

**Grand Lodge  
Free & Accepted Masons  
Of California  
Grand Oration 1957**

**Grand Orator  
Ralph H. Head  
"Freedom's Holy Light"**

Most Worshipful Sir and my Brethren in Freemasonry

We are living in the greatest age in the history of the world, a time of great hope and adventure. If men can successfully retain their freedom and their inalienable rights they may yet advance beyond the horizon to a new age, an age in which poverty and famine begin to disappear and new and better standards of living emerge for all people, an age when water converted from the sea will make desert lands productive and when minerals and chemicals will be produced in abundance beyond man's present imagination.

It seems opportune to look toward this brilliant horizon at the conclusion of a year in California Masonry marked with progress, planning, and growth. It is an especially appropriate time because our Grand Master, Most Worshipful L. Harold Anderson, represents both in his thinking and in his profession the prophets of the new era of peace and scientific achievement.

Before men can attain this goal they must first adopt and accept without uncertainty or doubt and without equivocation certain principles of integrity, morality, righteousness, and honor. Before men can realize the dream they must learn the importance of liberty and the worship of God and that the two are inseparable.

People who worship God realize the unique importance of the individual. They resist the tendency of government to violate the rights of the individual. For if men do not practice the virtues of honesty, generosity, charity, and brotherly love they cannot be free. Unless men have an unfaltering belief in God and an inextinguishable love for freedom the bright day of abundance and peace may never be within their reach.

It becomes apparent then that there is existing and has existed for centuries, perhaps far back into the dim past of unrecorded history, a great moral force dedicated to freedom, faith, and morality. This great force, this great teaching, is Freemasonry. It is not set forth in text, books, published as a creed, imposed as a dogma. It is organized within the structure of the Craft. In its rituals, in its symbols, and in its lectures. This is the secret of Freemasonry. This is the secret of its growth.

Somewhere in the dark past of antiquity building with stone had its beginning. A primitive man may have placed one stone on another at the entrance of his cave. He may have hidden a possession under a carefully laid pile of stone. But whatever he built, and whatever man has built thereafter, the motivating force has been the quest for security, for protection against the weather, for freedom from fear of the unknown. It does not appear as a mere coincidence that the art or even the act of building has from almost the beginning of civilization been closely and understandably associated with the search for freedom.

Somewhere in the early dawn of history there came into being groups of men who became skilled in the art and science of building with stone. Even by the beginning of the age of recorded history there were ancient ruins of such magnitude that only men of considerable skill in engineering and geometry could have erected the original buildings. These builders—these masons—employed wood, and stone, and chemicals and fire. Their work was often tricky and dangerous. Only an expert, a trained and qualified man, could be entrusted to produce finally that which was useful and beautiful and which would stand the test of time.

How were these men educated thousands of years ago when there were no printed text books or trade schools or seminars or the publications of scientific papers? All evidence points to the fact that knowledge was accumulated by men who organized themselves into guilds or clubs according to their craft or profession. The building craft was called masonry. To enter such a craft a youth had to start as an apprentice and then prove himself willing to be trained and educated over a long period of time by the master workman.

Freemasons, men who worked with and carved freestone, instead of being bondsmen, were free to move where their work demanded. These Freemasons and not the craft in general founded and fathered that which ultimately developed into the fraternity of which we are a part. As they moved to the site of a new community they first arranged homes for their families. Then they erected buildings called lodges. These lodges had a master and assistants whom we would call wardens. The work they did was dangerous and complex. If an arch or a pillar was not perfectly constructed it might collapse. The masons themselves often worked on the tops of walls or high scaffolding. Their tools were many and difficult to use. For these and many other reasons the building craft insisted that their members should keep their skills and arts and processes strictly to themselves. These were "trade secrets" and Freemasonry became known as a secret organization.

Around the fourteenth century the Freemasons began to make their lodges permanent. A permanent body had to have a charter in order to meet so a scribe drew up a document which became the lodge rules and regulations. Gradually it came about that if a group of Freemasons could get a copy of that document or version they could, on its strength, organize a new lodge.

During these early times Freemasons probably admitted into their lodges an occasional non-working member, what we would call today an honorary member. As the number of lodges increased more and more non-operative members were admitted. These were called Accepted Masons. They held meetings behind guarded doors, used pass words and grips, emblems and symbols for purposes of identification just as the older craft lodges did in order to preserve the secrecy of the art and science of building.

Such were the Masonic lodges at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Then one day in June in the year 1717 the lodges of London, England, met for the purpose of forming a Grand Lodge which proved to be the Mother Grand Lodge of the world. Out of this came the Grand Lodge system of Freemasonry.

