



Grand Lodge Bulletin

Vol. 57, No. 10

Editor, R.W. Bro. Norman J. Senn

December 1992

Three Roads To Bethlehem

There is a carol which opens with a question — “How far is it to Bethlehem?” — and the response is quickly made “Not very far!” But in the Christmas story, it’s clear that the journey that each of the various groups took were as different from each other as they could possibly be. It is also clear that the symbolism of these pilgrimages are as meaningful today as they were in the time when the Christmas stories were first set down.

There are three roads to Bethlehem in the story. First was the road of Mary and Joseph. The main road ran through Nazareth, the town in which this couple lived. It went south to Jerusalem and a further seven miles to a little town where King David was born — Bethlehem. The main road was the road of necessity. Caesar had decreed that all had to report to their ancestral towns to be counted (and taxed) — and Mary and Joseph were of King David’s line. Hence it was necessary for them to take that arduous journey to Bethlehem — difficult at the best of times, and especially difficult for Mary “who was great with child.” It was a road they had to take — the road of necessity. And the Christmas story reminds us that there are many roads of necessity we have to take — hard roads in which we must make decisions that affect not only our own lives but the lives of those around us. But, as in the story of this season, there is always the possibility of a new direction.

The second road is the shortest, although it is a side road. Up in the hills above Bethlehem there were shepherds who said, in response to an angel’s song, “Let’s take the road into Bethlehem and see...” It was the road of curiosity. If there is anyone who has not travelled over this road at Christmas, then they have not known the full meaning of this wonder-filled time. Every child, at this time of the year, is a walking question mark! Every gaily wrapped gift, whether it has his or her name on it becomes the object of their curiosity. And which family does not have within it one or more “shakers” — those persons who pick up a gift that has their name on it and shake it to see what sound it produces — or they test it, weigh it and give that package every test known to them short of opening it. These are the ones who are on the road of curiosity. For the shepherds, that curiosity led them to a discovery, not just of a stable and a family, but that which sent them back rejoicing at the meaning of their new found discovery. They were, as the Apostle Paul puts it, “surprised by joy.”

Our side roads of curiosity will always lead us to new and meaningful surprises, if we follow their leading. Holy Writ suggests this in many places, but the one that has the Christmas message is, “Ask and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened unto you.”

And then there are the back roads of life. These are the roads that the Magi took. As many of us have learned through sad experience, the back roads may, in theory, be the shortest way to get from A to B and yet we become hopelessly lost. But the Christmas story tells us that it was a road of faith for the Wise Men. With only the light of a single bright star to give them direction, they made their way across an unknown wilderness. Tradition tells us that they arrived twelve days late — but then faith does not always run on our timetables. Every journey of faith begins with a glimmer of light and when we persist in our journey, then that light becomes a beacon of assurance and we can bring the gifts of our lives and ask God to use them as He wills.

The three roads to Bethlehem are still ours today. What begins as necessity for Mary and Joseph, continues as a road of curiosity for shepherds and a way of faith for wise men and women everywhere.

To all of you, whether you celebrate Hanukkah or the Festival of Christmas, may you have a Blessed and Happy Holiday!

The Rev. J.W.(Jim) Roberts, Grand Chaplain.

Gifts For Christmas

If you still need that special Masonic Gift for a Masonic friend, remember the Alberta Masonic ties in light or dark blue with the Masonic symbol over the Alberta Roses. These can be obtained for \$18.19 from Grand Lodge. Your Lodge Secretary has a list of other items which may be suitable for gifts and which are available through the Grand Lodge Office.

New Year’s Levee

Once again the New Year’s Levee, honouring the Grand Master, will be held in Edmonton at 12 noon on New Year’s Day. The event will be at Freemasons’ Hall and all are welcome. Saskatchewan Lodge members are to be congratulated for organising this ongoing Masonic tradition.

