

**Grand Lodge  
Free & Accepted Masons  
Of California  
Grand Oration 1889**

**Grand Orator  
Adam Clark Bane**

MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND MASTER AND BRETHREN OF THE GRAND LODGE

In response to your invitation, I stand in this Fraternal Temple to discourse briefly upon the sacred principles of Masonry. But, first of all, we should reverently bow our heads in gratitude to the Supreme Master and Architect of the Universe, that He has preserved our Craft and spared our lives, amid the change and decay of the year which has just been entered upon the records of the past.

Freemasonry, as we were taught it, and as every Mason should practice it, is a system of ethics, and teaches the theory and practice of all that is good in relation to GOD and man. It is a science that embraces every branch of moral duty. Not a step can be taken in Masonry without faith in GOD. I know of no more faithful friend of morality and Christianity than the Institution of Masonry.

Our Order holds out two mighty arguments in its favor; a universal language, understood by the Fraternity in every quarter of the globe, and a universal fund for the relief of the distressed, whatever may be their religion, their country, or their complexion. Under the genius of Masonry we unloose the chains of the captive, we raise the drooping head of the orphan, we present the ambrosia of hope to the children of sorrow. Hand in hand, we stand around the blazing altar and chant the hymn of Charity.

Other societies and institutions, like the Colossus of Rhodes, may extend from land to land, but Masonry overstrides the world. Over the whole habitable globe are our Lodges disseminated; wherever the wandering steps of civilized man have left their foot-prints, there have our Temples been established; the lessons of Masonic love have penetrated the wilderness of the West, while the arid sands of the African desert have, more than once, been the scene of Masonic greeting.

No language can fitly describe the great Temple of King SOLOMON, the work of Masonic hands; much less can thought conceive of an eulogium that would justly represent the vast proportions, the majestic splendors, and the princely beauties of that spiritual Temple of unsullied character which the virtue and valor of Masonry have erected. Thought, language, and images fail us as we pause to describe it. It is a theme too high for conception, too grand for description, too sacred for comparison. The grandeur of nature and the glory of art, the dreams of fancy and the creations of poesy, all fade before our vision. Admiration no longer hovers over the Elysian fields of VIRGIL; HOMER'S sparkling rills of nectar, streaming from the Gods, woo our thirst no more; the bright Bandusian fountain, and the magnificent vale of far-famed Cashmere, lose their splendors; even the Paradise of MILTON, with its trees and its rivers, its fruits and its flowers, its hymns and its harps—a living landscape, with its vernal diadem, and voiced with melody—dwindles into sterility when compared with the monument of character and deeds which centuries of Masonic labor have erected.

How vital to every heart, every home, every State, and every Nation, are these organized Fraternities. What could take their place? Destroy organized Fraternities, and you would take from the heart its most wholesome virtues; you would take from the hearthstone its warmth, from the family its bond, and from the State its future.

Organized Fraternities are as ancient as the dusty Pyramids that sentinel the banks of Egypt's Nile. You no longer hear the selfish and guilty CAIN asking, "Am I my brother's keeper?" but, up from the human hearts of a race of brethren who are organized into active Fraternities, comes a sentiment like this: "I will protect a brother's interests as I would my own." When GOD, in the Edenic garden, declared, "It is not good that man should be alone," he established the authority for the thought that men, the issue of a common parent, should form but one great family, united by the gentle bond of fraternal love. And thanks to Masonry and other kindred

orders that have rent the veil which obscured our unity, for, in the Temple of these Fraternities we are made to know and feel the link of kinship between us.

The necessity for these great Fraternities is the unequal condition and abilities of men; the fact that man is a dependent being, relying for his success and happiness upon the efforts of his fellows. If the weak could find protection from the mighty, they could not, with justice, lament their condition. And when all men, of whatever resources, will labor together in the spirit of Fraternity, the true idea will be accomplished in establishing the rights of every man to the fruits of his labor, to his land and to his home.

Among the living principles of our branch of this great fraternal family, are equality and charity. Equality is the broad plane upon which all brothers stand. Here rich and poor, great and humble, old and young, gather around the same altar, and lisp the same vows to the same GOD. They subscribe to the same principles, they foster the same desires. No man is deemed greater or better than his fellow, only as character makes him such. Every man's business is the same—human charity. The books would not contain the record of the good we have done. If every member of this and other Fraternities would live up to the principles he has professed, earth would be a heaven begun below. We would then see a people of equality and frugality, and, in every form, art and industry employing their cheerful labor; and then the proudest boast of American citizenship would rise, not from the favored son of wealth, but from the manly freeman, who returns with the sun from his place of honored toil to the house which is his own, where the blossoming vine and rose bespeak the fragrant happiness of the loved ones at home.

Our hand of charity is ever full, yet ever distributing; we are saving a brother's life; we are soothing an aching heart; we are wiping tears from widowed cheeks; we are feeding and clothing orphan children. How many little ones would go hungry; how many bodies would chill; how many strong men would die alone, uncoffined, unknelt and unwept; how many rude boxes would be lowered with their dead cargo into the potter's field; if it were not for the kind ministrations of Masonic hands!

