

**ADDRESS TO THE 2002 CALIFORNIA MASONIC SYMPOSIUM**  
**By Alain Bauer, Grand Master of the Grand Orient of France**  
**Sacramento, California, July 27th, 2002**

It is a great honor to be your guest at this 2002 California Masonic Symposium. I want, first of all, to thank the Most Worshipful C. Ray Whitaker, Grand Master of Masons in California, for his very fraternal invitation.

In prior communications the leadership of the Grand Lodge of California asked me to speak about "The Great Divide: The Grand Orient of France and Dogmatic Freemasonry." Let me say here to you that this was a very great... surprise! After all, we do not think that such freemasonry exists. James Anderson was very clear about this at the beginning. We respect and welcome in the Lodges of the Grand Orient of France those who believe or do not believe. Neither Atheist, nor extremist, there is nothing in the Grand Orient that gives us as Masons the right to determine a definitive approach to advancement, or a specific stream, that leads to our individual accomplishments and personal growth through the Craft.

First, I want to acknowledge that critical parts of my speech have been prepared in collaboration with my very close friend and brother, Grand Commander of the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite of France, Alain de Keghel.

The time now has come to engage fraternally in a deep and sustained analysis of the Masonic landscape, as it is, not as we imagine it to be. All Brethren of good will are now looking toward a more open-minded, more tolerant, and more Masonic approach to our Brotherhood.

To that end, increasing numbers of Masons from around the world are making the necessary efforts to build a bridge of Light which does not end at national borders or within the limits of individual Masonic bodies. It is time to open eyes, minds, and hearts, to the inherited legacies of our diverse and rich traditions.

It is indeed a great privilege to have the opportunity to open more widely the doors of understanding. So let us attempt in our time together to overcome the friction of difference that far too often marks the realities of the profane world, and tarnishes our Masonic world.

The Masonic Order has endured through the vicissitudes of time, culture, civilizations and society. However, it has survived through the centuries not by following passively the movements of society, but rather it often has been at the forefront of important change within society. In those moments of leadership it has been at its strongest.

As one important illustration, simply being here in the United States of America, brings to mind the major role American Masons, and some of their French Brethren, played in establishing modern democratic society.

We can all give our deepest thanks to George Washington, Benjamin Franklin (Who I can tell you with great pride was the Worshipful Master of a Grand Orient of France Lodge in Paris.), to the Marquis de Lafayette, and to many others who worked so strenuously for freedom that time will not permit us to list all of their names today.

In point of fact, there have been important and fruitful moments of deep contact between French and American Masons going back even before the time of the American Revolution. Nevertheless, we know from history and personal experience, that there are different traditions in America and France. Because French Masons realize fairly well how difficult it is for some of our Brethren on this side of the Atlantic to understand how it came to pass in France that there is such a great variety of Masonic bodies and Masonic streams, or traditions, it would be of value to discuss France to some degree.

With your permission, let us consider together some historical facts but also some issues that may be regarded as premature in the emerging transatlantic dialogue, or even hazardous. In order to do this to full mutual benefit, it is obvious that we first need to know each other much better than we do.

To be direct and to the point, I will first offer a few words concerning the Grand Orient of France: It has not relinquished the dedication to The Great Architect of the Universe and it has never initiated women. It is the oldest traditional Masonic body in France. This fact was just confirmed a few weeks ago by the United Grand Lodge of England to the Minnesota Grand Lodge here in America. And as I briefly mentioned earlier, the fact that there was a very strong commitment by the Grand Orient of France to the establishment of Freemasonry in the early years of the United States of America is well documented.

The Grand Orient of France is a federation of Lodges using different workings where every single Lodge has the freedom to choose a Ritual belonging either to the French Rite (a legacy of the old English Rite), the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite, the Rectified Scottish Rite, as well as the Royal Arch, Mark Masonry, Memphis-Misraim, and the Emulation Working. Our lodges, which are free to choose their working are also free to work to the G.A.O.T.U.

The Grand Orient with more than 44,000 Brethren is the largest French Masonic organization in a country which counts a total of roughly 130,000 members working in a Lodge. This is a number which may sound ridiculous by comparison with some 2 million Freemasons in America, but you must consider the size of the French nation which totals sixty-million people (compared to 288 million Americans).

