

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
Grand Oration 1961**

**Grand Orator
Myron E. Smith
"For Such A Time As This"**

Most Worshipful Grand Master and Brethren

It is wonderful to have this opportunity to express to the Grand Lodge and to our Most Worshipful Grand Master my deep appreciation for the privilege of serving in this station throughout the past year.

This has been a glorious year in California Masonry! The inspired leadership of our Grand Master and the enthusiastic support given him by all the brethren has been superb. His warm and friendly manner, the wisdom, strength and beauty of harmony of all his actions, his understanding of the role of the Master Mason, his love for all the brethren, have brought new distinction to the craft. To have been of some small service to him and to the Grand Lodge has been a joy, which I shall treasure always.

You have given explicit instructions to him who occupies the station in which I now stand. By tradition, you have made it his duty to address the Grand Lodge upon matters appertaining to the Craft. Implicit is the obvious injunction that the matters spoken shall be of maximum import. In the discharge of this duty, your help and your assistance are necessary, for this is a mutual endeavor in which we search together for new and further light in Masonry.

In a little European mountain village, a traveler noticed in the late afternoon that the people of the village left it to walk up a path on the mountainside. Each carried a lamp. He followed and found that they were going to a small church.

In the church, there were no light fixtures. It was lighted only by the lamps the people brought with them. At first, when only a few had arrived, the traveler dimly saw the outline of the pews and pulpit. It seemed quiet and peaceful, and he bowed his head in a moment of prayer. When he looked up, the room was becoming brighter and brighter as people came in. With the increased light, it became more beautiful.

The traveler learned that the pioneers who built the church wanted every person in the village to come to the church for worship there. So they gave each person a lamp and said, "Some corner of God's house will be dark and lonely, unless all his sons and daughters come to worship Him at the appointed time." The church was nearly always filled, for no family wanted its corner to be dark.

Well, my brethren, Grand Lodge is like that. It says to each and every member: Bring with you your Masonic Light, and with it the light of all the members of your Lodge-for Grand Lodge is the sum total of all the light of all brethren. Let the light, which you bear illumine our path up the mountainside in our search for truth.

What, then, is our most important Masonic concern, upon which to focus all the light we now have? Could it not be said that these are reflective moments-a pause in the day's occupation, as it were-to ask ourselves:

. . . whence came we?:

. . . where are we?: and,

. . . whither are we traveling?

When we ask ourselves these questions, we realize that our concern is not the means but the ends of life. The president of a great university asked a student why he was attending the school. The young man replied: "To become an engineer." This, the professor said, was very commendable. "But why are you really here?", he insisted. Puzzled, the student answered: "To

obtain further knowledge." "That, too, is to be admired," responded the professor, "But what is your goal in life?" "Oh! I see what you mean. My purpose in life is to learn the will of God for my life and do everything within my ability for the good of mankind."

So it is in Masonry. Important as is the business of making a living-the means of life-our great concern is the ends of life. This is the objective of Masonry: to help us achieve the ends of life. All of our symbolism, all of Masonry's lessons are pointed in that direction. How may we be certain that, in our day, we achieve the ends of life?

Our concern is not for ourselves alone. We needs must keep faith with our brethren of other years who have long since joined the Great Grand Lodge on High, whose sacrifice and devotion have made life possible for us today, and with our children and our children's children, the character of whose lives will be determined by our own sacrifice and devotion.

How like a great relay race life is for us! What a thrill it is to witness the relay at a great track meet or in the modern Olympics. Each runner on the team carries the baton for a measured distance, then passes it on to a teammate who runs awhile until he, too, hands the baton on to another, and so on until the race is completed. Timing, coordination, teamwork, stamina-all are imperative. If one runner stumbles or drops the baton, the efforts of those who preceded him will have been of no avail and those to follow will have no opportunity to run at all.

We did not begin the race of life alone. Others preceded us. They continued for a distance, then handed us the baton. One day we will hand the baton of life on to another generation. Will we hand on undimmed the blessings of liberty so hard won for us?

For our generation, these are days of tremendous challenge. We live in the greatest age of all time. Within our lifetime, more has happened-more is happening-than in any previous period in the history of the world. Think how the world has changed since we were born!

Distances have become insignificant. The horse and buggy have given way to the automobile and the airplane. And now the space age is upon us. With the turn of a dial, we telephone 'round the world. By television, we see events as they transpire across the country. The world grows smaller.

Creature comforts have increased. Modern industry produces for us limitless conveniences unknown to kings at the turn of the century.

Life spans have lengthened. Newly discovered medicines, surgical techniques and the science of nutrition extend the lives of men.

Leisure time has been expanded. New methods of production, automation, make machines do more work for us.

Power beyond imagination has become ours. In a 15-pound package, a child could carry enough fissionable material to produce all the power required in the United States for an entire year. Mankind now has the power to provide all its necessities. The atomic age is here.

Man's inventive genius has created a new world for men to live in, and has us poised at the threshold of still other worlds about to be explored.

But, in the midst of all this scientific progress, we are sobered by the realization that comparable progress has not been made in moral and spiritual matters.

