

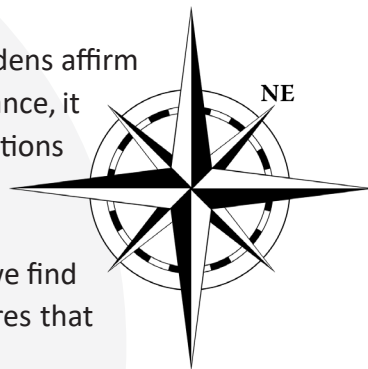


# UGLE ORATION

## Whence come you?

**Summary:** An explanation of why we first travel East then West to find enlightenment and self-knowledge through an inner journey.

In the catechism in the opening ceremony of the Master Masons' Lodge, the Wardens affirm that they are travelling from East to West in search of that which was lost. At first glance, it may seem contrary to their journeying so far which, though with many perambulations and diversions, have led inevitably from West to East. Where the candidate was successively employed, instructed, improved and finally, challenged to seek enlightenment. Now it would seem, he is travelling in the opposite direction and we find the reason for this in a catechism contained in one of a series of published lectures that are, on occasions, worked in our Lodges:



**Q.** Did you ever travel?

**A.** My forefathers did.

**Q.** Where did they travel?

**A.** Due east and west.

**Q.** What was the object of their travels?

**A.** They travelled east in search of instruction, and west to propagate the knowledge they had gained.

When the Lodge is opened in the Third Degree, all those present are Master Masons; as at this point in time there are no candidates being conducted through the ceremony. Thus they are all qualified and fully fledged Masters, their training is over and it is now time for them to return to the everyday world, to put their acquired skills into practice and to transmit their knowledge to others. They therefore acknowledge that it is not only by the instruction they have received from the Worshipful Master that they hope to achieve the object of their quest but by their own industry. Indeed, in the final line of the opening catechism, the Master relinquishes his leading role and instead, offers his assistance and mutual cooperation.

*'We will assist you to repair that loss and may Heaven aid our united endeavours.'*

There is another sense in which we as Master Masons now travel from east to west. We are returning home! In olden days, the Fellow Craft, or Journeyman as he was also known, would travel widely in search of experience before returning to his roots to ply his chosen trade or profession. A recurrent theme in the world of literature is of a man who dreams of a treasure in a far off land but when he has made the long and perilous journey in search of it, he learns that the treasure is not to be found at his destination but within his own home. This story appears in the writings of the Sufi mystic Jelalludin Rumi, in *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho and in Norfolk folklore in the tale of John Chapman, a poor tinker who lived in the town of Swaffham. This recurrent tale emphasises that what we are searching for is not to be found outside of ourselves but in the very centre of our beings.

This centre is, we are taught, the point from which a Master Mason cannot err, implying that this is the place of truth and perfection. Although religious traditions may focus on our imperfection, the way of the mystics affirms that our true selves are pure and unassailable, being made in the image and likeness of our Great Architect and that our original traits are Love, Wisdom, Peace, Purity and Bliss.

Enlightenment and self-knowledge are, therefore, not things we need to travel far away in search of. They are not acquired through study, rituals, creeds and dogmas, but rather, in a symbolic sense, by making that journey home to the centre of our being. In a delightful book called *Zen Reflections*, Robert Allen states that *'The original nature of our mind is pure. We are enlightened, but don't realise it!'* Our inner journey is a way of opening windows to eternity, to see what Zen Buddhists call 'our original face before we were born'; that is, to see our true, eternal, enlightened natures.

Today many people seek meaning outside of themselves. Somehow, they feel naked, exposed and incomplete without the external 'protective clothing' of wealth, possessions, status and authority; possibly acquired at the expense of the autonomy and happiness of others and of their own true natures. They devote great effort to building impressive personas or egos with which, not entirely unknowingly, they drive wedges between themselves and others and they forget that we are all brothers, partakers of the same nature and sharers in the same destiny. The long explanation of the working tools of the Second Degree reminds that *'a time will come, and the wisest of us knows not how soon, when all distinctions, save those of goodness and virtue, shall cease, and death, the grand leveller of all human greatness, reduce us to the same state'*.



Third Degree Tracing Board - Josiah Bowring  
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In the Third Degree we are urged to:

*'Let the emblems of mortality which lie before you lead you to contemplate on your inevitable destiny, and guide your reflections to that most interesting of all human studies, the knowledge of yourself'.*

Thus, the wise man, comes to know himself, his true and God-given pure nature, simply by being himself. He has nothing to gain because he already has everything. In the words of the Address to the Worshipful Master on his Installation, he has been *'enabled to lay up a Crown of Joy and Rejoicing which will continue when time with him shall be no more'.*

When he has stepped from this temporal, transient and ephemeral life into eternity; a step he can take in this life and not just in the life beyond the grave. In so doing he will promulgate light. By the practice of the Masonic art, he will, again to quote the Address to the Worshipful Master, be *'known as one to whom the burdened heart may pour forth its sorrow, to whom the distressed may prefer their suit, whose hand is guided by justice and whose heart is expanded by benevolence'.*

## 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

\*Note: All biblical passages are taken from the Authorized King James version and any reference to ritual will be from Emulation unless otherwise specified.

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