

THE KEYSTONE



Publication of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons
of British Columbia and Yukon

The Grand Chaplain's Christmas Message

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My Companions,

A family with a little girl was braving the wild holiday shopping crowds. Their tempers grew increasingly short; until, the little girl, almost in tears, was sent to an early bed. As she knelt to pray she was heard to say, "Lord, forgive us our Christmases as we forgive those who Christmas against us." This cute little story reminds us to keep our perspective during the holidays and not miss the real meaning of Christmas.

A few months ago I read Phillip Yancey's new book, *Rumours of Another World*, sub-titled "What On Earth Are We Missing?" It is an excellent book, which in one part the author explains that as we learn more about the visible (physical) world around us; we seem to know less about the invisible (spiritual) world. Albert Einstein said, "The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed."

Recently, I was listening was listening to several brothers discuss how some jurisdictions are making hundreds and thousands of one day masons. A Grand Lodge officer remarked that he was opposed to the practice. He believed that Masonry should not be diluting its ritual and requirements to become a mason, but strengthening all our Masonic values and requirements. I agree, but I fear Masonry may have traveled too far into the physical realm and lost touch with the spiritual. Did I just say spiritual and Masonry in the same sentence? Yes, for all those who want to believe that Masonry is a religion, it does have a spiritual side, but it is not a religion. The Bible teaches that we



can learn about God by looking at the world around us; however, that does not make bird watching a religion, any more than attending church makes you a Christian. In studying about the beginnings of Masonry we find that it originally had a great deal more Christianity than it does today.

(continued on page 3)



M.E.C.
George W. Eaton

**Royal Arch Masons
of
British Columbia
And Yukon**

**Board of
General
Purposes**

**9 April, 2005
Roberts Creek, BC**

In This Issue:

Page No

Pythagoras, Geometrician & Philosopher

2

Grand Chaplain's message, cont.

3

The Astronomy of the Royal Arch

4

National Treasure

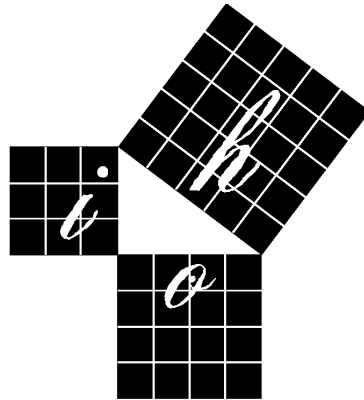
4

Pythagoras, Geometrician and Philosopher

Not only was Pythagoras one of the foremost of the ancient Greek philosophers and geometers, but his work figures importantly in that of the Craft. The Royal Arch, itself has to do with geometric forms such as the square, the right angle, the triangle, the circle and the cube. Our work also refers to the five regular Platonic bodies: the tetrahedron (or pyramid), the hexahedron (or cube), the octahedron, the dodecahedron and the icosahedron, figures of 4, 6, 8, 12 and 20 sides

Born at Samos in about 568 BC, he distinguished himself early-on in the Olympic Games, winning a prize for wrestling. In later travels around the eastern Mediterranean to learn philosophy and religion, he met with the prophet Ezekiel and may have met with Daniel as well.

Upon his return to Greece, Pythagoras established himself as an educator at his own academy. Aspiring pupils faced a difficult examination and were made to deposit all of their worldly property in the common fund of the society. The apprenticeship was a five-year period, after which there were three degrees to be taken: the *Acousmatici*, the *Mathematici* and the *Pythagoreans*. On completing the final degree, the graduate was clothed in a white garment and fully instructed in the secret doctrine of a Pythagorean.



Not unlike Freemasons, Pythagoras' students were distinguished for their reverence for the deity and their love for their fellow human beings. Their assemblies were arranged due East and West. And they knew their fellow Pythagoreans wherever they went by a system of signs of recognition.

Among his many fields of endeavour, geometry is the one for which Pythagoras is best remembered. He believed in the universal influence of numbers, and explained the principal geometric figures in relation to numbers: The point is represented by one, the line by two, the plane by three, and the solid by four.

His fascination with numbers even led him to an important revelation in one of the other liberal arts and sciences, that of music, where he discovered the relationship of musical intervals to the lengths of strings of the same tension.

The symbols adopted by Pythagoras in his secret instruction were principally derived from geometry. The right an-

gle was an emblem of morality and justice. The equilateral triangle was a symbol of God, the essence of light and truth. The square referred to the divine mind. The cube was the symbol for the mind of man, after it had been purified by piety and acts of devotion. The point within a circle was a symbol of the universe. All of these are so familiar as Masonic symbols that it is no wonder that Pythagoras is often referred to by Freemasons as an "ancient Brother."

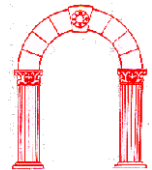
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Castells, F.deP. 1927. *Antiquity of the Holy Royal Arch: The supreme degree in Freemasonry.*

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From an address to Manoah Lodge No. 141, by VEC. John McIntosh, 10 April, 1999



Grand Chaplain's Message

This has been slowly removed with the passing of time. In the Royal Arch however, we are not removing the Scripture from our ritual as much as we are ignoring it. I and a friend, who is also an Evangelical pastor, took all our Royal Arch degrees together. We were astounded at the amount of Scripture contained in the MMM, MEM, and HRA degrees. Just as amazing was the fact that almost no one doing the degree work knew it was there. Once a very well known companion asked me to explain to him the meaning behind the words used to gain entrance into our chapter rooms. When I explained he was astonished, and I was subsequently asked to give the same explanation to several chapters. Our generation seems to be the first intent on trying to build a society without God, and this affects every part of our lives; from the attempt to change Christmas to the winter festival to the slow erosion of the spiritual side of our ritual.

