

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
Grand Oration 1948**

**Grand Orator
Judge Albert C. Wollenberg
“The Masonic Citizen In To Day's World”**

Most Worshipful Grand Master, Past Grand Masters, Grand Lodge Officers, Distinguished Guests and Members of Grand Lodge

As Americans and as Master Masons, we gather here in one of the most crucial hours of all time.

Specifically, we are met to transact the affairs of our Grand Lodge, to discuss its problems and consider its program. But in a broader sense we are here to wrestle with far greater and more serious issues.

Now, more than ever before, a harried world needs to see the light by which Master Masons work, to live according to the square, and to keep passions within due bounds.

In many lands statesmen are struggling to preserve a hard won peace. Against terrifying odds they are seeking to tighten the links in the weakened chain of human brotherhood, to guarantee human rights for all mankind, and to make this world a safe place for everyone.

Perhaps we, of the Craft, should set the example. I believe we should.

Ours is an ancient creed. Our philosophy and our teachings have withstood the test of time and tempest. The teachings that are needed for a world at peace are the precepts of Freemasonry; the ideals that make for peace are the principles for which we have worked through generations.

Today mankind is at the crossroads. Jealousies and intrigues threaten to undo the sacrifices of countless heroes who gave their lives that man might dwell in peace, in justice and in decency.

Our great democratic ideology is at stake. Foreign isms threaten us. Only by democracy's preservation can we hope to attain the ideals for which we stand.

Man has harnessed the forces of nature as never before. Unseen power has been seized by the cunning of science and human ingenuity to fashion force not for good but for evil—for destruction and devastation.

Either we must learn to live together or we must resign ourselves to die together. The Atom bomb leaves no other choice.

Freemasonry, we all agree, has paved the way for men to live together in peace, in brotherhood, in truth and in dignity. That is why I believe we Master Masons, in our Lodges or in our respective fields of endeavor, face a challenge greater than in any time that has come before.

The founding fathers of this nation, impelled by a true faith in democracy and many of them steeped in the fundamentals of Masonic learning gave this nation and through it the civilized world, a great human document—one of the greatest ever put on paper. The Constitution of the United States guarantees every person living in free America equality, justice and fair play.

Between the lines of that Constitution and the Bill of Rights therein contained and interwoven in its concept and spirit, are the basic principles underlying our great fraternity.

If the time should come when that code becomes a law of nations— of all nations and of all peoples everywhere—men of every creed and every race and every nation will be following the teachings of Freemasonry.

And that code is nothing more than a common desire to put into practice the basic tenets of decent living that inspired our recent sacrifices on the battlefields. In that struggle we won the war. Now we are engaged in a new fight to win the peace.

To win the peace we must banish selfishness and bigotry and jealousy from the earth. We must make brotherhood a living theme. We must infuse its spirit into the hearts of man. To do this we must achieve unity here at home.

We know that through the years the enemies of Freemasonry have been the foes of human liberty and justice. And we know from history that the forces, which have trod upon the apron and the trowel, are the forces that denied the dignity and the freedom of the common man.

Let us pause to look into events of recent years—within our own fresh recollections—at the work of tyrants across the seas.

In Germany and in Italy, where Dictators sought to impose the integrity and power of the State above the individual. Masonry was one of the first to go. Masonic Grand Lodges and all subordinate Lodges in Germany were dissolved. All of the most important Masonic dignitaries were sent to concentration camps. The Gestapo seized the membership lists of Lodges and looted their libraries, Temples and homes.

The same procedure was repeated by the Fuehrer when he took over Czechoslovakia, Poland, Holland, Belgium and Norway. When France fell, the Vichy government promptly caused the two Masonic bodies of France to be dissolved, their property seized and sold at public auction.

In Italy, Mussolini dissolved Freemasonry as early as 1925.

