



LODGE VEGAS # 32

VOLUME OF THE SACRED LAW

The proper Masonic name for the book on the altar even if it is the King James Version of the Bible. Just as Freemasonry uses the name Great Architect so as to be inclusive to the faiths of all its members, so to should it use the name Volume of the Sacred Law to be inclusive of all books of faith of its members. The candidate is obligated on the book of HIS faith.

Many of our American Masons do not understand that in Continental lodges the Bible is not upon the altar, but that it is lying on the Master's pedestal, as is also the case in some of the English-speaking lodges. It has been decided in Massachusetts, after an exhaustive examination of the law and precedent, that according to the ancient regulations, it is the Sacred Book of the Law which is placed upon the altar. It will be readily understood that the Sacred Book of the Law includes the Koran, the Veda, the Scruti, the Pentateuch, as well as the Bible.

Referring to the question of the use of the Holy Bible on the altar in English and American lodges, we note in a recent Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of England that it was decided that the Provincial Grand Lodge of India could initiate candidates without interference with religion, and laid down the rule, "He need not cease to be a Mohammedan, Buddhist, Hindu, Jew, Christian, or any other denomination."

The Grand Registrar of the Grand Lodge of England stated "It is not a question of the Bible being on the altar, it is 'The Volume of the Sacred Law.' Among the Christians it is the Old and New Testament combined. Among the Jews it is the Old Testament alone. Among the Mohammedans it is the Koran.

"During the latter part of 1875, there was considerable stir among the Craft lodges in India, as to the propriety of the use of the Koran in Masonic lodges under English Constitutions. Considerable correspondence was had with the Grand Lodge of England, in London, which brought out the fact of the initiation of the King of Oudh, a Mohammedan, in Friendship Lodge No. 6, in London, on April 14, 1836. At the initiatory ceremonies a volume of the Koran was used. The book had been furnished by the Grand Master, and the candidate was obligated upon it by the Master of the lodge, who was an English clergyman. This stopped further discussion, and it was settled in the Grand Lodge of England and her colonies, that it was proper to obligate all candidates upon that particular book which they held to be most sacred, and contains the work of Deity. All of this has been accepted and acknowledged as correct by the Grand Lodge of Scotland, and the annual appointment of Grand Shastii bearer, Grand Veda Bearer, Grand Koran Bearer, Grand Bible Bearer, etc., has been regularly made."

- Source: The Builder - March 1921
A. G. Henderson, Chairman,
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WISDOM

In Ancient Craft Masonry, Wisdom is symbolized by the East, the place of light, being represented by the pillar that there supports the Lodge and by the Worshipful Master. It is also referred to King Solomon, the symbolical founder of the Order. In Masonic architecture the Ionic column, distinguished for the skill in its construction, as it combines the beauty of the Corinthian and the strength of the Doric, is adopted as the representative of Wisdom. King Solomon has been adopted in Speculative Freemasonry as the type or representative of Wisdom, in accordance with the character which has been given to him in the First Book of Kings (iv, 30-2): "Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman and Chalcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the nations round about."

In all the Oriental philosophies a conspicuous place has been given to Wisdom. In the book balled the Wisdom of Solomon (vi, 74), but supposed to be the production of a Hellenistic Jew, it is said: "I called upon God, and the spirit of Wisdom came to me. I preferred her before scepters and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her." And farther on in the same book (vii, 287) she is described as "the breath of the power of God, and a pure influence (emanation) flowing from the glory of the Almighty, the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror, of the power of God, and the image of His goodness."

The Cabalists made the Hebrew Chochma, or Wisdom, the second of the ten Sephiroth, placing it next to the Crown. They called it a male potency, and the third of the Sephiroth, Binah, are, or Intelligent, female. These two Sephiroth, with Keter, or the Crown, formed the first triad, and their union produced the Intellectual World.

The Gnostics also had their doctrine of Wisdom, whom they called Achamoth. They said she was feminine; styled her Mother, and said that she produced all things through the Father.

The Oriental doctrine of Wisdom was, that it is a Divine Power standing between the Creator and the creation, and acting as His agent. "The Lord," says Solomon (Proverbs iii, 19) "by wisdom hath founded the earth." Hence Wisdom, in this philosophy, answers to the idea of a vivifying spirit brooding over and impregnating the elements of the chaotic world. In short, the world is but the outward manifestation of the spirit of Wisdom. This idea, so universally diffused throughout the East, is said to have been adopted into the secret doctrine of the Templars, who are supposed to have borrowed much from the Basilideans, the Manicheans, and the Gnostics. From them it easily passed over to the advanced Degrees of Freemasonry, which were founded on the Templar theory.

Hence, in the great decoration of the Thirty-third Degree of the Scottish Rite, the points of the triple triangle are inscribed with the letters S.A.P.I.E.N.T.I.A., the Latin for Wisdom.

Bezaleel (Exodus xxxi, 3) was filled "with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship," and this has ever been the ideal condition of a Craftsman. From first to last the Scripture, the Great Light, urges the dominating value of Wisdom, from the Pentateuch to Revelation, the allusions are frequent and emphatic. Especially in such pertinent and suggestive references as in Second Chronicles (I, 7-12) do we find that the desire by Solomon for Wisdom and understanding was rewarded by material possessions as well as these leading spiritual gifts.

It is not difficult now to see how this word Wisdom came to take so prominent a part in the symbolism of Ancient Freemasonry, and how it was expressly appropriated to King Solomon. As Wisdom, in the philosophy of the East, was the creative energy-the architect, so to speak, of the world, as the emanation of the Supreme Architect-so Solomon was the architect of the Temple, the symbol of the world. He was to the typical world or Temple what Wisdom was to the great world of the creation. Hence Wisdom is appropriately referred to him and to the Master of the Lodge, who is the representative of Solomon. Wisdom is always placed in the East of the Lodge, because thence emanate all light, and knowledge, and truth.

LOST WORD

The mythical history of Freemasonry informs us that there once existed a Word of surpassing value, and claiming a profound veneration; that this Word was known to but few; that it was at length lost; and that a temporary substitute for it was adopted. But as the very philosophy of Freemasonry teaches us that there can be no death without a resurrection-no decay without a subsequent restoration-on the same principle it follows that the loss of the Word must suppose its eventual recovery.

Now, this it is, precisely, that constitutes the myth of the Lost Word and the search for it. No matter what was the Word, no matter how it was lost, nor why a substitute was provided, nor when nor where it was recovered. These are all points of subsidiary importance, necessary, it is true, for knowing the legendary history, but not necessary for understanding the symbolism. The only term of the myth that is to be regarded in the study of its interpretation, is the abstract idea of a word lost and afterward recovered.

The Word, therefore, may be conceived to be the symbol of Divine Truth; and all its modifications- the loss, the substitution, and the recovery-are but component parts of the mythical symbol which represents a search after truth. In a general sense, the Word itself being then the symbol of Divine Truth, the narrative of its loss and the search for its recovery becomes a mythical symbol of the decay and 1088 of the true religion among the ancient nations, at and after the dispersion on the Plains of Shinar, and of the attempts of the wise men, the philosophers, and priests, to find and retain it in their secret mysteries and initiations, which have hence been designated as the Spurious Freemasonry of Antiquity.

But there is a special or individual, as well as a general interpretation, and in this special or individual interpretation the Word, with its accompanying myth of a loss, a substitute, and a recovery, becomes a symbol of the personal progress of a candidate from his first initiation to the completion of his course, when he receives a full development of the mysteries.

- **Source: Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry**