facings of the CANADIAN SOUL

SCRIPTURES SET IN PARLIAMENTARY STONE



Title: Tracings of the Canadian Soul: Scriptures Set in Parliamentary Stone © 2019 by Canadian Bible Society

Published by Canadian Bible Society 10 Carnforth Road, Toronto, ON Canada M4A 2S4 www.biblesociety.ca

ISBN 978-1-77124-239-4 Printed in Canada. "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." —PSALM 72:8

FAITH THAT HELPED SHAPE A NATION

he curtains are being drawn. The scaffolding rises. The Centre Block disappears behind a protective screen. The icons of our shared life and national character will be hidden from view for a decade or more during the largest heritage restoration project that Canada has ever seen.

The goal, as stated by Public Services and Procurement Canada is "to preserve this majestic piece of our nation's history for generations to come."

Intertwined in that history are the faith and biblical convictions that shaped our nation. They found expression in exquisite details of carvings, ornamentation and glass, particularly in the Peace Tower.

The embedded art reflects the minds and hearts of those who built the nation, and of those who later built our Parliament. The roots of those early declarations continue to nourish traits in our national character that we cherish today.

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UP FROM THE RUINS

n a freezing night in February 1916, as war consumed Europe, the Canadian Parliament Buildings in Ottawa caught fire.

By the time the flames were quelled, seven people were dead, and most of the Centre Block, which housed the House of Commons and Senate chambers, was in ashes. The loss was a serious blow to a

Today the Centre Block is highly recognizable to Canadians and its prominent Tower is often named as Canada's most important national symbol, an icon of Canadian democracy.

nation just finding its footing in the world.

Rumours blaming enemy saboteurs spread quickly, but a Royal Commission to investigate the fire immediately went to work. Three months later, on May 15, the Commission reported that the cause was likely careless smoking.

Rebuilding began immediately. The cornerstone for the new building was laid in September 1916 and within four years Parliament was holding sessions in the notquite-finished structure. Building continued until the Peace Tower opened in 1927.

Today the Centre Block is highly recognizable to Canadians and its prominent Tower is often referred to as Canada's most important national symbol, an icon of Canadian democracy.





COMMISSIONED TO GREATNESS



On June 22, 1867, a few days before Confederation, John A. Pearson was born in Chesterfield,

England. Pearson would become the designer of the building that symbolizes Canada to the world today.

Pearson emigrated to New York in 1888 and arrived in Canada shortly after. The architectural firm he joined went through several changes, but by 1896 the firm was renamed Darling and Pearson. His partnership with Frank Darling lasted until Pearson's death in 1940.

The commission of a lifetime came in 1919 when Pearson was selected to design and rebuild the Centre Block.

With his talented collaborator Jean Omer Marchand of Montreal, John A. Pearson imprinted his vision of the nation and its government throughout the structure, part of which were selected Christian Scriptures, chosen to inspire and direct us.

INSCRIBING HOPES AND TRUTHS



The architect Pearson's hand is evident everywhere in the Centre Block. Yet it was Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King who reportedly initiated this inscription on the largest bell in the carillon: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men." (Luke 2:14)

iving proper weight to the biblical passages inscribed, encased and carved into the very structure of Parliament is a delicate task.

Unquestionably, they reflect a singular piece of Canadian heritage, and arose out of the dominant religious stream of the day.

Christians, then and now, resonate deeply with the themes and with the very words and immediately connect them to their context in the Bible. Christians read the references as part of the divine narrative of creation, fall, reconciliation and redemption, and through them are reminded of their deepest convictions and hopes.

Pearson, his colleagues, committees and artisans seemed to choose Scripture passages, images and allusions as a way to speak to Canadians about fundamental truths and aspirations for both government and citizens.

Chief among those assertions is that neither those who govern, nor the citizens who mandate governments, constitute the highest authority in life.



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Imposing such limits on government and ourselves is an absolute prerequisite for the task of cultivating peace, fostering human rights, and creating a society that is truly inclusive, equitable and just.

