

THE ANCIENT MYSTERIES

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FOR quite a number of years I have been a student of Freemasonry and it has been my aim to follow into the distant past the lines of causation by means of which our noble institution has been developed into its present form and influence. Steadily but surely the origin of the Craft has been pushed back amid the dim mists of farthest antiquity. Not that in those far-off times there was anything like the present organization or ritual, but that our genealogy includes the builders of the great cathedrals of Europe, those who gave glory to Rome and Athens, and even those who reared the wonderful temples at Karnac or heaved the pyramids above the sands of Cairo, is now the accepted belief.

With the advance of knowledge, the better and more complete understanding of the factors that go to make up our present civilization, and the constant bringing to light of facts that for long ages were lost from human sight, it becomes morally certain that the roots of our modern Masonry may be traced not only to the reign of Solomon and the structure erected on Mt. Moriah, but far beyond that day and generation.

Within the last half century the archaeologists have pushed their investigations into almost every nook and corner of the world, and they have brought forth from the storehouses of the long ago a more complete record of the thoughts and deeds of those of ancient times than was ever before in the possession of mankind. Throughout the Peloponnesus and by the waters of the Nile and in the valleys of the Tigris and the Euphrates they have been digging in the earth and uncovering the story of man's development in ages long anterior to the Christian era. The discovery of the Rosetta stone, the laying hold upon the secret of the deciphering of the cuneiform inscriptions of Assyria; the finding of the laws of Hammurabi, these, with other helps that have been afforded, have led to a discarding of the conceptions previously entertained regarding the peoples of antiquity, and made it plain that we must reconstruct our theories of the far-off past. And it is abundantly evident that they of old time were wrestling with much the same problems that confront us at the present moment. And they were dealing--in their way--both with the practical protection of their welfare as workmen, and with the philosophy of life--the distinction between the body and the soul that tenants or is imprisoned in the flesh.

That the great multitudes of those of operative skill were banded together and that they hedged themselves about with secret means of identification, there is today no shadow of doubt, and that these were the progenitors of our modern lodges, and that we are their lineal descendants, in my judgment it is impossible reasonably to deny.

They who in this day write the history of Masonry are more and more inclined to look upon the 24th of June, 1717, as but a date when the transition from its operative to its speculative form was fully consummated. They are not content to start at that point and simply tell us what it since has been and done, but almost without exception they go back from that date to the stone Masons of the Middle Ages and through these to the Roman Corporations of Builders which had their origin under Numa Pompilius in the eighth century before Christ and try to connect these in some more or less definite way with the architects and builders of Egypt and Assyria and to show that we may justly claim that this is the attested line of our descent.

To this kind of work I have applied myself with much interest, but it is only the following of the history of what was in effect but an old time Knights of Labor. It is worth our while, in my estimation, for it is no small honor to be allied with an institution that spans so many centuries, and there is a certain justifiable pride in the great age of the Craft, but fundamentally I do not personally worship dust-begrimed antiquity, nor do I go into any temple of the long ago to find the idols at whose feet I lay my truest sacrifice. It does not necessarily recommend a thing to me to tell me that it is old. If I love it heartily, it is because within it is embodied a nobler song, a higher ideal, a more vital help and inspiration than I can find elsewhere.

So it is that in my study of Masonry I have not been satisfied simply to trace the fortunes of the workmen of various lands and ages, the signs and grips and words by which they communicated with each other, and the testimony that there is a line of relationship running back from our lodges to the days of the earliest Pharoahs, but I have found a keener interest in the revelation that is made of what is really deeper and more vital in those institutions of the past out of which our fraternity and its teachings have been developed.

Now it requires but a little investigation to show that one is amply repaid who applies himself to this more philosophical phase of study, and at every step it will grow upon us that Masonry is but a form and expression of that innate something in man

which from the dawn of his evolution has led him to reach out toward the Eternal-not-ourselves and to strive to understand the meaning of what we may designate as death. And to him who contemplates it in this fashion it appears as of the same character as that other line of man's development which has been expressed in the building of temples and churches of worship.

