

TOWARDS AN ENLIGHTENED DEMOCRACY

By W/B David P. Stuard, Jr.

Today's thinking towards a democratic world state is neither a new trend nor an accidental circumstance. The work of setting up the background of knowledge necessary to the establishment of an enlightened democracy among all nations has been carried on for hundreds of years by so called "secret societies", who had as their purpose to create a mechanism for the perpetuation, from generation to generation, of certain policies, principles, or systems of learning, beliefs for which in times past many were persecuted or condemned. It is beyond question that throughout history, secret societies have exercised a considerable degree of political influence, usually directed against despotism, intolerance, and religious oppression.

The modern organization known today as Free and Accepted Masons can trace its lineage back through several periods of chrysalis, evolving from the philosophical to the political to the social and fraternal, yet all of these incarnations were bound together by obligations of mutual helpfulness and the service of the public good. It is well known that our grand master Hiram Abiff was a member of the Order of Dionysian Artificers, whose members practiced secret rites and worshiped the gods under geometric symbolism. Not so well known was their philosophical, moral, and political conviction concerning the perfecting of human society. They were the first to refer to ignorant and uncultured humans as a Rough Ashlar, an uncut stone ill-suited for the purposes of building. Through self-discipline and the practice of the divine arts, man perfected himself to become the True Ashlar, square, upright, and suited to fit with others into a grander pattern of Masonry. Each enlightened and perfected human being was thus deemed as acceptable for incorporation into the temple of the "Living God", built of stone made ready before it was brought thither.

In the early stage of European society, the Dionysians developed into the guild of cathedral builders, and architecture was their chosen instrument for the perpetuation of their grand design, the blueprint for the building of a perfect world. The execution of this design was taken up by the Knights of the Ordo Templis, whose delvings at the site of Solomon's Temple not only

brought them wealth and prestige, it exposed them to the teachings of the Dionysians, the Essenes and the Qabalists. These Knights Templar, as they have come to be called, grew from nine original members to become a political force that influenced all of civilization. On June 15, 1215 they helped bring about the creation of a Constitutional Monarchy in England through the enforced signing of the Magna Carta. King John had taken refuge in the London Temple at the time, and his acquiescence was the price of his continued protection by the Order. Those same knights later warned John's son, King Henry III, "So long as thou dost exercise justice, thou wilt reign, but if thou infringe it, thou wilt cease to be king!"

Such warriors and statesmen, bound by oaths of loyalty and servitude, and armed with knowledge, wealth, and military prowess, presented a clear threat to the authority of the Catholic Church and to the feudalistic system which it symbiotically both supported and drew upon for support as well. On October 13, 1307 (Friday the 13th) the order was given to arrest the Knights Templar, confiscate their wealth and transfer all templar holdings to their rivals, the Knights Hospitaller. Many Templars were tortured and killed, but the majority, having received warning through secret networks, fled into exile. Eighteen ships bearing Knights and treasure sailed from La Rochelle to Scotland, where once again they took a stand for freedom. On June 24th, 1314, also known as "St. John's Day", historian Albert Mackey tells of Masonic Orders "conferred on the field of Bannockburn as a reward for the valor that had been displayed by a body of Knights Templar who aided Robert the Bruce in that remarkable victory". As a result of that one battle, Scotland remained free for over four hundred years.

The Templars then fell out of sight, apparently merging into a secret society known as "Lollards" or mutterers, which soon spread to cover all of England. Evidence of them can be seen in the Peasant's Rebellion of 1381, led by an enigmatic figure known only as Wat the Tyler. It is known that some form of underground organized this revolt, spreading the word from cell to cell, town to town, that all would rise up together on the pre-arranged signal, "For now is tyme to be war". Hundreds of thousands of commoners, enraged by the excessive taxes imposed by regents of the 14 year old King

Richard II, and incensed by the gluttony and lechery of the church, struck back at both, but with one curious common feature. There was very little looting. In fact, the destruction seemed to focus primarily upon properties belonging to the Knights Hospitaller, holdings which had been seized from the Knights Templar some 75 years before. This rebellion ended with the betrayal and murder of Wat Tyler under a flag of truce and King Richard's promise of amnesty was broken as soon as he was out of harm's way, but the point was made quite clear that there were those who would carry on the cause of democratic reform, both openly and covertly if need be.

It is not unsurprising then that during the next period of history, a different tactic was employed by those early philosophers of Europe, who now sought to persuade the Monarchy by bending its ears instead of its arms. All of the petty princes of the middle ages had their advisors, wise old men who, in many instances were the actual rulers of the state. It is obvious that if these men were bound together by some common purpose, their influence would be considerable. And bound together they were, a secret society of unknown Utopians who moved the crowns of state like pieces on a mighty chess board. Michel de Nostradame was consulted by no less than three kings, as well as Europe's most powerful queen, Catherine de Medici. The illusive Compte St Germaine counseled Frederick the Great and many others of his court. One of the earliest known Freemasons, Sir Francis Bacon, may have revealed his affiliations when he wrote in his famous essay "New Atlantis", "Lord, God of heaven and earth, thou hast vouchsafed of thy grace to those of our Order, to know thy works of creation and the secrets of them". It is important to remember that it was Bacon who directed the English program of settlement in the fledgling colonies of America. He recognized that here lay the opportunity to accomplish the great dream, the establishment of a philosophic empire. He made sure that the Masonic society was transplanted to the New World, setting up the machinery of democracy over a hundred years before the American Revolution.

Of that time much is known regarding the democratic efforts of Freemasonry. Brothers such as Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and George Washington are well known to us all. In fact, of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence, only one was not a Mason.

But you may not be aware that the Masonic rolls also included Thomas Payne, Paul Revere, William Dawes, Nathan Hale, Patrick Henry, and the designer of Washington DC, James Hoban. You may also not know that the so-called Boston Tea Party was an entirely Masonic affair, carried out as it was by the members of St. John's lodge during an adjourned meeting.

In the years following the Revolutionary War, Masons have continued and will continue to strive for democracy. Simon Bolivar, who freed much of South America, was a Mason, as were Davy Crockett and Col. William Travis, who gave their lives at the Alamo. And in the century just passed, brothers Roosevelt and Truman, along with their English counterpart, Sir Winston Churchill, turned back the greatest threat that democracy has ever faced. Such men understand that a world-wide democracy cannot be simply legislated into existence. Permanent progress results from education and not from legislation. Only enlightened men can sustain enlightened leadership, and only the wise can recognize and reward wisdom. In a democratic way of life, the survival of the state depends upon the intelligent cooperation of its people. Thus the supreme Masonic purpose remains the perfection of man. This must come first, then all good things will inevitably follow.

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