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Grand Lodge Bulletin

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Christmas 1967

"Christmas! Humbug!" so said Scrooge, and he was right! Look at your papers as Christmas draws near. Suppose you were some mythical visitor from Mars, what would you gather from them? An orgy of spending on gifts, an invitation to gluttony on a vast scale, the expectation of alcoholic excesses and drunkenness . . . all this hypocritically centred on the idea of children and the family! There would be Christmas trees, mostly artificial, lights aplenty on trees and houses, Santa Clauses by the hundreds, jolly fat red-faced men all in urgent need of dietary control, reindeer leaping across the roofs, records blaring "Jingle Bells".

You might very well ask "What is this all about?" and get the reply "Why, it is Christmas, of course". "And what is Christmas?" And then you would run into an embarrassed silence, for your host, being an honest man, knows that it is all wrong.

The truth is that we have reverted to old paganism, and celebrate a Roman Saturnalia, the feast of mid-winter, and all the mystery of the true Christmas is lost, buried under our very celebration.

Christ-mass is the religious celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, that, and nothing more, certainly nothing less. Then, of course, the question leaps at us "Why, out of all the billions of human births do we attempt to concentrate on this one?" When half a world observes a man's birthday—or his death-day—it can only be because that man's life had a special significance. Well, what is the significance of the life of Jesus Christ?

For a hundred thousand years men had been guessing at the idea of God, and some of the guesses were pretty grim. The trail of religion across the ages is a trail of blood. Animal sacrifice, human sacrifice, slaughtering of whole peoples, all this plus the sordid cult of fertility with its temple prostitutes . . . it is not an agreeable picture. But "in the fullness of time" it was in the Divine Mind that the time of guessing was past. It was as if God had said "There is my man floundering in pure guesswork about Me. I will speak to him in a language he can under-

stand, the language of a truly human life". And so, in the simplest way, in a small country town in a small country, the Man was born and named Jesus, for He would save his people from their false ideas and show them truth. A hundred years later, John wrote that wonderful prologue to his gospel. "When all things began the Word already was. The Word dwelt with God and what God was, the Word was. All that came to be was alive with His life and the life was the light of man . . . So the Word became flesh; He came to dwell among us and we saw His glory, such glory as befits the Father's Only Son, full of grace and truth". (Translation of the New English Bible of John I).

Light! Light on God, light on man, light on Society, light on history, light on life, light on death . . . this is why Christmas is of such vital importance to us as the seasons swing round in their appointed times.

There is much light in our Craft . . . three great lights, three lesser lights, restoration to light of the initiate, darkness visible.

"Let there be light" said the Creator at the beginning. This Christmas let there be light in our minds, in our families, in our beloved Craft, in our own lodges. So mote it be.

O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie;
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light.
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight

How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven
No ear may hear His coming
But in this world of sin
Where meek souls will receive Him still
The dear Christ enters in.

Venerable C. SWANSON,
Grand Chaplain.

In Whom Do We Trust?

With hurried prompting and very hesitatingly the candidate in the Entered Apprentice Degree finally acknowledges, often without too much conviction, that he places his trust in God in all times of difficulty and danger. It has been debated whether the candidate understands what he is saying or if there is significance in the question. There are two additional issues that the Masonic Order must ask:

- (1) Does such a question indicate that Masonry teaches that trust in God is needed by mankind only in times of difficulty and danger?
- (2) Does such a question imply a guarantee that when trust is placed in God, the candidate will be saved from difficulty and danger?

If answers to the above two queries are in the affirmative then the teachings of the order are quite archaic. Trust in God is not an emergency escape hatch but is rather a quality of life. There is no guarantee that trust in God is an insurance policy promising a placid and uneventful life devoid of all crisis and tragedy. Danger, distress, suffering and sorrow are all inherent in human existence and there is no magical way to avoid them. To teach that trust in God is an incantation to be invoked only at times of difficulty and danger is to adopt an unrealistic attitude. The quality of life that trust in God creates is life with power sufficient to face exigencies with balance and confidence and in so doing to live a life of significant service. There are men who have had to face tragedies and who have had to suffer but whose lives have been an inspiration to mankind. Their trust in God was not of the safety seat belt kind but was the type of trust that carried them through victoriously.