As one delves into the history of the operative Masons he finds all through the ages, especially in the long ago, that when the novice was taken in charge to be initiated and instructed there was a double course which he was made to follow. On the one hand he was trained in the science of architecture: he was taught the laws of building and acquired skill in construction. There was another part of his training, however, which has not been so much emphasized, but which after all may be found to be most vital in the inheritance which has come down from those ancient brethren to us of the Masonic fraternity of today. I discover beyond a peradventure that in Palestine and in Greece and in Egypt, and I doubt not in other lands as well, to those of the Craft were imparted teachings concerning the Infinite Architect of the Universe and the destiny of the human soul. In the lecture of our third degree today we refer to our ancient brother, the great Pythagoras, and we exhibit the figure by which we afford the proof that the square described upon the hypotenuse of a right angle triangle is equal to the sum of the squares described upon the other two sides--which is purely mathematical. It is, however, far more interesting to me, and far more significant as regards what is most vital in Masonry, that Pythagoras saw resemblances to numbers of things, and held it to be true that one quality of numbers was Justice, another Soul, and Spirit, etc., and that he taught that it is by mathematical and scientific study that man looks into nature and finds things obeying the laws he has ascertained for himself in his own mind and that therefore the meaning of the Universe is revealed in the soul and not by the senses, and that if, thus rightly guided, we look within, we shall find the Eternal God. Moreover, he maintained that the soul element is not limited to bodily substance. It is not our personality, as he reasoned, but it belongs to infinity and cannot be annihilated. All of which shows plainly that the Pythagorean education was to lead to intercourse with God and that it held within it the teaching of immortality. Even here we find the heart of the system to be the reaching out after the answers to the deepest questioning of the mind of man and it is pertinent to observe that what Pythagoras thus

taught in regard to these deeper or mystical revelations in their relation to the science of mathematics, is typical of what we find to have been a characteristic of Masonry in many lands.

Whether we consider it to be to our glory or to our shame, the men of all ages have been Mystics--they have either explicitly or implicitly recognized the essential relation of our nature to God and striven to adjust their lives accordingly.

Mysticism, so far as we have acquaintance with it, may be said to have had its birth in the Orient among the Brahmins, and it attributes to the human mind the ability to rise to an immediate intuition of God and thereby to a knowledge of all truth. This consummation is not to be obtained on the lower level of discursive reasoning, but an ecstatic state of the soul is a necessary condition for the contemplation of the absolute.

The Brahmin laid aside all that pertains to the world of sense and allowed God alone to work within him until in the transport of mind he became identified with the hidden deity--"the God greater than all gods and men." Transplanted to the West, this mysticism appears in the Neoplatonists and later in a Tauler and other Christian mystics, or in such a one as Eckhart, whose teachings called forth the anathema of the Vatican. To all these there is a realm above that of sensible things, but there is a faculty in man capable of attaining thereto and upon being introduced into that magical circle man becomes cognizant of the absolute and of his own undying nature.

It is true that many of the schemes evolved by these mystical dreamers are not altogether satisfactory to us today. The Brahmin, the Buddhist, and even Eckhart held that as all men have arisen from God so all desire to return to the divine being, and the final end of their activity is attained when, by the resignation of all individuality, they get back to the source from whence they came, the union with deity, the absorption into Nirvana--lost so far as our distinct personality is concerned by becoming once more a part of that from whence we came. But in all of this we see man wrestling with the same old problems of the Infinite Artificer of the universe and the destiny that waits us beyond the grave.

It is pertinent at this point of our study also to affirm that Plato is understood only in the light of the mysteries. The Neoplatonists credit him with a "secret doctrine," and they maintain that his teacher Socrates, put his hearers through an "initiation" whereby they found something within them they were not aware of possessing.

