



GEMS OF PURPOSE

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 1

APRIL 2010

A MASONIC NEWSLETTER

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The Two Saints John

By Rev. Sidney E. Harris, M.P.S.

Dates to Remember

- April 23 & 24—*Conclusion of The Nashville Valley Scottish Rite Reunion, Grand Lodge Building of Tennessee*
- May 20—*Stated Meeting Bethpage Lodge*
- June 17—*Stated Meeting Bethpage Lodge*

We know from the Gospel record that John the Baptist was born six months before Jesus, so tradition has set his birthday as June 24th. Legend has set John the Evangelist's for December 27th. They were exact opposite in temperament: the Baptist an extrovert and man of action, and the Evangelist an introvert and man of thought, meditation and vision.

These extremes of temperament and their blending in various degrees swing the circle of human dispositions. The world needs such extreme types and the merging of the two types in various proportions.

The Baptist, son of Zacharias the Priest and Elisabeth, a cousin of Mary, was promised to the father when he was ministering in the Holy of Holies in the Temple; the parents had given up all hope of ever having a child.

The Baptist was a Judean by birth and his character partook somewhat of the harsh, foreboding beauty of the bare, inhospitable, desert-like Judean hills. The Evangelist was the son of Salome who was believed to be Mary's sister, so he was Jesus' cousin. While the Baptist was his second cousin and was born in the With year of Tiberius Caesar. As son of a priest he would be well versed in the law and the Prophets. His parents died when he was quite young, so, instead of following in his father's footsteps, he withdrew to the desert and in solitude formulated a creed. Wild beasts, snakes and scorpions were his companions, the open sky his roof, locusts and wild honey his food. Often he saw the brush on fire and snakes and other wild creatures fleeing before the flames.

His mission: clad in the simplest garments, subsisting on the simplest fare, exposed to wind and sun, he preached in the sabbatical year when the fields were left unsown and the soil's harvest was the common property of all.

He stood a heroic figure, splendidly built, of great strength, with bright flashing eyes and a deep resonant voice. Crowds flocked to him; there was an electric expectancy; not only the common people but Scribes, Pharisees, and Herod's soldiers eagerly listened to his message. Repent and be baptized ! Judgment is coming upon the willful evil-doer. Jesus was baptized by John who did it very reluctantly. He felt oh so unworthy in the presence of his great kinsman.

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The Two Saints John

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The Baptist preached the coming of God's Kingdom and upon the second appearance of Jesus he said: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

Herod wondered about John. What had he come to do? Organize a new sect? Stir up a revolt against Rome? He was very popular; even some of Herod's soldiers were converts. After Jesus' ministry began, John began to wane in power. He had come to prepare the way: he was the pathfinder, the trailblazer.

John's condemnation of Herod's incest and adultery reached the Palace. Herod's unlawful wife persuaded Herod to imprison John. Herod Antipas was one of the sons of Herod who was misnamed the Great. He did not hate John but was nettled by him; he failed to understand his popularity. While John was in prison Jesus testified that John was not merely a prophet but the greatest of the Prophets.

John's fierce fanatical zeal was perhaps needed to stir the people and prepare them for Jesus' message; but it was certain to make his life a short and unpleasant one when he rebuked sin so boldly. Herod discarded Aretu, daughter of an Arab king, and took Herodias, his brother's wife. The discarded wife's father promptly declared war. Herod's soldiers were not very enthusiastic about the campaign, so Herod had to get help from Rome.

Herod's birthday was a drunken orgy and Herodias would not appear before the drunken men; but her daughter Salome danced lasciviously and pleased the vicious drunken king. On oath he promised to give her whatever she asked. Her mother told her to ask for the head of John the Baptist. Why did Herodias make this request? Was it because John expressed disapproval? Other in the court circle also did so.

Herodias was a mature woman, jaded in heart and body. She was attracted by the vigorous body and mind, the flashing eyes and deep, musical voice, and the fearless tongue, the compelling personality who knew her for what she was and despised her. So she had the man executed whom she could not drive from her mind.

John the Evangelist was the cousin of Jesus and son of Salome and Zebedee, a well-to-do fisherman who kept hired servants and was well known to the High Priest.

He was a Galilean; yes, of Galilee with its soft verdant luxurious hills. Its valleys jeweled with lilies of a great variety of colors and shades, the beautiful lake, with the snow-capped Lebanons in the distance, the invigorating breezes: all helped to form John's character.

