



DGL NEWS

DISTRICT GRAND LODGE of CENTRAL SOUTH AFRICA

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SEASON'S GREETINGS from the RWDGM

"I have always thought of Christmas time, when it comes around, as a good time ; a kind, forgiving, charitable time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on their journeys." Charles Dickens was obviously not a Freemason, if he were , he would have known that it is the nature of our creed to have that spirit within our hearts every day of our lives. Yet it does no harm to remind ourselves of this fact. In that vein , I would exhort all of our Brethren to be cognizant of those less fortunate around them and spread the cement of true fellowship and Brotherhood to those who would really benefit from it.

It is essential that we celebrate this most joyous of seasons , take pleasure in the much needed break from our various business and private commitments and for the truly fortunate , surround ourselves with family and friends. This past year is worthy of celebrating as it has been outstanding as far as the number of new Initiates to our Order is concerned , may this trend continue and increase in the coming year.

To the Staff , Office Bearers and Brethren of District Grand Lodge, to the Residents and Staff of Roslin Park , to the Brethren of our Daughter Lodges and to those of our Sister Constitutions , I wish a Merry Christmas , a Happy Chanukah and a prosperous New Year.

May Peace be your Christmas Gift and your Blessing all year through .

Bro. R.G. Law
RWDGM

Greetings Brethren.

Once again the year is almost over. As this is our final issue for the year, I wish all our readers and their families all the best over the Festive Season and good luck for 2009.

To subscribe, or to unsubscribe, just send an e-mail to jrhoda@absamail.co.za [Rhoda is my sister/secretary] with your request in the subject line, and that will do the trick.

Once again, here goes and enjoy reading!

Neville Boner.
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hi Neville, I cannot agree more with the article written by Bro. Zak Theron. It is an insightful and accurate appraisal of factors which may determine the choice of a prospective candidate . The Spanish Author , Miguel de Cervantes quoted, " Show me the company you keep and I will tell you what you are." Brother Theron's opinions are refreshing and most welcome. I'll sign off now as another Cervantes quote states." A closed mouth catches no flies".

Regards, **Bro. Bob Law RWDGM**

WE NEED BETTER ACCESS TO BOOKS

For some time now, Bro. Neville has been making my life difficult. Whenever I see him these days, instead of a **Masonic** handshake, he holds out his hand palm upward, and demands a book review. That wouldn't be a problem if we weren't so completely at the mercy of the booksellers. We only see Masonic texts if they deign to import them. Amazondotcom is now unwilling to trade with South Africa because of all the thefts at **OR Tambo** airport. **And Exclusive Books's mark up is standard at 48%.** Enter my professional training. There seems to have been a reason for my being called to Librarianship. I had a word with a reputable book dealer, whom I have known professionally for more than ten years. His firm, Praesidium Books, has been a major supplier of engineering and technical books to academia and the private sector for a long time. Praesidium has also proven itself to me as a rare entity in South Africa: a business which is willing to admit when it has had a Murphy attack, and to make right. The deal is this. We can order any book through Praesidium and they will deliver within a standard two

weeks – airmail. The markup on publisher's price will be a maximum of 35%. Continual feedback on the progress of orders is standard procedure with Praesidium Books. For my part, I have undertaken to identify publishing houses for Praesidium.

Of course there are catches:

- The exchange rate at the time of the transaction
- Many smaller American publishers respond reluctantly to orders from outside the United States. This might impact on the two week standard.

Let's give the arrangement a trial run to see if it is workable. Your book orders don't necessarily have to be purely Masonic. Contact Bro. Neville by e-mail with the title you want to order, and I will sort out publishing details and pass on the order to Praesidium. My role will **only** be that of co-ordinator, so that, if traffic is high enough, I can get additional benefits for us (like titles for the District library, for instance). *By Bro. D Maclymont, PM Lodge Alberton*

ON THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTMAS

There is no biblical injunction to commemorate the birth of Jesus. Just as well, because nobody knows for sure exactly when Jesus was born. Only two of the Gospels – Matthew and Luke - have nativity stories. Therefore, all the facets of Christmas have their origins in extra-biblical sources.

