

## *FREEMASONRY AND THE ANCIENT MYSTERIES*

*The theory which ascribes the origin of Freemasonry as a secret society to the Pagan (Mysteries of the ancient world) , and which derives the most important part of its ritual and the legend of its Third Degree . From the initiation practiced in these religious organizations , It connects itself with the Legend of the Temple origin, because we can only link the initiation in the Mysteries with that of Freemasonry by supposing that the one was in some way engrafted on the other, at the time of the building of the Temple by the Tyrian and Jewish workmen . Nevertheless, before we can properly appreciate the theory, which associates Freemasonry with the Pagan Mysteries, we must make ourselves acquainted with the nature and the design as well as with something of the history of those mystical societies. Among all the nations of antiquity in which refinement and culture had given an elevated tone to the religious sentiment, there existed two systems of worship, a public and a private one. "Each of the pagan Gods," says Warburton, "had (besides the public and open) a secret worship paid unto him, to which none were admitted but those who had been selected by preparatory ceremonies, called INITIATION. This secret worship was called the MYSTERIES."*

*The public worship was founded on the superstitious polytheism whose numerous gods and goddesses were debased in character and vicious in conduct. Incentive to virtue could not be derived from their example, which furnished rather excuses for vice. In the Eunuchus of Terentius, when Choereas is meditating the seduction of the virgin Pamphila, he refers to the similar act of Jupiter, who in a shower of gold had corrupted Danae, and he exclaims, "If a god, who by his thunders shakes the whole universe, could commit this crime, shall not I, a mere mortal, do so also?" Plautus, Euripides and other Greek and Roman dramatists and poets repeatedly used the same argument in defense of the views of their heroes, so that it became a settled principle of the ancient religion. The vicious example of the gods thus became an insuperable obstacle to a life of*

*purity and holiness. The assurance of a future life of compensation constituted no part of the popular theology. The poets, it is true, indulged in romantic descriptions of an Elysium and a Tartarus, but their views were uncertain and unsatisfactory. As to any specific doctrine of immortality, and were embodied in the saying of Ovid \* that of the four elements which constituted the human organization, "the earth covers the flesh; the shade flits around the tomb; the spirit seeks the stars."*

*Thus did the poet express the prevalent idea that the composite man returned after death to the various primordial elements of which he had been originally composed. In such a dim and shadowy hypothesis, there was no incentive for life, no consolation in death. And hence Alger, to whom the world has been indebted for a most exhaustive treatise on the popular beliefs of all nations, ancient and modern, on the subject of the future life, has after a full and critical examination of the question, come to the following conclusion: "To the ancient Greek in general, death was a sad doom. When he lost a friend, he sighed a melancholy farewell after him to the faded shore of ghosts. Summoned himself, he departed with a lingering look at the sun and a tearful adieu to the bright day and the green earth. To the Roman death was a grim reality. To meet it himself he girded up his loins with artificial firmness. But at its ravages among his friends, he wailed in anguished abandonment. To his dying vision there was indeed a future, but shapes of distrust and shadow stood upon its disconsolate borders; and when the prospect had no horror, he still shrank from the poppied gloom."*

*Yet as each nation advanced in refinement and intellectual culture the priests, the poets, and the philosophers aspired to a higher thought and cherished the longing for and inculcated the consoling doctrine of an immortality, not to be spent in shadowy and inert forms of existence, but in perpetual enjoyment, as a compensation for the ills of life. The necessary result of the growth of such pure and elevated notions must have been a contempt and condemnation of the absurdities of polytheism. However, as this was the popular religion it was readily perceived that any open attempt to overthrow it and to advance, publicly, opinions so*

antagonistic to it would be highly impolitic and dangerous. Whenever any religion, whether true or false, becomes the religion of a people, whoever opposes it, or ridicules it, or seeks to subvert it, is sure to be denounced by popular fanaticism and to be punished by popular intolerance. Many of the philosophers were, however, skeptics. The Stoics, for instance, and they were the leading sect, denied the survival of the soul after the death of the body; or, if any of them conceded its survival, they attributed to it only a temporary duration before it is dissolved and absorbed into the universe. Seneca "Troades," I., 397) says, "There is nothing after death, and death itself is nothing." Post mortem nihil, est ipsaque mors nihil.

Socrates was doomed to drink the poisoned bowl on the charge that he taught the Athenian youth not to worship the gods, who are worshipped by the state, but new and unknown deities. Jesus was suspended from the cross because he inculcated doctrines which, however pure, were novel and obnoxious to the old religion of his Jewish fellow citizens. The new religious truths among the Pagan peoples were therefore concealed from common inspection and taught only in secret societies, admission to which was obtained only through the ordeal of a painful initiation, and the doctrines were further concealed under the veil of symbols whose true meaning the initiated only could understand. "The truth," says Clemens of Alexandria "was taught involved in enigmas, symbols, allegories, metaphors, and tropes and figures. The secret associations in which the principles of a new and purer theology were taught have received in history the name of the MYSTERIES. Each country had its own Mysteries peculiar to itself. In Egypt were those of Osiris and Isis; in Samothrace those of the Cabiri; in Greece they celebrated at Eleusis, near Athens, the Mysteries of Demeter; in Phoenicia of Adonis and Dionysus; of and in Persia those of Mithras, which were the last to perish after the advent of Christianity and the overthrow of polytheism. These Mysteries, although they differed in name and in some of the details of initiation, were essentially alike in general form and design. "Their end as well as nature," says Warburton, "was the same in all: to teach the doctrine of a future state." \* Alger says: "The implications of the indirect evidence, the leanings and guiding of the entire

