

## Chapter 4

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# THE ANTIQUITY OF MASONRY

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For centuries it has been the proud boast of Masonic historians that their order descended from the Temple of Solomon. Other authorities have traced its origin far beyond the Temple on Mount Moriah, insisting that it arose during the childhood of the race and spread into most of the nations of the earth.

“Ancient no doubt it is,” we read in a recent edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica, “as having subsisted from time immemorial—Freemasonry is descended from primitive rites once universal in the dawn of history.”

Dr. Rawson, an eminent archaeologist and a prominent Mason, says of this subject:

The Egyptians recorded in writing and in pictures their rites and ceremonies, which made visible the condition of the order in those matters at the time, about 4000 years ago. We read in those pictures the same lessons that are taught to us now, although they are distributed through the several degrees from the first to the thirty-second.

The Masonic historian Cunningham does not scruple to declare:

The opinion of Free Masons, that their order existed and flourished at the time of Solomon’s Temple, is by no means so

pregnant with absurdity as some men would have us believe . . . The vicinity of Jerusalem to Egypt, the connection of Solomon with the royal family of that kingdom, the progress of the Egyptians in architectural science, their attachment of the mysteries and hieroglyphic symbols, and the probability of their being employed by the King of Israel, are additional considerations which corroborate the sentiments of Free Masons, and absolve them from those charges of credulity and pride with which they have been loaded.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most prolific and authoritative writers within the Masonic brotherhood is Dr. A. G. Mackey, who is convinced that:

The existence of this order in Tyre at the time of the building of the temple is universally admitted; and Hiram, the widow's son, to whom Solomon entrusted the superintendence of the workmen, was an inhabitant of Tyre, and as a skilful architect and cunning and curious workman, was doubtless one of its members. Hence we are scarcely claiming too much for our Order when we suppose that the Dionysians were sent by Hiram, King of Tyre, to assist King Solomon in the construction of the house he was about to dedicate to Jehovah, and that they communicated to their Jewish fellow-laborers a knowledge of the advantages of the Fraternity, and with them to a participation in its mysteries and privileges.

The truth is that Masonry is undoubtedly a religious institution, which, handed down through a long succession of ages from that ancient priesthood who first taught it, embraces the great tenets of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul.<sup>2</sup>

In 1880 the Prince of Wales delivered an address when the cornerstone of Truro Cathedral was laid. At this great Masonic pageant he declared:

Brethren: We are an ancient fraternity, which, from the earliest days, has been identified with all that is beautiful and grand in architecture . . . I feel sure that the same spirit must be in your minds this day which animated the Jews of old, when as Ezra tells us, the builders laid the foundations of the Temple of the Lord.

<sup>1</sup> W. M. Cunningham, *Cross's Masonic Chart*, p. 235.

<sup>2</sup> Mackey's *Lexicon*, p. 36.

We have among us secrets concealed from those who are not Masons. They were instructed to Masons in ancient times, and, having been faithfully transmitted to us, it is our duty to convey them inviolate to our posterity.<sup>3</sup>

Many volumes have been written in defense of the proposition that Masonry had a definite connection with Solomon's Temple. We shall consider but a few opinions from outstanding authorities on the subject. Anderson's *Ancient Constitutions* has served Masonry as Blackstone's writings determined the course of jurisprudence. Says Anderson:

Solomon appointed 3300 Master Masons, Fellow Crafts, 80,000 . . . All the Free Masons employed in the work of the Temple, exclusive of the two Grand Wardens, were 113,600.

A short time before the consecration of the Temple, Hiram, King of Tyre, came to take a view of that mighty edifice, and inspect the different parts thereof; that he was accompanied by King Solomon and the Deputy Grand Master Hiram Abif, and that after a thorough examination he pronounced it to be the utmost stretch of human art . . .

The Temple of Jehovah being finished under the auspices of the wise and glorious King of Israel, Solomon, the Prince of architecture, and Grand Master Mason of his day, the fraternity celebrated the capstone with great joy; but their joy was soon interrupted by the sudden death of their dear and worthy Master Hiram Abif; nor less was the concern of King Solomon, who, after some time allowed their craft to vent their sorrow, ordered his obsequies to be performed with great solemnity, and buried him in the Lodge, near the Temple, according to the Ancient Usages among Masons; and long mourned for his loss.

