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Poetry.

HONOR TO OUR WORKMEN. Whom shall we call our heroes, To whom our praises be ascribed...

ADDRESS.

DELIVERED AT THE MASONIC HALL, IN WAYNESBURG, MONDAY, JUNE 24, '98.

BY SAMUEL WAKEFIELD, D.D.

Worshipful Master, Officers and Members of Lodge No. 153, of Free and Accepted Masons.

In obedience to your call, I am here to-day, to commemorate our Patron Saint, to spread before you, and before others who are present with you, some brief remarks respecting what is denominated Freemasonry.

I thank you for the cordial invitation which you have given me to perform this service, partly, because it is an unmistakable expression, on your part, of fraternal regard; and partly, because it affords me an opportunity of giving utterance to some of my honest opinions, respecting the merits of this benevolent and time-honored institution.

It is reasonable to believe, that the present system of Freemasonry had its origin in architectural science. This is clearly indicated by the very name of the fraternity, and also, by the working tools and implements which are still employed by the craft.

It is perfectly natural for men who have a laudable ambition for eminence in any mechanical art, to avail themselves of the science and experience of others employed in the same craft; and when it is necessary in the execution of their work, to employ some great object, for a number of men of like occupation to be employed in concert, it is equally natural for them to regard their united attainments as a kind of common treasury, on which each one may draw at pleasure, for the mutual benefit of all.

In every association of this kind, order, which is "heaven's first law," is an indispensable element; but the history of the world shows, that order cannot be established or maintained in human society, without some supreme controlling power. It is therefore reasonable to suppose, that this acknowledged necessity for supreme control, in every well-ordered association, gave rise to that superiority of authority or mastery in Freemasonry, which every Worshipful Master of a Lodge is invested, and as the chief magistrate of a civil government requires the aid of subordinate officers, to enable him rightly to execute the laws, so the government of the Masonic Fraternity requires the execution of subordinate assistants, by whose aid the principal officer is enabled to discharge the functions of his exalted station, with honor to himself, and with profit to the brethren.

As men have always held the science of architecture in high estimation, an ability to impart to others a knowledge of the art has been regarded by many, as a most honorable and desirable attainment. But in the early history of our order, knowledge could not have been imparted as it may be now. The art of printing was then unknown to the world; and men expert in writing were like the visits of angels, and far between.

The common, and almost only way of communicating knowledge, was by oral instruction—a fact which has left its signature upon the craft, never to be erased. While some were desirous to learn, others were both able and willing to impart; and thus by a very natural and easy process were established different degrees in the science of Free Masonry.

Another important step in the formation of the order was, the adoption of a plan, by which the brethren should secure to themselves the advantages of their union, when sickness, accident, or the infirmities of age should render them incapable of active service. They knew that unless they could rely on some means beyond the prospect of their daily labor, they might be reduced to extreme want. To secure themselves against this evil, they adopted the practice of regular pecuniary contributions, thus creating a common fund for the relief of the destitute, from which every brother had a right to expect aid, as his necessities might require.

The logic of events, however, soon convinced the Craft, that a Brother might be in most pressing necessity for pecuniary aid, when far removed from the particular association of which he is a member, and unable to avail himself of its ability to relieve his wants. This, in all probability, led to the adoption of the Article in the Masonic Creed, that Freemasonry is a Universal Brotherhood. It acknowledged a common interest, unconfined by the limits of local ties. It bestowed upon every brother, whether

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residing within the bounds of his own particular association, or journeying as a stranger, may have need of aid, and apply for needed assistance, and the ability to establish the justice of his claim. It must not be forgotten, however, that a Brother may sometimes need what is of far more value than pecuniary aid. He may be placed in circumstances which call for the honest announcements of caution, the well-chosen words of good advice, or the soothing accents of sympathy; and if he can establish his claim, he may expect, though a stranger, to realize the peculiar advantages of his connection with the fraternity, and to receive the desired aid.

If we admit the truthfulness of the statements just made, we must come to the conclusion, that Freemasonry is, to a very great extent, a creature of circumstance—a kind of natural formation. As a plant, it unfolded, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the sheaf. As a building, it had its foundation in a few elementary, eternal, and indestructible principles. Its construction was carried forward by the employment of such materials, and the adoption of such means, as the craft, with its progressive skill, and ever enlarging experience, believed to be conducive to its highest interests. In due time it reached its consummation, and stood forth a living temple, which, by the symmetry of its proportions, and the perfection of its parts, challenged the attention and admiration of the world.

