

**Grand Lodge  
Free & Accepted Masons  
Of California  
Grand Oration 1934**

**Grand Orator  
Ira Thompson  
“The Beginnings of Freemasonry”**

Most Worshipful Grand Master, Officers and Members of the Grand Lodge

The beginnings of Freemasonry are lost in the dim vistas of antiquity. An ancient tradition links our venerable institution with the Dionysian Artificers, that marvelous fraternity of architects and artisans that flourished in the centuries preceding the Christian era and left the enduring memorials of their splendid achievements in the massive temples and magnificent stadiums of Asia Minor, (1) and with the Roman Collegia, that heroic order of builders who in the glamorous period of Rome's sky-ranging grandeur constructed cities, raised monuments and erected public works whose proportions and symmetry awaken our admiration and astonishment even today when we can view them only in ruins. (2) But for our purposes we need not go so far a field.

The earliest Masonic records extant are made up of soaring spires and flying buttresses, of ornamented rose windows and delicately carved pillars. I allude, of course, to those supreme creations of human genius, the glorious cathedrals of Europe. *"These grand cathedrals rose, one by one, out of the fervent heart of the time and by the well-taught head and hand. So when they touched a stone, it blossomed into beauty, and where they laid it, there it stayed. They never made a false line and never carved an ugly thing, except by pure intention."* (3) Goethe called these cathedrals "frozen music."

Through the centuries we trace the history of Masonry. In one age it builds miraculous cathedrals. In another age it lays aside the apron and the trowel and assumes the sword in valiant warfare for liberty of thought and freedom of conscience. In still another it formulates a priceless ritual through which it instructs the neophyte in the age-old truths of philosophy and morals. Again it battles for free education.

As Masons we are proud of our history. And justly so. Nor do we forget that the past was the matrix of the present, even as tomorrow lies expectant in the womb of today. We may appropriate and apply the sententious words of Dean Inge: *"Believe me, the only promise of a better future for our country is to be looked for from those to whom her past is dear."* (4) So with the light of the past shining upon us we gaze into the future.

Disconcerting Statistics.

The future of Masonry! Ah, that thought gives us pause! Has Freemasonry a future? There are those, critics speaking exultantly, and devoted adherents speaking sorrowfully, who point out that the craft is suffering a serious decline in membership. In 1931 the total membership of the fraternity in the United States was 3,287,153. In 1934 the membership totals 2,910,273. A loss in three years of 376,980; nearly 12 per cent. (5) What greater proof do you need, ask our enemies, that Freemasonry has reached its apogee and is now in process of rapid disintegration? That the imperial pageant passes and moves to a drab, inglorious end? And the figures are disconcerting— until we remember that the pessimism rests on an error, the obvious fallacy being the belief that membership statistics are a true test of the vitality of the Masonic institution.

I do not wish to speak unkindly or disparagingly of those who in the stressful years just past have left us, nor do I wish to underestimate any significance there may be in their going, but I do assert that when men drop their membership in a Masonic Lodge because they are unwilling to make the sacrifice necessary to pay their dues the craft is stronger for every such man who leaves it. We have constitutional ways of taking care of the unfortunate Brother who, having fallen upon evil days, must ask the indulgence of his Brethren in the matter of dues; but when a man is not willing to give up a package of cigarettes a week to keep himself in good standing in his Lodge, it is proof apparent that he never really belonged.

Let us face our own responsibility frankly. Let us place the blame where it belongs. A

sardonic wit has said that the present time is notable for three passing—the passing of the buffalo, the passing of the Indian, and the passing of the buck. Let us not make that error. The fact is, during the days of hectic prosperity we were so hypnotized with the fascination of our rapidly mounting membership figures that we failed in the first and last and most important care of a Lodge of Masons when convened—to see the Lodge duly tiled—and vast numbers slipped through the carelessly guarded doors who never should have been given admittance. Now they are leaving us, and we wish them Godspeed. They never were duly and truly prepared, they never learned the true password. It is a purging that our fraternity sorely needed.

