

Secret Societies

A Resolution of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

Translated by Robert E. Smith from:

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The Synod observes with sorrow that many Christians in this country have gotten mixed up in secret societies such as the Odd Fellows, Freemason lodges, etc., and are still mixed up in them. The Word of God is clearly against this, because:

- 1) Ephesians 5:11-12 forbids partnership in all activities that are kept in secret.
- 2) John 3:20 testifies that anyone who does not fully disclose what he does, in other words, keeps some activities secret, is correctly viewed with suspicion, as if he has done something wrong. For example, a member of a family who belongs to a secret society disturbs the necessary trust among the members of that particular family. In the same way, a member of a congregation, who belongs to a secret society, abandons a quality – which is so necessary in the member of a congregation – that he can be trusted. In fact, he falls under the judgment of God’s Word (1 Thess. 5:22) by being burdened with evil appearances.
- 3) In 2 Corinthians 6:14 the Word of God warns us not to pull a foreign yolk – to be hitched together with unbelievers. In other words, we should not go with them along the same road of conceit or perform with them their ungodly deeds. This does not mean to exclude the ways we must follow and the works we must perform together with our neighbor in this earthly kingdom because our vocation or trade requires it. In these matters, we must work together with our neighbor, whether he is a Christian or not, according to God’s will. But surely someone is pulling a foreign yolk with them when he is put together with members of secret societies, because fellowship with such people does not come to us from God. It is surely our choice, because God did not institute any of these organizations. A Christian is pulling a foreign yolk with them because these secret societies consist of all kinds of people, Jews and heathen, apathetic and blasphemers. We Christians already have enough to do to defend against the temptations that come to us in this earthly kingdom. We will certainly

tempt God's wrath if we work together with unbelievers without God's command.

- 4) Matthew 5:33-37 forbids us to swear by any creature of God or any thing in general. But anyone who is admitted to membership in the Odd Fellows or other secret organizations must promise on his honor to keep the secrets of the order, thus acting against God's Word. More than that, these secret societies march around with the Bible and observe all kinds of worship practices, which is horrible idolatry, because a gathering can never worship the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, if it is made up of Jews and heathen of all kinds. Thus the members of secret societies transgress the holy First and Second Commandments.
- 5) Matthew 6:25-34 is transgressed by someone who joins these secret societies. For by not avoiding their company for the sake of receiving physical support, he declares that he does not turn to his God and provider in times of need and death, but to human fellowship and Mammon. What Christian would want to sin so badly against the holy First Commandment?

These teachings of God's Word, to which much more may be added, testify that anyone who joins or associates himself with the Odd Fellows or other secret lodges, whether or not he attends their regular meetings, renounces God, our highly-praised Savior and treads God's Word under foot. Therefore the synod warns all her members and all Christians in general, especially, those of our dear family of faith, that are recent immigrants, about every secret society. The synod assumes it is self-evident, that Christian congregations who oppose secret societies will proceed according to the instructions of the Lord in Matthew 18:15ff. if any member of a secret society should be found among them. But, at the same time, the synod calls attention of all her members and Christian congregations in general to the heartfelt plea that, in her fellowship the poor and sick be cared for according to the example of the ancient Christian fellowship. In this way, her members will assist them in their ever-growing struggle against the temptation of secret societies.

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