



LODGE VEGAS # 32

A Masonic Dictionary...to help Masons and Non-Masons

ACCEPTED

The Latin accipere, receive, was from ad, meaning "to," and capere, meaning "take," therefore to take, to receive. The passive apprenticeship and initiation, but after the participle of this was acceptus. In Operative Masonry members were admitted through course of time, and when the Craft had begun to decay, gentlemen who had no intention of doing builders' work but were interested in the Craft for social, or perhaps for antiquarian reasons, were accepted" into membership; to distinguish these gentlemen Masons from the Operatives in the membership they were called the "Accepted." After 1717, when the whole Craft was revolutionized into a Fraternity, all members became non-Operatives, hence our use of the word in such phrases as "Free and Accepted Masons."

AFFILIATE

Filius is Latin for son, filia for daughter; the prefix "af" is a form of the Latin ad, meaning to add to. To be affiliated means therefore to be adopted into a family as a son or daughter, a meaning that beautifully covers a Mason's relation to his Lodge once he has affiliated with it.

ALARM

The Latin for weapons, or arms, was arma. Our "art" and "article" came from the same root, art meaning something originally made by the use of the arms, hands and fingers. The English "alarm" goes back directly to the Italian alle arme, and ultimately to the Latin ad arma so that "alarm" means "to arms, signifying that something has happened of possible danger. A knock at the Lodge door is so named because it calls for alertness, lest the wrong man be permitted to enter.

ALLEGORY

The Greeks called a place of public assembly agora; from this they built the word agoreuein, meaning speak, in the sense of addressing a public. When to this is added alias, meaning another, the compound gives us our "allegory," which is the speaking about one thing in the terms of something else. In Masonry we have the allegory of Solomon's Temple, of a journey, of the legend of a martyr builder, etc., in each case the acting and describing of one thing being intended to refer to some other thing. For example, the building of Solomon's Temple is described, not for the purpose of telling how that structure was erected, but to suggest boxy men may work together

in brotherliness at a common task.

ALTAR

Alt, in Latin, referred to height, preserved in our "altitude;" this root appeared in altare, literally meaning a "high place." In primitive religion it was a common practice to make sacrifices, or conduct worship, on the top of a hill, or high platform, so that "altar" came to be applied to any stone, post, platform, or other elevation used for such purposes. In the Lodge the altar is the most holy place.

APPRENTICE

In Latin apprehendere meant to lay hold of a thing in the sense of learning to understand it, the origin of our "apprehend." This became contracted into apprendre and was applied to a young man beginning to learn a trade. The latter term came into circulation among European languages and, through the Operative Masons, gave us our "apprentice," that is, one who is beginning to learn Masonry. An "Entered Apprentice" is one whose name has been entered in the books of the Lodge.

APRON

In early English, napron was used of a cloth, a tablecloth, whence our napery, nap-kin; it apparently was derived from the Latin map pa, the source of "map." "Apron is a misdivided form of "a napron," and meant a cloth, more particularly a cloth tied on in front to protect the clothes. The Operative Masons wore a leather apron out of necessity; when the craft became speculative this garment, so long identified with building work was retained as the badge of Masons; also as a symbol of purity, a meaning attached to it, probably, in comparatively recent times, though of this one cannot be certain.

ASHLAR

The Latin assis was a board or plank; in the diminutive form, assula, it meant a small board, like a shingle, or a chip. In this connection it is interesting to note that our "axle" and "axis" were derived from it. In early English this became asheler and was used to denote a stone in the rough as it came from the quarries. The Operative Masons called such a stone a "rough ashlar," and when it had been shaped and finished for its place in the wall they called it a "perfect ashlar." An Apprentice is a rough ashlar, because unfinished, whereas a Master Mason is a perfect ashlar, because he has been shaped for his place in the organization of the Craft.

ATHEIST

The Greek for God was theos; when the j prefix a was placed before it, we get the origin of "atheism," signifying a denial of the god, or gods. The word should be distinguished from "agnosticism," which means neither to affirm nor to deny but to remain in doubt; and from "infidel," which means that one does not believe some doctrine. Christians call Mohammedans "infidels" because they do not believe the Bible; Mohammedans call Christians "infidels" because they do not believe the Koran. Inasmuch as Masonry requires of a petitioner that he believe in God the atheist is automatically excluded from the Fraternity.

