



UGLE Oration

First Grand Principle

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The First Grand Principle, 'Brotherly Love'.

Summary

An explanation of what Freemasons understand by the term, 'brotherly love'.

Keywords

First-Degree, Grand-Principle, Brotherly-Love

The First Grand Principle

Freemasonry is based on three Grand Principles: brotherly love, relief and truth. The first to these, brotherly love, does not just refer to our Brethren within Masonry, but to love of all of mankind. Sadly, the English language is limited in its words for love.

The ancient Greeks, by contrast, had several words and, in addition to eros, they talked of agape, caritas and philia. Agape is that unconditional and non-judgemental love that sees all human beings as equal in the eyes of God and it reflects the love of God for all his children, irrespective of their faith, class and nationality. Caritas, or charity, is the caring and compassionate love that drives us to relieve suffering, and is the basis of our second Grand Principle, relief. Philia, from which our word affiliation is derived, is the desire for association, for friendship and for companionship, all of which Masonry provides in abundance. Our third Grand Principle is truth, and philia also refers to our search for truth, as expressed in the word *philosophy*, derived from the Greek words *philia-sophia*; literally, the love of Sophia, the Goddess of Wisdom.

When you first expressed interest in becoming a Freemason, you were asked to affirm your belief in a Supreme Being. You were not asked by what name or in what form you acknowledge this Being, whom we in the Craft term the Great Architect of the Universe. Those questions belong to your personal faith and, indeed, we avoid all topics of religious discussion. During your journey through our ceremonies and ritual you will, however, often be encouraged to contemplate on the great, awesome, incomprehensible and transcendental mystery behind all that exists. You will be encouraged to sense that, in the words of Albert Einstein, behind anything that can be experienced there is a something that our mind cannot grasp and whose beauty reaches us only indirectly and as a feeble reflection.

But in one powerfully over-riding way, God is not beyond our understanding because, as mystics of all religions and in all ages have affirmed, God is Love. Alas, throughout the ages this great truth has been smothered by fear, and the creation in frightened peoples' minds of a terrifying deity full of retribution.

In total contrast, Isaac of Ninevah emphasises that God and Love are one and the same thing and, as such, all God can do is to love. He added that, 'When we reach love, we have reached God; our own road is ended and we have crossed to the island which is beyond the world'. In his first encyclical, entitled *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love), Pope Benedict XVI remarks that '... love promises infinity, eternity – a reality far greater and totally other than our everyday existence'.

Despite what some of our critics assert, Freemasonry is not a religion. This is made very clear by Grand Lodge but, at the same time, Masonry is hailed as a friend of religion. In many ways, the Masonic attitude to religion reflects that of the great Sufi mystic-poet Jelalludin Rumi, also known as Mevlana, who remarked that all love is a bridge to the love of God and that love is the only true religion. In one of his poems, which have a wonderful dream-like quality, Rumi states that 'Love is the astrolabe that sights into the mystery of God.' He also asserts that love lifts us above the divisions of religion, 'I enter the mosque, the synagogue, the church, the temple and I see but one altar'.

Nearer to home, the 14th century English mystic Julian of Norwich, in her radiantly optimistic book *Revelations of Divine Love*, states that many people accept that God is all might and wisdom and can do all manner of things but that he is all love and *will* do all manner of things, there they fail. She affirms that, through the infinite power of love, God will make all manner of things well and that ‘in the end all shall be love’.

Freemasonry transcends the boundaries and schisms of religion by emphasising that, in the words of John Lennon, ‘All you need is love’. In Delhi there is a shrine widely renowned as a meeting place for those of all faiths and where one worshipper remarked, ‘*What is nice about this place is no one is Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian. All faiths pray together. I’ve found a lamp of love here for all religions. It’s like a beacon*’. Our Lodges could be seen in this same light. At your Initiation you were made to represent the foundation stone of a temple, but this is not a real building but is symbolic of an inner temple that you are building to as a dwelling place for the Almighty Architect. In this context, we may reflect on another saying of Jelalludin Rumi, ‘*The place that Solomon made to worship in is not built of earth and water and stone, but of intention and wisdom and mystical conversation and compassionate action*’.

##END##

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

If used as part of an event, the paper should be advertised and promoted by way of trailers, flyers and announcements, in summonses, letters, emails, notice boards, and on social media.

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