

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
Grand Oration 1958**

**Grand Orator
Melvin A. Pixley
“Proper Communications - The Answer”**

We read in the Holy Writings that it was decreed in the wisdom and counsels of Deity aforetime that a house should be built, erected to God and dedicated to His Holy Name. This structure was erected and known as King Solomon's Temple, perhaps the most wonderful structure in the world's history.

The early architects and the architecture found in King Solomon's Temple communicated to future generations the thoughts, needs, pride and glory of the earliest races, and their reverence for the great Creator. Their designs still inspire and are the objects of admiration now found in the Masonic theme.

Now we also read in the past Annual Communications of this Grand Lodge that it was decreed in the wisdom and by the foresight of the Masters. Wardens and Past Masters that this Grand Lodge build a Temple to communicate to the world that California Freemasons, honoring their heroic dead, erect a Temple, dedicated to Freemasonry, virtue, and a universal benevolence, that the cause of freedom for which they died shall ever be therein the sacred trust of their Brethren and of Freemasons yet unborn.

It is interesting to note that after the Great Fire of 1906 here in San Francisco, there was left standing here on the site of our new Temple three columns. These same columns today stand in Golden Gate Park, bearing the prophetic motto "The Portals of the Past Will Be the Gateway to the Future."

To carry out that prophesy this new Temple has been here erected to the glory of God, bearing symbols of the past in memory of those who are gone, and opening a new gateway to the future service of humanity and the advancement of Freemasonry in California.

The modern architects and the architecture found in the California Masonic Memorial Temple will communicate to future generations not only the progress of Masonry in California, fully recognizing the industry of the past and present, hardships and toils, bravery and valor, but the accomplishment of carrying out two Masonic lessons of Faith and Work by emphasizing love of freedom and proving that we assumed our responsibilities.

Words are indeed an imperfect vehicle for the translation of human emotion especially when that emotion is centered around the memory of those who were but are not. Words certainly cannot properly describe the accomplishments of those who have made possible this very occasion, achieving their purpose in maintaining for us and for Freemasons yet unborn our great heritage-Freedom.

Time will not suffice for a detailed report or inventory of all Masonic structures, symbols or words that communicate, but at this communication and following the dedicatory ceremonies, it is important as a matter appertaining to the Craft, to pause and concentrate on the value and needs of proper communications, especially those that radiate from Operative and Speculative Masonry.

Before our present means of communication symbols were used and understood by both the educated and uneducated. Today some people consider symbols to be old fashioned, fanciful, or even an expression of superstition. These people forget that there was a time when education was not as widespread as it is today, and in those days certain objects and numbers were used to indicate certain lessons or ideals to people in general. Symbols were indeed the very objective of the human family, directing life along its wonderful course from the cradle of the races in the Far East to today's civilization, just as today Masonic symbols, illuminated by Masonic light and divine rays, enable us to communicate to the initiated knowledge and wisdom, that which to the profane remains as darkness and ignorance.

The most common communicative symbols known to man are those given to us by God and are the symbols normally classed as nature, for by the use of the five common senses,

hearing, seeing, feeling, smelling and tasting, we are not only protected but enjoy the beauty and love of the Supreme Architect. Throughout this masterful plan we constantly receive the communication of the perfect balance and harmony created and intended for life.

Do not the following symbols bring to our minds past experiences? Beautiful as the clouds may be, how many times have they indicated to us that a storm is approaching? Think of the beautiful flowers with their fragrance and delicate colors, communicating their many symbolic meanings. Carvings and statutes, such as those found on the very walls of this Temple, which inspire the receptive mind. Photography, some pictures reflecting to us happy occasions, and others of sorrow. Murals, like those presented by this Grand Lodge which are now seen in the Washington Memorial Temple, one depicting the Father of our Country and his officers attending church for the purpose of raising funds to alleviate suffering among the poor. The other, President Washington receiving the silver plate which is deposited in the cornerstone of the United States Capitol, these communicate to us, as does this structure, our belief in charity and freedom.