This is Masonry of the past recited according to the best authorities not because its fascinating story is unfamiliar to the members of this Grand Lodge, but only in an attempt to demonstrate how Freemasonry, first operative and then speculative, is completely and inseparably interwoven into the affairs of mankind from time immemorial. If we who stand at the threshold of a new and better world are to pass through its entrance then we must make certain that this great moral force will continue to exert its equalizing benevolent influence in the years ahead just as strongly as it did in the pre-historic period, as it did in the Dark Ages, during the Renaissance and the Reformation, and during the birth of freedom in America.

When men in their quest for freedom turned to the New World they also turned to Freemasonry as a philosophic weapon against despotism in all its forms. The Dark Ages had been times of violence when oppression was the usual condition of society. Unless a man were of the nobility or of the hierarchy of the church he could do nothing without the consent of his feudal lord and master. Under such conditions there was no hope for the weak. But the craftsmen found it possible through their guild system to retain their freedom of movement. At this point Freemasonry became the guardian of the rights of the individual, a role it has continued to play from the Age of Darkness to the Age of the Atom.

When men came to the New World they were faced with problems which their past experience had not equipped them to handle quickly and easily. No longer was it a question of man striving against man. It was man striving against nature. They were possessed with complete freedom to try to wrest from nature those things they desired. Old concepts and institutions which were not adapted to this pursuit were cast aside and the jungle law of the survival of the fittest was again supreme. Work became the passion of the individual. Circumstances of birth did not determine leadership but individual abilities and attainments.

The new land of America provided a tremendous challenge to the European, a challenge both intellectual and physical. Most of the people who had come to America did so because they were dissatisfied with the social, economic, political and religious institutions of Europe. Only those brave enough to break with the past and face the danger of frontier life were able to survive. Those who did were alert and versatile. The new frontier had a constant leveling influence on the lives of the colonists. This stimulated a practical application of brotherhood emphasized by the Masonic fraternity. At last the individual had become important.

Masonic philosophy in America reached a stage sufficient for leadership at the very time and place when the opportunity for such leadership arose. Freemasonry was the only organized philosophic institution common to all the colonies. It drew the leading citizens of the towns and villages into bonds of unity and brotherhood. This made mutual trust, confidence and cooperation possible in working toward the common cause of independence.

From 1733 with the formation of St. John's Lodge at Boston until 1775 Masonry grew rapidly in America and historians point out the great influence exerted by Benjamin Franklin's Poor Richard's Almanac first published in 1732 when he was elected Junior Grand Warden of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania.

The Almanac was a collection of popular wisdom so cleverly phrased that it had a strong appeal to the public. Its recommendations of thrift and industry and the value of the practice of virtue was an exhibition to the general public of the philosophy taught by Freemasonry. The Almanac was published during a period of great activity in Masonic lodges which sowed the seeds of Masonic philosophy in all parts of the Atlantic seaboard. By 1775 there were more than 100 stationary lodges and 50 military lodges.

It would be difficult to determine specifically what influence Masonry played in the Revolution and in the ultimate formation of the Republic. It is not difficult, however, to show that Masons were deeply involved and that they furnished leaders all out of proportion to their number in the population. Masons constituted less than two percent of the population yet provided for one third to one half of the leadership. It seems impossible to conceive of American victory without such men as James Otis, a Massachusetts Mason, who declared that taxation without representation was tyranny, or Samuel Adams, the leader of the Sons of Liberty, or General Joseph Warren, Grand Master of Massachusetts, who dispatched Paul Revere on his historic ride, and then died a patriot's death at Bunker Hill. or Ethan Allen, the Vermont Mason, who led his Green Mountain boys in the successful attack against Ticonderoga, or Haym Salomon, born of a Jewish family in Poland, who spent his personal fortune and died in bankruptcy for the holy cause of freedom.

While it may never have been proved conclusively that Masonic philosophy provided the motivating force in the fight for American Independence, there is no doubt that the early American Masons were almost unanimous in their pursuit for freedom. Without the sympathy and moral support of such distinguished English Masons as Edmund Burke and William Pitt the Revolution might have failed. Masons in France helped to establish the grounds upon which France could intervene on behalf of the American Revolutionists. The philosophy of liberty, equality, and fraternity taught by Freemasonry appealed to soldiers of freedom on both sides of the Atlantic.

Had the influence of Freemasonry only found expression and action during America's quest for independence then the contention that Masons in all ages have been the most forward advocates of freedom may not be well founded. But the relation between Masons and a willingness to fight for the liberty of the people has been well established. Benito Juarez as a Mason and President of Mexico gave his country the most liberal government it had ever had. Giuseppe Garibaldi, Grand Master of Palermo, had an unquenchable thirst for freedom which satisfied itself in France and Uruguay and then resulted in the unification of Italy. Simon Bolivar was a South American patriot, a general, a statesman, and the "George Washington" of South America. Within him the fires of liberty burned strong for he was a Mason.