The Old Testament Prophet says that a man who puts his trust in God shall flourish like a tree that is planted beside the water. Such a tree, will continue to bear fruit even though the country goes through long years of drought.

In the Hiram Legend, our Grand Master, placed his trust in the Almighty. This did not relieve him of tragedy and suffering at the hands of the ruffians. It did help him to remain loyal to the responsibility of his obligation even though an ignominious death was the result.

MASONIC WORKSHOP

Third Masonic Spring Workshop of Alberta Masons will be held at the Banff School of Fine Arts, Banff, Alberta. Friday, Saturday and Sunday, March 29th, 30th, and 31st, 1968. Registration forms will be mailed to Alberta Masons with their January, 1968 notices. We suggest you send in your registration form the day you receive it. Detailed information will be displayed in the February issue of your Bulletin along with a Registration form.

The "extra mile" has no traffic jams.

THE GRAND MASTER'S COLUMN

Christmas is a time that behooves us to remember the old, old saying "Peace on Earth goodwill to Man". We know that the ideal of peace, can never be realized and that goodwill in the sense described in the Holy Book is beyond our reach, until all mankind obeys the commandments of Him whose birthday we are celebrating at this time.

Christmas, with all it stands for, is our most hallowed heritage. For centuries it has united all civilized peoples and nations. What a pity that all the ennobled emotions of Christmas, too soon pass away in the hustle and bustle of the New Year. Would this not be a wonderous world if the spirit of Christmas lived on for the next twelve months, till we again renewed our innermost feelings and our hearts stirred again with the thoughts of another joyous Christmas.

At this time of the year our hearts turn to the spirit of giving, to those we love the most dearly. But there is another giving. The giving of ourselves to our fellowman. Only when we give, without thought of what we may receive in return, are we actually giving. We of the Masonic order have been taught the true principles of giving, and we have a wonderful gift to bestow on all mankind. The gift of goodwill, the giving of ourselves for the good of all. This is not always an easy gift to bestow. We may, sometimes find it hard to extend the hand of friendship and it may take a great deal of effort and self control on our part, to always extend the right hand of fellowship. Fortunately however there are thousands upon thousands of men who sincerely believe in the principles of "Peace on Earth goodwill to Man".

And so in wishing the Brethren of Alberta a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year I do so with sincere thanks to Him, whose birth we are commemorating on this Joyous occasion, that he has once again blessed our great order with a prosperous and successful year. An honoured place where peace is constantly preached, where goodwill remains an active reality and where men strive actively to find the Kingdom of God. Knowing that our efforts are not in vain.

May you and yours enjoy a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Bernie Brown.

No matter how much I probe and prod
I cannot quite believe in God
But oh, I hope to God that He
Unswervingly believes in me.

I shall pass this way but once.
Any good, therefore, that I can do,
Or any kindness that I can show
To any human being, let me do it now.
Let me not defer or neglect it,
For I shall not pass this way again.
(Quoted by M.W. Bro. D. L. Gibson in his address
to the Banquet at Grand Lodge).

"The Dignity and Importance of Freemasonry"

M.W. Bro. D. M. TAYLOR, P.G.M., G.R.B.C.,
Banff Conference, September, 1961

You are familiar with the charge to the Worshipful Master at his installation where you hear the words "Forcibly impress them with the dignity and high importance of Freemasonry". What does it mean?

Let us examine the dictionary:

DIGNITY: nobleness; excellence; character which inspires or commands respect; high rank; an exalted office; stateliness of aspect, manner or style; the quality of being worthy or honorable.

HIGH: having elevation or extent; noble; lofty in character.

IMPORTANCE: the quality of being significant or momentous; to be of consequence; weight or force.

Literally, then, the Worshipful Master is charged with the responsibility of impressing his brethren with the quality of being worthy or honorable, lofty in character, and that all their thoughts, words and actions should be of consequence. This is not only the responsibility of the Worshipful Master but of every Freemason.

