

cause they tell us that our Craft has ever been associated with all that is useful and benevolent, with all that is cultivated and refined, with all that is noble and good. Three years, brethren, have passed since, with much diffidence, and some fear of failure, it was proposed to institute this special service. There was then but one Lodge in this city, where three are now established, each of which is numerically superior to the one of three years ago. Masonry has grown beyond our most sanguine hopes. And the spectacle of to-day shows us that we were right in the confidence we felt that Masons had lost none of their old love for things sacred and holy. The Great Architect of the Universe is still our acknowledged head—still the Father in whom we trust. The blessed haven of rest, where flows the river of life, and where eternal peace and rest prevail, is still the Lodge for which we are striving to be perfected. The divine rule, promulgated by God's own Son, is still the level, the plumb line, and the square of our existence. Masonry teaches us that the most distinguished members of our Craft, the men who lead the holiest lives, those sainted beings who spend their days in labor and their nights in prayer, who live but that they may learn to die, can in this lower world become no more than Entered Apprentices in the Beatific Lodge above. Therefore, it is, Worshipful Master and brethren, that I rejoice to see in this place of worship so noble a gathering of our Order to demonstrate to those who sometimes deride it and question our integrity, that by the Word of God alone we regulate as far as in us lies our every action. We none of us, I think, can ever forget those words which were addressed to us when we first entered upon our solemn obligations; when we were charged to consider the volume of the Sacred Law as the unerring standard of truth and justice, teaching us our duties to our God, our neighbor, and ourselves—

to God, by never mentioning his name but with that awe and reverence which are due from the creature to his Creator, by imploring His aid on all our lawful undertakings, and by looking up to Him in every emergency for comfort and support; to our neighbor, by acting with him upon the square, by rendering him every kind office which justice or mercy may require, by relieving his distress and soothing his afflictions, and by doing to him, as in similar cases, we would wish he should do to us; and to ourselves, by such a prudent and well-regulated course of discipline as may best conduce to the preservation of our corporal and mental faculties in their fullest energy, thereby enabling us to exert the talents wherewith God has blessed us, as well to His glory as to the welfare of our fellow creatures. Where, I ask, can be found a better exponent of the duties of religion than are discernible in the obligations of Masonry? Where is the church or sect which exacts from its members a pledged word, much less an oath, so awful and solemn, to observe to all associated in religious fellowship the very strictest honor and good faith? And where, I also ask, in any society, sacred or secular, will you seek for such almost unexceptionable fidelity? We say, and we defy contradiction, that nowhere as in our Fraternity does it exist. Who ever heard of a Mason closing ear or heart to a brother in distress? Who ever heard of a Mason revealing the secrets of his Craft? Who ever heard of a Mason who lived in openly profane or scandalous existence? I do not assert that such things cannot be; I do say they have never come under my observation. We do not claim for Masonry and Masons an infallibility of life and conduct, but we do assert that her laws are so fenced about that they so recommend themselves to our reason and our liking as to be almost secure from infringement. Brethren, with Masonry in its general bearings, in