Hear me! The strength of Freemasonry is not found in the number of its members, in its wealth, nor in its prestige. Our ritual alludes to the pestilence that fell upon Israel because David numbered the people. (6) Go back with me to the second degree and rehearse once more the significant story of Gideon. (7) We Americans are especially prone to fall into the error of thinking in terms of numbers, statistics, and tables.

It is a perversion of values to measure the Masonic fraternity by membership tables. Mere quantity is a dangerous yardstick. There are more bacilli in a putrefying carcass than there are men in a great city. A billion may be less than one if you are comparing beetles with the brain of an Einstein. There is only one thing in life worth measuring, and that is quality; and quality can be appraised, but it cannot be measured. You can weigh beef and count garbage cans, but mother love and patriotism and human genius and religion defy your measuring rods and your chemical retorts, because they are spiritual qualities.

### Strength of Masonry

The strength of Freemasonry lies in its spiritual possessions: its teachings, its symbolism, its venerable history, its ancient tradition, and above all, in the character of its members.

This is one reason why you cannot reduce Freemasonry to a formula or confine its free spirit within the limits of a definition. In my library I have a folder with many definitions of Freemasonry: some are eloquent, some are bizarre, some are unique, some are ingenious, some are challenging, but I have yet to find a definition that is adequate. The best, the most comprehensive, leaves something unsaid. Masonry being in essence spiritual, it cannot be defined, it can only be characterized. You search the Scriptures in vain for a definition of Deity, but the writer of the letter that bears the name of St. John gives us a perfect characterization: God is love (8)—and we feel that is adequate and in it we have received a revelation of the Father.

So grasping the great universal symbols we are enabled to characterize Freemasonry and obtain an understanding of its genius, its inner power, its essential nature; determine whether or not its vitality is spent; and from that vantage point glimpse something of the part it is to play in the world of the future.

### Masonry Defined

What is Freemasonry? Freemasonry is the sky. Who shall encompass it? Like the resplendent canopy of heaven, it o'ereaches human life; at times a translucent radiance, at times an alluring mystery, a velvet darkness tremulous with stars. The scientist can calculate the flight of a sunbeam and stretch his measures over the vast spaces, but can he capture the elusive beauty that quivers in the twilight or imprison the subtle influences that rain from those shining orbs? Its vastness, as limitless as eternity, declares Infinity.

Freemasonry is the sea. Who can plumb its depths? Moved by cosmic impulses, it ebbs and flows responsive to compelling forces behind the distant suns. Touching all shores, it is circumscribed by none. Receiving into itself all rivers, it loses not its identity; being enriched by all tributaries, it absorbs yet is not changed. Unfathomable, it forever reflects with undimmed purity the ever-changing beauties of the changeless sky.

Freemasonry is the light. What shall withstand it? As silently as the dawn it comes. Before its irresistible advance the noxious things of shadowy night flee in terror. The sun of righteousness with healing in his wings arises, and at his smile the earth is flooded with glory. The mission of Masonry was formulated on that first day when the Creator scattered the prevailing darkness with the potent word: Let there be light! Light, all pervading, life giving, and world-conquering light!

Freemasonry is the wind, blowing where it listeth, bearing on its wings a fragrance of acacia broken but blooming hard by a mound of fresh-laid clods, bringing an odor of myrtle and cypress,

suggesting the perfume of blood-red roses blossoming on a crown of thorns; bringing, too, an echo of old-time chants in sacred groves to long forgotten gods, a murmur of immemorial prayers richly intoned by deep-voiced priests, reminiscent of all the beautiful dreams and aspirations of humanity—a dynamic wind, a breath, a spirit, causing the prophet to cry, "*O wind, breathe upon these slain that they may live!*"

Freemasonry is the ancient sphinx dreaming by the crowded ways of men who shall read her riddle? Her voiceless lips propound the tragic challenge upon which hang the issues of life and death. Deliberately she misleads her children and bewilders them with explanations of her symbols that confuse and distract. Ruthless, she casts aside the wretched mortal whose darkened mind brings no solution, but wreathes with immortal bays the brow of him who answers well her questioning. And it is well. He only is worthy of the high revelation who gives his soul to obtain it and will not be satisfied with trivialities. Tinsel may be bought for a farthing, but gold must be dug from the depths.

