

Tracings
of the
**CANADIAN
SOUL**

SCRIPTURES SET IN PARLIAMENTARY STONE



Canadian
Bible Society

Title: Tracings of the Canadian Soul: Scriptures Set in Parliamentary Stone

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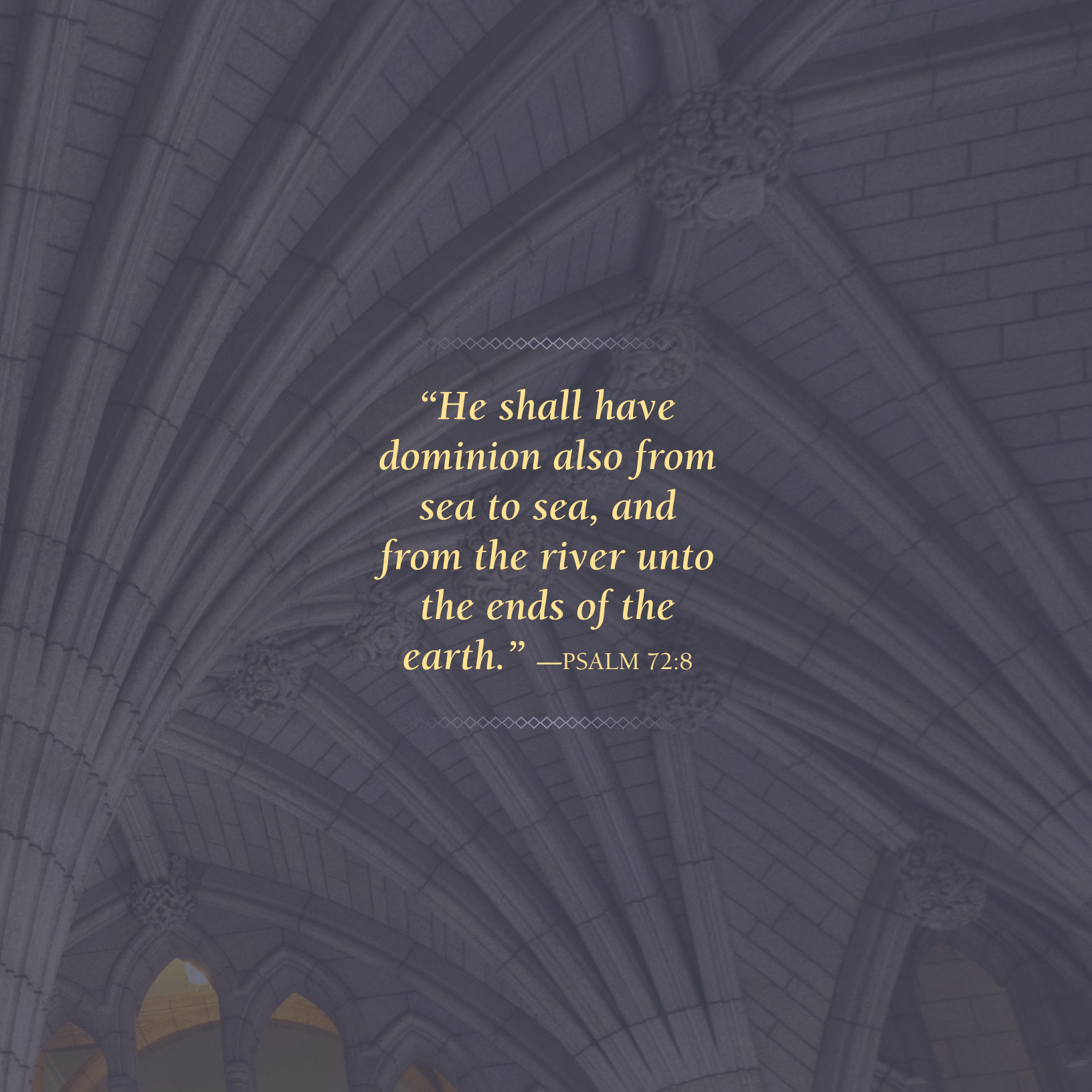
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*“He shall have
dominion also from
sea to sea, and
from the river unto
the ends of the
earth.” —PSALM 72:8*

