most exalted station, and men of the greatest talents and influence. Kings, divines, philosophers, and men of science in every civilized nation. Let it be your highest ambition to imitate their virtues. It is your business to enforce the laws of

this institution. Then let every member see in your conduct the path he ought to tread. It is observed of Julius Cæsar that he never said to his soldiers "Ite ite" but "venite." That is he never said "go on," but come on, or "follow me." Your life should be a comment on those excellent laws it has become your duty to illustrate and enforce.

Now unto you who are to be governed I would say, (here all the members rise,) let it be more your endeavor to keep, than to mend our laws, "let every one be in subjection to the powers that be." You know it is a truth much to be lamented, that many have violated the most solemn vows, sacred injunctions, and affectionate advices, have shewn themselves "rebels to all law both human and divine," and have thereby disgraced this institution. You know among the bulk of mankind there are but few who have the good sense to discriminate between the peculiarities of individuals and the peculiarities of systems. The multitude condemn by wholesale, the misconduct of one is attached to the whole. Then let us make an awful pause!—and interrogate ourselves thus. Shall I perjure myself? Shall I break my solemn vows and violate the laws of this institution? shall I plant thorns in my own bosom and harrow up the feelings of my best friends and brethren? That we may not my dear brethren! let us all seek after that vigorous Faith,—that confirmed, glorious Hope :—and that glowing, celestial Charity, of which we have been speaking. For it is in vain to strive to produce an effect without a correspondent cause. "Make the tree good and then the fruit will be good."—We may cull the choicest sentiments from the best authors, we may resolve and re-resolve, and still have to complain "when I would do good evil is present with me."

Unless we have the principle of Piety, we can never uniformly practice it. My very dear brethren, a man may be a good man and not be a mason, but a man cannot be a good mason but must be a good man. This you know by having become acquainted with the peculiarities of this institution. A detail of its intrinsic excellence, and a full

development of its rules might have a tendency to exalt it in the public esteem ; but how would those be able to shew their faces before an enlightened public who have basely trampled on its laws, broken all its injunctions, despised its fellowship, and wickedly wrested themselves from its kind embrace, and darted beyond the stretch of its Charity ?

These have injured the cause they were bound to serve, and have lacerated the hearts of their brethren, and stand anomalies in the sentimental world. As I am a stranger amongst you I cannot think myself in danger of being taxed with being personal in my remarks. I declare I am not, but if I were let the individuals who deserve the censure feel all the poignancy of conviction, and would to God he may be reclaimed.

I never was more sincere or more freed from an inclination to bestow unmerited compliment than at this time, when I say " I hope better things of you." The personal acquaintance I have the pleasure of enjoying with some of you not only excites the hope, but guarantees the belief that the purposes of this institution shall not be perverted or desecrated by you. I hope the time will never come when it will be considered otherwise than an honour to have a name amongst you. As this City is the metropolis of the Province, I hope this Lodge will distinguish itself by its strict adherence to its own laws which will make it an ensample to others.

I never feel more attached to this institution than when I am revolving in my mind the present condition of man. The misfortunes to which he is exposed, and the fluctuations to which he is liable, shew the necessity of combining for the avoiding or alleviating our sorrows. Every true philanthropist must approve of every association that has for its object the protection of the stranger, the comfort of the afflicted, and the lessening of human misery in whatever shape it may present itself. And amongst us this is not confined to nation or to colour ; in every class of society we have brethren. No difference of opinion in matters relative to law, politics or religion is suffered to dis-

solve our bond of affection. Let us then approve that which is excellent and “hold fast that which is good,” that after our mutual assistances while travelling through the checkered maze of providence, we may have an entrance administered unto us abundantly into the kingdom of everlasting repose, and on our way be this our individual prayer.—

Father of light and life, thou good Supreme,
O, teach me what is good ; teach me thyself ;
Save me from folly, vanity and vice,
And every low pursuit, and feed my soul
With knowledge, conscious peace, and virtue, pure,
Sacred, substantial, never fading bliss.—THOMSON.

“ Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we can ask or think, be all honor and glory, world without end, AMEN.

FINIS.

Erratum.—In the introduction, for Roblin read Rollin.