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SECRET AND BENEFICIAL SOCIETIES.

DEAR BROTHER: – I would like to have your opinion on the subject of life insurance. They are organizing lodges all around here – United Workmen, Knights of Pythias, Red Men, Masons, Odd Fellows, etc. They are working it just about like sectarianism in the churches. Would like to see an article in the TOWER on the subject.

Yours in the love of the truth,

W. E. KILLAM.

OUR REPLY TO THE QUERY.

In our judgment the majority of "secret societies" are merely beneficiary and have no secret schemes antagonistic to the general public welfare, the secret rites and ceremonies being merely "boys' play," occupying the time and attention of persons who have no greater aims than those which pertain to the present life. We note, however, that several Roman Catholic Societies seem to have schemes connected with the use of fire-arms, and are therefore to be classed as malevolent rather than benevolent.

We note also that the Order of Free Masons, if judged by its past history, has some secret object or scheme, more than fraternity and financial aid in time of sickness or death. And, so far as we can judge, there is a certain amount of *profane* worship or mummerly connected with the rites of this order and some others, which the members do not comprehend, but which, in many cases, serves to satisfy the cravings of the natural mind for worship, and thus hinders it from seeking the worship of God in spirit and in truth – through Christ, the only appointed Mediator and Grand Master.

In proportion as such societies consume valuable time in foolish, senseless rites and ceremonies, and in substituting the worship of their officers, and the use of words and symbols which have no meaning to them, for the worship of God, in his appointed way – through Christ, and according to knowledge and the spirit of a sound mind – in that proportion these societies are grievous evils, regardless of the [R1827 : page 144] financial gains or losses connected with membership in them.

But respecting those orders which are merely Mutual Insurance Societies, in which the members pay a certain weekly sum of money to their sick, and at death a larger sum to their families, we must concede that they represent a good principle. It is certainly in harmony with the golden rule to help our neighbor when he is in need. The only objection we see to this is, that it puts the matter on a business or selfish basis and thus destroys its *benevolent features*; for each one joins, not for the good he can do, but for the help he hopes to obtain for himself or his family.

If, therefore, the matter be considered merely as a business arrangement, we can see no more wrong in joining such Mutual Benefit Societies than in taking out a policy in a regular Life or Accident Insurance Co., or insuring property in a Fire Insurance Co. – *provided* always that there be no confession of error or binding obligation required, contrary to the liberty wherewith Christ makes free. Wherever oaths of secrecy are demanded it is safe for God's people to touch not, taste not, handle not, – except as oaths are prescribed by public law, as before courts or in reference to documents for public record. In every other case the children of God will be blessed in obeying strictly the admonition, – Let your Yea be yea, and your Nay, nay; for "whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." It is in connection with his description of the "last days" of this Gospel age that St. James cautions against all binding oaths, such as many Secret Societies demand. – Matt. 5:37; Jas. 5:12.

We suggest, however, that, even as business concerns, many will be disappointed greatly by these Mutual Benefit [R1828 : page 144] Societies, in the near future. When the time of trouble shall have fully culminated, these Societies, as well as the great Life Insurance Companies and business in general, will all be paralyzed; and those leaning upon them will be sorely disappointed. The only ones who will be secure then will be those who have laid up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through and steal. All others, even the rich, will "weep and howl for the miseries" which shall come upon them."

The present agitation for Societies and Unions, which is taking the world by storm, seems to be foretold in the Scriptures, and includes, we believe, not only Church organizations, but all the various organizations which tie men up together in bundles, to-day as never before. (See Isa. 8:12; Matt. 13:30.) These "bundles" or Societies may seem simple and harmless just now, but when the symbolic fire reaches them, when the great time of trouble shall have kindled the passions of the world in general, then it will be almost impossible to escape from these bundles. Pride will hold them together; – none will wish to show the "white feather" of cowardice; – none will wish to appear disloyal in the hour of trouble; – Societies will act *en masse*, and individuals will thus be led into positions which they never would take alone. Money also will be a factor. After having paid in considerable "dues," they will not feel disposed to *lose* that money; – especially when they see the cloud of trouble getting darker and nearer. Thus bound together they will suffer from the "burning," the distress, of the time of trouble, which God declares will be such as was not since there was a nation.

Better far will those be who lean not upon Egypt (Ezek. 29:6,7 – the world), for help, but who lean upon the Lord. The Lord will be their fortress in the day of trouble.

Such societies, on selfish business principles, are foreign to the spirit of God's Church. In it, those who have this world's goods should

be ready to assist the *needy* of the Lord's family, hoping for nothing again. And all who are members of the true Church whose names are written in heaven, all who have the spirit of the Head, will be willing and anxious to do good unto all men as they have opportunity, especially to the household of faith, who are not leaning upon earthly Societies, but who, instead of spending "dues" in that way, are using their means to serve the Lord, his truth and his people.

Since we do not condemn Life Insurance Societies conducted upon business principles, even though we fear that they will be very insecure dependencies when the time of trouble shall have fully commenced, some one may ask, How are we to understand our Lord's words, –

"TAKE NO THOUGHT FOR TO-MORROW."

We are to understand these words in perfect harmony with the Apostle's words, "Provide things honest in the sight of all men," and "He that provideth not for his own [as he may be able] hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." Our Lord's words signify, Do not be weighed down with anxious care for to-morrow; but while seeking to know and to do God's will, trust in his providential care, which he has promised will cause all things to work together for good to them that love him supremely. It is as right for the husband to consider the future welfare of his wife, as for the Heavenly Bridegroom to provide for the Church (Eph. 5:25.) It is as proper for the earthly father to make provision for his children – especially in good training and fair education, as for the Heavenly Father to plan for and educate and prepare a future home for his children. (1 Cor. 2:9.) It is when parents attempt to become rich and to leave their children rich that they specially err. (1 Tim. 6:9,17,18; Mark 10:23,24.) They in attempting to contravene the law of God (that sinners learn to labor and to eat bread in sweat of face) work an injury to their children. But their error does not justify other parents in neglecting to give their children the best

patrimony, an education, at least rudimentary, including religious and moral training.

Those who leave their children such a legacy and the example of a noble, upright life of fellowship with God leave a bequest which the breaking of banks and insurance companies and all the terrible troubles of "the great day" will only make the more pricelessly valuable.

So then our advice to God's consecrated people is, – "Trust in the Lord and do good, and verily thou shalt be fed." Use time and money in the Lord's service, and rely upon him to cause all things to work for your highest good.
