

The Bible

by
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Behold the three great lights in Masonry: the Bible, Square and Compasses. What do they teach?

The Holy Bible to be the rule and guide of our faith; the Square to square our actions; the Compasses to circumscribe our desires and keep our passions within due bounds toward all mankind, more especially a brother Mason.

Is this all you are supposed to know about the three great Lights in Masonry? Let us go further in our search for light and knowledge.

The Square and Compasses one of the oldest symbols upon our earth. It can be traced far back in antiquity. Of all the old symbols, the square and compasses has never been infringed upon. Yet for some reason very few ever understand the true meaning of that old symbol.

The Square is the working tool of man. The Compasses represents the working tool of GOD the Creator. Also, the Holy Bible is man's book of instructions, given to him by the Creator with which he is supposed use his Square and thereby build a better life upon the Earth that God has created with the Compasses.

You now ask, how can you prove the previous statements?

Have you ever seen, or know of anything, which God has created which has a straight line? Can you give me one illustration of any one item which God has constructed in the many wonders upon or of this Earth which has a straight edge or line? And without straight lines what use would God have for a square? God must have used the Compasses or a like substitute.

On the other hand, Man builds everything with the Square, assisted by the Plumb and level.

The only time man uses the compasses is when he wished to add beauty and/or strength to his creations.

Man first prepares all of his working and building materials with the rule and square.

Have you ever seen a carpenter's tool chest with the compasses among his tools?

Skin divers have a rule they follow when below the surface. If they see anything or object which has straight lines and more especially, squared surfaces, they can always attribute it to something man has made and has sunken below the surface of the waters.

As for our Holy Bible or book of the Law, or book of instructions. What do you know about it?

Every one present can honestly say he has read or attempted to read the bible. You honestly admit that you do not know all that there is to know about the Bible. I cannot name one person who could honestly say that he knows or understands everything within its pages.

Statistically, we know the word Bible comes from the Greek (bibyla) meaning sacred. We know that it consists of 88 books, which are divided into Testaments. The Old Testament contains 39 books and the New Testament contains 27 books. The word Testament also comes from the Greek and means Covenant.

The 88 books were written by 36 or more authors during a period of nearly 1,800 years.

The Bible contains:

- 3,566,480 letters
- 773,692 words
- 31,173 verses
- 1,189 chapters

The most commonly used word is "and". It occurs 46,277 times. However, the word "Eternity" appears only once in the Bible (Isa. 57:15). The longest book in the Bible is Psalms. The shortest book is Obadiah. The longest word in Maher-shalal-hash-baz (18 letters). The name GOD does not appear in the book of Esther, yet it appears 7,736 times in the other 85 books.

Now we could go on and on with statistics. They would be interesting but they would add little light to the greatness of that Holy Volume. They would be just statistics.

However there is one statistic we as Masons should be aware of and very proud of, and that is the part Masonry played in its conception.

Where so we start? With the crusaders? With Solomon? The second temple? With Moses? No, let us come forward in time.

In 926 A.D. the Masons or working guilds were invited to England by Prince Edwin, and thus began the building era of England.

All the great castles, buildings and bridges in England were constructed between 927 and 1348, a period of 421 years. Westminster Abbey, Whitehall, Buckingham Palace, London Bridge, etc.

However in 1348 the Black Death struck and in London over half the population died (1,000,000). It only lasted one year but the country went into a decline as far as the building trades. Taxes levied by the crown, stopped many a church, castle, bridge or wall of addition.

Thus began the greatest period in Masonry. For many years the nobility had tried to enter the ranks of the skilled Masons, but to no avail. These guilds were strong and financially better off than any other group of men. This infuriated the nobility but they made no dent in the great guilds.

But after the Black Death swept through and they were out of building jobs, they still stuck together. For the next 250 years to 1590 the masons became even closer as true brothers.

They learned other trades and took any job which was available to a free man. They pooled their wages at the end of the work day or week, each one placing all they were able to earn into the one common pot held by the Master and to be expended by him for the good of all. They were a proud group of men and it was noted by all the people in England how well off they were.

There never seemed to be any contention in the guilds. They worked hard and proudly gave everything to the master to be shared by all equally. They did indeed prosper and were very strong. More pressure was applied from the outsiders to enter the ranks but to no avail.

The people watched them and tried to emulate them, but they failed, because of their greed.

However, 250 years without building work except for a few jobs, the guilds lost some of their interest in the old rules and regulations of their fathers. They became lax and in the evening when they used to sit around there Masters and listen to the old stories and tales of their ancient Brothers and how the great Temple of Solomon was constructed, and over and over again the old stories of early life on the old earth. What today are the biblical stories of the Old and New Testaments?

These were the stories told and retold by the old Masters. It was great entertainment for all and many outsiders were invited and allowed to sit in and listen to the Master tell his tales of old.