Man's inhumanity to man has surpassed all Biblical records! Two World Wars have been fought, and now we are engaged in a cold war, the horrors of which, if it becomes a hot war, make every thinking man shudder in advance. The human race now has within its possession the power to destroy itself. The nuclear power that should be man's servant at once has become the enemy of its maker. Though man has mastered anew the forces of nature, yet he cannot enjoy his achievement. For fear of his life, he must look for a place to hide. And he can find none.

Herein is the paradox: dazzling progress in technology and materialism on the one hand and confused retrogression in satisfying the deepest needs of the human spirit on the other. This we recognize as evidence of a grave disorder in man's relation to his God and with his fellow man.

The great English historian, Arnold Toynbee, tells us that, actually, we are engaged in three kinds of war:

- . . . a physical war;
- . . . an ideological war; and
- . . . a spiritual war.

On a worldwide basis, two opposing philosophies struggle for control over the minds and hearts and consciences of men:

. . . corporate despotism vs. "the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness"
. . . tyranny vs. government of law
. . . enslavement vs. freedom
. . . atheism vs. belief in God man is nothing vs. man is a child of God

The gravity of events in the life of our world is such that none of us can afford just to "do business as usual." Our society, our whole way of life, everything in which we believe, are being challenged by a powerful atheistic attack that endangers every privilege we have-even our very right to be Freemasons.

"For such a time as this," we are confronted by the question: "What shall we do?"

In the language of numbers, much spoken of by Masons, there are three things that we individually can do:

I. Obtain all the knowledge that we can about the alien philosophy, which is so diametrically opposed to our beliefs.

II. Replenish the springs of our faith in our principles and ideals.

III. Sustain the institutions so essential to our freedom.

I. Consider the first category: to obtain knowledge. Let all of us make it our duty to study and acquaint ourselves with the dangers which lurk in the alien and counterfeit philosophy which threatens all free men. Espoused by Marx and given the name of dialectical materialism, it now goes by the name of communism. Its theory is that economic and materialistic forces determine the events of history; that there is no place for individual motive, spiritual inspiration, moral discipline or ethical law; and that the human personality must be subservient to the interests of the state.

It says to us: God is dead! There is no divine creator. Life just happened. There is no wisdom over all.

It establishes its own morality by the dictates of a dominant minority.

It defines truth as anything that serves its purpose.

It waives human freedom aside as nothing.

It masquerades as an economic and political concept, when in fact it is philosophical.

It worships itself-materialism-as a God, while denying that there is a God. As such, it is idolatry and violates God's first commandment:

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me!"

It purports to be utopia and in less than half a century has imposed itself upon nearly half of mankind.

It seeks to dominate the world through the destruction of all free institutions and the will to resist.

It uses physical force and intellectual subversion to attain its purposes. It employs the most subtle methods to discredit and ridicule western civilization and instill fear.

It knows that apathy, indifference and inaction are its allies.

Standing squarely in opposition to this ideology is the spiritual concept of western civilization: that man is a child of God and therefore of supreme worth; that the highest value to be attained by man is the development of his human personality; that man's rights come from God and man forms his government to protect those rights.

When the two philosophies are thus contrasted, we realize more clearly why no Mason may accept the dogma of dialectical materialism and, as individuals, each must put himself

against the creeping paralysis of the counterfeit ideology, which threatens to engulf the free world.

So, as a first step, to avoid being deceived by it, let us obtain all the knowledge we can about the gigantic evil.

II. Consider the second thing that we must do: replenish our faith in all of our principles and ideals.

To be against an insidious movement is well, but it is not enough. We must be "for" the principles in which we believe. We must remember that no doctrine, truth or knowledge can live in the intellect if it does not renew itself in experience. If our beliefs do not renew themselves in our experience, they become just words.

So if we are to make certain whither we are traveling, we must reexamine and re-evaluate the principles by which we live, and dedicate and devote ourselves anew to our faith.

We believe in God and the immortality of the soul. In our application and throughout the degrees we have testified to that repeatedly, for no atheist may pass our tiled door. Shall we each not ask: How deeply do I believe in God? Is God at the center of my life, where He has a right to be? Is He my constant companion, nearer to me than the breath I breathe, or is He a pocket God, to be consulted only at my convenience?

Emerson wisely said that a man is what he thinks about all day. That which dominates his thinking tends to find expression in his life. What is the pattern of our thoughts? Do we think about God and thus give Him a place in our lives? To truly believe in God, let us let God occupy our thoughts and thus guide our lives.

The great Jewish physician and philosopher of the twelfth century, Maimonides, has some wise advice for us. In his view, there are four states of perfection:

- (a) A material level in which men seek happiness through goods and property;
- (b) A physical level based upon the development of bodily strength;
- (c) A moral level developed by adhering to the laws of righteousness and virtue; and
- (d) A spiritual level founded upon faith in God.

"The knowledge of God," he said, "is the only perfection we should seek."

Daniel Webster once was asked what was the greatest thought that had ever entered his massive mind. Reflecting a moment, he answered: "The greatness of God and my accountability to Him!"

