

**BUILD A BETTER TOMORROW**  
**1. We Have a Stake In It, Too**

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An invitation to address such a significant gathering as this is a challenge to call forth a supreme effort on the part of any man. If in the course of my remarks you should detect thoughts resembling something of mine you have read or heard me discuss before, it is by no means a coincidence. On the contrary, I am one who believes that a certain message is vital to our Brethren in our time, worth repeating again and again to all who will hear.

It is a message of faith; a message of appreciation for, and confidence in, and loyalty to Ancient Craft Freemasonry.

Be patient, then, and understanding, as I play another variation on an old refrain.

"Build a Better Tomorrow." What a stimulating theme for consideration of Freemasons from all parts of this great province at an intimate week-end retreat! Tonight I shall ask you to think with me on the introductory phase of the subject, Build a Better Tomorrow: We Have a Stake In It, Too.

Then tomorrow afternoon we can address ourselves to the logical sequel, Build a Better Tomorrow: Yes, But How?

It is doubtful whether there ever has been a time in recorded history when the human race did not yearn for a better tomorrow. I'm sure most of you have heard the old story about the incident wherein our legendary first parents, Adam and Eve, were evicted from the Garden of Eden. Quite naturally, they paused and looked backward with sadness at their former home, and, as they did so, Adam observed to his attractive consort, "My dear, we are living in troubled times."

When I delivered the address at your Annual Communication of 1969 in Calgary, I used as my subject, "Put on Thy Strength." Again and again I related incidents in which men (most of them Masons) had done the best things in the worst times. If we are living in one of those "worst times," I told the Brethren, then it behooves us to do what Masons always have done in the worst time -- the best things.

Prince Hamlet cursed the day he was born to set a disjointed world aright. Even then a time out of joint was no new thing. The Prophet Isaiah described an age which sounds strangely like 1978. He called it "a day of tumult and shouting and confusion... a battering down of walls and a shouting to the mountains."

Let me acquaint you with some personal correspondence I had almost five years ago with the late M.W. Brother Conrad Hahn, a great Masonic leader and a dear friend. In my letter I had observed that a moral depression afflicts all of society over most of the civilized world, and that while our Masonic leadership acknowledges that fact as it applies to society as a whole, our leaders do not like to admit that the moral depression has affected Freemasonry as well.

Wrote "Connie" in reply:

"I doubt that the average Mason realizes the extent to which "the times" have affected the Fraternity. He can mouth the principles of the Craft and wring his hands about the times being out of joint, but he doesn't really have enough "sense of perspective of history" to correlate the one with the other.

As a matter of fact, I believe it's more than 'a moral depression' that's causing modern man's problems. It's a psychic, a spiritual crisis which results from man's loss of confidence in practically all his institutions..."

M.W. Brother Hahn then went on to enumerate those institutions which, in his opinion, were no longer commanding the respect of present day man. He mentioned the churches of the Christian faith, institutions of learning (that is, schools, colleges and universities), government and the political process, and technological development (that is, science).

To the four enumerated by my friend, I would add two. Under the heading "government and the political process", I should want very much to have a subdivision headed the courts and our law enforcement agencies. The other institution I would have to add, even though I am an old newspaper man, would be the agencies that communicate information and seek to mould public opinion; that is, the press and television.

M.W. Brother Hahn then went on to say in his letter to me:

The authority of all institutions is being questioned and denied because the individual has become less and less respected, taken for granted, and contemptuously ignored unless he conforms without question to established patterns (which don't seem to be working). Modern man is in crisis because he can't identify himself in the "scheme of things."

Now Masonry has an approach to a solution of this problem: first, God; then Brotherhood. Both are spiritual concepts; both have to be spiritually elucidated and spiritually exemplified. How? Ah, I wish I could explain it as simply as the Pythagorean Theorem -- but that's what our Masonry must attempt to analyze, to explain, to teach, and to win commitment to!

In addition to loss of confidence in our institutions, I see much in our Fraternity to give me concern. It is our relationship with each other as Freemasons in a time when there are strains on to ties of brotherhood.

These are days of frustration for us all. Wherever we go and whatever we do, we are constantly beset with annoyances, most of which are abrasive in nature, some shockingly rude, others downright insulting. And the more people there are who must live in closer and closer contact with each other, the more annoyances there will be.