Freemasonry is one with that transcendent mystery that broods o'er every cradle, smiles o'er every marriage bower and watches with an infinite tenderness by every bier. It is the wonder of the child, the ecstasy of the lover, the question of the scientist, and the vision of the seer. The shekinah shedding its mystic light over the mercy seat, the lambent flame illumining the holy altar, the radiance shining from the luminous pages of every Scripture, the ineffable splendor of the Sacred Name—Freemasonry is that! We do not know what it is, but it gives meaning to life. We cannot touch it, but it is more real than the sun that glows at noontime. In its presence we are dumb, yet it makes the soul articulate. Possess it and find immortal life.

Thus I characterize Freemasonry.

### Star-gazing and High Values

You say I rhapsodize. I admit it. I do not apologize for lifting this discussion of Freemasonry out of the drab and commonplace into the realm of ideals. By our more literally minded Brethren I expect to be scorned as a stargazer and a dreamer of dreams. So be it. But I remember the words of that great French Mason, Victor Hugo:

"It is by the real that we exist;- it is by the ideal that we live. Would you realize the difference? Animals exist, man lives." (9)

Our trouble is that our understanding of Masonry is too narrow, too circumscribed. We have been content to think of the institution merely as one more fraternity whose main business is the conferring of ritualistic degrees, the cultivation of social contacts, and the practice of a petty philanthropy. Now, of course I do not depreciate degree work, good-fellowship, and benevolence. These are all good in their place: but they should be simply means to an end. When the end is forgotten in an overzealous cultivation of the means, they become trivial and unworthy. With good old Walt Whitman I cry:

"Long enough have you dreamed contemptible dreams;  
Now I wash the gum from your eyes;  
You must habit yourself to the dazzle of the light,  
And of every moment of your life." (10)

We are like those jungle people to whom was given a sundial, and they wishing to honor it, builded over it a windowless hut and there in the darkness they rendered it homage. At last a wise man came along who tore down the hut, and for the first time the glory and the purpose of the sundial were revealed. From the fathers, we, the Masons of today, have received a priceless possession. In our over anxious efforts to honor it and them we have hidden it under ritualistic precisianism and Lodge routine minutiae and have missed the transcendent meaning and purpose of our Masonic inheritance. The time has come for a reassertion of values.

My good friend, H. L. Haywood, whose book, "Symbolical Masonry," is one of the finest interpretations of Masonic teaching, tells us that one evening he missed his little son, four years old. Going out into the yard, under the cloudless splendor of a desert sky, he found the little lad, pail in hand, clambering up a stepladder. "What are you doing?" asked the father. And the little fellow replied: "Why, daddy, I'm going to get a bucketful of stars." So today, frankly, I am trying to hand you "a bucketful of stars." You may toss them aside. You may admire them and wear them as jewels on your heart. You may use them to light you along the pathway of life. Or you may let them guide you, as a certain lustrous star led the wise men of old, to a sacred shrine where you will bend the knees of your soul in worship and offer a loving sacrifice of gold, frankincense and

myrrh.

Lest you think I am alone in this exalted conception of Freemasonry, may I quote that great commentator on Masonic symbolism, to whom I have already alluded, Brother H. I.. Haywood, who asks:

"What is a Mason, if not an architect of the mystical order? In so far as he is true to his Royal Art he is one engaged in building up within himself a real, but viewless Temple; its foundations laid deep in character, its walls formed of the solid stuff of genuine manhood, its roof the stately dome of truth, its spires the upreaching of that aspiration toward a Higher which was the original inspiration of every great cathedral." (11)

### World Needs Masonry

In describing Freemasonry as a spiritual force I would not have you think that Masonry consists of beautiful but impractical ideals; a kind of fairy fantasy woven of rainbows and gossamer, poetry and high-flown sentiment; as alluring as the lovely Antares, yon red star clinging to the neck of the Scorpion, glorious but unattainable.

My contention is that the distinctive doctrines of Freemasonry are eminently practical; that until mankind frankly, sincerely and wholeheartedly adopts them as its social and political objectives it will wander lost and bewildered in the wilderness of confusion and distraction; that when the principles upon which Freemasonry is based are accepted as the foundation stones of civilization and the teachings of our gentle craft are taken as the working program of statesmanship and social progress, the golden age of which man has dreamed and of which poets have sung, will be close to realization.

