

Free Masonry

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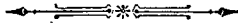
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FREEMASONRY:

ITS ORIGIN, HISTORY, AND USES.

DELIVERED AT CHICAGO. SUNDAY. FEBRUARY 26, 1888.

INVOCATION.

Infinite and Eternal God; Thou Divine Architect of the universe; Thou Who hast fashioned all things and hast upreared the divine structure: unto Thee Thy children turn in praise. Helpless and feeble as man is in his infancy, thrust into outward life, not knowing from whence he came, and through all his mortal being not knowing whither he tends, still Thy life encompasses that oblivion and fills his life with the consciousness of Thy being: beyond the doubt of mortal birth and death Thou art the enfolding and encompassing power. Even as the sun with orb'd splendor pierces the darkness of space and giveth light unto worlds, so doth the All Seeing Eye of Thy love give unto each the knowledge of infinite power. We would praise Thee without ceasing. May every heart turn to Thee in adoration forever. Amen.

DISCOURSE.

There is no shibboleth in modern Freemasonry, nor is there anything mystical, mysterious, nor awful.

The essential principles of Freemasonry have been made public and are known to all who care to know them.

The origin of Freemasonry, as declared by the Masons themselves, by their traditions and rituals in the lodges, must be a subject of individual reason or investigation, or not questioned at all. Very much that belongs to the order not only interests the general public, but is valuable to such as are familiar with ancient symbolism, in tracing the connection between ancient scholarship and the modern Order of Freemasonry.

Those who expect to hear anything pertaining to the mysteries or secrets of these rites will, of course be disappointed; but it is possible that even the masons who are present may have interest in receiving an added suggestion concerning that which they have been told with all solemnity, dates from the beginning of the building of Solomon's temple and was brought to Jerusalem by Hiram Abiff, the great founder of Freemasonry, the builder of the Temple.

Unquestionably there are minds within and without the Order who believe that the present organization may have had its origin in some of the ancient guilds; as you may already know that in England and all over Europe, after labor had been enslaved, every species of artisanship was protected, even under the sanction of monarchies, by orders, or guilds. Only the free-born citizens of the Anglo Saxon race boasted that they had never been slaves because they inherited the soil. The laborers, those who performed any kind of manual labor, were held in bondage, as were conquered nations, and under the ancient Saxon Kings were serfs, similar to the serfdom that recently existed in Russia. Those who labored as masons were exempt, we mean the operative masons, the masons who built palaces, churches, cathedrals and towns. It is unquestionably true that these formed themselves into societies or guilds with signs, passwords &c., and traveled about from place to place; in that time of comparatively small civilization there were few large towns to build, there would be occasionally a cathedral, on every such occasion there must have been a master who understood architecture; then there must have been members, operative masons, who penetrated in those days throughout all Europe; that these must have had a common purpose is found to be true, because there are some well preserved ruins and restored arches of cathedrals, abbeys and churches in England built as far back as the tenth, twelfth and fourteenth centuries. An Italian came into England in the thirteenth century whose architecture was perfect. There still remains traces of the most surpassing architecture and sculpture which he performed by his own hand. To suppose that those engaging in such work were subjected to the various vicissitudes of the ordinary laborer is impossible; hence it is known that all through the middle ages there were guilds of operative masons. By some sort of transformation which grows out of the freedom of nations, the greater liberty existing among the laboring classes, the guild of operative masons is certainly not at the present time associated with the order of Freemasons; but, if it is true, as the Freemasons declare, that their Order dates back to the time of the building of Solomon's temple, it might also have become in some manner associated with the operative masons of the middle ages. Our idea is that both claims are comparatively true. Our theory may or may not be accepted, but we certainly think the guild and the Order have a common origin. The guild of masons has precisely the same symbols as the masonic order has to-day, and the same symbols are in the ancient temples, in Jerusalem, and in the most ancient Egyptian inscriptions. These symbols must have been associated with the higher Order, we mean by this the order of ideal Freemasonry, which preserved the initiate by certain signs and symbols sacredly placed in his keeping: which also protected by its presence the operative mason from poverty, and from such slavery as the working men of all lands suffered, until very recently, and endured even under Christian civilization.

If it is true, as supposed, that King Hiram took with him into Jerusalem any number of operative masons to build the Temple, if it is true that he initiated the priests of the Temple in the sacred rites of the secret order, then it must also be true that he betrayed in some degree the sacredness of the Order as known or preserved in Egypt, because there the inscriptions, which are found in the temple at Jerusalem, are held most sacred, and could only be imparted to the priests of certain degrees in Egypt. Our theory is this: that as the operative masonry was most essential to the civilized world that the guild of operative masons was protected as long as was necessary under the banner and wing of the higher Freemasonry, but that behind the operative mason there was a still larger and diviner secret Order that many belonged to who were familiar with the Kabalistic symbols in the Hebraic church; that the Kabala itself, indeed that all those secret Orders existing in the Orient found their entrance into Jerusalem, and from thence into the Western civilization. All these were in some degree associated with the foundation of Freemasonry, but had no connection then with the guild of masons, but were called by various sacred names, from the Order of Melchisedeck down to the present time.

