

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
Grand Oration 1965**

**Grand Orator
Byron C. Morton
“A Re-Examination Of The Fundamentals
Of Freemasonry”**

Most Worshipful Grand Master, Past Grand Masters, Grand Lodge Officers, Distinguished Guests and my Brethren

To be standing before you today in this honored position is most unexpected in my young Masonic life. I am not unmindful of the many outstanding Masons who have occupied this office before me and have imparted to you great thoughts and lessons on the various phases of Masonry. It makes the task before me seem insurmountable, but I will, in my own way, convey to you the thoughts which I have today.

Your Grand Master, the Most Worshipful Theodore Meriam, has been an inspiration to all the Grand Lodge Officers this year, as well as to all the Masons in California. It was my extreme pleasure and honor to serve with him in 1959 when he was your Grand Orator. Ever since that time I have had the greatest respect for his ability and dedication to the principles of Freemasonry. Throughout this year he has stressed the emphasis on the basic principles of our Institution-that we should pick up the working tools-ever mindful that the practice of our teachings would make us better men and better Masons. To him I would like to express my deepest gratitude for allowing me to serve again as a Grand Lodge Officer. It has been a most rewarding experience.

As the Grand Master has many times reminded you brethren that it would be well for you to review the principle tenets of Freemasonry, so I say let us undertake a Re-examination of the Fundamentals of Freemasonry to our daily lives, whether we be teachers, public officials, businessmen, professional men, laborers and last, but not least, parents of the citizens of tomorrow.

The whole philosophy and the basic religion of human life is to be found in the fundamental principles of Masonry.

The tenets of our Order are Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth, and the first among them is-

BROTHERLY LOVE

"By the exercise of Brotherly Love we are taught to regard the whole human species as one family-the high and the low, the rich and the poor-who, as created by one almighty parent, and inhabitants of the same planet, are to aid, support and protect each other. On this principle Masonry unites men of every country, sect and opinion: and causes true friendship to exist among those who might otherwise have remained at a perpetual distance."

"We love because he loved us first. But if a man says, 'I love God,' while hating his brother, he is a liar. If he does not love the brother whom he has seen, it cannot be that he loves God whom he has not seen. And indeed this command comes to us from Christ himself; that he who loves God must also love his brother." I John 4:19-21

We know what Brotherly Love means, although it is most difficult of definition. Imperfect it may be in its manifestations, and not always displayed by us; yet it is the cement which holds together the social edifice of this world. Brotherly Love is the divine element that advances society; it is the solar ray that brightens the heavens, thaws the ice-bound districts, vitalizes its soil, and quickens its germs of life. Love breaks the seal of the apocalyptic books, and leads all the powers of the soul to join in their hallelujahs.

Masonry is Brotherly Love. It is the heart of a system of principles which underlie the whole fabric of Freemasonry. Heaven-taught brotherly love has been the distinguishing

characteristic of every true Mason from time immemorial, and should continue to be so characteristic of Masons that the enemies of Masonry should be compelled to say now, as did the enemies of the Christian believers of old: "Behold how they love one another."

Brotherly Love is a task, a kingly task-quite the greatest, the most important, inside the whole compass of life. Just as man must be in right relation with the food he eats in order to maintain health, so must he likewise be in right relation to his fellows if he would live in happiness. Practical men of affairs are today thinking of brotherhood in terms of cooperation, and this is perfectly legitimate. Freemasonry is organized cooperation. Because we can do together what we could never do alone, men are drawn together in this great fraternity not only to promote the practice of brotherhood in their own lives, but also in the life of the whole world.

The spirit of fraternalism, in all its aspects, is a spirit of cooperation. There can be no constructive progress without cooperation. There can be no cooperation without proper regard for duly constituted authority which is the very cornerstone of the social compact. If, therefore, the Masonic Order is to fulfill its high mission as the great exponent of brotherhood, every Freemason must be taught not only to be a law-abiding citizen, but that he must cast his influence on the side of law and order.

Wherever in the world there is a lodge of Freemasons, there should be a focus of civilization, a center of the idea of fraternity, making for the peace and harmony that should prevail in this great lodge of the world.

I like to think that our Fraternity is a sort of great school in which men learn brotherly love by practicing it toward Masons, because he who begins by practicing it toward his brethren will come sooner or later to practicing it everywhere.