THEREFORE THE WORLD NEEDS FREEMASONRY, AND BECAUSE OF THAT NEED THE FUTURE OF FREEMASONRY IS ASSURED.

May I therefore, in the remainder of the time that is allotted to me, direct your thought to Freemasonry as a social force in this modern world, in the years of the immediate future, in this period of unparalleled importance and significance.

### Marvelous Modern World

We are living in the most marvelous and pregnant age in the world's history. I have no sympathy with those fearsome, defeatist Brethren who read the future in the terms of cataclysm and disaster. It is true that at the present time society is in a state of ferment. Institutions that have endured for centuries are crumbling into ruins. The ancient authorities are flouted and the immemorial traditions are discredited. But these disturbances are not signs of decadence, they are the birth pangs of a new era. Civilization is being reborn. Stupendous forces are at work remolding the social order. High-power machinery, mass production and scientific management are giving us a new industrial organization. Radio, the telegraph, rapid transportation have shrunk the globe into a very small ball. Tomorrow morning the happenings of today in London, Calcutta, Buenos Aires, Cape Town, will march across our breakfast tables.

Knowledge has increased beyond the wildest dreams of the fathers. We have pulverized the atom, explored the far-distant constellations and revolutionized the fundamental concepts of physics. The children in our homes, coming from high school, chatter glibly of curved space, fields of electro-magnetic energy, and Freudianism. Man's understanding of the universe has become more and more refined until now the scientist solemnly avers, "*The universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine.*" (12) The new knowledge has not only given us a new and expanded view of the cosmos, it is revolutionizing human relations.

In the realm of government we see mighty ideas and ideals in death-grappling conflict; democracy, socialism, communism, fascism, natzism. Who is seer enough to predict the outcome? But I believe in these formative years, these tremendously significant years of reconstruction, Freemasonry must be, yes, will be, dynamic. In these fateful decades when the fortunes of a thousand years rest upon decisions and events, Freemasonry must be a directing, stabilizing, constructive force.

At this point a word of warning must be spoken. The craft must never become entangled with purely local and temporary issues. Any endorsement by the fraternity of political or industrial movements would not only be disloyalty to its sacred tradition, it would be a violation of its very nature. It has never exalted any dynasty, preached the propaganda of any man's glory, nor

loaned its holy banners to the crusaders of any temporary political panacea or social regime. Such action would be contrary to its very genius, and would be disruptive of its influence and destructive of its power.

Freemasonry stands for certain fundamental principles, certain timeless ideals, certain profound spiritual truths, too transcendent to be used as slogans for any localized crusade, worthy though it may be in itself. When Emerson was once chided because he did not espouse some particular reform he declared, *"My reform includes all others."* So with Masonry. Its power lies in its aloofness from partisan strife and sectarian rancor, lies in its eternal declaration of universal truth. This it does by the instruction of its members, by baptizing them with a consecrated enthusiasm, by sending them out into the world of darkness and error to declare the truth of the living God by word and deed.

Now to particularize. May I name, briefly and all too inadequately, seven great social principles that are implicit in the ritual of Freemasonry, that constitute its holy doctrine, for which it has fought earnestly and consistently through the centuries, and which honestly applied to present day problems would, we believe, supply the answer to our riddles, and a solution to our problems.

### Significance of Individual

The first and most fundamental of these teachings to which I would call your attention is: THE TRANSCENDENT SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL MAN. There is a school of social and political economy that declares that in civilized society the state must be supreme and that the individual is of worth only as he is subordinate to and of service to the state. To this teaching Freemasonry can never give consent. I quote you familiar yet momentous words: *"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men."* Individuals do not exist to serve the government, the government exists to protect the individual in his rights. We must never lose sight of the truth, as Plato holds, that the state is the individual writ large, and when any government, no matter under what name or pretension it may masquerade, invades the rights and liberties of the individual citizen to serve the interests of any class or group as against the welfare of the nation as a whole, that government becomes repugnant to the genius of Freemasonry. Any regimentation that places shackles upon the hands or minds of the people must be stoutly resisted by every Mason. That is why every despotism, whether it be the dictatorship of the proletariat, or the tyranny of the corporate state, or the absolutism of an imperious spiritual authority, strikes its first desperate blow at Masonry.