Wherein lies that ultimate authority? Many faith groups have their answer. But for the founders of the nation and the builders of the Centre Block, that source is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a belief that still resonates with millions of Canadians today.



A CELEBRATION OF CANADA

ccupants and visitors to the Centre Block enjoy a visual feast of architecture and design. This rich array of symbols, text and art directs our attention away from ourselves and invites us to reflect on our collective life as a nation.

The vaulted Confederation Hall dazzles visitors, while subtly reminding us that this is the ship of state, with a carving of Poseidon, god of the sea, and a compass rose and wave patterns on the floor.

National and provincial symbols frame the entrance to the Peace Tower. The ceiling of the House of Commons Foyer is replete with depictions of maple leaves, pinecones, oak leaves and acorns, punctuated by symbols of government at work. Tapestries, paintings, furniture and metalwork all perform a symphony of celebration.

In key spots, we find Scripture passages and allusions to Christian themes. These artistic exhortations are directed to those who govern and to citizens alike, urging us to consider what it means to be a nation of peace and justice in a modern world.

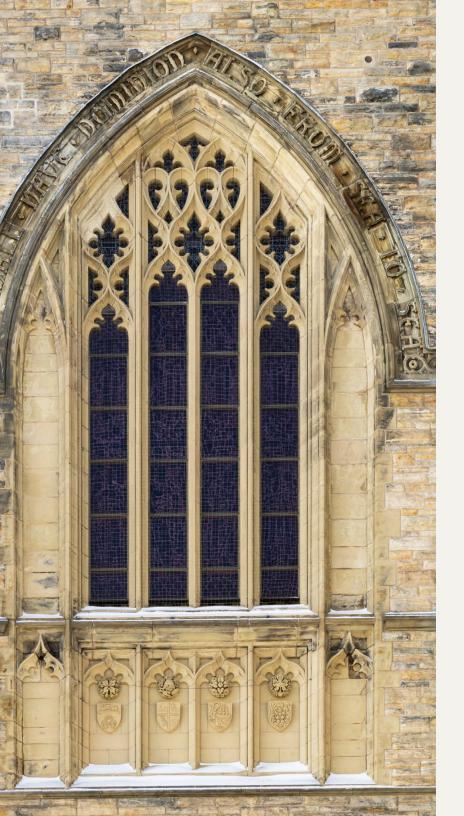




Humourous and surprising carvings reward those who look closely. A carving of a lobster perches outside the House of Commons, while those waiting outside of the Speaker's Office may spot the Joker, watching them and sticking out his tongue.



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ROOTED IN FREEDOM

n the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the first fundamental freedom listed is "freedom of conscience and religion."

Our modern convictions about that freedom would have seemed strange when Canada was a colony. Pre-Confederation English governors debated extending freedom even to fellow Christians who expressed their faith differently. But freedom of conscience and religion became a pillar in Canadian nation-building.

Sadly, in our history of upholding that freedom, we chronicle extreme failures towards indigenous people and disturbing compromises towards others.

Yet Canada remains in the forefront of promoting human rights and freedoms. Today, we are one of the most pluralistic and diverse nations on earth. While not all we want to be, or could be, many in the world look to us for inspiration. One of the key themes implied by those Scriptures is that there is a limit to the power of government. The inscriptions make no direct case about rights, but instead point to a higher authority to which even government is subject.

Although not setting out to build a "Christian nation," many of our Confederation founders took inspiration from their Christian faith, which helped express their aspirations for the country and the character of its government.

An entire generation later, the builders of the Centre Block incorporated Scripture verses and biblical allusions, in carvings, ornamentation and glass, extending the heritage of faith that originally influenced our national discourse.

One of the key themes implied by those Scriptures is that there is a limit to the power of government. The inscriptions make no direct case about rights, but instead point to a higher authority to which even government is subject.

These adornments on our national buildings were not offered as artifacts of the past, but as an empowering guide for the future.

"He shall have dominion also from sea to sea." (Psalm 72:8)

In late 1866, the Fathers of Confederation met in London, England and negotiated details of Canada's creation with each other and with the British government.