Masonry teaches Brotherly Love. This is one of its leading lessons. It is this which has given it a place among the social organizations of the past and present ages, which has reared its temples among all nations, and scattered the seeds of civilization and progress over the surface of the globe. It is this which brings peace, harmony and decorum to our Lodges; which banishes the talebearer, censor and reviler; which guards the character of a brother, and brands calumny and slander as detestable crimes. It is this which brings to a common altar the Israelite, the Christian, the Mohammedan and the Hindu, and joins their hands in the strong grip of a Master Mason. It is this which exalts society, disarms feuds and sectional hatred: which cements republics and produces international comity. It is this which makes Masonry the world's great peacemaker.

Do you who have joined Masonry realize that each and every step, obligation and lesson you have experienced has been personal, in that it is you who have professed your faith in our principles and teachings, and you who have solemnly promised, in the name of God, to perform those duties of moral and material assistance to your brethren, to those of their household, and to the whole human family?

Do you recall the lesson that you might some time become entirely dependent upon the benevolence of others? Do you realize that you have specifically obligated yourself to assist your brethren, their widows and orphans? Do you feel the tremendous significance of the interpretation of the "five points of fellowship?" Is it fixed in your mind that each of these points communicated to you in such impressive manner, and under such circumstances, calls for a pledge to service on behalf of your brethren in order to prove yourself one of them?

Each of these points signifies a service of brotherly love, or charity, in the best and broadest sense of the word. When we are filled with the spirit that inspires us to travel out of the way to aid and serve a needy brother, to remember him and his welfare in our prayers, to share his hopes and fears and be ever ready to lend a helping hand, and to counsel with him in his trials and perplexities, then indeed we are giving to charity a true Masonic exemplification.

The Mason who cultivates a habit of brotherly love will have no difficulty in following the dictates of his heart in the practice of numberless acts of affectionate good will which will be most welcome to those whom they affect, and which will cheer his own life.

RELIEF

"To relieve the distressed is a duty incumbent on all men, but particularly on Masons, who are linked together by an indissoluble chain of sincere affection. To soothe the unhappy, to

sympathize with their misfortunes, to compassionate their miseries, and to restore peace to their troubled minds, is the great aim we have in view. On this basis we form our friendships and establish our connection."

"For when I was hungry, you gave me food; when thirsty, you gave me drink; when I was a stranger you took me into your home, when naked you clothed me; when I was ill you came to my help, when in prison you visited me. Then the righteous will reply, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and fed you, or thirsty and gave you drink, a stranger and took you home, or naked and clothed you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and come to visit you?' And the king will answer, 'I tell you this: anything you did for one of my brothers here, however humble, you did for me.' " Matthew 25:35-40

Masonic relief is not to be measured by the natural sympathy of brethren for brethren in distress, but by a far higher and more ennobling rule, gratitude to the Great Architect of the Universe for the many mercies and blessings which He has most undeservedly bestowed upon us. Under this rule Masonic relief becomes an expression of Masonic love of the Father and Giver of All. What can we do for Him who has done and is doing so much for us is the question the true Mason should ask. He is the possessor of all things. He needs nothing. All we can do, therefore, in recognition of His goodness towards us, is with grateful hearts to bestow some of His gifts to us upon our distressed Brethren, who, like us, recognize His Fatherhood. The hand that is raised in thanksgiving should be opened in relief. But let us remember that this relief which we are thus to bestow upon our distressed Brethren is not simply the gift of money, food or clothing, but the Masonic rule requires us to devote one-third of our time to the service of God and of a worthy distressed brother. Mind you, not to the relieving him of his actual bodily wants, but the service of a worthy distressed brother. That service is not performed by the gift of a few dollars, nor by "throwing to the poor dog a bone," but requires at our hands remembrance in personal devotion, personal sympathy, spiritual comfort and consolation as well as bodily relief, and the satisfying of physical wants. Thus, it is fitting and proper that we maintain our Homes at Union City and Covina.

The distressed brother, the bereaved widow, the desolate orphan. are the brightest jewels in the Masonic crown. They are our dependent wards, our precious heritage, and we must not, under our solemn obligations, we dare not, overlook or despise the blessed privilege of doing them good.

The true Mason must be and must have a right to be content with himself; and he can be so only when he lives not for himself alone, but for others also, who need his assistance and have a claim upon his sympathy.