Think of the many kinds of lights, not only those which beautify the heavens but those found in our lodges and in our homes. Yet, there are those which control our physical movements on the streets and walks of life.

Do not the rays of the morning sunburst convey to us that "This day is mine, yesterday it was God's, tomorrow it will be his again and our acts will be recorded in eternity". There are communicative rituals which are expressed by robes, words and movements. There are the blessings communicated by rest, and a symbolic reminder of this is in the six windows at the top of this very structure, for "in six days God created the Heavens and the Earth. and rested upon the seventh".

Modern transportation such as ships, trains, automobiles, trucks and airplanes communicate departure or arrival of our loved ones and the security and relief which they might bring, not to overlook the symbolic meaning of the destruction and devastation of war which they can create, laying waste and destroying many valuable monuments of antiquity on which the utmost exertions of human genius were employed.

Then there is that which is quietly communicated by the touch of a loved one's hand upon our brow: and one can never forget those childhood memories of the fragrance of our Mother's delicacies communicating to us the pleasure we were about to experience.

There are illuminated billboards, arranged in such a manner as to influence our lives, and visible signs of all descriptions, lighted and unlighted, to direct our way. The cross conveys that a church exists, even the direction of an arrow, without much question to our minds, indicates the route we are to follow.

How important has it been in our lives when a smile or a cheery greeting of "good morning" from a friend, or even a stranger, has helped our day.

Many times two symbols when taken together have an entirely different meaning. One of the best-known examples to us is the Square and Compass placed on the Holy Bible.

There are many other forms of communication. For many years man has known that words are merely man-made sounds which indicate things, places or items, and since their use came into being many phases of symbolism or sign language have been discontinued. But by the progress of using merely man-made sounds, the pooling and advancement of knowledge has taken place. Instead of remaining helpless because of the limitations of our own experiences and knowledge, instead of having to discover what others have already explored. Repeating their errors, we can go on from where others left off to greater accomplishments. All that is needed by men (or Masons) is man's ability to cooperate.

The invention of writing was a tremendous step forward for mankind. The accuracy of reports can be checked and rechecked by successive generations, and knowledge is not restricted to memory or symbols. Writing resulted in progress and development, actually opening the doors to modern education and public schools, a landmark in our progress which Masons will defend as a part of our freedom. Thus we trace the history and development of the basic means of communication. What we do with these methods of communication will greatly determine our future and the future of mankind.

Words, their proper meaning, the way they are spoken and written today control our thoughts and, my brethren, "a man's life is what his thoughts make of it." "What you are is what God gives you." Most surely, what you become, in the final analysis, is what you give God.

Man's future progress and accomplishments will be governed by words, symbols, or a combination of both. Yet how vital and important it is that we avoid the danger of worshipping the symbols or rituals rather than that which they represent. The Masonic pin is not to inform the world that one is a Mason, but rather a reminder to oneself of our duty and responsibilities.

The modern use of mathematics and chemistry signs, coupled with words, greatly assisted in breaking the atom. Present-day traveling is controlled by words and symbols; even maps are a combination of the two which communicates to us the correct direction. If maps are improperly prepared and are incorrect, actually no harm befalls us until we attempt to use them and then we discover we are traveling the wrong road. This philosophy challenges all men and Masons to properly prepare their minds thus improving their way of life, fully realizing that "the largest room in the world is the room for self-improvement".

Great changes in the world were brought about by the modern advancements in communications. Mankind was greatly aided when from our Supreme Court room in the nation's capital the Morse code was proven successful by transmitting that unforgettable message, "What hath God wrought". Yet, it was only a step toward the ultimate in long distance communication. In a few years a phlegmatic world was startled with the invention of telephone communications.

Today telephone and telegraph wires unite the people and countries of every known corner and hamlet of the world except those areas restricted by men who defy the very law of nature by not accepting the beauty of life which is derived from harmony and cooperation.

