

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
Grand Oration 1941**

**Grand Orator
Henry C. Clausen
“Toward Greater Masonic Action”**

Most Worshipful Grand Master, Distinguished Past Grand Masters, My Fellow Grand Lodge Officers and Brethren

Your enthusiastic introduction makes me feel almost as I did when a nervous tiler in a northern Lodge introduced me as the Grand Architect of the Universe!

About two hundred and twenty years ago, the Mother Grand Lodge of London adopted a General Regulation, which read, "at all annual communications a brother selected by the Grand Master shall harangue the brethren and give them good advice." I am now supposed to follow that ancient charge. You may be thankful, though, that Grand Orators are like fleeting stars. They shine forth officially from the firmament of Masonry briefly, and but once a year. So I suggest you sink deeply into your chairs and relax, for this fleeting star will soon sink over the horizon.

It has been my good fortune this past year to have had the opportunity of serving you. For this I am indebted to our Grand Master. To you, Brother Lloyd, I express my very real thanks.

I suppose every Grand Lodge Oration given anywhere this year will discuss the dictators and this disjointed world. I wish there was a way of talking about something else. But, as one wit remarked: "These dictators and their wars: If you take them seriously, they will drive you crazy. If you don't take them seriously, you are crazy."

Whether we like it or not, we must think about a world gone mad with bombs, bullets, and bayonets. And as Masons, we must consider some of the larger aspects.

Similarity of Our Times

There is a similarity, almost twin-like, between the times of today and the times out of which speculative Masonry sprang. Then, as now, the British Isles were beset by confusion. Then, as now, the press made an indelible impact upon the mind. Then, as now, intolerance was in the air. Then, as now, bloody wars were being waged. Truly, the spiritual flame flickered feebly.

It was out of the travail of these times that speculative Masonry was born.

On June 24, 1717, four London Lodges met to celebrate the Feast of Saint John the Baptist. Among the members were those thinkers who had sought a light for the darkness of their day. They decided to constitute a Grand Lodge of London. From this point they abandoned "operative" Masonry and organized for the growth of "speculative" Masonry. Thus was found a nucleus for unity, a focal point, and a rallying place, which had been sought for a spiritual upsurge. Masonry was enthusiastically launched into the world. The world, in turn, seemed ready for the civilizing force of Masonry.

Civilizing Force of Masonry

A great intellectual and moral revolution was thereby in the making. While Masonry zealously refrained from interference in politics, still its basic teachings and idea of human equality so expanded in the minds of men that reforms were automatically advanced in opposition to the established order of heredity, the so-called divine rights of Kings, inequality, and a dogmatic church. Throughout the craft there grew a strong will to liberty. Men began expressing in words that which before they had even hardly dared to vision. The human mind, propelled by a newborn desire for freedom, finally was emerging victorious from a death-like struggle in the field of ideas. This liberation, as well as the moral regeneration of the people, was accomplished through the social force and directive power of Masonry.

The alert student of history will also see here a starting point from which came our American concept of a free mankind. For, as the importance, prestige and power of the Mother Grand Lodge of London grew, Masonry spread rapidly over the world. And wherever Masonry

penetrated, the new freedom followed. The constant result was a step forward in mental activity—immense progress toward an emancipation of the human mind. Hence, when Masonry arrived in America, it was but natural that she should come clad in the robes of freedom. Then, through the initiative of our Colonial Masons, the whole world was pointed toward a liberalistic age.

It was no accident, brethren, that one of our greatest American gains, stemming from a Masonic concept, was the release of man from any dogmatic, dictatorial church. No matter what religious faith you profess you can thank our Colonial brethren that a separation of church and state was firmly bolted and riveted down into our Constitution.