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W.Bro. Dick Reynolds — W.Bro. Bev Snyder

Grand Master's Itinerary

December

- 1 Corinthian Lodge No. 22 (Okotoks)
- 2 Bowmont Lodge No. 181 (Calgary)
- 8 Medicine Hat
- 10 Lochearn Lodge No. 151 (Rocky Mtn. House)
- 14 Lamont Lodge No. 94 (Lamont)
- 16 Alberta Lodge No. 3 (Fort Macleod)

January

- 4 Evergreen Lodge No. 166 (FH Edm)
- 6 Balmoral Lodge No. 185 (St. Albert)
- 12 Mount Lebanon Lodge No. 54 (Calgary)
- 14 Nanton Lodge No. 17 (Nanton)
- 18 Charity Lodge No. 67 (Lethbridge)
- 21 Wetaskiwin Lodge No. 15 (Wetaskiwin)
- 27 Forestburg Lodge No. 128

Masonic Medal Of Merit

At the last Annual Communication of Grand Lodge, the institution of a "Masonic Medal of Merit" was accepted.

The concept and logic of this action is to recognize the Master Mason "whose personal qualities and actions have been exemplified so eloquently in the General Charge."

Eligible brethren are those who have generally not sought offices in their Lodges, Districts or Grand Lodge and have not served in the office of Worshipful Master — Freemasons who have toiled behind the scenes, serving their Lodges and their communities quietly, with devotion and without stint, year after year; Freemasons who are, in effect, the strong arms, the steadfast pillars and the soul of our Masonic Order.

The Masonic Medal of Merit is now a distinctive mark of recognition for these particular brethren. A recognition which will enable us to acknowledge that we truly do have Freemasons who are morally exemplary, who personify what we hope to be, who are truly positive images of

Freemasonry in action.

Each Lodge and/or Member will have the ability to nominate a deserving Brother for this high honour. (The forms and procedures will soon be sent to each Lodge.) The procedure of nomination and selection will be outlined in that communication, along with a time frame for nominations to be received by the committee.

The successful nominee(s) will then be honoured by the Grand Lodge of Alberta A. F. & A. M. and will be awarded the Masonic Medal of Merit jewel.

1993 Masonic Rose Parade Float

Past Grand Master Stan Channon, chairman of the 1993 Masonic Rose Bowl Parade Float, which will be seen on January 1, 1993 in Pasadena, gives this update on the float:

"The float will be 55 feet long, 18 feet wide and 17 feet high in the form of three band rotundas joined by two bridges. There will be three musical groups of Masons on the float as well as representatives of the youth groups and ladies concordant bodies. The musical groups will play music composed or performed by well-known Masons, ranging from Mozart, John Philip Sousa, to Country/Western. We are in the process of selecting the riders on the float and a star attraction who will be readily recognized by the public and the TV audience."

From **Emessay Notes**

Masonic Service Association of the U.S.

Lodge Notices

The **Bulletin** has been leading the battle for better communication in the Lodges through the non-formal part of the summons. We have many significant improvements, but nothing has surpassed the communications from Gateway Lodge No. 164. Accompanying the Summons is a **TWO COLOUR**, four-sided publication, which is interesting, informative and worth reading. That is not enough — there is also an annual 24 page booklet with the full year's agenda, a calendar page for each month with important meetings already marked, a full Lodge roster and the centre pages, which can be removed, are petitions for membership.

This is an outstanding planning device and will really be of value to the members. Congratulations to Worshipful Master K. Darby and his communications team for an outstanding effort.

December

The month of December, the first month of the winter season, is the twelfth month of the year. It takes its name from a Latin word meaning "ten." A century before the birth of Christ, the year was made up of ten months, December being the last month of the year. When Julius Caesar reformed the calendar and added January and February, making December the twelfth month, its name was not changed.

An old tradition assigns the turquoise or ruby as the jewel, and the holly as the flower of this month.

from the Master's Book

Question Of The Month

Can a Lodge ask another Lodge to give a courtesy initiation to a candidate?

Answer To The Question Of The Month For October

Who were called cross-legged Masons?

An answer from R.W.Bro. Larry Watson of Calgary states that after reading the book *The Temple and The Lodge* (referred to later in this Bulletin) and then Addison's *The Knights Templars' History*, he believes the answer to be as follows.

The effigies on the tombs of the ancient Knights Templar are always represented with the legs crossed. This is in allusion to their character as Knights of the Cross. Consequently, in the sixteenth century when some Knights Templar in Scotland joined the Masonic Lodge at Stirling, they were called cross-legged Masons. R.W.Bro. Watson raises the question, Was this the way the Knight was actually placed in his tomb?

