

**Grand Lodge  
Free & Accepted Masons  
Of California  
Grand Oration 1871**

**Grand Orator  
John M. Browne**

MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND MASTER AND BRETHREN OF THE GRAND LODGE

Appreciating the honor conferred upon me at our last Communication, I enter upon the duty assigned with feelings of regret that one more competent than myself had not been selected to frame, from the exhaustless material that Masonry affords, an address worthy of the subject, worthy of the appointment of the Grand Master, and worthy of the dignity of this Grand Body. This expression is warranted by a perusal of the varied discourses heretofore presented you, wherein historical re-search, logical acumen, and practical deduction are eloquently portrayed, and the perfection of prose made poetical in the impassioned language of the lamented. STARR KING.

Our theme is Masonry, its origin, object, and effect.

Of its antiquity. Masonic literature is replete with theories, ingenious and plausible, if not convincing. PRESTON traces the foundation of Masonry from the commencement of the world, having a being co-existent with the origin of symmetry and the revelation of harmony. Even the learned Doctor OLIVER reverently asserts the Great Architect of the Universe to be the founder of our science, before His creation of the globe. Advancing in this theory we learn that ADAM, in the worship of his Maker, was taught Masonry; that it constituted his chief happiness in Eden; and became his only consolation, when, yielding to the seductive sophistry of the mother of all Masons, he unhappily fell. ANDERSON, in support, introduces CAIN, in the application of the knowledge acquired from ADAM, as the builder of a city, it being the first practical exhibition of operative Masonry. Although the race of CAIN, following his example, apostatized and degenerated proportionally, yet a few of his immediate descendants retained a sufficiency of virtue to enable JABAL to invent the use of tents, JUBAL music, and TUBAL CAIN the art of working metals. Masonry, however, was finally given up by this unfortunate people, but was promulgated and enhanced by SETH, who, in association with virtuous men, formed assemblies and established a system purely theological, over which ENOCH was installed as the Grand Superintendent.

Leaving the theory of antediluvian Masonry, continued by NOAH and his descendants, we follow the classical ABNOLD in his endeavor to fix the origin of our science, or, by preference, to make it, in a degree, the successor of the mysteries of the ancient Pagan world—finding an agreement in the mysticism that wrapped up in a veil of allegory every dogma of philosophy, every tenet of theology, and every maxim of morality, with speculative Masonry, as synonymous with progression or civilization.

The Osiris and Isis of Egyptian mythology, separate from mysticism, poesy, and divine attributes, appear as two human characters, possessed of intelligence and goodness, and consequent power to elicit attention and obedience from the wild and uncultivated barbarians, and to elevate them from savagery and ignorance, to social order, divine worship, and legal observance.

ORPHEUS, the poet, physician, philosopher and priest, after listening to the instructions of the Egyptian sages by the tomb of Osiris, sought to reform society by an elevation from the rudeness and solitude of its primitive state, in the establishment of a secret order, which inaugurated a civilization that attracted the attention and admiration of the world, and commenced the social regeneration of Greece. These mysteries came to be known, in subsequent ages, as the " Eleusinia," and for the space of near two thousand years were the pride of Athens. CICERO makes the civilization of mankind one of the most beneficial effects of the Eleusinian institutions.

"Musaens first, then Orpheus civilize,  
Mankind, and gave the world their deities.  
To many Gods they taught devotion

"Which were the distinct faculties of men."

PYTHAGORAS, the philosophical mystagogue, initiated into the mysteries of Isis, ordained his secret brotherhood and taught his doctrines in a symbolical form, in harmony with politics, religion, and construction of society—effecting his realization of a civilized community, and ultimately achieving the social regeneration of Greece. The Pythagorean mysteries embraced secrecy, mutual aid, social communion, intellectual cultivation and scientific progression, and impressed its influence on following ages.

ODIN, the great mystagogue of the North, instituted sacred mysteries to stimulate his people into activity; to elevate them, morally and politically; to render them progressive; and to insure a civilization that gave to Scandinavia a new existence, and, from obscurity, obtained for it position in history.

The Cabirian mysteries of Samothrace, Mithras of Persia, and the Druids of Britain and Gaul, demand mere mention.