The place where these philosophers taught was filled with the spirit of the mystics, and Plato's dialogues mean more or less according to our spiritual condition. Truth or falsity is decided by something within which opposes the physical body and is not subject to its laws. Socrates approaches death as he would any other event. In the Phaedon, in which Plato records the last words of his master, there is but little argument for immortality, but there is the teaching that death is a release and it is folly to rebel against it.

Now the particular fact to which we here call attention as contributory to what we hope to make plain is that the popular religions of the Ancients did not give satisfaction to the minds and hearts of hosts of thinkers among them, and so there sprang up great groups of mystics everywhere who guarded their secrets by a priestly caste and by most solemn vows. There was a oneness of belief which runs like a golden thread through all the fabric of these old time organizations and which is not lost even when the votaries turn to shame and debauchery. To each of the mysteries there was a different god or hero, but always the same aim and purpose, the elevation of the initiated to the apprehension of God and immortality, and I shall endeavor to acquaint you with what one is able to learn concerning the methods employed by those of old time to enforce their lessons and to show that there is something more than a casual connection between these companies of worshippers and our Masonic fraternity.

The task is the more difficult because those who presented the mysteries hedged themselves about by such sacred vows of secrecy as most effectually held the initiated from revealing what was imparted to them and if there were in those days those who because of pique or with desire of personal gain, exposed the secrets, their works were somehow suppressed and have disappeared from history. There is enough, however, that has come down to us, to give us a very definite idea of what the mysteries were in substance and to show that almost without exception that most vital in each concerned the deity and the life beyond the grave.

We will therefore consider first the mysteries of Osiris and Isis, for the Egyptians are the most ancient people whose story is set before us in the annals of the past. Herodotus, the father of history, constantly alludes to these mysteries, but he always speaks with extreme caution, since it is evident that he had himself been initiated into the rites.

In the "Book of the Dead," that ancient collection of prayers and hymns supposed to aid the soul in its journey to Amenti, there is some aid to us, but in that work the myths are mostly taken for granted as being well known, and therefore are not enlarged upon. Most of our knowledge in this domain comes to us from Greece, to which country, in an altered form, the mysteries were transplanted, but it is sufficient to enable us to reconstruct the Osiriac myth which was, in a sense, the model for all the other systems.

Osiris was the greatest of the Egyptian heroes and he was by his devotees transformed from a mortal king to be an immortal god. It was he who introduced civilization among the dwellers of the Nile, and he went everywhere teaching the people agriculture and the arts. During his wanderings his brother Typhon, who was a rival for his throne, formed a conspiracy against him. He had a beautiful carved chest made, inlaid with gold, and he promised to give it to him whom it should fit when he should lie down in it. When Osiris tried it Typhon closed the lid and made it secure and had the chest thrown into the river where it floated along until cast ashore at Byblos, in Phoenicia.

Isis, the sister and also the wife of Osiris, overcome with grief, searched everywhere for the chest and at length found it, but Typhon again obtained possession of the body which he cut into foul teen parts and scattered about. Isis then searched for the fragments and wherever she found one she buried it, and that was the reason Egypt was so rich in the graves of Osiris. One part, that of propagation, Isis could not find, and so she consecrated a model thereof and the Phallus henceforth becomes associated with the mystic rites. Afterwards, Osiris was resurrected, returned from the region of shades, and was reunited with his consort.