Here some one may ask: When did Freemasonry take its birth? When did this living temple arrive at its consummation? To these questions we cannot give a definite reply. We know, that as far back, along the pathway of time, as the unlikeliest light of historic testimony can reach, we find the existence of the order; and that, assisted by the dim taper of tradition, we can trace it to a period still more remote. But it must be admitted by all, that there is a point in this investigation, beyond which dark and impenetrable shadows are cast. "But whence sprang the moral of the craft? What is the origin of the feeling of social affection, which belongs to the craft? Brethren, Freemasonry is not the author of that principle. It embodies philanthropy, and makes it practically useful; it keeps alive the feeling of mutual dependence and the sense of mutual obligations, which belong to true philanthropy; and hence her appropriate home is in the Lodge. She retreats behind the foundation of the world, and is made venerable and active. Scordid desires, and overreaching cupidities drive her from the busy haunts of man; and, wandering to find some resting place for the soul of her feeble, she makes her abode with us, the good and true in our order, as for her; and though we invoke God in our secret assemblies, and stand in awe of his greatness, yet is our love for him best shown by the evidences and fruits of our love for man. We do not, as the ancients, regard philanthropy as a duty, but as a pleasure. Her date is beyond the foundations of social life. She stands the eldest of Heaven's attributes for our benefit." She was actively employed when the Almighty first created man, and her voice was heard when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.

But at this point, some one may be inclined to ask, "What is Freemasonry, as it is understood by the world?" To this our reply is, that it is a moral and benevolent institution, whose members are united in the bonds of fraternal fellowship, and whose peculiar principles are solemnly grounded by land and sea, and in the bosom of the earth. The moral bearing of the institution is a matter which may be "seen and read of all men." We know that it does not profess to be a system of religion; nor does it attempt to displace religion, or to occupy its room. It is, in fact, a system of moral instruction which is peculiar to the craft, and with which even the uninitiated may become familiar. Indeed, every man of common sense, and every Mason is a "pious and virtuous" man; and his way was acknowledged when "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

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Here are men of different political views, may have been warmly engaged in party warfare; but they have cast aside, for a time, all the insignia of embittered contest; and, having triumphed over personal antipathies, they put on the garb of fraternal affection, and learn to acknowledge each other as brethren. Thus, the fretting excitement of party strife is allayed; angry antagonisms are pacified and united; and all are made of one family, and exercise unfeigned charity toward all.

And is there no advantage—no benevolence in all this? Are we to expect no benefit to result from the cessation of angry antagonisms, and the promotion of brotherly affection and good will? Surely these resting places of the passions exert a salutary influence upon our moral character. Their direct tendency is to save us from that hardness of heart, which constant rivalry and unmitigated antagonism will most assuredly produce.

2. The benevolence of Freemasonry is seen in its readiness to assist the needy. Where is the Masonic association which has not, in one way or other, visited and relieved "the widow and the widows in their affliction?" Where is the brother who has ever disregarded the cry of distress, or refused to lend a helping hand, in ministering to the necessities of a fellow creature? We know that when Freemasonry bestows its charities, it does not sound a trumpet, or proclaim its benevolence by some public demonstration; but still the benevolence exists, and the favors are bestowed, while the donor, who gives in secret, is often rewarded openly. Indeed, there is a blessedness in the very act of bestowing a needed favor, which often fully compensates the giver. And if, in addition to this, we take into account the personal gratification which our charities create, and the heart-felt gratitude which they evoke, we will have at least an imperfect view of the fruits and evidences of that benevolence, which has ever been a prominent characteristic of our order.

Will you with me to witness the tears of gratitude, which the lonely widow sheds over the offering you send her in the name of Freemasonry? Will you listen, with me, to the thanksgivings of the orphan, whose wants your liberality has relieved? Will you mark, in the man of deep gratitude, the signs of our order, when he receives into his trembling hand the proof of your Masonic charity? These, and similar cases, may be regarded as so many appeals to the heart of every man of true humanity; and we will surely be disposed to regard them as such, when we see the bestowment of even a cup of cold water, in a proper manner, "shall not lose its reward."

