

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
Grand Oration 1953**

**Grand Orator
Loys T. Newton
"He Is "In Truth" A Master Mason"**

Most Worshipful Sir, our honored Past Grand Masters, Distinguished guests and visitors, and members of the Grand Lodge of California: ALL MY brethren in Freemasonry

In accordance with the Ancient Charges of Freemasonry and the Law of this Grand Lodge, it becomes my duty, and it is a pleasant one, to deliver at this time, an address on matters pertaining to the Craft.

I would feel remiss in that duty if I did not pay a just and well earned tribute to the brethren who have labored so well to make of this an outstanding year in the annals of Freemasonry: the Grand Lodge Officers and Committee Men who have given unsparingly of their time and ability in the performance of their respective duties.

Too much credit cannot be given these brethren, and in particular our Grand Master, Most Worshipful Arthur M. Warren. Through his many, many visitations to all sections of our vast jurisdiction, participating in Masonic functions of every nature, kind and description he has in his kindly and friendly manner carried the principles of Freemasonry to the brethren, not by precept alone but more so by example. His contribution to the cause of Freemasonry will long endure, and the fruits of his labors will be gathered in all the years to come, for the good deeds a man performs live long after he has gone to that bourne from which no traveler returns. May I say to him, for you, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant of Freemasonry."

At each Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of California we review and evaluate in full the collective results of our individual labors during the Masonic year just passed and prepare for the new year to come.

In keeping with that custom I shall review Freemasonry itself, Masonry's personal obligation to each initiate, the Master Mason's duty to the Fraternity, the principles we have espoused, the doctrine we teach and our potential power to influence the lives and destiny of all mankind.

There will be nothing new, perhaps, in what I say here: but is it not well that we should be reminded, at our Annual Communication, of the great heritage we possess, our duty to preserve it unimpaired and to resolve, each man individually, to labor unceasingly in its behalf?

Here the leaders of Freemasonry are met in solemn conclave: the Officers of the Grand Lodge, the Masters and Wardens and Past Masters from practically every Master's Lodge in California; the men upon whose shoulders rests the responsibility for the continued success or the failure of Freemasonry in our day. for without strong and devoted leadership we fail.

Freemasonry is a brotherhood of free men; men of good reputation and therefore presumably of good character; men with a firm belief in a Supreme Being, a kind and beneficent father of all mankind, who wisely and justly governs the universe and the lives of men: men who believe He has endued each of us with a spiritual entity which will never, never, never die. These four qualifications are basic, fundamental, and a necessity in all Freemasons. He who does not possess them can never be a Master Mason though he be regularly invested with that ancient and honorable title. He is, on the contrary, a cheat and a fraud unworthy of the title bestowed upon him, for he has declared himself to be such a man and accepted on that premise.

There are, as you well know, no religious qualifications for membership in the Masonic Fraternity other than a declaration of a belief in a Supreme Power and a future existence. Those who declare that we deny men membership in Freemasonry because of their affiliation with any specific church are both ignorant and uninformed and they bear false witness. It is not true now; it never has been. Nowhere in our Masters Lodges, or in our Masonic Law, is there any mention of church or creed as a qualification or disqualification for membership. To the contrary, communicants of some churches cannot become Freemasons because the Canon Law of their

church prohibits their uniting with us in the great work to which we are dedicated. These men are not free men and are more to be pitied than censored. A man can be held in spiritual bondage just as sure as he can be held in bodily bondage. To be a free man in the true sense of the word men must be free both spiritually and materially.

For him who is held in material bondage through forces beyond his power to overcome, there is always hope of acquiring freedom, if he be spiritually free; but for him who lives in spiritual bondage through the powers of ignorance and bigotry, and fear of eternal damnation if he disobey the Canon Law in matters social, civil, political or religious, there is little hope; and so he lives in bondage in a free country.

Our founding fathers knew about this from the lessons of history and their own bitter experience in the old countries, when they wrote in Article I of Amendments to the Constitution, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." That basic law is Masonic. Let us ever defend it to the utmost, for we are free men in a free country and from a free church, or we could not be here today.

Freemasonry is most certainly not a political institution despite continuous false reports to the contrary. We know that politics and political discussions of every nature, kind and description are prohibited in our Lodge rooms and in our Temples. And yet, one of the fundamental Principles of our fraternity, the right to freedom of all men, must of necessity be the basic doctrine of any political party which declares that it stands for free men under a free government.