Communism and its leaders all over the world are today following the familiar formulas of the Nazi and Fascist Dictators. Nowhere behind the Iron Curtain is Masonry or any of its great tenets tolerated. Masonry is opposed to tyrants in whatever form they may appear and no tyrannical despot can live and allow the seeds of freedom to bloom into fruition within the breast of man. This enemy is worldwide; its disciples are to be found everywhere and we in America must as Masons, and, therefore, of course, as good citizens be constantly on guard to defend zealously against this breeder and disseminator of hate and disunity.

Unity, of course, must be our watchword.

The tenets of Freemasonry, teaching brotherhood, justice and equality, upholding human dignity and human rights, were inimical to the tyrannical philosophies of these Dictators, who put themselves above the Great Architect of the Universe and enslaved their helpless citizens.

Masons, of course, were not alone the victims of these cruel persecutions. The Jews were marched off to crematories and concentration camps. Catholics and Protestants suffered next. There was no place for God or for his teachings. Mein Kampf took the place of Holy Scripture.

But there was irony in Hitler's persecution of Free Masons. Unconsciously and unknowingly he paid our Craft one of its finest tributes—a tribute that, despite its source, should inspire us to work with all our power for the principles we teach.

From his own publishing house—from the source of his own Mein Kampf—came a book entitled "Freemasonry—Its World View." In that volume Hitler sought to put the stamp of official disapproval on Freemasonry.

To Herr Heydrich, second in command of the Gestapo, fell the task of writing the preface. After commanding that every new Nazi member must, and I quote—"Confirm by his word of honor that he does not belong to a Masonic Lodge"—the writer put this brand upon Freemasonry, at least, that was the Nazi version of an excommunication, a stigma, and mark of degradation:

"Masonic Lodges are . . . associations of men who, closely bound together in a union employing symbolical usages, represent a supernatural spiritual movement, the idea of humanity . . . a general association of mankind, without distinction of races, peoples, relations, social and political convictions."

For those principles Freemasonry was damned and Masonic Lodges were dissolved.

What creed approaches closer to the pinnacle of American, of Christian ideals? What objective in human relationships could reach closer to the highest aims of society as conceived by present-day civilization?

Today the nations of the world, through the United Nations, are trying to put that same creed into practice everywhere. We in America are lending our fullest moral and political support.

Everywhere men of fairness, of intelligence and of dignity are striving to support our government and through it the United Nations.

From Washington has come, not so long ago, a momentous document, the report of the Committee on Human Rights. In a word it spells democracy, it spells America.

From some quarters of the nation we hear rebellion against its findings but you and I know that its tenets have been incorporated into the platforms of our major parties. And rival candidates for the Presidency are spousing them.

What are those principles so sharply pointed up by the report of the Committee?

Actually what, in essence, do they contain but the same Masonic teachings of fair play, of equality, justice and brotherhood that you and I hear again and again within the Lodge room.

And because they are so identical with our own Masonic teachings, I believe that you and I have a responsibility to see that the Committee's principles become a vital part of our every-day

living.

The Committee has recognized, as you and I know, that within our land work un-American forces, preaching bigotry, spreading lies against one group of good Americans or another.

Their purpose is to gain power by divide and conquer strategy— by turning Christian against Jew, native against foreign born, Negro against white, worker against employer.

But you and I—and the rank and file of good Americans know, that our democratic way of life depends upon unity and that to preserve democracy we must preserve our national unity. And when unified there is nothing on this earth America cannot accomplish.

We must be ever alert to the teachings of the rabble-rousers and the hatemongers in our midst. Whether they rant against the Jews or the Catholics or the Protestants—whatever lies they spread—we must recognize them for what they are—common traitors to America and to the brotherhood for which we stand. As the Late Wendell Wilkie, a champion in the struggle for human liberty and equality, once said:

"Our way of living together in America is a strong but delicate fabric. It is made up of many threads. It has been woven over many centuries by the patience and sacrifice of countless liberty-loving men and women. It serves as a cloak for the protection of the poor and rich, of black and white, of Jew and Gentile, of foreign and native born.

