

1689/27
C8

THE CHIEF SECRET OF FREEMASONRY:

“Love to God, and Love to the Brotherhood.”



A SERMON,

PREACHED IN

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, BURSLEM,

ON TUESDAY, JULY 28, 1857,

BEFORE THE

PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF FREE AND ACCEPTED
MASONS OF STAFFORDSHIRE,

BY THE VERY WORSHIPFUL BROTHER

THE REV. JAMES DOWNES, B.A.,

Incumbent of St. Ann's, Staffordshire;

PROVINCIAL GRAND ASSISTANT CHAPLAIN;

Chaplain of the Lodge of St. Matthew, 786, Walsall.

PUBLISHED BY THE UNANIMOUS REQUEST OF THE BRETHREN PRESENT
OF THE PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL LODGES.

WALSALL:

PUBLISHED BY J. R. ROBINSON, THE BRIDGE.

1857.

Copyright Worcestershire Masonic
Library and Museum Trust

THE CHIEF SECRET OF MASONRY—LOVE TO GOD
AND THE BROTHERHOOD.

—
“*Sirs, ye are brethren.*”—ACTS VII. 26.
—

PRAYER BEFORE SERMON.

ALMIGHTY Father of mercies! God of love! Thou source of all true Wisdom! bless, with the light of Thy truth, and the sanction of Thine all-glorious presence, this assembly of Thy people. May this gathering of Brethren in Thy holy temple meet with such a portion of Thine approbation, that we all may be truly benefited; and Thy name, O Lord, everlastingly glorified. May we all be united in the true bonds of Brotherly Love; and may the fear of God so influence every link of our sacred union, that our Masonic principles may bear the true insignia of all christian perfection. May we have Faith and Hope, and possess that true *Christian Masonic Charity*, that shall give us in our hearts all the true and unabating felicity of the love of God; and produce in our actions all the true and substantial effects of the true and unadulterated love of our fellow-creatures. May we, one and all—Christians and Masonic Christians,—be *Brethren*; and may we now see the beginning of that happy day, when true and saving knowledge shall fill the earth as the waters do the channels of the sea. Hear us, mighty Father, for Thy dear Son's sake, our elder brother, in whose name we further pray to Thee :—Our Father, &c.

Copyright Worcester's Masonic Library and Museum Trust

Dear Brethren and Christian Friends,

The task of the preacher, on an august occasion like the present, is none of the easiest; for, whilst he has to address the Brethren of the Provincial Grand Lodge and Local Lodges, he has also to address those who, not being Masons, yet belong to the general family of christian brethren. The latter probably think they shall hear something new, something striking, something that shall give them a better insight into Masonry than they had before. Difficult as the task may be, I will, to the best of my ability, as a christian Minister and fellow labourer, endeavour to please, and, I trust, edify both classes. And may the Great Architect of the universe, the common Father of us all, look down upon us at this time; and especially direct His humble, ministering servant in the wisdom of His Gospel, and furnish him with good materials, that the whole building of Masonic science, Masonic labour, and christian love, may be fitly framed together, and be made manifest to every beholder, as having strength and duration, unparalleled and unequalled; and beauty and ornament unrivalled in the universe.

I trust I shall be excused by our much revered Grand Master and the brethren, if, as I proceed, I expose to the strangers present, as far as I dare, some of the secrets and history of our Order.

And one of the grandest secrets we have, is, what I would

wish were (if I may so say) of world-wide celebrity—Love to God, and Love to the Brethren: the latter being one of the last commands of our elder Brother Jesus Christ. “And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also;” we learn likewise, from the volume of the sacred law, that “He who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen.”

If our professions, as men and Masons, be destitute of love to God, and charity towards our fellow creatures; if our philosophy be destitute of our philanthropy; or, if our Masonry be destitute of the activity of doing good; away with religious profession, it is but an empty name; away with philosophical sentiment, it is but as sounding brass; away with Masonic pretensions, they are but as tinkling cymbals.