While we do not seem to have any answer to that question, an additional item offered by W.Bro. John McKechnie of Calgary is that in some cases, the Knight is shown with his legs resting on a dog. This meant that the Knight had been injured in a campaign but had died at home. There are tombs like this at Durham Cathedral.

Joke Of The Month

Someone passed along this story at a recent dinner party. We were trying to listen to several conversations at once and missed some of the more significant details.

Bursary Recipients

On September 2, 1992, six most appreciative Bursary recipients were presented with their cheques for \$1000 each at a special ceremony in Edmonton. The function was organised by R.W.Bro. J. Arthur Jones, DDGM of Northern Lights District. Among those present were those in the photo below.



Front row (l. to r.): Christine McMeckan, Concordia College (Law); Winnie Wong, University of Alberta; Tim Quach, University of Alberta (Commerce); Betty Poon, University of Alberta (Commerce); and Mark Piorecky, University of Alberta (Forestry). *Back Row (l. to r.):* R.W.Bro. Myron Lusk, Deputy Grand Master; V.W.Bro. Dennis Oberg, Grand Tyler; M.W.Bro. Jim Crawford, Grand Master; R.W.Bro. Art Jones, District Deputy Grand Master; Bro. Barry Gogal, MHEBF Chairman, NLD; and W.Bro. Graham Downey, District Secretary NLD.

It seems that one of the Lodges in New York City, for some reason, couldn't meet in its temple and, for several months, met in one of the meeting rooms of the Hotel Taft. One evening, as they gathered in their aprons and regalia, they were observed by a gentleman in the hotel lobby as they proceeded into their meeting rooms. Curious, he asked the Bell Captain what it was all about.

"Oh, that's the Masons," the Bell Captain explained.

"Masons," the man mused, "that's the outfit that's so hard to get into, isn't it?"

"You'd better believe it," said the Bell Captain, "See that guy over there with the sword — he's been knocking on the door for nine long months and they haven't let him in yet."

from *Grand Lodge of New Hampshire News*

Book Review

The Temple And The Lodge: Inside Freemasonry

by Michael Baigent and Richard Lee.

Corgi Books, 1990; 375 pages; price \$7.95 in paperback.

Baigent and Leigh have a common interest in historical mysteries and esoteric subjects and have done much research in these areas. Baigent is a novelist and short story writer and Leigh is a teacher with a Ph.D. Neither of the men is a Mason and, as might be expected, they miss the point of some Masonic practices and rituals. The authors do not write for the purpose of criticizing or exposing Freemasonry. As they explain in the preface, their purpose is to explore and understand. The basic premise of the book is that Freemasonry is a direct descendant of the ancient order of Knights Templar. This order was a powerful force

at the time of the Crusades and had tremendous influence in the affairs of Europe. Because of its wealth and intrigue, the order fell into disrepute with the ruling powers in civil government and the Roman Church. The Order of the Temple was officially dissolved by a Papal Decree on March 22, 1312. It is the contention of the authors that a large remnant of Knights Templar found their way to Scotland and reorganized. Their armed support was one of the major factors in the success of Robert the Bruce at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. From this association with Robert the Bruce came what is known today as Freemasonry. The members of the Preceptory and of the Royal Order of Scotland will find the story absorbing. From that point on, the Templars became involved with the fortunes of royalty and nobles. Because of this they found their way to England and here Freemasonry was born and grew rapidly. Through the same association with the ruling classes and the exile of a

variety of kings, queens and princes, the order found its way to France and became rapidly entrenched in the politics of France, Spain and other areas. Inevitably, the movement came into conflict with the Roman Church.

From the story of the involvement of Freemasonry with rulers and members of the army, it naturally followed that the order rapidly made its appearance in America when the colonies were settled. The influence of Freemasonry is traced through the War of Independence to the Declaration of Independence, the American Constitution and the planning of the Capital City of Washington.

While the book makes absorbing reading, for the Mason there are many unanswered questions. While there are some vague references to "Operative" and "Speculative" Masonry, there is no clear explanation as to how and when the "Speculative" branch developed. The authors content themselves with stating that Freemasonry appeared but offer no detailed explanation of how it appeared. There is no real explanation of the growth of two Grand Lodges and how they developed.

The arrival of the United Grand Lodge of England has little attention. Mention is made of the Grand Lodge of Scotland and the Grand Lodge of Ireland but no attention is paid to their origin.

