

There are sublime commandments that need no miracle or voice from above to force our allegiance and assure us of their divine origin. These truths are understood by every reflective mind. If obeyed, they are intended to make Earth a Paradise and raise man to just below the angels. They include understanding the worthlessness of ceremonies and the need for active virtue in its place. They confirm that a pure heart is security for a pure life. They declare that government of thought is the originator and forerunner to action. They promote the ideas of universal philanthropy and love for all men. They encourage us to do unto others as we would have done to ourselves and to be right, just, and generous. These truths also include the forgiveness of injuries and self-sacrifice for duty, humility, sincerity, and *being* that which we *seem* to be. They command obedience by their correctness and beauty. They are the law in all ages, in every country around the world. God revealed them to man from his beginning.

To the Mason, God is our Father in Heaven. To be His children is sufficient reward for peacemakers. To see His face is the highest hope of the pure in heart. He is always there to strengthen His true worshippers. We owe Him our deepest love and our most humble and patient submission. His worship is seen in a pure, charitable, and generous heart. We must live and act as if He were constantly present. In death, we are at His merciful disposal. We hope and believe that death is but the initiation to a better life. His wise decrees forbid a man to regard his death with lazy contentment.

Masonry's teachings about conduct toward man and reverence to God are universal among all religious men and offer little room for debate among mankind. He is our *Father*, and we are all *brothers*. These truths are apparent to both the unlearned and wise, the busy and the leisurely. No priest is needed to
 228 teach or endorse these. If every man conformed to them we could end barbarity, cruelty, intolerance, uncharitableness, faithlessness, treachery, vengeance, selfishness, and all the vices and evil passions of humanity.

The true Mason holds that a Supreme God created and governs this world. He believes that He governs it by wise, just, charitable, steady, unwavering, and unalterable laws. He believes agony and sorrow are for *his* correction, *his* strengthening, and *his* development. These laws are the best that could be made for our happiness and purification. They provide the opportunity for everyone, from the common to the most noble, to work on their virtues. They are best adapted for us to work out the vast, reverent, glorious, and eternal designs of the Great Spirit of the Universe. Though a man may be in misery, he believes that nature has showered equal blessings and sunshine upon others from the very same unchanging equation of life. Time is pressing onward to fulfill its mighty purpose. It is an honor and a reward to have contributed to humanity's course through time, even as a victim. A Mason takes this steady view of Time, Nature, and God. He bears his lot in life without objection because it is his part

of a system ordained by God. He believes God does not lose sight of *him* while overseeing the operation of the Universe. He understands that if he should suffer pain or calamity that it was established when the Universe was created and the chain of events ordained through time. He believes that God considers his own good deeds equal with the notable achievements of humanity through time.

With these beliefs, he attains a degree of virtue that is the highest humanity can reach amid *passive* excellence. He finds his reward in the reflection that he is an eager and cooperative aid to the Creator of the Universe and in the noble understanding that he is worthy and capable of this sublime concept despite his sad destiny. He is entitled to be called a Grand Elect, Perfect, and Sublime Mason. He is content to fall early in the battle if his body would form a stepping-stone for the future advancement of humanity.

229

If God is perfectly good, then He could not have us suffer pain without reason. Either we receive an antidote to evil within us, or such pain is necessary to the grand scheme of the Universe, which is good in its whole. The Mason submits to it in either case. He would not suffer unless it was the order of things. If a man believes that God cares for His creations, then (no matter his creed) he cannot doubt that it would only happen if it were better for himself or for the greater good of humanity. To complain and grieve is to challenge God's will, and it is worse than unbelief.

The Mason's mind is nobler upon enlightenment and reflection. He ascends toward a more divine life. He loves truth more than rest. He prefers the peace of Heaven to the peace of earthly paradise. His loftier mind is heavy with worries. He knows man does not live by pleasure and materialism alone, but by God's power. He knows that the only true rest and peace comes with the final rest and reward from a life filled with good works. He accepts that trouble is found everywhere on the path to Heaven. He must prepare himself for the necessary work of life that requires constant attention. If one does not find comfort in the furnished temples and churches of tradition, then he must labor to build his own house for his own system of faith and thought.

The power in the hope of success, not reward, should stimulate and sustain us. Our objective, not our self-interest, should be our inspiration. Selfishness is a sin. When we consider eternity, selfish desires are simply not important. We should not work through life to achieve Heaven or Bliss but out of Duty.

Usually, we have to combine our efforts with thousands of others, contributing and carrying forward a great cause. Our specific sacrifices cannot be accurately measured. If we are to assist and prepare the way for the future arrival of some great achievement among humanity, our portion of contribution may not be realistically measured. Few of those who have labored with patience, secrecy, and silence to bring about political or social change for humanity have lived to see that change implemented, and fewer have witnessed appreciable returns from their labor. Still fewer were able to define what weight their efforts

230

contributed to the achievement of that change. Many will doubt if these exertions will make a difference. Thus discouraged, they cease all effort.