“In all the institutions of Masonry, in all its rules, and in all its orders, its candidates are not only every moment instructed and advanced in the knowledge of the being and existence of a God, but also the *love* we owe Him. Yes, brethren, the secrets of Masonry, properly attended to, are the secrets of the Lord; and as we travel from the west to the east, and in our pious journey survey, from the north to the south, the English Lodge has no point, no corner—has neither foundation or summit, where God is not recognized and had recourse to in all His holy perfection. The Worshipful Master of a Lodge, who is without religion, must talk a language

foreign to his heart; the Pedestal in a Mason's Lodge is always unfurnished without that Book of Books, of which God is the only author: and the jewels, both moveable and immoveable, have no significant reference, but as they refer you to Him, who is the author of all things; who is the giver of every good and perfect gift, whose hands are open to supply your every want; and who alone is the source of every Mason's hope.

Would you, the uninitiated, survey our Lodge from the surface to the centre? High as the heavens we behold Him, who manageth all creation, in the exercises of His wisdom and power: deeper than hell, we see Him carrying on redemption beyond the narrow limits of all human philanthropy, saving; not only a part, but the whole; saying unto death, "I will be thy plague," removing the sting of death: saying unto hell, "I will be thy destruction," breaking all its massy doors, and setting its despairing prisoners free. Look we from the north to the south, or *vice versa*, we see the Seasons roll on in their usual round of uninterrupted variety. Forth comes the smiling Spring, in all her tender softness; the fostering sun, the moistening shower, and all the pleasing promises of plenty. Next shoots the Summer's sun with full perfection, to bless the ripening year, which Autumn, with her full-fed fatness, showers upon the earth for man's enjoyment; and e'en when surly Winter blows, we lose its essence of intention, if, e'en in that inclement season, we ever lose sight of a God of love.

Thus stands, and thus is furnished, a Mason's Lodge: the God of creation, the God of providence, and the God of grace rises in the east, to shine upon her with glory: returns *into* (not *from*) the west, and blesses her with His presence. He stretches His arms of love from north to south, and calls her His own beloved; and in all His dispensations, in the exercise of all His perfections, and in the manifestation of all His graces, gives to every enquiring individual an experimental knowledge of Himself. Oh! my brethren, is He not a God worthy of our love and adoration? And "God is love." He displays it in His creation and providence; everything in and around us bespeaks the character of the Great Creator; and that everything is so ordered and instructed that we do, or *may*, enjoy it in a superior manner, should be *to* us at once a proof of His goodness, and *in* us an excitement to gratitude and praise. With this love, the sceptre of the Almighty easily bears its sovereign sway over every affection of His creatures' hearts; and with this love, the human soul soars above all human distinctions, and all human impediments, and flies upon the wings of obedience, to rest for ever upon the security of divine approbation.

And oh! what did we not lose when man lost his innocency! Loaded as we are with ten thousand times ten thousand blessings of His love, what must have been the state of our first parents in Paradise? Though Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens, is the blissful throne of Him, who alone is from ever and for ever, He (in

wondrous, condescending love to His creature man) laid the foundations of the earth, and built it for man's habitation, and gave it him for his inheritance. He built it as the temple of man's adoration, and as the altar from whence all his free-will offerings were to arise; and therein man was placed, as the high-priest thereof to offer up from thence continually, the grateful incense of praise and thanksgiving for all the blessings showered around Him. Our blissful parents, in their first estate, needed no other Architecture: for (robed in innocence) the verdant turf, with all its native fragrance, was their refreshing pallet, and the open heavens their sheltering canopy. Oh, brethren, what were the delights of primæval innocence? "The varied carol of early birds was the herald to Eden's pair to close their balmy slumbers—to hail the approach of dawning light—to join the morning stars, with all the glad creation round, in one long chorus of exulting Hallelujahs to their all-bountiful Creator! Over these glorious scenes, the sun rose joyous, and in smiles he set; and cheerful through the day his circling course he ran. In those happy days, gone, gone never to return,—the tongue vibrated only with praise and gratitude; and man's heart, in every deed, and word, and thought, was in unison with heaven. Then bliss supreme lighted up the countenance of the first pair in blissful Eden, as yet unsullied with a tear; and nature, symphonious nature, caught those smiles for the circling year all through; her hills and dales, her plains and groves, laughed in the mingled bloom of herbs, and flowers, and fruit; nor sighs, nor tears were known:

but bleating hills and lowing vales, with sparkling streams and woodland songs, proclaimed Creation glad throughout!"

