



UGLE Oration

To seek for that which was lost

Index

The Genuine Secrets

Summary

An exploration of the search for self, contained in the mantra, *'Seek and ye shall find, ask and ye shall have, knock and it will be opened to you'*

Keywords

Third-Degree, Search, Genuine-secrets, Self

To seek for that which was lost

Throughout the world, across its diverse cultures and down the many centuries, stories have long been told about the mythical quest for something or someone precious that has been lost. Examples include Jason and the quest for the Golden Fleece in Greek antiquity, Rama's quest for Sita in the Sanskrit epic Ramayana, the medieval Nibelungs' search for a lost treasure and, probably the best known of all, the quest for the Holy Grail in the Arthurian legend.

Of all the Grail literary works, perhaps the most esoteric, in terms of its symbolism, is Wolfram's German classic, Parzival, whose hero is often thought to have derived his name from his constant ambition to 'pierce-the-veil' shrouding the mystery. Only then can he find his true identity. Whilst in the other Grail stories, 'that which is lost' appears variously as a chalice, a plate, a cube or a pyramid, for Wolfram it is a stone, connecting it, in some commentators' eyes, with alchemical mysteries.

In Masonic allegory, it is a secret or a lost word.

How do we as Freemasons, like Parzival, hope to find that which is lost? It is by our Initiation, by departing from our everyday, material and profane lives and entering into another sacred world, by subjecting ourselves as candidates to trials, by perambulations, winding circuitous journeys and by asking the right question at the right time. The three distinct knocks of an Entered Apprentice offer us the way forward, *'seek and ye shall find, ask and ye shall have, knock and it will be opened to you'*. So, it is the quest which is important, the courage to continue through the open door and the constancy to persevere steadfastly on the journey into the unknown world beyond, reliant on one's intuitive faith, rather than the literal possession or ultimate re-discovery of a lost treasure. In this sense, the goal is purely symbolic. If you seek the inner reality of the spiritual quest, you will win the spiritual prize which moth and rust cannot corrupt, nor thieves steal.

But how are we to regard the substituted secrets of a Master Mason; a replacement of the genuine? Are they to be understood as merely ersatz secrets, earthly spam rather than manna from heaven and therefore to be de-valued? On the contrary, the light of a Master Mason is darkness visible by which the candidate confronts his own mortality and is made to feel, through experience gained, that his uncovered humanity is perhaps even more precious than an ineffable concept of perfection, the numinous, because his humanity has been hard won by passing through the different trials and tribulations all mediated through the involvement and participation of his fellow Brethren. The quest is for life itself, reflected in its other face, death. The act of being raised from a figurative death to the degree of a Master Mason is a step into reality, a metaphorical rebirth towards that bright morning star. A luminous archetype of his spiritual ascent, from a state of here and now in this mortal life, and a willingness to live and love unconditionally according to the Masonic line and rule.

'Let no discouragement ...make him once relent, his first avowed intent to be a pilgrim', is how John Bunyan's famous hymn describes his search for the celestial city.

Even today, in popular television shows, aspirants, be they celebrities or ‘wanabees’, strive to discover and realise their latent but undisclosed self-knowledge and talent, the so-called X Factor, prompting many to wonder at their journey of discovery and to declare their amazement at what they have found out about themselves.

How are these secrets revealed?

Through escape into another world or environment, through tests and trials, hard work and dedication, by human interaction and the courage to continue when often it would be more comfortable to give up, intuitive faith and belief in ones’ innate Godlike and God-given qualities.

In essence, the quest for the Grail is nothing but the quest for the Self, a unique quest signified in all the myths and symbols. It is one’s own self that one is seeking through all. And in this quest one runs in every direction, whereas the Grail is here, nearby, one has only to open one’s eyes.

In Freemasonry, for ‘Grail’ substitute ‘The genuine secrets of a Master Mason’.

##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>

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