Now about 1590 (approx) Prince James as a very young man and extremely likeable, used to associate himself with the old Masters, and in the evening with others, gathered at the feet of the Masters. He would listen to them telling stories of the past, all of which had the overtones of symbolic masonic teachings and of course the ever present brotherhood of man. Most of the old tales were attributed to God and God's ever watchfulness over man. The stories had been accumulated over the many hundreds of years and were parts of the same stories which are to be found in the Rabbinical, Torah, Septuagint, Koran, Targun, and of course the writings of Moses.

The stories fascinated the young prince, and he never tired of listening to them. Over and over again. They were so much more entertaining and instructive than those told by the Religious leaders of the Church of England; their biblical stories were twisted to fit the political aims of the Church of England.

Prince James' interest grew and grew and he saw great possibilities in writing all the old stories into one chronologically assembled volume, instead of so many disconnected stories which had been changed to fit the story teller. As a Prince, he had talked with some of the religious leaders and found they also agreed and disagreed with the stories, but the more he talked with them the more interest he had in developing one great volume of religious teachings, which would tell the story of man as truthfully as possible.

Prince James became King James in 1602 and early in his reign (1603) the king appointed 54 of the most learned biblical scholars of England to locate and produce all manuscripts, volumes, and writings of religious and historical writings since the beginning of the world, and return them to England. Of the 54 who were appointed only 47 served in the work till its completion.

Manuscript after manuscript was found and returned to England. It was not an easy task due to the dark ages and the burning of books by the then Catholic Church in their attempt to censure the world's writings. Many valuable manuscripts were unavailable. Most of the books which are now in the Old Testament were translated into Greek around 284 B.C., such as the Torah, Rabbinical, Book of Moses and the Septuagint.

Most all manuscripts which later became part of the New Testament were found in their original Greek and Aramaic (which was the language spoken by Jesus). The Pen-a-tooch (Pentateuch) which was translated from Caldaic, Aramaic, and Hebrew.

The earliest known writings of the Hebrews date back to 950 B.C. and for the next 700 years the written record of god's dealing with man were laid. The Hebrew script of the time, and for many centuries afterward, was never an easy

language to read or write. It had no vowels, and was a very bland Language, thus the written language was different than the spoken language. In fact the written language was little more than an attempt to establish notes by which the reader or story teller could sharpen his memory and thus tell the story which he already knew and insuring his retelling to be as factual as possible.

Prior to 950 B.C. there is much argument as to what written language was used to perpetuate the knowledge of the world. As a matter of fact, no one is quite sure what Moses used in the way of a written language to write his many books, such as Genesis, and Exodus. It has been suggested that Moses never wrote the first five books of the Bible. They were merely attributed to him as a means of establishing some sort of truth to their contents.

No matter how it was done, there still appears to be knowledge of the descendents of Abraham for a period of 2,000 years.

From the years 280 B.C. to 130 B.C. in the City of Alexandria, Ptolemy II, the governor, became very disturbed that here was a large Hebrew population who were no longer interested in their own language and were gradually turning to Greek as their spoken and written language. In fact there were fewer and fewer scholars able to write and read the ancient Hebrew. Ptolemy II feared that the knowledge contained in the ancient writings, such as the Pentateuch and other books on Hebrew history would become extinct. To insure against the loss of this knowledge, Ptolemy II established a guild of 70 Hebrew scholars to collate and translate the ancient documents into Greek. This work took approximately 150 years but there was never more than 70 scholars working on the project at one time. When one of the scholars could no longer work on the project, he was replaced by another scholar. When it was finally completed they named it the Septuagint (from the Latin seventy). The Septuagint is the basis for the Old Testament as we know it today. 2,000 years of history was preserved in this one Volume of the Sacred Law. This was the birth of a single book which records the command of God to Moses, as written in Exodus, Chapter 17, verse 14,

"And the Lord said unto Moses, write this for a memorial in a book."

As the original Hebrew writing gradually disappeared and translations were retranslated and small changes were made, it may be fortunate that many of the early translations of what is now the New Testament period were burned by the Roman Emperor who ordered that his daily bath be heated by burning of Christian manuscripts, most of which were but translations of the original.

With the adoption of the Christian religion by the Roman Empire, many of the old manuscripts were translated into Latin. One such translation by Jerome which was completed in 381 A.D. (approx.) is still used by the Catholic Church and is referred to as the Vulgate Version.

It is no wonder some would question the validity of today's Bible, because for the next 1,800 years hand-written copies were made of the Septuagint, some in part and some in total. How much was changed by the student who did the copying we will never know. However, it is fortunate for mankind that not many of the translations were ever used when the Bible was finally completed. Of course certain sections were eliminated and which appear today in the Apocrypha and the lost books of the Bible, also the book of Jubalee.

Now let us not forget that those translations were all hand written and it took many years to copy even sections from the Septuagint.

There were 15 million characters and this was about a life-time work for one man. Often one man would not live to finish the book. And so another man would take up where he left off and finish the book.

