

Masonic Matters

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By Ed Halpaus

“Hope is a song in a weary throat.” Rev. Pauli Murray 1910-1985

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“Great men cultivate love.” Booker T. Washington

I bring you greetings from Most Worshipful Brother Raymond G. Christensen, Grand Master of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Minnesota, and all of the Grand Lodge officers elected and appointed of the Grand Lodge of Minnesota.

The Three Graces

By Ed Halpaus, Grand LEO

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”

1 Corinthians 13:13 Authorized, or King James, Version

The Three Graces can be traced to ancient Greek religion where they were goddesses of fertility; the name Graces refers to the ‘pleasing’ or ‘charming’ appearance of a fertile field or garden. The number of the Graces would vary in different legends, but there usually were three of them, namely: Aglaia, meaning brightness; Euphrosyne, meaning joyfulness; and Thilia, meaning bloom. They were said at various times to be the daughters of Zeus and Hera or of Helios and Aegle.

In works of art the Three Graces were, in early times, depicted being draped with cloth, and later as nude female figures. In Freemasonry the Three Graces; Faith, Hope, and Charity, are depicted in art wearing fine clothing.

In a copy of a painting I have in a book, Faith is shown standing between two Corinthian Pillars looking at a lamp, which she is holding in her hand. [The lamp, by the way is the kind of lamp we now know as the lamp of knowledge.] Hope is depicted standing in front of a window, holding flowers in her arms and with flowers near her feet. Charity is shown standing with the clouded canopy of heaven behind her, holding a small child in one arm, and her other arm caressing two slightly older children who are clinging to her.

If you would like to see a copy of this painting you might have a copy available in your Lodge library. Most lodge libraries, no matter how large or small they may be, are likely to have at least one set of books called Mackey’s Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, and the edition that is called Mackey’s Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences; the New and Revised Edition, by William J. Hughan and Edward L. Hawkins will have, in volume 1 next to the title page, the artwork depicting the Three Graces. There are two other editions of Mackey’s Encyclopedia I am aware of; the original edition which would be very rare and valuable, and a revised edition by Robert Ingham Clegg, which is the edition I prefer to use for research.

The Three Graces are familiar to all Freemasons: We first learn about them in the third section of the lecture of the First Degree. A short synopsis of what that lecture has to say can be found in the Minnesota Masonic Manual. In it there is a section, (on page 29,) called ‘The Badge of a Mason,’ which has a portion of the Entered Apprentice lecture telling about Jacob and his vision. The section continues with information about the Three Graces: It begins by talking about Wisdom Strength and Beauty, and that Freemasonry’s dimensions are unlimited, and that its covering is no less than the canopy of heaven. Leading into the subject of the Three Graces, it says: *“To this object the Mason’s mind is continually directed, and thither he hopes at last to arrive by the aid of that theological ladder, which Jacob, in his vision, saw ascending from earth to heaven; the three principal rounds of which are denominated Faith, Hope, and Charity, and which admonish us to have faith in God, hope in immortality, and charity to all mankind.”*

The degrees of Freemasonry are meant only to pass on truths in a way that we can understand them: Freemasonry is not a course in history, mythology, religion, theology, or a study of the Holy Bible, (although many Masons will study the Holy Bible because they enjoy it;) it is simply a fraternity of men, who have the best interests of their fraternal brothers and fellowman in their hearts and minds.

When we hear the Entered Apprentice lecture and the portion about the Three Graces we may or may not realize that the words allude to two different sets of scripture; One from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament; Genesis 28:12 and 1 Corinthians 13:13 You can look up those pieces of scripture to read for yourself in their entire context; each of them are well worth the time it takes to read and study them.

In Freemasonry, with Faith being represented by the first or lowest rung of Jacob's Ladder, Faith is synonymous with confidence, or trust, one of the first things a candidate for Masonry must have; as Brother Mackey says: [The] *"first and essential qualification of a candidate for initiation, is that he should trust in God."*

We have learned that our *"Faith may be lost in sight; Hope ends in fruition; but Charity extends beyond the grave, through the boundless realms of eternity."* Brother Mackey explains why this is said: Faith is the evidence of things not seen – *'when we see - we no longer believe by faith but through demonstration; Hope lives only in the expectation of possession, it ceases to exist when the object once hoped for is at length enjoyed; 'Charity,' [which originally meant Love,] 'is exercised on earth in acts of mutual kindness and forbearance, [it] is still found in the world to come, in the sublime form of mercy from God to his erring creatures.'*

After the first round of Jacob's ladder is explained in the lecture we advance to the second round where Hope is represented; Hope is symbolic of the hope all Freemasons have in the immortality of the soul. There is further symbolism found in Faith and Hope in the fact that having proceeded from the first to the second round of the ladder the Mason is led by his belief in God's wisdom and goodness.

