

Contemporary Mystic Christianity **Bible Self-Study Supplement**

The Comacines

From the time of Constantine and his Edict of Milan in 313 to the end of the Middle Ages, the cathedral motif was the principal theme of all monumental architecture. The Edict of Milan was proclaimed during an era of intense artistic and intellectual activity. The School of Builders in Rome was qualified to supply esoteric Christian artists who could express in stone and marble the spirit of the new Church age. Old lines of formalism and convention were broken and the builders infused their work with an originality as inspiring as the Truth it represented: "Behold, I make all things new."

The history of the Roman Guild of Builders is a fascinating one, They were divided into three groups, novices, operatori, and magistri. These three groups esoterically should be represented today by the Apprentice, Fellowcraft and Master of the Blue Lodge, namely students, workers, and Masters.

These early Roman Guilds bore the name of Comacines from an ancient Teutonic word, Genwchin, meaning "house builder." The Comacine islands became centers of great power and a Comacine architect was known to possess attributes far beyond those of ordinary men. These mystic

Builders were freed by royal decree from the exactions demanded of the masses — taxes, military service, etc. They were at liberty to travel into any country where their services were required. An edifice to be "built in the Roman manner," was prededicated to a deeply esoteric purpose.

Among the duties assumed by the guilds was that of rendering aid to the ill and needy and to give mutual assistance in times of need. By secret signs and words these Builders were enabled to travel unmolested from country to country. Among the most interesting of their signs and words were the "Endless Knot of Solomon" and the "Lion of Judah."

The Masonic Collegia, existed in Rome in the time of Constantine and Theodosius. The daughter of the first Lombard king in 390, Theodolinda, was a great patron of the Masonic guild. She was one of the first disciples of Gregory the Great and became one of the brightest spiritual lights of her time. "All of her churches followed a definite symbolic expression." This woman Initiate had truly learned to "build in the Roman manner.

From Solomon to the Builders of the medieval ages, these mystic Guilds existed in unbroken continuity. They remained true and loyal to their teachings and responsibilities. Four Comacine Brothers were martyred in Rome during the reign of Diocletian for refusing to use their

high art in the construction of a temple which he desired to put to unworthy uses. They unitedly declared: "We cannot place sacred symbolism in wood and stone to ensnare the souls of others." One was imprisoned, one tortured in an iron case, another thrown into the sea, and the fourth decapitated. Their relics in the time of St. Leo were placed in four urns in the crypt of the church built in their honor by the Comacines at that time in Rome. This church became the central meeting place of the Guild and the "Fete of the Four" was observed here with profound occult ceremonies.

The medieval cathedrals were built as replicas of the early Temples of Initiation. The Archbishop of Milan in 1332 invited only "those who understood the work" to present "models" for the cathedral, which was later constructed as virtually a reproduction of an inner-plane Mystery Temple, the inspiration of its rare and almost tenuous and fragile beauty remaining today as potent and striking as when it was first completed. This majestic spectacle is truly a "sermon in stone," the full meaning of which eludes the understanding of the wisest modern who lacks the esoteric key.

By all canons of esoteric architecture a house dedicated to spiritual living should be cruciform. Christ upon the cross is the cosmic emblem of the spirit crucified in matter. All sanctuaries hold as their supreme ideal the liberation of the

spirit, consciously, from this cross of matter; hence the glorious symbolism which marked the path of these master workmen during the medieval age of Cathedral building.

The Christ legend, which symbolizes the Path of Initiation, was emblazoned by stone cutters, glass weavers and the painter's brush. These were divinely inspired workmen belonging to the mystic Masonic crafts. Fired by their reverence and devotion, they made stone and wood, marble and glass, into living memorials, beautiful beyond all words to describe — the great Gothic Epic which marks the path of medieval Christianity through France, Spain, Germany, Holland, Italy and England.

The Gothic cathedral voices its ideal in vertical lines that seem to lift toward heaven in audible prayer beseeching fulfillment. As Longfellow expresses it: "Great towers yearning up toward God."

In the Gothic architecture of France's cathedrals, differentiation between the masculine and feminine is particularly noticeable. In Notre Dame the south tower is noted for its grace and delicacy of outline, the north for its strength and firmness.

In the Amiens cathedral the north tower is taller and larger than the southern. St. Peters in Rome, the Milan Cathedral and St. Mark's in Venice are adorned with both

spires and domes; ornamentations that suggest both the masculine and feminine, separate and apart, and yet harmonious, in a rhythmic blending which heralds a divine state which is yet to be.

"In regard to old St. Peter's at Rome (Builder, January 2, 1892), we read that 'so exactly due east and west was the Basilica that, on the vernal equinox, the great doors of the porch of the quadriporticus were thrown open at sunrise, and also the eastern doors of the church itself, and as the sun rose, its rays passed through the outer doors, then through the inner doors, and penetrating straight through the nave, illumined the High Altar.' The present church fulfills the same conditions."