Our idea is, also, that the real foundation of the symbols and principles, and the basis of ideal Freemasonry, is to be found in Egypt: There are all the symbols which are adopted by the modern order: there the circle, the plane, the square, the triangle, the six-pointed star (or double triangle): to the latter have been given various names and virtues which have been substituted for the ancient names of the Divinity. In our opinion the introduction of the Seal of Solomon or the six-pointed star, is an innovation growing out of the Jewish ignorance of the inner Egyptian meaning of the six-pointed star. We believe that the three and the twice three, the three times three, the four times three which means the twelve pointed star (the highest symbol in Freemasonry) were all to be found in ancient Kabalistic symbols; were numbered in the Sephiroth and named in the Shemoth, that the various designations of the Crown and Kingdom, (belonging in Freemasonry to the Throne of Solomon) are the Crown of wisdom, the Throne of wisdom; the King of wisdom; and the real interpretations are the real key to the solution of the mystery of this Sacred Seal.

There is no doubt that Freemasonry has been handed down through two distinct channels: through the Hebrews who properly understood, among the Kabala, the meaning of the symbols, but could not impart it to those who were simply operatives in external masonry, nor yet to the populace; and through Phenicia, and Greece into modern Europe, until the two have combined.

You know but little of this order; save that as far back as you can trace its history it has been without creed, distinction of race, color or condition, that it has been the solvent of national and personal difficulties, that it has reconciled kings and countries, that it has been most liberal in its profession of humanity, that its foundations are the essential virtues, that its chief foundation is charity, love and truth, that wisdom is the basis of all understanding.

Beyond all this, you also know that, while in some periods of the Roman Catholic church it has been favored by the popes, who have themselves been initiated into the mysteries of the Order, the Roman Catholic church at last

became jealous of its power and placed a ban upon it. In modern civilization it is not recognized in the Roman Catholic church at all; although there are, unquestionably, many individual members of the priesthood who belong to this most mysterious order. All through the middle ages in the early history of the church it was accepted, and it is believed that it is owing to Freemasonry, and the presence in the Order of many priests and popes that many of these ancient symbols have been preserved; but masons will surely not be offended when we declare that the original meaning of the symbols have been lost, and that they can only be found by tracing the original and ancient meaning in the symbols themselves. Recent discoveries in Egypt, and the tracing of those discoveries down to the building of Solomon's temple, proves that the Egyptian symbols and the symbols in the Holy of Holies in Solomon's temple are the same; that similarity proves that the ultimate solution of them must be the same, whether mathematical or whether belonging to the mystic synonyms of the name of God; that other names have been substituted for the latter, as it was profane to hand down either the sacred Shemoth or the sacred Sephiroth for the external and uninitiated masses of mankind to speak; these, therefore, have been named virtues. These virtues form the cardinal principles or basis of the order itself.

Then there is in the ancient Egyptian ritual that which clearly traces the origin of the ideal Freemasonry. The plane or level upon which all Freemasons meet, or should meet, is the basic line of the pyramid, as it is also the basis of every geometrical computation; in the triangle the two sides form the two equilateral lines which, added to the first, make up the complete solution of the circle. Until the triangle was discovered the square was the only solvent of the circle (and that only approximately,) as the square is also one of the essential symbols of operative masonry, and as the triangle is the basis of all pyramidal forms of building.

It is not singular that operative masonry through the guilds, and ideal, mathematical and sacred Freemasonry should have been confounded; nor is it strange if in the middle ages, in the early civilization of Europe, these two were mingled in some degree under the protection of the higher Order. We believe, however, most positively, that in the origin of Freemasonry it was not intended for operative masonry, but to convey, geometrically and mathematically, to the mind of man the essential principles of the architecture of the universe as the basis of the divine scholarship and learning: and in symbols to convey a meaning superior to that which was merely incident to the mechanical performance in outward building.

As the basis of all things, that which is level, that which is plane, that which meets the eye at the horizon, that which forms the basis of all upbuilding must be taken as the only standard of the beginning of things. So until the triangle was discovered the square must be taken as the solvent of the circle which was the completion of all things. Among the ancients the four sides of the square, were given sacred names, it was considered as the basis of all worship; this is the same as in the Oriental and Brahminical religions, and suggests the idea that this same symbolism belonged unto Brahminical nations, and also formed the basis for the

preservation of the four qualities of the Brahminical Deity, (the three and the one which makes the fourth.)