We read in the rule and guide to our faith, open upon our altar: "The earth is the Lord's and the Fullness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein."

God is the giver of life, the creator and owner of all things on earth and in the heavens. Everything we have and are, we hold in trust for Him. We have the deed to nothing. We are leaseholders from God who holds the title to all. As trustees under God, every power and every attribute should be used, not for selfish or ignoble objectives, but for the glory of God and the loftiest development of individual personality.

If we have accountability, how are we accountable? We have an accountability for the right use of our time, our talents and our possessions.

Time is a deposit in the bank of God. No one of us knows how much of a balance any of us has. In the sight of God, we are trustees of the hours, the days and the years.

The Great Architect endowed us all with the talents we possess. To use them to the exclusion of his purposes is to frustrate the end for which they were given.

Because the Kingdom of God deals with human beings in their earthly relationships it must employ earthly institutions and instruments. For the wise and earnest use of those possessions we are accountable to God.

Harry Emerson Fosdick puts it this way: "It is a good thing to check up once in awhile and make sure you have not lost the things that money cannot buy.... Everything that money can buy depends for its ultimate worth, for the purpose it serves, for its final effect on human life, upon the things that money cannot buy."

We believed in immortality. Too easily, it can be assumed that this is a state of being that occurs when we die. But, if we are immortal ever, we are immortal here and now. Let us resolve, then, to live our immortality now, by living every waking moment as though we do expect to live forever.

We believe in the cardinal virtues: temperance, fortitude, prudence and justice. Consider their application today.

Temperance: We shall need to be especially temperate in our attitudes toward the underprivileged of the world who, to obtain enough to eat, fall victims to the alien philosophy.

Fortitude: Nothing undermines so completely as fear. Fear is everywhere in the world. Fear alone can overwhelm our will to resist. The only antidote is the shield of faith.

Prudence: How heavily we must draw upon this virtue, on an international basis, lest, by accident, a thoughtless act precipitate a holocaust.

Justice: There is yet so much injustice in the world that, with new resolve, we must exemplify this virtue.

So it is with the great tenets of Masonry: brotherly love, relief and truth. Never before have we needed so much to devote ourselves to these great principles.

Sometimes, we have difficulty with the word "love." "Love thy enemies" is the Biblical message. How can we love those who would destroy us? The problem is one of definition in translation of the Bible from the Greek. The Greek language has three words for love, each with a different meaning: Eros; philia; agape.

Eros is the love of husband for wife: attraction to another because of the other's attractiveness.

Philia is the love of parents for child: attraction because of mutual concern.

Agape love does not depend upon lovableness of the other person or shared interests. It arises from recognition of the need of the other person for fellowship. It is a consuming concern for the welfare of others.

This is the need of the hour: agape love, a consuming concern.

We believe in the spiritual graces: faith, hope and charity. How greatly the world is in need of their message today!

Joseph Fort Newton tells us that: "Belief is a truth held in the mind. Faith is a fire in the heart." Think of it! To have such a conviction about our beliefs that our hearts are on fire. It is the virtue by which we are united to God.

Hope is the "anchor of the soul," the source of that energy, courage and endurance without which spiritual progress would be impossible.

Nothing great, Emerson admonished us, is ever accomplished without enthusiasm. My brethren, as never before, let us from this day henceforth be enthusiastic about our principles and ideals that we may achieve true perfection.

III. And now a very brief comment concerning our third thing to do: sustain our free institutions.

Today we enjoy life in a free country because of a document containing approximately 4,000 words and 89 paragraphs-our Constitution. It assures us of government by law. It is a priceless heritage. Let us here resolve to support and sustain it with greater earnestness than ever before.

Likewise, let us strengthen our support of our public schools, the institution through which man obtains the education necessary to govern himself.

And lastly shall we not encourage one another to support more faithfully the church or synagogue of our faith?

Masonry, we so well know, is religious but it is not a religion. Masonry supplements and under girds the work of synagogue and church, but never was intended to take their place in our moral and spiritual development. Let us emulate the example of our Grand Master who, for more than 30 years, has been active in the religious school of his faith-most of the time as Superintendent of his Temple School.

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For such a day as this, these then are the things we can do, my brethren, to help resolve the paradox of our generation: Obtain knowledge of the evil that confronts us that we may avoid it; replenish our faith in our beliefs; and sustain our free institutions.

We live at a great time-the wind is blowing-the trees are bending -the earth is shaking, but these are great days in which to be alive.

Life was not made to be taken easy. Life is an uphill climb all the way. But, with Luther, "If God be for us who can be against us?"

In the long war between the evil and the good, our faith in God will see us through, for, in the words of Patience Strong:

"If you stand very still in the heart of a wood-you will hear many wonderful things-The snap of a twig and the wind in the trees and the whirr of invisible wings.... If you stand very still in the turmoil of life-and you wait for the voice from within-you'll be led down the quiet ways of wisdom and peace- in a mad world of chaos and din.... If you stand very still and you hold to your faith-you will get all the help you ask-You will draw from the Silence the things that you need-Hope and courage, and strength for your task."