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## First Class Fare and One-Third

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The CHARGE FALSE

## THAT MASONIC BODY IS IRRELIGIOUS INSTITUTION.

KINGSTON Masonic Lodges: JOO Strong, Attend Service in St. Paul's Church—Vigorous Sermon Preached by Rev. W. F. Fitzgerald.

St. Paul's church was not large enough to hold the big congregation that assembled on Sunday morning, to hear Rev. W. F. Fitzgerald, M.A., B.D., preach to the Masonic lodges of Kingston, and numbers were turned away. The Free Masons of the city and a number from the district were out in great force, and no less than four hundred of them paraded to St. Paul's shortly before eleven o'clock, and occupied the greater portion of the downstairs pews. It was the largest Masonic church parade in the history of the order in Kingston, and was a great tribute to Brother, the

of the sacred record: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." There is no chronology, and which leads us in its higher orders to the deepest mysteries of the Christian faith. No man in a Masonic lodge compromises any cherished conviction of the creed he holds, but he holds to soften the asperities of creed and to reduce to practice the brotherhood which Jesus has based on the fatherhood of God.

Then as to its large-heartedness. Think, for instance, of the Masonic jewels that exist here and there. The schools for the orphans and our brother Masons, the provision it makes at times for the widows. My brothers, there is a great and bitter cry going up to heaven this and every day from suffering humanity. Our brotherhood hears the cry, and, in response, brings the mantle of love and spreads it over the needy and sad. Thank God, I have seen how Masonry has softened the bitterness of life; how it has helped to dry the weeping tears; how it has relieved the wants of the sore distressed; how it has cheered the sad room of sickness; how it has followed the brother's corpse to the last earthly resting place. Nor is this all. We Masons, if we are true Masons, will defend and protect the virtue and the honor of the sisters and wives and mothers of our brethren of the craft. And any Mason who is immoral and forgets the sanctity of his obligation, is a traitor to the glorious traditions of this great religious brotherhood to which we belong.

These two glorious facts are the foundations on which our Masonic body rests. We Masons have learned from the "Volume of the Sacred Law" that God is the great Creator and Preserver of all things. We have learned, too, that God-given humanity is greater than the accidental circumstances of man's environment, including the marks of rank and fortune. And whoever confesses this faith we welcome him as a brother to share with us the hidden mysteries of nature and of science.

## A Charge Refuted.

And here let me pause to notice how awful and how uncharitable, as well as utterly false, is the accusation that the Masonic body is an irreligious institution. Brethren, I hope our presence here to-day in such large numbers is sufficient evidence that the charge is false. But indeed the public acts of our Masonic institution bear abundant testimony to the fact that as our institution prohibits all political movements under the pretence of her authority, so our Masonic body has purged herself from all connection from any so-called body of Free Masons who have cast off belief in an Almighty God. And there never has been a time since the revival of Free Masonry when a belief in God was a superintending power did not form a chief part of the system.

One great epoch in the modern history of Free Masonry, as we know it, accentuates this fact: On Sept. 10th, 1877, the Grand Orient of France resolved to alter the first articles of the Masonic constitution. These articles were, a protest in God, in the immortality of the soul, and in the solidarity of humanity. Two-thirds of the then existing lodges of French Masonry altered these clauses, so as to read: "Its basic is absolute liberty of conscience and the solidarity of mankind." The French ritual was changed accordingly, and all allusion to the Great Architect of the Universe was everywhere expunged. Up to this date French Free Masons had been received and welcomed at all times in English lodges, but when this deplorable action was taken by the lodges of France immediately the lodges holding with the English constitution, England, Ireland, Scotland, the colonies and the United States, repudiated the French Orient, ceased to hold fraternal communication with them, and made it impossible for anyone admitted into a French lodge to be received into our Masonic lodges. And though the Grand Orient continues to exist in name, it is not Masonic. France deliberately and wilfully rejected Masonry, and not Masonry France. And to include English and Irish and Canadian Masonry in a denomination which applies only to its travesty in France is either to display unhappy ignorance or wilful prejudice. And yet, even in France, there are some eighty lodges who refuse to be led away by the reversal of the precepts of Masonry, who owe no allegiance to the French Orient, who cordially pray with us the great fraternal prayer "Our Father Which Art in Heaven," and who are still working under the Supreme council of the Ancient and Accepted Rite true to the creeds which we profess. We are proud to be a social and moral institution, and our presence here to-day accentuates this other fact that we are a great religious institution.

Never said Mr. Fitzgerald, was a more striking sermon preached under the striking conditions than the discourse by St. Paul from which his text was taken. Its eloquence, its classic grace, its courteous and consolatory appeal, no less than its masterly reference to their own poets, and its passing allusion to the admission of many an altar of their own ignorance of the nature of God, marks the awful vigor and intense conviction of this great apostle. And the surroundings were indeed a fitting setting for such a theme. For he stood where Pythagoras and Socrates and others had answered for their lives on religious subjects. Above him towered the great rock of the Acropolis; beneath him lay the magnificent temple of Theseus, adorned with all the wonders of art, of which Athens was so justly proud. Round and about him stood the twenty curious, half-contemplative crowd of philosophers and sophists, little knowing that in their presence that day was the apostle of One before whose awful cross, idols and temples alike would vanish away, in such a presence and before such an audience. St. Paul boldly grapples with three vast problems—(1) The unity of God, (2), the solidarity of mankind; (3), the person and office of Jesus Christ. It is of course but a summary which St. Luke has here recorded for us, but it is a summary in which Theology, Anthropology and Christology are dealt with in words of matchless wisdom and burning eloquence; and which reveals to us, as Neander well expressed it—"How St. Paul according to his own words could become a Gentile to the Gentiles to win the Gentiles to the gospel."

First of all he proclaims that God who made the world is the Lord of Heaven and earth and needeth not to be worshipped in temples made with hands. Then that all mankind has been made by him of one blood where over their lot is cast, and thirdly, that he will judge the world by Jesus Christ. With references to the third division and glorious climax of St. Paul's discourse, I shall only say that the Advent season through which we are now passing rings out for us Christians this most certain fact—that the blessed Jesus who died to save us from our sins will one day return, to be our judge when every eye shall see him, "robed in dreadful majesty." This is the grand swell rolling in from the unfathomed deep of inspired truth that makes "the flood at Admete tide." Whether we recognize it or not the day is drawing nearer when time shall end and eternity begin.

Let me briefly point out two other thoughts about our Masonic order, and these are, (1) its universality, and (2) its large-heartedness. First, as to its universality. It is not too much to say that it has covered Europe with its shadow, and that in Africa, Australia, India, New Zealand, Japan, America, it is growing in usefulness and vigor. Why? Because it appeals to universal wants and supplies a universal need. How can we look out on the deplorable spectacle of divided Christendom and not thank God for any society that affords a common

thought for the holy, self-sacrificing and consistent life of many a brother Mason, who has proved by word and work the value of the teaching he has gained in the Masonic temple. Brethren, such lives are their own best witness to the faith that is within.

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