Our sole political duty is to so inculcate our initiates, each one individually, with the doctrine of Freemasonry that they shall never be deceived or misled by the false doctrines or irresponsible political philosophies of misguided leaders, self-anointed saviors of the people, or blatant demagogues who seek to obtain power over men for their own selfish ends.

The primary purpose of Freemasonry, therefore, is to make Master Masons of men whom we believe possess the necessary qualifications and who come to our door of their own free will and accord. It most surely is not just to invest them with the title that we labor in our lodges but rather to make them Master Masons in fact as well as in name. This is Masonry's personal obligation to each novice. This is a labor for Freemasonry that can only be performed in the Masters Lodge.

It matters not how strong nor how efficient the Grand Lodge of California may be, it can only suggest and direct in a general way. The final answer as to whether the candidate becomes just another member or a Master Mason in fact, as in name, is the responsibility of the Masters Lodges, for there, of necessity, he must receive all the understanding of Freemasonry that can be conferred upon him. Once again upon the leadership of the men who are assembled here today depends the fulfillment of that most important Masonic duty.

When one labors in the Masters Lodge, the vineyard of Freemasonry, he devotes himself not only to the building of the Temple of Masonry but more so to the ultimate moral, spiritual and political welfare of all mankind.

He who lives and labors only for his own selfish desires is indeed poor and without honor among men.

To strive to make men better and wiser in the "truth" is the noblest of virtues; and when one labors in the Masters Lodge he exercises that virtue in the fullest measure, for he is working in the service of the greatest institution ever conceived for the enlightenment of mankind.

To enlighten men is to bestow upon them mental, moral and spiritual "light" and this is in "truth" the avowed purpose of Freemasonry, for "light" as all Master Masons know symbolizes knowledge and wisdom and understanding of the "truth".

To impart "light" one must first acquire "light". Let the "light" be diffused in every Masters Lodge that it may shine in the hearts of all Master Masons and thus enlighten the world.

We have stressed the great importance of our labors in the Masters Lodge: the diffusion of "the light", which ever shines in our Lodge rooms, and of the vital necessity to make of each initiate a Master Mason in fact as in name. It is well, therefore, that we should define the title that only we can bestow: determine what constitutes a true Master Mason and evaluate the results of thus attaining our desired objective.

That ancient and honorable title itself is the key to the answer.

In the Operative Craft a Master Mason is one who has perfected himself as an artisan in the building of Temples and great buildings of stone and brick and other material substances, and who controls and directs the workmen in their labors thereon.

At this point you will remember that we no longer labor in Operative Masonry but in Speculative only, using the tools of an Operative Craft to depict the great moral and spiritual lessons of a Speculative art -a symbolic system, of teaching, as old as the recorded history of mankind.

A Master, therefore, is one who rules or commands, who subdues, overcomes and conquers something by physical, mental or moral force. A Mason is one who builds, in the Operative Craft a building perchance; but in the Speculative art in which we engage he builds a man.

Through his acceptance and deep study of our beautiful ritual with its explanatory lectures, and with a full understanding of the ancient symbols of Freemasonry, and most important of all, of the full and true significance of the legend of the Third Degree, the initiate has acquired the necessary moral and spiritual strength to conquer and overcome the sensual and material passions of hatred and envy and greed and avarice, love of power over men, pride of opinion and intolerance toward and hatred of men because of their race or their political or religious opinions and beliefs, and all of the kindred evils which beset men from the cradle to the grave in their journey along the rough and rugged highway of life.

Having attained the victory in that battle he is in fact a Master Mason-master and ruler over himself; and as the Master Craftsmen of King Solomon's time erected a beautiful material temple with the tools of their craft, he has used the tools of a speculative art-wisdom and knowledge and understanding-to build within himself, within his material, earthly body, a beautiful spiritual temple.

He is master of himself, he has builded his temple; and through his knowledge and understanding of the "truth" he has become worthy of the title we conferred upon him.

The "truth" is that immutable or never changing law laid down in the beginning by the Supreme Grand Master of us all for the guidance of all mankind. It is just as certain in its operation and in its cause and effect as the law which governs the sun, the moon and all the planets in their course in the firmament above.