Not all scribes were dedicated to copying the work completely. It was so easy to eliminate much of the original without ever being found out (at least in their lifetime). There were many such copiers who were commissioned by the Kings and Barons who themselves were illiterate and could neither read nor write. So the copier would often just copy enough to make a good size manuscript and even select those parts

which to them were the easiest to copy. Thus these copies were never complete and many of the words were changed, for no one cared, and due to the illiteracy of the world, often they were never read.

As late as 1952 there was an article printed entitled 50,000 mistakes discovered in the Bible.

Example — in the quote "...that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven". The word camel in Greek is Kamelos, but on some manuscripts we find the spelling (kamilos) which in Greek means a ship's cable.

Example — Exodus 34 tells us that Moses descended from Mount Sinai with the two tablets and then the skin of his face shone. In an earlier translation it tells that Moses' face was horned. Michelangelo's famous sculpture of Moses depicts him with two horns extended from his head. The Hebrew word Kanan means shining but Keren means horned.

When all the manuscripts which could be found were assembled and returned to England, the 54 agents of King James were divided into six companies. Two companies went to Westminster; two companies went to Cambridge; and two companies went to Oxford.

After several years working on the manuscripts, they produced the Authorized Version, or King James Version of the Holy Bible in the year 1611, which makes the Holy Bible we in the Christian world recognize as the greatest book in the world only 577 years old in 1988.

Out of the 47 who worked upon the final manuscript, 41 members agreed 100% with the final finished product. The other 6 members wished to include the 5 missing books of Moses and four other lesser known manuscripts.

It is interesting to note that the King James Version was written in the old English and as the language of the day was made up of Ye, Yah, Though, Thy, Verily and other poetic style words. The Christian today emulates these words as though they believed that the ancients spoke in Old English.

Stories and movies are produced today with the characters speaking their lines in Old English as written in the King James Version of the Bible and which did not exist until after 1220 A.D.

Let us never lose sight of the great part played by the early operative Masons in the final construction of the Holy Bible.

It is hard to believe that the Holy Volume on our altar is only 388 years old and England had already started to advance upon the New Continent of America before it was even started to be compiled.

How odd it is that time forgets. Masonry, which is not supposed to be a religious organization, has contributed so greatly to the many denominations which if it were not for the basic fundamentals they instilled in Prince James as a boy and the fundamentals they instilled in William of Orange there never would have been a King James Version of the Bible, nor would there have been a Magna Charter as soon as there was. But that is another lecture.

Let us not forget how the early denominations fought the King James Version of the Bible. Those Pilgrim Fathers, whom we talk so highly of, left England in 1820 (just 9 years after the completion of the Authorized Edition) did so because the king had issued an edict to the effect that henceforth the Authorized edition of the Bible would be used in all Churches in England and that all Christian religions would have to use the Bible he had ordered assembled. The Authorized Version was accepted by the Church of England. It was much later that the Authorized Version became known as the King James Version.

How odd those Pilgrim Fathers whom we proudly proclaim, for their fight for religious freedom, (and their descendents) have never revealed their mistake. It is not an unknown secret, they in later years had to accept that which they had rejected, "the King James Version," not by an edict of law but because it was the best available.

Yes, let us not forget that Masonry was here long before any of the present denominations which exist today were even thought of.

Today every one of the Christian denominations adhere to the Holy Scripture called "The King James Version" except for the Catholic Church which have their own version, which is not much different then the King James version.

So the book upon our Altar found its beginning in the stories told and retold by our early Operative Masters.

From Operative to Speculative, Masonry has lost some of its fine tenets, especially the stores of old. The stories are still there but no one is interested in listening to them.

Thus in closing I give you the three great lights in Masonry: The Holy Bible, The Square, and Compasses, and I hope a new appreciation of them.

As to the symbolic meaning of that most ancient emblem the Square and Compasses, never forget its true meaning which existed long before Masonry or the Bible.

The working tool of Man with the working tool of God resting on top, symbolizing man working under God during his construction and building.

THE HOLY BIBLE

The source and versions of the Bible

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| Apocrypha | A-po-cri-fa | Early Jewish Greek |
| Septuagint | Sep-ta-gent | (70) Greek |
| Vulgate | Jerome | the Catholic Bible, Latin |
| Christian Creed | | Greek |
| Koran | | Turkish |
| Pentateuch | pen-a-tooch | Israelite Hebrew |
| Vedas | | Brahaman |
| Targum | | Pure Jewish |
| Cloverdale Version | | The Great Bible of - 1488-1588 |
| Tyndale Version | | Book of Prayer - 1532 |
| Dovat Version | | |
| Genevan Bible | | |
| Revised Addition | | |
| Moffet's Version | | Masonic |
| King James Version or Authorized Version | | |
| Rabbinical | | Hebrew |
| Torah | | |
| Book of the Law | | The oldest records known to man. |