Without the hope of the immortality of the human soul, human virtue would not be as stimulating as it is, or ought to be, and vice would not be as fearful to man as it is, or, again, as it ought to be. Without hope life would be devoid of happiness. Thus the grave would be, as some legends say; *'still more gloomy, if it were not for the sprig of acacia blooming at the head of the grave, which reminds us of that imperishable part of man which survives the grave; the immortality of the soul.'*

Brother Mackey tells us *"the ancients represented Hope by a nymph or maiden holding in her hand a bouquet of opening flowers, indicative of the coming fruit; but in modern and Masonic iconology, the science of craft illustrations and likenesses, it is represented by a virgin leaning on an anchor, the anchor itself being a symbol of hope."*

In St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians, (1st Corinthians,) he admonishes them to be cautious and not to blend with the world and accept its values and lifestyles. In 1 Corinthians 13:13 he compares Faith and Hope with Charity, (Masonically the third round of Jacob's ladder,) St. Paul calls charity the greatest of the three. *As Brother Clegg writes: "We must not fall into the too common error that charity is only that sentiment of commiseration which leads us to assist the poor with pecuniary donations. Its Masonic, as well as its Christian application is more noble and more extensive. The word used by the Apostle is, in the original, ἀγάπή, or Love, a word denoting that kindly state of mind which renders a person full of good-will and affectionate regard toward others."*

John Wesley, who was profoundly influenced by the Moravians, and who is the founder of Methodism, which evolved from the Methodist Societies into the Methodist Church, wrote about Charity that he regretted that the original translation of the Holy Bible was not done correctly as regards the word Charity. Had it been translated correctly the Three Graces, as they are known, would have been known as Faith, Hope, and Love not Faith Hope and Charity. Then, as Brother Mackey says *"we have understood the comparison made by Saint Paul, when he said, 'Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing."*

To paraphrase Henry Drummond, in his essay 'The Greatest Thing in the World,' on First Corinthians chapter 13, Brother Mackey says that *"guided by this sentiment, the true Freemason will suffer long and be kind; he will be slow to anger and easy to forgive; he will stay his falling Brother by gentle admonition, and warn him with kindness of approaching danger; he will not open his ear to the slanderers, and will close his lips against all reproach; his faults and his follies will be locked in his breast, and the prayer for mercy will ascend to Jehovah [The Great Architect of the Universe] for his Brother's sins."* Brother Clegg adds some fine sentiments about Charity, which I like, and they remind me something a Minnesota Past Grand Master, Phil Soderberg, is fond of saying when he greets Masons in his travels; "I extend to you the right hand of fellowship."

Here is what Brother Clegg added to Mackey's Encyclopedia of Masonry on Charity:
"My Brother: With this right hand I welcome you to the fellowship of our Lodge and to the ranks of our ancient and honorable Fraternity whose cornerstone is Charity: Charity is the brightest jewel in the Masonic crown; Charity is the Corinthian pillar whose entablature adds strength, beauty and grace to the Masonic fabric; Charity is the radiant spark emanating from God, the inexhaustible source of love; the Charity that is swift of foot, ready of hand, in the cause of a common humanity; the Charity that writes a Brother's vices in water and his virtues in enduring brass; the Charity of which He who spake as never man spake was the illustrious exemplar; let this, the Mason's Charity, burn upon the altar of your heart a living fire."

The Three Graces of Freemasonry: Faith, Hope, Charity; if we were to think of Charity as Love maybe it would give us a whole different outlook on our Freemasonry.

Doing Masonic Research in books that are readily available in Lodge and Scottish Rite libraries and from our Grand Lodge bookstore, as well as information on the Internet is well worth taking the time to do, it actually is fun: It can help a Mason learn more about the lessons of Freemasonry, and thus we can understand these lessons better.

"And now these three remain; faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.
1 Corinthians 13:13 NIV

From the Great light of Masonry = "Do not seek revenge, or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord." Leviticus 19:18 NIV

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With "Brotherly Love,"
Ed Halpaus
Grand Lodge Education Officer

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