



## WHY ENGLAND?

Why did Speculative Masonry grow out of Operative Masonry only in England? Howard R. Stewart answered this question in the following way.

The Operative Masons or cathedral builders were an orderly lot with extraordinary ingenuity and talent whose speculative nature was apparent in the scope of their structures. They used copies of the old charges, took oaths not to violate landmarks, admitted non-operatives and had centuries in which to transform into Speculative Masonry. Yet this transition didn't occur in continental Europe.

Operative Masonry reached its height in continental Europe. Prior to the 12<sup>th</sup> century cathedrals were low flat thick walled buildings with few windows. Their art evolved to the building of magnificent cathedrals, such as the Notre Dame Cathedral, still standing today. The countries of France and Germany were the most important. Albert Mackey believed that the German Steinmetzens held general assemblies, adopted constitutions and codes of law. However their organization waned and was abolished by Imperial Edict in 1731

Conditions began to change in continental Europe. The Roman Catholic Church remained the dominant factor, but the cultural revolution spawned by the Renaissance had evoked a new outlook on religion which raised questions concerning the organization and teachings of the church. John Calvin and Martin Luther landed sharp attacks on fundamental Catholic doctrine. With the Renaissance came newer and freer thinking and charges of heresy skyrocketed. Any belief contrary to church canon was unpardonable and for centuries Europeans lived under terror of the Inquisition.

In sharp contrast, a tolerance for differing beliefs and opinions was present in England, especially when a Protestant occupied the throne, and many political and religious dissidents sought refuge there.

In 1517 the Protestant reformation shattered the unity of Christendom and

religious wars followed, such as the 30 Years War. This was the most devastating war fought prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Catholic armies overran Germany threatening Protestantism with extinction.

During this time several schools of Hermetic philosophy existed. The activities of the adepts were by necessity underground and their knowledge was known as “hidden knowledge”. In Germany this knowledge was promoted as a weapon against the Roman Empire. It was the movement that Frances Yates called the “Rosicrucian Enlightenment”.

However the 30 Years War caused many to flee to the relative safety of England where some would join the “Invisible College” at Oxford University. In 1660 it threw off its shrouds and became the main conduit for Masonic thought. Thomas and Henry Vaughn, Henry More, Isaac Newton, Chevalier Ramsey and Christopher Wren were members. Rosicrucianism, The Royal Society and Masonry became almost indistinguishable.

Also at this time Philip the Fair of France ordered the arrest and torture of the knights Templars. Many of them escaped to England where Edward II didn't respond to Pope Clement V's order to arrest them.

In summary the ancient knowledge and advanced secrets of the builders came to Western Europe long before advancing to England and fell into receptive hands. All of the necessary ingredients were there but formal organization did not occur. There may be many reasons of this, but chief among them must have been the fear of religious and political persecution, which caused many intellectuals, especially Hermetic philosophers, to flee to England where they were looked on with favor by King James I.

Source:

~ H. R. *PH 'LA LA THES* Dec. 199