He was the beloved disciple, the center of the inner circle. At times impulsive, impetuous, vindictive, as when he wanted to call down fire from Heaven. Rebuked those healing in Jesus' name: was ambitious for the first place. At last supper asked who should betray Jesus. Was with Jesus in the garden when he was arrested. Stood with the women at the Cross. Jesus committed his mother to him. First at the tomb. With the seven at Galilee. First two say: It is the Lord! After the day of Pentecost preached in Greece but mostly in Ephesus. Persecuted by Domitian. 81-90 banished to island of Patmos, now nearly treeless, indented by a good harbor. It was a place of exile for lower-class criminals. Worked in the salt mines for eighteen months. There wrote the Book of Revelations. In the cave is a monastery where tourists are shown what is supposed to be the embalmed body of St. John. In the year of the accession of Nerva he was released and returned to Ephesus where he lived until the reign of Trajan. He wrote three Epistles addressing them to an Elect Lady.

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Scriptures for a Studying Mason

Proverbs 8:10-14

Pro 8:10 Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold.

Pro 8:11 For wisdom *is* better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.

Pro 8:12 I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.

Pro 8:13 The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

Pro 8:14 Counsel *is* mine, and sound wisdom: I *am* understanding; I have strength.

The Two Saints John

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John's is the Gospel that is viewing the life of Jesus in perspective and seeking to present him as the divine son of God and the savior of the world: God incarnate in human form.

The world to-day needs the two Saints John. It needs the vigorous man of action who stands erect and unafraid; who will pull off the mask and show people themselves as they really are. Such men will not lead comfortable lives; they will get far more brickbats than bouquets. They will not have any too many friends. They will be admired but not loved. They are like the surgeon who on occasion will be compelled to perform a painful operation without using an anesthetic.

Such men will cut a path through the debris of our lives; they will build a road along which the great teachers can travel. They will be great and shining lights in a wilderness of uncut, untried paths.

They will prepare the way for the apostles of Love and teachers of its transforming power.

People must repent; the poison of the past must be eliminated; then comes the one who is to fill the void with the transforming power of Love.

The man of action directs our lives, then the teacher of Love follows and points out to men and women the way to the city of God. There must be repentance, pardon, and peace, followed by light, life, and Love. The latter is that City's first law.

Both of the Saints John are essential, and a combination of these types in varying degrees is needed in God's great kingdom whose law is brotherhood and love.∞

Taken from *The Michigan Freemason, Volume 8, 1877. Page 300-302.*



Botticelli, 1484. Virgin and Child Enthroned between Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist. Tempera on panel. Gemaldegalerie, Berlin

This Is My Duty

**To use what gifts I have as best I may;
 To help some weaker brother where I can;
 To be as blameless at the close of day
 As when the duties of the day began;
 To do without complaint what must be done;
 To grant my rival all that may be just;
 To win through kindness all that may be won;
 To fight with knightly valor when I must.**

- S. E. Kiser



AN INQUIRY INTO THE HISTORY OF THE POME-GRANATE AS A MASONIC EMBLEM.

BY ALBEHT G. MAOKEY, M. D.

Past Master of Solomon's Lodge, Nd. 1, Charleston, South Carolina.

It is somewhat surprising that although the indefatigable Oliver has devoted one of his most abstruse works to the consideration of the "Signs and Symbols" of our Order, he has not in the whole of that treatise made the slightest allusion to the POMEGRANATE, one of the most remarkable of our emblems. To fill up this hiatus in Masonic Science, is the object of the present paper. And I doubt not that to every Fellow-Craft Mason it will be interesting to discover that the Pomegranate, as an emblem, was known to and highly esteemed by the nations of antiquity, and that there is thus established another link in the great chain which connects the Ethnical Mysteries, or as they have very appropriately been called, "Spurious Freemasonry," and the Order as it now exists among us, and as it doubtless was established at the building of King Solomon's Temple.

In the description of the pillars which stood at the porch of the Temple, (see 1 Kings, vii. 15,) it is said that the artificer "made two chapiters of molten brass to set upon the tops of the pillars." Now the Hebrew word *tn'ieita* (*caphtorim*) which has been translated "*chapiters*" and for which in Amos ix. I, the word "lintel" has been incorrectly substituted, (though the marginal reading corrects the error,) signifies an *artificial large Pomegranate, or globe*. * It was customary to place such ornaments upon the tops or heads of columns, and in other situations. The skirt of Aaron's robe was ordered to be decorated with golden bells and pomegranates, and they were among the ornaments fixed upon the golden candelabra. There seems therefore to have been attached to this fruit some mystic signification, to which it is indebted for the veneration thus paid to it. If so, this mystic meaning should be traced into spurious Freemasonry; for there, after all, if there be any antiquity in our Order, we shall find the parallel of all its rites and ceremonies.