This is the myth as nearly as we are able to recover it. It is certain beyond question that the priests of Osiris were monotheists and it may yet appear that it is to them rather than to the Hebrews that we owe the first definite teaching of the doctrine of the one and only God; while every mummy that they embalmed speaks to us of their belief in immortality. Even if we do not know much concerning the ceremonies of initiation as they took place in the land of the Pharaohs, there is abundant light thrown upon our study from the fact that these mysteries were transplanted to Greece somewhere about the fourteenth century before Christ, and to other lands a little later on, and here they assumed various forms, but all of them bearing resemblance to each

other. Here, however, as in Egypt, there could be no greater crime than the betrayal of the secrets, as is attested by a host of the classic writers such as Pindar and Sophocles and Isocrates and Aeschylus (the last, because of what he put into one of his plays, being obliged to flee to the altar of Dionysus, where he escaped death only by legally proving that he had never been initiated). Nevertheless, from one source and another has come sufficient help to enable us to follow in detail the forms and ceremonies and the mystic teaching of those ancient peoples.

From earliest times there were secret cults and Mysteries in Greece. Every clan had its sacred locality and ceremonies, from which those of every other clan were excluded. Some of these rites were crude and some were of a lewd character, but all together they exerted a marvellous influence upon the people. Some of them were even dedicated to the worship of infernal Pluto and others to Demeter and Cora, but gradually, almost without exception, they took on the hope of a bright hereafter beyond the vale of death.

At the time when the Persian Empire arose on the ruins of other ancient monarchies it subjugated Lydia and the flourishing Greek colonies of Asia Minor. It was then that Greece issued out of its Middle Ages and Athens was enlarged by the incoming of new tribes, became the capital of Attica, and laid the foundation for its future greatness. One expression of its growing importance was the spread of the influence of its mysteries until what had been its special and particular cult, became dominant wherever the Greeks held sway. The mysteries of Eleusis exhibited the greatest attempt of Hellenic genius to construct a religion which would keep pace with the growth of thought and civilization in Greece. That they were related to the mysteries of Osiris and Isis we are well assured, but the method of their transmission from Egypt and the full process of their transformation into the elaborate system which prevailed at Eleusis we do not know.

It was my good fortune a few years ago to visit the scenes where those elaborate ceremonials took place. I followed the route of the pageants that went out from Athens and lingered at the many shrines at which the devotees paused to pay their tribute and wandered among the ruins of the great temple at Eleusis--which was the largest sacred edifice of those old Greeks-- begun, it is said, by Eurnolpus, the first priest of the cult, in 1356 B.C. Naturally, I endeavored to learn as much as possible concerning the ancient

Greeks and to lay hold, if I could, upon what was really the heart of what they thought and the motive which prompted them to those spectacular exhibitions. And as it is from the rites of Eleusis that we derive the larger part of our knowledge of the mysteries in general, it will be my aim to give you a fairly adequate conception of what they were like.

In the first place, they were in honor of the goddess Demeter, the patroness of agriculture, and they dealt much with the procreative power of nature. Later they turned to the deeper problems of life and death and the great beyond. From the Homeric hymn to Demeter we learn that she was the daughter of Kronos and that she gave to Zeus a daughter, Persephone (or Cora.) One day when Cora was gathering flowers she was abducted by Pluto, the God of Hades, and with the consent of her father, Zeus, who was a brother of Pluto, she was carried to the infernal regions.

Demeter arrived too late to assist her daughter, but after searching for her for nine days and nights with torch in hand she learned from Helios (the sun) the name of her seducer and also that of his accomplice (Zeus). Incensed at her husband, she left Olympus and the gods, and disguised as an old woman she determined to scour the earth to find her daughter.

Arriving at Eleusis she was discovered by Keleos (the ruler of the realm) sitting upon a stone, in tears. He took pity upon her, and she entered his family as a nurse to the queen's son. Wishing to make the boy immortal, she annointed him by day with ambrosia and hid him by night in fire, but his mother discovered what was being done and, not understanding the import of it all, she was terrified and the boy was rescued by his sisters.