Masonry Today

You might now feel like saying to me: "It is all very well and even inspiring to sing hosannas of praise for what Masonry has done in the past. We tingle with pride when we hear the heroic names. We thrill with emotion when we see the many romantic pictures in our gallery of Masonic memories. But those are old stories. We cannot live in the past. We are living now in a so-called modern, fast-moving, scientific age. Look to this world of ours and see the mighty armies of warring nations locked again in a fight to death. Look to our craft abroad and see our Lodges that have been brutally blacked out. Look to our craft in America and see our membership rolls showing that we are numerically on a decline. Look to the writings of our men of great intellect who tell us there is danger that our civilization may eventually be killed by our civilization. Then you tell us, how can Masonry justify its existence in this transformed, troubled world? Should we streamline and adjust Masonry to the changing times? What can we do as Masons living in this age?"

I don't profess to have any magic secret nor do I presume to preach. I am not like the visiting gentleman from Georgia at the colored church, whom the colored clergyman introduced with these words, "The speaker of the day knows the unknowable, he can do the undoable, and he will unscrew the inscrutable."

My most immediate answer to your acute questions, though, would be that every age is modern to those living in it. Every age also accumulates a useful backlog of lessons. And all ages are the same when we consider that the moral precepts of Masonry ever were and ever will be.

Froude, in his essay on the Science of History put it aptly when he said:

"Opinions alter, manners change, creeds rise and fall, but
The moral law is written upon the tablets of eternity."

Our fundamental human problems remain the same in all ages. The yearning of mankind for happiness, for friendship and fraternalism, for justice, truth and virtue has been constant. It has been repeatedly expressed in the teachings of men of religion, the speeches of Demosthenes, the letters of Cicero and Montaigne. Finally, it was crystallized into the sentiments of Freemasonry.

Of course we should not stand still, on the means of applying Freemasonry. Of course we should be creative, on the means of applying Freemasonry. Of course we must move ahead, on the means of applying Freemasonry. As a celebrated Danish author said, "Life can only be understood backwards, but must be lived forwards."

But the means of Masonry should not be confused with the end of Masonry. Our compelling function, always, is to resist any innovations, which would be destructive of the end of Masonry. Our Lodges, pins, degrees, buildings, homes and charities are but the roots; Masonry itself is the fruit.

Need for Active Masonry

It was Horace who said wisely, "All virtue is a struggle; life is not a scene of repose, but of energetic action."

Brethren, a mere passive admiration for the sublimity and inherent goodness of Masonry will not suffice today. We need an active, constructive, a practical way of applying Masonry! We need increased, greater Masonic action! We need the kind of Masonic action that was exemplified in the lives of our Colonial Masons. We need the kind of Masonic action that has been uniformly exemplified in the lives of our Past Grand Masters and in the life of our Grand Master, they who

have given so generously of their time that we might be the richer through their guidance. We need the kind of Masonic action which was exemplified in the life of the late and beloved John Whicher, he of saintly Masonic memory. We need the kind of action that will result in another living, vibrant, enthusiastic, upsurge of Masonic force!

What we should think about is, "*How* are we going to do this? What are we going to do?" A great psychologist said that when we are faced with a difficult problem, the start is half the solution. We can all start increased Masonic action in several simple ways.

Follow the Guide of Grand Lodge

Grand Lodge is the nerve center from which active impulses can radiate to and from each Lodge and member Mason. You can deaden the nerve line running to you by the narcotic effects of indifference and apathy; or you can use it for energizing your manpower into channels of action. Study and put into practice the recommendations of your Grand Lodge committees and of your Grand Master. It would help even if you were like the young lady of whom the bishop asked whether she followed the Ten Commandments. She said, "I can't say that I follow them, but they do give me a lot of good ideas." Get some ideas from the annual address of your Grand Master. He is the voice of Grand Lodge. He speaks to you and for you. With your help he can speak louder and say more.