Presidents and princes, emperors and kings, have been members of the Craft. If Freemasonry celebrates these famous men who have been Masons, it is not out of conceit or even with pardonable pride, but to demonstrate to its initiates by precept and example the universality of Masonry and to show that the true Mason has often been the true soldier of freedom.

A Masonic poet, Douglas Malloch, successfully joined together Masons of all ages in his thrilling words:

"Fine men have walked this way before. Whatever Lodge your Lodge may be. Whoever stands before the door, The sacred arch of Masonry, Stands where the wise, the great, the good In their own time and place have stood.

You are not Brother just with these Your friends and neighbors; you are kin With Masons down the centuries; This room that you now enter in Has felt the tread of many feet For here all Masonry you meet."

With the end of the Revolutionary War there appeared for the first time in its history the opportunity for Masonry to play an important role in the creation of a new economic and social order. The knowledge Masonry had accumulated over thousands of years had taught that the individual seldom gained his liberty as a gift of government. Experience had proved that only through limiting the powers of the government had liberty for the individual been assured. Masons had found that freedom of thought is effective only when the individual has learned to think intelligently. Freedom to form opinions has value only when the individual has learned to determine right from wrong and the true from the false. He has freedom to defend his liberties only when he understands the principles of law which guarantee those liberties.

One hundred and seventy years ago today plus one week there occurred in Philadelphia the most important event in political and social history of the world. Think of that first Constitution Day when George Washington and representatives from the thirteen independent American states signed the great charter written in convention attended by fifty-five delegates of whom thirty-three were Masons. Of these two were Past Grand Masters, two were Grand Masters, and two were to become Grand Masters.

These Masons were the most influential leaders in the Masonic fraternity in America. Since Masonry was the only institution at that time governed by a federal system, it appears conclusive that the principles set forth in the Constitution were not drawn from any source other than those developed through the centuries by the Masonic fraternity. The similarity the government of the United States bears to the government of Masonry both in theory and structure cannot be credited to mere coincidence. These precepts provided for a liberal democratic order in which mankind is led through education to a more equitable and just society, a sovereignty which is the sovereignty of the people, a limited government, local self-government, supremacy of the national government in matters affecting all of the people, and separation of powers into the executive, legislative and judicial.

They formed a Constitution giving the government only 20 powers, and no more, because all history had taught them that government, when it becomes big, becomes tyrannical; it takes away man's freedom, and the writers of the Constitution wanted no part of it. They'd been through that. They wanted a limited government.

After writing this document they met again, and they were still unhappy. They made ten amendments to it: they called this the Bill of Rights. There are some who believe that these were rights that government gave to the people, but they were no such thing. They were ten prohibitions against the government.

They said, "Look, Mr. Government. I have given you twenty powers. Now bear in mind that you can't take away my freedom of religion or press, or speech; you can't prevent my carrying arms in my own defense; you can't stop me from educating my children; you can't stop me from petitioning my government; you can't stop me from writing or speaking. And most important of all, just in case I've forgotten something you can't do, don't assume that power belongs to you. That belongs to us."

The Constitution was based upon the theory of inalienable God given personal liberty that had been categorically proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence. Personal rights were made enforceable by the individual person himself and this was at once the distinguishing feature of the American constitutional system; never before had the individual citizen been legally authorized to enforce his God-given rights against all the majesty and power of his government.

Because man freed himself from domination by government, man has built in America the greatest civilization ever known to mankind, beyond all man's dreams. This was not because of our national resources, not because of wealth or any different intelligence of people. Man freed himself, and his energies, his thoughts, and his inspiration to work out his own salvation in life, to do as he pleases, just as long as he respects the rights of other men to do as they please.

The principles necessary for freedom and the good life came into the world thousands of years ago. They were written in the Ten Commandments that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai. They were perpetuated as Jesus Christ elevated the ancient law and glorified it in the

Sermon on the Mount. They were guaranteed by the Magna Carta at Runnymede. They were preserved through the Dark Ages, the Middle Ages, and the Reformation by groups of men called Freemasons. And when the New World opened up new perspectives and horizons to men who loved freedom is it any wonder that in America there developed a government whose purpose was to preserve the God-given rights of the individual, to keep him free so that he might conscientiously fulfill his personal responsibilities to God and to his fellowman?

Today we must ask ourselves this question: do we still wish to be free and therefore govern ourselves, or do we wish to be made secure by whatever governmental regulations and regimentation are necessary to produce security?