incidental clues now left us as to the real aim and purport of the Mysteries, combine to assure us that their chief teaching was a doctrine of a future life in which there should be rewards and punishments." Thomas Taylor, the Platonist, says that : "the initiated were instructed in the doctrine of a state of future rewards, and punishments, and that the greater Mysteries "obscurely intimated, by mystic and splendid visions, the felicity of the soul both here and hereafter, when purified from the defilements of a material nature and constantly elevated to the realities of intellectual vision. All the ancient writers who were contemporary with these associations, and must have been familiar with their character, concur in the opinion that their design was to teach the doctrine of a future life of compensation. Pindar says, "Happy the man who descends beneath the hollow earth having beheld these Mysteries. He knows the end, he knows the divine origin of life." Sophocles says that "they are thrice happy who descend to the shades below, after having beheld these rites; for they alone have life in Hades, while all others suffer there every kind of evil." Lastly, Isocrates declares, "those who have been initiated in the Mysteries of Ceres entertain better hopes both as to the end of life and the whole of futurity. It is then evident from all authorities, that the great end and design of the initiation into these Mysteries, was to teach the aspirant the doctrine of a future life not that aimless one. Portrayed by the poets and doubtfully consented to by the people, but that pure and rational state of immortal existence, in which the soul is purified from the dross of the body and elevated to eternal life. It was, in short, much the same in its spirit as the Christian and Masonic doctrine of the resurrection.

But this lesson was communicated in the Mysteries in a peculiar form, which has in fact given rise to the theory we are now considering that they were the antitype and original source of Speculative Masonry. They were all dramatic in their ceremonies; each one exhibited in a series of scenic representations the adventures of some god or hero; the attacks upon him by his enemies; his death at their hands; his descent into Hades or the grave, and his final resurrection to renewed life as a mortal, or his apotheosis as a god. The only important difference between these

various Mysteries was, that there was to each one a different and peculiar god or hero, whose death and resurrection or apotheosis constituted the subject of the drama, and gave to its scenes the changes which were dependent on the adventures of him who was its main subject. Thus, in Samothrace, where the Mysteries of the Cabiri were celebrated, it was Atys, the lover of Cybele, who was slain and restored; in Egypt it was Osiris whose death and resurrection were represented; in Greece it was Dionysus, and in Persia Mithras. Nevertheless, in all of these the material points of the plot and the religious design of the sacred drama were identical. The dramatic form and the scenic representation of the allegory were everywhere preserved. This dramatic form of the initiatory rites in the Mysteries, was as the learned Dr. Dollinger has justly observed, eminently calculated to take a powerful hold on the imagination and the heart and to excite in the spectators alternately conflicting sentiments of terror and calmness, of sorrow and fear and hope. As the Mysteries were a secret society, whose members were separated from the rest of the people by a ceremony of initiation, therefore resulted from this form of organization, as a necessary means of defense and of isolation, a solemn obligation of secrecy, with severe penalties for its violation, and certain modes of recognition known only to those who had been instructed in them. There was what might be called a progressive order of degrees, for the neophyte was not at once upon his initiation invested with knowledge of the deepest arcane of the religious system. Thus, the Mysteries were divided into two classes called the lesser and the Greater Mysteries, and in addition, there was a preliminary ceremony, which was only preparatory to the Mysteries proper. So that there was in the process of reception a system of three steps, which those who are fond of tracing analogies between the ancient and the modern initiations are prone to call degrees. A brief review of these three steps of progress in the Mysteries will give the reader a very definite idea of the nature of this ancient system. So many writers have thought that they had found the incunabulum of modern Freemasonry, and will enable him to appreciate at their just value the analogies, which these writers have found, as they suppose, between the two systems. The first step was called purification by water. When the neophyte was ready to be received into any of the ancient Mysteries, he was

carried into the temple or other place appropriated to the ceremony of initiation, and there underwent a thorough cleansing of the body by water. This was the preparation for reception into the Lesser Mysteries and was symbolic of that purification of the heart that was necessary to prepare the aspirant for admission to a knowledge of and participation in the sacred lessons that were to be subsequently communicated to him. It has been sought to find in this preparatory ceremony an analogy to the first degree of Masonry. Such an analogy certainly exists, as will here after be shown, but the theory that the Apprentice's degree was derived from and suggested by the ceremony of Lustration in the Mysteries is untenable, because this ceremony was not peculiar to the Mysteries.

An ablution, lustration, or cleansing by water, as a religious rite was practiced among all the ancient nations. More especially was it observed among the Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans. With the Hebrews, the lustration was a preliminary ceremony to every act of expiation or sin offering. Hence, the Jewish prophets continually refer to the ablution of the body with water as a symbol of the purification of the heart. Among the Greeks lustration was always connected with their sacrifices. It consisted in the sprinkling of water by means of an olive or a laurel branch. Among the Romans, the ceremony was more common than among the Greeks. It was used not only to expiate crime, but also to secure the blessing of the Gods. Thus, fields were lustrated before the corn was put into the ground; colonies when they were first established, and armies before they proceeded to battle. At the end of every fifth year, the whole people were thus purified by a general lustration. Everywhere the rite was connected with the performance of sacrifice and with the idea of a moral purification.

