

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
Grand Oration 1954**

**Grand Orator
Herbert A. Huebner
"Faith Of Our Fathers"**

Most Worshipful Grand Master, and Past Grand Masters, Officers and Brethren of the Grand Lodge of California, and Distinguished Masonic Guests

We are privileged to meet here today because a century and some years ago the torch bearers of Masonic light trudged over the summits of the Sierra Nevada or crossed the Isthmus of Panama or sailed around the Horn, converging in Northern California, the cradle of our State and of Masonry in California.

They were rough and rugged journeys, beset with the hazards of desert, mountain and sea. We owe much to those hardy pioneers who brought enlightened humanity to the shores of the Pacific, and with it the principles of representative government, and the Masonic ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

Today, orange groves and vineyards spread their verdure and bear their fruit where the wild barley once grew shoulder high to a man on horseback, cotton bursts its white bolls where sage brush once thirsted. Roses and lilies bestow fragrance and beauty in the myriad gardens of our homes. Multilane freeways sweep through mountain passes where battles were fought and outlaws held up stages. There are twelve million people in California, now the second most populous state in our nation.

In 1852, when the Grand Lodge of California was two years old, it embraced 22 duly constituted Lodges, and 3 U.D., with a total membership of 655 Master Masons. Recent figures disclose a total of 626-chartered Lodges and 15 U.D. with a membership of about 220,000. While we rank but sixth among the states in Masonic membership, the rapid influx of population has brought within our boundaries many thousands of sojourning Masons who have not affiliated with California Lodges and therefore cannot be counted.

Thus Masonry, as an institution, although lagging at times, has in general paralleled in growth the life of California. Moreover, it has contributed men of stature to the pulpit, the capitol, the bench and bar, the military. Great surgeons, and educators, and industrialists are on its roster. Masons of manifold vocations are abroad in the world, each practicing-to greater or lesser extent-the lessons learned in the Lodge Room.

It is significant that two thousand, and more, men have laid aside the scalpel, the law book, the production schedule, the wrench and hammer, the plow and harrow, and the Wall Street Journal, to convene as Masons here today-devoting a week out of the year to the serious attention of the affairs of Masonry in California. There are some things in a man's heart that the cardiograph does not reveal.

You, my brethren, are far advanced in Masonry. First, you have learned the ritual thoroughly; second, you have progressed toward a mastery of the symbolism of Masonry: third, you have acquired an understanding of the philosophy inherent in it: and fourth, you are living according to Masonic light, some fitfully and spasmodically, others regularly and incessantly!

This reference to the four steps in a man's Masonic life is a preface to the comment that in your hands the Liberty of the people of this world would not be in jeopardy: Equality would be more than a Utopian concept: and Fraternity would replace famine, and hardship, and suffering.

The destiny of mankind is the deep concern of Masons. We are descended from the same stock, partake of the same nature, and share the same hope. That hope comprehends Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. We began as one family. Some day we hope again to become one family.

Meanwhile, you and I are traveling for the flick of an eyelash, as measured against eternity, down the long corridor of time where the footprints of past generations are scarcely

discernable-footprints made by weary men who knew only servitude, or at best subjection to the will of the few.

Ancient Greece is said to have been inhabited by five million freemen and twelve million slaves. The vast water works of Rome, and the commercial and military highways, were built by slave labor. The serfdom of feudal England is a dark scene of history. The word "liberty" found rare use in those days of human oppression, although it was present in the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus, tenth verse, which I will subsequently quote. Mankind lived in political and philosophical chaos. Hammurabi's code of laws had been lost in the dust of forgotten time. The Ten Commandments were unknown to the many, impotent in the hands of the learned. Imprisonment was haphazard and at the caprice of the powerful.

Out of these intellectual and moral mud flats finally emerged in England a writ issued by a judge to bring before him a man to determine whether there had been illegal confinement. That was the Writ of Habeas Corpus.

The principle of that springboard to freedom was soon affirmed in the Magna Carta issued by King John in the year 1215 under the compulsion of his barons.

Among the many clauses in that Great Charter, the following have particular significance to us:

"No freeman shall be taken, or imprisoned, . . . except by the legal judgment of his peers or by the law of the land.

* * *

"To no one will we sell, deny, or delay right or justice."

Another clause provided that all persons are to be free to come and go in time of peace, except outlaws and prisoners.

The Great Charter began to illuminate the life of mankind but at times the lamp was nearly extinguished for lack of supporting fuel.