True charity cannot be expressed by occasional almsgiving, but by consistent and continued benevolence in thought and action that will influence us to view with sympathy the conditions of our brethren, rejoice in their welfare, endeavor to share their sorrows and increase their joys. Our monitors refer to the tenet of relief in these words: "To soothe the unhappy, to sympathize with their misfortunes, to compassionate their miseries and to restore peace. to their troubled minds, is the great aim we have in view." Not a word in this about giving money, but everything to indicate the value of the personal equation. Our best and noblest acts of charity are often "the little nameless, unremembered things," in that they promote within us the growth of a generous and benevolent spirit that helps ourselves as well as others.

"Go, break to the needy sweet charity's bread
For giving is loving," the Angel said.
"And must I be giving again and again?"
My peevish and pitiless answer ran.
"Oh, no," said the Angel, piercing me through,
"Just give till the Master stops giving to you."

A careful study of these words is all the guide any Master Mason, no matter how experienced, really needs to point the way to Masonic relief.

Masonry is not per se a benevolent organization. It was not formed for the purpose of mutual relief from pecuniary distress, and its finances are neither gathered nor managed with that end in view.

Masonry is something much greater; it ministers to a man's heart and mind, rather than to his body.

The greatest charity which Masonry has for its members is charity of thought; the greatest relief it can render is relief of the spirit.

TRUTH

"Truth is a divine attribute and the foundation of every virtue. To be good and true is the first lesson we are taught in Masonry. On this theme we contemplate, and by its dictates endeavor to regulate our conduct. Hence, while influenced by this principle, hypocrisy and deceit are unknown among us; sincerity and plain dealing distinguish us, and with heart and tongue, we join in promoting each other's welfare and rejoicing in each other's prosperity."

The cornerstone of the Masonic structure is Truth.

The truths of Freemasonry are purposely veiled in allegory and symbol, and their deeper meanings do not appear upon the surface of the ritual. Our ceremonies are full of cunningly hidden suggestions of these immortal truths-so much so that one is almost inclined at times to claim for Freemasonry an inspiration from the Great Architect Himself .

The symbols and ceremonies of Freemasonry have more than one meaning. They rather conceal than disclose the truth. They hint it only, at least; and their varied meanings are only to be discovered by reflection and study. Truth is not only symbolized by light, but as the ray of light is separable into different rays of different colors, so is truth separable into kinds. It is the province of Masonry to teach all truths-not moral truth alone, but political and philosophical, and even religious truth, so far as concerns the great and essential principles of each.

What is truth? If we could answer that question we could be gods, and know the secrets of the universe. Truth is the great object of Masonic study-the age long quest of man. It is the reward promised to those who are faithful, when their spiritual temple is completed.

"Truth," said one of the most ancient Indian sects of philosophers, "is the Eternal Attribute of God," and this expression has been handed down to us through the long succession of ages in the lessons of Freemasonry, wherein we are taught, "Truth is a divine attribute and the foundation of every virtue."

"It is no proof of a man's understanding to be able to affirm whatever he pleases: but to be able to discern that what is true is true, and that what is false is false, this is the mark of intelligence." Swedenborg

Moral truths are distinguished from other truths by a singular characteristic: so soon as we perceive them, they appear to us as the rule of our conduct.

The doctrines of Masonry are the most beautiful that it is possible to imagine. They breathe the simplicity of the earliest ages, animated by the love of a martyred God. That word which the Puritans translated "Charity," but which is really "Love," is the keystone which supports the entire edifice of this mystic science. Love one another, teach one another, help one another. That is all our doctrine, all our science, all our law. We have no narrow-minded prejudices; we do not debar from our society this sect or that sect; it is sufficient for us that a man worships God, no matter under what name or in what manner. Ah!, rail against us, bigoted and ignorant men, if you will. Those who listen to the truths which Masonry inculcates can readily forgive you. It is impossible to be a good Mason without being a good man.

"Today's challenge, then, to our Fraternity is to apply more completely its principles within our ranks; that duty we owe to God, that loyalty we owe to our country; that fellowship we owe to our neighbor and brother. That doctrine, in real action, will influence scores of others beyond the boundaries of our organization, not only of the present generation, but also the coming generation. We are charged to assume that leadership.

'We are all blind until we see
That in the human plan
Nothing is worth the making if
It does not make the man.

'Why these cities glorious
If man unbuilted goes?
In vain we build the world unless
The builder also grows.' "