

# **VALEDICTORY ADDRESS OF R.W. MICHAEL W. WALKER**



**AN ADDRESS GIVEN BY R.W.BRO. MICHAEL W. WALKER, GRAND SECRETARY, AT THE QUARTERLY STATED COMMUNICATION OF THE UNITED GRAND LODGE OF ENGLAND, HELD ON WEDNESDAY 9TH MARCH, 2005, IN FREEMASONS' HALL, GREAT QUEEN STREET, LONDON.**

**M.W. PRO GRAND MASTER AND BRETHREN, FIRSTLY LET ME SAY THAT I FEEL NO STRANGER AMONGST YOU. I HAVE BEEN COMING HERE NOW TO VISIT YOUR GRAND LODGE, AND TO REPRESENT MY OWN, FOR OVER TWENTY THREE YEARS; AND HAVE FINALLY MASTERED THE KEY TO THE LABYRINTH THAT IS FREEMASONS' HALL SO THAT I CAN NOW GET TO THE ROBING ROOM AND THENCE TO THE DOORS OF GRAND LODGE WITHOUT GETTING LOST. SADLY THIS ACQUIRED SKILL WILL SHORTLY BE SUPERFLUOUS WHEN I HAND THE BATON ON TO ANOTHER AND RIDE INTO THE SUNSET. HOWEVER, AND BECAUSE OF THIS, I AM INDEED GRATEFUL FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A SHORT VALEDICTORY ADDRESS ON THIS MY LAST OFFICIAL VISIT AS GRAND SECRETARY FOR IRELAND.**

**A WELL-KNOWN DUBLIN CHARACTER AND SUCCESSFUL ART-DEALER WAS RECENTLY QUOTED IN HIS OBITUARY/APPRECIATION AS HAVING FREQUENTLY REMARKED THAT "MOST OF US HAVE DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR. IF WE CAN AFFORD THEM, WE'VE A**

**RESPONSIBILITY TO OCCASIONALLY INDULGE THEM". WELL I HAVE BEEN GRACIOUSLY AFFORDED THE OPPORTUNITY AND WILL THEREFORE ACCEPT THE OPPORTUNITY TO INDULGE MY DELUSIONS BY THESE FEW WORDS.**

**BECAUSE FREEMASONRY IS A SUBJECTIVE ENTITY IT MAKES ITS OWN SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION TO EACH INDIVIDUAL AND IT IS THEREFORE VERY DIFFICULT TO PROVIDE AN EXACT DEFINITION FOR AN OUTSIDER, BUT I WAS REMINDED RECENTLY OF ONE OF THE BEST DEFINITIONS I HAVE EVER COME ACROSS WHEN, IN A PRESS REPORT ON THE HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY, 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS, HELD IN DUBLIN ON JANUARY 30<sup>TH</sup> THIS YEAR, THE POPE WAS RECORDED AS SAYING "THERE MUST BE NO YIELDING TO IDEOLOGIES WHICH JUSTIFY CONTEMPT FOR HUMAN DIGNITY ON THE BASIS OF RACE, COLOUR, LANGUAGE OR RELIGION"; AND THE ISRAELI PRESIDENT, MOSHE KATSAV IS REPORTED AS SAYING "THE WILL MUST RESURFACE FOR A FRATERNAL WORLD, A WORLD BASED ON RESPECT FOR MAN AND HIS DIGNITY". I WAS IMMEDIATELY STRUCK BY THE SIMILARITY OF THESE SENTIMENTS TO THOSE EXPRESSED JUST TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO BY W.BRO. DANIEL O'CONNELL, FREEMASON, LAWYER AND STATESMAN, WHO WHEN DELIVERING A SPEECH IN 1814, UPON "ILLEGAL ASSOCIATIONS", DESCRIBED FREEMASONRY AS "PHILANTHROPY, UNCONFINED BY SECT, NATION, COLOUR, OR RELIGION". TRUTH, ONE OF OUR THREE MAIN PRINCIPLES AND PRECEPTS DOES NOT CHANGE. TRUTH, IN A MASONIC CONNOTATION, MAY BE EXPANDED INTO, OR INTERPRETED AS, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE MORALITY, THE KNOWLEDGE AND FEAR OF GOD AND, FOLLOWING ON FROM THAT, RESPECT FOR, AND LOVE OF, OUR NEIGHBOUR. THIS RESPECT INCLUDES TOLERATION OF HIS PERSONAL VIEWPOINT, HIS RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND HIS POLITICAL OPINIONS. IF WE PURSUE THE AIMS OF FREEMASONRY, OUR SEARCH SHOULD WIDEN, YET FOCUS OUR VISION, WHILE EVER MAKING US MORE DEEPLY AWARE OF, AND CLOSER TO, THE GREAT ARCHITECT OF THE UNIVERSE, HEIGHTENING OUR SPIRITUALITY AND DEEPENING OUR INSIGHT INTO THAT WHICH WE MAY NEVER HOPE FULLY TO UNDERSTAND. THERE IS SO MUCH MORE TO FREEMASONRY THAN THE SHALLOW DEPTH OF TODAY'S ASSESSMENT AND ITS SCANT INSPECTION AND ACCEPTANCE BY TODAY'S SOCIETY, OBSESSED AS SOCIETY IS WITH OVERT MATERIAL SUCCESS FOR THE INDIVIDUAL RATHER THAN HIS OVERALL CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.**