If there is any earthly consideration which, more than any other, can give poignancy to the sting of death, it is the "tormenting thought, that the loved ones whom we are about to leave behind us must be thrown out upon the cold charities of a selfish and unfeeling world. But, on the other hand, if the husband and father is called to die, without being able to secure to the objects of his dearest affections the necessities of life, it is to him a consoling thought, that he leaves behind him a well-ordered and operating institution, whose help they cannot seek in vain.

Perhaps we cannot better illustrate the nature of Masonic benevolence, than by presenting a single circumstance, which has occurred in our own cities. It comes to us well authenticated, and is only one case among thousands. A large property holder instructed the proper officer to make attachment of household furniture for rent due. The tenant was a widow, and the mother of little children; and that attachment would cover nearly all that the law allowed to be taken. When the lady was introduced to the officer, and learned the object of his visit, she exclaimed in her distress, "What shall I do?" Her friend, who stood by her side, said, "I can apply. I am alone—utterly alone—helpless—destitute—a widow."

The officer then inquired, "Is there no association upon which you have a claim?" Her answer was, "None." He then inquired, "Are you not a member of any benevolent society?" "But I remember," said she, "my husband told me more than once, that if I should ever be in distress, I might make this available."—Here she produced a small book, "I fear, however, it is now too late."

"Let me see it," returned the officer, who was himself a Mason. On examining it, he at once recognized the standing of the deceased Brother, and said, "We will see what we can do for you, though the landlord, I know, is not a Mason. Who is your clergyman?" Inquired the officer. She told him who her clergyman was. He also was a Mason.

When the officer made known to the clergyman the widow's distress, and also her claim on the fraternity, he inquired, "Who is the landlord?" When informed by the officer, he said, "Ah! does his religion teach him to set no bounds to his charity?" "Yes," said the officer, "Freemasonry requires it. I have sent the last payment of my salary; but here is my note, at a short date; but here is my note, at a short date, for the amount due. The landlord will hardly refuse that."

Thus, in a few minutes, the claim was paid; and the benevolent officer, forgiving his fees, the heart of the destitute widow was caused to sing for joy; while her tears of gratitude, made brilliant by the smiles of her relieved children, became level with the stars in the firmament of which is beyond that of silver or gold.

But, if by this act of Masonic charity, the afflicted widow and her weeping children were made to rejoice, how unfeignedly great must have been the pleasure of those who presented for them so great a benefit! My brethren, Freemasonry not only inspires the heart with a feeling of true benevolence, but it becomes, to a great extent, its own reward; by affording its members the rich luxury of doing good to the needy.

We might present other aspects of the benevolence of this institution, if time and circumstances would allow; but perhaps we have pressed this subject far enough for the present occasion. Our conclusion is, that Freemasonry is, both a moral and benevolent institution;—one whose legitimate tendency is only good, and not evil.

We know, however, that in whatever light we may regard Freemasonry, it always has been, and still is, an object of zealous opposition on the part of many. We cannot believe that this opposition has always been governed by moral honesty. In many cases, the wicked motives which it originated have been so apparent to be misunderstood, and hence the opposition has assumed the character of unmitigated persecution.

To those who oppose our order from dishonest motives, and in a slanderous manner, we have nothing to say; nor would you as good men and true Masons, thank me for attempting to disprove their unscrupulous slanders. We leave them to the consequences of their own doings, knowing that in due time they shall be fully rewarded for their wicked work.

But there are some who are honestly, though mistakenly, opposed to Freemasonry. They oppose it, not because they have any sympathy with the organized ant Masonic movement; but because they suppose it to be liable to insuperable objections. And as these objections may exist in the minds of good and honest men, they deserve a candid investigation. Our time, however, will not allow us to do more, than to consider a few of the strongest.

1. The first objection which we will notice is, that "Freemasonry is unchristian." This objection is urged. 1. From a consideration of the present improved state of our social relations.—We rejoice to know, when we compare the past with the present, that our social condition is greatly improved, and that our civil and religious rights are now more clearly understood, and more generally acknowledged than formerly. But still, how narrow is the compass of this social improvement, compared with the family of man! In many parts of the earth social improvement has made, for centuries, but little progress. Hence, if Freemasonry were entirely excluded from the most civilized portions of civilization, it would be a great loss to the world. It is necessary in less favored parts, to accomplish the benevolent objects which it proposes to reach.