The historian Mitchell is convinced that:

Even before the death of Solomon many of those who received their instructions from him, and were, therefore, called Solomon's workmen, traveled into foreign countries in search of employment, delighted with an opportunity to disseminate the benign and holy principles of Masonry . . . Thus we see that soon after the Masons

<sup>3</sup> J. A. Weisse, *The Obelisk and Freemasonry*, p. 157.

commenced traveling, so highly were they esteemed that, in many places; they acquired privileges and immunities granted to no other people; they were called Freemasons because they taught the art only to the free born. They built Lodges, or rooms, in which they lived in the vicinity of any building they undertook to erect; and by their proximity to the great and wealthy, who employed them, the moral principles taught, and so rigidly lived up to, attracted general notice, which, together with their superior knowledge of the arts and sciences, so influenced men of the great-wealth and of the highest order of the talents to solicit and obtain association with them; and if we are to believe the manuscripts brought forward in 1718, kings, princes, and potentates soon after became Grand Masters, each in his own dominion; and this is the more likely, as Solomon, the wisest King, had set the example.

It is probable that Solomon endeavored to unite the world in the strong bands of love, and encourage the study of the sciences by admitting all those sages and learned persons who visited him, to see the Temple and learn of his wisdom, into the mysteries of Masonry, and in this manner was a knowledge of the art soon carried to all parts of the world, and hence, kings and princes became Grand Masters, or patrons of Freemasons in their respective countries . . .

The royal descendants of King Solomon continued to fill the throne and patronize the noble art of Freemasonry, either directly or through the High Priest.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Mackey assures us that :

One of the greatest objects of Solomon's life, and the one which most intimately connects him with the history of the Masonic institutions, was the erection of the Temple to Jehovah . . .

In Masonry, the Temple of Solomon has played a most important part. Time was when every Masonic writer subscribed with unhesitating faith to the theory that Masonry was there first organized; that there Solomon, Hiram of Tyre, and Hiram Abif presided as Grand Masters over the Lodges which they had established; that there the symbolic degrees were instituted; and that from that period to the present Masonry has passed down the stream of Time in unbroken succession and unadulterated form . . . So that now almost all the symbolism of Freemasonry rests upon

<sup>4</sup> J. W. S. Mitchell, *History of Freemasonry*, pp. 93-95.

or is derived from the House of the Lord at Jerusalem. So closely are the two connected, that to attempt to separate the one from the other would be fatal to the further existence of Masonry. Each Lodge is and must be a symbol of the Jewish Temple; each master in the chair a representative of the Jewish king; and every Mason a personation of the Jewish workmen.<sup>5</sup>

Another Masonic historian affirms that: "After leaving Egypt the mysteries were modified by the habits of the different nations among whom they were introduced and especially by the religious systems of the countries into which they were transplanted."<sup>6</sup>

The prolific writer Mackey assures us that:

The High Priest is the presiding officer of a chapter of Royal Arch Masons . . . He represents Joshua, or Jeshua, who was the son of Josedech, and the High Priest of the Jews when they returned from the Babylon Exile. He wears a robe of blue, purple scarlet, and white linen, and is decorated with a breastplate and mitre. On the front of the mitre is inscribed the words, "Holiness to the Lord."

From *The History of Freemasonry*, by Dr. J. W. S. Mitchell, published in 1858, we quote:

Immediately after the completion of the Temple, Lodges were formed in various parts of the kingdom. Anderson says that the old Constitutions relate the fact that Solomon annually assembled all the Masons in a Grand Lodge at Jerusalem, "to preserve the cement of fraternity, and transmit their affairs to the latest posterity."

Just here we are met with a difficulty which we do not remember to have seen satisfactorily explained. Solomon seems to have been the Father of Masonry, or the instrument in God's hands to establish it. We believe Masonry always taught all the morals, all the virtues, that are inculcated in the Holy Bible. We have said, elsewhere, that Masonry was originally Speculative, as well as Operative; and though we do not believe, with Dr. Oliver, that it ever was the true religion, we most sincerely think all its teachings

<sup>5</sup> A. G. Mackey, *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, pp. 722-798.

<sup>6</sup> *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*, p. 23.

were in strict conformity to the principles which that religion teaches.