There is much in the various symbols of operative masonry to suggest that all the symbols and mechanical implements here used were used in the sense of supplementing and making more clear human virtues, by familiar lines of interpretations, and were not intended as being associated with the particular operation of building itself.

Whichever line of reasoning, or history you choose to accept, it is certainly a most remarkable fact that in this nineteenth century, which seems to bring the solution of all these problems, there are brought to light from Egypt, and from the Orient, these symbols; and that they exactly correspond in sentiment though not in language to the interpretation held by the Freemasons. Whether the latter borrowed them from the Kabala, who introduced them into Freemasonry, or whether Freemasonry itself was known in Egypt, and was carried into Jerusalem and then distributed over the Western world you must be the judges. We think that the lines are twofold, as said before, by which the real and the false masonry have been handed down. One line is through Phenicia and Greece into Rome and to Europe; the other through Jerusalem and the Hebraic Kabala into the history of the Hebrews and thence into Europe; and that both tides were blended somewhere about the beginning of the Christian era.

The foundations of modern Freemasonry are, of course, in the moral sense of man and relate to the Infinite; to the brotherhood of man; to the extension of charity, kindness, and good will toward all. These also form the bases of all the highest religions in the world. But the one great merit connected with Freemasonry is, that it has been exceptionally free from dogmatism and creed; while introduced into every country, beneath all climes, there still has been no pursuing of any especial line of creed or dogma.

The organization of Freemasonry is in Lodges, Chapters, and Encampments. The Blue Lodge, which is the ancient foundation of Freemasonry, contains all the essential principles. The Chapters and Encampments seem to us ornamental degrees probably introduced since the advent of Christianity for the purpose of propitiating popes and kings, especially that they might not suppress the original Order.

The Blue Lodge has three degrees: the Entered apprentice; the Fellowcraftsman, and Master Mason. In these must be included all the cardinal principles of Freemasonry. So far as the chapters and encampments are concerned they are not essential nor are they mystical, but they relate to supplemental ideas, incorporated no doubt by particular kings and rulers who wished to make the order a little more exclusive and, also, who wished to honor some favored ones in their courts or dominions with the bestowment of the new degrees of the Order. These up to the highest degree give no added light, no illuming power beyond the first three degrees that we have named: so far as those three degrees are concerned, Masons themselves will agree that the solemnity of the initiation, that the importance of human life, that the various moral precepts are in themselves sufficiently binding to make a world wide renovation and reformation if followed out.

It is doubtless true that in many ages when barbarism was still in existence, when there were comparatively few degrees of civilization, when the whole world was, perhaps, at the mercy of kings and rulers this became a great protection to human life, to human virtue, and to human possessions; and we think at one time constituted almost the only method for preserving the symbols, and some portion of their derivations, the meanings of which are now being interpreted all over the world.

We are at a loss, however, to discover that in this nineteenth century Freemasonry, aside from its prestige, its ancient influence—the fellowship of peasant and king,—can be of any especial value among Christian and enlightened nations. If the mason is bound by the tie of brotherhood to his fellow mason, is not humanity bound by the common tie of the brotherhood of mankind? If it was necessary before the advent of the Christian religion that in civilized nations there should be added protection besides that which kings and rulers gave, surely those who look to the teachings of Christ and the Sermon on the Mount do not need any other inducement for fellowship and kindness toward each other; even though they have been disgusted with the creeds and dogmas of the church, the common voice of humanity, the high enlightenment of the present day, makes of every place of assemblage—or should make it—a lodge of Freemasonry: good fellowship, brotherhood, charity and every highest type besides. It is unquestionably true that in modern times the qualities that once adorned those who gained admission to those mysterious rites, are no longer insisted upon. There was a time when, like the Knights of the Round Table of King Auther of old, none could be admitted save those who were most honorable, highest in virtue, and most loyal to their king, most exemplary in their daily life, most true in their love to their betrothed or their wife; this formed the standard of the Knights of the Round Table; in ancient days it formed the standard of those admitted to the highest order of Freemasonry. Today it is supposed to form the standard, but every one knows that this is not literally true, that humanity is not challenged and put to the test, as in former days, before entering this degree; because all the world makes greater demand: outside there are as many requirements of human virtue as within any secret organization.