Freemasonry unfolds its good and beautiful truth in three noble and impressive degrees, and no man can take them to heart and not be enriched by their importance, dignity and beauty. The Entered Apprentice Degree lays emphasis upon that fundamental righteousness, the purification of heart, which is the basis of life. The Fellowcraft Degree lays stress upon the culture of the mind, the training of the faculties in the search of knowledge; the quest of light without which man remains a child. The Master Mason Degree teaches us to prepare for the everlasting life which is to come.

When a man receives his degrees he takes a vow to uphold and to practise, to the best of his ability, the principles of Freemasonry. The Dignity and High Importance of our fraternity is emphasized throughout all our lectures and teachings, yet many do not appear to grasp the significance of what is being taught. Is it because it is difficult to understand? I cannot for a moment believe this to be the case. The principles of Freemasonry are basic and simple . . . "be a man of honor and conscience, of good morals, honest and true; submissive to the laws; devoted to your family and your country and to humanity; kind and indulgent to your brethren; a friend of all men, and ready to assist others in time of need".

These are good and simple things, and easy for anyone to understand. There are some who say the language we use in our ritual is old fashioned and not easy to follow. With this I disagree. The beautiful language which we use in our Masonic work has a tremendous appeal to, and is an excellent stimulant for, the thinking mind. In this day and age the idea seems to be, in most things, to abbreviate, cut down and shorten, in thinking, speaking or acting. One gets the impression that the object is to make things so easy that we do not have to use our brains at all. This is

wrong. Intellect and reason are God's highest gifts to man, and only by their highest development and use can we hope to attain that which should be our rightful destiny.

Our work in Freemasonry calls for patience and tolerance. We are faced with a situation where the material things of life are being considered more important than truth, character and love. Honesty and integrity are being pushed into the background, even good manners and courtesy are hard to find. The dignity of man, once considered of prime importance in human values is becoming "old fashioned", something to be "ridiculed".

How are we to correct this kind of thinking while we are admonished to be tolerant in respecting other people's opinions? Toleration does not mean indifference to truth nor weakness in defending it. It does not mean neutrality nor approval of error. A Freemason will stand and fight for his beliefs, using reason rather than force, persuasion rather than punishment. Freemasonry, by virtue of its principles, stands for those "Great Freedoms of The Mind" by which men arrive at the Truth, that Truth by which no man is injured, and by which we have the only real basis for freedom.

When we speak of the high importance of Masonry, we must consider the importance of Masonic education, which is the "building of character". In the struggles we face today a strong and noble character is of the utmost importance. All that we do, all that we think goes into the making of our character. All our passions and aspirations have their effects upon it. If we are selfish—it is ugly; if we are greedy and hateful—it is hideous; if we are good, honest and true—it is beautiful.

We are fortunate in belonging to our great Fraternity. The opportunities we enjoy are not given to all men. If we renew our vows to make our masonic way of life more real, more active and earnest in our lives, we have a source of power and influence for good among men which has no limits, no boundaries. Our efforts in this direction should not be taken lightly, but with resolute hearts and strong hands for our task is not an easy one. Our enemies are many. Greed, selfishness, hatred, lust for power, fear, suspicion, coercion, corruption, prejudice and despotism are all still too prevalent in this day and age. And we have enemies in our own ranks; I mean apathy and indifference, and they are no mean opponents. The attitude of indifference is one of the most difficult to overcome but it must be overcome if we are to fight our other enemies with any degree of success.

I fully believe that if we pursue our efforts with resolution and determination and guide them in the proper direction, that our message cannot help but appeal to many receptive hearts and minds. Then, and only then, will we be able to fulfill the true purpose of the "Dignity and High Importance of Freemasonry",—the Glory of God and the good of mankind.



M.W. Bro. T. Gordon Towers P.G.M. receives a full dress regalia at a meeting of Red Deer Lodge No. 12.

CHARTER FLIGHTS TO THE UNITED KINGDOM

Two charter flights to London, England have been booked for 1968 with Wardair. Each flight will carry 110 passengers and application forms with details may be secured from the Grand Secretary.