Of course this number is approaching less than a half of the amount of Freemasons in the United Kingdom. However, like the USA (of course, we do not

ignore the dark times of the Morgan affair in your country), Great Britain is the only country in Europe where Freemasons were never persecuted and where our Masonic Order had a chance to develop without the negative interference of the churches, and politics. This situation, by the way, is changing in the U.K. with a Catholic Prime Minister strongly challenging the role of Freemasonry in British society.

This history explains why continental Europe does not total today much more than some 250,000 Freemasons. Out of this number, nearly half are French. To be more complete in this presentation, it should be added that France has benefited from an additional important *feminine Masonic and mixed-gender Masonry development* since the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

It can be noted with interest that the first recorded Masonic Lodge was created in France in 1688. The first Masonic Order in 1728 was named "Grande Loge" before changing its name into the "Grand Orient de France" in 1771-1773. That same year a new "Grande Loge de France" was created by dissident members, who then in 1799 joined yet once again the "Grand Orient de France." Finally, a new "Grande Loge de France," our friend and sister obedience, was created in 1894. The Grande Lodge de France still exists today with more than 20,000 members and is an outgrowth of the same Masonic roots.

In overall percentages, French Lodges can be broken down into the following numbers: 69% male, 20% belong to mixed-gender masonry and 11% are for women only. One may consider also that 75% of French Masons are men, but that over the last 30 years, the relative percentage of women has more than doubled rising from 10% to nearly 25%.

As many of you will know, a great turmoil began in 1877 as the Delegates of the Lodges of the Grand Orient of France while attending the annual General Assembly, and after fierce debate, made a decision and voted to lift the mandatory obligation to refer to T.G.A.O.T.U. in Lodge rituals. It is interesting to note that the motion to introduce this dramatic change was introduced by a Protestant Minister and Brother, Frederic Desmons. One must today realize that this happened in the context of French post-revolutionary society which had fought successfully for a separation of the State from the Catholic Church. I can bear witness today to the liberty given earlier by the French Lodges for those non Roman Catholics that were persecuted in subsequent years and decades after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Lodges of the Grand Orient were the places of refuge of free thought and liberty against the great darkness of this period.

In earlier times under the Kingdom there was no desire to accept any level of ecumenism by established religion. There simply was no tolerance of different beliefs in established religion. After the French Revolution of 1789, the Catholic Church as an institution which tried desperately to regain the temporal power it

had lost. It was in this context that the signature of the *Concordat* of 1801 had as its first consequence for French Freemasons their effective excommunication. This occurred as a result of the *Encyclical "In Eminenti Apostolatus Speculae."* The immediate effect of this was to produce a radicalization of the relationships between the conservative Catholic Church and the Grand Orient. Remember that the Grand Orient was at this time deist in its majority but still supportive of the gains of the Revolution: Freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, were, and still are, our motto. We also wanted to become free from English Masonic colonization. Does this not ring a bell?

The Masons in 1877 believed their decision expressed in a democratic vote was a way to return to the original and very liberal spirit of the Constitution of James Anderson. That was the heart of the matter. That is what was in their thinking. The focus was on Anderson's Constitution as it had been written in 1723, before the changes made in 1738. In fact, Masons before 1717 were officially "Catholics," they became "Christians" and then "Noachites." The Grand Orient of France merely climbed an additional step, asking them to refer to the "Universal Moral Law," as specified by the 1723 Constitutions.

This would mean, as well, a focus on Anderson's Constitution well before the extensive changes undertaken in 1813, and before the 1929 modifications with the so-called "eight fundamental obligations." These are the later obligations necessary in order to attain recognition from the United Grand Lodge of England.

It is not the purpose here to place too much emphasis on this most sensitive and controversial issue, which all too easily pollute Masonic relations and discussion. Unfortunately, there is not much substantive reasoning at all on the topic today. For example, there is very little examination of the historical facts as a necessary background to the discussion.

The matter has sadly poisoned the relations between different Masonic streams. It has produced a Masonic reaction which many Masons around the world still do not understand: a kind of Masonic equivalent to the Pope has emerged with established rules of excommunication and a kind of "new grand Inquisitor."