They also debated the name. Reportedly, John A. MacDonald wanted to call the new country the "Kingdom of Canada" but that was seen as provocative towards an edgy United States.

Tradition tells us that New Brunswick representative Sir Leonard Tilley was struck by a Scripture verse in his own morning reading. "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea." (Psalm 72:8.) He proposed it to the assembly, the group adopted "Dominion" as a fitting way to describe what they were creating. The name prevailed, passing into British law in March 1867, and officially proclaimed on July 1.

Five decades later, the East window of the Peace Tower was decorated with that same Scripture verse.

THE SEAT OF AUTHORITY

n an early era of Parliamentary democracy, no one wanted to be speaker for a simple reason: the Speaker of the British House of Commons was the liaison with the King. If the speaker brought unwelcome news, he might well be executed.

Rulers throughout history have often claimed an unassailable divine mandate. As Parliamentary democracy evolved, elected leaders likewise placed themselves as God's agents, but with a growing endorsement of the rule of law, and their responsibility to live up to divine standards.

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Today the modern Speaker of the Canadian House of Commons manages a busy multi-faceted department. But Canadians recognize the Speaker as the agent of fairness in the House of Commons, and the referee of free expression.

When presiding in the Canadian House of Commons, the Speaker literally rests on British tradition: the chair is a replica of the Speaker's Chair created in 1848 for the new parliament at Westminster and incorporates wood from Westminster Palace dating to the 14th century.

The Speaker's Chair was presented to the Canadian House of Commons on May 20, 1921 by the United Kingdom Branch of the Empire Parliamentary Association. An identical chair was given to the Parliament in Australia in 1926.

The tradition perpetuated in the Canadian Speaker's chair anchors the work of the Speaker and the conduct of Parliament in timeless values.

Amid a wealth of symbols, the carved exterior sides of the chair offer seven Latin mottoes, which, in translation, include "Neither by entreaty nor reward," and "Liberty lies in the law," culminating simply in "Glory to God."





CRAVING A VISION

"Where there is no vision, the people perish."

overnance is messy. Decisions create winners and losers, factions, tribes and dissenters. Competing interests clamour for a hearing. Pragmatism emerges as a survival skill while partisan interests and political opportunism can challenge even the most cherished principles.

A modern democracy wrestles with imperfect options and limited resources. Even when trying to lift up the oppressed, protect the weak or defend the helpless, laws and regulations can create new victims.

Yet despite a complicated social and political landscape, Canadians have been proud of their government and their history, over time. Canada is always rated as one of the best places to live in the world, a sign that our governments get a great deal right.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish" could be a reminder to all who approach Parliament that an understanding of who we are as a nation, and what we aspire to collectively is more important than the specific issue of the day.

But when asked the source of Canadian pride, what stands out is how Canadians are viewed by and in the world.

Fierce and loyal warriors in the First World War. Advocates of human rights on an international scale. Dedicated peacekeepers. Generous neighbours to countries in crisis. Welcomers of those who are oppressed, excluded or persecuted, or simply ambitious for a better life.

Individuals and interests may thrive under almost any conditions. But "the people," the collective of citizens cannot exist without a vision of who they are together.

When asked the source of Canadian pride, what stands out are moments when Canadians had a vision of themselves in the world.

A WATCHWORD TO THOSE IN POWER

ncorporating Scripture into the physical structure of Parliament was not official government policy. Some politicians were hostile to the effect, while others were ambivalent at best.

The House of Commons Hansard for the 5th session of the 13th Parliament even records an emerging consensus to have carvings removed from the exterior of the Peace Tower. One Member described them as an "absurdity" while others objected that all the exterior carvings were in English only.

