

JEWISH FREEMASONS.

Prior to the formation of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717, the Charges and Regulations by which the Craft was governed are to be found in the Manuscript Constitutions or Old Charges, of which about one hundred copies have survived to this day. At the commencement of each is to be found an invocation to the Trinity, and by the Regulations ~~the~~ Masons^{are} enjoined to be "trew men to god and holly churche." From these indications we may deduce the fact that in those days every Mason had to be a Christian.

With the coming of the Grand Lodge era, however, a change takes place, widening the portals of the Society of Free and Accepted Freemasons; and, in Anderson's Constitutions of 1723, the First Charge "Concerning God and Religion" lays down as follows :-

But though in ancient Times nations were charg'd in every Country to be of the Religion of that Country or Nation, whatever it was, yet it is now thought more expedient only to oblige them to that Religion in which all Men agree, leaving their particular opinions to themselves; that is to be good Men and true or Men of Honour and Honesty, by whatever Denominations or Persuasions they may be distinguish'd.

It has been thought by some that by this Anderson meant Christianity in its widest sense, but it is certain that that was not the interpretation placed upon that Charge by some of the Lodges then in existence, as within a very few years Jews were being made Masons. In the Grand Lodge MS. Lists of 1723 and 1725 there are occasional names which seem to suggest Hebraic origin; but in the MS. List of 1731, we find undoubted evidence of Jews as members of the Craft.

In the Daily Post for Monday, 22nd September, 1732, we read :-

On Sunday, about two in the afternoon, was held a Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons, at the Rose Tavern in Cheapside, where in the presence of several Brethren of

Distinction, as well as Jews and Christians, Mr. Ed. Rose was admitted to the Fraternity by Mr. Dan'l Delvalle, an eminent Jew Snuff Merchant, the Master, Captn. Willmott, etc., who were entertained very handsomely, and the evening was spent in a manner not infringing on the morality of the Christian Sabbath.

But even earlier than this we find that at the Annual Grand Feast held on 13th April, 1784, Solomon Kender was one of the Grand Stewards. In the years that followed, other Jewish Brethren occupied similar offices.

With regard to the "Antients," we know that they, too, admitted Jews into the Craft, and had a special prayer for use in Jewish Lodges.

Notwithstanding, however, the professed universality of Freemasonry, there was certainly, in some Lodges, a disinclination to admit Jews into the Craft. For instance, in the records of the Lodge of Tranquility, No. 185, an "Ancient" Lodge, there is a Minute dated 15th October, 1791, which gives the following information:-

It was agreed by the brothers, the better to avoid ignominiously insult, if any of them inadvertently should recommend a Jew, that he could not be admitted as a brother on any pretence whatever in future.

By a strange coincidence, this very Lodge, after falling into low water and getting heavily into debt, was revived on 24th January, 1848, by nine Jewish Brethren, who had resigned from the Joppa Lodge, No. 188, in consequence of one of the nine not being elected, when Senior Warden, to the Master's Chair. The members of the Lodge are now nearly all Jews.

Prosperity Lodge, No. 68, is another Lodge of a similar character. In 1858, Bro. H.A. Isaacs - afterwards Sir Henry Isaacs, Lord Mayor of London - was Lecture-master of the Lodge and Preceptor of the Lodge of Instruction; and it seems throughout its existence

to have contained a good proportion of Jewish Brethren. At one time a resolution was passed that Jewish members should be allowed to provide their own dinners, and an allowance was made to them for this purpose from the Lodge funds, doubtless because the usual Lodge dinners were not prepared in accordance with Jewish rites. Other Lodges in London which may be mentioned, as being composed almost entirely of Jews, are Friar's Gate Lodge, No. 1348, Samson Lodge, No. 1659 and Barnato Lodge, No. 5265, the last-mentioned being named after one who was not at that time a member of the Craft.

In addition to the five Lodges already referred to, there are four other Lodges in London entirely restricted to Brethren of the Jewish faith. The oldest is the Joppa Lodge, No. 188, founded in 1789, and is followed in seniority by the Lodge of Israel, No. 895, founded in 1793. In passing we may note with interest that all these Jewish Lodges, which had existence before the Union of 1813, were Lodges warranted by the Grand Lodge of the Antients. Other Jewish Lodges in London are the Montfieri Lodge, No. 1017, the Amicus Lodge, No. 3771, and the Hampden Lodge, No. 5850, warranted respectively, in 1844, 1916 and 1930.

With regard to the Provinces, there is the Lodge of Israel, founded at Birmingham in 1873, which is a Jewish Lodge, and there is also one with the same name, founded at Liverpool in the following year, which it is understood, is restricted to Jews; and the Israel Lodge, No. 4774, which meets at Cardiff, having been consecrated on 17th December, 1915. - (Bro. Gilbert W. Daynes.)

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