In paganism, to be precise. In ancient pagan times, the last day of winter in the Northern Hemisphere was celebrated as the night that the Great Mother Goddess gives birth to the baby Sun God. It is also called Yule, the day a huge log is added to a bonfire, around which everyone would dance and sing to awaken the sun from its long winter sleep. As luck would have it, the log sometimes took as many as 12 days to burn out, thereby giving ample time for frolicking.

In 325AD, Constantine the Great, the Roman emperor, introduced Christmas as an immovable feast on 25 December. He also introduced Sunday as a holy day in a new 7-day week, and introduced movable feasts (Easter). In 354AD, Bishop Liberius of Rome officially ordered his members to celebrate the birth of Jesus on 25 December.

In Roman times, it became the celebrations honouring Saturnus (the harvest god) and Mithras (the ancient god of light), a form of sun worship that had come to Rome from Syria a century before with the cult of *Sol Invictus*. It announced that winter is not forever, that life continues, and an invitation to stay in good spirit. Today, in the Greek and Russian orthodox churches, Christmas is celebrated 13 days after the 25th, which is also referred to as the Epiphany or Three Kings Day. This is the day it is believed the wise men finally found Jesus in the manger.

Here is a brief summary of the origins of some of the most endearing aspects of Christmas:

Father Christmas. Santa Claus is based on the patron saint of children, Saint Nicholas (270-310AD), who became one of the youngest bishops ever at age 17. At age 30 he became the Bishop of Myra, a port town on the Mediterranean Sea, that is part of modern-day Turkey. He hailed from a rich home and became well known for supporting the needy. He would often be seen, clad in red and white bishop's robes and riding on a donkey, handing out gifts to children. The image of Father Christmas that we know today was introduced by artist H. Sundblom in advertisements for the Coca-Cola Company.

The Reindeer. Long ago, Father Christmas and the elves discovered the special formula of Magical Reindeer Dust which make them fly. This dust is sprinkled on each of the reindeer shortly before they leave on Christmas eve. Rudolph is the most famous reindeer. He is the leader of the other 8, whose names are Blitzen, Comet, Cupid, Dancer, Dasher, Donder, Prancer, and Vixen. In 1925, it was discovered that there are no reindeer at the North Pole. There are, however, lots of reindeer in Lapland, Finland. In 1927, the great secret of Santa's address was revealed by Markus Rautio. He declared that Father Christmas lives on Lapland's Korvatunturi Mountain.

Christmas Tree. It is told that St. Boniface, a 7th century monk from Crediton, Devonshire, England, one day came upon a group of pagans gathered around a big oak tree about to sacrifice a child to the god Thor. To stop the sacrifice and save the child's life Boniface felled the tree with one mighty blow of his fist. In its place grew a small fir tree. The saint told the pagan worshipers that the tiny fir was the Tree of Life and stood for the eternal life of Christ.

Mistletoe. Mistletoe was held sacred by the Norse, the Celtic Druids and the North American Indians. The Druid priests would cut mistletoe from an oak tree with a golden sickle. The branches had to be caught before they touched the ground. They then divided the branches into many sprigs and distributed them to the people, who hung them over doorways as protection against thunder, lightning and other evils. The folklore continued over the centuries. It was believed that a sprig placed in a baby's crib kept out evil spirits.

