

**Grand Lodge  
Free & Accepted Masons  
Of California  
Grand Oration 1923**

**Grand Orator  
John L McNab  
“Masonry In Its Relation to Citizenship”**

Brethren of the Grand Lodge

I am compelled, at the outset, to ask the indulgence of this enlightened audience. By way of preparation for this event I have glanced back over the events of my predecessors, covering a long period of time. No one could hope to excel the beauty of expression in which the various Grand Orators clothed their thoughts or surpass the eloquence in which their appeals were made. Experience, however, has shown me that I am ill fitted for the task of discussing purely moral subjects. As time has ripened I have found myself irresistibly moving with that ever-increasing group who believe that the sphere of their greatest usefulness is to be found in solving the problems of the present, and preparing for those of the future. The past is full of interest but the present and future are filled with inspiration. Therefore, I trust I may be forgiven if, in the brief hour allotted to me, I discuss some of the controlling things which confront us as American citizens.

As nothing is so vital as the happiness of mankind, so there is nothing which so vitally concerns Masons as the process of Government.

Benjamin Franklin, quaint philosopher and orator of common sense, in moving the adoption of the United States Constitution, said: "There is no form of government but may be a blessing to the people, if well administered. It can only end in despotism when the people shall become so corrupt as to need a despotic government, being incapable of any other."

I propose therefore, in this brief address, to consider the indebtedness of the Government of the United States to the Masonic brethren who assisted so immeasurably in creating it, and the corresponding obligation of the members of the Craft to support and defend against every assault the Government which their forefathers called into existence.

The American form of constitutional government is very largely the result of the labors of a group of men who were members of the Masonic faith.

The Declaration of Independence which pealed like a bugle note against oppression was the handiwork of Thomas Jefferson, a Master Mason. That document is a declaration by Englishmen against Englishmen of the rights wrung by the barons of England from stubborn old King John on the banks of the Runnimeade.

We scan, with conscious pride, the names of the courageous men who signed it. From the bold and commanding signature of John Hancock to the last name, all of the fifty-six signers but four were members of the Masonic craft.

As we pass into the Revolutionary period we touch elbows at every turn with men active in Masonic life. Paul Revere stood through the chilly night, across the river from the old North Church, anxiously scanning the horizon and waiting for the signal which was to send him on his journey. Catching the gleam from the lantern in the belfry of the old North Church he leaped to his saddle and galloped down the country road, his horse's hoofs ringing through the clear New England air. As he passed from homestead to homestead he shouted the same cry: "To arms ! To arms ! The enemy is on the march."

We cannot escape a thrill in recalling that as he rode he wore in the lapel of his coat the insignia of his Masonic Lodge.

When General Joseph Warren fell on the slippery and bloodstained ground at Charlestown Heights he was the Grand Master of the Masons of Massachusetts. It has been said so often that it has become a truism that the Boston Tea Party was little more than an adjourned Masonic Lodge.

But why go on? Clinton and Livingston, Rittenhouse and Jefferson, James Monroe, Samuel Adams and Patrick Henry had all in humility of spirit, joined the Masonic faith.

Every officer of the Revolutionary Army, from the rank of Major to that of Commander-in-

chief, was a member of the Masonic fraternity, save one—Benedict Arnold. Who can say, after this stretch of time, that had this traitor to his country's cause joined with his comrades in listening to the moral precepts of Masonic teaching, he would not have spurned the offer which made his name the synonym of treachery and dishonor in American history ?

The convention which framed the American Constitution was perhaps the noblest group of men ever convened for a similar purpose in either ancient or modern times. Its meeting place was Old Independence Hall in Philadelphia. It is one of the strange paradoxes of history that the group of men who erected the frame of a government based upon obedience to law, met in actual disobedience of their instructions. They were called together by a resolution empowering them to amend the Articles of Confederation which had proved their futility as an instrument of national government. They met to amend a charter and they ended by destroying it and creating an instrument of government, new in the annals of mankind.

James Bryce, author of the "American Commonwealth" has said that the Constitution, which may be read aloud by an American school boy in twenty minutes, contains more wisdom than any document ever penned by the hand of man.

Of that body of fifty-seven patriotic statesmen all but three were Master Masons. At the head, by common consent, sat George Washington, the founder and the Master till death of his Masonic Lodge in Alexandria.