Four hundred years later we see a handful of pilgrims tossing in a small vessel on the high seas sailing westward, composing and adopting a code of laws for the colony to be founded by them, to which laws they promised "all due submission and obedience." That was the Mayflower Compact, the first of the great American documents defining the principles of freedom by self-government.

The other four which I commend to you are the Declaration of Independence, The Constitution with its Bill of Rights, Washington's Farewell Address, and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. The cornerstone of them all is the principle that Liberty is an unalienable right.

Between the date of the Mayflower Compact and the publication of the Declaration of Independence, four Lodges of Freemasons in London formed themselves into a Grand Lodge.

It matters not whence they came. The early history of our Order is not accurately known. It may be interesting to speculate as to what we derived from the ancient mysteries, how the legend of King Solomon's Temple found its way into our ritual, and whether the Essenes contained the germs of Freemasonry. We can read with interest, but not much profit except the benefit of perspective, about the Roman Collegia, the Guilds of the Middle Ages, and the Cathedral Builders.

Many of our brethren with the speculative mind have poured from one vial to another, ephemeral fluids distilled from the past. Occasionally a drop will glow with prismatic radiance to renew or reveal some fact or philosophy. But in the end we return to the ritual and the form of organization of Freemasonry as established by the brethren in England and which are the foundations upon which this Grand Lodge is erected.

Those four Lodges in London were numerically insignificant against the population of even the City of London. One-fifth of the population was composed of beggars and paupers. Labor had no rights worth mentioning. Corruption and brutality scourged the city. Executions for crime were a favorite public spectacle.

Yet through those Lodges funneled the moral philosophy accruing as the high tide of five thousand years of human struggle! Those Lodges and their offspring conditioned men by

inculcating in them the principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, to become the founding fathers of our nation.

They were Masons who declared to the world of 1776 "these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among them are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

They were Masons who framed our Constitution to "secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity."

It was a Past Master of a Lodge in Virginia, who said in his Farewell Address:

"Interwoven as is the love of liberty with every ligament of your hearts, no recommendation of mine is necessary to fortify or confirm the attachment.... The independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint councils and joint efforts, of common dangers, sufferings and successes."

Washington's heart was filled with grief for those who had died in freedom's cause, and lay buried at Lexington, at Valley Forge, at Yorktown.

Was he given the vision to foresee the graves on the field of Gettysburg, at San Juan Hill, along the Western Front, in the Argonne Forest? Did he realize that men would die for Liberty at Pearl Harbor, Bataan, Anzio, on the Normandy Beach, on Iwo Jima, and Okinawa, in the far-flung Islands of the Pacific, and in Korea?

Even as the gates of the tomb closed upon the remains of our Masonic brother and first President, his last will and testament revealed a startling inconsistency in the thinking of men. Slavery of the Negro had been accepted practice on the theory that Negroes were chattels. Washington by his will, provided for freedom of some of the slaves he owned and for humane treatment of the others. Thus, as he contemplated the end of his earthly days, he drew a design on the Trestle Board which Abraham Lincoln although not a Mason, but a student of Masonry, understood and followed sixty-odd years later. Half the nation, which had been conceived in liberty, refused to acknowledge that the phrase "all men are created equal" included the Negro slaves.

"Now," said Lincoln at Gettysburg. "we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure." By force of arms and the will of God the nation survived, and liberty transformed 3,000,000 chattels into human beings.

What is Liberty?

At the time of the Revolution, liberty meant freedom from tyranny, from serfdom, from taxation without representation, from compulsion in religion. It meant the right to representative government, the right to worship in the church of one's choice. to work together, pray together, sing together.

It still means that, and more.

It means, in the words of Ex-President Herbert Hoover that "the individual is free to choose his own calling, to develop his talents, to win and keep a home sacred from intrusion, to rear children in ordered security. It holds he must be free to earn, to spend, to save, to accumulate property that may give protection in old age and to loved ones."

This land of liberty can spread a montage on the wide screen of your memory that is indeed fabulous: See worshippers in cutaways entering the fashionable churches on the avenues, while plain folks tread the sawdust aisle in Billy Sunday's tent-laugh at the hilarious kidding of the Supreme Court in the musical comedy "Of Thee I Sing," and another day thrill to the martial strains of Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever"-try to spot among the mothers of today the flappers of the '20s, it's hard to tell them from those who were cloistered debutantes- watch two All Americans smack leather on the gridiron while thousands cheer, and try to pick the one who is the rich man's son-.