Make Known the Real Meaning and Mission of Masonry

Everett B. Clinchy, president of the conference comprising Jews, Protestants and Catholics, a few years ago wrote an extraordinary book called "All in the Name of God." He analyzed the recurrent anti-Masonic, anti-Catholic and anti-racial movements. It all sums up to this—the movements arise from fear. Those who do not know are afraid. They suspect the so-called secrecy and mystery. Quoting from his book, Dr. Clinchy said:

"The strength of the anti-Masonic society that flourished in this period lay in the dread among those of native stock of the mystery and secrecy of Masonry that was suspected of concealing a threat to American institutions. Both Masons and Catholics either lacked the ability, or disdained to take pains to allay these unnecessary suspicions."

You remember we recently laughed at the lengths to which some will go in fostering this fear. An example in point was Goebbel's ridiculous "expose" of a photograph showing President Franklin D. Roosevelt with his sons and Mayor La Guardia, dressed in Masonic regalia, sitting in a Masonic Lodge. And just a few weeks ago we read again how Petain, the would-be dictator, laid all the ills of France at the doors of Freemasonry. The consequent thinking, which goes on in the minds of some people, is like the speech of a recent refugee from Europe. He spoke perfect English but in between his words he whistled and hissed. Someone asked him why he did this. He replied "I learned to speak English by listening on the short wave radio." There is a great deal of "whistling" and "hissing" in the thinking of some people about Masonry. Brethren, as Masons, we have a responsibility to safeguard ourselves. Of course, we should not be driven by a spirit of exasperation to the use of counteracting methods which would be as foolish as the attacks leveled against us. We must conduct ourselves with patience, dignity and reserve. But we can firmly show that we do have the ability and will take the pains to allay unnecessary suspicions. Examples in point of effective and proper counteracting methods will be found in how the Grand Lodge of the Philippines jurisdiction stopped anti-Masonic radio broadcasts, and how the Swiss Masons prevented the passage of anti-Masonic legislation. Let's make known what is meant by Masonic secrecy; that a few years ago the Mother Grand Lodge of London issued this statement, "There is no secret with regard to any of the basic principles of Freemasonry."

Let's make known that Masonry is non-partisan; that we know any intrusion by us into the arena of partisan politics would be the eventual death of our institution, like dying of drinking too deeply of the fountain of youth.

Let's make known that Masonry is tolerant of all creeds, all races and all religions; that we say:

"Let prudish priests do battle with creeds, that church is mine that does most Godlike deeds."

Let's make known that Masonry has no bars because of position in life; that true equality exists under the square and compass.

Let us make known that Masonry conceals no threat to American institutions but that on the contrary American institutions owe their very life to American Masons. We can stand for the free way of life. Do you remember that inspiring passage in a Greek drama written over 2000 years ago? One of the characters put this question: "Who is the shepherd over you, and the lord of your host?" The chorus thundered back, "Of no man are we called the slaves or subjects." That democracy for which they felt such a passionate devotion was later preached by Christ. Then, like a river of gold flowing on through centuries, that ideal has come down to us as our priceless inheritance.

The fundamentals of Masonry have never prevented individual action by Masons within the orbit of good citizenship. On the contrary our individualistic concept calls for individual action. Masonic strength lies in the realm of each individual's action. "The strength of the wolf is in the pack, and the strength of the pack is in the wolf."

Many, many years ago there also lived a powerful, a cruel and a double-crossing dictator, Xerxes, King of the Persians. He sent an emissary to Athens, seeking an alliance and offering a territorial bribe. That system of strategy is old as the hills. But the free Athenians replied, "Tell Mardonius that Athens says 'So long as the sun keeps the path where now he goeth, never shall we make compact with Xerxes; but we shall go forth to do battle with him, putting our trust in the God who fights for us and in the mighty dead, whose dwelling places and holy things he hath condemned and burned with fire.' "

In the same spirit say we to all foes of freedom, never shall we make compact with alien forces of aggression! Never shall we permit the intrusion of their false philosophies into our way of living! But we shall stand steady, strong, and united. We shall insist upon a continuance of the Masonic doctrine of equality and unity. We have no place in these United States for any man or group who would tear us apart through demonstrations of racial or religious hatreds!

