



NUGGET

Sublime to Sublime - The Transitory Nature of Life.

Summary: Sublime to sublime - a link between Craft and Chapter Masonry. An exploration of the connection between Craft and Chapter Masonry and the transitory nature of life.

An unfolding of the intrinsic link between the Craft and the Royal Arch, and in particular, the transitory nature of life alluded to at the end of the ceremony of Raising.

To be able to do so, we will first share a few perceptions: In Freemasonry, we are often exposed to language and terminology that is specific in its use, for example, the terms 'Sublime' and 'Supreme', when used in conjunction with the Craft and the Holy Royal Arch. Some researchers consider the Royal Arch as being the second volume of the history of Freemasonry focusing upon: *'that which was lost to its final recovery'*. These researchers would argue that without the practices we use in the Royal Arch ceremonies, the Master Mason's Degree would be like a song half sung; a story partly told; or a promise unfulfilled. Hence their use of the term 'plus ultra' (further or beyond), when compared to the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason.

As Master Mason's, we could might consider ourselves 'left in limbo', having not been privy to the 'lost words and secrets', when our journey in the Craft ends so abruptly! Whereas the Royal Arch could be regarded as the 'ne plus ultra', of Masonry i.e. the uttermost point attained or attainable in a Mason's career. As Mason's, and in particular, as Royal Arch Companions, we should always be searching for continued and further learning and understanding. This is both an individual and collective journey, *'... men must explain to one another the truth they have discovered, or think they have discovered, in order thus to assist one another in the quest for truth'*,¹ or as St Augustine said: *'Search to find, once you find it, go on searching again'*.

In our ceremonies, we enact this to a degree by unfolding aspects of our understanding through an allegorical play. For instance, in the ceremony of raising a candidate to a Master Mason, we consider the building of King Solomon's Temple in the 10th century BCE and the moral inferences of this. In the Royal Arch ceremony, we concern ourselves with the inferences relating to the rebuilding of that temple in the 4th century BCE, following its destruction by the Babylonians.

In the rebuilding of the temple, there were then, as there are today, prophets of doom who were apathetic and indifferent to its reconstruction. But the resolute conviction of Zerubbabel saw the temple finally rebuilt through his unwavering dedication and courage. This was the lesson laid down for us. It is not surprising, therefore, that we give so much allegorical credence to the artefacts and tools that were used to encourage us to moralise over.

The successful conclusion of the rebuilding of the temple was made possible both by the spirit of toleration and the material support on the part of the Zoroastrian kings of Persia, the largest of all the empires that ever existed in the ancient world. We learn that Cyrus the Great and his various successors, respected the national particularities and peculiarities of their subjects, including the that of the Jews, during their Babylonian



captivity. Within the tomb of Cyrus there was reportedly the inscription: '*O Man! Whosoever thou art, and whensoever thou comest ... I am Cyrus, the founder of Persian empire. Envy me not the little earth that covers my body.*'²

The lesson here is that this great king of a great empire recognised the transitory nature of life, of riches, of men living, working and learning together.

In a sense, our transitory path should be about exploring and challenging the truth behind our learning, knowledge, perceptions and actions.

References

1. Paul VI, (1965), *Dignitatis Humanae*, Vatican II, <http://www.vatican.va> [Accessed 15/08/19]
2. Plutarch, Life of Alexander, Epitaph of Cyrus, *Hoyt's New Cyclopedia Of Practical Quotations*, (1922), p. 230, Funk & Wagnalls Co., New York & London.



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.

*Note: All biblical passages are taken from the Authorized King James version unless otherwise specified.

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

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