Leave Calgary July 3rd and return from Gatwick (London) August 2, 1968. Leave Calgary July 21, 1968 and return from Gatwick (London) August 18, 1968. The aircraft is a 727 Jet, Flight time to London about 8½ hours, fare \$317.00, return.

AREA MEETINGS 1968

Arrangements have been made for Area Meetings to be held as follows:

Edmonton	Monday, February 26th, 1968
Calgary	Tuesday, February 27th, 1968
Lethbridge	Wednesday, February 28th, 1968
Red Deer	Thursday, February 29th, 1968

Educational Assistance Programs In Other Jurisdictions

The Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Indiana in 1966 carried an interesting survey of Scholarship Programs in a number of Jurisdictions. The information was for the year 1965.

Alberta	— awarded	29	— cost	\$13,600
Arkansas	— awarded	8	— cost	\$3,311.00
Arizona	— assisted	six	students	
British Columbia	— awarded	33	— cost	\$7,500.00
Connecticut	— awarded	27	— cost	\$9,750.00
Kentucky	— awarded	10	— cost	\$6,167.00
Minnesota	— awarded	4	— cost	\$1,500.00
New Brunswick	— awarded	4	— cost	\$2,000.00
New Zealand	— awarded	68		
Ohio	— awarded	26	— cost	\$10,400.00
Prince Edward Island	— awarded	4	— cost	\$1,000.00
Queensland	— awarded	70		
Saskatchewan	— awarded	3		
South Australia	— awarded	6		
Victoria	— awarded	31		
Western Australia	— awarded	11	— cost	£800/
Wisconsin	— allotted			\$2,400.00

CENTURY LODGE CELEBRATES 50th ANNIVERSARY

A most memorable meeting was held in Century Hall at Milk River on Friday, October 20, 1967 when Century Lodge No. 100 A.F. & A.M. celebrated their 50th Anniversary. One hundred and twelve members and guests were seated at the banquet.

Many sincere toasts were proposed during the evening, highlighting these were the toasts to the senior members of Century Lodge who were seated at the head table and among them were Bro. Roy W. Caldwell, Bro. Harry C. Smith, Bro. Scott I. Harris, R.W. Bro. Fred A. Bartram, P.D.D.G.M.; W. Bro. Orville Hurlburt, Bro. A. A. (Ted) Humphrey, W. Bro. William Finlay, and senior guest R.W. Bro. J. J. Watson of Sharon Lodge.

The guest speaker at the banquet was R.W. Bro. C. E. Pinnell, Deputy Grand Master.

One hundred and nine members signed the register for the Thanksgiving meeting following the banquet. The Grand Lodge was well represented and included M.W. Bro. B. Brown, Grand Master; R.W. Bro. C. E. Pinnell, Deputy Grand Master.

Twenty Lodges were represented including Century Lodge with two lodges from Montana and two lodges from Saskatchewan.

The Thanksgiving Service was conducted by Bro. Elmer Halmrast, Chaplain of Century Lodge. A history of Century Lodge was given by W. Bro. Leslie Lindeman followed by a tribute to the Charter Members and the deceased members by Worshipful Master Bro. C. Johnston.

Alliance Lodge No. 135 Meeting October 17th

Bro. Ron McPherson was raised to the M.M. Degree and his father and grandfather were both present. Wor. Bro. Malcolm McPherson now has four sons and one grandson in Alliance Lodge.

The visitors to the 250th Anniversary of the United Grand Lodge of Great Britain in June were invited to tour the schools maintained by the Mother Grand Lodge. Included in the tour were the Royal Masonic Senior School for Boys, the Royal Masonic Junior School for Boys, the Royal Masonic School for Girls and the Royal Masonic Junior School for Girls. Some of these schools have been in existence since the 18th century and have made a very significant contribution to the educational and cultural life of Great Britain. The schools are located in the beautiful English countryside and are a pleasure to visit. The schools are maintained by voluntary contributions from members of the Craft for the sons and daughters of deceased and distressed Masons. Admission is granted to students who would benefit by a boarding school education and who are in financial need. Most of the students admitted are fatherless and the school assumes responsibility for educating, clothing and feeding them. The cost to the Freemasons of Great Britain to finance these schools runs into well over a million pounds yearly.