After that the bestowal of immortality was impossible and Demeter left the house, but she revealed herself to King Keleos and by her direction he built a temple that she might initiate the Eleusinians into her mysteries. To that temple Demeter retired, but her grief for the loss of her daughter was limitless and she vowed vengeance against gods and men. For a year she spread sterility over the earth. Zeus sought in vain to appease the wrath of Demeter and finally he sent Hermes to Pluto ordering him to restore Cora to her mother. This Pluto was obliged to do but before her departure he gave her secretly a sweet pip of a pomegranate which compelled her to return periodically to the

nether world forevermore and henceforth she spent a third of the year there and two-thirds in the world above.

By the return of her daughter, the wrath of Demeter was appeased, but as she was ordered to return to Olympus, before doing so she called the princes of the realm together and initiated them into the rites which assured them of honor after death; and at Eleusis, the place of her sufferings, she founded the cult which should keep her faith in remembrance.

Now the meaning of this myth is quite apparent and it is often set forth in the Greek classics. It is that the soul originated from the immortal and it is led astray by what is transitory. It lives alternately above and below. It cannot abide permanently upon the heights of the divine. It is never-dying, but is doomed to recurring transformation by birth and death until it is reunited with the source from whence it sprung, and the temple service instituted by Demeter was to help establish its votaries as far as possible in the divine life.

This was the beginning of the mystic system at Eleusis which later developed to such proportions that it became a wonderful influence in the Grecian life and transcended all other similar rites in brilliancy of presentation. It was in great part a revival of the ancient established religion of the realm and this conduced to its adoption as the state religion, but it was reinforced by foreign elements, namely, the introduction of gods who did not inhabit Olympus and who had suffered and had found consolation.

These mysteries were supposed to enshrine a primitive revelation of divine truth, and it is maintained by Pindar and Sophocles and Plutarch (and their contemporaries and successors) that they exercised a healthy and saving effect upon their votaries, and although in the time of Diogenes they lost their religious character and became simply a splendid ceremony and under the Romans they degenerated to mere superstition, yet they endured with power for nearly a thousand years, coming to an end during the reign of Theodosius II. Let me as briefly as possible portray to you what took place and the significance of the rites as I interpret them.

Every device of painting and sculpture, of architecture and music and dancing, of gorgeous costumes and alternating darkness and dazzling light was called into being to make an impression upon the initiate, and he was taught that by what was to be imparted he was to have an advantage in the future world. The novitiate was subjected

to a special preparation, his mind was wrought up to a breathless expectation, and he was disqualified if he had committed murder and had not made reparation therefor.

There were what were called the Lesser Mysteries, which were celebrated at Athens on the hill of Agra, near the Stadium, in the month of February, but these were but a preparation for the rites which were to follow. The novitiate was subjected to a most sacred vow of secrecy and was only admitted to the vestibule of the sanctuary of Demeter. He had to wait a year before he could advance to what was designated as the Greater Mysteries.

These Greater Mysteries occupied nine days in their presentation, from the fifteenth to the twenty third of September. Two months previous to that time heralds from the priestly families went forth to announce the coming of the celebration and a holy armistice was declared for those who were waging war, so that all might be free to travel in safety.

As the date set for the beginning of the ceremonies drew near the novitiate was subjected to a fast which lasted for nine days and then he was ready for initiation. We are told by many writers of the terror in the minds of those who were about to pass through the ordeal and it is often compared to the preparation for death.

On the fourteenth of the month, at full moon, the priests of Eleusis, headed by the hierophant (who was dressed to represent the governor of the universe), removed from their repository the Sacred Objects, and, followed by the populace, carried them in procession to Athens. All the Athenians went out to meet them, the youths from eighteen to twenty years of age formed a guard of honor around the sacred objects, and they were deposited at the foot of the Acropolis, the announcement of their arrival was solemnly made to the priestess of Pallas Athena, the tutelary goddess of Athens, and the high festival began.

The following morning the novitiates were taught that they could not participate unless their lives were clean and they could speak with intelligible voice. Next day, the sixteenth, was the feast of Purification when they bathed in the sea that their minds might be pure and undefiled. On the seventeenth was the sacrifice of Soteria, which was for the salvation of the Senate, the citizens of Athens, and their wives and children.

