

The Origin and Objects of Ancient Freemasonry Part 1



A Treatise

To introduce the subject of Ancient Freemasonry at this period with a design to adduce anything new, at least to the enlightened, would be a work of supererogation, having the semblance of assumption, more than an effort to impart information.

Summoned by your invitation to deliver a treatise, I have chosen for my subject The Origin, Objects, and Introduction of Freemasonry into the United States, and also its introduction among colored men in this country. I shall, therefore, proceed, at once to the discharge of my duty, doing the best I can according to the opportunity and means at hand for the accomplishment of this end.

Masonry was originally intended for the better government of man for the purpose of restraining him from a breach of the established ordinances. The first law given to man was by God himself, that given in the Garden of Eden, forbidding the eating of the reserved fruit. (Gen. 2:17) The first institution was that of marriage. (Gen. 2:21, 24). The first breach of the law was committed by eating the forbidden fruit. (Gen. 3:6). The first punishment inflicted on man was by God himself for a breach of the law. (Gen. 3:16+19). The first city was built by **Cain**, and named after his first born son, **Enoch**.

During the period from **Adam** to **Noah**, the life of man was of long duration, each individual living through several hundred years of time. His habits, customs and manner of living were simple; residing in thinly populated localities, for there were then no densely populated cities, and relying mainly on husbandry as a means of support.

Man from Noah to Solomon

From **Noah** to **Solomon** the character of man underwent an entire and important change. Noah's three sons, scattering abroad over the earth, built great cities, and established many and various policies, habits, manners and customs, for the government of their people. At this period, it will be remembered, a general separation in interests and sympathies took place among these brethren, (the children of one household parentage,) which continued to manifest itself in hostile array until building of the temple by Solomon, King of Israel.

I do not intend to assert that hostilities then entirely ceased, but that mankind were better governed after that period, will not be denied.

In the earliest period of the Egyptian and Ethiopian dynasties, the institution of Masonry was first established. Discovering a defect in the government of man, first suggested an inquiry into his true state and condition. Being a people of a high order of intellect, and subject to erudite and profound thought, the Egyptians and Ethiopians were the first who came to the conclusion that man was created in the similitude of God. This, it will be remembered, was anterior to the Bible record, because **Moses** was the recorder of the Bible, subsequent to his exodus from Egypt, all his wisdom and ability having been acquired there; as a proof of which, the greatest recommendation to his fitness for so high and holy an office, and the best encomium which that book can possibly bestow upon him in testimony of his qualifications as its scribe, the Bible itself tells us that "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians."

The Ethiopians early adduced the doctrine and believed in a trinity of the Godhead. Though heathens, their mythology was of a high and pure order, agreeing in regard to the attributes of the Deity with the doctrine of Christians in after ages, as is beautifully shown in the person of Jupiter Ammon, the great god of Egypt and Ethiopia, who was assigned a power over heaven, earth and hell, as well as over all the other gods, thereby acknowledging his omnipotence, all other gods possessing but one divine attribute or function, which could only be exercised in his particular department of divinity. (Jupiter was represented as seated on a throne of gold and ivory, figurative of heaven as the "pearly gates and golden streets," holding in his left hand a sceptre, figurative of his earthly power; his right hand grasping a thunderbolt, the ancient idea of the power and terrors of hell.)

Man the Likeness of God

What is God that man should be his image, and what knowledge should man obtain in order to be like god? The wisdom was possessed in the remotest period by the wise men of Egypt and Ethiopia, and handed down only through the priesthood to the recipients of

their favor the mass of mankind, being ignorant of their own nature and consequently prone to rebel against their greatest and best interests.

God is a being possessing various attributes: and all Masons, whether Unitarian, Trinitarian, Greek, Jew or Mohammedan, agree upon this point, at least without controversy. Where there are various functions, there must be an organ for the exercise of each function, and this conclusion most naturally led man to inquire into his own nature and his Creator.

The three great attributes of Deity: omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence, were recognized by the ancients, and represented in the character given to their ruling god, as above mentioned, as presiding over the universe of eternal space, of celum, terra, and tartarus, answering to the Christian doctrines of three persons in one, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

(One of the old doctrines of the priesthood was, that God the father presided over heaven, the Holy Ghost on earth, and Christ the son in hell; hence, his descent into the grave, is called a descent into hell, where some believe, or affect to believe, he ever remains; and this is the foundation of the belief of that Christian sect whose doctrines teach a purification and redemption in the grave, purgatory, a place of urging or purification, or hell.)