The next step in the ceremonies of the ancient Mysteries was called the Initiation. It was here that the dramatic allegory was performed and the myth or fictitious history on which the peculiar Mystery was founded was developed. The neophyte personated the supposed events of the life, the sufferings, and the death of the god or hero to whom the Mystery was dedicated, or he had them brought in vivid representation before him. These ceremonies

constituted a symbolic instruction in the initiation - the beginnings - of the religious system, which it was the object of the Mysteries to teach. The ceremonies of initiation were performed partly in the Lesser, but more especially and more fully in the Greater Mysteries, of which they were the first part, and where only the allegory of death was enacted. The Lesser Mysteries, which were introductory to the Greater, have been supposed by the theorists who maintain the connection between the Mysteries and Freemasonry to be analogous to the Fellow Craft's degree of the latter Institution. There may be some ground for this comparison in a rather inexact way, for although the Lesser Mysteries were to some extent public, yet as they were, as Clemens of Alexandria \* says, a certain groundwork of instruction and preparation for the things that were to follow, they might perhaps be considered as analogous to the Fellow Craft's degree.

The third and last of the progressive steps or grades in the Mysteries was Perfection. It was the ultimate object of the system. It was also called the autopsy, from a Greek word, which signifies seeing with one's own eyes. It was the complete and finished communication to the neophyte of the great secret of the Mysteries; the secret for the preservation of which the system of initiation had been invented, and which, during the whole course of that initiation, had been symbolically shadowed forth. The communication of this secret, which was in fact the explanation of the secret doctrine, for the inculcation of which the Mysteries in every country had been instituted, was made in the most sacred and private place of the temple or place of initiation. As the autopsy or Perfection of the Mysteries concluded the whole system, the maintainers of the doctrine that Freemasonry finds its origin in the Mysteries have compared this last step in the ancient initiation to the Master's degree. But the analogy between the two as a consummation of the secret doctrine is less patent in the third degree, as it now exists, than it was before the disseverance from it of the Royal Arch, accepting, however, the Master's degree as it was constituted in the earlier part of the 18th century, the analogies between that and the last stage of the Mysteries are certainly very interesting, although not sufficient to prove the origin of the modern from the ancient systems. But of this more

hereafter. This view of the organization of the Pagan Mysteries would not be complete without some reference to the dramatized allegory which constituted so important a part of the ceremony of initiation, and in connection with which their relation to Freemasonry has been most earnestly urged. It has been already said that the Mysteries were originally invented for the purpose of teaching two great religious truths, which were unknown to, or at least not recognized, in the popular faith. These were the unity of God and the immortality of the soul in a future life. The former, although illustrated at every point by expressed symbols, such, for instance, as the all-seeing eye, the eye of the universe, and the image of the Deity, was not allegorized, but taught as an abstract doctrine at the time of the autopsy or the close of the grade of Perfection. The other truth, the dogma of a future life, and of a resurrection from death to immortality, was communicated by an allegory which was dramatized in much the same way in each of the Mysteries, although, of course, in each nation the person and the events which made up the allegory were different. The interpretation was, however, always the same. As Egypt was the first country of antiquity to receive the germs of civilization, it is there that the first Mysteries are supposed to have been invented. And although the Eleusinian Mysteries, which were introduced into Greece long after the invention of the Osiriac in Egypt, were more popular among the ancients, yet the Egyptian initiation exhibits more purely and more expressively the symbolic idea which was to be developed in the interpretation of its allegory. I shall therefore select the Osiriac, which was the most important of the Egyptian Mysteries, as the exemplar from which an idea may be obtained of the character of all the other Mysteries of paganism.

(\* The first and original Mysteries of which we have any account were those of Isis and Osiris in Egypt, from whence they were derived by the Greeks. - Warburton, "Divine Legation," I., p. 194. Diodorus says the same thing in the first book of his "History," I., xxxvii.)

All the writers of antiquity, such as Plutarch, Diodorus Siculus, and Herodotus, state that the Egyptian Mysteries of Osiris, Isis, and Horus were the model of all the other systems of initiation

which were subsequently established among the different peoples of the Old World. Indeed, the ancients held that the Demeter of the Greeks was identical with the Isis of the Egyptians, and Dionysus with Osiris. Their adventures were certainly very similar. The place of Osiris in Egyptian history is unknown to us. The fragments of Sanchuniathon speak of Isiris, the brother of Chna or Canaan; in the lists of Manito, he is made the fifth king under the dynasty of the demigods, being conjoined with Isis; but as the four preceding kings are named as Hephæstus, Helios, Agathodomon and Chronos, the whole is evidently a mere mythological fable, and we have as far to seek as ever. Herodotus is not more satisfactory, for he says that Osiris and Isis were two great deities of the Egyptians. Banier, however, in his Mythology thinks that he was the same as Mizraim, the son of Cham, and grandson of Noah. Bishop Cumberland concurs in this and adds that Cham was the first king of Egypt, that Osiris was a title appropriated by him, signifying Prince, and that Isis was simply Ishah, his wife. Lastly, Diodorus Siculus says that he was Menes, the first King of Egypt. Some later writers have sought to identify Osiris and Isis with the Iswara and Isi of India. There is certainly a great deal of etymological plausibility in this last conjecture. The ubiquitous character of Osiris as a personality among the ancients is best shown in an epigram of Ausonius, wherein it is said that in Greece, at Eleusis, he was called Bacchus; the Egyptians thought that he was Osiris, the Mysians of Asia Minor named him Phanceus or Apollo; the Indians supposed that he was Dionysus; the sacred rites of the Romans called him Liber; and the Phœnicians, Adonis.