There was Alexander Hamilton, alert, sharp featured, keen of intellect, metaphysical in his reasoning, a master thinker among men.

There sat James Madison, justly termed the Father of the American Constitution, whose luminous notes, laboriously kept, form one of the most imposing monuments of American history.

And lastly, there sat in quiet and contemplative dignity, the quaint old seer, diplomat and statesman, Benjamin Franklin.

This convention had, after six weeks of tempestuous debate, reached the brink of impending dissolution. This sweet tempered old Master Mason rose to move that the convention open its deliberations with prayer:

"The longer I live the more do I become convinced" he said, "that Almighty God rules in the affairs of men. And if it be true that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, how can an empire ever rise without His care?"

Without injustice to other faiths and other creeds; without intolerance and without selfishness, are we not justified in declaring that the American system of Government — nay the American Republic itself — is largely the creation of men whose moral education, whose faith in God and man, whose spirit of comradeship in hours of darkness, whose spirit of prophecy to penetrate the future and to rise above the tumult of the present, were nurtured, stimulated, developed under the mellow glow of the lights which surround a Masonic altar. And if this Republic owes, in large degree, its origin to the work of the members of our Craft; if its infancy was nurtured in the cradle of Masonic motherhood, shall we, who are their successors in the same faith, stand heedless by and allow our form of government to go undefended against the assaults of those who would first weaken and then destroy it?

The period following the Great War has been a period of national and international brainstorm. Governments have been overthrown, kings have lost their crowns, laws have lost their power to command respect, and the emotions of the people everywhere are in a state of flux. Hunger respects neither king nor country. The chaos left by the great struggle has afforded an opportunity to those who would undermine the integrity of our institutions. Taking advantage of the universal discontent the radical strikes at Government as the only thing which fetters him. He knows neither the cause of his discontent nor the remedy for his wrongs; therefore he attacks the nation.

Europe is in the grip of communism. The radical, having overrun the war-torn countries, turns his hungry eyes toward America.

Here is the dream of his future conquests. Can he but beat down the civilization of the Anglo-Saxon and the Celt his cup will be full.

This American civilization is the one great obstruction to his world—wide dominion—it is the barrier against which he has torn with his bony hands and gnashed with his teeth in a furious effort to break in. Against the gates of the United States the surging hordes of European radicalism have beat thus far in vain; but they will return to the struggle again and again. Defeated here, they know that the world is not to become their conquest; triumphant here, there are no other . worlds to conquer.

There are 1,500,000 radicals already within our boundaries, clamoring for a chance to a communistic state, for the abolition of private property, for the end of representative government, for the overthrow of the Republic planned by our Masonic fathers, for stark-naked confiscation of our property won by the toil and sweat of centuries.

This host of radicals has, for the dissemination of its propaganda, 400 magazines and papers, mostly printed in a foreign tongue. It scatters its doctrine among 5,000,000 of people. It has spent during the year just closed \$3,000,000 in the sowing of the gospel of revolt and discontent, the propaganda of the Red.

There are fourteen millions of people in the United States of foreign birth. Over three millions cannot speak the English language.

Do not mistake me, I am not here to denounce the immigrant. We the immigrant. What concerns us is his quality. Today we have immigration law which restricts the foreign influx to a limited percentage of the particular race now within our boundaries. This present quota system has but one quality to recommend it—it is a present protection against the wild influx of war-worn refugees from broken countries. But what we are more concerned about than mere arbitrary limits on the number of immigrants is the high quality or the blood that shall be transfused into our national veins. The present system is unscientific. It must be followed by some rational system of selection. We must winnow the wheat from the chaff. And in the process we must see that we get the wheat and Europe retains the chaff. Austria has by her conduct given us a warning of what is in store for us. She denies passports to the industrious and intelligent, the skilled worker and law-abiding toiler. She freely gives them to the criminal and the ne'er-do-well. Let us reverse the process. We will open our doors to the intelligent, the industrious, the law observing. In our consulates overseas or in bureaus specially created we must provide for an investigation of the character of those who seek to enter our national life. Those and those alone who seem fitted to become a part of our civic system, who show a willingness to study our institutions and learn our language, to become absorbed into the active body of our citizenship should enter the gate.

The naturalization laws of this country have been made severe, but none too severe. No man should be permitted to join the great mass of Americans who does not embrace, with earnest faith and genuine understanding, the creed of American freedom.

