

The Three Great Lights

Out of the mist of antiquity we learn that the Three Great Lights have served as the focal point necessary to provide the foundation common to the Craft, which binds us as Brothers, the Holy Bible (Volume of Sacred Scripture) Square, and Compasses.

THE HOLY BIBLE

Certainly the Bible was not meant to invoke a particular religious dogma but rather to distill in our mind the thought that we are responsible and accountable to a higher power which, depending on one's theological understanding, might be referred to as God, Deity, Supreme Architect, etc.

In Speculative Masonry, by accepting the belief in a Supreme Being as sufficient to become a member of the Craft, leaving dogma/creed outside the Lodge defused that which would have been a most disruptive pitfall. Today the discussion of religion is "off the table" in Lodge.

The attention of every Mason in our Grand Jurisdiction is first called to the Three Great Lights when, as Entered Apprentices, we behold our first glimmer of light and the foundation of their use is explained. At the same point in the subsequent degrees elaboration of their use expands our understanding.

In the Entered Apprentice's Lecture, they are further defined as the Furniture of the Lodge: The Holy Bible, dedicated to God, The Square to the Master and the Compasses to the Craft.

The question "is it of your own free will and accord" lends itself to more than confirming that we have not been coerced in becoming a petitioner. Now, we as Adam, when with one bite of the apple was given the choice through knowledge (and responsibility) for responding properly to right and wrong, so we as Speculative Masons accept the responsibility to God utilizing the Three Great Lights to mold, temper and enforce our Masonic laws through the use of the working tools.

THE SQUARE

The Square migrates through the degrees and although it is always included as a part of the Great Lights, it appears as one of the working tools of the Fellowcraft as well as the Master's emblem. No doubt, before we became Master Masons we heard such phrases as "he is a square dealer" or "you will get a Square deal" indicating that in dealing with that company or individual you would receive a fair or honest deal.

In dealing with a Brother or Brethren, "On the Square" means that what is spoken of and or agreed to will be carried out strictly according to that agreement between the parties involved, and thus with morality and honesty as the foundation, the Square defines our actions and obligations to mankind.

THE COMPASSES

In preparing ourselves to become Master Masons, it is necessary that we understand the constraints within which we as men must act if we are to fulfill our Masonic destiny. To circumscribe our desires and keep our passions within due bounds, describes the use of the compass.

What is interesting when visiting that portion of the Entered Apprentice Degree regarding “The Dedication of Lodges,” there is a passage that refers to “a certain point within a circle embordered by two perfect parallel lines, representing St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist, and on the top rests the Book of Constitutions. In going around this Circle, we necessarily touch upon those two parallel lines as well as the Book of Constitutions; and while a Mason keeps himself circumscribed within their precepts, it is impossible he can materially err”....that point would have been made by one of the legs of the compass.

You could say that The Three Great Lights form the three sides of a triangle – the strongest of structures.