FAITH THAT HELPED SHAPE A NATION

The 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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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)

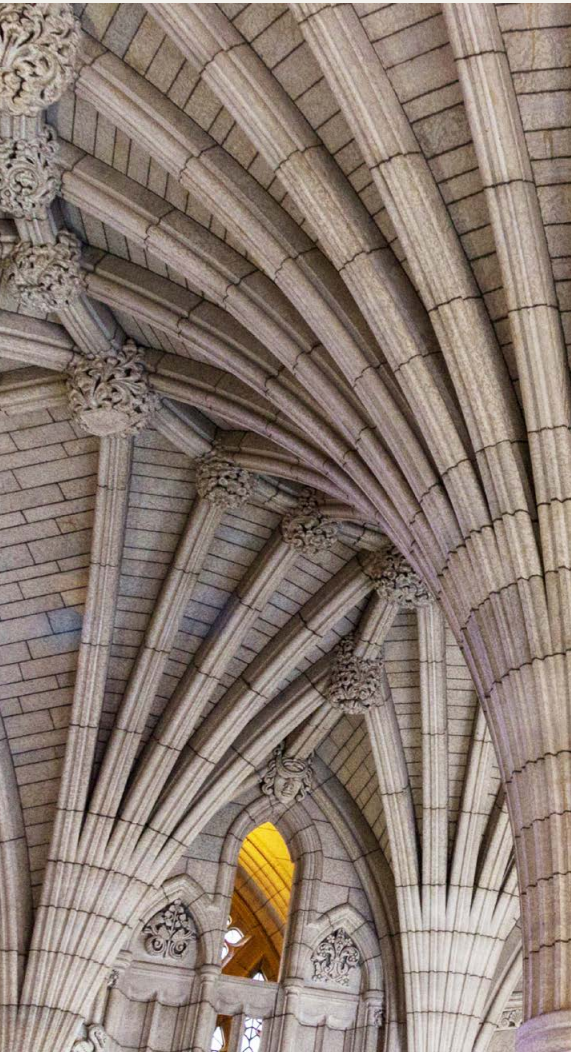
A CELEBRATION OF CANADA

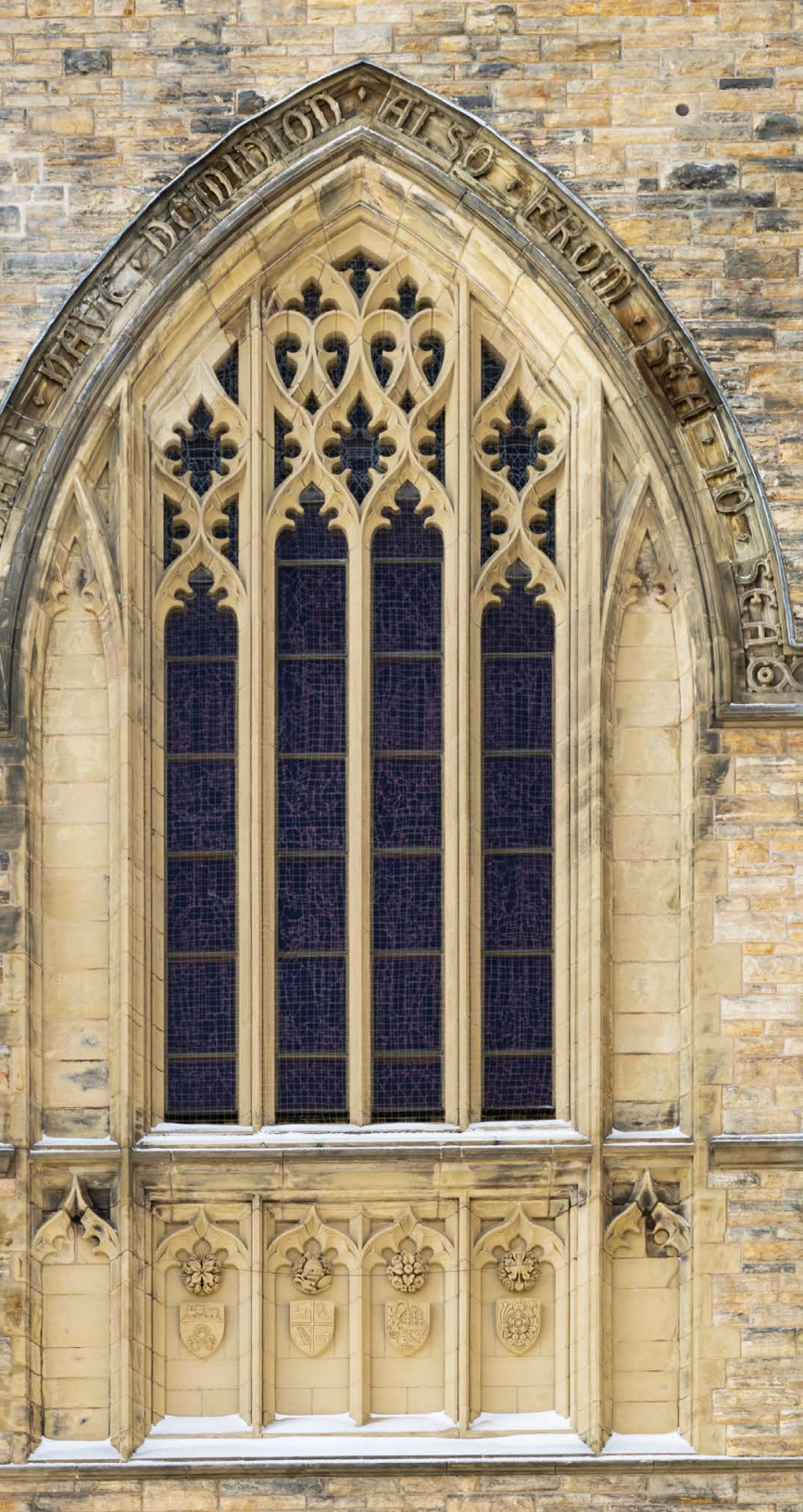
Occupants and visitors to the Centre Block enjoy a visual feast of architecture and design. This rich array of symbols, text and art directs our attention away from ourselves and invites us to reflect on our collective life as a nation.

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.





ROOTED IN FREEDOM

In 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.