But, alas! how soon did man lose himself! how soon did he fall from his high estate of bliss and innocence, to the degraded one of misery and woe; and, as in the days of his early innocence and primitive simplicity, every purpose of his heart was a bright display of the wisdom and goodness delegated to him from the Supreme (whose semblance then shone unclouded in his countenance): so with his fall, that countenance fell, darkened by the clouds of apostacy and rebellion. Dear brethren, was not our God early, as He is still, a "God of love?" We implore upon our Order, the blessing of this "God of love;" and we assert, that Masonry is venerable for its antiquity—for its plans were co-eval with Creation. It is glorious in its ends and purposes, for they are no less than the grand concerns of both worlds: the most essential interests of the present, and the moral preparatory for the future; it is boundless in its extent, operation, and beneficent effects, for it extends to the utmost parts of the earth; and embraces, for its objects, the good of the whole human race, of every clime, kindred, nation, tongue, and people under heaven; its leaders were, and still continue to be, the great (and what is greater than great), the noble, the good, the wise, and the honorable of the earth. Masonry has witnessed the rise, revolution, and wane of empires; withstood the ravages of barbarous superstition, in modern as well as in ancient times; for

through the dark ages, from the sixth to the sixteenth century, Masonry was the chief lamp of knowledge that illumined the gloom of the then degraded human mind; it was the nurse that fostered, the guardian that watched over, and the ark that preserved, through the deluge of gothic gloom that then overspread the earth, all the science that survived the wreck of the Grecian and Roman empires.

“We can clearly trace the originality and stability of Masonry: but in vain we ask even Balbec’s gorgeous domes, Palmyra’s boasted temples, or Egypt’s proud pyramids, (though much has recently been discovered) who their mighty founders were; though once, perhaps, the terror, the wonder, and admiration of the earth; yet now their names are forgotten as an idle tale; while the very wrecks of their mouldering grandeur, rifled by time’s proud triumph to their very base, seem thus to frown contempt on their vain founders’ schemes; leaving the enquiring traveller and poring antiquary, (in all their zeal for adding to the funds of historic lore,) lost in fruitless, dark conjecture, who raised their stupendous fabrics, or why, or for what purpose they were raised at all?” From such defects, the Order of Masonry is a brilliant and unrivalled exception; and there can be no doubt that it will endure till “the angel shall swear, by Him that liveth for ever, that there shall be time no longer.”

Nor need we wonder at its stability and duration, when

we reflect that it is laid on the broad basis of the welfare of the whole human race, knit together by one universal language, in the bonds of fraternal benevolence (the centre and circumference of all union and harmony), and it is founded on the adamantine rock of virtue in general, and all the cardinal and social virtues in particular, and at its head the "God of love."

"Sirs, ye are brethren:" brethren under one Father, and that Father is the "God of love," and therefore, the love of God ought to abound in us all, whether Masons or not, for "all we are brethren."

Without this love, wisdom, in all its human excellency, is but ignorance; profession, in all its flaming garb, is but presumption; and devotion, in all its most sacred forms, is but solemn mockery: but with this love, we unite earth to heaven, and bring the Deity, with all His reigning powers, into the human soul, to govern its affections. With this love, our wisdom will be that true wisdom, which is said to have come down from above, and is, in its nature, like its origin, pure, simple, easy to be entertained, without partiality, and full of those works, which are not only fair in appearance, but good in their nature. "Love to God," is the root and stamina of all true Masonry,—of all true religion; and to the love of the Great Author of the universe, we trace our ancient Order. As I observed before, Masonry boasts her lineage as the Daughter of the Great Architect of all things, and as the twin sister of religion. "*Love was her*

parent, her other name was charity." And this brings us to the second part of our grand secret—*Love to the Brethren*. And we have our command from Him, our elder Brother, who paid the unfathomable, unlimited, and unbounded price of His precious blood, for the purchase of the world, that "he who loveth God, love his brother also." Jesus tasted death for every man, and when expiring on the cross, sealed with His own blood the universal bond, and in His wide-stretched arms of universal love, embraced a dying world,—bid all to live,—and bid them live as *Brethren!*