Man, then to assimilate God must, in his nature, be a trinity of systems: morally, intellectually and physically. This great truth appears to have been known to King **David** who with emotion, exclaims: "We are wonderfully and fearfully made."

To convince man of the importance of his own being and impress him with a proper sense of his duty to his Creator were what was desired, and to effect this would also impress him with a sense of his duty and obligations to society and the laws intended for his government. For this purpose was the beautiful fabric of Masonry established, and illustrated in the structure of man's person.

Man, scientifically developed, is a moral and intellectual and physical being, composed of an osseous, muscular, and vital structure; of solid flexible and liquid parts. With an intellect, a mind, the constituent principle of which rises superior to its earthy tenement, with the velocity of lightning, soars to the summit of altitude, descends to the depth of profundity, and flies to the widespread expanse of eternal space. What can be more Godlike than this, to understand which is to give man a proper sense of his own importance, and consequently his duty to his fellows, by which alone, he fulfills the high mission for which he is sent on his temporary pilgrimage.

While the Africans, who were the authors of this mysterious and beautiful Order, did much to bring it to perfection by the establishment of the great principles of man's likeness to Jehovah in a triune existence, yet, until the time of King Solomon, there was a great deficiency in his government, in consequence of the policy being monopolized by the priesthood and certain privileged classes or families.

From Solomon Down

For the purpose of remedying what was now conceived to be a great evil in the policy of the world, and for their better government to place wisdom within the acquirement of all men, King Solomon summoned together the united wisdom of the world, men of all nations and races, to consider the great project of reducing the mystic ties to a more practical and systematic principle, and stereotyping it with physical science, by rearing the stupendous and magnificent temple at Jerusalem.

(Previous to the building of the temple, Masonry was only allegorical, consisting of a scientific system of theories, taught through the medium of Egyptian, Ethiopian, Assyrian, and other oriental hieroglyphics understood only by the priesthood and a chosen few. All the sovereign and members of the royal families were Masons, because each member of the royal household had the necessity to be educated in the rituals of the priesthood. And it was not until after Masonry was introduced into Asia by the Jews, [it being strictly forbidden by the Jewish laws for women to be priests] that females were prohibited from being Masons.

Among other nations of the ancients, priestesses were common, as is known to the erudite in history; and Candace, **Queen of Sheba**, was a high priestess in her realm, hence her ability to meet King Solomon in the temple, having passed the guards by the words of wisdom, from the outer to the inner court, where she met the king in all his wisdom, power and glory.)

For the accomplishment of this masterpiece of all human projects were laborers or attendants, mechanics, or workmen, and overseers or master builders.

Added to these, there was a designer or originator of all the (illegible. ED.), architect or draughtsman, and a furnisher of all the materials for the building: all and everything of which was classified and arranged after the order of trinity, the building itself, when finished, being composed of an outer, an inner, and a central court.

After the completion of this great work, the implements of labor having been laid aside, there were scattered to the utmost parts of the earth, seventy thousands laborers, eighty thousand workmen, and three thousand and three hundred master builders, making one hundred and fifty three thousand and three hundred artizans (Here the Trinity is again typified: three times fifty thousand, three times one thousand, and three times one hundred) each of whom having been instructed in all the mysteries of the temple was fully competent to teach all the arts and sciences, acquired at Jerusalem in as many different cities, provinces, states or tribes.

At this period, the mysteries assumed the name of Masonry, induced from the building of the temple, and at this time, also commenced the universality of the Order, arising from

the going forth of the builders into all parts of the world. This then, was the establishment of Masonry, which has been handed down through all succeeding ages.

For a period of years after the destruction of the temple and the sacred or mystic records, there was some slight derangement in the Craft; men were becoming ungovernable both in church and state, owing to the want of proper instruction, and their consequent ignorance of the relation they bore to their (illegible. ED.) society.

For the purpose of again bringing back the "prodigal son" to the household of his father, the "stray sheep" to the rich pastures of the fold of Israel, and repairing the somewhat defaced, honored monument of time, **Prince Edwin of England**, in 930 of the Christian era, being nine hundred and twenty two years ago, summoned together at York, all the wise men of the order, where the rites were again scientifically systematized, and preserved for coming time. At this point, the Order, in honor to Prince Edwin, assigned to itself the title of York Masonry.