Furthermore, only that government is in full accord with the spirit of Masonic idealism that sets the rights of the individual man superior to every consideration of dollars and markets and industrial wealth. James Truslow Adams, whose soul-stirring "Epic of America" should be read by every Mason, asserts that the unifying, inspiring force in American history is *"the American dream"; "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement."* (13) That is good Masonic doctrine.

The second mighty principle is, THE SUPREMACY OF THE MORAL LAW; and the moral law is not a simple set of ethical precepts, it is the integrity of the whole man. I have said that in civilized society the individual is the vital unit that integrates the social structure into a living thing. The strength of the social organism is the strength of these living units. Personal integrity is the one essential in the social order. Says Dr. J. A. Leighton: *"To me, history teaches that the only sure ways to lasting social progress and individual welfare lie through the selfless devotion of the individual spirit to truth, integrity the highest quality of workmanship, and the spread of the spirit of free fellowship and co-operation among human beings who otherwise differ, and are unequal, in powers and functions."* (14)

Harry Carr tells us that when President Madero of Mexico was assassinated, and his entire staff was arrested, Col. Octavio Serrano (now living in Hollywood), a high staff officer and a close friend of the slain president, was deeply concerned about the safety of the president's widow. Upon his promise as a Master Mason that he would return, the warden permitted him to leave the prison. He placed the widow in the care and under the protection of the Japanese embassy and

then returned, as it was believed, to certain death. This is a perfect and historic illustration of the Mason's pledged word. This is the moral law as a quality of character.

The only nation truly prosperous with an enduring prosperity is that nation dominated and led by men to whom moral principles are their dearest possessions. Again let me quote Victor Hugo:

"There is only one power, conscience in the service of justice; and there is only one glory, genius in the service of truth." (15)

### Religion Without Superstition

I pass quickly to the third great ideal: PURE RELIGION THE BASIS OF A HUMANE CIVILIZATION. *"No civilization has yet survived after the downfall of its gods,"* declares Sir Philip Gibbs. *"Its doom is declared when the faith and idealism which formed the basis of its laws, the inspiration of its art, and the meaning of its life are challenged by skepticism, and then abandoned in disbelief."* To this statement Masonry would give full acceptance.

Freemasonry is not a religion, it is religion. (16) Its creed may be simply and quickly stated. It believes in the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the infinite value of the human soul, the inescapable obligation of the moral law, the Golden Rule, and immortality. A Mason may believe more; he cannot believe less. Upon these indispensable beliefs the whole structure of our English-speaking civilization rests

There are those who tell us that religion is outgrown and that man has no further need of it. Certain nations are trying to get along without it. But alas, where religion is suppressed the emotions and urges of the human soul find expression in the wildest excesses of superstition and perversion. A writer in the London "Sphere" tells of an experience in a Russian village. A commotion on a village street awakened him at midnight and he went out to find the entire population engaged in the weirdest ceremonies of witchcraft, in which men were beating naked women with knotted thongs. This is said to be a common occurrence in the Russian hinterland.

Deprive the masses of the moral incentives of religion and they rapidly descend to the level of the beasts. Take away from your intellectuals the stabilizing, sanative influence of religion and their mental brilliance withers and dies under the blight of a shallow cynicism or a despairing pessimism. A nation, even though it be rich and prosperous, that neglects the cultivation of the spiritual life of the people, slips quickly down the primrose ways to decadence and death. May I quote you a provocative word of our own great Californian, Dr. Robert A. Millikan, who says:

*"Personally, I believe that essential religion is one of the world's supremest needs. And I believe that one of the greatest contributions the United States ever can, or ever will, make to world progress—greater by far than any contribution which we ever have made or ever can make to the science of government— will consist in furnishing an example to the world of how the religious life of a nation can evolve intelligently, wholesomely, inspiringly, reverently, completely divorced from all unreason, all superstition, and all unwholesome emotionalism."* (17)

Every Mason conversant with Masonic history would give unqualified endorsement to this vivid statement of the present need.

