



Book Review

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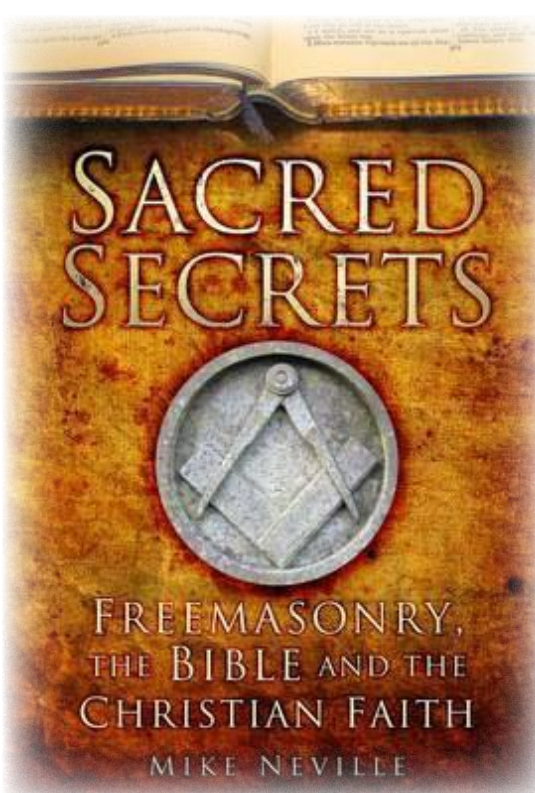
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SACRED SECRETS: FREEMASONRY,

THE BIBLE AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

How Christocentric Freemasonry is or should be has been a matter of debate and tradition since the modern fraternity's founding. Anderson's 'Constitutions' of 1723 suggest that, "...yet 'tis now thought more expedient only to oblige them to that Religion in which all Men agree, leaving their particular Opinions to themselves; that is, to be *good Men and true*, or Men of Honour and Honesty, by whatever Denominations or Persuasions they may be distinguish'd..." This was by no means universally accepted at the time nor is it case within all forms of Masonry today. Consequently, Christianity and its religious language and themes still permeate much of Freemasonry's ritual and work to this day.

The Christian Bible is the standard, if not also required, 'Volume of the Sacred Law' present in all regular and well governed lodges. Significant portions of it are also included directly in Masonic ritual work. Craft Masonry, for example, is erected upon a Jewish Biblical tradition, the construction of King Solomon's Temple, and both the Tanakh and New Testament passages are frequently quoted verbatim in the various degrees. Mike Neville, in *Sacred Secrets*, seeks to "...explain the relationship between Freemasonry and the Bible to the interested reader and at the same time help Freemasons to make the 'daily advancement



in Masonic knowledge' that they are charged to do at their initiation and to understand what many consider to be the 'word of God.' What he offers is an exhaustive exploration of several English Masonic rites and the Biblical stories and scripture upon which they are constructed.

For those who skipped Sunday school as a child or who have never read the Bible as sacred text or literature, *Sacred Secrets* exposes just how influential this text is to English Freemasonry and those following in its traditions. While no ritual work is revealed, for the profane, and more especially for those initiated in our work, a deeper

understanding of why certain degrees are structured as they are and why specific elements are incorporated is of particular interest. *Sacred Secrets* is nicely illustrated and provides several excellent tables summarizing its findings. Whether or not Neville's concluding apology for Freemasonry resonates with those critical of the order is uncertain, he clearly demonstrates the influence the Tanakh and New Testament have had on Freemasons and their work.


Rising Point

Mike Neville, *Sacred Secrets: Freemasonry, the Bible and the Christian Faith* (The History Press, \$24.95 USD)