

that it is coeval with the world's history, others date it from the time of Methuselah, others to the days of Noah, and others claim the great pyramid as the first Masonic temple, when the secrets of our divine Order were first revealed. However this may be—and there are good grounds for this, for the usages and customs amongst Masons have ever corresponded with those of the ancient Egyptians—there can be no doubt whatever that Masonry goes back to the time before the building of Solomon's Temple at Jerusalem, when the number and the variety of the workmen employed rendered it needful to adopt some means by which they could be classified and recognized, and also recognize each other, and it is an undoubted fact, to which I am able to bear my personal witness, that the signs, symbols, and trade marks which I have myself seen in the foundation stones of the ancient walls of Jerusalem are identical with those we now recognize and employ, though we have turned them to another account. Thus, to go no further back, Masonry has a history of 3000 years. I now come to speak of its principles. They are essentially religious—if they were not I should not be standing in this place this afternoon. No institution outside the Church of Christ can claim a more solid foundation than that on which Freemasonry rests, viz., the practice of every moral and social virtue. Every character, figure, and emblem employed has a moral significance, and is intended to inculcate the practice of virtue in all its genuine professors. It has been called the religion of daily life and of common sense, and cannot be better described than in the words that it is “a system of morality clothed in allegory and illustrated by symbols.” Its first imperative condition of membership is the acknowledgment of the Great Architect of the Universe, the one living and true God, the creator of all things, visible and invisible, “in whom we live and move and have our being.” No man can be admitted into our Order without making a solemn de-

claration of these fundamental articles of our faith, viz., the being of God, the immortality of the soul, a future state of rewards and punishments according to the deeds done in the body. We recognize the Great Architect of the Universe in all our words and works. We are constantly reminded that “Wherever we are, and whatever we do, He is always with us, and His all-seeing eye ever beholds us.” At every meeting of the lodge prayer is offered to Him and His blessing is invoked. This is our first great principle, and if anyone after being admitted to our Society on such a solemn declaration should at any time repudiate the faith and become an Atheist, the duty of the brethren is clear. As a natural consequence of our faith in the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, Freemasonry sets before its members the Volume of the Sacred Law, and charges them to consider it as the unerring standard of truth and justice, and urges them to regulate their actions by the Divine precepts it contains—since therein they are taught the important duties they owe to God, their neighbor, and to themselves—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 in all their lawful undertakings, and by looking up to Him in every time of need for comfort and support; to their neighbor by acting with him on the square, and by practising that golden rule—“Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye also unto them.” Deriving its inspiration from Holy Writ, Masonry includes the practice of every domestic as well as public virtue. Masons are individually exhorted to “let prudence direct them, temperance chasten them, fortitude support them, and justice guide them.” Another great principle insisted upon by Masons, and the natural result of what I have just been saying respecting our belief in the Bible as the Word of God, is the duty of obedience to the powers that be. “Honor all men, love the brother-