Some of the unpleasantness, sadly enough, is beginning to spill over into our relationships with our Masonic Brethren. And Freemasonry, you know, should be different. If Masons cannot be a little more kindly, a little more thoughtful and understanding in dealing with each other, then the message of our Craft has failed to get through, and we need to go back for a refresher course.

What challenge is offered, then, to Freemasons in our day? In my opinion it is to build where others would destroy... to unit where others would divide... to guard the seed through the long cold winter where others would throw it out... to provide tiny sanctuaries of friendship and understanding where men, of their own free will and be exercising their own choice, may experience brotherhood on a small scale even though we have not reached that state of perfection we should like for the human race to acquire.

For I am one who believes with all my heart that Freemasonry has something worth keeping, and keeping very much as it is. When our Brethren of the rank and file try to put into words what Freemasonry means to them, one of the qualities mentioned most often is that of its stability. but today I hear voices of concern. You can hear them also if you listen. They will tell you, as they have told me, "Freemasonry is all I have left. One by one we have seen those strong, stabilizing forces we once could count upon capitulate and leave the field of battle; one by one those institutions to which we once could look for moral leadership have abdicated. 'If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?' If Freemasonry fails, what is left as an alternative?"

Very well, then, what does our Craft have to offer in these times?

Let us direct our attention for a few moments to the message of the Fellow Craft degree. There is something about the Second Degree that says to me, "If you want to have a self you can live with, here are some old lessons, tried and true, that might be helpful to you."

Nowhere does the message come through so loud and clear and with such urgency as to the candidate, symbolizing as he does the adult man in the active productive years, bearing the burden and the heat of the day.

One of my oft repeated expressions is that the Fellow Craft is the forgotten man of Freemasonry. Writing in the "Kansas City Star" around New Year's Day, Bill Vaughan observed that "The year is always portrayed as an old man or a baby. Like most people, it never gets any attention when it's middle-aged." That may serve to explain why the Second Degree is looked upon as a necessary chore that all too many of our Brethren would like to forget or to omit entirely. They see drama in the youth on the lower step and in the elder statesman on the upper, but no romance, no excitement surrounds the man in the prime of life whose duty it is to do the work, provide the leadership, and pay the bills.

At the outset of the Fellow Craft degree, as in all the work of our Craft nowadays, we shall encounter the question of relevance. (And how weary I'm becoming of the word and its implications!) Again and again we hear repeated, parrotlike, the well-worn phrases: We must "make Freemasonry more relevant"; we must tinker with the ritual to "make it more relevant"; the place of our Craft in the scheme of things, its message, its teachings, its objectives, its standards, its grand aim -- all these "must be made more relevant."

At this point I am reminded of Mark Twain's classic observation about the Volume of the Sacred Law. "Most people are bothered by those passages in Scripture which they cannot understand," he said, "but as for me, I always noticed that the passages which trouble me most are those I do understand."

So it is with the messages and teachings and objectives of our Craft. Modern day society has not lost interest in Freemasonry because of lack of relevance; the problem arises with the realization the IT IS RELEVANT -- uncomfortably relevant!

The Fellow Craft degree tells me that to have a self I can live with I must be a responsible unit of society.

Over and over again with hammer blows the lesson of responsibility is brought home. In a day when the "work ethic" is scorned I am reminded of the dignity, the nobility of labour. "On the mind all our knowledge must depend," the ritual tells me, and in my journey to the Middle Chamber by way of the Winding Stairs I am introduced to knowledge that has blessed my life and the life of all mankind.

I come face to face with the message of responsibility in the lesson of the Globes. I see it in the emphasis on architecture, with the consequent symmetry and beauty of proportion that result therefrom. I find a practical application in the story of the battle at the passages of Jordan, wherein Jephthah's men made use of an important bit of knowledge. The enemy tribesmen who could not pronounce the test word correctly paid with their lives.

The Fellow Craft degree reminds me that when my work is confined to the task of influencing the lives of people, that is doing it the hard way, but it is doing it the effective way.

Permit me this illustration if you will, and be tolerant, if you can, as I boast a bit between the lines. There is no doubt in the minds of a few mid-westerners that the 1976 triumph of Indiana University in National Collegiate Athletic Association Basketball was a thrilling American epic. But even more significant to me than an undefeated season and a Number One standing in the United States was the philosophy of Coach Bobby Knight in bringing his team to victory. Syndicated columnist M. Stanton Evans tells it better than I can:

Knight, though only 35, is of the old-fashioned school of coaches. He believes in discipline, patience and the pursuit of excellence. He also believes in Clair Bee, Woody Hayes, General Patton, and short haircuts. What he doesn't believe in are sloppiness, slacking off, showboating, or the notion that life is a guaranteed free lunch.

