

Origin and Progress of Freemasonry.

THE origin of Freemasonry has been differently stated; some writers date it coeval with the world; whilst others, from a desire to injure its influences and deride its pretensions, represent it as an invention of certain ancient political parties in order to aid their projects. I shall now endeavour to show what may probably be considered its real origin, and that some of these apparently inconsistent accounts are not incompatible with each other.

It will be well to premise that an examination of the different system of religious mysteries throughout the world (so far as we are able to judge of them) must evince to the enquiring Mason that they all contain rites and ceremonies, emblems and symbols, bearing a great similarity to those used amongst us. I allude to this subject because one of our greatest Masonic scholars (the Rev. Dr. Oliver) has examined into this with much minuteness and ingenious research. He says: "The antiquity of Freemasonry may be deduced from the similarity of our rites to those of the mysteries; and we can only account for the resemblance which the ceremonies and doctrines of distant nations bear to each other by supposing that they were all derived from some great primitive system, which was practised when all mankind lived together as one family. It is morally impossible on any other principle that the same events perpetuated by the same ceremonies and symbols, and the same secret communications, could subsist in nations so widely separated as to preclude all possibility of intercourse with the inhabitants."

I shall not attempt to follow out the idea of Masonry having an antediluvian existence; although it is highly probable that symbolical nations should have been instituted in memory of the penitence, reverence, sympathy, fatigue, and faith of the inhabitants of the world before