



UGLE Oration

The light from above

Index

The Light from above – explored through the Third-Degree

Summary

The Light from above, explored through the Third-Degree, especially in relation to the centre, *'a point from which a Master Mason cannot err'* and through *'lifting our eyes to that bright Morning-Star, whose rising brings peace and salvation'*.

Keywords

Third-Degree, Centre, Morning-Star

The light from above

From that moment when we nervously entered the door of the Temple for the first time, we have found ourselves on a circuitous, and often confusing, journey. On the one hand, it has been a path of simplicity, learning certain steps, certain signs, certain words. But on the other, there has been much which has seemed complex, even obscure. In particular, those explanations given to us about the moral and spiritual lessons to be drawn from our workman's implements, from our symbols, and from our signs.

In the Third-Degree all this is brought together for the first time. We have been drawn into the centre of the circle, the hub of the wheel upon which all movement, all action in the world, depends. Symbols, such as this, teach us to approach and recognise the importance of that still point within ourselves which is our own axis, our own moral fulcrum, allowing us to move with certainty through a world where right and wrong are not always immediately apparent, or the distinction even valued.

When we open a Lodge in the Third-Degree, The Master asks where we hope to find the genuine secrets of a Master Mason. The Senior Warden answers *'With the Centre'*. *'Why with the Centre?'* asks the Master. *'That being a point from which a Master Mason cannot err.'* replies the Warden. This Centre points us from this world to one far greater, from which comes the source of our morality and our very existence.

Freemasonry teaches us to love the world, to give what we can to it and to shoulder the common burden. Yet, at the same time, it also teaches us to recognise its temporary nature. However successful our journey may be in worldly terms, there is a greater journey, which we all must take, and which neither wealth, position, nor success can prevent. It is that great journey beyond the grave we symbolically enter in the Third-Degree, and from which we are raised.

In the Charge given to the Candidate in the Third-Degree, Freemasonry asks that, as we each stand upon the brink of that symbolic grave, we allow time to contemplate the symbols of mortality. We should always remember that our true allegiance is to that world beyond; a world which lies beyond reason.

Beneficial as reason is, despite all the great gifts it has brought us, it remains limited in its usefulness for our journey onwards; it cannot pierce that mysterious veil which divides the earth from the heavens. Reason cannot comprehend what lies beyond, unless it is assisted by that light from above. To find, to experience, that light one must begin with knowing oneself.

This at first, can appear a superficial statement. But the knowledge spoken of here, the eternal Light of the Gospels, the Buddhist texts, the Hindu sacred books such as the Bhagavad Gita¹, the Sufi writings within Islam, and many other traditions around the world concerns, above all, experience; of the deepest source of the *Eternal One* of which we are part.

The Charge refers to the supreme importance of knowledge of yourself; here it is referring us to the ancient mysteries of the Greeks and Romans. Above the entrance to the great temple, and initiatory centre, of Delphi, in Greece, was the carved text: *'Man, know thyself'*.

This does not mean that we should just discover our likes and dislikes; it means much more. Neither is it referring to that intellectual knowledge which we were encouraged to learn in the Second-Degree. No, it means to truly know, to experience what the Self is. Belief is the prelude to experience, not an end in itself; with experience, belief can change into knowledge. We are, following the instruction of the Charge, moving on a journey from the external world where the seven liberal arts and sciences rule supreme, into something much deeper and much more mysterious. Each of us is being asked, 'Who are you?' 'Why are you here?' 'What is required of you?' The Charge answers: '*Be careful to perform your allotted task while it is yet day*'.

How can we be sure to perform this task correctly? The Charge answers '*Continue to listen to the voice of Nature*', by contemplation and sensitivity, by acts of self-determination, and by choices made freely. We must seek those still moments when this voice is not drowned out by the rough and tumble of modern life; seek them out, and trust them, for they emerge from the centre. And, the Charge continues saying that this voice of Nature '*bears witness that even in this perishable frame resides a vital and immortal principle*'.

The intense darkened moments during which this charge is given, allows the opportunity for such moments. We should deliver the charge slowly, in order to allow time for these spaces to communicate to all of us. We have expressed, concisely and dramatically, in this charge important instructions for building our lives in accordance with our destiny.

And what is our destiny? The Charge states, using the most ancient symbolism, that it is to '*lift our eyes to that bright Morning-Star, whose rising brings peace and salvation ...*'. The Morning-Star could be Sirius of the ancient Egyptians, or Venus of the ancient Babylonians, but it is not to be taken literally. It is a beautiful symbol of a new light appearing following a long period of darkness. This Morning-Star arises within; it is the first vision of the Light from above. The New Testament advises, '*take heed...until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts*'.

This bright star is a supreme symbol of that Divine Light which mystics throughout the ages have described. The experience of the Divine is beyond words and can only be expressed by means of symbols, and that of a blazing star has been used for millennia. '*You ascend to the sky as a star, as the Morning-Star*' is the promise written four thousand years ago in the Egyptian 'Pyramid Texts'.

The experience of this light brings peace and salvation; by knowing this light, whenever in life it may come, you have passed through the veil which has previously shielded eternity from your grasp. You have discovered the 'vital and immortal principle' within. You have discovered the Word which was lost.

It is this secret, open to all but recognised by few, which lies at the heart of Freemasonry. It is a secret which needs to be experienced, not simply recited. And it is this which is the prime concern of the Charge to the newly obligated Master Mason.

Endnote:

¹Pronounced '*Bargavar – Geeta*'.

##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.

For further papers and other learning materials visit "Solomon" at <http://solomon.ugle.org.uk>

Acknowledgement:

Acknowledgement is given to UGLE as this presentation originated from the Oration programme and permission has been given to publish it in this form. This item is recognized as an extract from the library of UGLE Orations and now included in the Solomon learning environment.

Disclaimer:

Every reasonable effort has been made to contact known copyright holders, but if there are any errors or omissions, The United Grand Lodge of England will be pleased to insert the appropriate acknowledgment.

The views or interpretations contained in this article are those of the author. UGLE recognises there are many different interpretations of ritual, symbolism and history.

Copyright:

All rights reserved. No part of this paper may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission from The United Grand Lodge of England in writing.