But the only thing that is of any interest to us in this connection is that Osiris was the hero of the earliest of the Mysteries, and that his death and apotheosis - his change from a mortal king to an immortal God - symbolized the doctrine of a future life.

His historical character was that of a mild and beneficent sovereign, who had introduced the arts of civilization among his subjects, and had then traveled for three years for the purpose of extending them into other nations, leaving the government of his kingdom, during his absence, to his wife Isis. According to the legend, his brother Typhon had been a rival claimant for the

throne, and his defeat had engendered a feeling of ill will. During the absence of Osiris, he, therefore, formed a secret conspiracy with some of his adherents to usurp the throne. On the return of Osiris from his travels, Typhon invited him to a banquet, ostensibly given in his honor, at which all the conspirators were present. During the feast Typhoon produced a chest, inlaid with gold, and promised to present it to that person of the company, whose body, upon trial, would be found most exactly to fit it. Osiris tried the experiment, but as soon as he had laid himself in the chest, Typhoon closed and nailed down the lid. The chest was then thrown into the river Nile, whence it floated into the sea, and, after being for some time tossed upon the waves, it was finally cast ashore at the town of Byblos, in Phoenicia, and left at the foot of a Tamarisk tree. Isis, the wife of Osiris, over whelmed with grief for the loss of her husband, commenced a search for the body, being accompanied by her son, Anubis, and his nurse, Nepthe. After many adventures, Isis arrived on the shores of Phoenicia and in the neighborhood of Byblos, where she at length discovered the body at the foot of the Tamarisk tree. She returned with it to Egypt. The people with great demonstrations of joy received it, and it was proclaimed that Osiris had risen from the dead and had become a god. The sufferings of Osiris, his death, his resurrection, and his subsequent office as judge of the dead in a future state, constituted the fundamental principles of the Egyptian religion. They taught the secret doctrine of a future life, and initiation into the mysteries of Osiris was initiation into the rites of the religion of Egypt. These rites were conducted by the priests, and into them many sages from other countries especially from Greece, such as Herodotus, Plutarch, and Pythagoras, were initiated.

In this way it is supposed that the principles and general form of the Mysteries were conveyed into other countries, although they everywhere varied in the details. The most important of the Mysteries besides the Egyptian were those of Mithras in Persia, of Atys or of the Cabiri in Thrace, of Adonis in Phoenicia, Syria, and of Dionysus in Greece. They extended even beyond the then more civilized parts of the world into the northern regions of Europe, where were practiced the Scandinavian rites of the Norsemen and

*the Druidical Mysteries of Gaul and Britain, though these were probably derived more directly from a primitive Aryan source.*

*But wherever they existed we find in them a remarkable unity of design and a similarity of ceremonies from which we are compelled to deduce a common origin, while the purity of the doctrines which they taught evidently show that this common origin was not to be sought in the popular theology. In all of the Mysteries, the ceremonies of initiation were of a funereal character. They allegorized in a dramatic form the sufferings, the death, and the resurrection of some god or hero. There was a death, most generally by violence, to symbolize, as certain (\*Thus Clemens of Alexandria describes the legend or allegory of the Cabiri Mysteries as the sacred mystery of a brother slain by his brethren, "fraters trucidatus a fratribus.") interpreters of the Mysteries have supposed, the strife of certain antagonistic powers in nature, such as life and death, virtue and vice, light and darkness, or summer and winter.*

*The candidate represented the person thus slain in the allegorical drama. After the death follows the disappearance of the body, called by the Greeks the aphanism, and the consequent search for it. This search for the body, in which all the initiates joined, constituted what Faber calls "the doleful part," and was succeeded by its discovery, which was known as the heuresis. \* This was accompanied by the greatest demonstrations of joy. The candidate was afterward instructed in the apporheta, or secret dogmas of the Mysteries. In all of the Pagan Mysteries, this dramatic form of an allegory, was preserved, and we may readily see in the groans and lamentations on the death of the god or hero and the disappearance of the body a symbol of the death of man, and in the subsequent rejoicings at his discovery and restoration, a symbol of the restoration of the spirit to eternal life .*

*In view of the purity of the lessons taught in the Mysteries and their inculcation of the elevated dogmas of the unity of God and the immortality of the soul, it is not surprising to read the encomiums passed upon them by the philosophers of antiquity.*

*The reader, if he has carefully considered the allegorical drama which was represented in the ancient Mysteries, and compared it with the drama which constitutes the principal portion of the initiation in Freemasonry, will be at no loss to account for the reasons which have led so many writers to attribute the origin of the Masonic system to these mystical associations of antiquity.*