No man should be permitted to take the oath of allegiance who is unable to convince the court not only that he understands all that an oath implies, but that he sympathetically embraces in its entirety the whole meaning of this system of government.

He must give evidence which justifies us in believing that he will not only abide by the laws of the country, but will understand and appreciate the spirit of our institutions.

The young of America must be educated to revere the Constitution and to study the lives of the men whose genius and statecraft gave it to the world. The schoolroom should be rid of those professors who preach lack of respect for the men who made our existence as a nation possible.

It is not enough for the immigrant to understand the American form of government; he must purge himself of every form of political philosophy which is contrary to the spirit of our institutions or which will endanger our citizenship.

Citizenship which does not come by birth must be molded by education. Education is the special ward of Masonry. Our Grand Master, like others who have gone before, has emphasized the absolute necessity for adequate support of the school systems of the country.

Is it not well for us to impress, not only upon the alien but upon the native born; that nothing which has been possible to any man is impossible to man today if he will but educate himself.

The human brain today is the same brain that has made history from the beginning of time. When Moses led the children out of Egypt under the jealous eye of the Pharaohs; when Abraham bound his son Isaac to the sacrificial altar; when Joshua fought and Solomon builded and sang; when Phidias carved his wonders in marble and Pericles sang the golden songs of triumph in Athens; when Caesar crossed the Rubicon and Cicero pleaded in the Roman Forum; when Attila, the Hun, swept like a simoon from the steppes of Asia and buried all of western civilization under the rush of his cavalry; when Mahomed the Prophet rose out of the desert with the Koran in one hand and the scimitar in the other and swept to the doors of European capitals when Charles Martel, the Hammer, drove back the Moors; when Charlamagne and Charles V ruled over the greater part of Europe; when Mirabeau and Robespierre rode the storm of the French Revolution when Cromwell fought at Marsden Moor; when Columbus braved the mutiny of his rebellious sailors on the bridge of the little galleon; when William Burke and Chatham pleaded the cause of the colonies before liberty loving Englishmen; when Washington accepted the sword of

Cornwallis at Yorktown; when John Locke, author of the Human Understanding; Sir Isaac Newton, discoverer of the law of gravitation, and Napoleon Bonaparte, conqueror of Europe knelt, as they did kneel in humility of spirit at the common altar of Masonry; when Sheridan galloped twenty miles through the Shenandoah and meeting his retreating columns shouted "Turn, boys, turn, we're going back" when Lincoln took pen in hand and said "I must sign it bold and clear for history must not record that my hand shook when I signed the Emancipation Proclamation"—it was the same old brain—no greater, no weaker—than is today possessed by the average American boy of the present hour. All that is needed is education and opportunity, the will to do and the soul to endure. And that education the Masonic craft says the American boy shall have—the liberty under all circumstances to acquire so long as the American Republic shall endure.

The anarchist must be stopped at the outer gate. The preacher of anarchy flees from his broken civilization to carry his poison into our social structure. Anarchy is the hapless child of frenzied wrong and nameless discontent—the blind philosophy that levels what it cannot build and sets the torch at the base of free government. Anarchy is the outburst of the pent-up wrongs of centuries—an infection from the running sores of vanished races; the protest of a tortured past; the wild reaction to the lash of heedless oppression laid, upon the back by-gone ages. It loves no government; it hates all discipline.

Such doctrine, no matter what its cause or whence its source, must be fought, vanquished, rooted out and ruthlessly destroyed. American civilization is the youngest, the purest expression of the ages. The Constitution which made that civilization possible must not be amended out of its original form. It must be obeyed. Amendments have been added to its text. Some there are who always declaim against infringements on their liberties, but excess of liberties must yield to the common good. The only way to get rid of a law that is not popular is to enforce it; if the people find in the end it is not wise they may be trusted to revoke it. That Constitution once written should be obeyed, not in a spirit of sullen acquiescence but in cheerful obedience.

In spite of all cavil and complaint our America is growing better. Macaulay in his brilliant review of history refers to those who look back to a by-gone age as superior to the present; to those who longingly refer to the time in England when a workman had a clean shirt once a month and the honor of women was not safe, at a time when England was truly "Merrie England," when the rich did not grind the faces of the poor and the poor did not envy the splendor of the rich." Who would exchange the comforts and pleasures of our present day for the crudities of yesterday; who would exchange the incandescent light for the tallow dip and the kerosene lamp; the automobile for the cart; the concrete highway for the slippery trail?