Merry Christmas! (and, sometimes, a happy New Year) Geseënde Kersfees (Afrikaans), Idah Saidan wah Sanah Jadidah (Arabic), Kung His Hsin Nien bing Chu Shen Tan (Mandarin Chinese), Vrolijk Kersfeest (Dutch), Joyeux Noel (French), Nollaig chridheil agus Bliadhna mhath ur (Gaelic), Froehliche Weihnachten (German), Kala Christouyenna (Greek), Mo'adim Leshimka. Chena tova (Hebrew), Shub Naya Baras (Hindi), Nollaig Shona Dhuit or Nodlaig mhaith chugnat (Irish), Buene Feste Natalizie (Italian), Feliz Natal e Feliz Ano Novo (Portuguese), Srozhdestvom Kristovym (Russian), Nollaig chridheil huibh (Scots Gaelic), Feliz Navidad (Spanish), Nadolig Llawen (Welsh). *By Bro. Zak Theron P.M. Unity Lodge, 1006*

POEM

A Masonic Christmas Story

(With Apologies to Clement C. Moore)

By Wor. Bro. C.S.L. (Laurie) Lund & V.W.Bro. R.G. (Ron) Dixon
[1997]

"Twas nigh afore Christmas at the Freemason's Hall
(Civil Services' regular), the order was tall;
Reams from Grand Lodge, a notice of motion,
A ballot or two and a pause for devotion
To brethren departed of the year '94,
Plus a candidate who would soon walk the floor.

Our own Junior Warden, when faced with the crunch
Said, "Let's all call off and go upstairs for lunch."
The Master replied, as Masters all do,
Intoned in a voice reserved for the few,
"Before we partake of the fellowship there
Is the summons to read and a ballot to clear.
Not to mention the candidate, he's quaking with dread
At the stories of whether the goat has been fed."

The Master, exhorting the brethren to work,
A firm grip on the gavel, he turned with a jerk
To the Secretary, putting a shine to each lens,
Polished both to a lustre and reached for his pens.

"It's half past the hour," the Master then winced
At the stuff left to do and remained unconvinced
That the evening would go as smooth as he'd hoped
Since he'd gone to the trouble of feeding the goat.
"Though the ballot's behind us, the notice is gone,
Grand Lodge is finished, the work still goes on."

The Inner Guard knew as the Tyler did too
That knock, knock and knock was the right thing to do.
Sidebenchers slept soundly and were only stirred
When the crack of the candidate's knuckles was heard
The slight groan that penetrated lips that were pursed
Appeared to the Deacon as just a light curse.

Onward they travel, the guide and the man
Seeking truth and enlightenment wherever they can
The secrets were given, the grip and the token,
Obligation was offered, the words then were spoken.
Though never, not once, was one heard to gloat
As the Entered Apprentice never did meet the goat.

The evening now ended, the candidate clear
Junior Warden entreats from the South us to hear
The oath we look forward to right from the start,
"Happy to meet and sorry to part."

Christmas had come to Civil Service that night
As men came together under the light
Giving freely of time as a labour of love
As we bent to the task of the Most High above.

To Stewards, to Deacons, the Tyler, the 'Guard
The Wardens, the Master, who all work so hard,
To Past Masters steady, Sidebenchers too
To Treasurer, Chaplain, the D. of C. who
Help carry the Lodge, year in and year out
To your family extended, a warm Christmas time.
Thank the G.A.O.T.U. we've run out of rhyme!

POINTS TO PONDER

Somewhere there's someone who dreams of your smile,
and finds in your presence that life is worth while.
So when you are lonely, remember it's true
Somebody somewhere is thinking of you.

- *K. Blackburn*

NOTICE:

QUOTABLE QUOTES:

"We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light."

~Plato

"No man is rich enough to buy back his past." -
Oscar Wilde

This is the final test of a gentleman: his respect for those who can be of no possible service to him.

-William Lyon Phelps, 1865 - 1943

What you bring away from the Bible depends to some extent on what you carry to it.

-Oliver Wendell Holmes

It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1803 - 1883

WEBSITES TO CHECK OUT:

A selection of masonic e-mags from around the world:

www.uglq.org.au/zone_files/Quarterly_Magazine/freemason_nov_o8.pdf

<http://www.masonicworld.com/newsletter/nl/Mar2005.htm>

http://hawthornefortitude200.com/joomla/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1

<http://www.bonisteelml.org/>

ALWAYS IN OUR MEMORY

<p>Bro. Abraham (Abe) Faure Kleinhans, PM Lodge Bedford and a Past District Grand Almoner.</p>

WHO WERE THE TWO SAINTS JOHN?

