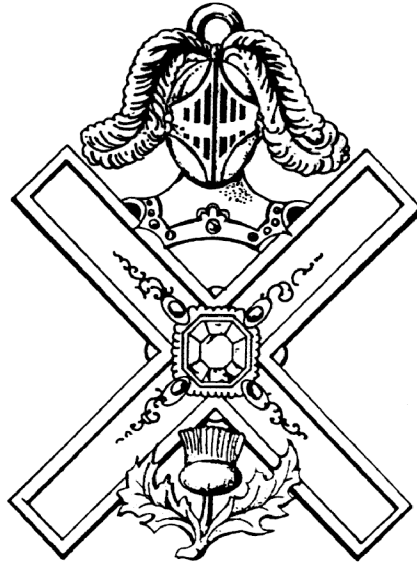


Charge from the 29th Degree — Knights of St. Andrew Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite



Masonry is the handmaid of religion. The Brahmin, Jew, the Mahometan, the Catholic, the Protestant — each professing his peculiar religion — may retain their faith, and yet be Masons.

Masonry teaches, and preserves in their purity, the cardinal tenets of the old primitive faith, which underlie and are the foundation of all religions. Masonry is the universal morality which is suitable to the inhabitants of every clime, to the man of every creed. It has taught no doctrines except those truths that tend directly to the well-being of man.

The best, and, indeed, the only good Mason, is he who, with the power of labour, does the work of life — the upright mechanic, merchant or farmer — the man who exercises the power of thought, of justice, or of love — whose whole life is one great act of performance of Masonic duty. The natural work of Masonry is practical life, the use of all the faculties in their proper spheres and for their natural functions. Love of truth, justice, and generosity, as attributes of God, must appear in a life marked by these qualities. The natural form of Masonry is goodness, morality, living a true, just, affectionate, self-faithful life, from the motive of a good man. It is loyal obedience to God's law. The good Mason does that which is good which comes in his way, from a love of duty, and not merely because a law enacted by man or God commands his will to do it. Not in vain does the poor or oppressed look up to him. You find such men in all Christian sects, Protestant and Catholic; among Buddhists, Mahometans, and Jews. They are kind fathers, generous citizens, and unimpeachable in their

business; you see their Masonry in their works and in their play. The true Mason loves not only his kindred and his country, but all mankind; not only the good, but also the evil among his brethren. Though the ancient and the honourable of the earth bid him bow down to them, his stubborn knee bends only at the bidding of his manly soul. His Masonry is his freedom before God, not his bondage unto men.

The old theologies, the philosophies of religion of ancient times, will not suffice us now; there are errors to be made way with, and their places to be supplied with new dogmas, radiant with the glories of heaven.

There are great wrongs and evils in domestic, social, and public life, to be righted and outgrown. Masonry cannot in our age forsake the broad way of life; she must journey on in the open street, appear in the crowded square, and teach men by her deeds — her life — more eloquent than any lips.

This degree is much devoted to Toleration, and it inculcates in the strongest manner that great leading idea of the ancient art — that a belief in the one true God, and a moral and virtuous life, constitute the only religious requisites needed to enable a man to be a Mason.

Man never had the right to usurp the unexercised prerogative of God, and condemn and punish another for his belief.

Few believe in any religion because they have examined the evidences of its authenticity, and made up a formal judgment, upon weighing the testimony. Not one man in ten thousand knows anything about the proofs of his faith. We believe what we are taught; and those are most fanatical who know least of the evidences on which their creed is based.

What is truth to me is not truth to another. The same arguments and evidences that convince one mind, make no impression on another; this difference is in men at their birth. Each thinks it is impossible for the other to be sincere, and each, as to that, is equally in error. "What is truth?" was a profound question — the most suggestive one ever put to man. Many beliefs of former and present times seem incomprehensible. They startle us with a new glimpse into the human soul — that mysterious thing, the more mysterious the more we note its workings. Here is a man, superior to myself in intellect and learning, and yet he sincerely believes what seems to me too absurd to merit confutation; and I cannot conceive, and sincerely do not believe, that he is both sane and honest; and yet, he is both. His reason is as perfect as mine, and he is as honest as I am.

The sincere Moslem has as much right to persecute us, as we to persecute him, and therefore Masonry wisely requires no more than a belief in one great, all-powerful Deity, the Father and preserver of the Universe. Therefore she teaches her votaries that toleration is one of the chief duties of every good Mason. The Masonic system regards all the human race as members of one great family - as having the same origin and the same destination; all

distinctions of rank, lineage, or nativity, are alike unknown. It requires the acknowledgement of the existence of the Grand Master of the Universe, and to reverence his great and sacred name, irrespective of sectarian ideas; in a word, to practice every virtue which adorns and ennobles the human character, and fly every vice which sullies and degrades it. It inculcates a generous love for all mankind, it matters not of what religious creed.

No evil hath so afflicted the world as intolerance of religious opinion; the human beings it has slain in various ways, if once and together brought to life, would make a nation of people, which, left to live and increase, would have doubled the population of the civilized portion of the world; among which civilized portion it chiefly is that religious wars are waged.

The Mason's creed holds that each man is absolutely sovereign as to his own belief — and God is the only magistrate that can rightfully decide as judge.

To that Great Judge Masonry refers the matter; and, opening wide its portals, it invites to enter there, and live in peace and harmony, the Protestant, the Catholic, the Jew, the Moslem — every one who will lead a truly virtuous and moral life, love his brethren, minister to the sick and distressed, and believe in the One All-Powerful, All-Wise, Everywhere Present God-Architect, Creator, and Preserver of all things — by whose universal law of Harmony ever rolls on this Universe; the great, vast, infinite circle of successive death and life; to whose ineffable name let all true Masons pay profoundest homage! For whose thousand blessings poured upon us let us feel the sincerest gratitude, now, henceforth, and forever. — Amen.