

FREEMASONRY AND RELIGION.

MASONRY is suffering from nothing more, to-day, than the intemperate ardor of its inconsiderate advocates. The Church of God is an institution too holy to be brought into comparison with anything clearly earth-born. Whatever there is good in Masonry has for its progenitor the Church of God. All our moral principles are professedly based upon the Divine oracles. We ask no higher honor than to be greeted with the approving smile of God's Church, and a seat upon her footstool.

There is a class of Christians who affirm that every organized effort for the promotion of benevolence should be included within the corporate limits of the Church, and that, therefore, all societies are not only useless, but are guilty of usurping the prerogatives of the Church. There is, on the other hand, a certain class of Masons who allege that Masonry is adequate to meet all the demands of man's religious nature, to institute harmony between the soul and its God, and to establish the condition of immortal salvation. Now we unhesitatingly enter our protest against the views of both. Being at once a member of the Christian Church and of the Masonic institution, being ardently attached to each, in their relative importance to human life and destiny, we think we are in a position to estimate without partiality the real worth of each, and to find the happy mean between the two extreme views we have epitomized. What is the Church? "The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men and women in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered, according to Christ's ordinance, in all things that of necessity are requisite to the same." The invisible Church may be defined to be constituted of all those who are vitally united in Christ, as members of the body to the head. Taken in either view, it is a society bound to observe the laws of Christ. It is a fundamental duty that all who believe in Christ should be initiated into his Church by baptism, and that all those thus inducted into the society should frequently partake of the Lord's Supper, to the end of testifying continued fealty to Jesus Christ, and faith in that great and distinguishing doctrine of his religion, the redemption of the world by the sacrificial effusion of his blood, both of which assume union with His Church. The Church is of Divine origin. It proposes to save men from their depravity by giving them a new heart, to rob death of its sting by taking away sin, and to impart souls in heaven by making them "meet for an inheritance with the saints in glory."

Now, *What is Masonry?* It is a system of moral truth preserved in and expressed by symbols and by allegorical representations. It claims no Divine institution. Its highest claim to antiquity rests upon a Union of the Craftsmen engaged in the erection of King Solomon's Temple. It proposes only to make better men for the life that now is, by inculcating the temporal moralities. It has no sacrifice upon its altars—either Jewish or Christian.

It has no atonement for sin:

"No bleeding bird, nor bleeding beast,
Nor hyssop branch, nor sprinkling priest."

—nor has it Jesus and Him crucified.

If any system of morality could save a man, then the gift of God's only begotten and dearly beloved Son to die for human salvation was a work of supererogation upon the part of God, and a cruelty as unpardonable as it was unnecessary. The Sinaitic revelation of the law was all that was required if the practice of those moralities—whose theatre of activity and reward is time—is all that God requires of man. If the view is correct that salvation hinges on faith in Christ, can any enlightened Mason claim that our Order is a saving institution? It requires an absolute repudiation of belief in Jesus Christ for any one to say so. The New Testament says: "There is no other name given under heaven, among men, whereby we can be saved, than the name of Jesus Christ." It says: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be anathema marantha;" *i. e.*, let him be accursed.

Who so profane then as to say that the name of Solomon or Hiram, or the Saints John has any healing power? Or that the practice of the Masonic virtues alone will substitute faith in the world's Redeemer, and secure heaven by another plan than that devised by Infinite Wisdom? The Master himself said: "He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep."

Immense damage is done to Masonry by its Craftsmen claiming too much for its principles. Indiscreet Masons have been the cause of that widespread and growing opposition in some branches of the Christian Church to our Order. They have claimed and frequently repeated, in an oracular manner, "that if a man would live up to Masonry he would be saved;" they have exhibited a fanatical preference for the