" Fraternity, Fraternity, what human tongue or pen  
Can estimate the great good-will which thou hast brought to men ?  
What joy and comfort thou hast brought unto the poor and sighing,  
What unrecorded ministries unto the sick and dying?  
Ah, not till the last trump proclaims that time shall cease to be,  
Will it be known in earth or heaven, how much we owe to thee.  
Then when the books are opened and the angels tell the story,  
Heaven's vault will echo to the song that celebrates thy glory."

Brother Masons, we can truly say of our Order, that it lifts men into a higher moral atmosphere—ever instructing them in lessons of honor and genuine nobility of character. It drives away from them the thoughts of the gambling table and the reveler's debauch. We are taught to honor GOD as the creator and preserver of the universe. No man can regularly attend a Masonic Lodge and hear its noble lessons rehearsed without becoming a better man, a better husband and father, a better citizen and a better Christian.

Brothers! our principles are Divine; our mission is grand; our hope is eternal. We are united in a mission that creates a bond of sympathy between families; making their principles one, their interests one, their hopes one; uniting them as brethren in a common cause of charity, benevolence and mutual protection—the cause of noble dignified manhood, and the cause of happy firesides.

It is for the womanhood and childhood of California, and the homes that we love, that we, who are assembled here, are banded together. Let us never forsake our trust; let not the seals that bind us be broken; but may each succeeding day be a new seal to the tie, and each week add a new link to the chain, until as a fraternal band, loyal to sterling womanhood, we shall stand with united hands, forming a chain that shall reach in an unbroken course around the State, encircling within the pale of its benignant influence every cottage and castle where woman reigns as empress of the empire of home.

Let us unite and labor to advance the principles of our beneficent Order; let charity fill our hearts; let Fraternity mould our actions; let us live the lives of true Masons, until Masonry and its blessed influence shall permeate every worthy home. Let the hills sing to the valleys and the rivers to the lakes our anthem of brotherly love. While there is a life to lose, while there is a heart

to ache, while there is a body to suffer, while there is a widow to mourn, while there is an orphan to clothe, let us be vigilant. Then like the dew that falls from the eyelids of the morning to moisten the lips of the roses, there shall pour forth from our beloved Order perpetual showers of blessings upon humanity.

But, my brothers, Masonry is not merely a science of earthly principles, but in her wise teachings she touches the shores of the beyond. She not only fits her members for life, but endeavors to prepare them to meet the responsibilities of eternity. Her principles are not merely human, but in the faith and foundation of Masonry is one grand spiritual thought—Man's Immortality. But I fear that the Mason too often sees the sprig of acacia without considering the great thought of immortality that it teaches.

The thoughts of the Mason are too much confined to life, flesh and the present; and he too seldom meditates upon eternity and immortality. I fear that, in our Masonic addresses, we too often neglect Masonry's prime principle, which alone makes the life of the Mason worth living—Immortality. Let us, in conclusion, with becoming reverence, walk for awhile along this mystic way.

We are standing upon the threshold of an awful future; let but the heart cease its beating, and we are gone, to grapple with the stern truths of ages at once interminable, inconceivable and unknown. "To be or not to be," after death is answered, and nearly all men, though with different degrees of faith, are looking confidently to an existence beyond the grave. The idea of immortality is seen in the language, literature and manners of every age; in the history, philosophy and poetry of every people.

But the heathen apply the "idea of immortality to the soul only. They saw upon the face of every mysterious providence the pencilings of immortality; they felt the truth attested within, by an instinctive shrinking back from annihilation, yet the tomb was invested with an eternal darkness, and the body surrendered to a perpetual sleep. With them the night of death was starless; there was no anticipated morning whose auroral splendors would break in upon the darkness of the grave, and hang the rainbow of hope over the dust of the dead. To what source then is the world indebted for the idea of the resurrection? Not to reason, for the mind has not the requisite data; not to nature, for it is super-nature; not to science, for it is beyond the province of science; but to the Bible.

This doctrine so sacred to Masons has been a favorite object of attack by every school of infidelity since its announcement. It is condemned as false because it involves a mystery; the argument has no force unless everything which involves a mystery is false. Another objector says, the resurrection contradicts the great principles of science. No science is perfect. It has been the business of every age to modify and improve the science of the past age. Science is scarcely out of its swaddling clothes. Is it entitled to more credence than the Bible? Must this old book, hoary with the age of centuries, written by the finger of inspiration, born at Sinai, completed amid the splendors of the Apocalypse, whose teachings are God-like, whose precepts are thunder given, fly the stage before the sacrilegious pretensions of an ungodly and pseudo-philosophy?

Again the objector says it is contrary to our experience; but the great error in this objection is that the objector assumes that the individual experience is the universal experience of the race.

Again it is urged that the resurrection is contrary to the immutability of the laws of nature; this argument is of no force, for the resurrection is not to be brought about by the regular action of the laws of cause and effect, but by a supernatural power.

