

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
Grand Oration 1927**

**Grand Orator
Fletcher A. Cutler**

Most Worshipful Grand Master, Most Worshipful Past Grand Masters, Very Worshipful Grand Officers and Brethren

The Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons within the jurisdiction of California is in annual communication convened. From every section of the State and over the seas, men have turned from their worldly pursuits with their cares, burdens, and trials, and here, within the walls of a Temple dedicated to the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man, they renew associations, exchange fraternal greetings, revive memories and weld into one mighty compact Master Masons who cling to their mother Lodge with filial piety and with a consecration deeply rooted in their affections bestow their choicest gifts of fidelity, trust, and love upon her altar. We are meeting on the far-flung rim of a vast continent, as members of a Craft that had its conception when civilization commenced to broaden, deepen, and expand and even as it tarried on the Atlantic shore for a brief space of time, it is here today marking time until again the onward and resistless march will continue. It is so decreed. It is so written in the annals of time. It was so ordered when on the plains of central Asia the march first began and advanced westward to Egypt and Carthage thence across the Mediterranean to Rome and Greece, over the fields of Runnymede, until it stood on the brink of a mighty deep peering into the lashings of an unknown and uncharted ocean. It is here to rejoice, to worship, to illuminate; and what a history it unfolds! What a tale of unswerving patriotism and constant loyalty to home, country, and a common Father, and through it all we read the story of man enrolled under the banner of Masonry ever pressing on, striving to attain for himself and his fellows liberty and justice, based on a rule of reason, where rank and class would be unknown, where the pure heart, the listening ear, the prepared mind would receive and imbibe lessons of a belief enduring, a faith eternal; faith in the validity of virtue; in the dignity of mind; in the supremacy of law; faith in the essential worth of goodness; in the honor of labor, and the abiding ties of brotherhood; a faith that takes hold upon the earth by the grasp of brotherly love, and the heavens by the hands of an unconquerable hope.

The philosophy of Masonic work is to prepare, educate and train its membership for the higher relations of life. It has faith in mankind. It invites his confidence. It begets his trust. It invokes his loyalty. It believes that the humblest life launched upon the widened sea of humanity has within it the slumbering forces of the constituent elements of a noble manhood awaiting but the touch of a sympathetic soul to arouse and stimulate the inherent qualities of the mind. And this is the purest glory which virtuous ambition can propose. The power of awakening, enlightening, elevating our fellow creatures may, with peculiar fitness be called divine; for there is no agency so beneficent and sublime as that which exerts an exalted sway over human souls. It is the surest test of greatness. We admire, indeed, the energy which subdues the material creation or develops the physical resources of a State. But it is a nobler might which calls forth the intellectual and moral resources of a people, communicates new impulses to society, throws into circulation new and striving thoughts, gives the mind a new consciousness of its faculties and arouses and fortifies the will to a resolute purpose of well doing. Blessed, indeed, is he who speaks with a life giving energy to other minds breathing into them the love of truth and virtue, strengthening them to suffer in a good cause, lifting them to high and lofty ideals.

In the consummation of such earthly triumphs, every simple fruit gathered, every victory won, every sacrifice endured, brings joy and inspiration in the knowledge that it has deepened the glory of the Republic and gathered untold blessings into the universal harvest of humanity.

Tranquility is born of it, so is gentleness, peace and mercy. Chivalric disregard of danger and pain is as natural to it as the lift of the waves when the moon hangs over them. Out of it has streamed an invincible courage into the will in the time of imminent earthly danger. From it has sprung irresistible enthusiasms that have matched and mastered the onsets of power. It has been the stimulant to a heroic consecration which no resistance could daunt or break any more than

human action can scatter the sunshine. It is not from the theoretical, but from the practical teachings and examples in every day associations that the subtlest and strongest incentive comes to that which is august and delicate in virtue. If one had a chance to write a poem for spirits to read in higher realms, to mould the marble into lovely form of ecstasy and passion for them to contemplate; to paint a picture whose beauty should show no pallid tint or tremulous line beneath the searching heavenly luster, with what infinite pains would he strive at his work. No less painstaking, serious, and considerate are the teachings of Masonry in an endeavor to shape and mould the character of those who come within its mystic circle, hear its hymns, prayers and stately ritual, and go hence with their hearts illuminated by the Great Light that rests upon its altar.

