



## Nugget

### Faith, Hope and Charity

#### *The three principal staves in Jacob's Ladder*

**Summary:** Opening with 'faith, hope and charity', the three principal staves of Jacob's Ladder, it goes on to focus on the wider meaning of 'Charity'.



Faith, Hope and Charity are the three principal staves on Jacob's ladder. "Faith in the Great Architect of the Universe, Hope in Salvation and to be in Charity with all men. The third and last, being Charity, comprehends the whole, and the Mason who is possessed of this Virtue in its most ample sense may justly be deemed to have obtained the summit of his profession, figuratively speaking. 'An Ethereal Mansion veiled from mortal eyes'. What does this mean?

This is a classic example of confusion caused by the changing usage of language. Let us go back to the dictionary. One of the older definitions of charity is: 'love, natural affection; spontaneous goodness'; another is: 'a disposition to act judge hopefully of men and their actions, and to make allowance for their shortcomings'. The use of the word 'charity' to reflect the giving of alms is an alternative and also quite old meaning, but it does not perfectly fit the context.

First-Degree Tracing Board by John Harris c,1825  
Courtesy of the Library and Museum of Freemasonry

'Charity comprehends the whole' is a way of saying that we must have natural affection for all men, to think well of them, and to support them. Remember the Charge after Initiation, where you are exhorted to. 'observe the duties you owe to God, to your neighbour and to yourself'? It continues, 'To your neighbour by acting with him on the square, by rendering him every kind office which justice and mercy may require, by relieving his necessities and soothing his afflictions, and by doing to him as, in similar cases you would wish he would do to you'. That is the summit to be achieved by Freemasons, the third stave of Jacob's ladder, the ethereal mansion.

When you hear the word in our rites, you need to open your mind to this more grand meaning, which lies at the centre of our masonic ideals.

Unknown Artist: Courtesy of the Library and Museum of Freemasonry



### **Recommended use of Nuggets**

Nuggets offer a short, simple and readily absorbed means of progressing Masonic knowledge and an easy way to introduce learning to Lodges and Chapters. It is hoped that they will become a regular feature of Lodge and Chapter meetings as well as a source for private-study.

Nuggets can be included as an item in the summons and read at most Lodge/Chapter meetings. They can be:

- Read by either a new or an experienced Mason with the minimum of preparation and practice; *though ideally, they need to be read a few times beforehand.*
- Themed with the meeting or activity.
- Used to initiate a discussion within a Lodge/Chapter, LOI/COI, or group.
- Read at home and shared as a topic for a future discussion.
- Used as a focus for an unplanned, informal discussion.

**For further nuggets and other learning materials visit 'Solomon' at <http://solomon.ugle.org.uk>**

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