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A REASON FOR MASONRY

by

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Foreword

Worshipful Master, Distinguished Brethren and Brethren, Before giving my address I would like to say a few words by way of explanation. In this address a legend is quoted, in the legend reference is made to a Master Mason making a journey to Egypt for the purpose of receiving initiation in the Great Pyramid. Contrary to general opinion the Great Pyramid was built as a Hall of Initiation.

It was to Egypt what the Temple at Jerusalem was to the Hebrew people

In the Great Pyramid we find the Subterranean Chamber at the base, this corresponded to the outer court of the Temple at Jerusalem - the court of the Gentiles (those who had no interest or appreciation of the spiritual aspects of what the Temple represented.).

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Above; the Subterranean Chamber we find the Queen's Chamber (sometimes called the chamber of Isis). Here we; find those making their first step towards initiation, here they learned the laws of nature, of beauty, love and rightness. This corresponded to the first chamber in the Temple at Jerusalem, and which is guarded in our Lodges by the J.W.

After the candidate had mastered the lessons and learned to apply them he was permitted to leave the Queen's Chamber and work his way up the Grand Gallery towards the Ante-Chamber. This Chamber corresponded to the second chamber in the Temple at Jerusalem, and which is guarded in our Lodges by the S.W. Here the candidate remained until he had freed the flesh of much of its carnality and had been given divine; guidance and instruction. At the close of his stay in the Anti-Chamber the candidate was placed in the Coffin (which was part of the furnishings of the chamber). Here he remained for a time, after which he was conveyed to the King's Chamber for his final initiation. This chamber corresponds to the Sanctum Sanctorum of the Temple of Jerusalem.

From this. we see. that Primitive Masonry must have been established at the same time as the Mysteries, and is a symbolic representation of the Greater Mysteries. At the same time we must recognize the connection between the Temple at Jerusalem and the Great Pyramid.

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In searching for a Reason for Masonry we must examine the spiritual aspects of our Masonic teachings; those teachings which are clothed in a beautiful system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols

At the time Masonry became the institution that we. know it to-day; those responsible for its. rituals and symbolism were well aware that the vital truths

they wished to impart had to be veiled in such symbolism that those truths would not become revealed to the profane, and at the same time those symbols had to be acceptable to Church and State.

Since that time mankind generally has moved to greater understanding of the spiritual; and if Masonry is to go forward and become the force for the uplift of mankind that it should be, some of the spiritual aspects of Masonry should be understood by members of the Craft.

"The Order known as Freemasonry appears to have been instituted as a vehicle to preserve and transmit an account of the miraculous dealings of the Most High with His people in the infancy of the world, for at that period Freemasonry may be identified with religion."

"The identity of the Masonic institution with the Ancient Mysteries is obvious from the striking coincidences found to exist between them. The latter was a secret religious worship and the depository of religion, science and art. Tradition dates the origin of the Mysteries back to the earliest period of the time and makes it coeval with the organization of society."

"But the order of Freemasonry (as anciently constituted in its various forms and under different titles) goes further than did the Ancient Mysteries. While it embodies all that is valuable (in symbolic form) in the institutions of the past, it embraces within its circle all that is good and true of the present and thus becomes a conservator as well as a depository of religion, science and art."

"Without any reference to forms and modes of faith, it furnishes a series of indirect evidences which silently operate to establish the great and general principles of religion, and points to that triumphant system which was the object of all preceding dispensations and must ultimately be the sole religion of the human race, because it is the only religion in which the plan of salvation is clearly developed." Pierson, Traditions of Masonry.

Centuries ago a real mysticism existed within the framework of Symbolic Masonry. This is the legend:

"It came to pass when the Great Temple was completed Solomon hesitated to dedicate it for two reasons;

"First, on account of the death of Hiram Abiff.

"Second, due to the fact that with the death of the Widow's Son, the Master's Word, and the secret manner of using it, had been lost. Therefore, Solomon in his extremity called a Secret Council at low-twelve in the secret crypt under the Sanctum Sanctorum.

"This secret council consisted of Solomon, King of Israel; Hiram, King of Tyre and Zadok, the High Priest and Benaiah, Captain of the Guards.

"After Solomon had deplored the loss of Hiram Abiff and with him, the Master's Word and the secret manner of using it, Hiram, King of Tyre arose and reminded King Solomon that Nathan, the

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Prophet, was still alive and might be able to render some assistance in the present calamity. Solomon, therefore ordered Benaiah, Captain of the Guards, to search out and bring before him Nathan, the Prophet. Benaiah, having