It serves our purpose to show that the rites of Heathenism, so varied in form, and yet agreeing in object and effect, were undoubtedly the invention of legislators, and of great advantage to the Pagan world. A review of the ceremonies employed and doctrines taught evinces clearly that, in these institutions of antiquity, the precepts of humanity and morality were warmly recommended; that the initiated solemnly bound themselves to practice piety towards the Gods, justice and charity towards their fellow men, and gentleness and tenderness towards the inoffensive part of the brute creation; and that this ancient brotherhood were constantly progressing to a higher civilization that finally developed a society of architects and engineers—the Dionysiacs of Asia Minor, whose existence in Tyre, at the time of the building of the Temple, is commonly admitted, and of which it is reasonable to suppose that HIRAM, the widow's son, was a member.

Generally acceptable is the theory that dates the origin of Masonry at the building of King SOLOMON'S Temple—a belief pleasing to the majority, in view of the magnificence of the structure, the wisdom of its builder, and its dedication to the Eternal God, who manifested His presence by a protection and approbation from its inception to its completion and sublime consecration.

From the Temple to Judea, Masonry is traced to the Essenian Fraternity, an extraordinary association of speculatives and operatives, existing early in the beginning of the Christian era, with many doctrines and ceremonies resembling those of our Order; and from this remarkable brotherhood some assert the descent of Masonry to modern times.

The earliest direct historical connection is found between Masonry in Europe and the corporations or colleges of Roman Architects and Builders, instituted by NUMA POMPILIUS nearly seven hundred years before the Christian era. Under the peculiar privileges granted by NUMA, this fraternity prospered for about twelve hundred years, when, falling under the displeasure of the Emperor THEODOSIUS, by his decree, they ceased to have operative life. During their prosperity the order was introduced into Britain, but it was not until the commencement of the seventh century that we find the Craft employed in the erection of stately cathedrals at London, Canterbury, Rochester, and other places, with evidence that a congregation of the Fraternity assembled at York, on the summons of Prince Edwin, in the tenth century, and that the erection of an abbey at Kilwinning, in the twelfth century, gave establishment to its Lodge; at which points respectively the general meetings of the brethren were held, and from which emanated the parents of present English and Scotch Lodges.

As the first crusade for the recovery of the Holy Land occurred in the eleventh century, the theory that introduces Masonry into Europe by Knights Templar returning from Palestine is entirely untenable.

The history of the Fraternity upon the continent of Europe is not as satisfactory as that of Britain, until the beginning of the twelfth century, when it monopolized the building of the great churches and castles, and enjoyed especial privileges under the patronage of pontiffs and sovereigns, whose desire for architectural grandeur occasioned corresponding emulous rivalry. At this period the Fraternity appear in history under the name of Masons; and, in consequence of their acknowledged right of self government, their exemption from taxes and ordinary allegiance,

they were soon distinguished from the common builders by the distinctive appellation of Freemasons.

Immunities thus possessed afforded an independence and prosperity before un-known, and rendered attractive a society composed exclusively of operatives to a degree that membership was solicited by many not builders, but who, by fortune or their own merit, could impart an advantage by their co-operation, and thus gained admission under the name of Accepted Masons.

In comparing the social organization, ceremonies, and principles of Masonry with those of the guilds of the middle ages, and the Stone Mason's Associations of Cologne and Strasbourg, the resemblance and historical connection are apparent; and a careful consideration of these relations gives acceptance to the theory that modern Freemasons directly descended from and are the successors, in an unbroken line, of the operative Masons of the middle ages.

Brethren, this examination of the theories as to the origin of Masonry is not intended simply to illustrate the honor imparted to it by antiquity, for its object and effect are as prominent whether the parchments we hold are recent or venerable with the impress of ages—whether few or many centuries have witnessed its existence—but to render credible the assertion that from the earliest periods men have constituted societies for mutual aid, protection, and advancement, based upon the recognition of the attributes of Deity, the principles of religion, and the duties of man to man; that these societies have had similarity in intent and result; and that organization commenced, progression continued, and the highest civilization perfected a system of morality comprised in a word—Masonry.