The States of Man's History

We have the history of man's existence from Adam to Solomon, showing three distinct periods, fraught with more mystery than all things else, save the ushering in the Christian era by the birth of the adorable Son of God; his origin in **Adam's** creation, his preservation in Noah's ark, and his prospects of redemption from the curse of God's broken laws by the promises hold out in that mysteriously incomprehensible work of building the temple by Solomon. Adam, Noah, and Solomon, then, are the three great types of the condition of man: his sojourn here on earth and his prospects of a future bliss.

Founded upon the similitude and consequent responsibility to the Creator, the ancients taught the doctrine of a rectitude of conduct and purpose of heart, as the only surety for the successful government of man, and the regulations of society around him. Whether Gentiles, Greeks, Jews, all taught the same as necessary to a Supreme Being, the author and Creator of himself.

But the mythology of those days, not unlike the scientific theology of the days in which we live, consisted of a sea of such metaphysical depth, that the mass of mankind was unable to fathom it. Instead then, of accomplishing the object for which this wise policy was established, the design was thwarted by the manner in which it was propagated. Man adhered but little, and cared less, for that in which he could never be fully instructed, nor be made to understand, in consequence of his deficiency in a thorough literary education, this being the exclusive privilege of those in affluent circumstances.

All these imperfections have been remedied, in the practical workings of the comprehensive system of Free and Accepted Masonry, as handed down to us from the

archives at Jerusalem. All men, of every country, clime, color, and condition, (when morally worthy), are acceptable to the portals of Masonic jurisprudence.

In many parts of the world, the people of various nations were subject to lose their liberty in several ways. A forfeiture by crime, as in our country; by voluntary servitude for a stipulated sum or reward, as among the Hindoos; and by capture in battle and being sold into slavery, as in Algiers.

Against these Masonry found it necessary to provide, and accordingly the first two classes were positively proscribed as utterly unworthy of its benefits as they were equally unworthy of the respectful consideration of the good among mankind. In this, however, was never contemplated the third class of bonddees, for none but him who voluntarily compromised his liberty was recognized as a slave by Masons. As there must be a criminal intention in the commission of a crime, so must the act of the criminal be voluntary; hence the criminal and the voluntary bondsmen have both forfeited their Masonic rights by willing degradation.

In the case of the captive, an entirely different person is presented before us, who has greater claims upon our sympathies than the untrammelled freeman. Instead of the degraded vassal and voluntary slave, whose prostrate position only facilitates the aspect of his horrible deformity, you have the bold, the brave, the high minded, the independent spirited, and manly form of a kindred brother in humanity, whose heart is burning, whose breast is heaving, and whose soul is wrung with panting aspirations for liberty: a commander, a chieftain, a knight, or a prince, it may be, still he is a captive and by the laws of captivity, a slave.

Does Masonry, then, contemplate the withholding of its privileges from such applicants as these? Certainly not; since Moses, (to whom our great Grand Master Solomon, the founder of the temple, is indebted for his Masonic wisdom) was born and lived in captivity eighty years, and by the laws of his captors, a slave.

It matters not whether captured in actual conflict, sleeping by the wayside, or in a cradle of bulrushes, after birth; so that there be a longing aspiration for liberty, and a manly determination to be free. Policy alone will not permit of the order to confer Masonic privileges to one while yet in captivity; but the fact of his former condition as such, or that of his parents, can have no bearing whatever on him the mind and desires of the recipient must be free; and at the time of his endowment with these privileges, his person and mind must be unencumbered with all earthly trammels or fetters.

This is what is meant by Free and Accepted Masonry, to distinguish it from the order when formerly conferred upon the few, like the order of nobility, taking precedence by rank and birth, whether the inheritor was worthy or not of so high and precious privileges.

In the three great periods as presented to view, you have the three great stages of man's existence: Adam, with childlike innocence in the Garden of Eden, turned out for

disobedience, as a youth upon the world, without the protecting hand of his Omnipotent Parent, Noah, as in adventurous manhood, in constructing and launching his great vessel (the Ark) "upon the face of the great deep," and Solomon, as in old age, in devising, planning and counseling, and heaping up treasures in building the temple of Jerusalem; all of which are impressively typified in the cardinal Degree of Masonry, the Entered Apprentice as a child, and as in youth the Fellow Craft; the Master Mason, as in mature and thinking manhood; and as an old and reflective man of years and wisdom, the Royal Arch completes the history of his journey of life.

