When did you learn to walk on water?

Or

The obvious metaphors we missed during the EA Degree. How do we as Masons learn to control our own emotional state and how do we move beyond the herd mentality of the Masses?

All Biblical passages used in this presentation have come from the Douay Rheims Version of the Catholic Bible. Some sections were taken as a whole and are quoted, some are shortened or paraphrased versions and condensed for conveying the point.

St Matthew Chapter 14 24-31

"But the boat in the midst of the sea was tossed with the waves, for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them walking upon the sea. And they seeing him walking upon the sea, were troubled, saying it is an apparition. And they cried out for fear. And immediately Jesus spoke to them saying: Be of good heart: It is I, fear ye not. And Peter making answer, said Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee upon the waters. And he said: Come. And Peter going down out of the boat, walked upon the water to come to Jesus. But seeing the wind strong, he was afraid; and when he began to sink, he cried out, saying: Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretching forth his hand took hold of him, and said to him. O thou of Little Faith. Why did thou doubt?"

I would ask that you pay attention to the use of the sea and the winds here as we will be coming back to that.

In each of the three degrees of Craft Masonry we are introduced to when we "Enter" a Blue Lodge, there is a direct correlation to one of the four elements of the ancient alchemical world in each. Albert Pike in his work Esoterica made short work describing the Element of Earth, as always being present in the Lodge. And he even went so far as to describe it as the first of the elements that every Mason walked on when he crossed the Porch for the first time.

But what about Fire, Water and Air?

Water, is the first of all elements that a Mason is exposed to. But why?

We will soon discover that historically the element of water is closely tied to our emotions and feelings. It is aptly placed with the fluid. Our emotions are quite fluid ranging in a single day from happy to sad, triumphant to beaten down; and all manner in between. And if the emotions of an individual are tied to water, what significance would the sea, or a waterfall have in this connotation.

Water is mentioned in the 4 gospels, depending on translation, in excess of 70 times, sea or ocean is mentioned more than 50 different times. That seems like an inordinate amount of attention being given to something that has no meaning other than us taking it at Face Value. No one is that thirsty. What are the Gospel writers telling us and what did the creators of the Masonic Degree system intend to teach us using it so often in the Entered Apprentice Degree?

Water, historically has been used as a metaphor for emotions. We find it in context when discussing AE Waite and his work with the Tarot deck and the suit of Cups. We find it within the writings of more than a few turn of the century philosophical and esoteric authors, Eliphas Levi makes the most of it in his book The Doctrine and Ritual of High Magic. When you look at its place within the Masonic degrees, the correlation becomes very evident once you have seen it.

Where does the Sheaf of Wheat hang?

Is a waterfall a calm relaxing pool of water? Oh no, a tumultuous torrent that is cascading and dropping at a staggering pace. Could this not be viewed as a metaphor for uncontrolled emotions? Could another word for emotions not be Passions? And you will notice the symbolism here is not just a cup of water, representing you and your emotional state, but a huge torrent of water cascading down. So this is a much larger symbolic meaning than just you the individual.

What did you come here to do?

What happens when our passions are uncontrolled? In the Gospel of St Matthew, Chapter 14; we have the death of St John the Baptist, one of Masonry's patron Saints. It is fascinating that the Gospel writers chose to place the story of Herod and St John before two of Jesus's miracles and major teaching events. So early on, they are giving us an example of uncontrolled emotions and passions.

Herod had put St John in prison because John was speaking out about Herod's affair with Herodias, his brother's wife. Herodias daughter danced her provocative dance at the feast and Salome's dancing pleased Herod so much that in his drunkenness he promised to give her anything she desired, up to half of his kingdom. When Salome asked her mother what she should request, she was told to ask for the head of John the Baptist on a platter. Although Herod Antipas was appalled by the request, he reluctantly agreed and had John executed by beheading in the prison. So in the same Gospel, we have an example given of what uncontrolled passions represent. Not just the passion of lust, but now the emotion of Ego. Herod, did not want to be shamed. But his uncontrolled emotions brought him to this point.

It would appear the creators of the Masonic degree system had much this same thought in mind when they placed an oath to address this very item in the Master Mason degree. Was it meant as

a stand-alone item, or a reminder about controlling your passions and emotions taken directly from the Entered Apprentice Degree?

For the violation of your oaths of the Entered Apprentice Degree, where does the penalty take place?

So again, we see the authors of the degree system symbolically placing Water, all around this degree. And even the penalty again closely mirrors what uncontrolled passions did to St John the Baptist.

So now for our next step, if Water is used as a metaphor for our emotions. Then understanding that the Sea, or the Ocean; is a metaphor for the Emotions of the Masses, or in common terms Herd Mentality.

St Matthew Chapter 13

"The same day Jesus going out of the house, sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went up into a boat and sat; and all the multitude stood on the shore. And he spoke to them many things in parables, saying;…"

So now we are discussing multitudes of emotions.

How many times have you as a Mason witnessed the emotional responses of the multitudes towards our fraternity? Every other week someone is screaming about Albert Pike and the Devil, we are all a bunch of Lucifer worshipers one week and the next we are all following the teachings of Baphomet. And the list goes on and on. World Domination! And its not until you are in it, that you discover what a disorganized International Group of Conspirators we really are. Green beans anyone?

Have you not wondered why the questions that are asked during the EA degree are all strikingly similar? Where were you first prepared? Its become a cliché these days to claim the heart is the seat of all emotions. What were you subduing again?

The brilliance of the early Gospel writers is multifold. We are shown the face value of each of the stories or parables, just as we are within Masonry. Our oaths are straight forward. But just as within the Gospels themselves, is there not a secondary layer of knowledge waiting to be shared.

If emotions are water, and the sea or a waterfall is herd mentality and a crashing emotional response. Then Jesus walking on water is controlling his passions and emotions. Jesus taking a boat out onto the water to teach is telling us He is rising above the crowd's emotional response to teach them. He is calm in the storm. And Peter is there to prove that anyone can do it, until they start looking around to see what the masses are doing. Peter didn't fall because of the Wind and the Sea. The storm was already present when he stepped out of the boat. He fell because he lost his focus and gave into the emotional response of panic that was all around him from the masses.

Miriam Webster describes Panic as of, relating to, or resembling a mental or emotional state (such as fear) that is extreme, sudden, and often groundless.

Peter fell, because of being in a groundless emotional state, both figuratively and literally. He was standing on water after all. And as he was walking on water i.e. controlling his emotions and passions when all around him were falling apart; his response was an emotional response that caused him to fall.

The lesson we take from Peter, and what I feel the authors of our Masonic Degrees are attempting to teach us is much the same. Control of your emotions, passions, is the first step towards mastery of yourself. It is the task you; the Entered Apprentice were charged with completing before you could be Passed. Because in controlling your emotions, you too can walk on the water like Peter and Jesus.

Douay Rheims Catholic Bible

MSN Co-Pilot for aggregated numbers used

The Doctrine and Ritual of High Magin, Eliphas Levi-JMG translation

Albert Pike Esoterica