

## Master Craftsman II 24<sup>th</sup> Degree Essay

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### Achieving Equilibrium

*Such were the Mysteries;.... The human mind still speculates upon the great mysteries of nature, and still finds its ideas anticipated by the ancient, whose profoundest thoughts are to be looked for, not in their philosophies, but in their symbols, by which they endeavored to express the great ideas that vainly struggled for utterance in words, as they viewed the great circle of phenomena, Birth Life, Death or Decomposition, and New Life out of Death and Rottenness, -to them the greatest of mysteries.<sup>1</sup>*

### The Beginning Continues

This essay question is a continuation of the essay question of the 23<sup>rd</sup> degree that dealt with the reality of evil, bad, and darkness existing within our world. And why is it that bad things happen to good people?

The answers to this question frame one of the great philosophical debates dealt with by humanity. In the previous degree essay I proposed an answer to that question. The answer being that humankind, living in a world that is broken by the severed relationship between the Creator and the Creation fails to understand that it is his/her spiritual relationship with the Divine that will cure this illness and rid this world of evil and darkness. But this degree turns one back to re-consider the rush to proposing a direct answer to this question of evil by focusing us on our ultimate goal of Harmony and equilibrium. By focusing us on our goal we then can approach the problem from the perspective of what we desire to achieve. This question is posed in order to lead us onward to ultimately achieving our goal of equilibrium or the re-uniting of the Creator and His Creation.

What is the power of an unanswered question?" is one of my basic **rules**. This question focuses my attention on the power that derives from not accepting easy answers to questions, especially questions that present opposing contraries. Only by extended pondering of the question, which cannot happen if one accepts some sham of an answer, can an answer arise that will hover over the contraries with its glowing resolution. The world would be much different if Columbus had accepted "Fall off the edge of the world." as the easy answer to the question, "What happens if I keep sailing westward?" Instead he held his unanswered question and sailed on into history.<sup>2</sup>

This quote from a Robert Matherne book review of **Embracing Contraries** by **Peter Elbow, Explorations in Learning and Teaching**, frames the discussion. The concept of holding to contraries means being able to leave important questions such as discussed

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1 Pike, *Morals and Dogma* pg 434

2 <http://www.doyletics.com/arj/ecrev.htm>

above and in the previous essay, open and unanswered as a key to arriving at our goal of harmony and equilibrium. Using the illustration of Columbus in the above quote we are presented with an example of contraries. There is no reconciling the belief that if you sailed west you would fall off of the earth, with I will keep sailing west. Either one or the other is true but not both. But it was the process of holding both of these contrary beliefs open that led Columbus to sail. The primary contrary we deal with in Masonry is My life exists in the the physical world with the contrary **my existence is primarily spiritual.**

### **Courage to Not Know or Faith**

This teaching also leads us to the necessary condition of courage or faith to be present within the individual in order to be able to hold these competing opinions as both potentially true in order to arrive at our goal of Equilibrium. This degree continues to look at this from the standpoint of the solution, which is equilibrium. How do we achieve this state of Nirvana or Equilibrium? This degree would have us deal with the idea of holding contradictions open in our thinking and leaving the questions unanswered as a means for reaching our ultimate goal of harmony and equilibrium.

This is not an easy proposition. Many of us find it very uncomfortable to live our lives without knowing the outcome. It is uncomfortable not to know what is going to happen. But this leads us to understand some important teaching in this degree. It refocuses us on some basics.

- 1) There is one true God Who is All and is only spiritual.
- 2) The soul within man is immortal and a part of the universal soul but yet man lives in the physical world.
- 3) The struggle in every mans nature between the divine, planted by God, and the flesh, or lower nature of man, is a constant within all the universe. This is the point to life. The reconciling of the contraries, because it ends in the desired result of equilibrium. Holding in our minds the understanding of the contraries, or leaving the question unanswered is part of this process.

### Conclusion

Ultimately our order uses symbols to show us the necessity of holding these contradictions in our minds as a way of achieving our goal of harmony and equilibrium. The square and compasses, darkness and light, Black and white, Pythagoras' Triangle, the cross all are used to teach us that while we live in a material world our true nature is spiritual. While we experience bad ultimately there is only good. It is ultimately the reconciling of the physical world we live in with the spiritual nature that resides within man that brings about our ultimate goal. Holding the contraries through contemplating our symbols reminds us of our ultimate goal.