In France, most Brethren simply did not care about this break in the Masonic family. They regarded this evolution in the breakdown of relations with regret and sadness, nevertheless, they lived their lives as Free Masons and they went their own way. This is how it was in the past, and it is still so today.

However, in the course of affairs, one Masonic body did decide in 1913 to work the "regular" way. This was the origin of the *Grand Loge Nationale Française* (GLNF), which today claims more than 20,000 members.

You must realize that despite differences this Grand Lodge often shares the same Temples with other Masons outside of Paris. This occurs even though

Brethren belonging to other streams do not work together with the GLNF in closed tiled Lodges. Nevertheless, substantive relations do exist. In very recent times, the respective Grand Masters of GLNF and GODF have worked to establish a new kind of relationship and signed agreements on the recognized quality of the initiation process, on disciplinary issues and on diplomatic relations.

We meet regularly, we accept transfers from one Body to another, we respect our mutual differences. This offers some hope for a brighter Masonic future, at least in France.

One has to realize that Freemasonry developed in a different way in France as well as in several other continental European, Latin American and African countries. It is something we have to deal with. It is an issue we would be wise to address and not ignore. There is no need to lock ourselves into unnecessary compartments and singular ways of thinking. We need to be concerned about the weakness that results from unnecessary divisions. We would be much wiser to prefer a universal perspective.

After all, our way of thinking is in part a legacy of the great philosophers and writers of the time of the Enlightenment: Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Diderot, and so many others.

Part of the task at the moment is to now pass on the rich heritage of our humanist and Enlightenment values to future generations. In the cause of freedom, and more, this tradition was fought and died for in France and America in the Eighteenth-Century. This must not be lost.

The essential point is that our Masonic message is still of considerable value. The great, generous and original ideal of Freemasonry to "unite people who otherwise would have remained at perpetual distance" is also a modern and vital message to our contemporary society endangered by egoism, ethnocentrism and crude materialism. At this time, everyone is speaking of globalization. But where are we as Freemasons in the contemporary world? Are we not at risk in our current situation? Is it not possible that the world will pass us by in the new millennium if we do not actively engage with humanity once again and give the message that is expected from us?

Of course, in your great country, in the U.S.A, you have been fortunate in having a series of prestigious heads of state as members of our Brotherhood. But even here does this not belong to the past?

Do we not have to stop and ask ourselves why the winding down is developing in this fashion? What can we do to return to a greater effectiveness, relevance, and visibility in our respective societies? Social meetings and charities are good, but they cannot be our main and only goal. In a modern society where every person is solicited for something, we have to become more attractive to those people

having something to contribute to society. We all agree that Lodges do not have to interfere in politics. But does it mean that we, as Brethren, as individuals, need to stay silent as mere spectators in the profane world?

Always working in reference to our ethical values as Masons, we should be more sensitive to the important issues confronting modern society: education, discrimination, the preservation of individual rights in a computerized society, rules of ethics in biotechnology, the proper and careful management of genetic modified organisms and of modern medicine, problems of environment, as well as of aging people, youth violence, challenges like drugs, tobacco and alcohol abuses. Young people will expect this from each one of us before they join our Lodges. They will not join if we neglect the vital issues of our respective nations, or of the world as a whole.

If Freemasons do not engage the world in front of them, they will, without doubt, lose the best and brightest of our youth. Fraternal relations as you and I have practiced them are not enough. The youth of our respective societies have many opportunities for socializing elsewhere more in keeping with the social and cultural interests of modern times and their own expectations. Nevertheless, how can there be Freemasonry without the most talented of our youth petitioning to join with us in service?

Furthermore, is it really necessary, because of revisiting the very fluid idea of *Landmarks* in this century, to destroy relations between each other, between the different Masonic traditions?

Are we to act like churches, which knowingly defend dogmas, who represent both temporal and spiritual powers, and thus could be imagined to be less tolerant as a result? On this matter, we are not performing very well at all as Masons. The churches, in fact, are much more successful in the practice of basic human tolerance as they work to improve their inter-confessional relations.

Let us take the example of the Roman Catholic Church, which today extends the metaphorical hands of the Pope all around the world even to non-Christian churches and communities. Each day the Roman Catholic Church reaches out to other denominations, including Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. How does it come to pass that Freemasons remain at the turn of this century unable to conduct, or even begin, some kind of similar Masonic dialogue on a large scale? This would by no means necessarily require of any Mason that they change anything about their Masonry. It simply means they could speak respectfully to each other about Masonry, about the joys of being alive, and about the serious issues of modern times.

