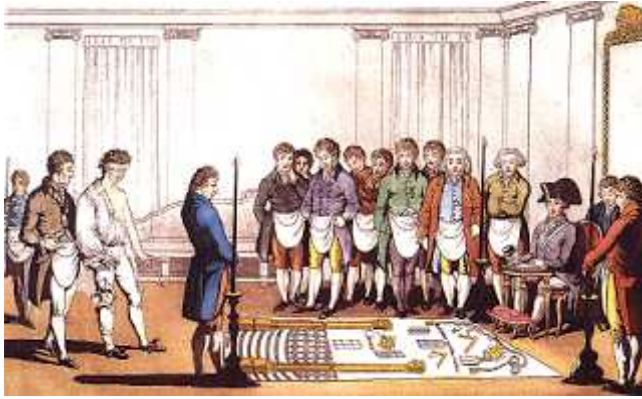


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"Masonic history, to be above evasion or dispute must stand on documents, not on opinions"
Lord Acton

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their origins in the Roman Collegia. In this way we date back to the VIth century B.C. This uninterrupted chain leads us back to the important Initiatic Schools of Egypt in which certain adherents had attained the highest degree of initiation; among them Moses, Pythagoras and Plato.

Each Collegia had a communal home where the artisans met on certain days, united in a feeling of pious solidarity, to share meals. Undoubtedly, the religious aspect was presided over by a Master of the College. Secrets of construction were transmitted and jealously guarded and their high reputation as builders made them sought after by the nobles of this world.

After the fall of Rome, there were numerous upheavals in the social order and what was left of the Collegia integrated with the Monastic orders, which were then multiplying in the Christian world. The thick walls of these institutions offered a secure refuge to maintain the torch for the arts and sciences and they allowed the builders to escape from constraint and allow them to circulate. So they constructed the churches and convents of the era (6th and 7th Centuries A.D.) and little by little, the growing peace of material security and the immigration of artisans enabled the brotherhoods of Master builders to regroup.

The Masonic bond with the Order of the Temple, both initiatory and as holders of the principal traditions, is undeniable, and at its dissolution due to the Inquisition, several of its members took refuge in European countries, where the Order still existed or in the Lodges of the Masonic builders, Those who had found refuge in Scotland consequently founded Scottish Freemasonry.

To the ancient builders, all of life's acts were intermingled with religious meaning. The work had a sacred character because it symbolized the creation of beings and things by the Divine. So they worked on the sites, in Lodges, where only the people of the profession were admitted and the secrets of construction were transmitted from Master to student. But there was also much more than that; these imposing cathedrals were and are still the true Esoteric Books of Wisdom where the Masters of that age wrote down the inherited knowledge of the mysteries of Antiquity, hidden in the symbols. During the construction of these monuments, the members met to work upon metaphysical research and philosophical teachings. The end of the great *operative* period of construction marked the beginning of that which we now call *speculative* where the philosophical aspect of the initiatory work has continued to the present time.

Freemasonry: An initiatory society

Modern Freemasonry aims to build the interior Temple, and to do this, symbols are put at the disposition of the adherent, to allow each, by their own study, to create the necessary relationship for their own spiritual growth. Freemasonry is an authentic initiatory society because it transmits a true initiation and conveys through its rituals and symbols, the teaching of the ancient mystery schools of which it is the trustee and heir.

Initiation confers a particular spiritual influence, actualised by the rites, whose effectiveness greatly surpasses the interpretation that is given and which finds its vastness in the legitimacy of its affiliation. All authentic initiatic steps aim at awakening the adherent. The best possible instruction cannot give Knowledge because the awakening cannot be provoked except by a systematic introspection which must be supported by the knowledge of deep seated psychic mechanisms.

The object of initiation is to guide the individual towards this Knowledge by an interior illumination, projection and understanding of the human *I* at whose centre is the transcendent Light. The initiatic method is an essentially intuitive path and that is why Freemasonry uses symbols to provoke this enlightenment as these symbols speak the language of the unconscious. Initiation by itself does not bestow the Light but it puts the subtle bodies in harmony and opens the interior organs of perception, leading one to the path of knowledge and a reintegration with a higher state. It provides one access to the Divine within. It is the search for the Lost Word.

