



UGLE ORATION

The Knowledge of Yourself

Summary: To pass through the darkness visible towards the ineffable and inestimable beyond, towards a horizon illuminated by a bright morning star, restoring us from a state of isolation to a glorious union with all that there is.



'The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind its faithful servant. We have created a society which honours the servant and has forgotten the gift.'

With these words, Albert Einstein seems to recognise that the 'me' of self-knowledge is not to be confused with the 'I' of self being, that the 'glimmering ray' of conscious reality flatters only to deceive by its intermittent luminosity. How susceptible are we in an enclosed or isolated consciousness to a neurosis of hope that our higher potentialities may not lead us towards the transcendent, but rather merely serve their own selfish needs when controlled by an egocentric self?

It is true that the Second Degree in Freemasonry contemplates the 'I' of the intellectual faculty but the candidate is led beyond finite knowledge, *'through the paths of heavenly science, even to the throne of God himself'*. The Third Degree takes him further along those pathways and, after many *'intricate windings'*, he is invited to consider the ultimate prospect of human futurity, death. By confronting death, we are enabled to live without reserve, un-provisionally and un-conditionally, in the present; or, as expressed in the Charge after Raising, *'while it is yet day'*.

Through his raising the candidate is taught to feel that the gloom of isolation by a figurative death is being 'expressed' or dissipated by the active participation of the Master and Wardens, his related selves so to speak, creating at that moment a mutual bond between himself and all that surrounds him, metaphorically *'a reunion with the former companions'*. The veil is being raised but, if we are to glimpse the emergent self-knowledge, the dim light of reason must be enhanced by 'that great light which is from above'.



A sense of transcendental awareness is not easily induced. The language of exhortation is emphatic, *'let me now beg you to observe'*, and speaks paradoxically of a *'darkness visible'* through which consciousness must be expanded. The candidate is being strongly persuaded to see, in the sense of experience rather than just observation, the reality of what confronts him, to become part of it and to participate in it. He is led towards a reflective consciousness mediated through his experience of the ritual, as though looking in a mirror. It is noteworthy that the Latin word for a mirror is *speculum* and as speculative Freemasons the eye, in the words of the thirteenth century mystic Meister Eckhart, by which we see God is the same eye by which God sees us.

Every man has a capacity for the infinite at the deepest level of his being. To achieve a self-possessed oneness with universal reality, some become monks and devote their lives to meditation and contemplation. Others are guided towards the transcendent through ritual as in the Masonic art, and discover that the fulfilment of Masonic self-knowledge can only be attained in and through the relationship with those other selves. It is a brother's abandonment of his desire for power over things, the effacement of his egocentric self. Thus a man must turn himself into the world rather than vice versa and, as the ritual prescribes, to heed that *'vital and immortal principle'* which inspires us to trample the King of Terrors; that is, death and the terror of the unknown, beneath our feet and to pass through the darkness visible towards the ineffable and inestimable beyond, towards a horizon illuminated by a bright morning star, restoring us from a state of isolation to a glorious union with all that there is.



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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