Yet the carvings survived. Some attribute their presence to Parliamentary

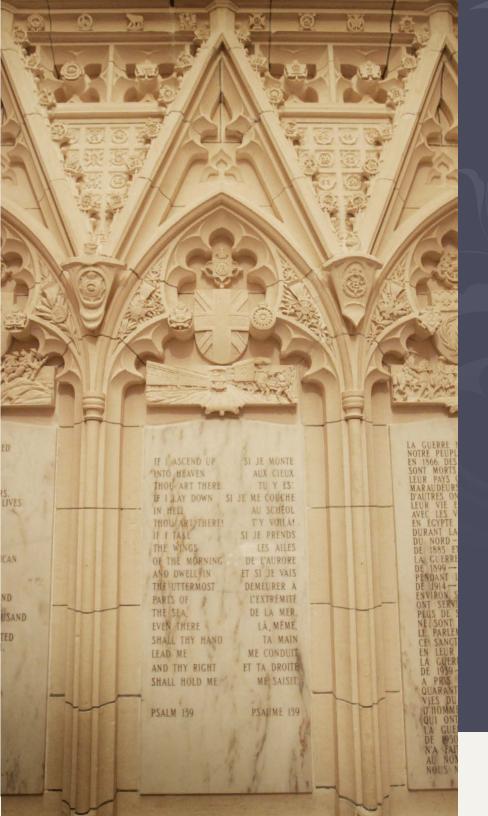
Yet while creating an astonishing range of imagery, Pearson selected Christian Scriptures for key pillars of this new home for Canadian government.

lethargy, and the dissolution of the Parliament a few months later. Christians see God's providence at work. Meanwhile, architect John A. Pearson reportedly was adept at navigating the personalities, egos, partisan impulses and competing priorities of the politicians to whom he answered and at getting them to approve his vision.

Perhaps all three explanations are true. What's not in doubt is that almost every feature of the Centre Block, including the Peace Tower, was envisioned by the chief architect, John A. Pearson.

In collaboration with his colleague Jean Omer Marchand, Pearson poured out his vision into the most minute details of form, function and decoration.

He was on a mission to remind those wielding power in Ottawa of where they came from, who they represented and their duty to serve Canadians.



A LASTING TRADITION

Not all Scripture embedded in the Centre Block is due to the architect. For example, a statue of Lt. Col. George Harold Baker, initiated by Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King in 1926, carries a citation from 2 Maccabees 6:31.

In 1952, William F. K. Oosterhoff was the Parliamentary stone carver. In his official role, he initiated a carving of Moses symbolizing law, in Confederation Hall.

In 1970, R. Eleanor Milne, Dominion Sculptor of Canada, added images of the divine man, the winged lion, the bull and the eagle in stone in the House of Commons Foyer. Those images often represent the Four Evangelists—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—and are derived from the prophet Ezekiel.

A full generation after John A.Pearson, in 1981, the Special Committee on Bilingualism on Parliament Hill commissioned the creation of the marble slab pictured here, and engraved with Psalm 139: 8-9, in French and English. The stone is installed on the south wall of the Memorial Chamber in the Peace Tower.

A PLEA FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

"Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son." (Psalm 72:1)

he responsibility of Parliament is the exercise of power. Choices made there affect millions of people. Decisions resound through the decades, and, taken together, gradually forge our national identity and way of life.

In Canadian democracy, government is restrained by due process and the rule of law, and leaders are held accountable at the ballot box. Yet the embellishments

Whether people live under a ruler with no restraints, or under a government defined by democratic traditions, citizens hunger for wisdom and fairness in the affairs of state.

of the Centre Block point to the existence of a standard more profound than common consensus, and an authority higher than ourselves.

Carved over the south window of the Peace Tower is a sentence from Psalm 72:1 "Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son."

The Psalmist would have seen kings who wielded unlimited power. The writer seeks a ruler who embraces God's insight and direction. The Psalmist implies a promise to the king, that just and fair dealings in his rulings will create an inheritance of righteousness, a legacy of justice for his son who would succeed him as king.

Whether people live under a ruler with no restraints, or under a government defined by democratic traditions, citizens hunger for wisdom and fairness in the affairs of state. The Psalmist reflects our desire for authority not preoccupied with winning and losing, but completely occupied by the welfare of the subjects.