A new architecture, emblematic of the New Age of Fellowship and Brotherhood, will come into existence through the inspiration of new Illumined Operative Masonic guilds that have through their devotion to the ideal achieved spiritual equilibrium within themselves, and through their understanding of the laws of life have re-established equality between man and woman in the world.

Hand-in-hand, the Illumined (head and heart equally operative), will pass into new sanctuaries between the two columns of the ideal triumphant, the Jachin and Boaz, which will then be no longer an idealization, but an objective reality.

The towers and upright columns of modern architecture are descendants of biblical stones. The tall uprising pillar gradually evolved into the steeple of the church, which became in symbolic architecture a "stationary plane," and is representative of the masculine Godhead of the existing religious dispensation.

This symbol of the predominance of masculinity in existing religious observances may be traced through the historic ages in buildings devoted to spiritual worship. It may be noted in the pagoda of the Chinese, the pyramids of Egypt, the fire towers of Persia, the spires of the Hindus and the campaniles of Europe, as well as in the biblical Tower of Babel, that impious challenge of mortal man to lift his own unchaste fire to burn in defiance of cosmic Law. (This procedure inevitably and rightfully brought about its own destruction.)

Biblically, these upright stones may be traced back to Gilgal and Bethel, also to the twelve stones raised by Joshua in his sacred ceremonial, and it will be seen that they each and all imply association with magic, the occult and the supernatural. It is the predominance of this pointed or masculine type of architecture that is termed Gothic and which was used so generally by Masonic building guilds in the erection of cathedrals in medieval Europe. The feminine arch is also conspicuous in these structures, thus

emphasizing the Virgo or Mother Mary principle which was at this time brought prominently to the fore by the troubadours and minnesingers.

The masculine and feminine are fairly evenly divided in the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. The Sun and other masculine symbols are to be seen over the right tower, the Moon and feminine figures about the left tower.

In Masonry the candidate is admonished to study the different orders of architecture. Among the types mentioned, the Doric, associated with the Ineffable Degrees, is the masculine and the Ionic, associated with the Second Temple, is feminine. The Corinthian, typifying the new law, is a uniting of the two types as emblematic of the New Age architecture.

Architecture was presumed by the early initiate-builders to be a perfected art only when these two principles so merged in harmony and symmetry that their union emitted a melodious note, a rhythmic song which could be heard by the mystic Builder. The chimes placed upon churches are a remembered fragment of this ancient principle, and if properly attuned to the structure that they embellish, they should sound its particular and individual keynote.

The great cathedrals still remain as living tributes to those inspired Builders who by the works of their hands

disseminated the teachings of the new Christian faith. In symbolic and in pictured art they glorified our Lord and Saviour, the Christ, and glorified man in turn through the depiction of the Way whereby man shall become a Christed one. Thus the mission of these Mystic Masons was twofold: they came not only to decorate and to beautify, to uplift, to guide, to inspire and to teach by their immortal works, but also by the nobility and purity of their selfless lives to demonstrate the Way of Christ.

The first Christian Temples were the Catacombs, the secret meeting place of the early Christians and later their burial place. Here they maintained continued contact with holy men and women of the Gospels who had departed this mortal life.. The most advanced of their number were sanctified by Initiation. Their tombs became shrines of worship and nuclei of great spiritual power. The age of cathedral building was dedicated to the pursuit of this sacred intercourse between the living and the holy dead. No cathedral was ever dedicated unless it contained relics or a tomb of a saint.

"There are five orders of architecture, as petals of a perfect rose, which build upward from within but are of no material craftsmanship; yet is the Gothic Order their holy sacrament. There are five points of fellowship which are of the Union of souls in God, and in the Secret Tradition they

are called otherwise five virtues which lead to perfection: the kind of fellowship is that of the Holy Assembly and its bidden Church.

"There are seven liberal arts and sciences, understood as gifts of the spirit. There are seven manifestations of Christ symbolized as a golden side of Tradition, within and without Masonry. There is a point within a circle, there are two Pillars, there is a Holy of Holies: they have been heard of in Emblematic Freemasonry, but it is after the manner of rumors till they are learned and realized within. So long as they speak from without only, it is as in the uninitiated and popular world, where prophecies have become void in the Sanctuary, where tongues have failed and there is no open vision.

"But there is another Sanctuary and it sends forth other Voices: when hearts awaken — and already they stir in their sleep — it shall be seen and heard also, bringing tidings of the Masonic subject in its true sense of meaning. In the light of that meaning I bear my last witness, God willing, and it testifies that of God moveth the great Rite of Masonry."

These are the sublime words with which Waite concludes his inspiring work on Emblematic Freemasonry.

— ***Corinne Heline***