Let's look in the Bible and see if we find an example. Hosea 2:1 says, "*Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah.*" All Royal Arch Masons are familiar with this passage of Scripture, but few know the les-

son it teaches. Hosea was God's prophet to the people of Israel, and God instructed Hosea to give an example to the people about their wickedness. Hosea was instructed to go marry a prostitute and have children. In this lesson Hosea is a symbol of God and the prostitute a symbol of the people of Israel. After the marriage the prostitute left Hosea for another man, but Hosea still loved his wife, so he ransomed her back and they eventually had children. Hosea named them 'Lo-Ammi' (Not my people) and 'Lo-Ruhamah' (No more mercy) symbolizing that God was tired of the evil behavior of the people of Israel. The lesson continued when God has Hosea change their names to 'Ammi' (My people) and 'Ruhamah' (More mercy). This is a beautiful illustration of God's holiness, justice, and forgiveness. God will not permit man to sin without punishment, but God in His mercy will provide a way to save mankind and make them His people. This is the meaning of Christmas and I found it not only in the Bible but in the ritual of the Holy Royal Arch.

Søren Kierkegaard told a story about a rich man riding alone in his carriage at night. Inside the carriage a small light illuminated the interior, and this small lighted area was the rich man entire world. Outside however, the peasant driving the carriage is exposed to all the beauty of the stars in the heavens illuminating the cold dark sky. One mans world was the small physical world illuminated to arms length, while the others is all the glory of the universe that God created.

Our Grand First Principle asked the question, "Will you?" Permit me to ask the same question, Will you look for the true meaning of Christmas? Will you make 2005 the year you find the meaning behind our ritual? Will you strive to serve God and your brothers, finding the spiritual side of your existence? Will you?

May you have a Merry Christmas and Joyful New Year.

VEC Rev. Dr.
Joel J. Chiri
Grand Chaplain

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The Astronomy of the Royal Arch

Astronomy numbers among one of the most important of the Liberal Arts and Sciences which the craftsmen are asked to study. One of our twin pillars is surmounted by a celestial sphere which is a map of the heavens. The sun is, of course a frequent symbol in our work, particularly in the Royal Arch. The moon, too, figures regularly in our lessons. The Lodge itself is a representation of the world, whose two pillars are compared to the two columns which the ancients supposed to support the very arch of heaven. And reference is made in some jurisdictions to the astronomical circle which borders the sun. In fact, that astronomical circle is a Zodiacal circle, one which was commemorated by placing it over the entrance to

the Freemason's Hall in London in 1775.

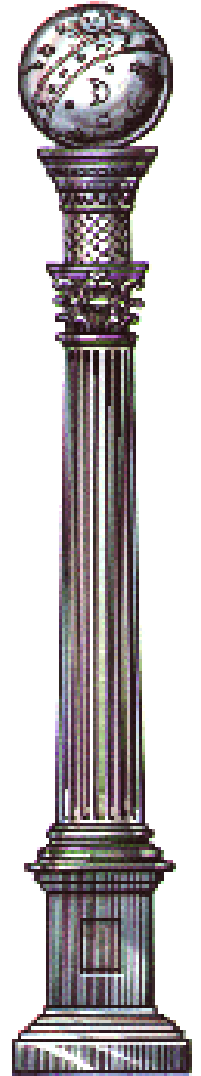
Consider, as well, our 12 banners: Within a Royal Arch Chapter, there are 12 ensigns on staves, one for each of the 12 tribes of Israel. The depictions are of "the distinctive bearings of the 12 tribes of Israel." The Jewish Encyclopedia observes that the constellations corresponding to the 12 zodiacal signs represent the 12 tribes of Israel. Under such an arrangement the 4 distinguishing bearings of the principle armies would be arranged in this way: with the *Leo* of Judah in the East would be the *Virgo* of Issacher and the *Cancer* of Zebulum. With the *Taurus* of Ruben in the South would be the *Gemini* of Simeon and the *Aries* of

Gad. With the standard of Ephraim, *Aquarius*, in the South would stand the *Pisces* of Manasses and the *Capricornus* of Benjamin. And along side the *Scorpio* of Dan would be arranged the *Sagittarius* of Asher and the *Libra* of Nephthali. The connection makes even more sense when it is considered that the Babylonian pantheon was zodiacal and must have had a certain amount of influence on the tribes of Israel.

Sources:

Castells, F.deP. 1927. Antiquity of the Holy Royal Arch: The supreme degree in Freemasonry.

MacKey, Albert G., 1949. Lexicon and History of Freemasonry.



National Treasure

The story of the Knights Templar and their connection with Freemasonry are the basis for a modern day search for the hidden treasures of the Knights Templar by a family who were entrusted with the secret clue to its whereabouts by Templar descendents.

Starring Nicholas Cage, and reminiscent of the Indiana Jones series of films, this new feature film is a must see for all Freemasons, particularly those of us familiar with the York Rite. The film is currently playing throughout North America.