The arch over the south window on the Peace Tower reads, "Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son." (Psalm 72:1)

YEARNING FOR PEACE

ts name is the Peace and Victory Tower, but mostly, we know it simply as the Peace Tower. The most recognizable government building in Canada transcends its neighbours and has become a symbol of some of our deepest instincts as a nation.

We do go to war. We prepare for war. But we are not a warlike nation.

As a nation, we invest heavily in lives and resources to keep the peace around

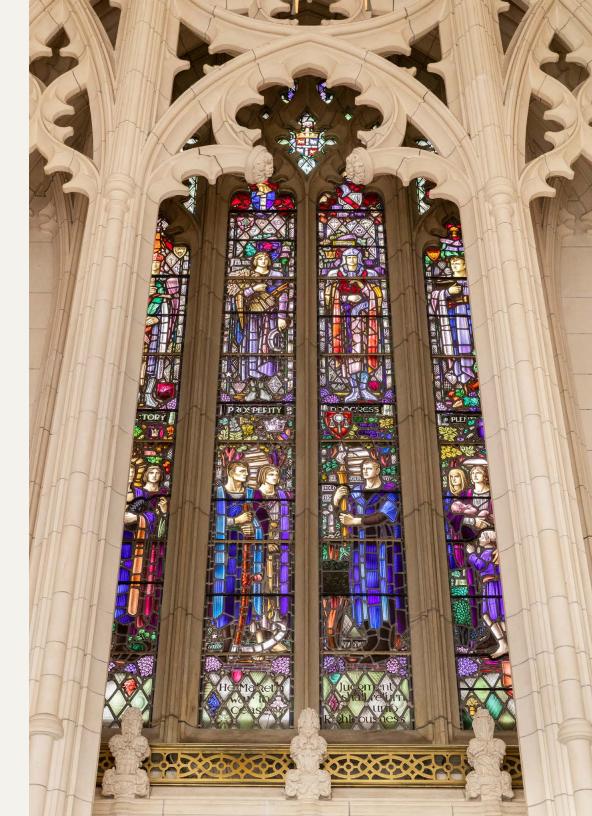
The Centre Block was created by a people whose families and communities had been deeply ravaged by war, with tens of thousands dead and many more injured. the world. When the complexities and demands of modern conflicts compromise that peace-keeping stance and weaken our reputation as peacekeepers, many of us feel a sense of loss and grief.

Our sense of loss, however, does not compare to the profound grief that followed the First World War. The Centre Block was created by a people whose families and communities had been deeply ravaged by war, with tens of thousands dead and many more injured.

Believing that they had survived the war to end all wars, they created a monument to the dead, and a hallowed Memorial Chamber. Again, the architect pressed Scripture into service to create the frame for reflection on the price paid by individuals and families and looked to give them comfort.

"In all my thoughts of the Tower, Peace was dominant – I believe there is a quiet peaceful dignity about it. I somehow bring myself to read it that way – no matter what troubles and worries and differences of opinion take place in the building. I feel that one cannot approach the building up the centre road without experiencing its mute appeal for toleration – moderation – dignity and peace." —John A. Pearson (1867-1940)

MAKING SENSE OF THE PAIN



n the memorial Chamber of the Peace Tower, two massive stained-glass windows fragment and colour the light to create a reverent atmosphere.

The east window is titled "The Call to Arms" and includes these Scriptures:

"Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory." (1 Corinthians 15:57) "Acquit ye like men be strong." (1 Corinthians 16:13) "Thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle." (Psalm 18:40; 2 Samuel 22:40)

The west window is titled "The Dawn of Peace " and includes these Scriptures: "He maketh wars to cease." (Psalm 46:10) "Judgement shall return unto righteousness." (Psalm 94:15)

Designed by Frank S.J. Hollister, these two windows are celebrated for their beauty, artistry and impact. They also require thoughtful reflection on the Scriptures themselves.