The history of Masonry is coincident with the birth of the great ideals that inspired the inventor, the thinker, and the scientist in producing the results of their patient toil and self-sacrifice, results conducive to the happiness and well-being of the people of the times in which they lived. The craftsmen, whose work was reflected in pyramid, monument and temple, were men of genius, art, and skill. They worked with mathematical precision and geometrical exactness. Their labors were unceasing and culminated in the building of that great Temple which was the triumph of operative Masonry. For centuries it stood as a monument to the wisdom, the goodness and the mercy of Him to whom it was dedicated, and there was reflected in its beauty and strength an influence so sacred, a promise so refreshing that it brought to its portals the wayfarer, the toiler and the pilgrim. It was a beacon of light unto the pathway of struggling mortals. To this Temple came man humbly and contritely to worship in the presence of the very spirit of his God. Here man beheld the finished work of the callused, sweating millions of his fathers. Within its broadening limits passion was curbed, cruelty expelled, vice suppressed, and it shrouded with a halo of sacred innocence the purity of womanhood, the nobility of manhood. In each sustaining prop man found a covenant and a promise of strength and support; in each stone a life; in each symbol the story of the meekness and the humility of the sons of men; in each carved column an increasing adoration and an intensified devotion; in each grand doorway the lingering footsteps of a cleansed life; in each ponderous pillar the unsheathed sword of faith and in each upright line and spire a prayer. To this Temple came the conceiving mind and the working hand had amassed in temporal form the treasure of a whole temple, the aspirations and devotions of a great race.

With the destruction of the Temple and its removal from the eyes of men there came another epoch in the forward movement of the human race. There came a day when the sublimest writings of the brightest intellect and the teachings of a profound philosopher held sway; when art and literature stood preeminent; when civilized thought marked the brow of earth's leading men; when mental power and knowledge brought men to the richest field of cultural achievement. Then it was that speculative Masonry appeared and built unto herself an edifice as symmetrical, as imposing, as magnificent as her prototype of ancient days; an edifice resting upon foundations of moral precepts as rules of human conduct; an edifice contrived in the wisdom of the great and the good, supported in the strength of a firm faith, adorned in the beauty of a noble purpose, cemented in the bonds of brotherly love, and crowned by those exalted virtues which quicken the conscience, stimulate the faculties, and lead men with a sacred devotion to those divine ideas which bring a perfect understanding to all mankind.

The pages of Masonic history are illuminated by the names of brethren who, in the early days of its existence, with a fortitude unparalleled, a faith sublime, a heroism superb, shaped its destiny. Under their guidance, as against the forces of ignorance and superstition, as against the shafts of malice, as against the vindictive crusades of vengeance and relentless persecution, as against the bitter attacks and fierce denunciation, Masonry marched on, carrying the torch of hope along the pathway of civilization. It withstood the cry of the doubter and the scoffer and by the sheer majesty of its strength, the purity of its motives and its insistent plea for light, truth and knowledge, at last challenged the admiration, nay—commanded the respect of the world until today, aligned in its ranks may be found the lowly and exalted, the poor and the rich, the young and the old, standing side by side, each the equal of the other, submerging all consideration save that of country and home, they are steadfast, patriotic and unified in their adherence to Masonic principles, Masonic ideals and Masonic traditions. It is meet and proper that we should at our annual communications recall Masonic history, recount its progress, note its triumphs, to the end that those who are devoting their time and talents in advancing its material interests may be compensated with the recital; remembering, however, that this Order does not flaunt its virtues in

the eyes of the passer-by nor invade the highways to boast of its wares, nor seek to pluck laurels of fame for fame alone. The greatest reward, the happiest returns, the most precious results are realized from the ties of brotherly love and the ministrations of relief, as tenderly, gently and kindly its protecting arms are entwined about the helpless and needy, the grief-stricken, the bereft, the young and the aged. What Mason is he who does not walk with an exalted spirit as he comes within the sweet, fragrant atmosphere of Covina, where there is mirrored in the soul the innocence, the purity, the loveliness, of cuddling infancy and budding womanhood—where the musical laughter of children whose hearts expand with love, devotion and gratitude, falls upon the listening ear and visions of home, fireside, and the never-to-be-forgotten lullaby of precious motherhood play upon the heart strings attuned to the mystic chords of an angelic chorus. For them it is dawn; the day breaks; the sun of happiness appears and never sets. There Masonic brotherhood finds its fullest expression and it is ennobled, sanctified and glorified in all its beneficence. Another scene appears. A home set on sloping hills mellowed with the fading rays of evening's glow. The day is gone. The step falters. The frame yields With every rustle of the leaves, the sighing of the winds, the shadows of night, men and women come within the sheltering fold of a brotherhood whose vows live eternal, whose throne is the human heart, where love dwells, charity glows, mercy reigns, and from its sweet influence springs the purest and holiest sentiments of humanity.