This step implies three conditions:

- 1) The quality of the inherent possibilities of the individual's own nature which is the Prima Materia on which the work must be carried out.
- 2) The imparting of the spiritual influx that allows one to be part of a traditional organisation that encourages the development of one's potential.
- 3) The inner work which leads one to pass through the initiatic hierarchy in order to guide oneself towards deliverance or the highest identity.

The initiation transmitted throughout Freemasonry is a kind of spiritual alchemy, having as its goal a real transformation of the individual, a personal blossoming and a personal realization.

The Masonic Lodge

When Freemasons meet, their labour is carried out in a particular framework, accompanied by precise ritual in which each word and each gesture possesses a teaching that leads one to perceive and understand. The Masonic Lodge is the harmonious reflection of the Cosmos, governed by the great Laws of the Universe, and presented at a level more easily accessible to the human being: it appears as a reflection of our own psychic faculties and the Mason ought to try and establish this harmony within. Indispensable keys are available to each person to help open the doors to the interior.

Masonry: A school and a technique

The word school implies a system of learning and that is what the Freemason partakes of from the time of one's request for admission into the Order until one's full personal blossoming.

Freemasonry is a school of freedom where the thoughts and conscience of each member may be freely expressed. The Freemason seeks to avoid instability and psycho-

mental disorders that characterize the ordinary person because the ultimate goal of the Order is personal reintegration into the State of Original Perfection. By the teachings, each person must discover this by themselves; even though it is an integral part of the development in the Masonic search for Truth, No one can take the place of the individual in discovering the Truth. This method is perhaps what most distinguishes Freemasonry from other initiatory societies because it does not impose any ready-made ethics, teach any particular belief or contain any global truth. It refuses the comfort of the truth of others. Neither does it impose any restrictions on the search for Truth, rather it enhances one's possibilities by creating a place outside of the daily routine where rituals and symbols encourage inner reflection. In this way, Masons have the freedom to present works touching on the highest philosophical, moral and metaphysical issues and to discuss them in an atmosphere of openness and nobility and great tolerance, the very basis of all spiritual development. To know how to find the meaning of the Sacred is a certain key to advancement toward complete fulfilment.

Modern Masonry

Modern Masonry is divided into two major approaches: liberal and traditional. The first has a philosophical or humanistic approach whereas the second is spiritualistic. In a general way one can say that liberal, humanistic Freemasonry is concerned almost exclusively with the great sociological questions and work toward the progress of humanity. Spiritualistic or traditional Freemasonry is directed toward the glory of the Great Architect of the Universe. One method has English origins and is characterized by the exclusive practice of ritual work.

The other, to which we belong and which is French in origin, directs its work to study and symbolic research, strongly influenced by esotericism and the Sacred Sciences (astrology, kabbalah, mythology etc...), not to forget psychology and philosophy. These diverse tendencies may seem to be in opposition to one another but in reality have a common vocation, that of being a beacon for humanity, to bring to human beings a profound understanding of the web of their destinies and to unite them beyond all that usually divides the profane world. The aim is to form free beings and little by little, to modify their egotistical and impulsive behaviors in order that these conscious personalities might open up to the world around them.

Freemasonry is not a religion and each Freemason is free to practice the religion of their own choice in an atmosphere of complete tolerance for that choice. The perfect Masonic Rite is the one which is, if not secret, at least discreet in the world. A recent decision to appear more visible for a certain time allows us to make known the first step to those who might be interested in joining or affiliating with our Order.

Conclusion

Freemasonry may appear complex and confusing. Freemasons may seem to lead astray by appearing to be enigmatic, may fascinate or disconcert, but above all, there resides the knowledge and serenity of those who want to be and are masters of themselves and their destiny.

Leandros L. K.

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