Undiscouraged, the Mason strives to elevate and purify his *motives* just as he works diligently with the conviction that there is truly no such thing as wasted effort. In all labor, there is something to be gained. All sincere exertion in a righteous and unselfish cause is *necessarily* followed by an appropriate and proportionate success. *No* bread cast on the waters can be wholly lost. *No* seed planted in the ground can fail to sprout in due time and measure. In moments of despair, we may doubt if our cause will triumph and, if it does, whether we have contributed to its triumph. We take comfort in the knowledge that God knows our immeasurable contribution. He sees every exertion we make and can assign the exact degree each assisted to gain victory over social evil. No good work is done in vain.

The Grand Elect, Perfect, and Sublime Mason will not deserve that honorable title if he does not have strength, will, and energy. He must have a Faith that feeds upon the desire and thought of humanity's victory. It must be content with its own portion, fighting when it should, and finding joy in the battle, even in defeat.

The accumulated filth and misery from mankind's centuries, the Augean Stables of the World, require a mighty river to cleanse them thoroughly. Our labors are drops we add to the river to swell and bolster its force to accomplish the deed. God notices this even if man does not. He whose zeal is deep and serious, will not care foremost that his drops should be distinguishable from the
231 mighty torrent of cleansing waters. To make them distinct, he would have to keep his portion separate to flow by itself, where it would have far less of the desired effect for mankind.

The true Mason will not take care to ensure that his name is labeled on the coins he casts into God's treasury. He is satisfied knowing he has worked with a purity of purpose towards a good cause, and he *must* have contributed to its success. The *degree* in which he has contributed is a matter of little concern for him to measure. The unselfish is satisfied knowing that having contributed to a success, however obscure or unnoticed is sufficient reward. Let every Grand Elect, Perfect, and Sublime Mason cherish this faith. It is his duty. It is the brilliant and never-fading light that shines from within the symbolic pedestal of alabaster on which rests the perfect cube of agate, the symbol of duty that is inscribed with the divine name of God. He who is industrious is a good laborer and a worthy employee. He who selflessly sows seeds that others will reap is a noble person and worthy of reward.

The Mason does not promote an undervaluing of this life among others. He does not view this life as an insignificant and unworthy portion of existence, because that would require unnatural, morbid, or insincere feelings. Masonry teaches us that the future will correct the social evils we see about us today. This life is but a step on the path to achieving that correction. Without action today,

it will be unattainable, but we may not see the cure in this lifetime. Denial of progress does injury to virtue and society. Life is real, serious, and full of duties to perform. It is our initiation to immortality. Those who have affection and deep interest for this world's state will work for its improvement. Those whose affections are deflected to Heaven easily submit to the miseries of earth. They deem these problems as hopeless, fitting, or pre-ordained. They comfort themselves with the idea of their future compensation. It is a sad hypocrisy that those completely given to religious contemplation and to making religion and virtue rule their hearts are often most apathetic toward improving this world's problems. In many cases, they conserve the imperfect state by being hostile to political and social reform, as it might divert men's energies from thoughts of eternity.

The Mason does not fight instincts, emaciate his body, belittle what he sees to be beautiful, demean the wonderful, and distance himself from what is dear and precious. He does not deny his nature, which God has given him, to struggle to achieve what He has *not* bestowed. He knows that man was created as a mixed being of body and mind. He is not only a spiritual being. The body is fit and needs the material world with its full, rightful, and allotted share. His life is guided by a recognition of this fact. He does not deny his body boldly and then suffer to admit its weakness and inevitable failings. He believes that his spirituality will continue to exist in the next stage of his being, the spiritual body. His body will be left behind at death, but until then God meant for it to be commanded and controlled and not painfully neglected, despised, or ignored for the soul. 232

The Mason is concerned about the fate of the soul, its continued and eternal being, and the events in which it will become fully developed. These are topics of profound interest and refining contemplation. These thoughts occupy much of his leisure time. He returns to them as he becomes familiar with the sorrows and troubles of this life, as his hopes are dashed, and as his visions of happiness fade away. When life has wearied him, when he is worn, and when the burden of his years weigh heavy on him, the balance of his thoughts slowly shift to the next life. He clings to his beliefs with a feverish tenacity and will not listen to the forbidding decree of others. These are the privileges earned by the worn, weary, and bereaved.

His contemplations of the Future shine light on the Present for him. It develops the higher aspects of his nature. He strives to accommodate the respective claims of Heaven and earth upon his time and thoughts. He works to give proper proportion to performing the duties and interests of this world while preparing for the next. He weighs his actions between the cultivation of his own character and public service.

The Mason does not indoctrinate. He entertains and speaks his own convictions and leaves others free to do the same. He only hopes for the time,