We believe that all these associated organizations have brought mankind, however, to contemplate the possible brotherhood of man, and in the midst of striving, contention, differences of positions, great peril and calamity, carried man through all those perils with great safety. We believe them valuable if one needs a shield of strength, the screen or assistance of a secret organization. But why should any man need it, why should it be needed in this day of enlightenment, when the public press, the highest standard of literature, and society itself *should* require that every one stepping within its sacred pale should be as exemplary in life as is expected of the most exemplary Freemason?

However, it must be a matter of individual opinion whether this society, or association, or any other secret organization, is of social or moral value today. There was a time when it might have governed the politics of the world: it can do so no longer. There was a time when kings and priests, when popes and rulers might be bended by its power, this time is past; but there still is time for such as may need its impulse, its aspiration, to aid them in carrying forward any great work in life, the highest unfoldment of the individual nature, it may be that it is now required. To those who are comparatively enlightened, those whose minds are beyond the pale of mere external ceremonials there is little that is now attractive: chiefly because they find in other works, in other sources the

same solvent of life; because of the secret occult forces in the world today that reveal, not only the ancient mysteries of Freemasonry, but also reveal that which leads beyond any external form or order to find the mysteries of life, and the human spirit itself. So if the Sermon on the Mount and the Golden Rule be the standard of life you do not need Freemasonry. Even if the teachings of Buddha, who also taught the essential basis of the Golden Rule and the fellowship of man, be followed you do not need Freemasonry; and if the common voice of a common humanity, that in every age and clime rises up to declare the fellowship and brotherhood of man, the doing unto others as you would be done by, the sanctity of human life, and of human virtue, then you do not need Freemasonry. But if there is but a limited idea of these broadest principles then there may be need.

We find no fault with those who unite through companionship, love of society, or even that innocent love of display which comes from the various adornments of the ornamental degrees; for this desire we have no criticism, we only say: that life itself is a great and wonderful lodge, and that every human being enters at birth the same kind of Apprenticeship that is suggested in the first degree of Freemasonry; that every human being passes through in middle life the Fellowcraft; and very few attain the ideal degree of Master Mason, though many may claim it, and all may assume it who have passed through the form of initiation in the mystic lodge.

When we consider that the whole of human life is to instruct man in the higher and diviner fraternity, all these secret orders will have lost their mystery, and their cunning. With the eyes of angels upon you who read every thought, understand every motive, and with the All Seeing Eye, whose presence is in every human spirit, is made manifest by the conscience that is there, with this interpretation you may clasp hands with the Egyptian, with the Brahmin, with the Jew, with the Christian, with the infidel, and find fellowship with all. Under the highest interpretation you may pass beyond the external ceremonial, the different degrees that lead to the Royal Arch of Freemasonry, and find that those are the stepping-stones of life that lead to the sacred inner temple where God's presence is found in every human spirit, and where all are initiated through sorrow, and trials, and discipline, to meet that death which certainly is not oblivion, and is not the end of all.

THE LAST DEGREE.

[IMPROMPTU POEM]

"Entered apprentice" all must be
 In the very hour of mortal birth;
 Unclothed the form in infancy
 And unsheltered upon the earth.
 Whether in peasant hut or palace hall
 The form finds refuge, even there
 There is one power over all
 "We meet on the level and part on the square."

"Fellowcraftsmen" all must be
 In the pilgrimage of life, on earth
 Taking the six steps, two times three,
 Revealing the power of truth and worth,
 But whether we gain perfection's height,
 Or whether dispersed in empty air,
 All must view the thought aright,
 "Upon the level and on the square."

And if we reach the third degree
 And Master masons we become
 That through the "Royal Arch" must be
 Suggestive of the heavenly home;
 It is only by the thought divine;
 God's power encompasses us there
 The "all seeing eye" is at the shrine.
 "We meet on the level and part on the square."

The "Lion" of Judah's mystic tribe
 May hold us in his subtle "paw,"
 The "Eagle" soaring toward the sky,
 May downward swoop with mystic "claw:"
 But whether we recognize its power
 Upon the earth or in the air
 We clasp each other by that dower
 "We meet on the level and part on the square."

As the "points of fellowship" are five
 In this one mystical degree,
 We meet at the sixth and lip to ear
 Reveal the light of masonry:
 But even with all the secrets known
 There is none so high but even there,
 We must by the power of God alone
 "Meet on the level and part on the square."

And when the great "Grand Master" death
 Shall summon us through the "Royal Arch,"
 And out of earth's all fleeting breath,
 We pass with souls that onward march,
 The "*All Seeing Eye*" beholds us come
 And "Past Grand Master", God, is there.
 For His presence is all our home,
 "We meet on the level and part on the square."

BENEDICTION.

Beneath the dome of heaven, under the light of the "*All Seeing Eye*" may all
 good fellowship be yours. Amen.

BANNER OF LIGHT.

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