Because this order has ever been the champion of human rights, and because it believes that man has attained his highest development under the institutions of a free government, it has preached that patriotism which means undiminished loyalty to the American government. When the first Pilgrim landed on Plymouth Rock he was the living embodiment of all that was written by those who followed and when the Colonists sent the answering cry across the seas, "We believe these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed," Masonry rejoiced, for truth was enthroned, darkness was lifted from the eyes of men, superstition, ignorance and persecution were banished and Masonic teachings were realized and justified. Equality of man was the rallying cry of the revolution. It had been the dream, nay, the asserted right by philosopher, seer and sage, and here in this newly discovered country it was to be a recognized and realized truth. Equal rights, reads the Constitution; equal burdens; equal representation; all equally enjoyed by the dweller in the mansion, the citizen in the cottage, the master in the counting-room, the toiler in the ranks. No written mandate of ruler, no statute of legislative body can take from the humblest of these the God-given rights bequeathed to him by that document, the repository of his civil and religious rights. Let us here then today firmly, calmly and in a spirit of reverence and tolerance renew our undivided allegiance to the American government, believing as we do that its perpetuity depends just as much today on the watchfulness of its citizens as it did in that day when the Minute Men of '76 were at its service. There never was a time in the history of our country when the citizen should be in a more receptive mood to respond to the call of his country and especially its insistence on his exercising the right of suffrage which was given to him under the implied obligation that he would use it in his community, state and nation It should be the proud boast of every Mason within the sound of my voice that he actively participates in the affairs of his country by registering his will at the polls at each election, thereby adding to his own satisfaction of having performed a duty, the knowledge that his presence and act served as a guide and an example to his fellow-citizen. The true patriot is he who takes an active part in the civic affairs of his community. The stability of our government is due to the fact that neither standing armies nor hereditary orders of nobility repress and restrain, but from the rostrum and the pulpit, the newspaper and the magazine, on the street at public gatherings and in the home, a free, full, calm and fair discussion controvert, expose and dissipate dangerous principles and elements. The masses are being so educated and society as a whole so elevated that the destinies of mankind can no longer be changed or controlled by an Alexander, a Napoleon, a Caesar or an ambitious and misguided ruler. We are a young nation measured in years, but we have grown old in experience. It would seem that we had about completed the circle of national perils. We have had domestic war with its horrible bereavements. We have in response to the cry of a suffering and mistreated humanity invaded distant lands, we have recently at a fearful cost of blood and treasure vindicated the freedom of the seas, and the world has learned that our motives were unselfish and not in quest of the spoils of war, but that in every contest on land and sea where

American valor and American heroism have been displayed the object to be served was not to debase but rather to uplift and advance civilization; that wherever our flag is flung to the breeze there may be gathered in full confidence the people of all creeds and nationalities. The crowning tribute to the success of our institutions is evidenced in the feverish desire of immigrants from country for admission into our land. They recognize that in this country of ours there has been reared a citizenship unrivaled in the world for the privileges enjoyed, the opportunity and general welfare impartially distributed. The gateway to such a land and such a government for years was wide open to all. With no discriminating nicety did we examine each and every one knocking at our door and we gloried in and self-applauded the successful experiment of a government that received unstintingly those coming to us with a hope and promise of homes beneath the protecting folds of our national emblem. Our only concern was that they in good faith support our institutions, aid in our development and with a deep consciousness of the blessings of a free government attach themselves and their children to our citizenship. In those dark and threatening days when Americanism was to be tried in the crucible of a bloody conflict, when heart sobs, tears and prayers mingled with the strains of the Star Spangled Banner and My Country 'Tis of Thee, we then discovered that an indifferent and unsuspecting people were harboring in their midst those who were recreant in loyalty. Swift and effective came the remedy from an outraged and awakened people. We say today to the man or woman under whatever name you are masquerading whether it be communist, anarchist, socialist, syndicalist, I. W. W. or Red, if this flag and this country and the administration of the laws by our Courts are distasteful to you then forthwith you shall be deported to a country where you may air your doctrines, light your torch and throw your bomb with all the freedom and license that country may accord you. There is room for but one loyalty, one devotion, one consecration and one flag in this country which in the end shall glorify and elevate liberty, justice, and equality, the Continental unity of the American Republic, the social fraternity and the continued prosperity of the American people.