Now this concept of RELIGION APPLIED TO AFFAIRS OF STATE GIVES US DEMOCRACY, and for three centuries Masonry has struggled to establish in human relations the principles of liberty, justice, equality, toleration, sympathy, altruism—all synonymous with and included in democracy—and to inculcate the spirit of fraternity in the hearts of men. Time does not permit an extended discussion of these dynamic ideals of free society, but may I dwell, just for a moment, upon two—liberty and toleration. These two principles are inextricably interwoven. You cannot have one without the other, and no form of human society is worthy of this glorious modern age that does not elevate as of greatest worth—liberty and toleration.

To understand the truth of this assertion scan with me the pages of history.

Five centuries before Christ, Anaxagoras of Clazomenae, teacher of Pericles and Euripedes, was banished from Athens for asserting that the stars were red-hot balls of fire and that the sun was thousands of times bigger than the whole of Greece.

The Stoic, Cleanthes, two centuries later, denounced Aristarchus of Samos, as impious because he attempted to prove that the earth moved around the sun.

Hypatia of Alexandria, bright star of paganism, renowned teacher of philosophy and science,

was brutally killed in the fifth century of our era by a mob of infuriated monks. In their frenzy they dragged the exquisite maiden, naked, through the streets and scraped the very flesh from her bones with oyster shells.

In the sixteenth century Giordano Bruno swept the midnight skies with a crude telescope, then shouted across Europe that the stars were flaming worlds. He paid for his audacity with his life and died at the stake on February 17, 1600.

Servetus, the discoverer of the lesser circulation of the blood, was burned by Calvin at Geneva in 1553, a victim of fanaticism and cruelty.

Thomas Woolston, a Fellow of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, in the eighteenth century subjected the miracle stories to a searching criticism and for his temerity he was deprived of his fellowship, was prosecuted for libel, and sentenced to a fine of £100 and a year's imprisonment. Unable to pay, he died in prison. (18)

These instances could be multiplied a thousand times. Pitiful, indeed, are the stories of cruelty and heartbreak that clutter up the pages of history.

Today there are in the world powerful movements, social, political, industrial, that depend for their success upon the suppression of free speech, free activity and individual initiative. Men imbued with the spirit and traditions of Freemasonry cannot look with complacency upon their advance to places of dominance.

Freemasonry, acting through its inspired votaries, has combated fanaticism and intolerance in all its forms, and on a thousand bitter battlefields has lifted its white standard of liberty and toleration. Perhaps even in this radiant age of scientific progress and economic development it may again be necessary to unfurl the snowy banner of freedom in challenge to those forces that would lay the human spirit under the thrall of despotic authority and control, and if that hour arrives Freemasons will not be found wanting.

In a challenging speech recently delivered, Dr. E. C. Moore, vice-president and provost of the University of California at Los Angeles, declared that fascism and communism in contrast with democracy were *"iron ways of governing flesh and minds. They are molochs created by the human imagination and worshipped with human sacrifices."* *"The future of democracy,"* he continued, *"is more democracy—democracy richer and fuller—for under no other plan can each single life come to its full flowering,"* a state of social relationship, where *"the poorest he may live his life as the richest he."* To such a social relationship liberty and tolerance are indispensable.

We must never let our children forget that this is the meaning of our beloved flag:

"Your flag and my flag, and how it flies today,  
In your land and my land and half a world away.  
Blood red and rose red, the stripes forever gleam,  
Snow white and soul white, the good forefathers' dream—  
Sky blue and true blue, with stars that gleam aright,  
The glorious guidon through the day, a shelter through the night.

"Your flag and my flag, to every star and stripe,  
The drums beat as hearts beat and fifers shrilly pipe;  
Your flag and my flag, a blessing in the sky,  
Your hope and my hope, it never hid a lie.  
Home land and far land, and half the world around,  
Old Glory hears our glad salute and ripples to the sound.

"Your flag and my flag, and oh! how much it holds  
Your land and my land secure within its folds.  
Your heart and my heart beat quicker at the sight,  
Sun kissed and wind tossed, red and blue and white;  
The one flag, the great flag, the flag for me and you,  
Glorified all else beside, the red and white and blue."