Under our Constitutional System, with liberated minds at work fueled by incentive, the greatest era of invention known to the world has unfolded during the past half century. It has brought comforts and opportunities beyond compare, and beyond the per capita possession of any other nation! Automobiles for the masses, power tools for the craftsman, power appliances

for the housewife, more bathtubs, more radio and television sets, than the oppressed peoples of the world know exist.

All this being factual, you ask, why dwell upon the subject? Because, my brethren, complacency endangers our way of life. Our American System is still on trial.

Early in our political history, the spoils system threatened our "government of laws and not of men," and ever since, upon occasion, has deprived us of the best in men and minds.

Because free men are not all honest men, we have paid for appalling betrayals of public trust.

Because free men are not all altruistic men we have suffered the encroachment of political tyranny, especially under the excuse of emergencies.

Because all free men are not all fair men we have witnessed economic tyranny as the result of greed for wealth.

These internal encroachments on our American System do not provoke us to abandon it, but should activate us to renewed vigilance against recurrence!

External alternates to our American System have been known by various modern names since the days of Feudalism: Bolshevism, Nazism, Fascism, and Communism. They have in common the principle of National Regimentation controlled by Autocracy. They have in common denial of the existence of God.

They are thrust upon a people by defamation of the existing system, followed by an overthrow through seizure or suppression, a surrender of any power exercised by the legislative bodies, and intimidation or suppression of the courts.

They are maintained against an unwilling or uninformed public by manipulation of newspapers and radio and suppression of free speech and free press—all accompanied by portrayals and promises of Utopia!

What a sad commentary it is on the intelligence of many Americans -aside from the question of loyalty-that they are gullible enough to accept and believe such empty promises emanating from the mouths of men who speak in a foreign tongue, who have never uttered a prayer to God, who have never knelt at a Masonic altar, who are hostile to us and everything we have or are!

Let us be thankful that they are a minority in America, but let us never forget that around the world the people in totalitarian states out-number us.

Liberty as we know and live it, has been continually threatened from within and without. The waves of opposition sometimes surge exceedingly high. We, as Americans and Masons, have a solemn duty to maintain eternal vigilance against domestic encroachments and against foreign ideologies repugnant to the liberty of the individual!

I commend to you the words and actions of modern statesmen whose hands are guided by sincerity and justice. You and I may not subscribe to all that is said and done, but we should be grateful that complacency does not prevail.

On June 30, 1954, President Eisenhower declared that the hope of the world lies in peaceful coexistence with the Communists, but added: "I will not be a party to any agreement that makes anybody a slave."

In July this year, Senator Knowland announced that if Red China is admitted to the United Nations he would relinquish his post as majority leader and stump the country for the United States to withdraw. Brother Knowland is a member of a Lodge in this jurisdiction. Whether withdrawal would best serve the Nation is a question I do not pose. The point is that Knowland is vigilant.

Syngman Rhee, President of the Republic of Korea, in a speech in Los Angeles, August 6, 1954, warned that Communists believe they have won the world because they think "America is afraid of war and will not fight."

He continued: "Our eternal symbol must be justice at any cost, because that will lead to liberty, to the triumph of right, and to the peace that we can win in no other way."

The faith of our fathers is not easy of fulfillment. Painstaking has been the labor. Obstacles have beset the path.

We who employ symbols and allegory in our ritual, may appropriately compare the challenge to liberty with the life of the Liberty Bell, symbol of freedom, and symbolic of freedom's struggle. It was ordered from London to celebrate the 50th year of the Commonwealth of

Pennsylvania about the middle of the 18th century. Twice it had to be recast in Philadelphia because of brittleness, before it was hung in a steeple of the State House (known later as Independence Hall). In the recasting, some American copper was added to the original bell metal. The bell bears the inscription from Leviticus XXV, 10, to which I referred: "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof"-words spoken by the Lord to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Once, in the fall of 1777, when the British army was about to occupy Philadelphia, the bell was removed for sanctuary to a church in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and in June of the following year was returned to Philadelphia. It remained sound through the years of the Revolution, the founding of the United States, and the series of Supreme Court decisions authored by Chief Justice John Marshall, Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Virginia, decisions which construed the Constitution in a manner to reinforce the Temple of Liberty.