Masons enter into most solemn obligations and engagements, than which nothing ought to be more binding; nothing more sacred. Brethren, by bonds never to be broken; by the highest, deepest, broadest breach of all moral honesty, strict integrity, and religious sincerity; bonds into which we entered of our own free-will and consent; and if failing in the performance of this our solemn obligation, how shall we hope to be found faithful in the performance of any promise?

Not only is it required to keep faith with his brethren, but to wipe away the widow's tear, heal the rankled bosom of distress, and still the orphan's cry. Masonic pity and Masonic benevolence hold out, in the hand of charity, the richest cordial of comfort,—the softest balm of commiseration. Like venerable Job, "The fleece of his flock is always ready to make garments for the naked; the wheat of his floor is always ready to be

thrashed for the hungry; his cruise of oil and barrel of meal never cease to be divided, till they fail in their produce; and if unable to help as he could wish, he gives his hearty blessing,—he breathes his anxious sigh,—he prays his fervent prayer,—that God would look down upon and succour the distressed.”

Masons are to be found in the farthest extremity of earth's bounds. And the stranger, wrecked upon a foreign shore,—severed by oceans from his dear fire-side, and the olive branches round his table,—a captive, wounded and stretched on the couch of anguish and disease,—in a dungeon, perhaps,—hears the glad voice of a brother,—starts with fresh life in every vein; and with the fire of animation beaming in his eye, hails his welcome approach,—presses him to his bosom, and forgets, for the time, wounds and bonds, captivity and pains. “Oh Beneficence! at thy approach, sorrow flees far away; and for mourning and heaviness, thou givest joy and gladness; and in the sunshine of thy presence, tears and anguish brighten into smiles and songs of thanksgiving.”

Dearly beloved brethren, whether Masons or not, I would affectionately entreat you to cherish in your bosoms the heaven-born germs of charity and beneficence;—let us nourish them as plants, whose fragrance is beyond frankincense; and though plants of celestial clime, they will bud, blossom, and bear fruit in our inclement soil; and will bear their healing produce, not once only, but the year throughout: they will be the cheering beams

around the soul, in the most cloudy gloom of life; and at the awful close of this mortal scene, they will shed their celestial rays of comfort around the departing spirit, and usher it, amid the gratulating hail of ministering angels, to the blissful realms of joy and love; where we may present them, hallowed with the increase of a thousand-fold, at the throne of the Grand Architect, from whence they sprung; where they will, as heaven's sterling currency, be our ready passport to the grand temple of the blessed.

Dear christian friends and brethren. These are the chief secrets of our ancient Order:—love to God, from His unceasing love to us; and love to man, from our obligation of common relationship;—“Sirs, ye are brethren.” It is an union of man with man, having its foundation in God, who built the universe, and is the God of love. From this source of love is hewn its chief corner stone, whose name is *glory*, and whose nature is *love*; and when He, who will complete the building of His redeeming mercy, shall come to collect His jewels, He will place in His kingdom, as the ornaments of His triumphant grace and glory, every real Mason,—every real christian; and whatever his station may have been in the work, whether a Master to devise, a Warden to explain those devices, a Steward to superintend, a Secretary to transcribe, or a Workman to raise the building by his handy labours; all shall be accessaries and assistants to this great edifice of universal love; and all that are found *true*, shall be rewarded; not altogether according

to the perfection of his performances, or the sublimity of his station and office; but, in a great measure, according to the sincerity of his intentions, and the zeal of his endeavours. "Love the brotherhood, fear God, honour the king," are the grand mottoes of the craft—"three of our brightest jewels; three of our richest ornaments, three of our first and most prevailing principles."