"The Call to Arms" makes us uncomfortable. We resist the implied divine mandate for war. We have often seen that, in times of war public rhetoric is often bolstered by a "God-is-on-ourside" sentiment. But today, our intimate knowledge of the horrors of war and its inevitable moral compromises make us Whatever our critique of the use of these specific passages, Pearson and the artists knew that few written works resonate as deeply and widely with those in grief as the Scriptures.

reluctant to invoke God's name.

Further, students of Scripture note that the Corinthian passages are about victory in spiritual battle and offer no mandate for armed conflict.

"The Dawn of Peace" is a happier fit. The Psalms are a rich trove of human hopes, and the end of war remains one of humanity's most cherished dreams. The window's creators anchor that hope in God. They also hint at the injustices that surround war, with the expectation that righteousness can emerge.

Whatever our critique of the use of these specific passages, Pearson and the artists knew that few written works resonate as deeply and widely with those in grief as the Scriptures. In creating a space to memorialize those who remained vibrant in the memories of their families, they harnessed the strongest tools they had to communicate respect and honour.

GUARDED BY THE ANGELS

Here a nearly universal angst, that when our lives are over, we will not be remembered. A long full life offers many possibilities that one will not be forgotten.

When lives are cut short in the service of a nation, the act of recognizing, remembering and recording the names of the dead seems imperative.

In the Memorial Chamber that record is preserved in a stunning display of craftsmanship, and once again, Scripture was deployed to create a literal frame of that record.

The Book of Remembrance, that records the names of over 66,000 Canadians who died during the Great War, rests on a large stone altar of British Hoptonwood limestone, in a bronze case.

Engraved on all sides of the case is a ribbon pattern, bearing the text of Ephesians 6:13: "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

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For the floors and the walls of the Memorial Chamber, the architect John A. Pearson personally collected stone from battlefields in Europe where Canadians had died. Today, six additional altars in the Chamber hold separate books listing those who have died in conflicts since the First World War.

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GUARDED BY THE ANGELS — continued

To accompany this verse, tiny enamels with Latin inscriptions illustrate the full armour of God as enumerated in Ephesians 6:14-17.

Veritas – Truth Justitia – Righteousness Pax – Peace Fides – Faith Salus – Salvation Spiritus – Spirit, the word of God

The architect and the artisans would have known this as one of the great Scripture passages describing how Christians are equipped to live in faith and obedience, and "fight the good fight."

But they also would have recognized in this text some of what we all aspire to, values that are nearly as universal as our fears.





For the floors and the walls of the Memorial Chamber, the architect John A. Pearson personally collected stone from battlefields in Europe where Canadians had died. Today, six additional altars in the Chamber hold separate books listing those who have died in conflicts since the First World War.

A HUNGER FOR JUSTICE

From the beating heart of the Memorial Chamber and its implied promise to fallen friends and loved ones, to the stunning grandeur of Confederation Hall, the Centre Block continues to intrigue and inspire.

As the wealth of details registers in one's consciousness, the visitor discovers a rich array of imagery and allusions that often require a guide to interpret.

So perhaps the exhortations to the Cabinet and the Opposition over the doors to their respective rooms were intended to be a contrast. In their directness, perhaps we can see these as a plea by those who are governed for an ethic they hope their legislators will display.

Once again, Scripture is pressed into service in different generations. In 1919, Architect John A. Pearson chose 1 Peter 2:17 for the tympanum over the door to the Opposition Board Room. The simple exhortation is to "Fear God. Honour the King."

Sixty years later, in 1980, the tympanum over the door to the Cabinet Room was inscribed with the words of Song of Solomon 1:1: "Love justice, you that are the rulers of the earth." "Aimez la justice, yous qui jugez la terre."





SIMPLY PROFOUND

This trio of injunctions – *Fear God*, *Honour the King. Love Justice* - are strikingly simple on the surface yet serve as profound standards that can support and guide parliamentarians.

The Christian reads "Fear God" as an invitation to embrace the knowledge of God as the beginning of wisdom and the source of ethics. Other traditions look to their own sources but share the conviction that we alone are not a sufficient authority.