Serene and confident in his understanding of the "truth" the Master Mason walks uprightly before his God and his fellow man. He neither bows his head nor bends his knee in obeisance to any man for he pays that homage only to Him in whom he put his trust, for the "light" from the "truth" shines within him and he is spiritually a free man-a Master Mason.

Through his knowledge of this divine attribute, "the truth", one of the three principal tenets of Freemasonry, he has developed his power of understanding-that power with which men think and ponder and reason, and thus arrive at just and honest opinions on all subjects pertaining to life here on earth and on that future existence which Freemasonry proclaims and teaches. All animals possess the five powers of seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling and tasting; but man, alone, of all the creatures on this earth, ascending the seven steps, possesses the sixth power of understanding; and through the seventh power of speech which, also, he alone possesses, he conveys to future generations his knowledge and his understanding for their welfare and advancement.

Through his knowledge of "the truth" he denies the divine right of any ecclesiastical power, of whatever denomination, to dictate what men shall think, and thus to proscribe all religions and faiths except their own man-created doctrine which may or may not contain the "truth". He demands the right to worship the God of his faith, in the church of his choice, and in accord with the dictates of his own conscience; and he grants this same right to all men, and defends it to the utmost.

He also denies the divine right of king, prince, potentate, dictator, or tyrant by whatever title, to rule and govern men without the consent of the governed, and proclaims and demands the right of men to a voice in the enactment of all laws under which they must live.

From the Master Mason's knowledge of the sad record of education, or rather lack of education of the people when undertaken under the domination of private institutions in the centuries passed, he recognizes that free public schools maintained by public funds are a vital and necessary factor in the successful continuance of any free government, for from the schools

of today come the citizens of tomorrow; and only in the free public schools, uninfluenced by any ulterior motive, can students and pupils learn to think, free and untrammled by the insertion in the curriculum of teachings and doctrines which are not democratic and which have as their objective the perpetuation of a religious doctrine above the true doctrine of free men. He knows that the free public schools are Masonic, and that as such they should ever be protected and defended from those subversive elements that would destroy them.

The true Master Mason knows from his interpretation of the ritual and the legend of the Third Degree that the Great Architect of the Universe created man spiritually free, that though despots and tyrants might enslave his corporeal being, place him in chains, cast him in the darkest dungeon, or torture his body with the whip or on the rack, yet man would still be spiritually free-free to think and to reason and decide, and to commune with his Creator through that spark of the divine wisdom with which all men, sons of a common Father, are endued and who willed it thus. Even in the dungeons and the chains of tyranny he reasoned through his power of understanding that if his God made him spiritually free, he must have of necessity willed that men should be materially free.

From that divine truth comes the great doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man and the right to freedom of all man, kind which we teach in our Lodge rooms now. Upon that doctrine rests all that has been declared previously in this address, for without spiritual and material freedom man is devoid of the power of free speech; he has lost the right to act in accordance with the dictates of his own heart, and his power to reason has been destroyed. He is indeed as an animal with no conception of God, no feelings of brotherhood and no ideals of freedom.

Men lived in terror and bondage and ignorance, century upon century, and only because men who believed in the truth were willing to suffer untold tortures and the agonies of a living death, and to die upon the field of battle by the hundreds of thousands, are we meeting here today as free men and as free Masons.

The lamp of freedom burned dimly in some of the Grecian states about 500 BC, the days of the great philosophers, but it was extinguished and destroyed by the tyrants of the Grecian and Roman Empires. Darkness then prevailed for over a thousand years principally because men were held in spiritual and material bondage through an unholy alliance of church and state.

The lamp of liberty, the light from the "truth", was lighted again in the 13th century on the British Isles. It came to us through the men who learned it there, and here it has grown and grown until its light illumines the world. It is a priceless heritage; and in a closing paragraph, I like to describe it thus:

From the knowledge acquired of the "truth" in the ages past, we live in freedom in the present; and in living as free men in the present, we build for the future and for generations as yet unborn.

It is a sacred heritage given by God to man.

In this day and age it is ours, but only so long as we have the will and the courage to defend and retain it.

Its destiny is in our hands. Let it not be written on the pages of history that this priceless gift from our Heavenly Father to His children, and which means so much to us and to the ages yet to come, was abridged or destroyed in our time.