No less concerned are we with the worldwide problems that the not distant future will bring to our very doors. It is universally conceded that the theater of the world's future events will be on the Pacific Ocean, its waters, its shores and its islands. There, Europe, America and Asia will meet and there the next chapter in the history of the human race will be written. What will be the character of that history? Will it be along the old lines of imperial domination that proved to be the undoing of Europe, checked civilization and spread more human misery over a darkened earth than was ever known before? Will monarch and ruler regard each other with cynical distrust as they hold in their mailed fists the destinies of countless thousands of people who know not where or why their expiring groans? Will power, territory and wealth be the great prizes for which funeral pyres of men will be offered as a sacrifice to human greed and lust of conquest, or will Christianity, civilization and humanity be the harmonizing influences that will bring the nations into an universal brotherhood? However the pacifist may deplore, the pessimist grieve, the isolationist protest, it was foreordained that this nation should have the dominating voice in making answer. It was so decreed at Yorktown when a nation as born, illustrating constitutional freedom in all its magnificence, power and grandeur. At Gettysburg when the shackles that fettered human beings to an infamous bondage were rent in twain. On these shores when the Pacific Coast was protected against foreign proprietorship and reserved as an abiding place for the American people; warders of the western seas. It was so decreed nineteen hundred years ago when, on the fields of Bethlehem while shepherds nodded, toilers rested, flocks browsed, stars shone and angels of mercy and kindness hovered near a babe lay in its swaddling clothes in a manger and out of that peaceful and unheralded scene there was wafted out on the night air a message that ever since has been the hope, the promise, the inspiration of the peoples of the earth. This nation is the incarnation of that message, it visualizes its spirit, it redeems its promise, and it consecrates its faith.

President Lincoln was suddenly ushered into eternity without warning while there was yet upon his lips a prayerful plea for peace in the South, peace in the North, peace in every section of the land that would weld the States into a Union, one and inseparable. President McKinley was stricken down at the Buffalo Exposition surrounded by evidences of the skill and genius of the American inventor, manufacturer and farmer as revealed in the products of the mill, the loom, and the soil. The assassin's bullet reached him at a time when he was giving utterance to a plea for peaceful industrial and commercial relations between the nations of the earth. President Harding assumed the reins of government at a time when there was a crisis in the world's affairs. The war was at an end. The Armistice had been signed. The troops were returning to their soil. There yet

remained for the nations to fully realize the awful cost in life and treasure. In the adjustment of their differences, policies, governments, boundaries and peoples and in the fulfillment of the obligations incurred there were presented problems complex and intricate such as were never presented to man since time began. The lament of the widow and the orphan, the heart sobs coming from homes bereft of stalwart sons and the plea of the maimed and wounded reached his ears and President Harding dedicated his presidential career, aye, his very life to a peace that would tranquilize the world. At the opening of the session of the disarmament conference President Harding stood before the representatives of the nine powers and addressed them in these words: "We, of the United States have but recently returned from the burial of an unknown American soldier when a nation mourned while paying tribute to him, and while the words were not spoken, a hundred millions of our people summarized the inexcusable cause, the unspeakable sacrifice, the unutterable sorrow, and there was ever present the impelling question, can God forgive, or humanity justify? Human greed exacts no such toll; ambition and avarice must be denied it. If misunderstanding was the cause, then it must be banished."

I trust that I will not be deemed presumptuous if here in the presence of this august body I proclaim that from the hearts of three million Master Masons in the United States there comes a fervent reassuring and approving response to these sentiments. "So Mote it be," saith the Lord. "So Mote it be" saith the Mason. Because I believe that this Order will be a helpful, active and forceful factor in that eventful future, I glimpse a vision of this Great Republic standing firm, resplendent and triumphant, the very leader of the Congress of the English speaking peoples of the earth; under its guidance liberty and justice shedding their unspeakable glory everywhere and all the time; plenty streaming from its overflowing treasuries of culture, thought and religion; its mountain tops aflame with the three great lights directing man along the pathway to his true destiny; instilling in the hearts and minds of mankind the softening spirit of fraternity, working out its mission as it was designed until the discordant voices of the nations stilled, the babal straightened, the swords sheathed and under one banner, one ideal, one consecration the nations hearkening to the American drum beat will march amid the breaking of a golden dawn into the paths of righteousness and with bowed heads and contrite hearts listen to the swelling chorus of that message that was wafted out on the night air nineteen hundred years ago when a babe lay in its swaddling clothes in a manger on the fields of Bethlehem— "Peace on earth, Good will to all mankind."