God's plans and the mysteries of communication were not yet foreseen with the invention of the telephone and telegraph. Experiments later proved that sound vibrations could be recorded, allowing us to store up the speeches and songs of the great and good and communicate them to future generations.

In our life span how many men, or Masons who are known as and called "The Sons Of Light and Knowledge," realized the joys which would be ours with the invention of radio, and how it would unite the world in many ways. Very few Masons, if any, ever believed it possible that years later on April 19, 1950, the 100th birthday of our Grand Lodge, the Grand Master of Masons in California would stand before a microphone and set forth not only the accomplishments but the actual dogma of our fraternity to the world in general.

The method of communication known as television has brought before our eyes and to our minds transactions and activities of many kinds that before remained at a distance, and it is possible that the exterior and interior of this Temple will be viewed in the homes of thousands of free Americans.

There still exists, my brethren, a more important form of communication, perhaps known as the third dimension or conception, that being the relationship between God and man, the Creator and the creature, the belief in the inner unity. It is an enduring gift, rare moments of penetration and escape when men feel the unity between God and themselves. It leads us out of the world of struggle and error, growth and decay, suffering and death, into that of peace, beauty and harmony. This communication must be striven for and obtained by meditation, silence and acceptance. Yet it runs like an unbreakable cord throughout the history of religion and philosophy. Within it lies one and the same truth, and by it also disappears all opposition, the unifying of all separated things. From this type of communication we understand the meaning of that immortal verse of scripture, "The Kingdom of God is within you."

Within all the beneficial forms of communications Masons know and should be constantly aware of the fact that like the symbolic meaning of the mosaic pavements of King Solomon's Temple, checkered with good and evil, there are good and evil expressions. Evil communications corrupt good character, and from the Holy Writings we know that "evil communications corrupt good manners".

Masons should always avoid the evil communications due to personal allergies, incompatibility and pet aversions. We, as Masons, should maintain no allergies except that of the spirit, abhorring only that which is evil.

Today, as a result of progress, education and knowledge, the Mason is required to disseminate the important truths of life. Our safeguards are the very foundation pillars of our fraternity-Faith and Work, sometimes alluded to as preparation.

With the changes and new methods of communication have come many changes in the meaning of words and symbols. Only a few years ago men using the dictionary as proof would

have properly defined the word "broadcast" to mean "scattering of seed": 500 years ago one who looked under a hood would have found the face of a monk, today he would find a motor car engine. Recently we referred to the United States as the "48 States of the Union," today there are 49. Therefore, the ancient Masonic axiom of constantly seeking further light and knowledge is vital to proper communications.

All through the ages there have been masses who would not heed warning communications, and would not believe the quotation, "If the danger seems slight, then truly it is not slight." One of the many examples is found in the historic record of the Titanic, christened the greatest ship afloat, hailed as the conqueror of the ocean. Yet on its maiden voyage after intercepting the message from the ship California that they had encountered three icebergs five miles away, the Titanic's officers requested the California to release the air. Then the unforgettable proof of ignoring communications. Due to their defiance and lack of preparation, not even carrying distress rockets, only hours later the officers of the Titanic were unable to arouse the Captain of the California. When others were in danger he was spending his time on other activities, never hearing or heeding those letters at low twelve-C.Q.D., Come Quick, Danger; S.O.S., Save Our Ship, Save Our Souls.

Records reflect the final moments on deck of the Titanic, the passengers' immediate change from gaiety and no particular thought of Deity to communicating silently, by word and music. We all know that on that night of terror, as the water covered the deck, the band played "Nearer My God To Thee," a song written in 1841, based upon some of the verses of the Holy Bible that were used to constitute every lodge in this Grand Jurisdiction.