*It has been a favorite theory with several German, French, and British scholars , to trace the origin of Freemasonry to the Mysteries of Paganism ; others repudiating the idea that the modern association should have sprung from them , still find analogies so remarkable between the two systems as to lead them to suppose that the Mysteries were an offshoot from the pure Freemasonry of the Patriarchs . In my opinion there is not the slightest foundation in historical evidence to support either theory, although I admit the existence of many analogies between the two systems, which can , however, be easily explained without admitting any connection in the way of origin and descent between them. Of the theory that the Mysteries were an offshoot or imitation of the pure patriarchal Freemasonry, Hutchinson and Oliver are the most distinguished supporters. While Hutchinson strongly contends for the direct derivation of Freemasonry from Adam, through the line of the patriarchs to Moses and Solomon, he does not deny that it borrowed much from the initiations and symbols of the Pagans. Thus he unhesitatingly says, that "there is no doubt that our ceremonies and Mysteries were derived from the rites, ceremonies, and institutions of the ancients, and some of them from the remotest ages." But lest the purity of the genuine patriarchal Masonry should be polluted by borrowing its ceremonies from such an impure source, he subsequently describes, in that indefinite manner which was the peculiarity of his style, the separation of a purer class from the debasement of the popular religion, wherein he evidently alludes to the Mysteries. Thus he says: "In the corruption and ignorance of after ages , those hallowed places were polluted with idolatry ; the unenlightened mind mistook the type for the original , and could not discern the light from darkness . The sacred and hills became the objects of enthusiastic bigotry and superstition; the devotees bowed down to the oaken log and the graven image as being divine. Some*

*preserved themselves from the corruptions of the times ,and we find those sages and select men to whom were committed, and who retained the light of understanding and truth, unpolled with the sins of the world, under the denomination of Magi among the Persians; wise men, soothsayers, and astrologers among the Chaldeans; philosophers among the Greeks and Romans; Brahmins among the Indians; Druids and bards among the Britons; and with the people of God, Solomon shone forth in the fullness of human wisdom.*

*I have denominated the surreptitious initiations earth-born, in contradistinction to the purity of Freemasonry, which was certainly derived from above; and to those who contend that Masonry is nothing more than a miserable relic of the idolatrous Mysteries (vide. Fab. Pag. Idol., vol. iii., p. 190), I would reply, in the words of an inspired apostle, 'Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree bear olive berries or a vine figs? So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, full of mercy and good fruits' (James iii. 11, 12, 17). I wish to be distinct and intelligible on this point, as some misapprehensions are afloat respecting the immediate object of my former volume of Signs and Symbols; and I have been told that the arguments there used afford an indirect sanction to the opinion that Masonry is derived from the Mysteries . In answer to this charge, if it requires one, I only need reply to the general tenor of that volume, and to declare explicitly my firm opinion, founded on intense study and abstruse research, that the science which we now denominate Speculative Masonry , was coeval , at least, with the creation of our globe, and the far-famed Mysteries of idolatry were a subsequent institution founded on similar principles, with the design of conveying unity and permanence to the false worship, which it otherwise could never have acquired.*

*There is another class of Masonic scholars who have advanced the theory that the Speculative Freemasonry of the present day is derived directly from and is a legitimate successor of the Mysteries of antiquity. They found this theory on the very many and striking analogies that are to be found in the organization, the design, and*

*the symbols of the two systems, and which they claim can only be explained on the theory that the one is an offshoot from the other.*

*The Abbey Robin was, perhaps, the first writer who advanced this idea in a distinct form. In a work on the Ancient and Modern Initiations, \* published in 1780, he traces the origin of the ancient systems of initiation to that early period when wicked men, urged by the terror of guilt, sought among the virtuous for intercessors with the Deity. The latter, he says, retired into solitary places to avoid the contagion of the growing corruption, and devoted themselves to a life of contemplation and to the cultivation of the arts and sciences. In order to associate with them in their labors and functions only such as had sufficient merit and capacity, they appointed strict courses of trial and examination. This, he thinks, must have been the source of the initiations, which distinguished the celebrated Mysteries of antiquity. The Magi of Chaldea, the Brahmins and Gymnosophists of India, the Priests of Egypt, and the Druids of Gaul and Britain thus lived in sequestered places and obtained great reputation by their discoveries in astronomy, chemistry, and mechanics, by the purity of their morals, and by their knowledge of the science of legislation. It was in these schools, says the abbe, that the first sages and legislators of antiquity were formed, where the doctrines taught were the unity of God and the immortality of the soul, and it was from these Mysteries that the exuberant fancy of the Greeks drew much of their mythology. From these ancient initiations, he deduces the orders of Chivalry, which sprang into existence in the middle Ages, and certain branches of these, he thinks, produced the institution of Freemasonry. The theory of the Abbey Robin therefore traces the institution of Masonry to the ancient Mysteries, but in an indirect way, through the orders of Chivalry. He might therefore more correctly be classed among those who maintain the doctrine of the Templar origin of Freemasonry. However, it is Alexander Lenoir, the French archaeologist, who has attempted in the most explicit and comprehensive manner to establish the doctrine of the direct descent of Freemasonry from the ancient Mysteries, and especially from the Egyptian. In the year 1814 he published an elaborate work on this subject. \* In this he begins by affirming that we cannot expect to find in the Egyptian and Greek initiations those modes of*

