

FREE MASONRY 2

THE ORIGIN OF THE CRAFT

Fraternities of men have existed in some shape or form during every period in the world's history. Doubtless, in primitive ages, it became apparent that mutual protection would afford the greatest security against the unbroken forces of Nature, and the evil forces of man and secure sympathy, support and protection to those whose bond of union was made a common cause.

Hence originated Masonry. Back of all written history there existed a civilization which has left nothing to history but the dim radiance of a wondrous splendor. The archaeologist has unearthed the records of thousands of years and has given us glimpses of the splendor of past generations not recorded in written history.

We have traces of the great past in ruined cities and magnificent temples of the Eastern Hemisphere; wonderful works of art; mausoleums of the dead past. Babylon, with its splendid hanging gardens, its temples and walls. Tadmora, Palmyra, Nineveh and Balbeck, the cities of the plain, whose ruins are wonder and admiration even in our progressive age; they all give evidence of an advanced civilization of which there is no record.

The origin of Masonry, like other historical transactions, lies buried in the gloom of obscurity. Its philosophy may be traced to the remotest ages of the world's history. Its symbols are older than the Temple of Solomon, and antedate the Pentateuch of Moses. Its ceremonials were practised in the ancient mysteries, when Egypt stood as the first and the most enlightened power of the then known world. Its tenets were known by the nomadic nations of the East, and transmitted from father to son, generation after generation, so that even today the Bedoin of the desert recognizes the hail of the Craftsman. We trace its ramifications from Egypt to Greece and Rome, and in the Middle Ages find it an Operative Art, constructing temples and public buildings which yet beautify continental Europe. When the mechanical art became generally known and no longer required the protection vouchsafed to it by the Masonic Building Corporations, the operative art became a speculative science, and in this form has descended to ourselves. Masonry, says a distinguished divine, has arisen as the sun rises, without halt or stay until it reaches the zenith, and there it will remain a light to all nations until, perchance, this earth shall cease to be a trial ground for men and resolve itself into higher conditions. Then Masonry, having made all men brothers, will go down as the sun goes down on a perfect and complete day." - E.M.L. Ehlers, Grand Secretary, New York.

"It is not correct to say that Masonry dates from the Revival, nor from the Institution of the Roman College, nor from the rise of the Dionysian Artificers, nor from the building of King Solomon's Temple, nor even from the Great Grand Lodge in the Wilderness. We came across signs and symbols all over the world that refer to the ancients who held the doctrines that are our fundamentals, and practised a morality that resembles ours to a remarkable degree. We cannot assume that the progress of humanity was the same in all ages - there must have been thousands of years between the arrival of a particular cult in one region and its spread to another - and the significance of this consideration appeals to us still more when we are met with persistent legends of great continents crossing what are now watery mains. History can only help us from the date of her birth. Tradition is sometimes of assistance, and sometimes confuses.

"We may believe or not the persistent legends of Atlantis, that say in the music of the mighty Atlantic Ocean, where now the deeps call unto deeps - legends almost equally persistent, tell of an original centre of mankind in India, and also at the foot of Mount Ararat. Wherever we go, we find indications of a kind common to all races, that along the same lines the Creator led man from darkness into the light, and fixed the Divine Doctrine in sign and symbol, in pillar and pyramid, in picture and demotic script. Among all the lower races of men we find vestiges of totemism - in the religious practices of the people; and totemism is but a masking symbolism.

"There is also abundant evidence that the esoteric method was adopted from the earliest ages of which we have any trace, for the purpose of training the youth, and aspiring of humanity as to the duty and the opportunity of human life." -

John George Givson, LL.D., "Builders of Man."

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