

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
Grand Oration 1975**

**Grand Orator
Donald G Ingalls
"The American Dream"**

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

In the beginning God created the earth. He created it and furnished it for man's use. Then he created man. He created man and gave him the gift of free will, the capacity for decision, and the ability to learn from his own mistakes and improve himself. God gave man the competency to save his soul. He gave man the capability to become civilized, to live with his fellow man in amity, to appreciate the value of peace, freedom and responsibility. He demanded of man only that he work at these things - that he work to acquire and deserve liberty and freedom of body and spirit.

Millenniums passed. Man spread across the earth and founded many cultures, societies and nations, and at last man founded this country of ours, these United States of America. It was founded on the unique premise of the rights of man . . . the inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Our founding fathers knew well what those words meant. Never before had a nation been founded on the idea that those rights were possible. Our founding fathers knew also that the words "pursuit of happiness" meant not a blind chase, but that they had to work to achieve happiness. They knew that the word "happiness" meant not just pleasure, but peace, independence, dignity and self-respect. They knew also that the "inalienable right" was the peace and freedom that man earns through his own toil, sweat and tears.

Our founding fathers turned their backs on security. They gladly traded it for freedom and liberty of thought, independence of action, and the right to be responsible for themselves. Those founding fathers battled the wilderness with one hand and with the other fended off and finally defeated the old power which followed them to the new land and tried to hold them to the old ways.

Freedom, liberty, independence and responsibility, that was the American dream handed down to the children who followed.

How stands that American dream today?

Once upon a time these United States of America stood as the whole world's golden envy. Never before had there been such a land of opportunity. Never before had responsible men done more in the name of individual freedom.

Again I ask, how stands that American dream today?

Have we already surrendered that one quality without which freedom and liberty and independence cannot even exist? The quality of-responsibility?

Is freedom still worth the responsibility of being free? Have we as a nation forgotten that to be free, each citizen must assume, maintain and defend his right to be responsible for his freedom? Do we talk too much about the rights of man-and not enough about the responsibilities of man'?

Do we believe that man has nothing else-only rights? Have we shifted from our founding fathers belief in the right to independence and freedom in which to work and endure by one's own sweat and so pursue his dream of happiness-to a new belief which is the right to trade in one's independence and freedom for the privilege of being free of responsibility?

About the time of the birth of this nation, an Irish statesman observed that, "God has vouchsafed mans liberty only on condition of eternal vigilance, which condition if he break it, servitude is the consequence of his crime and the punishment of his guilt."

My Brethren, how stands the American dream today?

Next year, 1976, will be the Bicentennial Year of our country. It will also be the bicentennial of Freemasonry in these United States, and there is more than just coincidence in

those related facts. Freemasonry has been, is now, and must continue to be a viable and integral component of the mental and spiritual structure of this nation. Whether it is or not, depends upon you and you . . . and me.

My Brethren . . . we who labor in the vineyards of Freemasonry are among the most fortunate men alive! We are in the right place at the right time for we possess in our Masonic teachings the building stones with which to erect a house of ethics that is desperately needed in this country today! The need was desperate in 1776 and men of Masonic character met the challenge-the need is as desperate in 1976. How will we modern-day Masons meet our challenge'?

The teachings of our fraternal order demand the best that is in us. They demand the sanctification of our lives, the purification of our souls, and the ordination of our spirits, but, it is by our actions that the world shall know us!

Our actions are our mark upon our work, just as surely as were those left by our ancient Brethren upon the stones of the great cathedrals. When those eloquent buildings were constructed many intangible elements went into their several parts. Beyond the materials, beyond the skills of the workmen, love and devotion were poured into the mortar and the continuing devotion of those who entered those sacred precincts added tremendous substance and power to the spiritual aura that surrounds them.

We modern-day Masons too are craftsmen and builders and if our labors are to contribute significantly to that ultimate ideal, philosophical empire which is not only our Masonic realm but the hope of mankind as well-and if our actions are to mark our work with a standard of excellence, then we too must pour our love and devotion into the mortar. We too must, by precept and example, strive with every fibre of our strength and devotion to add substance and power to the spiritual aura surrounding our own lives and the life of our nation.

There is a great need in our country-nay, in all the world, my Brethren.

There is a need for a spiritual recrudescence, a breaking out afresh, a revival of spiritual self, a rededication to the unfoldment of the inner self, a giving-of self and of spirit.

We who labor in the vineyards of Freemasonry are among the most fortunate men alive because we have access to the knowledge and the means and the inspirational power to lead such a spiritual recrudescence!

If we but will!