recognition which are used by the Freemasons of the present day, because these methods, which are only conventional and had been orally communicated under the obligation of secrecy, can not be known to us, for they could not have been transmitted through the lapse of ages. Omitting, therefore, all reference to these as matters of no real importance, he confines himself to a comparison of the Masonic with the ancient rites of initiation. In this view he comes to the conclusion that Freemasonry in all the points that it essentially comprehends is in direct relation with the Mysteries of the ancient world, and that hence, abstracting certain particular usages practiced by the modern Freemasons, it is evident that Freemasonry in no respect differs from the ancient initiations of the Egyptians and the Greeks. This theory has been embraced by nearly all the French Masonic writers except Rebold, who traces Masonry to the Roman Colleges of Artificers. Unfortunately for the general acceptance of this theory, M. Lenoir has in the first place drawn his comparisons from the system of ceremonies of initiation which are practiced in the lodges of France, and especially from the "proofs and trials" of the Entered Apprentice's degree. But the tedious ceremonies and painful trials of the candidate as they are practiced in the French Rite constitute no part of the original English Masonry whence the French Masonry derives its existence, and were adopted as a pure innovation long after the establishment of the Order in France by the Grand Lodge of England. And again, the Egyptian initiations, with which they have been compared by Lenoir, were not those which were actually practiced by the priests of Egypt, or at least we have no authentic proof of that fact, but were most probably suggested by the imaginative details given by the Abe Terrasson in his romance entitled Sethas, in which he pretends to portray the initiation of an Egyptian prince. The truth is that Lenoir and those writers who have followed him and adopted his theories have not instituted a comparison between the original ceremonies of Masonic initiation and those of the ancient Mysteries, but merely a comparison between a recent system of ceremonies, certainly not earlier than the middle of the last century, and a fictitious system indebted for its birth to the inventive genius of a French abbe, and first promulgated in a work published by him in the year 1731.

As well might Mr. Turner or any other writer on Anglo-Saxon history have cited, as authentic materials for his description of the customs of the Anglo-Saxon, the romantic incidents given by Sir Walter Scott in his novel of *Ivanhoe*? Hence all the references of the voyages of an Entered Apprentice in a French Lodge to the similar voyages of an Aspirant in the Mysteries of Osiris or Isis become nothing more than "the baseless fabric of a vision," which must fade and dissolve like an "insubstantial pageant" when submitted to the crucial test of authentic historical investigation. The Rev. Mr. King, the author of a very interesting treatise on the Gnostics, \* has advanced a theory much more plausible than either of those to which I have adverted. He maintains that some of the Pagan Mysteries, especially those of Mithras, which had been instituted in Persia, extended beyond the period of the advent of Christianity, and that their doctrines and usages were adopted by the secret societies which existed at an early period in Europe and which finally assumed the form of Freemasonry. I have said that this theory is a plausible one. It is so because its salient points are sustained by historical evidence. It is, for instance, a fact that some of the Mysteries of Paganism were practiced in Europe long after the commencement of the Christian era. They afforded a constant topic of denunciation to the fathers of the church, who feared and attacked what they supposed to be their idolatrous tendencies. It was not until the middle of the 5th century that they were proscribed by an edict of the Emperor Theodosius. But an edict of proscription is not necessarily nor always followed by an immediate abolition of the thing proscribed. The public celebration of the Mysteries must, of course, have ceased at once when such celebration had been declared unlawful. But a private and secret observance of them may have continued, and probably did continue, for an indefinite time, perhaps even to as late a period as the end of the 5th or the beginning of the 6th century. Mosheim tells us that in the 4th century, notwithstanding the zeal and severity of the Christian emperors, there still remained in several places, and especially in the remoter provinces, temples and religious rites consecrated to the Pagan deities; that rites instituted in honor of them were, in the 5th century, celebrated with the utmost freedom and impunity in the western empire; and that even in the 6th century remains of the Pagan worship were to be

found among the learned and the officers of state. \*During all this time it is known that secret associations, such as the Roman Colleges of Artificers, existed in Europe, and that from them ultimately sprang up the organizations of Builders, which, with Como in Lombardy as their center, spread over Europe in the Middle Ages, and whose members, under the recognized name of Traveling Freemasons, were the founders of Gothic architecture.

There is no forced or unnatural succession from them to the Guilds of Operative Masons, who undoubtedly gave rise, about the end of the 17th or the beginning of the 18th century, to the Speculative Order or the Free and Accepted Masons, which is the organization that exists at the present day. There is, therefore, nothing absolutely untenable in the theory that the Mithraic Mysteries which prevailed in Europe until the 5th or perhaps the 6th century may have impressed some influence on the ritual, form, and character of the association of early Builders, and that this influence may have extended to the Traveling Freemasons, the Operative Guilds, and finally to the Free and Accepted Masons, since it can not be proved that there was not an uninterrupted chain of succession between these various organizations.

