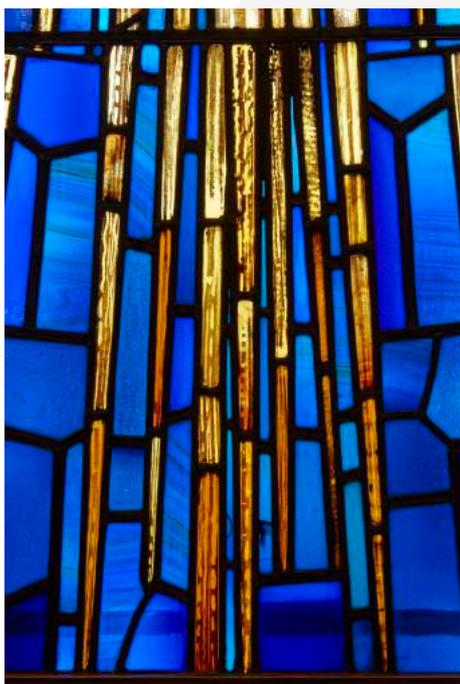




UGLE ORATION

From Helpless Indigence to Holy Confidence A Journey through the Three Degrees

Summary: The blind faith of *'helpless indigence'* as expressed in the First Degree, is fashioned and modelled through the formative years of the second, until it is made ready for transformation into a mature and *'holy confidence'* in the third.



'No opposite can be known without its opposite, having suffered a blow, you will know a caress', so wrote the Persian poet Rumi in the 13th Century.

In our western culture we also use opposites to describe our human experience. For example, the darkest hour of night is often said to be just before the dawn of day when also the first notes of the song thrush are harsh and discordant, to signal to the world that this frail creature has survived the life and death moments of the dark. The legendary Liverpool manager, Bill Shankly, was disappointed that football was thus described, *'a matter of life and death'* - *'it is far more important than that'* he once insisted!

In our everyday lives, we categorise things as opposites to express our subjective thoughts and feelings, using them as boundaries or scales by which to make qualitative assessments or even moral judgements - Male/Female, Life/Death, Day/Night, Success/Failure, True/False - all are opposites viewed as alternatives, generating a tension and providing us with a form of Richter scale by which we recognise their influence but cannot bring them into balance or unity. It is as if we are attempting to paint a picture of external reality whilst our perception of the core subject is distorted and confused. It is in this sense an exoteric reality – one which is drawn from outside which, whilst real to us personally, remains fragmented and lacks the additional dimension of inner depth and perspective, or acceptance. We may even begin to dream of a life without death, pleasure without pain or light without dark. It is the reason why we often find it difficult to cope with life or a situation.



Contrast with the esoteric reality of the Masonic Initiate, esoteric because it is drawn from within, in his journey through the experience of Three Degrees, from the outside towards the centre. Opposites are no longer expressed as alternatives, poles apart at either end of a plus-minus scale of metered intensity, but rather as dualities, two sides of the same coin and both integral to the value of the whole entity. For example, look at the candidate's first experience in his Initiation; by being blindfolded he is deprived of material light. But one of the reasons for his being placed into darkness is to awaken a light from within the unconscious, to stimulate the generation of self-knowledge which will make him aware of the gap between the person he ought to be, in his heart, and the person he appears to be, behind his persona. Similarly, before being permitted to progress to the Second Degree, the candidate is asked to explain the paradox of when he was Initiated and how he became liberated from time and the manifest world. Light and Dark, Day and Night, Sun and Moon, Celestial and Terrestrial, and many other dualities recur constantly throughout the Ritual, each half being only capable of validation through the other.

How is the candidate to achieve a state of balance and integration of apparently opposing forces? The Charge to the Initiate informs him quite unequivocally. In addition to the duties we owe to God and to our Neighbour, there is a vital third duty. To our self within, to penetrate the secret of personality, both the introverted and the extraverted sides. This is not, however, to be understood as a selfish or narcissistic exhortation to navel gazing but requires a *'well-regulated course of discipline'* to harmonise both the conscious and unconscious, *'the corporeal and mental faculties'* into what Carl Jung describes as psychic wholeness or individuation – *'thereby enabling you to exert those talents wherewith God has blessed you'*.

The truly centred self becomes the point of fulcrum where the dual forces of Light and Dark are, experientially, through the difficulties and dangers encountered along the way, mediated and balanced. The language of the Second Degree continues the theme of duality: East/West, Right/Left and Superior/Inferior. German Freemasons of the 1780s also believed that the two great pillars of King Solomon's temple symbolised the magnetic poles of the philosopher's compass, that on the left representing male, upper fire and lower air whilst that on the right feminine, upper water and lower earth; and, as we are still told, when conjoined *'stability'*. This is what the Chinese call yin and yang in their ancient philosophy; two opposing and yet complementary





aspects of a phenomenon, combining to create a unity. Like the two great pillars at the entrance of King Solomon's temple, opposites yet supporting the same structure where the holy of holies within the inner chamber only can disclose itself when two have become one. The extended version of the Tracing Board in this degree expresses beautifully the harmonisation required if we are to *'steer the barque of this life over the seas of passion'* and *'observe a due medium'*, all the time keeping *'eternity in view'*.

In the Third Degree the candidate is invited to contemplate the death of his profane self by becoming spiritually re-born, being divinely inspired to lift his eyes *'to that bright morning star'*, the light of eternal reality, the criterion of perfection which has no opposite and whose truth is Infinite and ineffable. The paradox of a darkness visible is in truth light invisible, a hidden light illuminated from within by which the chaos of confused and opposite feelings - all constellated in the fear of death - becomes more manageable, inducing a firm but humble confidence towards a life of renewed hope and maturity. Just as light is needed for darkness, so darkness is needed for light. By aspiring to reach perfection, the transcendent man is enabled to seize and begin to comprehend its greatness.

'A true and sincere faith is the evidence of things not seen but the substance of those hoped for.'

The blind faith of *'helpless indigence'* as expressed in the First Degree, is fashioned and modelled through the formative years of the second, until it is made ready for transformation into a mature and *'holy confidence'* in the third, not in the future but now as the journey progresses; as expressed by the epic meaning within the ritual:

'Let the emblems of mortality which lie before you lead you to contemplate on your inevitable destiny, and guide your reflections to that most interesting of all human studies, the knowledge of yourself.'



Recommended use of Papers

Papers offer a simple, direct means of advancement in a particular aspect of Masonic knowledge. They can be used in a variety of ways:

- Read at home for private study
- Shared for pre-reading by members of a discussion group
- Read aloud in Lodge or Chapter, or in an LOI/COI/new members forum
 - Followed by 'any questions'
 - As a precursor to a discussion (in which case much more time is needed, possibly more than double that allocated to the paper itself)
 - Supported by audio-visual aids, if necessary

They can be delivered by a single person or split into bite-sized pieces and read by multiple presenters (in which case, the speaker(s) should have read and practiced the delivery of the paper beforehand).

If the paper is to be used to introduce a discussion, the presenter will need to have thought about the material, done a little research, and prepared some open questions to engage with the audience. Kipling's dictum can be of help in preparing open questions, which should begin with one of his 'serving men', as follows: *'I keep six honest serving men (they taught me all I knew). Their names are, What and Why and When and How and Where and Who'*. Rudyard Kipling

*Note: All biblical passages are taken from the Authorized King James version and any reference to ritual will be from Emulation unless otherwise specified.

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