(Brother Wilbur D. Nesbit.)

## Education and World Concord

The three remaining principles that must prevail in the new social order now coming into

being—principles that grow out of Masonic teachings as naturally and as inevitably as the Giant Sequoias rise out of the soil of our majestic Sierras—I can do no more than mention.

EDUCATION THE RIGHT OF EVERY CHILD, WITHOUT DISTINCTION OF CASTE, CONDITION OR RACE! This right must be emphasized and reiterated now when under the stress of economic stringency there are those who advocate drastic curtailment of popular education. Such a policy in a democracy is suicidal.

Again I quote Victor Hugo: "*Compulsory education is a recruitment of souls for the light. Henceforth all human advancement will be accomplished by swelling the legions of those who read. The diameter of the moral and ideal good corresponds always to the caliber of men's minds. In proportion to the worth of the brain is the worth of the heart. What humanity requires, is to be fed with light.*" (19) Feeding human souls with light! What a challenging conception of education! And it is one to which Masonry can give full approval.

WORLD-WIDE AMITY AND CO-OPERATION, AS AGAINST WAR AND NARROW NATIONALISM! The Masonic order is the world's greatest peace society. It ramifies through all nations, all castes, all Religions, all races. Men of divergent creeds whose religious taboos will not permit them to break bread together nevertheless meet as brothers around the Masonic altar and unitedly lift hands of prayer to the common Father. International compacts, diplomatic treaties, and trade agreements serve a noble purpose, but at the last the only sure defense against war is a sense of world-wide brotherhood, transcending all our petty suspicions and sordid hates, and fusing all our differences in a globe-girdling affection. Said Emerson: "*This great, overgrown, dead Christendom of ours still keeps alive at least the name of a lover of mankind. But one day all men will be lovers; and every calamity will be dissolved in the universal sunshine.*" (20) This is part of the radiant hope of Masonry.

Onward Forever

The last dynamic truth I would bring before you as being distinctively Masonic is THE BELIEF IN HUMAN PROGRESS; and I remind you that Masonry is a progressive science.

Einstein interrupts his contemplation of the infinite vastness to observe that there is no hitching post in the universe. The foremost scientist of the age tells us that exploration of the cosmos does not reveal any tethering stake. What is true of the universe at large is true of humanity. Forever the marching orders are given: "*Get thee out of thy country . . . into a land that I will show thee.*" (21) The Spirit of Life forever commands: "*Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.*" (22) The Kingdom of Heaven is kinetic, not static.

In our own ritualistic ceremonies, just when we think we have attained and the precious jewel glitters on our breast and we sit down to rest, we are summoned to the East, the Master bids us travel, and we set off anew upon our journey.

Science interprets the rhythm of the universe in the terms of evolution, and history is understood as a colorful pageant showing humanity on the march; sometimes swinging along like a victorious army with all flags flying and bands playing. At other times the dust of horrid conflict and ruthless warfare obscures the line of advance. But still mankind moves on, lured by an unquenchable hope, impelled by an irresistible interior power.

This emphasis upon evolution discourages red revolution and cataclysmic social upheavals. Free-masonry is a stabilizing influence in human affairs. It is opposed to violent and revolutionary programs. Human society is not a machine to be knocked down and put together again according to some blue-print of academic reform. It is a living thing, like a tree, like an animal; it grows, it develops according to fixed laws and logical progress. The power that reforms, redeems, recreates man is not an imposition from without. It lies at his heart, it resides in his soul. Men are gods in the chrysalis, and as the cocoons of selfishness, hatred, and meanness break, the spirit is released and takes the higher forms.

In the palace builded by the enchantment of Merlin were four zones of sculpture:

"And in the lowest, beasts were slaying men,  
And in the second, men are slaying beasts,  
And in the third are warriors, perfect men,  
And in the fourth are men with growing wings."

By consecration to the highest purposes men co-operate with the forces of nature, which



operate as the will of God.