It could mean they sit and discuss how best to get rid of self-imposed rules of recognition, exclusive jurisdiction, regularity, and so forth, none of which are in the slightest bit relevant anymore.

It is precisely these Rules and Regulations, which make a universal dialogue among all Freemasons virtually impossible. Is it not a kind of a paradox that today the Roman Catholic Church has almost lifted the excommunication of Freemasons that I spoke about earlier but that Freemasons of different disciplines in fact excommunicate each other? Is it a sane and normal situation where Masonic representatives may, in most cases, meet easier with a clergyman than with a fellow Mason belonging to a so-called "irregular" Grand Lodge?

In the United States, Grand Lodges did not, in fact, break relations with the Grand Orient de France in 1877, which is the popular but historically unfounded myth. Most of them did continue relations for a long time after 1877. During the 1<sup>st</sup> World War, for example, we received in our lodges numerous American Masons. And we did the same after our Liberation by the Allies, mostly by courageous American soldiers, in World War II. **U.S. Grand Lodges that Recognized or Approved Intervisitations with the Grande Loge of France and/or the Grand Orient de France during the 1900's were :**

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date</b>
Alabama	recognized GLDF and GODF	Dec. 4, 1918.
Arkansas	recognized GLDF and GODF	Nov. 19, 1919
California	recognized GLDF	Oct. 9, 1918
Colorado	intervisitations GLDF & GODF	May 1, 1918
Dist. Col.	recognized GLDF	Dec. 19, 1917
Florida	intervisitations with GLDF	Jan. 15, 1918
Georgia	intervisitations with GLDF	May 1, 1918
Indiana	intervisitations with GLDF	May 29, 1918
Iowa	recognized GLDF and GODF	June 12, 1918
Kentucky	intervisitations GLDF & GODF	Oct. 17, 1917
Louisiana	recognized GLDF and GODF	Feb. 5, 1918
Minnesota	recognized GLDF	Jan. 21-22, 1919
Nevada	recognized GLDF and GODF	June 12, 1918 & 1919
New Jersey	recognized GLDF and GODF	Apr. 17, 1918
New York	intervisitations GLDF & GODF	Sep. 10, 1917
N. Dakota	recognized GLDF and GODF	June 17, 1919
Oregon	recognized GLDF	June 14, 1918
Rhode Isl.	recognized GLDF and GODF	May 20, 1918
S. Dakota	recognized GLDF	June 11, 1918
Texas	recognized GLDF	Dec. 4, 1917
Utah	recognized GLDF	Jan. 22, 1919
Wisconsin	recognized GLDF	June 9, 1958
Wyoming	intervisitations GLDF & GODF	Sep. 11, 1918

I quote an American Mason and scholar Paul Bessel on the general topic. He has written, *quote*: "It will probably surprise most American masons to find out that during the 1900s the Grande Loge of France was recognized, or mutual visitations by members were approved, by twenty-three -- almost half -- of all United States grand lodges. Since the Grand Orient of France is said to be totally outside the pale of freemasonry and "flagrantly irregular" since the 1870's, it is even more surprising to find that twelve -- more than a quarter -- of United States grand lodges recognized or approved mutual visitations by members with the Grand Orient of France during the twentieth century.

Both the Grande Loge of France and the Grand Orient of France were fully recognized by eight grand lodges starting at the time of World War I. This could have been the result of the War and the desire to support strong allies in the war, as that is mentioned in a July 20, 1917, letter from four Grande Loge of France officials to United States grand lodges. In that letter it states the purpose of writing was "to extend to your Grand Lodge an invitation to enter into official relations with us and to cement those relations by an exchange of representatives." However, many American grand lodges considered and rejected recognition, and many that granted recognition did so only after detailed study and careful consideration. It is clear that grand lodges in the United States made thoughtful and serious decisions on this subject.

Appropriately, in the early twentieth-century, Louisiana led American grand lodges in recognizing the Grande Loge of France and re-recognizing the Grand Orient of France. Louisiana had caused the other American grand lodges to break their ties with the Grand Orient of France fifty years earlier.