On July 8, 1835, the Liberty Bell with its deep-throated solemn tone joined the rest of the Nation in mourning the death of John Marshall. In the midst of its funeral tolling it cracked and became silent, as though the price of Liberty had imposed too great a tension on its brittle walls. Thus, Marshall and the Liberty Bell ended their active service to the cause of freedom. But as Marshall can never die in the hearts of his countrymen, so the Bell remains as mute evidence of a glorious achievement. Mute, except on June 6, 1944. That was D-Day-when the allies invaded Normandy. Do you remember the radio broadcast that day when the mayor of Philadelphia tapped the Bell with a rubber mallet, seven times, once for each letter of the word Liberty? Like a voice from the past, sepulchral, it stirred the nation. It reminded us of the faith of our fathers.

The spire of the Old North Church in Boston, another symbol, has met twice with accidents. The last one, which occurred late this summer in a hurricane, was serious and will require substantial rebuilding.

The rebuilding will be slow and tedious. And when we turn to the destiny of mankind, we likewise confront problems for which there is no quick solution.

Until the principles of Freemasonry pervade all people, liberty as a universal privilege and condition will not be achieved. There are those whose lust for power, thirst for riches, and diabolical egotism will continue to block the path of liberty, both at home and abroad. The force of justice imposed by free nations may be required for survival, ever bearing in mind the ultimate goal of brotherhood.

Without minimizing our desire for a brighter and better world we must also be realistic. Major General William F. Dean, Commanding General of the United States Sixth Army, only last month appealed for public awareness to the tick of the Kremlin clock. He urged preparedness before war-to avoid war. He sardonically referred to his three years of "peaceful coexistence" behind the Soviet line of departure in the Orient. He said that he had all the faith in the world in his ability to keep from biting a rattlesnake, but he wasn't so sure about the rattlesnake's faith in his ability to keep from biting him. So the General picks up a club whenever he sees one-just in case the snake's faith isn't as strong as his!

Chief Justice Earl Warren, speaking at the dedication of the American Bar Center, in Chicago, on August 19th, said: ". . . we give notice to all, that in the world struggle between the forces of freedom and the godless totalitarian state, we rededicate ourselves to the principle that God's way is our way."

That pronouncement by our eminent Past Grand Master epitomizes, in my opinion, the duty of Masons in the days and years before us.

It is heartening to realize that the torchlights of Masonry are burning in ever increasing numbers. May they never falter. Old Lodges are building new temples. New Lodges are being constituted. There are almost as many Lodges now in California as there were Master Masons in 1852. It was at one of the ceremonies of constitution during the year in a coastal town of California that the wisdom, strength and beauty of Masonry impelled me to burn some midnight oil and express in verse the events of that evening and some Masonic sentiments for use the following night at another ceremony, in the San Joaquin Valley. I give you those lines, my brethren, as my closing thought:

At eight last night near Morro Bay,
A group of Masons met, to say
A new Lodge named Estero,

Which is Spanish for a bay,
Was duly constituted.

Where rolling surf its music played,
Fond memories their thoughts portrayed.
The brethren there were true, and good.

Sincere, and frank, and honest, stood
Their Master-a mechanic by profession,
Who cured the ills, of local engines of combustion.
A Brother schooled in farmer's chores
Of tractor, rake and harvesters;
Whose skillful touch in daily time
Transformed that night in face sublime.

And now, to the Valley of the San Joaquin,
And the baby Lodge of Mineral King,
In a land once claimed by the rifle's ring,
We Masons turn our thoughts.

Grand Lodge opens and convenes
To Constitute a Lodge, it seems,
Of Master Masons true and right,
By dispensation 'til tonight.

At the gateway to Sequoia,
In the City of Visalia,
Where Masonic lore is very old,
Welcome to Masonic fold.

Brethren all, may I entreat you:
Noble thoughts and acts display
That our Order in its way,
May show the World, that in this day
Of strife and discord and contention,
There is a force with no dissension
In its ranks.

That temperance is an attribute
No good man should e'r refute,
And that fortitude is a strong man's way
Of advancing truth and men to sway
Toward prudence, and the broader line
Of Justice and God's law divine.

And so, my brethren, in this hour of tension
Let us, in our Lodges, mention
The things that builders knew
Of square, and compass, and plumbline true
Which fashioned ashlar, and hearts anew,
For that task we now must face
To make this World the kind of place
The faith of our fathers held in view!