Dear brethren, we have spoken of *Jewels*, and what beautiful allusion is made to them in the Prophet Malachi—"In that day, saith the Lord of Hosts, when I make up my *Jewels*, I will spare them as a man spareth his own son." The Mason has his jewel near his heart: indeed, every man, be his jewel what it may,—the wife of his warmest affection, the child of his heart, or the friend of his bosom,—*guards his jewel* as he guards his life. But God says, he that toucheth *my* jewel, "toucheth the apple of mine eye!" Infinitely delicate deposit of a jewel! Creation may moulder into dust! sinners may receive their due punishment! and universal nature may dissolve! but he who toucheth the Jewels of the Lord of Hosts, toucheth the apple of His eye! Think of this, brother Masons, and fellow christians all; and sully not, for one moment, the purity or the brightness of this estimable character; for becoming jewels, *i. e.* being righteous, "ye are the eternal brightness of His everlasting crown," and the destined beauties of that kingdom, where the redeemed of the Lord will ever be honored as the purchase of His blood.

We are now about to put the sincerity of your christian and brotherly love to the test, by soliciting your contributions, each according to your means, to such charitable purposes as shall be deemed most urgent. And among others, we have charities for the maintenance, clothing, and education of destitute or orphan sons and daughters of Masons. To a father or a mother the name of orphan is enough to move their hearts to pity and to help them; and oh! if it be a *female orphan*, she wants a father's arm and a father's heart: give it her, dear brethren, in your contributions to-day, towards a safe retreat from vile temptations and pollution, from the storms and tempests of this wicked world.

In conclusion, I would say, very briefly, to the uninitiated, that Masonry has no principle but what might still more prove an ornament to the purest mind; nor any appendage but what gives additional lustre to the brightest character. By the exercise of the duties of Masonry, the *rich* may add abundantly to the fund of their eternal inheritance. The *wise* may increase their knowledge of the nature of God, in all His best perfections, and thereby daily grow still more wise unto eternal salvation. The *pure in heart* may be always advancing in the divine likeness; and they who walk in this path of the just with zeal and activity, will find it as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

To you, dearly beloved Brethren of our ancient and

royal Order, I would say in the words of a much-beloved relative and Brother, now no more:—"Act up to the principles of your institution, that so it may be the praise of the whole earth. Act up to the principles of your institution, and as it regards yourselves, it will be well with you; your transfer hereafter will most assuredly be a transfer from the labours of this mortal life, to the rest of an eternal glory. Your *faith* and *hope* will abide to the praise of your memory, when the world sees your face no more. Your *charity* and *love* will be your robes of purity and light, through an immeasurable eternity. Your seat in the Lodge, whether local or provincial, will be changed for a seat near the Grand Architect, where you will be decked with all the glorious ornaments of that Order, which heaven alone can make more perfect; in which eternity itself, in all its endless duration, can never dissolve. Exercise your calling here with fidelity and zeal, and then, when the transitory business of this short day of human existence shall have passed its fleeting course, and the Author of all things shall command us to close the Lodge of human labour, we shall be admitted into that general assembly of the true and faithful, where *faith* shall be truly realized, *hope* universally confirmed, and *love* shall be the grand, the prevailing passion of every assembled bosom. I most humbly and fervently pray, that in the city not built with hands, you may individually hear from our Great Head, at whose feet all powers in earth and heaven cast their crowns, and fall down and worship:—"Come up hither, thou blessed one, and be a pillar in my temple." Now to God the Father, &c.

PRAYER AFTER SERMON.

HEAVENLY Father, Thou supreme and eternal Being, dismiss these Thy servants with Thy holy and benevolent blessing: may the words which have this day been spoken sink deep into every heart. And as men, as christians, and as holy brethren, may the interests and happiness, both spiritual and temporal, of each other, influence us in the exercise of every friendly, christian, and Masonic act of charity, benevolence and love: that while travelling through this wilderness world, we may obtain all those pious habits, which can alone render us fit to be Brethren of the Lodge above, where our souls shall be completely solaced with the sweet and pleasant refreshment of pure, unsullied love,—of lasting, unabating happiness. Grant all we ask in faith, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

