

Freemasonry not Christianity.

It is passing strange, yet lamentably true, that Masons esteemed "bright" in the ritual have often misapprehended the specific design of Ancient Craft Masonry.

In answer to the question, what is Freemasonry, perhaps no better definition can be given than to say, "it is a beautiful system of morality veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols." This is the definition to be found in all our monitors, and has become stereotyped in the memory as well as the manuals of the Craft. It has been so often quoted and repeated by Masonic writers and speakers, that but for its exceeding beauty it would long since have become wearisome. Not satisfied, however, with this significant and comprehensive definition, some of our good brethren are wont to indulge in the most extravagant rhapsodies in reference to our speculative Freemasonry, not only as a social and moral Institution, but also as a complete religious organization, which nothing need be supplemented to secure the ultimate happiness of man. Such gross misconceptions of its true mission are not only calculated to mislead the novitiate as to its legitimate purpose, but are positively pernicious in their consequences, in so far as they may influence the religious sentiments of the Brotherhood, and are therefore to be greatly deprecated.

Absurd speculations and gross misrepresentations upon the subject of Freemasonry are to be expected from the more illiberal and prejudiced of the "profane," and have become practically of no importance as they have long since ceased to influence public sentiment to any extent against the Fraternity. In this age of Masonic light and research, the religious bigot may lift his hands in holy horror and calumniate the Institution to his heart's content; he may denounce it with impunity as an ingenious artifice of the devil, designed and planted by

his satanic majesty himself expressly for the destruction of human souls, and vehemently remonstrate against all our Masonic Lodges as so many infernal masked batteries from which the secret foes of Christianity are pouring an incessant and destructive volley into the sacramental host of God's elect? And yet we feel that such insane ravings are utterly powerless to harm, and only furnish another practical illustration of the folly of the *viper knowing the file*. There is no danger to be apprehended from this quarter. Such fanatical frenzy has long since spent its force. What concerns us now is to protect the Institution from the judicious though well meant laudations of its friends, who often evince a zeal for Masonry which is not according to knowledge. When those who have been initiated into its mysteries, and are regarded "bright" in its ritual, pass to the opposite extreme, and maintain that Freemasonry is a divinely appointed instrumentality to reclaim our apostate humanity, and all sufficient not only for the purposes of this life, but also for the life to come, we feel there is just cause for alarm lest our venerable Institution be subjected not only to the ridicule of the enlightened scholar, but also to the hostility of the true Israel of God. A moment's reflection ought to convince any Brother that it is morally impossible that Freemasonry should have such a mission as that contemplated by the Christian religion. Startling to some as may be the announcement, it is nevertheless true, that in the Ancient Symbolic Degree of Masonry there is no recognition of the Messiah—the Christ of the New Dispensation; and such a fact, did it exist, would appear strangely out of joint with our Masonic traditions. How could an Institution confessedly Jewish in its origin, and bearing in all its features a strong Hebrew lineage, consistently incorporate the great central truth of Christianity in its teachings, preceptive or