The lawless and the dissolute adorn the front pages of the press, but they are not the majority of society. The world is growing better every day. The man who breaks a plate glass window and steals a tray of jewels; who beats his wife and ends in the police dock, who murders his neighbor or burns his home to gain the insurance emblazons the headlines of the daily press. But the calm and law revering millions who educate their children, till the soil, tend the shop and factory, build their homes and earn their bread by the sweat of their brows—these are the imposing and overwhelming majority of the people who, unheralded and unsung, constitute the real soul of our America.

There are single passages from the writings of our statesmen which exercise more influence upon the youth of America than all the statutes of the Union. There are songs written by men whose names have been forgotten that are more to the people than a regiment of bayonets. Some one has said: Let him who will make the laws of a country if I be permitted to write its songs.

Nathan Hale, standing under the tree and waiting for the word of death, throwing his noble brow to heaven and saying: "I regret that I have but one life to give for my country" is better than the best recruiting sergeant in the army. William Pinkney's "Millions for defense but not one cent for tribute" sounds in our ears like the clarion call of a silver bugle.

It is not the innumerable volumes of statutes which tax the capacity of our shelves which makes us law abiding. There are too many laws. The very excess of law breeds disrespect for it. THOU SHALT NOT never made a good citizen.

What then, makes a good citizen? Is it the craven fear that a breach of law will send him to the dungeon? Is it the fear of the bayonet or the lash which causes the cowering figure to skulk in the shadow of a wall which makes him a model citizen?

No; rather is it the wholesome affection for our system of government; the genuine recognition that here men are free and over yonder they are not. It is the thrill that greets every

sight of the sweet old banner that spells protection of home and babies. It is the pride that swells every breast with every recital of our national advancement; t the sob that chokes with every thought of national dishonor or disgrace—this is what makes an American. A great American will be a great American to the end whether there is a single statute in the criminal code or not.

The Masons who helped to found this government required no boastful citizenship. What we want is not noisy citizenship, but thinking citizenship. Amid the clamor of the politician must be heard the calming voice of statesmanship.

In our Masonic lodge rooms, where Masons congregate, must we keep our intelligent citizenship pure. Not that other orders may not faithfully carry out like purposes, but our history, our traditions, impose it upon us as a sacred duty.

During the Dark Ages when culture was destroyed, when women were not safe from ravishment on the open highway, when theft and robbery, arson and murder were but tawdry incidents of the day, when t law was laughed at and license ruled the land of ruins, all that was left of learning and culture was kept alive in the cloisters and retreats of religious orders and in the huts of secluded hermits.

Thus it was that Macaulay said:

"The church has many times been compared by divines to the ark of which we read in the book of Genesis, but never was the resemblance more perfect than during that evil time when she alone rode, amid darkness and tempest, on the deluge beneath which all the great works of ancient power and wisdom lay entombed, bearing within her the feeble germ from which a second and more glorious civilization was to spring."

And so, when communism and Bolshevism, sovietism and anarchy assail us, when ancient landmarks begin to vanish beneath the flood, when crazy theories fill the air and demagoguery rules the land,—then, let our Masonic faith be kept. True to the faith of those who with the vision of the seer founded our government, let our Masonic lodge rooms be the sanctuary for the Ark of the Covenant. Let us make it the haven for the Constitution, for the benefit of every creed and faith.

The wild chimeras, the vague gods of half-crazed nations must in the end give place to the calm reign of constitutional government.

The Republic alone must endure.

And as our Colonial Masons brought it into existence is it not the peculiar duty of the Masonic craft of today to preserve and defend it against assault?

Let us say like Mohammed of old: "Though the sun on my right hand and the moon on my left shall say 'silence,' still will I speak."

Like the prophets of Joshua's time let us stand by and hold aloft the chieftain's hands till the day be won.

Let our country thus baptized by Masonic genius be unto us like the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day which led the wandering tribes of Israel's host through the sterile desert that led to the Land of Promise.

Here, as the Masonic descendants of the eider members of the craft, let us dedicate ourselves to the support of the America they founded; let us pledge ourselves to keep the fire aglow on the altar throughout the bitter chill and darkness of the night until the breaking of the crimson dawn.