

Saxons. This scholar briefly stated that no Grand Lodge could have been assembled at York in the year 926 by Edwin, son of Athelstan, for the very best reason that this monarch had no son.

This legend of the time of Athelstan, so far as the same relates to Edwin, has been abandoned by more accurate Masonic writers, but in its stead the effort has been made to refer the Craft tradition from the 10th century to the 7th—associating it still with the city of York. Bro. Woodford in the introduction p., xiv., to Bro. Hughan's *Old Masonic Charges*, suggests that "tradition sometimes gets confused, after the lapse of time, and that he believes the tradition in itself is true which links Masonry to the church building by the operative brotherhood under Edwin in 627, and to a Guild Charter under Athelstan in 926." Prior to Bro. Woodford, and long before he had called attention to this novel adjustment of Craft legends, Bro. Francis Drake in 1726, declared "Edwin about the year 600, had laid the foundation of our—York—Cathedral and sat as Grand Master."

By means of a pious fraud, so frequently resorted to by the early evangelists, Edwin, King of Northumberland, in the year 627, professed the faith of Christ, and with many of his subjects was baptized on Easter day at York, in St. Peter's Church, which he himself had constructed of *timber*, during the time he was being catechised for baptismal rites. Edwin afterwards began the erection of a larger church of stone under the direction of Paulinus, intending to enclose the oratory within the walls, but a violent death left the work unfinished. It will be observed from the foregoing statement, which is drawn mainly from the historians Bede and Henry Huntingdon, that the earliest building referred to was composed of wood, and built by the half civilized King himself; the other according to the unequivocal expression of the venerable author, was also personally conducted by the same King, and constructed of stone, Paulinus, *teaching him*. This, therefore, is the total proof from which the theory has sprung that Edwin organized, in the year 627, the Masons into an operative body, and sat as their first Grand Master at the building of the ancient Church! We unhesitatingly assert that at this period there were no artificers or builders according to the strict rules of *art*, in England, who were sufficiently skilled to erect a *stone Church*; and that the builders of stone alluded to was composed of rough rubble or broken fragments rudely held together by cement—in truth just such an edifice as might be constructed in the most primitive style out of unhewn stone and roughly conjoined without higher skill than is required to form fragmentary pieces into an unshapely mass, simply fastened together by means of mortar. Manifestly under the tutorship of Paulinus, the King of Northumberland, with the aid of his people, was equal to the task of carrying broken stone or cementing it with mortar, and this is the significance of the passage in Bede's history.

Fortunately the earliest introduction of artificers into England, competent to erect a stone church according to the rules of an exact science and mechanical skill, does not depend upon conjecture. In the year 672, St. Benedict introduced from Gaul or France to England, the *first body of artificers* who were skilled in the construction of stone church edifices. These builders were architects and under the privileges of their incorporation, reaffirmed by the Theodosian edicts two centuries previous, and the Gothic rulers of Northern Italy, had a regular organization. Twenty-nine years before their importation from Gaul by St. Benedict, the Langobardic ruler Rothar, had in the year 643 recognized these building colleges, and specifically designated them as *Collegia Comacinarum*. I can interpret the expression *Comacinarum* only as signifying *associate Masons*, co-macinarum, instead of the meaning usually given: Colleges of Como. At all events, when these artificers appeared in Great Britain in the year 672, they brought with them the highest skilled labor, a profound knowledge of mechanical or technical art—the most abstruse of all arts—and an organization developed and perfected through centuries, possessing the undoubted right to live and be governed wheresoever sojourning, in strict accordance with corporate laws which had been successively allowed and affirmed from the time of Constantine the Great to Rothar, King of the Lombards, in the year 643, or within thirty years of their appearance in England.

From this but one conclusion can be drawn, that in the year 627 King Edwin could not have been Grand Master of a body of skilled Craftsmen, because there was at that time no such Assembly around the walls of this rude edifice of stone and mortar at York, and for the additional reason that an uncivilized ruler had no recognition as the head of artificers whose science represented centuries of exalted periods of civilization! This legend is equally unfortunate on the basis of undisputed history. Our venerable authority—Bede—expressly states that the object of Bishop Benedict in introducing workmen from the Gallic provinces was to have *artificers* who were competent to build "a Church in the style of the Romans," which signifies an absolute dearth of skilled