The theory of Mr. King cannot, therefore, be summarily rejected. It may not be altogether true, but it has so many elements of truth about it that it claims our serious consideration. But, after all, we may find a sufficient explanation of the analogy which undoubtedly exists between the rites of the ancient Mysteries and those of the modern Freemasons in the natural tendency of the human mind to develop its ideas in the same way when these ideas are suggested by the same or similar circumstances. The fact that both institutions have taught the same lessons by the same method of instruction may be attributed not to a direct and uninterrupted succession of organizations, each one a link of a long chain leading consequentially to another but rather to a natural and usual coincidence of human thought. The believers in the lineal and direct descent of Freemasonry from the ancient Mysteries have of course discovered, or thought that they had discovered, the most striking and wonderful analogies between the internal organizations of the two institutions. Hence the most credulous of

*these theorists have not hesitated to compare the Hierophant, or the Explainer of the sacred rites in the Mysteries, with the Worshipful Master in a Masonic Lodge, nor to style the Dadouchos, or Torch-Bearer, and the Hieroceryx, or Herald of the Mysteries, Wardens, nor to assign to the Epibomos, or Altar-Server, the title and duties of a Deacon.*

*That there are analogies, and that many of them are very curious can not be denied, but I shall attempt, before leaving; this subject, to explain the reason of their existence in a more rational way than by tracing the modern as a succession from the ancient system. The analogies existing between the ancient Mysteries and Freemasonry, upon which the theory of the descent of the one from the other has been based, consist in the facts that both were secret societies, that both taught the same doctrine of a future life, and that both made use of symbols and allegories and a dramatic form of instruction. But these analogies do not necessarily support the doctrine of descent, but may be otherwise satisfactorily explained.*

*Whether the belief in a personal immortality was communicated to the first man by a divine revelation, and subsequently lost as the intellectual state of future generations declined into a degraded state of religious conceptions; or whether the prehistoric man, created but little superior to the wild beast with whom he daily contended for dominion with insufficient weapons, was at first without any conception of his future, until it had by chance dawned upon some more elevated intellect and by him been communicated to his fellows as a consoling doctrine, afterward to be lost, and then in the course of time to be again recovered, but not to be universally accepted by grosser minds, are questions into which we need not enter here. It is sufficient to know that there has been no period in the world's history, however dark, in which some rays of this doctrine have not been thrown upon the general gloom. The belief in a future life and an immortal destiny has always been so inseparably connected with elevated notions of God that the deep and reverent thinkers in all ages have necessarily subscribed to its truth. It has inspired the verses of poets and tempered and directed the discussions of philosophers.*

*As both the Mysteries of the ancients and the Freemasonry of the moderns were religious institutions, the conceptions of the true nature of God which they taught to their disciples must of course have involved the ideas of a future life, for the one doctrine is a necessary consequence of the other. To seek, therefore, in this analogy the proof of a descent of the modern from the ancient institution is to advance an utterly fallacious argument.*

*As to the secret character of the two institutions, the argument is equally untenable. Under the benighted rule of Pagan idolatry the doctrine of a future life was not the popular belief. Yet there were also some who aspired to a higher thought - philosophers like Socrates and Plato, who nourished with earnest longing the hope of immortality. Now, it was by such men that the Mysteries were originally organized, and it was for instruction in such a doctrine that they were instituted. But opposed as this doctrine was to the general current of popular thought, it became, necessarily and defensively, esoteric and exclusive. And hence we derive the reason for the secret character of the Mysteries. "They were kept secret," says Warburton, "from a necessity of teaching the initiated some things improper to be communicated to all." \* The learned bishop assigns another reason, which he sustains with the authority of ancient writers, for this secrecy. "Nothing," he says, "excites our curiosity like that which retires from our observation, and seems to forbid our search." \*\* Synesius, who lived in the 4th century, before the Mysteries were wholly abolished, says that they owed the veneration in which they were held to a popular ignorance of their nature. \*\*\* And Clemens of Alexandria, referring to the secrecy of the Mysteries, accounts for it, among other reasons, because the truth seen through a veil appears greater and more venerable. \*\*\*\*emasonry also teaches the doctrine of a future life. But although there was no necessity, as in the Pagan Mysteries, to conceal this doctrine from the populace; yet there is, for the reasons that have just been assigned, a proneness in the human heart, which has always existed, to clothe the most sacred subjects with the veil of mystery. It was this spirit that caused Jesus to speak to the Jewish multitudes in parables whose meaning his disciples, like initiates, were to comprehend, but which would be unintelligible to*

*the people, so that "seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand."*

*The Mysteries and Freemasonry were both secret societies, not necessarily, because the one was the legitimate successor of the other, but because both were human institutions and because both partook of the same human tendency to conceal what was sacred from the unhallowed eyes and ears of the profane. In this way may be explained the analogy between the two institutions which arises from their secret character and their esoteric method of instruction. The symbolic form of imparting the doctrines is another analogy, which may be readily explained. For when once the esoteric or secret system was determined on, or involuntarily adopted by the force of those tendencies to which I have referred, it was but natural that the secret instruction should be communicated by a method of symbolism, because in all ages symbols have been the cipher by which secret associations of every character have restricted the knowledge which they imparted to their initiates only. Again, in the Mysteries, the essential doctrine of a resurrection from death to eternal life was always taught in a dramatic form. There was a drama in which the aspirant or candidate for initiation represented, or there was visibly pictured to him, the death by violence and then the resuscitation or apotheosis - the resurrection to life and immortality of some god or hero, in whose honor the peculiar mystery was founded. Hence in all the Mysteries there were the thanatos, the death or slaying of the victim; the aphanism, the concealment or burial of the body by the slayers; and the heuresis, the finding of the body by the initiates. This drama, from the character of the plot, began with mourning and ended with joy. The traditional "eureka," sometimes attributed to Euclid when he discovered the forty-seventh problem, but most probable to Archimedes when he accidentally learned the principle of specific gravity, was nightly repeated to the initiates when, at the termination of the drama of the Mysteries, they had found the hidden body of the Master.*

