

THE SPIRIT OF FRATERNITY AND THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Address by Robert Morgan
United States Senator
Order of the Eastern Star
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I think it would be well to consider what a tremendous impact the spirit of brotherhood has had on our nation's development, especially at crucial times in our history.

We in the Masonic Fraternity, and in the Order of the Eastern Star, are dedicated to that spirit. It is the reason and the motivation for our joining together. We know that the mutuality of interest and just plain friendship we share, is a force of such power that no difficulty can defeat us.

At the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the sage Ben Franklin told those who were wavering, who were

afraid to sign, "Gentlemen, we shall all hang together, or we shall all hang separately." Now Ben Franklin was an active, practicing Mason. He understood how potent is the force of fraternal ties, and how important it is to "hang together" in times of adversity. Many of the men in that room were Masons. And it is a matter of historical fact that over and over again, the nucleus of patriotism among the American Colonists was the brotherhood of Masons.

I want to go back in our history a little bit, and look at the influence of fraternity on our struggle for independence. Then I want to speculate on what a good effect we could have, today, on our national life.

Let me quote a little bit from a book by Ellis V. Gregory, called Freemasonry and Early America. He speaks of the

Continental Congress, which guided our people through the Revolutionary War.

"The Continental Congress drew together Masonic leaders from all the Colonies. Masonry was the common ground on which they could meet in mutual confidence and understanding, excluding religious, racial and political differences. The outstanding figures of the Congress were Masons. We know that Masonry had considerable influence in reconciling the jealousies and prejudices of the various colonies.

"Each colony was a self-governing commonwealth, naturally cherishing its rights and privileges above those of other colonies. Hence, elements of disunion constantly asserted themselves. However, many of the members were accustomed to gather in Masonic association after adjournment of their

daily sessions, and there is no doubt that fraternal accord did much to lessen bitter animosities."

Fraternity helped hold us together during the Revolution. But examples of Masonic influence in settling disputes among factions, and offering a rallying place for freedom, go far back to the French and Indian Wars, when leading Masons organized the American offensive against French control of the Northern Colonies.

Here, we even see the force of brotherhood cutting across the lines of war, and transcending its bitterness. When Israel Putnam, later a Revolutionary War leader, was captured in battle, the Indians bound him to a tree and were about to burn him alive. Just as they set the fire, he gave a Masonic sign, and the French Count de Molang saw it. He was a Mason. He quickly

stamped out the flames, and cut Putnam free.

And again, during the Revolutionary War, members of one of the Masonic Lodges inclined to be loyal to the Crown were meeting one day when the ceiling fell in. And with it fell an American patriot, hiding out from the British. The Lodge tyler confessed that he had hidden the man to save him. The Lodge quickly got together a purse for the fugitive, and helped him to escape, in spite of the fact that the members were on the other side of the conflict.

If the spirit of fraternity can mitigate the antagonisms of war in such ways as these, imagine what it did for the American cause itself.

The Lodge of Saint Andrew in Boston was a center for revolutionary activity in Massachusetts. John Hancock, Paul

Revere, and the martyr of Bunker Hill, Joseph Warren, were all members. In the Lodge met Revere's "Sons of Liberty," who have been lighted down through history as instrumental in carrying forward our fight for Independence.

When the British imposed the Stamp Act on the colonies, provoking the cry of "No taxation without representation," Brother John Rowe stood at the meeting of Saint Andrew's Lodge and proposed the question: would tea mix with salt water? And then, on the night of the Boston Tea Party, so many members of Saint Andrew's were mysteriously absent from the Lodge that it was not possible to hold the regular meeting.

On the night of Brother Paul Revere's famous ride to warn of the approaching British troops, it was Masonic fraternity which bound those organizing the watch. Joseph Warren organized

it, and the man posted in the Old North Church to show the lanterns, "one if by land and two if by sea," was John Pulling, a Mason.

Many of the ties of the Committees of Correspondence, which bound together revolutionary centers in all the colonies, were based on Masonic friendship.

Finally, there is the example of George Washington himself. Washington is perhaps our Nation's most illustrious Mason.

Let me quote Ellis Gregory once again. He says:

"When the Continental Congress created its first army and made Washington commander-in-chief, there was an element of politics in his appointment. He was expected to bring the Southern colonies to the support of New England. Normally he would have been handicapped by being an aristocrat, a slave

owner, and a member of the Episcopal Church, and would have been regarded with a dim view by the Puritans of New England.