We cannot admit, however, that social refinement renders Freemasonry unnecessary. The highest circles of social life there is often unrelieved woe, calling for help, but calling in vain, unless its voice can reach the Masonic ear. But pecuniary assistance is not all that Freemasonry confers. Among its most valuable benefits are good will, social intercourse, and friendly advice. These are always necessary, even in the most refined state of society; and though they may sometimes be realized in the usual walks of life, it is only to the craft that they are absolutely secured.

2. The objection is further urged, from the consideration, that if men are bound to do good to the needy, independent of the requirements of any voluntary association, why should they be bound to do so by the requirements of any such association? It is necessary to observe, that it lies directly against every other benevolent institution, as it does against Freemasonry. If the common obligation resting upon all men to minister to human suffering, is not sufficient to create a moral call for almshouses and public hospitals, then for Masonic associations.—The argument proves too much, and therefore it proves nothing at all.

That if the duty of all men to do good to the needy, is not sufficient to create a moral call for almshouses and public hospitals, then for Masonic associations.—The argument proves too much, and therefore it proves nothing at all. That if the duty of all men to do good to the needy, is not sufficient to create a moral call for almshouses and public hospitals, then for Masonic associations.—The argument proves too much, and therefore it proves nothing at all.

There is therefore not only ample room, but an urgent necessity, for the benevolent offices of Freemasonry. 2. It is pleaded, moreover, that our order is unnecessary, because the really destitute are sufficiently provided for by the charities of the State. To this we reply, that we can heartily rejoice in all that is done for the relief of the destitute, by legislative enactments; especially when we know that the principles of Freemasonry lie at the foundation of all such beneficent legislation. But we must not overlook the fact, that these legislative provisions, however good in their design and tendency, are inadequate to accomplish all the benevolent purposes of our order. They, at best, are but a partial relief to human suffering. Freemasonry is a universal institution. They are mainly designed to relieve the wants of the body. Freemasonry pours its blessings upon the whole man. They are cold and heartless in their bearing upon the soul. Freemasonry extends its benevolent hand, with the sympathies of a brother.

Moreover, we know that all public charities carry with them a species of degradation, incompatible with the proper character of man's tender regard;—they who are his constant solace in times of affliction—the willing companions of his sorrows, as well as his joys, should be forgotten in the prescribed duties of the order. Many would be admitted into the rank of those who may claim its benefits, the mothers, sisters, and daughters of Freemasons, and invites, especially, the widows of departed members, to lean with confidence upon its supporting arm. To say, therefore, that Freemasonry is unnecessary, because the really destitute are sufficiently provided for by the charities of the State, is to say, that the benefits of our civil government, because they are not allowed to exercise the elective franchise, or to occupy seats in its several departments. As well might we argue, that they are excluded from the benefits of civil government, because they are not invited to share the secrets of Masonry and dispense its mysteries; they are therefore excluded from its benefits. Certainly not. As well might we argue, that they are excluded from the benefits of civil government, because they are not invited to share the secrets of Masonry and dispense its mysteries; they are therefore excluded from its benefits.

3. There is one other objection sometimes urged, which may be regarded as a passing notice. It is, that "Freemasonry is selfish and partial in the bestowment of its favors." "If there is any real good in it," say some, "why does it not throw open its doors, that all persons, indiscriminately, may partake of its benefits?" A few remarks will place this question in a proper light, and show that the objection is a "baseless fabric."

1. The very idea of a benevolent institution implies restrictions, both as to the persons to be admitted, and to the benefits to be conferred. It is not possible for any man to be a member of a benevolent institution, who is not invited to share the secrets of Masonry and dispense its mysteries; they are therefore excluded from its benefits. Certainly not. As well might we argue, that they are excluded from the benefits of civil government, because they are not invited to share the secrets of Masonry and dispense its mysteries; they are therefore excluded from its benefits.