Lodges were anciently dedicated to King Solomon because he is said to have been our first Grand Master, but in many countries Masons dedicate their Lodges to St John the Baptist and St John the Evangelist, who are said to have been two eminent patrons of Masonry. There is represented in these Lodges a certain point within a circle flanked by two perpendicular parallel lines, representing the two Saints. Above them is the Volume of the Sacred Law. The point represents the individual brother; the circle, the boundary line of his duty, beyond which he is never to suffer his passions, interests, or prejudices, to betray him. In going around the circle we necessarily touch on the two parallel lines, as well as the VSL; and while a Mason keeps himself circumscribed with these due bounds, it is impossible that he should materially err. The festival days set aside for these two saints by Freemasonry are June 24, for Saint John the Baptist and December 27, for Saint John the Evangelist. Both of these dates coincide with the Summer and Winter Solstices respectively. The parallel lines which border the circle are also said symbolize these two solstices.

According to Joseph Fort Newton, "History does not tell us why the Saints John were selected as the patron saints of Freemasonry. Whatever the facts may be, surely it is in accordance with the fitness of things that we honour these two names, John the Baptist, the stern prophet of righteousness, and John the Evangelist, the teacher of Love. Righteousness and Love--those two words do not fall short of telling the whole duty of a man and a Mason." However, there does seem to be a touch of parochialism in the choice of two biblical personalities.

Who was John the Baptist?

The four Gospels, the Books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, as found in the Bible, all describe this man in almost exactly the same language. The Baptist, who was a cousin to Jesus Christ, is spoken of as "A voice crying in the wilderness," whose purpose was to, "Prepare the way of the Lord and make his paths straight." He must indeed have been an important man for all four Gospels to refer to him with exactly the same terminology, which is quite rare. In the Gospel of Luke Jesus says of John, "Among them that are born of women, there has not risen any greater than John the Baptist." High praise indeed.

For his refusal to change himself or his message, John the Baptist was imprisoned and beheaded by Herod. The fidelity and integrity of John are echoed in the legend of Hiram Abiff, which probably explains his choice as a Patron Saint of the Masonic Order.

And John the Evangelist? John was the son of Zebedee and Salome, and the brother of James the Greater. In the Gospels the two brothers are often called after their father "the sons of Zebedee" and received from Christ the honourable title of Boanerges, i.e. "sons of thunder." Originally they were fishermen and fished with

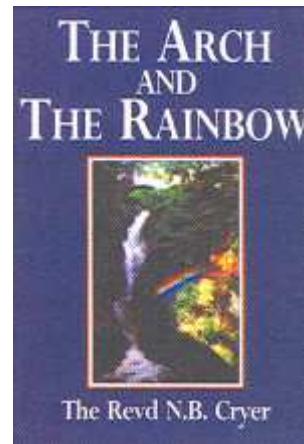
their father in the Lake of Genesareth. They were called by Christ from the circle of John the Baptist's followers, together with Peter and Andrew, to become his disciples. The first disciples returned with Jesus from the Jordan to Galilee and apparently both John and the others remained for some time with Jesus. Yet after the second return from Judea, John and his companions went back again to their trade of fishing until he and they were called by Christ to definitive discipleship.

In his writings the Evangelist develops the theme that the Word and the Light are linked, and goes on to bring Truth and Love in as additional links of the same chain. The ideals of Brotherly Love and Fellowship are explored extensively by the Evangelist. Also of Masonic interest is the story of how John, being far advanced in years, was carried into the assembly on a "stretcher," and would simply say, "My little children, love one another." Quite a profound statement to a Freemason.

There we have two Saints John, described Masonically as parallel figures. Both of impeccable character and strong in resolve. But whereas the one is dogmatic and rigid, the other is intellectual and esoteric. In both we find the integrity and inflexible fidelity so common to Masonic teaching, but the manner of teaching those virtues varies between the two.