Recognizing this truth, Masonry keeps its heart and mind open to the revelation of today, allowing no past revelation to eclipse the light of the present, knowing that:

"New occasions teach new duties;  
Time makes ancient good uncouth;  
They must upward still, and onward,  
Who would keep abreast of truth." (23)

And Freemasonry assumes the resolve that Plato puts at the end of his Republic: "*We will ever cleave to the upward road.*" Temple of Humanity

So, to use a simile familiar to every Mason, the craft in this latter day adds its contribution to the building of a spiritual temple. High engraved over the portal of the beautiful Scottish Rite House of the Temple in Washington the declaration is made: "*Freemasonry builds its temples among the nations and in the hearts of men.*" And it is so. This modern order of craftsmen is engaged in erecting an invisible but vitally real temple in the souls of men, builded of hopes and dreams, of prayers and noble resolves, of kindly sentiments and loving deeds—the temple of a redeemed humanity. We may adopt the description of the spiritual temple that Charles Rann Kennedy, brilliant dramatist and earnest Mason, puts in the mouth of Manson:

*"You must understand, this is no dead pile of stones and unmeaning timber. It is a living thing.."*

*When you enter it you hear a sound—a sound as of some mighty poem chanted. Listen long enough, and you will learn that it is made up of the beating of human hearts, of the nameless music of men's souls—that is, if you have ears. If you have eyes, you will presently see the church itself—a looming mystery of many shapes and shadows, leaping sheer from floor to dome. The work of no ordinary builder!...*

*"The pillars of it go up like the brawny trunks of heroes; the: sweet human flesh of men and women is molded about its bulwarks, strong, impregnable; the faces of little children laugh out from every cornerstone; the terrible spans and arches of it are the joined hands of comrades; and up in the heights and spaces there are inscribed the numberless musings of all the dreamers of the world. It is yet building—building and built upon. Sometimes the work goes forward in deep darkness; sometimes in blinding light; now beneath the burden of unutterable anguish; now to the tune of a great laughter and heroic shoutings like the cry of thunder. Sometimes, in the silence of the night-time, one may hear the tiny hammerings of the comrades at work up in the dome—the comrades that have climbed ahead." (24)*

### Masonry Militant

But that you may get the full significance of the mission of Freemasonry in the troublous but potent years of the immediate future, may I call to our remembrance the spectacle of the workers who rebuilt the ancient city of Jerusalem after the Captivity, how "they that builded on the wall, and they that bore burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded." (25) So I am not unduly confusing the similes by calling upon the Masons of today to be builders and crusaders at the same time. In one hand a trowel with which to build, in the other a sword with which to fight.

The warfare of Freemasonry is not against men or institutions, not against governments or churches, but against the tyranny that would reduce men to mere automatons, standardized, repressed, regimented; against the superstition that would befog men's minds with lies and corroding fear; against the spiritual thralldom that would shrink a band of iron around the brow of man and forbid the thought of man to expand, to develop, to grow; against the despotism that would prevent the freest expression of the human spirit; against slavery of every kind, whether it be to an autocrat, to an industrial over lordship, to a soulless bureaucracy, to false doctrines, or to craven, self-created terror; against ignorance, prejudice, hatred, materialism, Phariseeism, and all the black brood of shams and pretensions that have weighed like an unutterable anguish upon the soul of man.

It is a glorious war. A war for human rights, for the cause of righteousness, for little children yet unborn. It is the warfare of Socrates, of Martin Luther, of Wilberforce, of Washington, and, I say it reverently, of that Divine man who gave his life upon the cruel cross that men might be free.

There is a legend in the Frankish Alps that Charlemagne did not die but that angels carried him to a mountain cavern where they laid him, capapie, with his falchion by his side, and there he sleeps, waiting until humanity, boned beneath its woes, might call him to the rescue.

Freemasonry is that legendary Charlemagne, and humanity, embattled and distraught, calls upon the craft to make good its ancient tradition and draw sword in defense of those eternal principles to which it is dedicated. The hosts of light are gathering under the white banners of freedom and brotherhood. The trumpet sounds the advance.

Already the advanced forces are clashing with the enemy. This is no time for cowards and self-seekers. Only men with stout hearts and clear minds and consecrated souls are equal to the demands of this great day.

Let us slumber no longer. The Great Commander summons all men to the colors. The battle lines are forming. In the name of God and oppressed humanity, forward—to victory!

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