"For God's sake let us not tear it asunder. For no man knows, once it is destroyed, where or when man will find its protective warmth again."

And then there are the words of that widely known radio champion of the rights of men—Kate Smith—who, though a woman, speaks as might any good Master Mason. She says:

"I don't pretend to know all the things that will have to be done for a lasting peace—but I do know something about people.

"It seems to me that faith in the decency of human beings—is what we must have more of, if there is to be a future for all of us in this world. We read in the papers every day about conferences on the best way to keep the peace.

"Well, I'm not an expert on foreign affairs—and I don't pretend to know all the complex things that will have to be done for a lasting peace. But I am a human being—and I do know something about people. I know that our statesmen—our armies of occupations, our strategists—may all fail, if the peoples of all the world don't learn to understand and tolerate each other.

"Race hatred—social prejudices—religious bigotry—they are the diseases that eat away the fibres of peace. Unless they are exterminated it is inevitable that we will have another war.

"And where are they going to be exterminated? At a conference table? Not by a long shot. In your own city, your own church, your children's school, perhaps in your own home. You and I must do it—every father and mother in the world, every teacher, everyone who can rightfully call himself a human being.

"Yes, it seems to me that the one thing the peoples of the world have got to learn if we are ever to have a lasting peace, is—tolerance. Of what use will it be if the lights go on again all over the world— if they don't go on in our hearts?"

The lights. What light is Kate Smith actually talking about?—It is the light by which Master Masons work. The world needs more of it. You and I, in my judgment, can see that the world gets it. At least, all of us can set an example.

Not long ago I read a pledge for Americans—a few crisp and well pointed lines written by a distinguished American jurist and statesman —Judge Joseph A. Proskauer, retired member of the New York Bench. I'm going to read that pledge because it's spirit and its purpose is one that will strike responsiveness in the heart of every Master Mason:

"I will daily deal with every man in business, in social and in political relations, only on the basis of his true individual worth.

"I will never try to indict a whole people by reason of the delinquency of any member.

"I will spread no rumor and no scandal against any sect.

"In my daily conduct I will consecrate myself, hour by hour, to the achievement of the highest ideal of the dignity of mankind, human equality, fellowship and brotherhood."

There is much more that I could say but it's all locked within our faithful breasts—it all sums up in the secrets of a Master Mason,— learned in our travels along the rough and rugged road. And so, I am going to close with the story of the little boy who wanted his father to read him the comic paper—a story that touches closely what I've tried to say.

A father was busily engaged in his reading one evening and he didn't want to be disturbed. Close by on the floor sat his little son. The boy kept pleading, "Please, Daddy, please, read me

the funnies."

The father begged for time, kept asking for just a few more minutes. He wanted to finish what he was reading.

But the little boy was persistent. The father's patience was being exhausted. On a table close to his chair he spied a newspaper, its pages open to a large, complicated map of the world. The man grabbed it and pulled a pair of scissors from the drawer. He called the boy to his side and said:

"Look, son, I'm going to cut up this map of the world. You put it together again—the right way, of course—every bit of it—and when you've done that, bring it to me. I'll read you the funnies then."

The boy was off and his father settled down to what he was sure would be a long and comfortable period of reading without interruption.

But he was mistaken. Soon the boy was back. He had put the map of the world together again—perfectly—piece by piece.

"Son," said the startled father, "you've done it—a hundred times faster than I had expected. You've earned your right to have me read you the funny papers. But—first, tell me,—how'd you ever do it so quickly?"

The boy looked up wistfully and smiled. "This way, Dad," he began. "You didn't notice, but before you started cutting, I saw the other side of that page and on the other side of the map of the world was the simple—very simple—figure of a man. So I just put the man together and when I'd done that, the world was together again, too."

My brethren, let all of us, you and I, dedicate ourselves anew to preaching the creed of Masonry—a creed that will put men together again—and I am certain, as you must be, that once we've done that, the world will be together again too.