**THE PURPOSE OF MASONRY IS "SELF IMPROVEMENT" - NOT IN THE MATERIAL SENSE, BUT IN THE INTELLECTUAL, MORAL AND PHILOSOPHIC SENSE OF DEVELOPING THE WHOLE PERSONA AND PSYCHE SO AS, IN THE BEAUTIFUL AND EMOTIVE LANGUAGE OF THE**

RITUAL, "TO FIT OURSELVES TO TAKE OUR PLACES, AS LIVING STONES, IN THAT GREAT SPIRITUAL BUILDING, NOT MADE BY HANDS, ETERNAL IN THE HEAVENS". SUCH AN HYPOTHETICAL, WHOLE, DEVELOPED, COMPLETE PERSON MUST, IN HIS JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE, AND IN HIS INTERACTION WITH OTHERS, MAKE A MORE EXTENSIVE CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY IN GENERAL, THUS REALIZING AND FULFILLING HIS EXPRESSED WISH ON INITIATION, TO BECOME "MORE EXTENSIVELY USEFUL AMONGST HIS FELLOW-MEN". SUCH ARE THE LOFTY, LAWFUL AND LAUDABLE ASPIRATIONS OF THE ORDER.

IN MARKETING TERMS WE MUST VIEW FREEMASONRY AS A PRODUCT. THIS IS WHAT WE ARE "SELLING", OR OTHERWISE PROVIDING, FOR UPTAKE BY MEMBERS AND POTENTIAL MEMBERS. TO INCREASE OUR SALES, WE MUST EITHER IMPROVE THE PRODUCT OR MAKE THE PACKAGING MORE ATTRACTIVE. FREEMASONRY IS A FAIRLY STABLE PRODUCT IN ITSELF – VERY LITTLE CAN BE DONE TO ALTER THE PRODUCT WITHOUT CHANGING IT ENTIRELY IN BOTH ESSENCE AND APPEARANCE. ITS PRINCIPLES AND PRECEPTS HAVE STOOD THE TEST OF TIME AND ARE AS VALID TODAY AS EVER. WE CANNOT CHANGE THE PRODUCT AND REMAIN IN THE SAME BUSINESS; AND WE MUST BE TRUE TO OURSELVES IN THIS. IF WE WANT CHANGE TO THE EXTENT OF GETTING INTO A NEW LINE OF BUSINESS IT MUST BE ACCEPTED AND RECOGNIZED THAT THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT WE ARE DOING; AND WILL IT PERHAPS NOT BE LONG BEFORE SOMEBODY DECIDES THAT THE NEW PRODUCT IS NOT QUITE RIGHT AND NEEDS FURTHER ADJUSTMENT TO MEET THE CURRENT DEMANDS OF SOCIETY. THIS, I SUGGEST IS NOT AN OPTION WHICH IS OPEN TO US. WHAT WE HAVE AND WHAT WE STAND FOR WILL ALWAYS BE RIGHT, EVEN IF ITS ACCEPTANCE RISES OR FALLS ON THE SCALES OF TIME.

