

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

**“Christmas time! That man must be a misanthrope indeed, in whose breast something like a jovial feeling is not roused— in whose mind some pleasant associations are not awakened— by the recurrence of Christmas.”**

– Charles Dickens, *Sketches by Boz*

What was to become the best loved Christmas story in the English language was penned by Charles Dickens in 1843 and published in London on December 19<sup>th</sup> of that year.<sup>1</sup> Although classified as a novella, it is in reality a powerful morality play. As such it has been staged and filmed countless times. The quintessential filmed version starred Alistair Sim as *Ebenezer Scrooge* (1951).



At the outset, Scrooge is portrayed as a cold-hearted, self-centred shrewd and demanding money-lender that despises the frivolity of Christmas. “*Bah, humbug!*” He lives alone and is the surviving partner of the London firm of Marley and Scrooge. It is Christmas Eve. After grudgingly allowing his clerk, *Tom Cratchit*, the day off for Christmas, Scrooge returns home and retires to bed where he is visited by several ‘spirits’ – Jacob Marley, his long dead partner, and the three Ghosts of Christmas (*Ghost of Christmas Past, Ghost*

*of Christmas Present, and Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come.*) When Scrooge awakes on Christmas morning, he immediately repents and becomes a model of generosity and kindness.

A new man, he enters cheerfully into the spirit of the day. Henceforth, “... *it was always said of him that he knew how to keep*

*Christmas well if any man alive possessed the knowledge.*”



Dickens portrays a penetrating exercise in self-examination for Scrooge which results in a transformation of his character from a miser who cares only about himself and the accumulation of wealth to a man who genuinely cares about others.

---

<sup>1</sup> A CHRISTMAS CAROL has never been out-of-print and is available today.

Freemasonry enables us to see things in a new light, to see things from a new perspective through new eyes. As Freemasons trained to think in terms of allegories and symbols, **A Christmas Carol** resonates with Masonic correlations. Our three degrees in Craft Masonry, simplified as birth, life, and death, correspond to the three Ghosts of Christmas. As an initiatory Order, we also endeavour to transform ourselves by self-examination and '*a well-regulated course of self-discipline.*' Like the transformed Scrooge, we endeavour to be happy ourselves and communicate that happiness to others.

Although Charles Dickens was not a Freemason, I suggest that **A Christmas Carol** may be interpreted as an instructive Masonic Parable. It is a vivid portrayal of the transforming effect of initiation.

RSJD December 2015