One of the basic principles of Freemasonry is that a Mason should practice outside the Lodge those ideals that he learns within the Lodge. Because the writers do not understand this, they are inclined to point to the Lodge as being involved when the brother, in his private avocation acts in a Masonic manner. Sir William Howe was a Mason. He was also a General in the British army during the War of Independence.

Howe, many times, acted towards his opponents in a true Masonic fashion. This does not prove that the Freemason's Lodge was involved in the War of Independence. The story makes fascinating reading and the Mason is proud that a Mason of Howe's stature took the teachings of the Lodge to heart. Another intriguing part of the book is the account of the development of the Legend of Hiram Abiff. The writers point out, quite correctly, that the legend has within it Hebrew and Islamic influences. The whole legend is an accretion of many sources and is not strictly biblical. They appear to assume that such knowledge may weaken it from a Mason's point of view. They fail to understand that it is not the literal interpretation that is meaningful to the Mason. The teaching is the important issue.

The writers also are preoccupied with the skull and crossbones which was a symbol with the Knights Templar and is also associated with the Masonic Lodge. Again they do not understand the symbolism and fail to relate the skull and crossbones to the bright morning star that shines in the East. The book makes a tremendous contribution to Masonic research and should be on a list of essential reading. However it must be read with a critical mind. Masons should pay especial attention to this quotation from the introduction. After commenting on the criticism that the Freemason's Lodge is experiencing today, they write, "At the same time, it must be acknowledged that Freemasonry itself has done little to improve its own image in the public eye. Indeed, by its obsessive secrecy and its stubborn

defensiveness, it has only reinforced the conviction it has something to hide. How little it does in fact have to hide will become apparent in the course of this book. If anything, it has more to be proud of than it does to conceal".

Submitted by M.W.Bro. Jack Collett.

M.W.Bro. Collett also submitted the following note:

When I went to the bookstore to pick up the book *The Temple and the Lodge*, the clerk said that she hoped I would enjoy the book and that there were several books on the Masonic Lodge to be published this Fall and she would keep me informed when they came in. She also told me that there was a female student at the University of Calgary who was doing a research project on Masonry, and planned to write her Master's dissertation on Masonry thereby exposing the whole conspiracy. She was well ahead in her research when "THEY" told her she had better stop — or else. So the young woman had to change her research subject. I told the clerk that I was most interested and if she would give me the student's name I would get in touch with her and help her finish the work. She didn't know the student's name, since a friend had told the clerk the story. I would be very interested to know if anyone who reads the *Grand Lodge Bulletin* has had any contact with this particular student. If anyone does, I would like to talk to her. I would also appreciate knowing the identity of "THEY."

Accentuate The Positive

by Stanley F. Maxwell, Sovereign Grand Commander
Northern Jurisdiction, A. & A. S. R.

"Some years ago, song writer Johnny Mercer wrote a very popular song entitled, *Accentuate the Positive*. The first few lines were as follows: 'You've got to accentuate the positive; Eliminate the negative; Latch on to the affirmative; Don't mess with Mr. In-Between.' This could be a great lesson for Freemasonry today. Freemasonry is a positive philosophy. There is no room for negativism nor anything in between. Freemasonry started as a Craft of builders and was eminently successful, both as an operative Craft and later as a speculative craft. Today we hear remarks degrading our organization as a 'dying' craft. Let us 'accentuate the positive' and prove the rumour mongers to be false prophets. Our early leaders, profound thinkers, saw in Freemasonry an opportunity to perpetuate the high principals, great motivation, and idealistic concepts of the master workmen in the Craft Lodges by adapting them to the building of men. They used the builders' tools as symbols of the positive aspects of life that they sought to teach their followers. This concept of the builders, striving for perfection, is still at the heart of our Masonic teachings. We hear complaints that our youths are not joining our Fraternity as they did in former years. Can it be, if the premise is correct, that it is because we have shown so little interest in it? Our regular attendance in a Craft Lodge — we could easily invite and encourage just one additional brother to attend with us and again we would be pursuing the positive approach to solving what has been a problem in many areas. Let us resolve that, starting now... we will 'eliminate the negative, latch on to the affirmative, and not mess with Mr. In-Between'."