On the eighteenth there was a sacrifice in honor of Aesculapius, and the next morning the multitude started on the procession back to Eleusis. There were altars and

shrines all along the way and a pause was made and offerings bestowed at each of these. It was night before the pilgrimage was completed, so that torches were lit. Everyone from Eleusis came out to meet the worshippers and they finished their journey with chanting and a wandering in the dark along the shores and plains in search of the lost daughter of Demeter.

The next twenty-four hours were spent in rest and in preparation for the great initiation which took place on the twenty-first and twenty-second of the month, and was representative of the lives of the deities by whom the mysteries were instituted and developed. All that could be accomplished by dazzling lights and gorgeous costumes and strange apparitions and wonderful voices and every possible spectacular device was called into operation to produce an impression upon the novitiates.

After their credentials were examined, they were crowned with myrtle and admitted to the mystical enclosure where a priest proposed certain questions to which the answers were to be returned in a set and particular form. Then they underwent further purification and were specially prepared by partaking of a sacred draught, after which they were allowed to kiss the holy treasures of the temple, and then they approached the supreme moment of their exaltation. From the profound darkness of the night they were suddenly ushered into the midst of transcendent and overpowering light. On every hand issued loud cries for help and laments of agony. Frightful noises came as from earth and heaven. Flames burst from the surrounding walls and were extinguished by invisible hands. The lightning flashed with blinding brilliance and peal after peal of thunder rent the air. The place shook and vibrated and whirled and strange and amazing objects appeared everywhere around. As they advanced there were flambeau bearers representing the Sun and near an altar was the Adorer symbolizing the Moon, and there was Mercury, the messenger of the gods, and a multitude of similar characters most gorgeously attired.

As the candidate approached, he saw a spacious habitation replete with glittering gems. Above him, the roof was resplendent with stars, and he was raised up into a place burning with fire. When they pleased those around him assumed the likeness of men, and when they desired they gleamed as gods and appeared or vanished at will. All around him the lightning hissed and flashed, terrestrial demons with every device to

excite the human passions waited all along his path, and if he yielded he was plunged into an abyss of darkness and suffering.

All this was continued until the eighth day of the festival, when the ceremonies were completed and the candidates fully initiated, when they either remained to participate in the sports which followed or returned to Athens in somewhat the same spectacular way in which they had come, excepting that they no longer preserved a serious and solemn mien, but engaged in all sorts of chaffing and buffoonery.

Such were the famous Mysteries of Eleusis, in which, as is clearly to be seen, the legend of Osiris is transformed into that of Demeter, but with the same fundamental teaching of immortality and a reaching after a being behind and transcending the gods whom the people ignorantly worshipped and as Athens came in course of time to dominate Greece, her ceremonies served in a large measure as a pattern for others wherever the Greeks extended their influence.

Mackey tells us that the Dionysian mysteries were very old and that previous to the building of Solomon's temple the inhabitants of Attica had conquered Asia Minor and there they introduced these mysteries before they were corrupted by the Athenians, and in them was presented the death of the demigod Dionysus, the search for his body and his restoration to life. The same historian informs us that Hiram Abiff was initiated into these rites and that later his own death and resurrection were substituted in place of that of Dionysus.

There were also Mysteries of Mithras embellished by the wonderful teachings of Zoroaster and the contest between the hosts of Ahriman and those of Ormuzd. There were again the Samothracian and Orphic Mysteries which had their special characteristics, but all with the same underlying principles and teaching. There was something also of the same manifestation in our older scriptures where the Jews pictured Jehovah as dwelling in the thick darkness, and in the fact that they never voiced the sacred name of deity, and again in the New Testament in our book of Revelation.

