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FREEMASONRY AND ITS RELATION TO RELIGION.

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Out of the darkness of ignorance there occasionally comes a voice of doleful lamentation over the alleged hostile relation of Freemasonry to religion. It is even asserted that the Fraternity seeks to arrogate to itself the place of supremacy, and claims to be a substitute for Christian faith. Just at this juncture, when the eminent Dr. McCosh and the eloquent Dr. Talmage are seeking to create among the ministers of the Church a sentiment against secret associations, and conspicuously Freemasonry, it seems eminently appropriate to state, in brief and comprehensive terms, the professed attitude of the Craft to religion. And that the statement be made by a pupil of one and a fellow-Presbyterian minister of both these anti-fraternity agitators will not detract from its interest. Whatever may be said against Freemasonry, it is presumable that it has, at least, the right to define its own position and state its own claims.

1. Freemasonry is not inimical to religion. It is too intimately related to religion to assume toward it an unfriendly attitude. It has no conceivable motive in antagonizing the Church, or in interfering with the religious convictions of any one.

There is nothing in the nature of the Society that necessitates the renunciation of a single sentence of any creed, the discontinuance of any religious customs, or the obliteration of a dogma of belief. No one is asked to deny the Bible, to change his Church relations, to withhold monetary or moral support from the Church, or to be less attentive to the teachings of his spiritual instructors and counsellors. Freemasonry has nothing to gain by unfriendly relations toward religion; it is not jealous of the position, power and influence of the Church; it does not influence any one to forsake the public organization for the secret society.

2. Freemasonry is not a substitute for religion. It is not a religion in any sense; it is not a teacher of religious dogmas, and does not claim to have any opinion on subjects of dogmatic divinity. It scrupulously honors the convictions of each person, assumes that his own conscience and judgment are his best guides, and does not seek to reshape his theology. It does not offer any instruction which it claims is as good, or better, than the religious principles of the individual member. If a Freemason makes a religion out of the principles of the Society, or seeks to proselyte men from their faith, he acts contrary to the spirit of the institution. Freemasonry forbids any official action, resolutions, debates, argu-