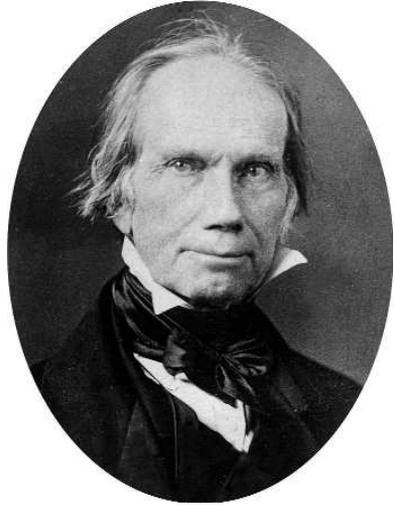


## Brother Henry Clay The Great Compromiser

The greatest skill a politician or any leader can have is ability to get a compromise. By definition this means an ability to listen to two sides in a dispute, and devise a solution acceptable to both. In American politics, Brother Henry Clay (1777–1852), speaker of the House for the 12th, 16th, and 18th Congress, is considered the greatest compromiser of all times. He was so good that he delayed the American Civil War by about 10 years. This was very significant because had the war broken out ten years earlier, the South would



have had a much greater chance of winning—the strength of the North was much less at that time. Abraham Lincoln was a great admirer of Clay, saying he was “my ideal of a great man.” In 1957, a Senate Committee selected Clay as one of the five greatest U.S. Senators, along with Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun, Robert La Follette, and Robert A. Taft.

In Freemasonry the trowel teaches us, “that noble contention, or rather emulation, of who best can work and best agree.” This is a very old way of saying that Masons are required to compromise. Clay became a Freemason at about age 21, and we might conclude that he applied this lesson to everyone he dealt with throughout his entire life—he looked for ways to get agreement rather than resorting to the position of, “let’s just agree to disagree.”

At one time, our Order was so good at “getting agreement” that it resulted in the formation of the United States. Somehow the little lesson has now become stagnated; we don’t seem to be able to agree on much, and new ideas are treated as an affront to tradition.

Nature has a ruthless way of addressing this problem: if you don’t change your ways (evolve) you will become extinct. There is no such thing as “agreeing to disagree.”

The Masonic Order is at the greatest crossroad since its inception. If we don’t take a lesson from our “Great Compromiser” (get agreement to change) we may not see the dawn of 2030, *AL 6030*.

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