

The 5 Minute Mason – Masonic Myths and Falsehoods

(Part II)

How many here were given or have a "Masonic Bible". Show of hands, please. Well this is a **Myth**. Technically, it's not really a Masonic Bible.

Fact: The Bibles sometimes called "Masonic Bibles" are usually the King James Version, to which a concordance has been added, giving the Biblical citations on which our Masonic Ritual is based. Sometimes reference material on Masonic history is included. No matter what you call it...I like to think of it as your 'owner's manual', after all it *IS* the 'Holy Bible'.

Myth. The story of Hiram as we portray it in our Lodge ritual is based on truth.

Fact. It isn't. It has been called an "allegory," but factually that's not correct. An allegory is a story within a story. What we portray in our ritual is actually a fable. But it's a fable that teaches valuable and unforgettable lessons. The Temple of Solomon was built to the glory of God...that is a fact.

The story as told in the Master Masons degree is not meant to be factual. In a broad sense it can be called a legend. The legend of Hiram is an important part of the teachings that are very graphically imprinted on the mind and heart of the candidate. Masonic author Allen Roberts said, 'The lessons found in the Legend of Hiram Abif reach to the roots of the soul and spirit. They are instilled in the heart forever. You were an active participant, so that these lessons would be deeply implanted, never to be lost. The ultimate triumph of good over evil, and life over death, has been depicted throughout the ages in drama, song and story'. Legends depicting a central figure being killed and then returned to life were common to many religions and rites. These undoubtedly had a bearing on the development of the lessons the ritualists of Freemasonry believed had to be taught. But the legend of Hiram is more intense, moralistic, and meaningful than any that preceded it.

Hiram Abif did exist. He was a skillful worker in brass and other metals, and he was sent to assist King Solomon at the temple. The Hiram Abif who actually worked at beautifying the Temple of Solomon lived to an old age, and he died of natural causes.

Myth. Pythagoras was Raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason.

Fact. So say the ritualists of yesteryear, and their successors have compounded the fabrication. Oh, don't get me wrong, Pythagoras was indeed a great man. Although he left behind no writings of his own, his students managed to leave more than enough to leave a wonderful legacy. His influence has extended to the present day. It's little wonder his teachings have reached into Freemasonry, even if only in small fragments. But, even if a form of Freemasonry was known while he lived (582-507 B.C.) he could not have been made a Master Mason. This degree didn't evolve until the late 1720's. Actually there are those who believe that the Freemasonry that did mature into what we have today was highly influenced by the Pythagoreans.

Myth: Some of our Masonic ritual was written by Sir William Shakespeare. This one has been around a very long time. I even heard mention of this shortly after I was raised, 40 years ago.

Fact: There is no evidence to indicate Shakespeare even knew there was an organization of stone masons that would eventually become Speculative Freemasonry. The old Gothic Constitutions are the basis for The Constitutions of the Free-Masons compiled by Dr. James Anderson and adopted in 1723. There is nothing in the Gothic tomes that remotely resembles the writing of the Bard. Some of Shakespeare's phrases have found their way into the rituals of the Craft, but they certainly were not written especially for this purpose. It would be nice to claim Sir William as an early accepted member of our gentle Craft, but we can't. Let's stop trying.

Myth: All, or most, of the Freemasons in Germany were murdered during the Nazi regime.

Fact: The truth about all of the horrors of Nazism will most likely never be known. On Hitler's rise to power, the ten Grand Lodges of Germany were dissolved. Many among the prominent dignitaries and members of the Order were sent to concentration camps. The Gestapo seized the membership lists of the Grand Lodges and looted their libraries and collections of Masonic objects. Much of this loot was then exhibited in an "Anti-Masonic Exposition", such as the one held in Belgrade, in October of 1941.

The number of German Freemasons sent to concentration camps, the gas chambers, prisons, those tortured or murdered in their homes will never be known. My rather unscientific research, the only kind possible in this case, seems to indicate that about two-thirds of the 85,000 Masons in Germany were injured in some manner, this left one-third of the members untouched. The number actually murdered or tortured is open to pure conjecture. It must be remembered that the Nazi horror reached out into other countries and filtered down to the Freemasons within those countries, as well. Terrible things happened to many people in that time of history, including members of the Craft, but those atrocities are forever shrouded in the mists of time.

If you have followed along my series of 'nuggets' over the years, by now you know how I love to illustrate a point with analogies....so he's a different one....Masonry guides us on our walk through the 'forest of philosophy, morality, and spirituality'. Where we choose to enter the forest, and how far we walk in, is entirely up to us. So, my job as your Lodge Education Officer is to point out a path, past the trees and into the forest, but it's up to you to walk the path. Some of my educational nuggets will point out an interesting 'tree in the forest', or maybe fix a little 'hitch in your git-along', but it won't do the walking for you. So, my Brethren, choose your path, enter the forest and continue on your journey of discovery. Read, discover, and devote some time to improving yourself in Masonry. Sign up on line for the Grand Lodge Correspondence Courses. Remember, Masonic education is a lifetime process.



... The 5 Minute Mason: #81 a series of nuggets from the Quarry of Freemasonry.SM

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