WHAT WE CAN DO IS UPGRADE THE PACKAGING, AND MAKE IT LOOK MORE ATTRACTIVE TO POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS, WHILE ALSO ACTUALLY MAKING IT MORE PALATABLE TO CURRENT CONSUMERS. IN THE FORMER CASE WE CAN - AND INDEED ALREADY SO DO - ACTIVELY ADOPT A HIGHER PROFILE; AND GENTLY BUT FIRMLY "LET OUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE MEN". THE CANDLE IN THE WINDOW IS THE INVITATION SYMBOL UNDERSTOOD BY ALL; AND SOME WILL ACCEPT AND KNOCK ON THE DOOR. I AM ENTIRELY AGAINST THE "GO OUT INTO THE HIGHWAYS AND BY-WAYS AND COMPEL THEM TO COME IN" ATTITUDE AS IS CURRENTLY BEING ADOPTED AND PRACTISED BY SOME NORTH AMERICAN GRAND LODGES. HARD-SELL IS NOT FOR FREEMASONRY HOWEVER YOU MAY TRY TO DRESS IT UP. FREEMASONRY IS THERE TO BE ADOPTED AND SAVOURED BY THOSE WITH MINDS ATTUNED TO, OR EVEN SEEKING, ITS ATTAINMENT AND WHAT IT PROVIDES. FREEMASONRY IS NOT FOR

EVERYONE; BUT WITHIN ALL POPULATIONS AND AT ALL TIMES THERE WILL BE THOSE TO WHOM IT WILL APPEAL. BY ITS PACKAGING AND PRESENTATION THESE CUSTOMERS MAY BE IDENTIFIED AND MAXIMISED BUT THEY CANNOT BE CREATED. OUR PRINCIPLES, SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS "ANCIENT LANDMARKS", MUST STAND FIRM, UPRIGHT AND VISIBLE, LIKE THE PILLARS OF STONE AND BRICK RAISED BY ENOCH IN THE LAND OF SIRIAD, AND WHICH WERE STILL STANDING IN THE TIME OF JOSEPHUS, LEST THE ARTS AND SCIENCES - IN OUR CASE THE WHOLE BODY OF FREEMASONRY - SHOULD SLIP FROM THE KNOWLEDGE OF MEN.

M.W. PRO GRAND MASTER AND BRETHREN, I HAVE BEEN THE COUNTERPART OR COLLEAGUE, AND I HOPE, THE FRIEND OF THREE GRAND SECRETARIES OF ENGLAND AND THREE GRAND SECRETARIES OF SCOTLAND FROM WHOM AT ALL TIMES I RECEIVED THE UTMOST CO-OPERATION AND SUPPORT SYMBOLISING THE ESSENCE OF THE MASONIC ETHOS, FOR WHICH I PERSONALLY, AND THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND WHICH I REPRESENT, ARE AND WILL BE FOREVER GRATEFUL. MAY I SAY THAT I AM SURE YOU WILL ACCORD THE SAME RECEPTION, SUPPORT AND MANY COURTESIES TO MY SUCCESSOR.

I WOULD LIKE TO CLOSE BY LIKENING MY EXPERIENCE OF FREEMASONRY AND THE WEALTH OF KINDNESS, GENEROSITY AND FRIENDSHIP EXTENDED TO ME OVER THE YEARS BY SO MANY, BUT PARTICULARLY BY THOSE REPRESENTING THIS GRAND LODGE, BY PARAPHRASING A DESCRIPTION, BY OUR PROBABLY BEST KNOWN POET AND PHILOSOPHER, WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS, OF LADY GREGORY'S HOME AT COOLE, IN CO. CLARE, - CERTAINLY A "MATERNAL SHELTER" FOR CRAFTSMEN OF A DIFFERENT "MÉTIER" - THAT "THIS HOUSE HAS ENRICHED MY SOUL OUT OF MEASURE, BECAUSE HERE LIFE MOVES, WITHOUT RESTRAINT, THROUGH GRACIOUS FORMS".

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