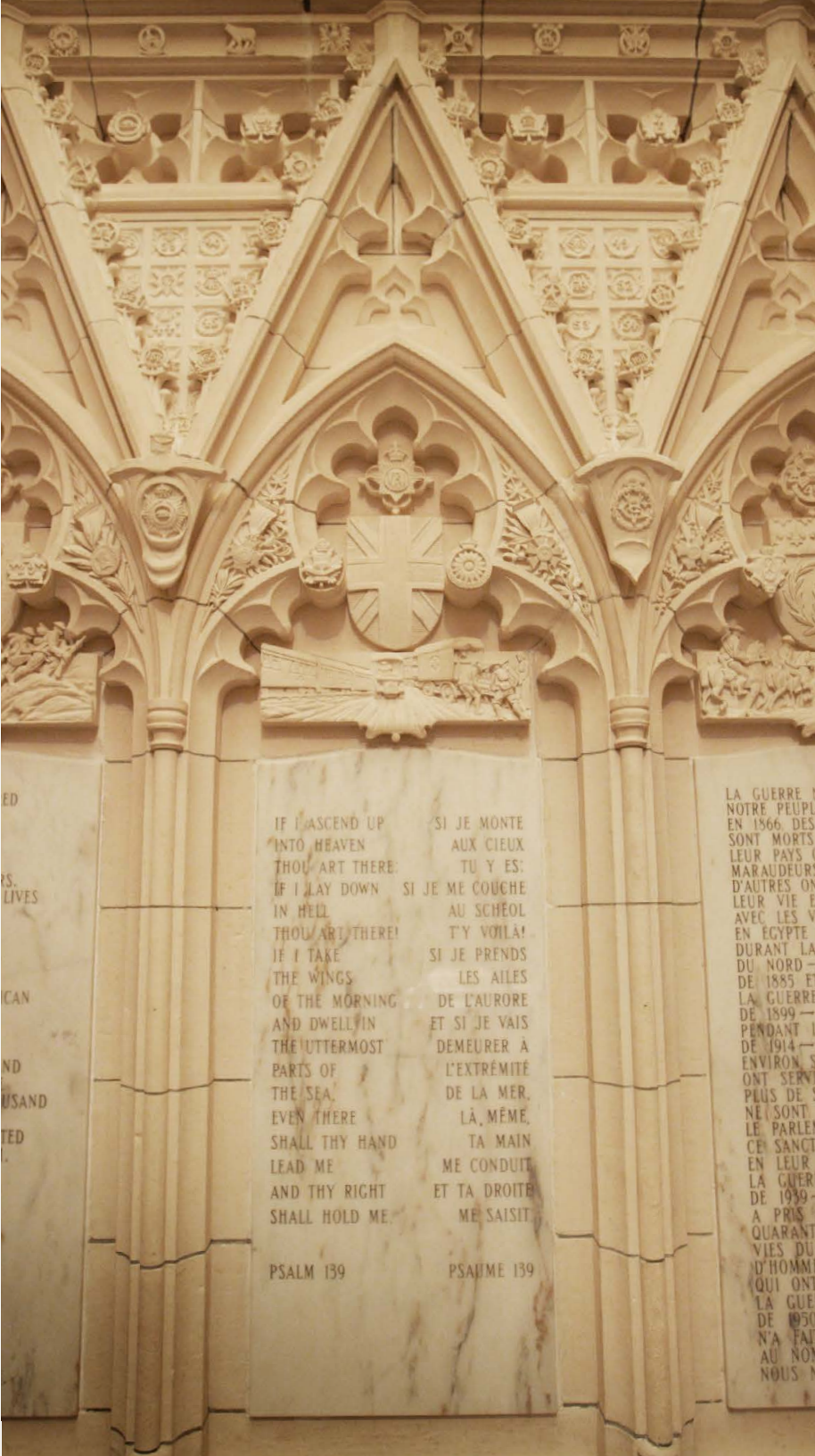
Yet Canada remains in the forefront of promoting human rights and freedoms. Today, we are one of the most pluralistic and diverse nations on earth. While not all we want to be, or could be, many in the world look to us for inspiration.



Édith Piaf, chanteuse française, a été nommée membre de l'Assemblée nationale le 15 mai 1984.
Année 1984
Pédagogue autrichien du 19^{ème} siècle, il a fondé une communauté de religieux.
Il est né à Salzbourg, en Autriche, le 26 août 1781 et est mort à Salzbourg, le 18 septembre 1858.
Il est enterré à Salzbourg, en Autriche.



OMNIBUS MERECISSIMO VISITOD LING PR



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.