Theism was conceived by men in their primitive state simultaneously with the recognition of God as the Organizer. This belief was progress. As man increased in intelligence, its adaptability became imperative—the newly acquired knowledge became the property of all, and as one inquiring mind may create progressive thoughts in others, so the first advancement occasioned a common elevation in the acknowledgment of a responsibility, and a necessity for obedience and protection, that re-moved man from his barbarism to a condition commensurate with the improvement made; and the spirit of Masonry, thus introduced, assumed substance when uninterrupted progression fixed firmly an advanced system of morality, or a better civilization. Few things are more remarkable in the history of man than that Masonry and civilization have had unity in purpose and result.

Masonry, in object, presents a universality of idea and sublimity of design impossible to depict, in all its bearings, in this limited discourse. As a skillful Mosaic workman forms and adjusts with his various particles a beautiful work of art, so does Masonry blend in one harmonious whole the races of mankind, forming a general brotherhood, where each maintaining an individuality, contributes to the beauty of all. Masonry knows no country; possesses no creed; grants toleration; is universal in extent. It unites humanity; gives one idea of devotion; acknowledges a common altar; and calls upon its followers to practice liberality towards the faith of every one. Yes—under the dome of its temple could be gathered a motley crowd, holding different political and religious views—speaking dissimilar dialects—but, by the language of Masonry, recognizing in each a brother & comrade in that great body which has for its object the amelioration and elevation of mankind.

Masonry opposes vice, error, ignorance, fanaticism, and persecution; it supports all that is good, true, and noble—conspicuous by contrast as in the Roman paintings where the vices were placed beside the virtues.

Paramount in object is charity—the corner-stone in the figurative Masonic temple—the keystone of its every arch—a word to be inscribed on the heart of each Mason a requirement to alleviate suffering whether caused by misfortune or sin; " for to step aside is human," and a true Mason sees not the sinner but the sufferer, and soiled not are charity's garments by such contact. " It is always safer for our judgment to be misled by simple charity than by uncharitable wisdom." Charity is not circumscribed to alms-giving. With broader range it softens judgment, gives Catholicism to opinion, and in its highest exercise is bestowed upon the uncharitable. Faith, Hope, Charity—the trinity of virtue—" these three, but the greatest of these is charity."

" In faith and hope the world will disagree,  
But all mankind's concern is charity;

All must be false that thwart this one great end;  
And all of God, that bless mankind or mend."

Masonry, in effect, presupposes a practical realization of its object, thereby rendering valid the familiar aphorism—" a good Mason must be a good man." In general effects it has assisted civilization in its contest with barbarism, established beneficial relations between nations, enlarged international union and sympathy, and by its potent principles, extending beyond the bounds of nationality, placed general society under obligations for the moral and political elevation of its members. Hand in hand with civilization in its leading element of the " Brotherhood of man " and the " Fatherhood of God," Masonry, in effect, has occasioned a prevalence of truth and justice surpassing that of the fabled reign of Astrea.

In the vicissitudes of war, whether in battle, in camp, hospital or prison, its benign effect has changed the uplifted hand of the destroyer to the extended hand of protection, respected the crushed hopes of the defeated, relieved pain, imparted com-fort, and mitigated the sufferings of captivity. Superior to self-interest or the promptings of excitement, its moral force has been directed to the abatement of war and the promotion of peace.

Undaunted by the maledictions of fanaticism, it enabled JACQUES DE MOLAY with a dignity and calmness unparalleled in history, to summon his Papal judge to appear with him before God, their common judge, and to suffer his martyrdom with heroic submission. Unterrified by the threats of the Inquisition, it determined JOHN COUSTOS to undergo tortures too atrocious in their cruelty almost for belief, rather than swerve from his imposed fidelity. These men were Masons.

It has aided the cultivation of the arts and sciences, encouraged the pursuit of knowledge, assisted in its general diffusion, and fostered every attempt to promote the education and happiness of all races and nations. It has extended every private and public virtue, caused the enactment of better laws, occasioned their stricter enforcement, and supported the loyal in their allegiance in the unhappy periods of political calamity.

Effective in increasing the courtesies of life, it has rendered sacred the name of brother—a name in its affectionate acceptance that fails not to excite solicitude for a brother in danger, to afford him relief in the distresses of life, and sympathy and consolation in death. On the day following the memorable engagement of the Kearsarge with the Alabama, among the multitude of congratulatory telegrams received from Ministers, Consuls, and prominent Americans in different parts of Europe, the Masons on board the Kearsarge received from their brethren in Holland the following: " Are any of the brethren killed or wounded?" In anxiety for their safety the brilliancy of the victory was secondary.