*Now, the recognized fact that this mode of inculcating a religious or a philosophical idea by a dramatic representation was constantly practiced in the ancient world, for the purpose of more*

*permanently impressing the conception, would naturally lead to its adoption by all associations where the same lesson was to be taught as that which was the subject of the Mysteries. The tendency to dramatize an allegory is universal, because the method of dramatization is the most expedient and has been proved to be the most successful. The drama of the third or Master's degree of Freemasonry is, as respects the subject and the development of the plot and the conduct of the scenes, the same as the drama of the ancient Mysteries. There is the same thanalos, or death; the same aphanism, or concealment of the body, and the same heuresis, or discovery of it. The drama of the Master's degree begins in sorrow and ends in joy. Everything is so similar that we at once recognize an analogy between Freemasonry and the ancient Mysteries; but it has already been explained that this analogy is the result of natural causes, and by no means infers a descent of the modern from the ancient institution. Another analogy between the Mysteries and Freemasonry is the division of both into steps, classes, or degrees - call them what you may - which is to be found in both. The arrangement of the Masonic system into three degrees certainly bears a resemblance to the distribution of the Mysteries into the three steps of Preparation, Initiation, and Perfection which have been heretofore described.*

*But this analogy, remarkable as it may at first view appear, is really an accidental one, which in no way shows an historical connection between the two institutions. In every system of instruction, whether open or secret, there must be a gradual and not an immediate attainment of that which is intended to be imparted. The ancient adage that "no one suddenly becomes wicked" might with equal truth be read that "no one suddenly becomes learned." There must be a series of gradual approaches to the ultimate point in every pursuit of knowledge, like the advancing parallels of a besieging army in its efforts to attain possession of a beleaguered city. Hence the ladder, with its various steps, has from the earliest times been accepted as a symbol of moral or intellectual progress from an inferior to a superior sphere. In this progress from the simplest to the most profound arena of initiation - from the inception to the full accomplishment of the instruction whereby the mind was to be gradually purged of*

many errors, by preparatory steps, before it could bear the full blaze of truth - both the Mysteries and Freemasonry have obeyed a common law of intellectual growth, independently of any connection of the one with the other institution. The fact that there existed in both institutions secret modes of recognition presents another analogy. It is known that in the Mysteries, as in Freemasonry, there was a solemn obligation of secrecy, with penalties for its violation, which referred to certain methods of recognition known only to the initiates. But this may safely be attributed to the fact that such peculiarities are and always will be the necessary adjuncts of any secret organization, whether religious, social, or political. In every secret society isolated from the rest of mankind, we must find, as a natural outgrowth of its secrecy and as a necessary means of defense and isolation, an obligation of secrecy and methods of recognition. On such analogies it is, therefore, scarcely worthwhile to dilate. Thus, then, I have traced the analogies between the ancient Mysteries and modern Freemasonry in the following points of resemblance. 1. The Preparation, which in the Mysteries was called the Lustration. It was the first step in the Mysteries, and is the Entered Apprentice's degree in Freemasonry. In both systems, the candidate was purified for the reception of truth by washing. In one it was a physical ablution; in the other a moral cleansing; but in both the symbolic idea was the same.

The Initiation, which in the ancient system was partly in the Lesser Mysteries, but more especially in the Greater. In Masonry it is partly in the Fellow Craft's, but more especially in the Master's degree.

The Perfection, which in the Mysteries was the communication to the aspirant of the true dogma - the great secret symbolized by the initiation. In Freemasonry it is the same. The dogma communicated in both is, in fact, identical. This Perfection came in the Mysteries at the end of the Greater Mysteries. In Masonry, it is communicated at the close of the Master's degree. In the Mysteries, the communication was made in the sachem or holiest place. In Masonry, it is made in the Master's Lodge, which is said to represent the holy of holies of the Temple.

The secret character of both institutions.

The use of symbols.

*The dramatic form of the initiation.*

*The division of both systems into: 8. the adoption by both of secret methods of recognition.*

*These analogies, it must be admitted, are very striking, and, if considered merely as coincidences, must be acknowledged to be very singular. It is not, therefore, surprising that scholars have found it difficult to resolve the following problem:*

*Is modern Freemasonry a lineal and uninterrupted successor of the ancient Mysteries? The succession being transmitted through the Mithraic initiations which existed in the 5th and 6th centuries; or is the fact of the analogies between the two systems to be attributed to the coincidence of a natural process of human thought, common to all minds and showing its development in symbolic forms?. I can only arrive at what I think is a logical conclusion which is that if both the Mysteries and Freemasonry have taught the same lessons by the same method of instruction, this has arisen not from a succession of organizations, each one a link of a long chain of historical sequences leading directly to another, until Hiram is simply substituted for Osiris, but rather from those usual and natural coincidences of human thought which are to be found in every age and among all peoples.*

*It is, however, hardly to be denied that the founders of the Speculative system of Masonry, in forming their ritual, especially of the third degree, derived many suggestions as to the form and character of their funereal legend from the rites of the ancient initiations. But how long after Freemasonry had an organized existence this funereal legend was devised, is a question that must hereafter be entitled to mature consideration.*