2. Freemasonry, like other benevolent associations, has proposed to accomplish its objects, by the association of a few of these ends. It has adopted certain means. The only question to be settled is this—Have men a right to form an association, for their mutual benefit? To say they have not, is at once to condemn partnership in trade. It is to say that man has no right to form themselves into a Mutual Insurance Company, a Banking Company, a Rail Road Company, or anything of the kind; which is too absurd to be believed. It follows, therefore, that men have a right to form any kind of association which does not interfere with the rights of others; and this, we believe, is strictly true of Freemasonry.

3. A claim upon the benefits of Freemasonry does not rest upon any of the benevolent objects of the institution. It is a claim which is purchased by every brother, and is therefore what may justly be called a perfect right. It is not then very unreasonable for persons to ask the free use of public places for which others pay a stipulated price, while they themselves pay nothing at all? Most assuredly it is. As well might we claim, that those who make no deposits in a saving fund, have as much right, as depositors have, to draw money from its vaults.

4. We would not conceal the fact, however, we wish it to be distinctly understood, that the direct object of Freemasonry is, to benefit the members of the order, together with their immediate female relatives and children. For, though it includes the duty of benevolence to all men, yet it requires its members to do good especially to them who are of its own household. To carry out this benevolent object, the secrets of Freemasonry are indispensable. They are the locks and keys, the bolts and bars, by which our common property is secured to the fraternity. They are a kind of Masonic safe, in which is deposited the precious treasure of the craft.

5. How preposterous, then, has it to say, that if there is any good in Freemasonry, it ought to throw open its doors, and allow all to enjoy its benefits. On the very same principle we may say: If there is any good in merchandizing, every merchant should throw away his locks and bars, and permit all persons to carry off his goods, without paying for them. Or might we not go so far as to say, if there is any good in the Christian Church, she should throw away all restrictions in regard to the terms of membership, and receive as men into her communion, even the most ungodly. The absurdity of the principle is so obvious, that we leave you to make the application.

But is it indeed true, that Freemasonry seeks to close its doors and deprive the world of its benefits? It certainly is not. We admit that it does not employ any direct influence to add to its numbers. It persuades no man—it urges no man to unite with the order. But it is true, on the other hand, that its doors are ever ready to be opened to all good men, who think that its benefits will compensate them for the cost. Those who think otherwise should not find fault with us, for retaining the secrets of the craft. They should rather regret that we are unwilling to purchase them; and we will not allow the free to be cut down, in order that they may gather the precious fruit.

And now, brethren, we must bring our remarks to a close. We have placed before you, in a very brief manner, some thoughts in regard to the origin and nature of Freemasonry, and the principal objections urged against it. The sketch we admit, is a very imperfect one; but we were comforted by the reflection, that it is addressed to those who know how to exercise charity. We have seen that there is nothing in Freemasonry incompatible with the teachings of Revealed Religion; that it acknowledges the Bible as Divine origin; and that it inculcates the worship of God. We have not said, nor do we believe, that it supersedes the Gospel. This, alone, is the power of God to save. We have not intimated that it can regenerate the human soul; for this is emphatically the work of the Spirit. But we do most unhesitatingly say, that no man can be a consistent Mason, who does not make the principles of pure morality the rule of his life. Here we would like to say many things by way of warning, and exhortation, and encouragement; but we have already detained you long enough. It is good and pleasant for brethren, even on earth, to dwell together in unity. It will be better, and far more delightful, for brethren to dwell together in the heavenly land. May we indulge the hope, that this fraternal association shall ultimately be continued, by the true Architect of the universe, into that "Glorious not more with hands, eternal in the heavens." "So mote it be."

It is not necessary to say to these brethren, that Freemasonry is not a political association. They know, and every Mason knows, that political questions are never carried into the Lodge. But how shall the initiatory rites of this order be administered, if it is not a political association? It is demonstrated by the fact, that men of opposite political parties unite together, in the same Masonic association.

There is one remark which may be made here, in regard to the phrase "Secret Society." It is intended to indicate that Freemasonry seeks to conceal its existence, its principles, or its designs, nothing can be farther from the truth. It declares, everywhere, its existence, principles, and designs; it gives to the world the names of its officers; it builds its temples in towns and cities; and it exhibits its members in public processions. True, there are secrets belonging to the order; but they are only such as are necessary to guard its privileges, and to perpetuate its identity.