In the habitual exercise of charity is the effect of Masonry realized by those with-out our Order—Charity that attends the bedside of a sick or dying brother, administering relief and supplying comfort; that visits the saddened home of the widow, bestowing sympathy and assistance; that protects the orphan with parental care and tenderness; that provides for the helpless and aged in their declining days.

Brethren! Each of us, in our official capacity, have witnessed the joy, the relief, the support, attending the dispensation of our charity; and have listened to the recipient's prayer, passionately expressive of gratitude, invoking Heaven's blessing upon us and our Order. Blessed Charity! The virtue of virtues—elevating and refining human nature—increasing our growth towards the goodness of the infinite—would that it might in truth become \*' the vital principle of our souls, dear as the ruddy drops that warm our hearts," making us what God designed we should be without the aid of Masonry.

\*' Truly to love ourselves, we must love God;  
To love God, we must all His creatures love;  
To love his creatures, both ourselves and Him."

Notwithstanding the storms of persecution and the anathemas of bigotry, Masonry, by excellence of precepts and fixity of principles, has continued, with varied prosperity, to its present pre-eminent position among the moral institutions of the world, with a glory at once ancient, unchangeable and universal. Masonic Temples, of architectural display and artistic adornment,

are being erected. New Lodges are constantly created, and the numbers of the Fraternity increased with a success heretofore unknown. Proud of our inherent worth and power of doing good—confident of a greater prosperity in the future—we have, unfortunately, one regret—a regret with a bitterness experienced by all—a regret produced by the action of bad Masons, who as surely mar the beauty of our institution as the unsightly blot defaces the otherwise unsullied sheet of paper; bad Masons—bad either from natural perversity, for a purpose, or from indifference—equally effective to the injury of our reputation in the estimation of the uninitiated, and preventive of the admission of good men, who, from such examples, doubt the utility and beneficence of our organization.

Bad Masons are to us a greater injury than the denunciations of spiritual or temporal powers and it is sadly true that we have unconsciously forged the weapons that have been used to our detriment. For this evil there is but one remedy; it will mitigate, but it cannot be expected that it will entirely eradicate the misfortune. We possess the remedy, but, unhappily, are too negligent in its application. It is this. Be scrupulously careful not to admit imperfect material into a structure otherwise perfect. Use caution in your recommendations; in your committees investigate the moral character and fitness of the petitioner—not alone that he is negatively good—but that he has positive and essential qualifications; and, above all, employ the ballot—the safe-guard of Masonic as well as political liberty—the ballot—undeniably our security and defense, its exercise should be made obligatory upon every Mason. Far better that the worthy few enter our mystic temple, and in purity of character kneel at our universal altar, exemplars of Masonic profession, than the indifferent multitude, who, from selfishness, neglect, or personal animosity, would pervert the privileges of membership to the littleness of self-interests, the gratification of passion, or the adherence to prejudice, equally baneful in result. Every brother should endeavor, by his close walk to the rules of the Fraternity, to show our purpose to those without, so that all recognizing his nobleness may say: Behold the effect of Masonry!

Mindful, brethren, of your labors of the week, I do not propose to continue a subject, the investigation of which presents other aspects for reflection and application. We are soon to separate, to engage anew in the manifold pursuits of life, charged with the mighty trust of keeping pure the principles of the Fraternity, for transmission, in original integrity, to our successors.

May a common Father enable us to perform this duty with such fidelity that, in the great future, when generation after generation has passed away; when the darkness of existing barbarism has been dispelled by the enlightenment of civilization; when man, in his destined progression, has, by other wondrous inventions, more completely brought the natural forces to his subjection—then will Masonry, by the simplicity and purity of its character, by its ennobling and refining influence, be more fondly cherished, more extensively diffused—" be invested with an additional charm to excite the heart, and an additional force to accomplish its mission upon earth," until its votaries shall, in very truth, be known as the Grand Brotherhood, ancient in origin, noble in object, and beneficent in effect.