In brief, Grand lodges in the United States began to withdraw their recognitions of the Grand Orient after 1868, when the Grand Orient recognized a Masonic group called the "Supreme Council of the Accepted and Ancient Scottish Rite of the State of Louisiana," which was not recognized by the Grand Lodge of Louisiana. The Louisiana Grand Master called this act a "strange perversion" by the Grand Orient. The Grand Lodge of Louisiana considered this an invasion of its territory, withdrew its recognition of the Grand Orient, and called on other grand lodges in America to do the same. It is very significant, when we remember the historical period in which this action took place (And, I have to add, considering the very special relations between France and Louisiana).

The Grand Orient decree and report, as printed in the *Louisiana Proceedings*, states that one of the reasons the Grand Orient recognized this "Supreme Council of Louisiana" is because that group allowed the initiation of men "without regard to nationality, race, or color."

The Grand Orient report mentioned the significance of "civil and political equality between the white and colored races," opposition to slavery, and the necessity of its abolition. The split of French Masonry with that of America actually came in

1869 when the Grand Orient passed a resolution that "neither color, race, nor religion should disqualify a man for initiation."

Since Louisiana had caused other United States grand lodges to sever their relations with the Grand Orient of France in 1868, it was especially significant that the Grand Lodge of Louisiana enthusiastically recognized the GLDF and re-recognized the GODF on February 5, 1918.

The adoption of the resolutions restoring fraternal relations with the Grand Orient of France and recognizing the Grand Lodge of France was followed by an outburst of applause, the national colors of the United States and France being displayed, one on each side of the station of the Grand Master, and national airs of each of the countries pealed forth from the Cathedral organ.

Nevertheless, it must be clear here today that the Grand Orient of France is not seeking recognition by the rules of the United Grand Lodge of England. We had good relations with the United States Grand Lodges before 1877 and after 1877. We can all remember with interest the breaking between Grand Orient of France and English Masonic Bodies in 1776, just 10 years after a 1766 agreement among Masons. You see, as a matter of historical fact, one of the reasons for the *real "Great Divide"* between Masonry in France and England was our support of the American Revolution and the financing of it by French Freemasons, like Brother La Fayette. This is an important part of the real history of Freemasonry. It is an important part of what actually happened.

We respect your independence because we were a part of it and because you were, twice in our history, the forceful weapon and working tool of our own freedom. Allies forever, do we really care about the English Masonic bureaucracy? It may be time for a Masonic Tea Party.

Being supportive of constructive change, I notice in this regard that some significant changes are beginning to occur. Even in London, pragmatism and common sense seems to be slowly gaining ground. We see a greater reaching out than in the past to Masons from different traditions. Step by step, we shall make progress. We are patient. Let's hope that society may be as patient as us. Clearly, Freemasonry is not yet Mister Rodger's neighborhood.

Of course, none of us today has a miraculous "ready-made" solution to suggest. We can only work to find a solution step by step. That is how we can all be pragmatic and helpful. *The first step is simply to take into consideration the simple truth that there are different Masonic streams.* This is the way we might want to work, freely, and very respectful of living traditions. If you are for sure the mainstream, let us hope that we are the gulf stream.

Your American Constitution says; "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the

freedom of speech, or of the press." Let us all hear the stunning, eloquent, and clear voice from the founding fathers. Since then you have gone on to construct the most powerful Nation in the world, and you have always relied on these earlier foundational values in doing so. These are the same values we share in my own country, in France.

There are a little more than 3.2 million freemasons in the world, at this time. The world we all share is dangerous, complex, and often savage. It needs the values and principles that we share together as Masons to protect and develop real democracy and genuine freedom.

Let us quote an anonymous writer at this time: "Listen to the words of the ritual. The true secret of Freemasonry is that its ideas are revolutionary, radical, and dangerous to those who would deny human dignity and promote injustice. As an institution we are non-political, and rightly so. But as individuals, we can take action to apply the ideas of Freemasonry in everyday life, Listen to the words of the ritual and go forth and resolve practice them everyday. Only then can we each improve ourselves in Freemasonry, and in so doing improve the world". Welcome to the Grand Orient, Joel Springer, Philalethes Society President.

As Freemasons of different lineages, why could we not act together? It is time indeed. Don't you think it is time, again, as it was in 1776, for independence?