

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
Grand Oration 1981**

**Grand Orator
William J. Crawford
"The Pledge And The Performance"**

Most Worshipful Grand Master, Brethren of the Grand Lodge and Distinguished Guests

There are two kinds of Freemasonry. The first and most important is far older than our Lodges and our rituals. It is even older than most of the events described in those fables about the antiquity of Masonry which used to be printed in the old books about Masonic history. It has been a part of all the religions evolved over the history of mankind, and has been an important element in the teaching of every philosopher, sage, seer and prophet who has striven to improve the lot of man. It is sometimes called universal religion, and sometimes that religion upon which all men agree. It is elegantly summed up in the Old Testament words of Micah: "...And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" And in the New Testament words of Jesus, ". . . Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind . . . and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." And in our own beautiful ritual which charges us with the duties which we owe to God by never mentioning His name but with that awe and reverence which are due from the creature to his Creator; by imploring His aid in all our lawful undertakings and by looking up to Him in every emergency for comfort and support; and to our neighbor, by acting with him upon the Square; by rendering him every kind office which justice and mercy may require; by relieving his distresses and soothing his afflictions; and by doing to him as in similar cases, you would have him do unto you.

This is pure Freemasonry. This is the subject matter of the lessons of our ritual, and in a world which has largely lost effective moral standards, these ancient lessons, these tried and true precepts, these formulas for successful living, exert a powerful attractive force which continues to draw good men to our Fraternity. To the extent to which we practice it, we as individuals are uplifted and ennobled. To the extent to which we practice it, our communities are better places in which to live. To the extent to which we practice pure Freemasonry, men are attracted to our Fraternity, and we prosper and grow. To the extent to which we practice pure Freemasonry, our Lodge rooms will be full to overflowing.

There is a second kind of Freemasonry which we might call organizational Freemasonry. It involves all of the things which we do in trying to accomplish our ideals-the way in which we organize our Lodges and our Grand Lodge, the activities of our Concordant and Appendant Bodies, the maintenance of our Temples, our committees, our officers. For many of us organizational Freemasonry occupies most of our time and on it we expend much of our energy. This Grand Lodge Communication is a feast for those of us who love to make the wheels of our Masonic machine go round. How caught up we sometimes are in the intricacies! And sometimes we, even you and I, must be reminded that the object of all these activities is the furtherance of the ideals of the true Freemasonry.

All of us here in this auditorium this afternoon though dedicated to the first kind of Freemasonry are deeply involved in the second kind.

Is it possible that on occasion we become so deeply enmeshed in the organizational details of our Brotherhood that we lose sight of our ideals? Are there times when our very organizational structure gets in the way of the accomplishment of our goals? I believe that there is evidence that this may be the case. I believe that many of the problems over which we agonize at such length and into whose solution we put so much effort can be analyzed in these terms. Let's get down to cases.

We have all been concerned with the large number of candidates who fail to advance beyond the first degree. About one candidate in five pays our fees, knocks at our door, becomes an Entered Apprentice and is not seen again within the precincts of our Lodge halls. If this were

an occasional circumstance we might be justified in thinking that the man had made a mistake in applying and did not desire to continue; but experience tells us that in most cases the man who has just been initiated is more enthused about Masonry than he will ever be again. Why then do we lose him? Could it be because we don't include him in the activities of the Lodge because he's only an Entered Apprentice? Could it be that he loses interest because for several months his only link with the Lodge is his coach? We must realize that the man who comes to us isn't interested in just the degrees of which he knows little, but that he has a whole range of social needs which he hopes the Lodge will help to meet. He has the need for fellowship with other men of high ideals. He has the need to be involved in some socially useful activity. He has the need to be entertained in an uplifting way. And yes, he has the need to be recognized as a family man whose wife and even children should be drawn within the circle of fellowship. Perhaps he doesn't return because we've offered him Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth, but he perceives that our organization is not interested in him as a person, but only as a "Candidate". We delay too long in making him an integral part of our Lodge. We miss what might be called the "psychological moment," and with some men we never get a second chance.