We, as Masons, know the destruction of a Temple often develops and inspires ideas and ideals, and does not the destruction of the Titanic communicate to us that we should be cognizant of today's danger signals. How complacent we remain when there are forces which would set aside and destroy not only our freedom of religion, speech, press and actions, but actually endeavor to control the future generations. The dangers we see daily in poverty-physical, mental and spiritual. Poverty of the body, poverty of the mind, poverty of the soul. How many men and Masons are idle when one of our most priceless heritages, our public school system, is in danger. Should not we support the Constitution of the United States and maintain the separation of Church and State?

We should not only use this edifice unveiled here as a monument to our departed brethren, and also a home to maintain our sacred altars. Realistically, we should cause our altar's illuminating lights to radiate from this Temple, allowing it to serve as a lighthouse, a beacon, to aid men and Masons to resist envy, hatred, malice and bigotry. Signaling to mankind that behind this symbol, or Temple, lie the important truths: to purify morals and bind the human family together with universal benevolence.

When men realize that "happiness is the one thing which multiplies by division," then will communication be easier and universal brotherhood more obtainable.

Today's needs require us to dedicate ourselves as a fraternity to aid and assist mankind. It is written in the Holy Bible, "As ye sow, so shall ye reap."

In the material life, if a farmer plants corn or wheat, the land doesn't care, it readily returns what is planted. The human mind is far more fertile, more incredible and mysterious than the land. Yet, like the land, it doesn't care what is planted; success or failure, worthwhile goals or confusion. However, what we plant or communicate to mankind through our lives will grow and return to us the results.

What then would be the power and effect upon the world for good if Masons in California, and throughout the world, resolved with enthusiasm to dedicate themselves to obtaining first the knowledge our Craft presents, then unitedly communicating it to the world by every thought, word and act. The task is not difficult, all that is needed is faith and work, developing harmony and cooperation.

Would not the leaders of all countries and people of the world soon feel the import of our united action if we constantly carried out those rules or lessons conveyed and communicated to us in the First Degree of Masonry?

What are those decalogues that will aid and assist mankind to find happiness? First, we know that man must recognize that "God is eternal, omnipotent, immutable wisdom, supreme intelligence and exhaustless love;" next, "Our religion shall be to do good because it is a pleasure

and not because it is a duty;" we have been taught and must prove to the world that "We shall unceasingly war against vice and injustice;" as a part of our lives "We shall honor our parents and the aged, instructing and protecting the young and innocent;" in all our acts "We shall cherish our wives and children, loving our country and obeying its laws;" by our conduct we should prove that "Our friends shall be to us a second self;" and "We shall allow no passion to become our master;" eighth and of vital importance "We shall forget our injuries, rendering good for evil, not misusing strength, position or superiority;" and last, "We shall study to know men that thereby we may properly learn to know ourselves, seeking virtue and avoiding idleness."

If these decalogues are too difficult for our brethren to remember, then Brethren of Grand Lodge, communicate to them this day the greatest commandment of Masonry, that "Ye love one another." for if we have or will develop the "Wisdom" to understand the true meaning of love, then harmony, which is the strength of our society, will supply us with the necessary "Strength" to carry out the true meaning of "Beauty," which is in reality God's beauty, and endowed with the beauty of humility we will properly communicate to the world the fullest meaning of "Brotherly love, relief and truth." By such "Faith" our "Hopes" will become a reality and make it possible for us to be worthy of the greatest "Charity" ever known, that which is communicated to us from the "Throne of God."

This Temple, recently dedicated, is a symbol of the pure purposes of our fraternity. From it should radiate brotherly love and all those things for which we stand. This Temple is a means for us to communicate, one to another and to the world in general. It is our newest form of communication. This Temple is built, but that is only the beginning. Through the practice of the great and lasting teachings of Freemasonry we may make this beautiful building glow with an inner light shining upon and helping the needy, the sick, the distressed, and bringing to the world more understanding and brotherly affection-the only real basis for harmony and peace. If peace can be achieved, then no more of our brethren need die as those brethren for whom this building is a memorial have died.

Let us strive, by proper communications, under the divine guidance of God, to finish the work we are in.