ascertained that Nathan was at the house of Abiathar, a former High Priest under King David, repaired to the palace only to find that Nathan had died of old age but a very short time previous to his arrival. He therefore set about to return and discovering a stranger wandering near the Secret Crypt, took him into custody and brought him before the Secret Council. The Stranger proved to be Abdemon, a very wise man and a subject of Hiram, King of Tyre. Upon examination it was found that he had been initiated as an Entered Apprentice, passed to the Fellow Craft degree, and raised to the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason by Seisan, a Scribe, who had journeyed into the country of the Tyrians, so that the secrets of Masonry preceeded Hiram, King of Tyre, into his own dominions. Abdemon, being a Master Mason, and recognized by King Hiram as a very learned and crafty man, was at length admitted to the Secret Council after giving into the hand of King Solomon a manuscript that had been given to him in a wonderful and mysterious manner by an Egyptian. Solomon was so pleased with the manuscript that he then and there admitted Abdemon as a member of the Secret Council which was then sitting. Abdemon, in his turn, felt himself so highly honoured that he begged leave, and received permission, to journey into the land of Egypt that he might be initiated into the secrets of the Initiates of the Great Pyramid and in turn, promised to journey back into the land of the Israelites and disclose to the Secret Council what he had learned. Abdemon was successful in his efforts and the following degrees were instituted to preserve the knowledge he had gained in the land of Egypt and his journey and initiation in the Great Stone Pyramid: The King's pioneer, and Degree of Master of the Secret Cavern.

"After resting for three days at the well of Beersheba, Ameni the Singer, the Heroscopus and Abdemon, under the escort of the King's Pioneer, journeyed by easy stages to Mount Serbal, where the parties took refuge in a natural cave., and there Abdemon received his final instruction before his initiation into the Degree of the Pyramid.

"During the course of the journey Ameni disclosed to Abdemon many hidden mysteries concerning initiation, and why it was impossible to make these disclosures to the multitude in general. Among the things which Ameni communicated to Abdemon in their journey, the following is but a part:

"Before appearing on earth man lived in a spiritual world, similar to the one on which he lives on leaving the earth. Each awaits his turn in this sphere to appear on earth, an appearance which is necessary and a life of trials no one can escape. The life anterior, which we have all passed through, was, so to speak, a life of nothingness, of childbirth, of happiness, life which we enjoy on our exit from earth, but this happiness cannot be comprehended because it is not accompanied with sensation to prove its reality, therefore God deemed it fit that we should pass through these successive lives, the first, on the globes of which I speak to you -a life unknown, of beatitude, devoid of sensation - a painful life placed between the two, to demonstrate through its contact the sweetness of the third - the life of good and evil, without which we should not be able to appreciate the happy state reserved for us.

"The Soul is an emanation of Diety, and in its original essence is all purity, truth and wisdom. This is an axiom which the disembodied learn, when the powers. of memory are sufficiently awakened to perceive the state of existence anterior to mortal birth. In the Paradise of Purity and Love, Souls spring up like blossoms in the All-Fathers' garden of immortal beauty. It is the tendency of the Divine Nature., whose chief attributes are Love and Wisdom, Life and Light to repeat itself eternally and mirror forth its own perfections in scintillations from itself. These sparks of heavenly fire become Souls, and

as the effect must share in the nature of the cause, the fire that warms into life, also illuminates into Light, hence the Soul emanations from the Divine are all Love and Light.

"Earths that have attained to the capacity to support organic life necessarily attract it. Earths demand it, heaven supplies it. Whence? As the earths groan for the lord-ship of superior beings to

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rule over them, the spirits of distant Edens hear the whisper of the tempting Serpent, which appealing to the blest Souls in their distant paradises, fill them with an indescribable longing for change, for broader vistas of knowledge, for mightier powers; they would be as gods and know good and evil. In this urgent appeal of the earths for man, and the involuntary yearning of the Soul for intellectual knowledge, the union is effected between the two, the Spirit becomes precipitated into the realms of matter to undergo a pilgrimage. through the probationary states of earth, only to regain paradise by the fulfillment of that pilgrimage." - Dr. Buck, Mystic Masonry.

The legend continues for some length. To summarize; we find it teaches that the Souls of men originated as Sparks of Fire from God Himself. The Soul in its original form was like an infant, and like an infant was not conscious of itself, and could not appreciate the beauty of the spiritual realm. In order for it to grow and attain full consciousness it is necessary for this infant Soul to incarnate into a material body, and in doing so it comes to know both good and evil. During the sojourn in the material world the Soul is given Divine Laws for its rule and guidance. Its mission is to develop the good within itself by following these Divine Laws so that it can return to the Fathers' world a Soul conscious of itself and its own identity.

The Volume of the Sacred Law resting on our Altars contain these Divine Laws, which are necessary for our guidance during our pilgrimage through this world. In this we find a reason for Masonry.

In the third degree a candidate steps into the character of Hiram Abiff and symbolically represents a death and a raising. The basis of this ceremony is not peculiar to Masonry alone, but has been enacted under various forms since antiquity.

In the light of the legend this takes on a new dimension and a deeper meaning. It does not represent a physical ordeal, but is the symbolic representation of the final elimination of all evil in the mind and body of the candidate and the raising of a fit and proper temple, made without sound or hammer, for the Soul within to develop and work for the good of the Craft.

During the ceremony the candidate is given a substitute word. It then becomes the duty of the candidate to pursue his researches, discover the divinity within himself, find the ineffable light and obtain the genuine secrets.

It is thus that Masonry partakes of the same mystery that has been taught since the beginning of time. While the rituals of Masonry are beautiful in their simplicity, the real strength is in the spiritual precepts hidden in the ceremonies.

We can best serve Masonry, and humanity, by exhibiting to the world those qualities that are inculcated in our Work, and thus do our part in contributing to the betterment of mankind as well as our brethren in Masonry.