3. Another objection to Freemasonry is, that "females are excluded from its communion." We are told by the objector, that "there must be something wrong in that exclusion, and that the principles of which our wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters are excluded." Objectionable as this view of the subject may appear to some, a few plain statements will place it before every mind in a very different light. Let it then be distinctly understood, that in the first place, that Freemasonry originated with a class of working men; and hence, in its origin, it could not have included women, than they could have included blacksmiths or carpenters. And when to this we add the fact, that Freemasonry, in all its distinctive features, is like "the law of the Moles and Persians, which although not a very different light, respecting the exclusion of women from membership in the craft.

But there is another fact which may be stated here, as furnishing a good and sufficient reason, for this exclusive regulation. Many of our secret meetings are customarily held in the night. Now, in view of this fact, who does not see, that to admit women as well as men, would give occasion to the tongue of slander to circulate a thousand evil reports, and to disturb the peace of society, and greatly injure the reputation of the order. Hence we regard it as a wise and prudent arrangement, and one which must be in perfect accordance with the purest dictates of common sense, to admit not men, but men to the communion of Freemasonry. It is therefore by the law of propriety alone, that women are excluded from participating in the labors and mysteries of the craft.

But we may conclude, as the objection seems to imply, that because they are not invited to share the secrets of Masonry and dispense its mysteries, they are therefore excluded from its benefits. Certainly not. As well might we argue, that they are excluded from the benefits of civil government, because they are not invited to share the secrets of Masonry and dispense its mysteries; they are therefore excluded from its benefits.

4. There is one other objection sometimes urged, which may be regarded as a passing notice. It is, that "Freemasonry is selfish and partial in the bestowment of its favors." "If there is any real good in it," say some, "why does it not throw open its doors, that all persons, indiscriminately, may partake of its benefits?" A few remarks will place this question in a proper light, and show that the objection is a "baseless fabric."

1. The very idea of a benevolent institution implies restrictions, both as to the persons to be admitted, and to the benefits to be conferred. It is not possible for any man to be a member of a benevolent institution, who is not invited to share the secrets of Masonry and dispense its mysteries; they are therefore excluded from its benefits. Certainly not. As well might we argue, that they are excluded from the benefits of civil government, because they are not invited to share the secrets of Masonry and dispense its mysteries; they are therefore excluded from its benefits.

2. Freemasonry, like other benevolent associations, has proposed to accomplish its objects, by the association of a few of these ends. It has adopted certain means. The only question to be settled is this—Have men a right to form an association, for their mutual benefit? To say they have not, is at once to condemn partnership in trade. It is to say that man has no right to form themselves into a Mutual Insurance Company, a Banking Company, a Rail Road Company, or anything of the kind; which is too absurd to be believed. It follows, therefore, that men have a right to form any kind of association which does not interfere with the rights of others; and this, we believe, is strictly true of Freemasonry.

3. A claim upon the benefits of Freemasonry does not rest upon any of the benevolent objects of the institution. It is a claim which is purchased by every brother, and is therefore what may justly be called a perfect right. It is not then very unreasonable for persons to ask the free use of public places for which others pay a stipulated price, while they themselves pay nothing at all? Most assuredly it is. As well might we claim, that those who make no deposits in a saving fund, have as much right, as depositors have, to draw money from its vaults.

4. We would not conceal the fact, however, we wish it to be distinctly understood, that the direct object of Freemasonry is, to benefit the members of the order, together with their immediate female relatives and children. For, though it includes the duty of benevolence to all men, yet it requires its members to do good especially to them who are of its own household. To carry out this benevolent object, the secrets of Freemasonry are indispensable. They are the locks and keys, the bolts and bars, by which our common property is secured to the fraternity. They are a kind of Masonic safe, in which is deposited the precious treasure of the craft.

5. How preposterous, then, has it to say, that if there is any good in Freemasonry, it ought to throw open its doors, and allow all to enjoy its benefits. On the very same principle we may say: If there is any good in merchandizing, every merchant should throw away his locks and bars, and permit all persons to carry off his goods, without paying for them. Or might we not go so far as to say, if there is any good in the Christian Church, she should throw away all restrictions in regard to the terms of membership, and receive as men into her communion, even the most ungodly. The absurdity of the principle is so obvious, that we leave you to make the application.

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