

# The Three Supporting Pillars of a Lodge

by H.A. Kingsbury

Sunday Masonic Paper No. 733

Although it is probably true that there is no Mason, be he ever so unskilled in his Art, who is so ill informed that if he were asked, "What are the symbolical Supports of your Lodge?" would not be able to give the information, "The Three Pillars, Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty," it is to be feared that there is many a Mason who, when he has given the information that the Three Pillars are the Supports of his Lodge and has given those Supports their respective names, has told absolutely all he knows concerning the Three Pillars. He knows nothing of their antecedents and their history; nothing of their symbolic significance. This is decidedly not as it should be. It is, then, worth the time and effort of every Mason who would possess even the elements of a proper knowledge of his Art, and especially is it worth the time and effort of every Mason who would call himself a student of his Art, to make an investigation, if only one of the utmost brevity, of the antecedents, the history, and the symbolism, of pillars and, more particularly, of the Three Pillars. To an investigation, such as suggested, the brief review below can serve as scarcely more than a synopsis. It is no more than a start in the right direction-- merely the sketching in of some of the more important features of a field of investigation which no Mason can afford neglecting to explore.

Probably pillars have been used for commemorative, monumental and symbolistic purposes since the beginnings of civilization in the world. For example, among the Egyptians many extraordinary events, singular or noteworthy transactions, and new inventions were commemorated, and their histories preserved, by records carved upon pillars of stone. According to tradition, Osiris, that Egyptian hero and god of such peculiar and especial interest to the Mason, set up pillars in commemoration of his conquests; the pillars bore hieroglyphically inscriptions recording certain interesting facts and details relative to those conquests. This reputed example of Osiris was followed by the kings of ancient Egypt for many centuries, for those kings had, in many instances, records of their conquests, triumphs, power, and magnificence, engraved on pillars or obelisks. And, if we are to believe the Greek legends having to do with the legendary world--conquering Egyptian king Sesostris who in those legends carries the burdens and the glories of many of the deeds of Rameses II., Rameses II during his military progress through the various nations which he conquered caused pillars to be erected bearing inscriptions and emblematic devices making known to posterity certain features of, and facts relating to, his conquests.

By the biblical peoples pillars were used in ways similar to those in which they were used by the Egyptians. Thus, Hiram King of Tyre, upon the forming of his grand junction between Eurichorus and Tyre, dedicated a pillar to Jupiter in commemoration of the event. Enoch erected two pillars--the Pillars of Enoch of which Masonry has its symbolic legend--the one of brass to resist water and the other of stone to resist fire upon which he inscribed information calculated to preserve his knowledge to posterity in the case of the destruction of the world. Jacob's Pillar at Bethel was erected to commemorate his extraordinary vision; his Pillar at Galeed was raised in commemoration of his treaty with his uncle, Laban. Joshua raised a pillar at Gilgal to perpetuate the fact of the miraculous passage of the River Jordan. And Absalom erected a pillar in honor of himself.

Leaving, now, the consideration of pillars as merely individual units and turning to the consideration of grouped pillars, each group consisting of three units, one realizes at the outset that the conception of a symbolic group of three pillars is not by any means one confined exclusively to Masonry; in not a few of the ancient mysteries and religious systems some symbolic meaning was assigned to a group comprised of three pillars. The symbolistic conception of three grouped pillars was contained in the Druidical Mysteries, indeed, in those mysteries, in some instances, the adytum, or sanctuary, was actually supported on three stones or pillars. In the mythology of India the conception of three pillars was present, the pillars being considered as located in the East, West, and South and as bearing the names Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty. In also the mysteries of India the three qualities, Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty, were treated of, being there considered as represented by three hierophants, one in the East, one in the West, and one in the South.

The three-pillar-group, in every ancient mystery or religious system where it occurred as such, was the presentation, symbolically, of a triad. Therefore, a consideration of the Three Pillars of the Lodge brings before the student, for his contemplation, the curious fact that nearly every mystery practiced by the ancient peoples of the world contained its reference, and that an important reference, to a triad. In the mysteries of India the triad was Brahma, Vishnu, Siva; in the Grecian Mysteries the triad was Jupiter, Neptune, Pluto; in the Persian, Ormazad, Mithra, Mithras; in the Gothic, Woden, Friga, Thor; in the Mexican, Tloquenahuaque, Huitzilopochtli, Miclantlactuclli; and so on through the various systems practiced by the ancients.

So, in carrying forward what was best in the conceptions and the teachings of the peoples of antiquity, Masonry, too, has its pillars of peculiar significance; places one in East, one in the West, and one in the South; considers each one symbolically significant as a unit, calling one Wisdom, one Strength, and one Beauty, as did the Hindus; and, finally, Masonry considers those Pillars as a group, unitary in character and in itself a symbol, indeed a symbol of the very highest type, for: The Mason is informed that the Three Supporting Pillars of the Lodge are Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty "because it is necessary that there should be wisdom to contrive, strength to support, and beauty to adorn all great and important undertakings": he cannot but gather from the lectures and the work, particularly of the First Degree, that the Lodge is the symbol of the World: therefore, when he combines these two conceptions and draws the necessarily resulting conclusion, he arrives at the same understanding of the ultimate symbolic significance of the Three Pillars as did the ancient Hindus--the Three Supporting Pillars of the Lodge are, considered as a group, the symbol of Him Whose Wisdom contrived the World, Whose Strength supports the World, Whose Beauty adorns the World-- Deity.

The Builder magazine October 1917.

Wayne Anderson, FCF, MPS  
Tel: 613-634-3029 (H)  
Cel: 613-453-7791  
Alle Menschen werden Brueder  
2B1 ASK1