It was Thomas Jefferson who said: "A wise and frugal government is one which shall restrain men from injuring one another, which shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned." This is the principle of liberty and self-government.

A wise and frugal government does not levy complicated and confiscatory taxes on payrolls, thus taking from labor's mouth the bread it has earned.

A wise and frugal government can restrain men singly or in groups from injuring one another without telling them what to sow and when and how to reap it.

A wise and frugal government would punish crime; but it would otherwise leave men free to govern themselves according to the Ten Commandments of God, rather than undertake to force universal compliance with tens of thousands of commands of government.

A wise and frugal government would not engage in 19,000 different businesses or own 21 percent of the land in America.

A wise and frugal government does not, except in times of great emergency and national peril, and pay for its debts out of money which remains in the pockets of its citizens after they have paid their taxes.

Somewhere along the way I have been given a ten-word cycle of civilization. Bondage is the first word; bondage, the place where civilization wakes up. Faith-in-God is the next word, then out of faith comes courage, and with courage men acquire their liberty. Then with liberty eventually comes abundance, the top of the arc. After abundance comes selfishness, and after selfishness comes complacency. From complacency comes apathy, and from apathy, dependency, and after dependency, back, if you please, to bondage again.

Where are we on that cycle now? We have long since passed the point where religious faith gave us the courage to acquire our liberty and the greatest abundance the world has ever known. Where are we now-at selfishness? complacency? apathy? or dependency?

Our Founding Fathers realized that men were free only as long as they would willingly assume the burden of governing themselves.

At the birth of our country the Masonic fraternity furnished morally strong self-disciplined and self-sacrificing men. They knew that freedom demands personal sacrifice and continuous self-restraint. They knew that when government undertakes to provide economic security for its citizens it must take freedom and self-government in exchange. The time may be near at hand when Masons may again be called upon to lead a courageous campaign to save the right to self-government they inherited from their forebears. It was necessary for the Masons of 1775 to use the weapons of violence: the musket, the cannon, and the sword. Today our weapons are more plentiful and more effective: freedom to speak through initiative and referendum, the power of the ballot box, the strength of a free public school, and the knowledge that faith in God, having once produced a free government for free men, can help preserve it.

The preservation of the Constitution of the United States of America is just as much the business of the Mason of 1957 as it was the Mason of 1787. If it were not for the Constitution of the United States neither private business, nor private property, nor private employment, nor private rights, nor personal privacy would exist in this country. Without the Constitution we would all be involuntary servants of the government.

If the United States is ever destroyed it will not be because of someone else's bombs. but because of our own indifference. The spirit of freedom is not dead in this country. It has been ridiculed by the socialists and the communists to the point that it sometimes goes into hiding. It has been unsold to some of our workers in our factories and fields, but since there is a spark left let us breathe new life into it while there is still yet time.

Few are willing to heed the warning today, because the gravy train is running in three sections and the factory whistles are making too much noise. They figure God will save America without giving Him any reason why. But there are green years. new frontiers for America's pioneers. We can, if we will, protect this wonderful land where any man willing to stand on his toes can reach the stars.

The collective force exerted by men of goodwill is fantastic in its power. I well remember years ago when I rode as a passenger on a train across the plains of the middle West. It was winter and slowly snow began to fall. The flakes fell into the hot smoke and exhaust of the engine and were consumed. They fell on the hot cover of the boiler and were licked up in an instant. They fell under the wheels and were destroyed as the train rushed on. What chance of life has a snowflake against sixty tons of steam driven power? Countless millions were hurled aside and destroyed, unwept, and unsung. But swiftly and softly the tiny flakes continued to fall and where a million were consumed a million more leaped to take their place. And soon, in spite of its mighty strength, the great locomotive began to slacken, more and more slowly it moved until with a last expiring burst of power, it stood still, panting and helpless in the whirling white.

As is the power of the snowflake so is the power of collective human thought and action. Light and often alone they strike the engine of ignorance and doubt only to be brushed aside. But one by one these snowflakes of the mind communicate themselves to other men, the crystals of intelligence begin to check the devastations of the enemies of light, until at last the great terrifying bulk of oppression and tyranny and despotism is brought to a halt and become a hollow thing, a phantom, a tale to scare a child.

Our fathers bestowed upon us our liberty at a high price. If we do not defend and protect it and pass it on to posterity, then our distant descendants must, through toil and slavery in centuries to come, retrace the bloody steps which will lead to another era of liberty, freedom, and peace when men will once again be given the opportunity to accomplish the destiny which God in his infinite wisdom planned for them.

Right here and now, in these our times, the question is being decided. May God give us courage to face the task. May He arouse in us the power of our convictions and help us to acquit ourselves like men.