And then there's the matter of attendance. Most of us would be delighted if ten percent of our members attended Lodge with any regularity, and if twenty percent came to a meeting we'd be overwhelmed. This is a very difficult thing for those of us who are so heavily involved in the work of the Lodge to understand. Why are not the majority of our members as attracted to the work of the Craft as we are? The first thing that comes to mind is that the program in most of our Lodges centers around the making of new members rather than the needs and interests of those who are already members. It is apparent that the opportunities to participate in the ritualistic work of the Lodge are both limited and of limited interest to our members. I'm not suggesting that we abridge the ritual, nor am I criticizing those who have devoted their fraternal lives to the pursuit of ritualistic excellence, but I am firmly convinced that the acquisition of new members is less important than the care and feeding of those we already have, and that somehow the amount of time and energy which we devote to ritualistic perfection leaves our officers little energy to devote to program planning. The question every Senior Warden should ask himself as he lays his plans for the coming year is, "What if we have no degrees to confer?" He can and should then go on to plan a year's activities around the interests of the members of his Lodge, and if he is successful, if he is able to arouse enthusiasm and attendance, if he is able to return the lost sheep, as it were, to the fold, then his Lodge need have no concerns about candidates for the degrees-men will be drawn to it as moths are to a flame. Mizpah Lodge No. 378 has such a program-a purely social event once a month; several opportunities each month for wives and families to attend-and it works! The members of this Lodge exude an enthusiasm which has led a large number of their non-Masonic friends to seek affiliation with our Fraternity.

There is another aspect of Lodge attendance problems that has to do with what we promise and what we deliver-pure Masonry versus organizational Masonry, if you will. I need not remind any Mason present of the nature of the obligations which bind us together, and yet I am often astounded to learn of Masons who for years have no contact with their Lodge other than the exchange of a check and a receipt for the annual dues. And which of us has not been embarrassed while sitting in Lodge and hearing of the death of a Brother several months or even a year after the sad event! What a sad comment on the quality of our fraternal ties. It's easy, of course, to say that that's the Brother's choice, but doesn't the cord of love which binds a Brother to his Lodge also bind a Lodge to its members? Most churches conduct an every member canvass, at least once a year, when a special effort is made to make personal contact with every member. Each Lodge should have a similar program in which each member is contacted at least yearly for a "Happy Birthday" or a "How are you?" or even better, "Can I pick you up and take you to Lodge tonight?" In the case of members residing in other states or at a distance, we might even utilize that list of Lodges kept by the Tiler and write to the Lodge nearest to the Sojourning Brother asking that they make contact and return a report. This kind of outreach represents a tangible expression of our pledge to remember the welfare of a Brother Master Mason as our own and cannot fail to raise reciprocal feelings in the breasts of those absent Brothers. American River Lodge No. 795 has an effective system of telephoning every local member before each meeting or other Lodge program. Not only are their meetings astonishingly well attended, but it is

hard to imagine any Brother of that Lodge being lost or forgotten or suffering any distress without the knowledge and comfort of his Brethren.

These are areas in which I feel organizational Masonry might interfere with the practice of true Masonry. There is one area, however, in which we have not applied our organizational know-how and that is in the stimulation and location of new Lodges to serve the population of our great State, which has doubled since 1950 and quadrupled since 1930. There are many theories as to why our membership has not kept pace with this growth in population. I believe that at least part of the reason is that our Lodges have not always followed the people. Many of these "new" people live in communities which a few years ago were non-existent or very small. In these communities live many of the very men whom we most desire as members of our Order-men in the midst of active business life and family life. These are the suburban communities most likely to support DeMolay Chapters, Rainbow Assemblies and Job's Daughters Bethels.

At present we leave it to chance that Masons in these communities will take the first step and form a Club which will lead to the establishment of a Lodge. I propose that we should pursue a more aggressive program. Let us identify those towns and cities which might support a Lodge. Let us stimulate the formation of Masonic Clubs and subsequently of Lodges. Let us enlist the aid and support of our concordant organizations in this effort. The symbolic Lodge, after all, is the nucleus of the Masonic family, and every new Lodge is potentially the locus for a Chapter of Eastern Star or of Royal Arch Masons. And our Brothers in the Shrine and Scottish Rite are well aware that their future lies in the growth and prosperity of the symbolic Lodges. I like to think of this as the Colonel Sanders' approach to Lodge development- seek out the best locations and establish an outlet. It is a practice which has worked well for Rotary, Lions and Kiwanis Clubs, and I do not believe that its implementation by this Grand Lodge would in any way compromise our principles or our Law.

I would like to close with a few remarks on the subject of congruence. Most of us remember from high school geometry that when two figures have equal sides and angles, they are said to be congruent. Social scientists use the term "congruence" to describe the degree of correspondence between what an institution is perceived to do and what it says it does. The civil rights unrest of the Fifties, the anti-war movement of the Seventies had as their roots the perceived lack of congruence between what our government said it stood for and how it carried on its business. Americans have become increasingly more sophisticated in detecting incongruence in all of the institutions of our society-the government, the church, and yes, even the Masonic Lodge. As we go about our fraternal business let us remember that it is fraternal first and business second. Let there be no disparity between our pledge and our performance. Let us remember that we cannot build without that harmony which is the strength and support of all societies, especially of ours.

MAN-MAKING

By Edwin Markham

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 build these cities glorious
If man unbuilt goes?
In vain we build the work, unless
The builder also grows.