The Origin of Freemasonry

Part 2

Its Introduction Into the United States



Masonry was introduced into the United States by grant of warrant to **Henry Price**, Esq. of Boston, on the 30th of July 1733, as Right Worshipful Grand Master of North America, "with full power and authority to appoint his Deputy," by the Right and Honorable and Most Worshipful **Anthony Lord Viscount Montague** "Grand master of Masons of England." (Cole's Lib, p. 332).

I do not conceive it necessary to prosecute the history of Masonry farther in this country; but let it suffice to say, that hostilities which commenced between Great Britain and American in 1775, absolved all Masonic ties between the two countries, and left American Masons free to act according to the suggestions of the peculiar circumstances in which they were then placed. With the independence of the country, commenced the independence of Masonic jurisdiction in the United States.

(It is said, that at that early period of its existence in this country, entertaining a kind of superstitious idea of its sacredness, the Masonic warrant was kept closely in some

secret places, prohibited from the view of all but Masons; consequently when General **Warren**, who was Grand Master of Massachusetts, fell in the Revolutionary struggle, the warrant was lost and with it, Masonry in Massachusetts.

All Masons are familiar with the fact that Grand Master Warren was raised from his grave and a search made, doubtless, supposing that the warrant might have been found concealed about his person.)

The Grand Lodge of Massachusetts was formed in 1769; Maine, New Hampshire, 1789; Rhode Island, 1791; Vermont, 1794; New York, 1787; (another being established in 1826, which has recently been denounced by England and all other legal Masonic jurisdictions thought the world); New Jersey, 1786; Pennsylvania, 1734, under England, to which she remained attached until September, 1786; Virginia, 1788; North Carolina, 1787; South Carolina, 1787; Georgia, 1786, Ohio 1808; Kentucky, 1800; Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee, the data not being given. (Cole's Lib 363-375). This gives a fair history of the introduction of Masonry into the United States of America.

Among Colored Men in the United States

In the year 178? (ED. NOTE. This date is incomplete in the original), a number of colored men in Boston, Massachusetts, applied to the proper source for a grant of Masonic privileges, and this being denied them, by force of necessity they went to England, which at that time not recognizing the Masonic fraternity of America, the then acting Grand master,(recorded on the warrant as the Right Honorable, **Henry Frederick**, Duke of Cumberland) granted a warrant to the colored men to make Masons and establish Lodges, subjects, of course, to the Grand Lodge of England. In course of time, their ties became absolved; not before it was proceeded by the establishment of an independent Grand Lodge in Philadelphia, Pa. by colored men, and subsequently, a general Grand Lodge, known as the First Independent African Grand Lodge of North America.

In the year, 1832, another Grand Lodge was established by a party of dissatisfied colored Masons in the city of Philadelphia, known as the "Hiram Grand Lodge of the State of Pennsylvania."

(The Grand Lodge dissolved in 1847, after an existence of fifteen years, becoming convinced that they had no just or legal foundation for an independent existence; and none contributed more to the accomplishment of so desirable an end, than the then acting Grand Master of the Hiram Grand lodge, Mr **Samuel Van Brakle**, an upright, intelligent and excellent man.)

There was, also, for many years, a small faction who rather opposed the F.L.A.G.L. still adhering to what they conceived to be the most legitimate source, the old African Lodge of Boston, among whom was the colored Lodge of Boston, and a very respectable body in New York City, known as the "Boyer Lodge."

In December, 1847, by a grand communication of a representative body of all the colored lodges in the United States, held in the city of New York, the differences and wounds which long existed were all settled and healed, a complete union formed, and a National Grand Lodge, established, by the choice and election, in due Masonic form, of Past Master **John T. Hilton**, of Boston, Mass. Most Worshipful Grand Master of the National Grand Lodge, and **William E. Ambush**, M.W.N.G. Secretary.

This, perhaps, was the most important period in the history of colored Masons in the United States; and had I the power to do so, I would raise my voice in tones of thunder, but with the pathetic affections of a brother; and thrill the cord of every true masonic heart throughout the country and the world, especially of colored men, in exhortations to stability and to Union.

Without it, satisfied am I that all our efforts, whether as men or Masons, must fail, utterly fail. "A house divided against itself, cannot stand," the weak divided among themselves in the midst of the mighty are thrice vanquished, conquered without a blow from the strong; the sturdy hand of the ruthless may shatter in pieces our column guidance, and leave the Virgin of Sympathy to weep through coming time.