Let's make known why the Masons abroad have been persecuted. I refer to the Masonry, which we recognize. Goebbels, Minister of Propaganda for Germany, gives the reason quickly. In 1933 he declared:

"The conception of spiritual freedom is contrary to the supreme authority of the leader. There is no other truth."

Following this declaration, an order was issued on May 11, 1933 for the destruction of 20,000 books at a public bonfire in Berlin. Significantly the first book thrown upon this heap was the Bible.

Masonry and Masons immediately collide with such a concept. Like oil and water, the two cannot mix. The two ways of life are irreconcilable. We say that the cosmic importance of man transcends any mere manmade state. We stand for the emergence of man as an individual, for the emancipation of the human mind, for morality in action throughout our daily lives. There we blow the bugle and draw the issue.

As a result our European brethren have suffered a crushing defeat for their way of life. They have been mistreated, their Lodges closed, their property confiscated, their leaders killed.

We can say to the world, "Go to that symbolic figure who holds the scales of justice with equal poise; lay before her the men who have oppressed our brethren, armored as they are with steel and iron, riding with a cavalry of hate over the bodies of their prostrate victims. Show her the sack of cities, the burning and bombing of innocent men, women and little ones, the people made miserable all over the earth. When she is under the impact of this view, follow these diabolical men into the dark rooms where they plot their plans, hear them scheme to steal country after country, to rule by force and fear, to snatch from the faithful every vestige of their spiritual and temporal freedom. When she has tired of this prospect, show her the men of Masonry, working without any bloody war, without any fabulous hero, without any Trojan horse. See plain men who use plain means for lifting man into a contemplation of his own exalted soul, leading toward a liberation of the human mind, unfolding a priceless philosophy of life, keeping in view always the higher meaning of immortality. Then ask her, 'Which of these do you choose?' " But the answer is easily made.

The same ideas, the same emotions must have passed through the mind of one who in his day was heralded as a hero-patriot, one who in later days was universally acclaimed the sage of America, that Master Mason of deathless fame, George Washington. Writing to his brethren of

King David Lodge at Newport in 1790, he was inspired to express his opinion of Masonry in these words:

"Being persuaded that a just application of the principles upon which the Masonic Fraternity is founded must be promotive of private virtue and public prosperity, I shall always be happy to advance the interests of the Society, and to be considered by them a deserving brother."

Let us stretch forth a helping hand to our oppressed brethren abroad and say to them with Emerson, "The hour may be against us, but the centuries are for us." Let us make known to them that we do feel for them, that we do stand by them, and that while their hands are tied, we will fight the good battle for them.

Make Our Lives Exemplify Masonic Teachings

Napoleon at one time thought he was a great and lasting conqueror. Later, in exile at St. Helena, he told the truth when he said, "The only conquests that are permanent are those we make of ourselves." He should have known.

Masonry is not a mass gift, it is an individual conquest. It cannot be conferred- it must be acquired. Merely walking through the ritual never made a Mason. We must regenerate and refresh ourselves each day. Like the manna the Israelites found in the wilderness. We are rewarded in direct proportion as we live the Masonic philosophy of life.

The world also judges our institution by the character of its members. We should so act that others may say, "Masons revere God, they pay their bills, they are gentlemen, they are moral, clean-minded and friendly." Shakespeare wrote the simple rule:

"To thine own self be true,
And it must follow as the night the day.
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

We are told in the holy writings, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering." Brethren, would you out-distance this night of the world despair? Then hold fast to your Masonic faith. Would you unlock a priceless philosophy of life? Then, my brethren, hold fast to your Masonic faith. Would you touch a brother's hand, hear a brother's voice, know what is meant by Masonic friendship whenever you go around the globe? Then, my brethren, hold fast to your Masonic faith.

