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FREEMASONRY RELIGIOUS, BUT NOT RELIGION.

The completion of the cathedral at Toronto reminds us opportunely, as Freemasons, of one of the most interesting episodes and public manifestations which has attended the progress of the Craft in our time and generation. We still can recall, with pleasurable emotion, how H. R. H. the Grand Master laid the foundation stone, with wonted Masonic ceremonial, of that interesting building, which, by zeal and munificence alike commendable and striking, has culminated in setting apart for religious worship and service a large portion of the intended structure. In seven years (a mystic Masonic number, by the way), this great undertaking has been carried out with great skill of workmanship and effectiveness of design. Though a good deal remains yet to be achieved, no reasonable doubt exists that the same sympathetic resolves, and the same hearty liberality which have characterized past efforts, will result ere long in a consummated work, in a perfected outcome. Thus the first cathedral built in our country for 800 years is now before us, reflecting the greatest credit on architect and workmen alike, and perforce reminding us of those older works, raised by lodges of Freemasons, which constitute the wonder of "Operative Masonry," and are not only the *chef d'œuvre* of constructive skill, but delight still the wandering student and the contemplative archæologist. We rejoice to think that our Royal Grand Master

laid the foundation stone Masonically in the "N. E. corner of the intended building," and we are also gratified and grateful to be reminded that, in the benign Providence of the Great Architect of the Universe, his life has been spared to be present at its consecration.

Our concern to-day is more, however, with the principles involved than with the work completed, as we deem the present a good opportunity to remove, if possible, some misconceptions, and to enforce some first principles of Freemasonry proper.

Freemasonry is not, and cannot be, a religion (Religio) in its strict meaning, literally, mystically, to any one.

Its very universality, elasticity, and freedom from dogma, forbid the idea.

We do not say that, in some far distant country, peopled by the "uncultured savage" or by some "residuum" of a race sunk in gross ignorance and debasing superstition, in its enlightening averments and didactic morality Freemasonry might not become a sort of religion to those so sunk and so degraded; but such are not really and truly, in the abstract or in the concrete, its professions or its mission to men.

Neither in its public proclamations, nor its safely-guarded "aporrata," is any such idea advanced, any color given to such a notion.

Our ultramontane antagonists have indeed objected to Freemasonry, so long ago as 1788, in the famous Bull of Clement, that it aimed at setting