Every individual who comes into this world, comes as a stranger in a strange land. At birth he begins an odyssey which continues until his death. Few can define the object of their search. We Freemasons know it is simply the unknown and ultimate fulfillment of our destiny. We are taught in our wonderful craft that life is a single but highly complex, cosmic structure and that as individuals concerned with the human problem we must look closely and with serious heart at the edifice we have entered.

If we listen, we will hear a sound as of some distant throb of thunder. Listen with understanding, and we learn that the sound is made up of the beating of human hearts, of the nameless music of men's souls.

If we look, our craft teaches us, we will begin to dimly see the soaring outline of the building itself, a looming mystery of many forms and shadows.

It is surely the work of no ordinarily builder!

We see its mighty pillars, cast in the form of the sanctified flesh of men and women who have sacrificed themselves in the name of truth and justice-and their endless rows form a bulwark strong and impregnable.

We turn to the cornerstones from which all else expands, and see there, laughing, the faces of countless children.

We see in the terrible spans and arches above, the joined hands of all men, interlocked and strong; while in the mighty heights beyond the gentle musings of the dreamers of the world, whisper against the lofty dome.

And then comes a moment when we realize that the mystic house is not yet finished. It is still building and being built upon, and we understand that the work must always go forward. Sometimes beneath the burden of unutterable anguish, sometimes to the tune of great laughter and heroic shouting. But always, the building must continue.

As Freemasons we are taught that we must climb ahead so that others, less venturesome, less informed, less strong in faith, huddled in doubt and fear far below; may listen in the silence of the night and have their faith renewed when they hear the tiny hammerings of our work, the work of their Masonic Brothers high above, in the dome, Brothers who have dared to climb ahead to prepare the way; who have climbed to dizzying heights beyond their own visions solely on the strength of their belief and faith in their work-and their love for their fellow man .

Yes, we each one come into this world a stranger, but along the pathway of our quest we can learn many truths. As we acquire wisdom, and Freemasonry is a wonderful teacher, we come to understand that in a relative sense, species including our own, are only commas in an eternal sentence. One life group merges into another until all nestle into the whole and become indistinguishable from it.

This interlocked life process becomes a mystical wonder that fills us with awe and it is this very feeling, this religious out crying, which has become the most valuable reaction of our species. It is a simple understanding that we, all mankind, are related inextricably to the whole, related to all reality, known and unknown.

It seems a simple realization, yet the profound feeling of it brought forth a Jesus Christ, a Moses, a Buddha, a St. Augustine, a Darwin, and an Einstein. Each in his own way discovered and reaffirmed that all things are one thing and one thing is all things. Yet, today modern man gropes bewildered and blind in the glare of his atomic age.

Plato told a story wherein prisoners were chained to the wall of a cave, and they had no knowledge except what they could guess from the flickering shadows on the rocky wall before them. And when, at last, they were permitted to see the full source of the light, they stood bewildered and blind in the glare of their sun.

Perhaps, even more than Plato dreamed, man has emerged from his cave of shadows and stands in the full light of his universe. Yet:

How many, in this country of ours today, despite an almost overwhelming affluency, find their lives to be sterile and unreal? How many grope for meaning and understanding? The human brain's ingenuity pours forth from a bottomless cornucopia a complex of toys and gadgets and mechanical marvels to entertain and stimulate and divert, but in none of these scientific placebos is there a remedy for our malady. Blinded and fearful, modern man, millions in our own nation, day by day trades away his independence and freedom for a shadow on a wall, a shadow he calls security.

The word security once had a meaning relative to a certain time. It meant that a man by his own efforts could secure the direction of his work as well as its rewards not only for himself but also for his children and his children's children. But somewhere along the way from yesterday to today, something has happened to that meaning. Today, security has come to mean to many human beings only how long an individual can rely on deriving his livelihood, not from his own efforts, but from a dole pinched off of the results of the efforts of someone else.

The teachings of Freemasonry define this malady as a moral sterility and lack of understanding. Freemasonry teaches that there is no remedy- except as is found in the enlightenment of the human spirit. Except as is found in man's ability to have a perceptive rather than an exploitative relationship with his fellow creatures. Except as is found in the rewards of his own efforts. Except as is found in his daily practice of brotherly love, relief, truth, faith, hope, and charity, fortitude, prudence, justice and individual responsibility!

It was from these mighty concepts that such great axial thinkers as Christ, Buddha, Confucius, and Moses, became creators of transcendent values and created a world of universal thought which today is our most precious human heritage .

Christ, Buddha, Confucius, Moses-these thinkers still speak to us across the ages; their works still shine outside our cave of shadows and they still stretch forth loving arms toward us, carrying not weapons, but with open hands, with charity and humility. They speak to us with the sole purpose of helping to create that radiant and noble being which is to some day glorify the universe. This was the dream of the first millennium. This must become the dream of today.