It is nothing without the Bible; our traditions are false if the ground-work of Masonry is not laid in the Bible; and though we may be compelled to admit that it has since been made subservient to other religions, and dance attendance to other gods, its tenets ever have, and ever will, point to the God Moses, and to that religion which was pointed out, or promised to the seed of Abraham—and hence we find it difficult to reconcile the early life of Solomon with the great principles and tenets of the order. It does seem strange, that one endowed with superior wisdom should, by means of that wisdom, bring a set of principles into practice, bring all its recipients under obligations to live in conformity thereto, and yet be the first to depart from them; yea, it would seem that, at the very period when he was most engaged in disseminating the truths of Masonry, he was setting at naught the very doctrine which gave it power over all other institutions to do good; for while it taught the power, and might, and majesty, of the one only living and true God, Solomon was worshipping the various Gods of his concubines. But this is not more remarkable than that God should choose him as the instrument to build His holy Temple, who so soon departed from the true worship; but how beautifully is the immaculate wisdom of our heavenly Father displayed in the life and character of Solomon, endowed, as he was with wisdom such as man never had . . .

Pierson's suggestion is not to be ignored. He says: "The order known as Freemasonry appears to have been instituted to preserve and transmit an account of the miraculous dealings of the Most High with his people, in the infancy of the world."<sup>7</sup>

Anderson was convinced that: "The ante-diluvian world was well acquainted with Masonry, and erected many curious works until the time of Noah, who built the Ark by the principles of geometry and the rules of Masonry."<sup>8</sup>

Another Masonic historian, Hutchinson, taught that: "Masonry existed in the second stage of its progress, and that the builders of the edifice were Masons."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> E. H. Pierson, *Traditions of Freemasonry*, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> A. G. Mackey, *History of Freemasonry*, vol. 1, p. 118.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

Mackey summarizes Hutchinson's theory thus:

Masonry was not organized at the Temple of Solomon, as is believed by those who adopt the Temple theory, but yet that building occupies an important place in the history of the institution. Solomon did not, therefore, organize as has very commonly been believed, a system of Masonry by the aid of his Tyrian workmen . . . But he practiced and transmitted to descendants the primitive Masonry derived from Adam and modified into its sectarian Jewish form by Moses . . . The Masons of Solomon were dispersed from Jerusalem into various lands, where they superintended the architectural labors of other princes, converted infidels, initiated foreign brethren into their mysteries, and thus extended their order over the distant quarters of the known world.

The Reverend Dr. Oliver declared: "Enoch, as Grand Master, practiced Masonry with such effect that God vouchsafed to reveal to him some peculiar mysteries, among which was the *Sacred Word*, which continues to this day to form an important portion of Masonic speculation."

In explaining the Temple legend Mackey writes:

This tradition traces the origin of Freemasonry as an organized institution to the Temple of Solomon . . . This is the legend that is now (1898) almost universally accepted by the great mass of the Masonic fraternity. Perhaps nine out of ten of the Freemasons of the present day conscientiously believe that Freemasonry as we now see it, organized into lodges and degrees, with Grand Masters, Masters, and Wardens, with the same ritual observances, was first devised by Solomon, King of Israel, and assumed its position as a secret society during the period when that monarch was engaged in the construction of Temple on Mount Moriah.<sup>10</sup>

In the latter part of the nineteenth century "Cleopatra's Needle" was found in Egypt. Carved upon the base of this obelisk, nearly two thousand years ago, were the Masonic symbols, of which we read:

The square carved on stone, the iron trowel, the rough ashlar, Perfect ashlar, and the apron . . . There are also other proofs of

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

Masonic arrangements on the base of the Needle, showing that the ancients possessed degrees higher than those of Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master . . . The Hebrews carried Masonry with them when they fled from Egypt.<sup>11</sup>

A century ago a patron of Masonry offered these arguments in favor of its existence:

Our fraternity dates its origin at least as far back as the days of Solomon. That wise king was himself the Master of a lodge, if not the founder of the first lodge.—What if history says nothing of so early an existence? Tradition is older than history, and the nature of the society requires its records to be preserved in a manner alike secure from the tooth of time and the gaze of cowans and the profane.