Make Masonry Live and Grow

Back in the days of Mohammed the Prophet, people had great respect for horses. Those with outstanding intelligence were selected for use in warfare and were trained to follow the bugle in battle. Having occasion to acquire some horses for himself, the great prophet went to a famous farm to make some personal selections. He ordered all the horses pastured next to a river, but fenced off and unwatered for three days. At the end of three days the bars were let down. The horses rushed in a mad body to quench their thirst. Just as they were about to plunge into the water the war bugle sounded. Of that great number, only ten answered the call. The ten were then chosen as the beginning of the famous "Prophet Breed" of Arabian horses.

Masonry also uses a wise and selective process for enrollment of its members. But greater Masonic action will automatically result in an attraction of suitable new material. Thus will follow an ever-increasing flow of that social force and directive power so sorely needed today. While the principles of Masonry are eternal, ever were and ever will be, still Masonic Lodges require strength and stamina through active members. Masonic action will result in Masonic growth.

What of Our Future?

In the olden days the watchman of the night would walk the watchtowers of the town. In times of danger the people would ask, "Watchman what of the night?" Today we ask of those on the higher watchtowers of Masonry, "What of our future?"

Experience has shown that the fundamental and simple reason for the breakdown of our way of life elsewhere in the world has been a lack of able, courageous and constructive leadership.

There has been a woeful want of moral as well as political leadership. The whole world literally cries out for leaders.

Some years ago a party of explorers, driven by a west wind from the Amazon River far out to sea, were dying of thirst. They had been without water for days. Drifting they suffered the tortures of the damned. At last a ship came into sight. They signaled frantically for water. The captain of the ship signaled back, "Let down your buckets. There is fresh water all around you." They did not know that the Amazon River remains fresh for more than a hundred miles out to sea.

In much the same way, the moral leadership for which the world cries out is just as available. Surely Masonry has proved itself a fountain source of inspiration for leadership. Where else in the world today is there an organization dedicated to moral uplift, which includes every creed, religion, and race? Who but the Masons have adhered more firmly to the faith of their fathers and shown more patriotism? Where then, but from the ranks of Masonry, can there come such leaders?

As Masons have always championed the emergence of man, so from the ranks of Masonry have there come leaders of mankind. Masons abroad have been the champions of democracy: Bolivar, South American liberator; Goethe, German poet; Mozart, Austrian composer, Lafayette, French patriot; Kossuth, Hungarian patriot; Garibaldi, Italian patriot. They were not only men in the forefront of movements for freedom, but all were also Master Masons.

It was no accident that in early America the stirring words, "Give me liberty or give me death" echoed the thoughts of Master Masons. It was no accident that when Paul Revere made his historic ride, he was spurred on by the heart of a Master Mason. It was no accident that most of the pens from which flowed the immortal words of the Declaration of Independence were those of Master Masons. It was no accident that the Masonic doctrine of equality of man was indelibly written into our constitution by Masonic hands, directed by Masonic minds.

Down to the present in the United States we have had twelve presidents fourteen vice-presidents, outstanding statesmen and soldiers, leaders of business and science, leaders of labor and letters, leaders of bench and bar, men of great and important affairs, all of whom also knelt at our shrine as humble Master Masons.

Looking toward the boundless future, therefore, we lift up our eyes from the darkness of the day to that letter "G" still shining brightly in the East and we are then ourselves uplifted. We say with hope and high confidence, that Masonry will again light the way for an awakening world. We say with hope and high confidence, that when history shall have passed her stern sentence on those erring men who have oppressed our brethren and beset this world with strife, Masonic Lodges will continue to exemplify the spirit of courage, the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God. We say with hope and high confidence that Masonry will fulfill mankind's hope for the emergence of leaders of whom, like of the leaders of the Renaissance, it will be said: "The dazzling light of their genius shines on through the centuries, showing future ages what man can be and what man can do."

Brethren! Now is the time for us to act—act to follow the guide of Grand Lodge—act to make known the real meaning and mission of Masonry —act to make our lives exemplify our Masonic teachings—act to make Masonry live and grow! Thus, we shall enjoy and move toward greater Masonic action!