This was a vital part of the American dream when our founding fathers established a new nation wherein man could escape from the "security" of his prison-cave and stand in the sunlight as a free individual.

Our Masonic ritual tells us that . . . "By the rough ashlar we are reminded of our rude and imperfect state by nature; by the perfect ashlar, of that state of perfection at which we hope to arrive by a virtuous education, our own endeavors, and the blessing of God . . ."

Freemasonry provides that "virtuous education" for those who seek it. God will supply the blessing. But we ourselves have to come up with the endeavor!

It is without question a rugged and difficult pathway we walk today, but our wonderful craft teaches us that if we look up we will see:

Far away in the sunshine
our highest aspirations.
We cannot yet reach out and touch them
but we can lift our heads and see their beauty!
We can believe in them,
and try to follow where they lead.

This too was part of the American dream. This too is part of our Masonic dream. Yes, we Masons have a glorious opportunity and a divine responsibility, my Brothers!

This great opportunity and responsibility is simply to help build that wonderful cosmic structure, that spiritual house not made with hands, that house mortared by the cement of the brotherhood of man, and illuminated by the source of all light, the fatherhood of God.

But we must be worthy of such work, my Brethren.

It is told of our ancient brothers, the Essenes, in the days when the monastery of the lowly Nazarenes rose in gloomy grandeur from the steep slopes of Mount Tabor, that those ancient brothers often wore a garment without a single seam. This garment represented to the Essenes the unbroken, spiral thread of life and when such a robe was purified by the proper motives and right living of its wearer, it is said it shone with a golden light.

Like the white of the lambskin apron which we symbolically wear as a badge of innocence, that Essenian garment stood for the pure and harmless. These qualities are a code all men could live by. It is a code required of thinking Masons. Each of us is to exemplify in his daily life a simple faith in God, good acts toward his fellow men, purity in his mind and heart, harmlessness in his thoughts and actions.

To do this means the weaving within one's own soul by one's own actions that one-piece garment of the Essenes. That robe which identified its wearer as consecrated and consummated.

We Masons have a dream . . . and in it, good men are made better men by right teaching and by their own efforts, and all men work for the betterment of one another.

In our dream, men understand that no end, however noble, is worthy of unjust means; that the struggle to unfold our inner self must always be on the high plane of dignity and self-discipline; and above all, that we must accept the responsibility of our own thoughts and actions.

In our dream, men understand that their individual destiny is tied up with the individual destiny of every other man and that their freedom is bound to the freedom of all mankind.

No man walks alone.

But all men walk better when their inner self shines like the golden light of the Essenian garment . . . or with the white purity of the Masonic apron.

We Masons have a dream in which all men walk together into the future, hand in hand in a true brotherhood of man . . . and they walk with the knowledge that there is no turning back.

We Masons dream of a time when every child in this great country will be able to sing with new understanding, appreciation and joy:

My country tis of thee
Sweet land of liberty
Of thee I sing.
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the Pilgrim's pride,
From every mountainside,
Let freedom ring!

Isn't that also the American dream? Isn't one of our strongest aspirations the longing for the time when all men will realize that freedom, a pure freedom that will truly echo from every mountainside, comes only with the acceptance of the responsibility of freedom? That it comes not

through written constitutions, however eloquent; that it comes not from laws or courts of law, however just; but that true freedom comes only from the hearts of men and women!

Masons are men taught to seek and know the truth-and the truth is that a society based on the freedom to do exactly as one likes, ends with that privilege in the hands of a strong and savage few!

Freedom is responsibility-and a good Mason is a man who in a society of no laws at all, would still obey those unwritten laws which are just and right.

This means, if we would see those dreams come true, that we must demonstrate to our children by precept and example that we are not on this earth to rule others, but to govern ourselves; that we are not here to satisfy our personal ambitions at any cost, but to transmute that ambition into a determination to be of the greatest possible use to our fellow man.

Brotherly love, relief and truth.

We have the remedy!

These words, spoken by that sad and martyred president Abraham Lincoln, are as appropriate today as in those troubled days when he said:

"With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in . . ."

What a poignant message to us today, my Brethren. What profound meaning to Freemasons everywhere.

Let us strive on to finish the work we are in!

As Masons, as adults, as parents, as citizens, as concerned members of our society, as responsible individuals of our species, we cannot bury our heads in the sands of past accomplishments and say it is enough.

We cannot retire to the "security" of a prison-cave and mutely wonder at shadows flickering on a cosmic wall. The future is upon us! The responsibility is ours !

It is no longer a question of restating the American dream-it is a question of saving it!

My Brethren, we Masons today are among the most fortunate men on earth because we are in the right place at the right time-and the time is now! Let us strive on, therefore, with renewed strength and vigor, and a revitalized dedication to our Masonic principles, and finish the work we are in!

God bless you, everyone.