I have thus, as cursorily as possible, given you a faint history of the origin and objects of ancient Free Masonry; its introduction into this country among white and colored men; and he who rejects Masonry as an absurd and irreligious institution must object to the Scriptures of eternal truth, and spurn the Bible as a book of mummeries.

But there have been serious objections urged against the legitimacy of Ancient Freemasonry among colored men of African descent or affinity in the United States, emanating at various times from different directions, of high Masonic authority in the Republic, and consequentl, received and adopted with a readiness as surprising as it was unkind and unjust by almost all of the Subordinate, and many of the Grand Lodges throughout the country, especially in the non slaveholding States.

A fact worthy of remark is that there is no comparison between the feelings manifested toward colored, by Northern and Southern Masons. Northern Masons, notwithstanding Masonry knows no man by descent, origin, or color, seldom visit colored Masonic Lodges; and when they do, it is frequently done by stealth!

While, to the contrary, Southern Masons recognize and fellowship colored men, as such, whenever they meet them as Masons. The writer has more than once sat in Lodge in the city of C_ (ED NOTE, Name not given in the original, but could be Charleston, S.C. where MRD lived) with some of the first gentlemen of Kentucky, where there have been present Col. A., a distinguished lawyer, Esquire L. one of the first Alderman of the place, and Judge M. President of the Judge's bench. This is a matter of no unfrequent occurrence, and many of our members have done the same.

Among the earliest and, peradventure, the first of these intended fratricidal assaults, was that of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania in the year 18??, a distinguished and talented ex

editor and present member of Congress, and Col. P., an ex Post Master, if I mistake not being at the time among the Grand Officers, if not the Committee who visited and reported concerning the African Grand Lodge in the Eleventh Street, Philadelphia.

And I should not at this date refer to the doings of those distinguished personages in this connection, but for the purpose of, as it never as yet has publicly been done, vindicating the above named First Independent African Grand Lodge of North America, against the aspersions of those multifarious outward forces which have so long been leveled against her Masonic ramparts. Lambparts would be a term far more appropriate; because our Masonic fathers have submitted really with the most lamb like passiveness to the terrible and disparaging ordeal.

In this wise, the circumstance referred to happened. The question had long been mooted among the white members of the fraternity, as to the legitimacy and reality of the colored Masons; and, consequently, a Committee from the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania (white) was appointed to visit the colored Grand Lodge then situated in Eleventh Street (Phila.), to apply the Masonic test, and prove or disprove their capacity as recipients of the ancient and honorable rituals of the mystic order.

A Grand Communication being congregated for the purpose, at the appointed time, the Committee went. A Committee of Examination being sent out, who, instead of, as they should have done, had there been in waiting St. **John the Baptist**, St. John the Evangelist, or St. Paul in his daring attitude, as the chief Christian on the Isle of Malta; examining them, on seeing the gentlemen, all men of the first standing in the city of Philadelphia, who had often been seen in Masonic processions, and so far, known, as they thought, to be Masons, an unwise conclusion to be sure, reported them to the Chair, when without a question, and entirely through deference, the Chair replied: "Admit them."

They entered, inspected, oversighted, and examined the work of the colored masons, applying the scrutiny of a suspicious eye, and the tests of plumb, level and square; all of this they pronounced to be good work, square, and just such work as was required to be done; but for this act of courtesy, and undue deference on their part, they were denounced by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, as being unworthy of the high privileges they possessed.

Had these gentlemen been half so generous as they were determined on being just, they could and would readily have excused the blunder made by the colored Masons, when considering the relative position in the community of the two parties who then met as Committees; the one subservient to the other, in all the relations of life.

In all the social relations in which they had formerly met, the one was domestic and the other superior, the one ignorant and the other intelligent; in a word, the one master and the other servant.

But I come not to plead in extenuation for the blunders, the palpable and reprehensible blunders of our colored Masonic brethren and fathers; may I not say that it served them

right, and has done them good, since their too great deference for persons in certain relations of life in this country, has done as much injury in other respects than this.

But that time is not now, neither are we those brethren; and they who now stand at the head of our Masonic jurisdiction are competent and adequate to the task for which they have been selected; so that the same excuse no longer exists for the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania.

Neither would I vindictively censure our fathers, as they did very well for their day and generation; and all that they did was done for the best; they meant well, and that is all, at least, that I require at their hands.