From the lips of God we have this declaration and promise for the comfort of every man: "Thy brother shall rise again!" Glorious hope! A remedy as universal as the disease. Our bodies may be dead for centuries. The cactus of South America may bloom ever our grave; the chilly mists of the North may sheet our tombstones in eternal ice, or the encroachments of the southern desert may bury them in sand; marts of trade may be built over our resting places; the plow-boy may sing his song above our long lost graves; corals may incrust our bones in solid rock, and uprear continents upon them; or the wings of the tempest may fan our dust all around the world; yet the resurrection trump shall find us and we shall live again.

Death and the grave are our foes. Death's ghastly and shadowy form rises to heaven, and throws its awful shadow upon all our hopes. The grave darkly gapes at our feet every step of life's journey. Had the Immortal GOD never conquered in death's dreary domain, the grave would have

devoured all the race. No ray of light would ever have broken into the arcana of the lonely tomb to tell of coming day. No welcome voice would ever have rung along its dark and dismal galleries, and pealed in joyful echoes amid its mouldy arches to break the eternal slumber of its sleepers. But the omnipotent GOD met death in his own dominion, plucked out his sting, took his keys, broke his crown, chained the monster to his chariot wheels, and mounted aloft to heaven a conqueror.

If there is no resurrection, the faith of Masonry is not adapted to all our wants. Can the best of you look upon death as an eternal sleep? Can you bid the bodies of your friends an eternal adieu without the pangs of keenest sorrow? Tell the young wife, widowed by the late war, as she rushes with dishevelled tresses amid the ditches of the battlefield, searching for her mutilated dead, that her husband will never rise, and she is saddened for life. Tell the sister as she gazes upon the shattered body of a beloved brother, that his face will never be restored to happy recognition again. Tell the mother who baptized her boy with blessings and sent him to the bloody front, where he fell and was buried uncoffined in some unknown grave, with no block or vine to mark his resting place that he will never come to her arms again. Tell bereaved fathers, mothers, widows and children, that there will be no resurrection, and a universal shriek will rend the air and crack the vault of heaven, till GOD hears and feels and angels weep. Earth will put on weeds of mourning, and like Rachel of old, go down to the judgment weeping for her children.

But how are the dread raised up? Inquiring humanity, doubting philosophy and infidelity ask. The Bible answers: "According to the working, whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself." GOD'S power is pledged for its performance, and that should satisfy us; that power which made systems and holds them in awful and perpetual balance; that power which confounded chaos with order, and laid the foundations of the universe deep down upon nothing, and upreared its columns, towering into empty space, wreathed them with constellations of worlds, and propped them against the throne of GOD.

That power which carpeted Creation's Temple with emerald, roofed it with azure, and lit it up with ten thousand suns; that power which shakes the earth, shivers its granite, ruptures its strata, overturns its mountains and upheaves its valleys; that power which binds lightnings to its chariot and rides upon the tem-pest; that power is pledged to raise us from the dead.

That power sooner or later will be exercised. The last day will come. The sun unwheeled will drag along the jarring heavens and refuse to shine. The stars will hide their face, and the moon will roll up in the heavens red as blood, and hang her crimson livery upon the wing of the night. Earth will tremble upon her axis, and huge mountains of woe will drift and lodge upon her heart. A mighty angel, with face like the sun, clothed with clouds and covered with a rainbow, will cleave the heavens in his lightning track, and, descending with his right foot upon the troubled sea, and his left foot upon the quaking earth, will lift his hand to heaven and swear by the Judge of quick and dead that time shall be no more. Old Time, the father of centuries and the tomb-builder of generations, will drop his broken scythe and break his glass, careen and fall, a giant in ruins.

The trump of GOD will then sound. Its resonant thunders will roll through all the lengths and depths of death's vast empire. The dingy king will drop his sceptre, ringing in broken fragments upon the damp pavements of the grave. The antiquated dead will start into life from their ashy urns and funeral pyres. Mummies will fling off the trappings of centuries and pour from their vaulted chambers. Abbeys, cathedrals, grottoes and caverns will be vocal with life. Human bodies will break away from their coral fastenings. Mermaids, draped in dripping weeds will mourn the evacuation of all their caves. The battlefields of the world. Troy and Thermopylae, Austerlitz and Waterloo, Lexington and Gettysburg will reproduce their armies, and crowd the world with revived legions. ABRAHAM will shake off the dust of Machpelah and arise with SARAH by his side. DAVID will come forth with harp in hand. Our village churchyards and family burial grounds will be deserted. All will come, patriarchs, prophets, Jews and gentiles, Christian and heathen, bond and free. And all the good, all around the world, will together hail this redemption's grand consummation, with one proud anthem, whose choral thunders, rolling along the paths of space, will shake the universe with its bursting chorus: "Oh death, where is thy sting; oh grave, where is thy victory?"

The sprig of acacia, which marked a grave, will mark an empty vault, from which the widow's son has arisen, to prove the truth so sacred to Masons—Our Immortality.