What did it mean to honour the King? For Pearson, was it a ritual assertion of the indivisibility of God and King, so common in his era? Or a call to perpetuate tradition? We don't know. But for the biblical writer, it was a call to adhere to the laws of the land and to not fall into the religious error of believing that one's faith is above the law.

Emerging with "Love Justice," the trio is complete. Pursuing justice is admirable and necessary. But the call here is an Old-Testament-prophet demand, to love justice, a bred-in-the-bone orientation in which justice is both the goal of good government and its own reward for those in power.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES – CENTRE BLOCK

1. Peace Tower. Exterior

East window: He shall have dominion also from sea to sea. Psalm 72:8 South window: Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. Psalm 72:1 West window: Where there is no vision, the people perish. Proverbs 29:18 Initiated by architect John A.

Pearson, 1921.



2. Peace Tower. Belfry

Largest bell, no. 53: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men. Luke 2:14

Initiated by Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, 1926.

3. Peace Tower. Memorial Chamber

3.1 Display case, main altar: Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Ephesians 6:13

To accompany this verse, tiny enamels with Latin inscriptions, illustrate the full armour of God: Ephesians 6:14-17 *Veritas:* Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth (v.14);

Justitia: and having on the breastplate of righteousness (v.14);

Pax: and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace (v.15); *Fides:* above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked (v.16); *Salus:* And take the helmet of salvation (v.17);

Spiritus: and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.(v.17)

Initiated by architect John A. Pearson, 1925.

3.2 Stained glass windows:

East window, "The Call to Arms": Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory. 1 Corinthians 15:57 Acquit ye like men be strong. 1 Corinthians 16:13 Thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle. Psalm 18:40; 2 Samuel 22:40 West window, "The Dawn of Peace": He maketh wars to cease. Psalm 46:10 Judgement shall return unto righteousness. Psalm 94:15

Initiated by architect John A. Pearson and designer Frank S.J. Hollister, 1926.

3.3 Marble panels, south wall:

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I lay down in the bowels of the earth, thou art there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me and thy right shall hold me. Psalm 139: 8-10 Si je monte aux cieux, tu y es; si je me couche au sheol, t'y voilà! Si je prends les ailes de l'aurore et si je vais demeurer à l'extrémité de la mer, ta main me conduit et ta droite me saisit. Psaume 139:8-10 Initiated by the Special Committee on Bilingualism on Parliament Hill, 1981.



4. Confederation Hall

Portrait head of Moses carved in stone symbolizing law.

Initiated by William F. K. Oosterhoff, Parliamentary stone carver, circa 1952.

5. House of Commons Foyer

5.1 The four living creatures or beasts carved in stone: the man, the bull, the lion and the eagle. Ezekiel 1:10;
Revelation 4:6-7

Initiated by R. Eleanor Milne,

Dominion sculptress, circa 1970.

-continued on next page

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

-continued

5.2 Statue of Lt. Col. George Harold Baker

And thus this man died, leaving his death for an example of a noble courage, and a memorial of virtue, not only unto young men, but unto all the nation.

2 Maccabees 6:31

Initiated by Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, 1926.

6. House of Commons Chamber

The exterior sides of the Speaker's Chair feature seven Latin mottoes or citations on a ribbon twisted around a delicate vine. The last one reads "Laus Deo".

Initiated by the British House of Commons, circa1849.



7. Cabinet Room

Tympanums over doors:

Love justice, you that are the rulers of the earth. Song of Solomon 1:1 Aimez la justice, vous qui jugez la terre. Sagesse 1:1 Source unknown, 1980.

9. Opposition Board Room

Tympanums over doors:

Fear God; Honour the king. 1 Peter 2:17 Initiated by architect John A. Pearson, 1919. Compiled by Audrey Dubé, Curatorial Services, House of Commons. (rev. 2004)

Reference Material:

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Written and produced in partnership with the National Prayer Breakfast committee 2019 Cathay Wagantall MP for Yorkton-Melville Deputy Shadow Cabinet Minister Veterans Affairs Chair National Prayer Breakfast 2019