His being a Freemason, however, made him acceptable to the Masonic leaders of New England, both in civil and military life."

Now, the leaders of the rebellion in New England, and the New England generals were mostly Masons. So were the members of Washington's general staff whom he trusted most. In fact, Brother Lafayette, the Frenchman instrumental in bringing his country's support to the struggling American colonies, said once that Washington would never willingly give command to any officer who was not a Mason.

One of the things which bound his officers to Washington was their Masonry. Washington was a stern disciplinarian, but during times of Masonic association, the rank and discipline

which separated Washington from his staff fell away, and they joined together as Brothers. This built their loyalty and dedication to their leader.

Thus, Masonic fraternity helped the men who carried the revolution to its conclusion "hang together," as Franklin put it. During the early days of our country, and during the bitter, divisive debates over our Constitution, the same spirit of brotherhood, rising above all differences, had its effect. The culmination of all the effort was symbolized some years later, when George Washington, wearing a Masonic apron presented him by Brother Lafayette, laid the cornerstone of the United States Capitol with Masonic ceremony.

But I do not recite this history merely out of pride in the part Masons have played in our nation's history. There

is reason for pride, but more than that, I think there is a lesson in it for all of us today.

The lesson is that our common friendship, our sense of mutual interest in being Americans, is needed once again.

One of the things which has troubled me since going to the Senate is the growing divisiveness in our society.

Of course, we shall always have conflict -- conflict of opinion, conflict of belief, and conflict over the direction of public policy. These are the sorts of things which our political system is able to reconcile, and I am not afraid of the most intense debate.

But I am very worried about the tendency to forget we are all Americans with a common goal -- the betterment of all parts of our society. We cannot pursue that goal if we allow

ourselves to let narrow interests determine our laws and our national direction.

I recently sat down with President Carter at the White House, to talk about the existing arms embargo against Turkey. Turkey is one of our strongest allies, and a key member of NATO. It is the most crucial line of defense against the Southern flank of the Soviet Union, a burden Turkey has willingly borne.

When Turkey and Greece got into a war over Cyprus, the reaction of the Congress was to pass an embargo on giving military aid to Turkey -- an action which is undermining the NATO alliance.

The President wants to correct this situation, somehow, and I gave him my support. Previously, I had given a speech

on the floor of the Senate to the effect that we cannot remain strong if we allow Greek Americans to be divided against Turkish Americans, Jewish Americans against Arab, White Americans against Black. I told the President the same thing, and it was well received. Other Senators who were there joined in my remarks, for they had all witnessed this kind of divisiveness, and had been growing fearful of it.

The American patriots who founded this country were not all of one mind. They had deep, serious disagreements. But they realized that despite all differences, they had to hang together, or hang separately. The Masonic Fraternity, the spirit we still share today in Masonry and in the Order of the Eastern Star, helped them to stay together. That spirit needs to sustain us once again.

We need to reaffirm the understanding that we are Americans first. We have much to accomplish. We have got to bring federal spending under control. That means that everyone is going to have to tighten his belt. We cannot say, cut the "other fellow's" budget, but not mine, because mine is more important. That is the sort of narrow interest which will divide us and defeat us. It is time for it to end.

We need to find, once again, the proper attitude towards our country. It needs our fidelity, constancy, loyalty, faith and love.

We need the fidelity of Adah, toward our fellow Americans, with whom all our fortunes are mixed.

We need the constancy of purpose of Ruth, so that we do not forget the fundamental principles on which our laws are

founded, even in times of turmoil and stress.

We need the loyalty of Esther, loyalty which makes us willing to serve our country, and to make sacrifices on its behalf.

We need the faith of Martha that we can survive, progress, and improve ourselves, in spite of the odds against us.

And finally, we need the love of Electa, for this beautiful land, its compassionate people, and its commitment to justice.

Every person has a need for brotherhood, just as he needs religion. But both are easily lost -- not by any act of rejection, but by failing to practice, to work at it every day. If we fail to do the work of fraternity, I fear we will lose what is most fundamental to the American experience.

Regardless of rank, regardless of wealth, regardless

of race, religion, politics, or former nationality, we are a
people. We are a people with no other reason for being
than our own human need for one another. Brother Franklin said
it all when he said we must all "hang together." What he
said, two hundred years ago, is still the truth.