Above all, Knight stresses intensity, hard work, and performing up to one's potential. As team captain Quinn Buckner puts it, "He tells you that if you've done your best, you'll never have any reason to look back regretfully and wish you had." Discipline and patience are in at Indiana University; doing your own thing, or letting it all hand out, are not.

There's a lesson in that beyond the confines of a basketball court, and beyond the boundaries of Indiana. The young people of America could do considerably worse than look to Bobby Knight and his hard-working Hoosiers as examples in the game of life.

To have a self I can live with I must recognize that fact that I live in a universe governed by certain laws that are dependable. As a creature occupying space in that universe it is incumbent upon me to play according to the rules.

Lloyd C. Douglas, a man whom Hoosiers like to claim as an Indiana author, used to tell about his enjoyable visits to an old man who gave violin lessons. The teacher had a homely philosophy that was refreshing. One morning Douglas poked his head in at the door and called out, "Well, what's the news today?" Putting down his violin, the teacher stepped over to a tuning fork suspended from a cord and struck it a smart blow. "THERE is the good news for today," he said. "That, my friend, is the musical note A. It was A all day yesterday, will be A next week, and for a thousand years."

If I'm listening, then, the Fellow Craft degree says to me that there are things that are reliable, and that it would be wise for me to build my life on that principle. Nowhere do I see that truth illustrated more forcefully than in geometry. The forty-seventh Problem of Euclid offers a striking example. It acquaints me with the rule of three, four, and five, by which an unknown may be determined from two knowns. The same rule applies with the ratios of six, eight and ten. Or twelve, sixteen and twenty. AND IT NEVER FAILS.

By the Forty-seventh Problem of Euclid I learn that there are certain truths not dependent upon time, or place, or world, or universe. The "situation" doesn't enter into some things, and this is one of them. It means today what it has always meant, its message as relevant as it was five thousand years ago.

The same truth is conveyed to me in the lesson of the Square, which must be ninety degrees, no more and no less. Ninety-one is too much, and not one can settle for eighty-nine. It has to be ninety, and it remains ninety year in and year out. I see it in the lesson of the Level and the Plumb, in the Winding Stairs, in the awe-inspiring Letter G.

A few years ago I read with pleasure Merle Miller's book "Plain Speaking", an oral biography of Harry S. Truman. One passage in particular I chose to mark so I might return to it as often as I liked. It was a question directed by the author to Dean Acheson, who was Truman's Secretary of State.

"The Kennedy people talk a great deal about situation ethics, whatever that means," said Merle Miller. "How do you think Mr. Truman would feel about that?"

"You'd have to ask Mr. Truman," Dean Acheson replied, "but I seriously doubt whether he has ever found it necessary to place a modifying adjective in front of the word 'ethics'."

It behooves me to bear in mind, if I want to live with myself, that the word "situation", or any other modifying adjective, when placed in front of the word "ethics", has no place in Freemasonry. Some things are true and dependable and right whether we like it or not, whether it suits our convenience at the moment or not.

And then, to have a self I can live with I must seek tirelessly to improve myself.

One of my favourite stories is that which describes the occasion when a beloved teacher came to his last lesson. It was Dean LeBaron Briggs, of Harvard, who for 50 years had taught English grammar. Like all good teachers, he also taught much that lies beneath and above and beyond that subject. The students say expectant, waiting to hear the words that would sum up fifty years of his life. They were astonished when he began his lecture unceremoniously by saying, "I wish to comment on the use of shall and will."

He paused to let them recover. Then he drove home the lesson that not one of them ever forgot: "If I have sometimes dwelt upon what seemed to be trifles, it is because small things are necessary to perfection, and perfection is no trifle."

The Fellow Craft degree has the same lesson to convey. Now I can understand the reason for its emphasis on knowledge. Again I see the right angle, which will settle only for ninety degrees. I see the Forty-seventh Problem, and can conceive of no circumstances under which it would not apply. I see the handiwork of those master

masons of long ago in soaring cathedrals, each a symphony in stone, enduring objects of breathtaking beauty because the hands that wrought them would accept nothing short of perfection.