But Masonry is older than Solomon. It constituted the wisdom of Egypt which Moses learned; and no doubt beneath the everlasting Pyramids, where silence and secrecy reign, the mysteries of the Order were for ages preserved. It was this that made Moses a mighty prince and the greatest of lawgivers. Noah was a master workman, and the Ark a lodge, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the fathers of the post-diluvian world, are recognized by all Free Masons as their ancient brothers. Tu-bal-cain was at least a fellow craft. Whether Adam was a Mason or not, I am not so certain. It seems probable he was not while he remained in the garden of Eden, as there was nobody to conceal the secret from but his wife. Yet the symbols of life, and of good and evil, the signs and names, the fig-leaf apron, and subsequently the "skin of a beast," or lamb-skin apron, all seem to indicate that the elements of the Order were at least taught to him—if, indeed, the so-called history of the creation is not a symbolic account of the origin of the Masonic Order. Josephus thinks Moses talked philosophically, perhaps mystically or masonically. So it is, if ever one becomes a Mason, he learns the import of that sublime sentence, "God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." And until so brought to light, he is but ill prepared to interpret the book of Genesis, or debate the merits of Masonry. What canst thou say, Mr. Campbell, against so venerable an institution?<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> M. W. Redding, *The Scarlet Book of Freemasonry*, 1889.

<sup>12</sup> *Millennial Harbinger*, 1845, p. 552.



From *The Obelisk and Freemasonry*, by J. A. Weisse, we quote:

Solomon is so well known by Free Masons, that we need not enlarge on his Masonic attributes . . . His temple has ever been the theme of operative and theoretic Masons . . . Not only Jew and Christians, but Arabs have remembered Solomon. Freemasons have pointed to him as the first Masonic Grand Master . . . Hiram has ever been indissolubly connected with Solomon . . . While King Solomon and Hiram are considered theoretic Masons, Hiram Abif may be regarded as the operative Mason at the structure of the temple . . . Even now Freemasons have a tool named Hiram.

Sacred Lodge. We are told that this lodge was held in the bowels of Mount Moriah, under the part on which was created the Sanctum Sanctorum of the temple of Solomon. King Hiram and Hiram Abif presided over this ancient Masonic institution.

With such a galaxy of great intellects, from Rameses the Great to Washington, we cannot feel surprised, that Masonry, under various names and forms, but with the same spirit of mutual protection and charity, braved time, space, persecution, fire and sword, over 6,000 years . . . Yet, since the discussion about the signs, emblems, and symbols on the American obelisk began, we read letters from Masons, who consciously or unconsciously seem to isolate Freemasonry, and give an impression, that it is rather a recent institution. If so, why invoke ante-diluvian celebrities like Seth, Melchizedek, Solomon, Pythagoras, etc. . . . ?

Had these worthy Masons pointed to any number of the celebrities, whom the brethren invoke in their Masonic rites and ceremonies from Enoch and Joseph to Zoroaster and Plato . . . These Masonic radicals seem to forget, that the Masonic Brethren of today cherish, not only the perpendicular, square, compass, plummet, oblong, and even the magic number seven, etc., but that they utter names and words which like their tools date to remote antiquity.

This gives a glimpse of the emblems and symbols of the primitive Magi and sages whose science has been called after them Magic. The Chaldean, Assyrian, Persian, Egyptian, Hindu, Chinese, Greek, Roman, and Celtic magnates and hierophants shared similar symbols from the building of the Tower of Babel to the Masonic Temple of New York City.

Early in the eighteenth century Lowrie wrote a book in

which he described the Essenes as "an ancient fraternity originating from an association of architects who were connected with Solomon's Temple."

Dr. Mackey assures us that:

In the American ritual the candidate is said to have come from the lofty Tower of Babel, where language was confused and Masonry lost, and to be proceeding to the threshing-floor of Orneu the Jebusite (the Temple of Solomon) where language was restored and Masonry found.

This is but a meager sample of the vast array of evidence that has been assembled in defense of the belief that Masonry extends back into the distant past, the ritual of Solomon's Temple playing an important part in its organization. If we are to place the slightest credence in this popular theory, we see at once the reason for a few points of similarity between the rituals of the Mormons and the Masons.

Though countless changes crept in during the centuries, enough of the Solomonic features could easily have been preserved to cause our enemies to cry "plagiarism" when they observed some "Masonic touches" in Mormonism.

Joseph Smith definitely insisted that the Temple ritual was revealed to him, and that much of the pattern, symbolism, and design were taken from the Temple of Solomon. The font resting upon the backs of twelve oxen is but one of the many Solomonic features of Mormon Temples. In like manner we may say that all other "Masonic touches" were not borrowed from Masonry but from the parent of Masonry—Solomon's Temple.