By Bro. Zak Theron P.M. Unity Lodge, 1006

BIBLIOPHILE-Book review



The Arch and the Rainbow

**Revd N. B. Cryer,
Addlestone (Ian Allan
Regalia), 1996. £24.95.**

This is, in my opinion, an important contribution to the continuing investigations into the origins of Freemasonry. Neville Cryer, for many years now a member of the research lodge Quatuor Coronati, has contributed a number of papers probing into masonic history. In particular, he has adopted the approach of looking at ritual elements remaining in the disparate modern degrees, both within and beyond the Craft, and posing the question of whether these might not be residues of some earlier more comprehensive and unified ritual structure, one with its roots deep within ancient operative practice. It is this approach that he adopts in *The Arch and the Rainbow*.

During a detailed examination of the history and structure

of the Mark and Royal Ark Mariner degrees, Cryer poses an intriguing suggestion: originally Freemasonry may have worked a seven degree system. A system which arose from a union between two distinct masonic traditions – the operative and the speculative - sometime prior to the 1720s. There is early evidence to support this, one example being an eighteenth century Irish Mark certificate illustrating a seven-stepped progression for masonic advancement. The earliest Scottish reference to the Mark Degree in a minute of 1770 lists a seven degree system: Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, Master, Mark Master Mason, Excellent, Super-Excellent and Royal Arch Mason.

But support is not proof and one methodological criticism which can be made is that equal weight seems to be given to evidential documents deriving from the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The latter may be derivative from the former, and there is no reason to assume that our nineteenth century predecessors had greater access to original data than we do today.

It is to be hoped that this book will receive wide distribution and spur a new generation of masonic researchers into further investigating the origins of Freemasonry.

Michael Baigent

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RITUAL: THE WORKING TOOLS OF A TRAVELLING MASON

I now present to you the working tools of a travelling mason; they are the Common Jack, the AA Card and the cell phone.

The Common Jack is the first tool placed in the hands of the travelling brother, to enable him to lift his car and change the tyre, while soiling his clothes.

The AA card is a small piece of plastic, meaningless by itself, but powerful when the first tool proves unsatisfactory. Though recognised by various drivers under different appellations, it is yet admitted by them all that no towing can be done without it.

The Cell Phone is an annoying tool, expensive in its use and yet an evil necessity. It is calculated to have its battery die just when it is about to be engaged with the second tool, and the mightiest curses have been created by its aid.

But as we are not travelling masons, but rather, social and local, or visiting brethren, we apply these tools to our Masonic Graces.

In that sense, from the Common Jack we learn that it is more important to lift up our brethren than it is to worry about soiled trousers or a slight inconvenience.

From the AA card we learn that help, support, and back-up are of vital importance. It is more important to help one another than to try to go it alone.

Also, we learn that team work is the only way to grow. Although the lodge may be strong and the members may be dedicated, it is all in vain if we do not support one another.

From the Cell Phone we learn that communication is necessary to achieve camaraderie, that devotion is achieved through repeated and caring conversations alone, and nothing short of familiarity and support is necessary to induce the virtue of brotherly love, encourage the lodge, and raise membership from obscurity.

On the whole we deduce the following moral, that visiting, meant as support, aided by team work and prompted by brotherly love will finally overcome all our hurdles, raise attendance through association, and promote contentment in the lodge of Freemasonry.

MASONIC DIARY

DECEMBER 2008			
1	Towerby	1st Degree	Rewlatch
2	King Solomon	2nd Degree	Germiston Boksburg
2	Ophirton/Heredom	2nd Degree	North
		Xmas	
3	Turffontein	Dinner	Rewlatch
4	Balmoral	Installation	Olifantsfontein
4	Randfontein		Randfontein
		Xmas	Boksburg
4	Athol	Dinner	North
4	Caledonian	Lecture	Germiston
10	Alpha Crucis	Installation	Rewlatch
11	Golden Thistle	1st Degree	Park Lane