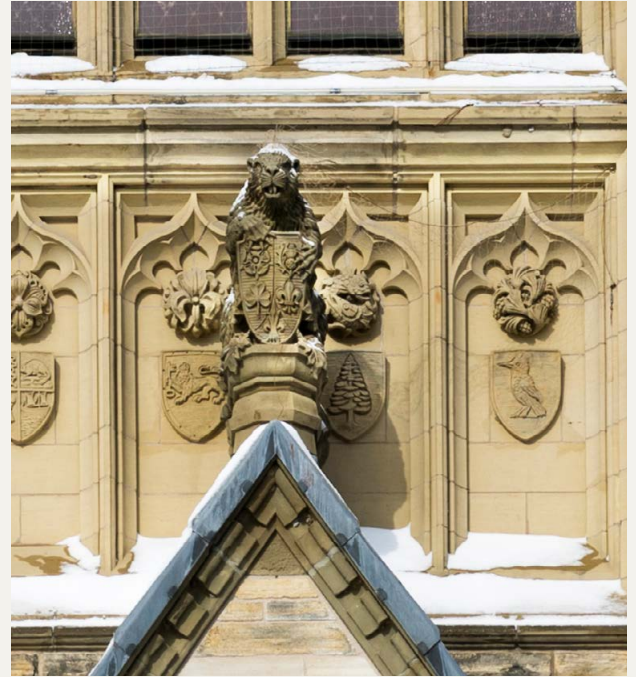
In 1952, William F. K. Oosterhoff was the Parliamentary stone carver. In his official role, he initiated a carving of Moses symbolizing law, in Confederation Hall.

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.

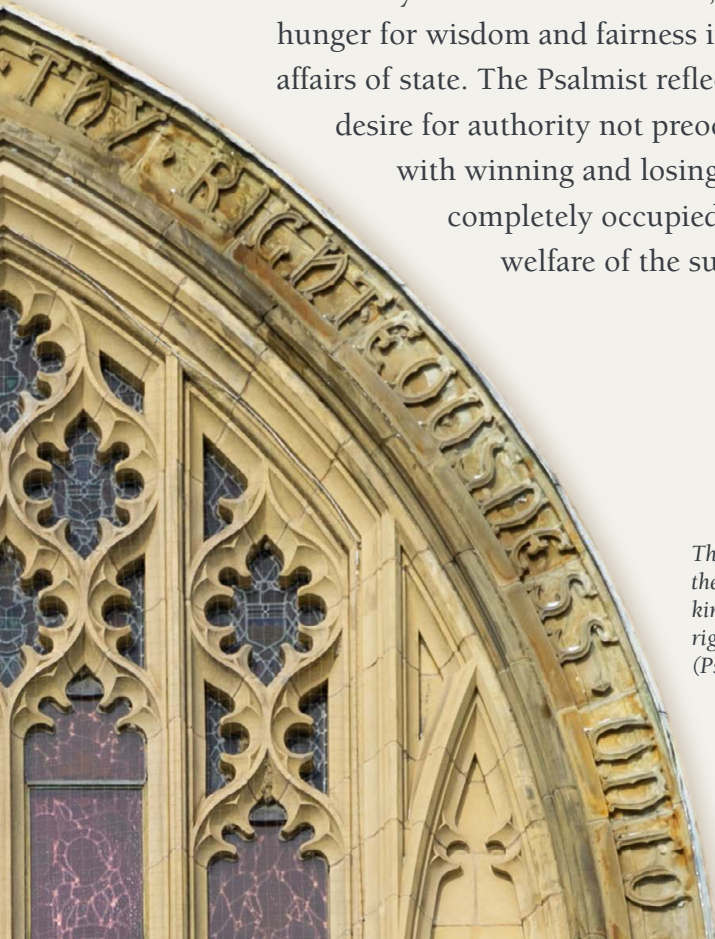
A full generation after John A. Pearson, in 1981, the Special Committee on Bilingualism on Parliament Hill commissioned the creation of the marble slab pictured here, and engraved with Psalm 139: 8-9, in French and English. The stone is installed on the south wall of the Memorial Chamber in the Peace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


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)*





“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



GUARDED BY THE ANGELS

Humans share 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.



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, vous qui jugez la terre."



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.

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BIBLICAL REFERENCES

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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, circa 1849.



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:

Scripture Passages Compiled by Audrey Dubé, Curatorial Services, House of Commons. (rev. 2004)

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The Parliamentary Website: www.ourcommons.ca/About/HistoryArtsArchitecture/index-e.htm

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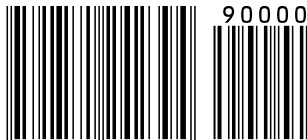
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