In all ages, therefore, we find man instinctively erecting-altars, reaching out after God if haply he might and him and looking on beyond the grave to a life that is endless. And it were folly to think that Masonry has had its place through the long centuries and among such varied peoples without appropriating to itself something of what was so

vital to mankind. Indeed the more I study its history, the more I am persuaded that what we have found to be the heart of the ancient mysteries was also the heart and soul of Masonry in days gone by, as it is, in my thought, in this day and generation.

Not that we in our fraternity are banded together as religious sect. Thank God we have no creed, but we meet strictly upon the level, and we ask of no man what church he attends or whether he remains outside them all. But on the threshold of our lodge rooms we do demand that those who would unite with us shall declare their faith in God, and except such is his conviction, none may pass through our ceremonies and sit with us in our circle of fraternity, and furthermore, he who does not learn from our third degree the lesson of immortality has not yet apprehended its true significance.

We are not only one with those who carved the sphinx and erected the statue of Memnon and with those who embellished the Acropolis with that series of temples that even in their ruin are the wonder and delight of all who look upon them, but we are also one with those who by what seem to us crude and often barbarous rites and ceremonies sought to impart to man an apprehension of deity and a surety that death is but an incident in an endless career.

We might, as Masons, cherish a just pride in an institution which reaches back through so many centuries of the long ago, even if we conceive of it as embodying only good fellowship and affording its members the means for travelling in foreign countries with the assurance of receiving a Master's pay. But this would place it in the same category with a thousand other guilds or trade unions which men have devised for their personal emolument, and to see no more than this in the work and teachings of the Craft would be to overlook what to me is our transcendent glory. To minister to our bodily comforts and our social enjoyment is assuredly a worthy mission, yet it needs but little apprehension of that which constitutes the real man--the deeper needs, the higher joys, the supreme longings of our race--to perceive that those who contribute to this nobler part of our nature are our truest benefactors.

And of such have been those who through the ages have gathered within the sacred circle of Freemasonry and radiated from its altar the inspiration that comes from the recognition of a Supreme Being and the certainty of immortality.

How far the Craft have been allied with those who in so many lands and ages rose above the popular religions there and then in vogue and laid hold upon the one

God and the unending tomorrow we may not be arbitrary in affirming, but that our operative forebears, while imparting the knowledge of the science of architecture, held also among their secrets these same priceless convictions it is not difficult to substantiate.

And in my judgment it was not because of the working of blind chance that we find such to have been the case, but rather we may believe that Masonry is one of the ordained instruments by which the Infinite Artificer of the Universe is to transform the rough ashlar of barbarism into smooth and polished and completed manhood, it is one of the means by which we are to advance by regular and upright steps to the attainment of our individual perfection and that of our human race.

Mark ye, brethren, the destiny of nations and the secret of their downfall! It is written on every page of history! They grew in wealth and power but they forgot the demands of righteousness and they forsook the altars of the Most High.

Today, as never before in the annals of time, the world is being devastated by war and cursed by a philosophy which is materialistic. The very foundations of society are threatened with overthrow. Our only hope is in God and in the dissemination of the spirit of brotherhood--the recognition of our obligations as members together of one great family.

Amid the turmoil and doubt and strife stands the fraternity of which we are a part, and within our lodges we are taught to live together in unity and to put our trust in one who is unconquerable, and by the light which gleams upon us when we are raised to the sublime degree of a Master Mason we recognize the indestructibility of the human soul. Surely it is a privilege and an honor which is ours, but I would call it to your minds that it also imposes vital obligations. It may yet be proved that as Masons we are standing between mankind and its reversion to barbarism and it is possible that a greater and more glorious future than that of which we have ever dreamed awaits the Craft.

Everything depends upon the shaping of our organization and our discharge of the duty that devolves upon us. If the word I have voiced in this hour shall have waked in any of you who have listened so patiently a higher conception of the significance and mission of Masonry and a firmer fidelity to its demands I shall have been abundantly repaid for the effort that I have put forth in your behalf.