It would be to the advantage of the Fraternity if we would all pause now and then -- rather often, in fact -- and ask ourselves the question, "Just what is the function of a Lodge of Freemasons?"

Is it to erect, equip and maintain a building? To furnish members for other organizations? To subsidize groups that have been attached to the Craft and provide facilities for them?

Of course not. Masonic Lodges can do all these, and more, as a by-product of that great, compelling force known as Freemasonry, but to proceed as if building, and subsidizing, and prospective membership pools were the basic purpose of Freemasonry is to get the cart before the horse.

Then what IS the purpose of Freemasonry? What is it all about?

In Indiana, the second question directed to me when I was memorizing my Entered Apprentice catechism, was:

"What come you here to do?" (Not in the past tense, but in the present; not "What came you here to do?", but, "What COME you here to do?", right now, this very minute.)

In my answer I was taught to say that I had come to learn how to make myself a better man. "To improve myself," was the way it was phrased.

Take particular note of that short sentence. I sought the privileges of Freemasonry that I might IMPROVE MYSELF. Not someone else. Not society, nor its institutions. Not other nations, nor creeds, nor races. JUST MYSELF; that's all. Once I had improved myself, then there would be some hope that others might be improved also.

In Indiana, two stones are displayed next to the Master's station in the East. One is rough; the other smooth. One represents what we are; the other what we can become.

Isn't the real purpose of Freemasonry, then, to take a good man, one at a time, and try by our teachings to make a better man out of him? Our purpose is the same as it was when the stones for King Solomon's Temple were hewed, squared and numbered IN THE QUARRIES WHERE THEY WERE RAISED. And where are those quarries? In your Lodge, and mine.

We have heard it said that Freemasonry is an anachronism in this confused age. If that be true, what a glorious anachronism it is! And with what solemn pride should we be the guardians of its message until reason shall again prevail! I was thrilled to read these forceful lines from the editor of a religious publication who was commenting on one of the many absurd experiments being advocated by the leadership of the churches of the Christian faith, each justified as "an idea whose time has come".

"So was phrenology an idea whose time had come," thundered the editor, "and haruspicy; and the Emperor Julian's restoration of paganism; and Arianism; and Hitler's Thousand Year Reich. History is soggly full of ideas whose time had come. Alas for those who must suffer through them until their time has come to go!"

The man who guides his steps through life by the challenging paradox known as Freemasonry is quite likely to have a self he can live with. For traditionally and basically, our Craft is a Brotherhood of Squares, made up of men who do the oddest things; who do not operate in the conventional manner at all.

Hence, in a day when the term "Square" is an epithet of scorn, Freemasonry quietly reminds us that the Square constantly symbolizes dependability, and truth, and honour, and unshakable integrity.

In an age when theologians seem to have lost contact with God, the Freemason has (or should have) no doubts at all.

In a restless time when men become impatient unless all of the prolific organizations in an over-organized age has a slogan and makes official pronouncements on about every subject under the sun, however trivial; when it is desired mightily that the conventional pattern be followed -- to maintain lobbies, to publish aims and objectives, to conduct drives and campaigns, to parade and demonstrate, its members falling over each other in a ridiculous effort to be seen and heard -- the Masonic Craft goes (or should go) quietly about its business with dignity, serene in the conviction that is has chosen the better part when, "through the improvement and strengthening of the character of the INDIVIDUAL MAN, (it) seeks to improve the community".

And so it is that the Masonic Institution, which sometimes is looked upon with scorn because it does not operate in the conventional manner, is prepared (or should be prepared) to bear witness to the fact that the conventional way of our age leaves much to be desired, and to stand upon its own majestic affirmation that the way to change human systems is to change human lives.

This, then, is my conception of how Freemasonry can help to build a better tomorrow: Instead of trying gimmicks whereby we may be seen and heard by men, let's try Freemasonry -- the real thing -- the only public relations program that really works. As Freemasons we have a stake in a better tomorrow, do we not? We do, indeed; yea, more than that; WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY.



Whether the English writer, C.S. Lewis, was a Freemason, I do not know. But his appraisal of St. Athanasius has a strangely familiar sound. To me, it would be the ideal epitaph for one who loves and serves our Craft through thick and thin:

"It was his glory that he did not move with the times; it is his reward that he now remains when those times, as all times do, have passed away."

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