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AN INQUIRY INTO THE HISTORY OF THE POMEGRANATE AS A MASONIC EMBLEM.

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1. The Syrians at Damascus, worshipped an idol which they called Rimmon. This was the same idol that was worshipped by Naman before his conversion, as recorded in the second book of Kings. The learned have not been able to agree as to the nature of this idol, whether he was a representation of Helios, or the Sun, the God of the Phoenicians, or of Venus, or according to Grotius, in his commentary on the passage in Kings, of Saturn, or what according to Statius seems more probable, of Jupiter Cassius. But it is sufficient for our present purpose to know that Rimmon is the Hebrew and Syriac for *Pomegranate*.
2. Cumberland, the learned Bishop of Peterborough, quotes Achilles Statius, a converted pagan and Bishop of Alexandria, as saying that on Mount Cassius, (which Bochart places between Canaan and Egypt,) there was a temple wherein Jupiter's image held a Pomegranate in his hand, which Statius goes on to say, " had a mystical meaning."* Sanconiatho thinks this temple was built by the descendants of the Cabiri. Cumberland attempts to explain this mystery thus : Agreeably hereunto I guess that the Pomegranate in the hand of Jupiter, or Juno (because when it is opened it discloses a great number of seeds) signified only that those deities were, being long-lived, the parents of a great many children, and families that soon grew into nations which they planted in large possessions, when the world was newly begun to be peopled, by giving them laws and other useful inventions to make their lives comfortable."
3. Pausanias (Corinthiaca, p. 59) says, he saw not far from the ruins of Mycenae, an image of Juno holding in one hand a sceptre, and in the other a Pomegranate ; but he likewise declines assigning any explanation of the emblem, merely declaring that it was "a forbidden mystery." That is, one which was forbidden by the Cabiri to be divulged.
4. In the festival of the Thesmophoria, observed in honor of the Goddess Ceres, it was held unlawful for the celebrants (who were women) to eat the Pomegranate. Clemens Alexandrinus assigns as a reason, that it was supposed that this fruit sprung from the blood of Bacchus.



The coincidences in the Pagan mysteries with respect to this emblem, might doubtless be extended still further, but I have neither time nor opportunity to pursue the research. I am however content, if by these few illustrations, I have added another to the many already existing proofs of the antiquity, as well as the beauty of our beloved Order. ∞

Taken from *Freemasons Monthly Magazine, Volume III, 1844, page 134-135*

About Us

Bethpage Lodge No. 521, Free and Accepted Masons was chartered by the Grand Lodge of Free and



Accepted Masons of Tennessee on January 27, 1885. It is named for the small community in which the lodge hall sits. Bethpage, Tennessee is an unincorporated town in northern Sumner County, just north of Nashville. In its 125 years, the lodge has flourished and been the Masonic home to many traveling brethren. It is a country lodge with many traditions. It currently has an active membership of around 90 members. Bethpage Lodge meets on the Third Thursday of each month at 7 pm, and its meetings are open to all Master Masons from Masonic Jurisdictions recognized by the Grand Lodge of Tennessee.∞

Gems of Purpose is the electronic trestleboard or newsletter of Bethpage Lodge. Its primary mission is to



assist in the spreading of Masonic light to not only the members of Bethpage Lodge but to Masonic brothers wherever this publication might land. It is edited and compiled by Brother David E. Stafford, Past Master. Brother Stafford began publishing *Gems of Purpose* in 2006 as a service to the Lodge and has continued to do so. Although it is an official media of Bethpage Lodge, the views and opinions contained in *Gems of Purpose* do not necessarily reflect those of the lodge, the Grand Lodge of Tennessee, or Freemasonry. If you have questions or comments, please direct those to Brother Stafford via e-mail at david.stafford@sumnerschools.org. ∞

Submission - Although *Gems of Purpose* is the official educational voice of Bethpage Lodge, the lodge encourages anyone who has an interest in Masonic Education to submit possible material for inclusion in the newsletter. Items on Masonic history, philosophy, ideology, figures, and symbolism will be considered. Of course due credit will be given to the writer and if the writer is not a member of Bethpage Lodge, his lodge will be identified. *Gems of Purpose* reserves the right to edit all submissions. ∞

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