BROTHER

This word is one of the oldest, as it is one of the most beautiful, in any language. No-body knows where or when it originated, but it is certain that it existed in the Sanskrit, in a form strikingly

similar to that used by us. In Greek it was *phrater*, in the Latin *frater*, whence our "fraternal" and "fraternalism." It has always meant men from the same parents, or men knit by very close blood ties. When associated with "initiation, which has the general meaning of "being born into," one can see how appropriate is its use in Freemasonry. All of us have, through initiation in our "mother" Lodges, been born into a Masonry and therefore we are "brothers," and that which holds us together in one great family is the "Mystic Tie," the Masonic analogue of the blood tie among kinsmen.

CANDIDATE

Among Romans it was the custom for a man seeking office to wear a shining white robe. Since the name for such a color was *candidus* (whence our "candid"), the office seeker came to be called candidate. In our ceremonies the custom is reversed: the candidate is clothed after his election instead of before.

CARDINAL

In Masonry we have "cardinal points" and "cardinal virtues." The Greeks had *kradan*, meaning, "swing on," and the Romans had *cardo*, meaning "hinge." The roots mean that on which a thing swings, or hinges, on which a thing depends or hangs, therefore anything that is of fundamental or pivotal, importance. A member of the Sacred College of the Roman Church is a Cardinal because of the importance of his office, which ranks next in dignity to that of the Pope. The cardinal points of the compass are those from which are determined all other points, north, east, south, west; the cardinal virtues are those which are fundamental to all other virtues.

CEREMONY

The Latin *caerimonia* referred to a set of formal acts having a sacred, or revered, character. A ceremony differs from a merely formal act in that it has a religious significance; a formality becomes a ceremony only when it is made sacred. A "ceremony" may be individual, or may involve only two persons; a rite" (see below under "ritual") is more public, and necessarily involves many. An "observance" is public, as when the whole nation "observes" Memorial Day. A "Master of Ceremonies" is one who directs and regulates forms, rites and ceremonies.

CHARITY

The Greeks had a word, *charisma*, meaning a gift, and a number of words from the same root, variously suggesting rejoicing, gladness. The Latins had a similar word, *carus*, and meaning dear, possibly connected with *am* or, signifying love. From these roots came "grace," meaning a free, unbought gift, as in the theological phrase, "the grace of God," and "charity." Strictly speaking, charity is an act done freely, and spontaneously out of friendship, not as a civic duty and grudgingly, as is sometimes the case in public charity. The Masonic use of the word is much nearer this original sense, for a Mason extends relief to a needy brother not as a duty but out of friendship.

CHARTER

In Latin *charta* was a paper, a card, a map; in Medieval Latin this became an official paper, as in the case of "Magna Charta." Our "chart" and "card" are derived from the same root. A Masonic charter is the written paper, or instrument, empowering a group of brethren to act as a Lodge.

CIRCUMAMBULATION

In Masonic terminology this is the technical name of that ceremony in which the candidate walks around the Lodge. The word is derived from the Latin prefix *circum*, meaning "around," and *ambulare*, meaning "walk," whence our *ambulate*, *ambulatory*, etc.; a *circumambulation* is therefore a walking around. In ancient religions and mysteries the worshippers walked around an altar; imitating the movements of the sun; this became known as *circumambulation*, and is the origin of our own ceremony.

CLANDESTINE

In Anglo Saxon "*helan*" meant something hidden, or secret, a meaning preserved in "*conceal*;" "*hell*," the hidden place, is from the same word. *Helan* descended from the Latin *celare*, hide; and on this was built the Latin *clandestinus*, secret, hidden, furtive. In English *clandestine*, thus derived, came to mean a bad secret, one that must be indulged in furtively. A secret may be innocent; it is merely something done without the knowledge of others, and nothing is more common; but a *clandestine* act is one done in such a way as to elude observation. *Clandestine* Masonry is a bad kind of irregular and unlawful secret society falsely claiming to be Masonic. In the Constitutions a *Clandestine* Mason is defined as, "One claiming to be a Free and Accepted Mason not having received the degrees in a Lodge recognized as regular by the Grand Lodge of the State of New York."

CLOTHING

In early English *cloth* was used of garment, dress, and shows up in our *clad*, *cloth*, *clothe*, *clothing*. *Clothing* is the set of garments, or coverings, by which the body is protected from the weather and concealed from view. In Masonic usage the meaning is much narrower and more technical; a Mason is clothed when he wears the apron, white gloves, and the emblem of his rank. The apron and gloves are also employed as symbols, though gloves have pretty much fallen into disuse in American Masonry.

COLUMN

The Greeks called the top or summit of anything *kolophon*; in Latin *culmen* had a similar meaning; from these origins come our *culmination*; "*excelsior*, *colophon*, *colonnade*, *colonel*, and *climax* appears to be closely related to it. A "*column*" is a cylindrical, or slightly tapering, support; a "*pillar*" is a rectangular support. Either may stand free or be incorporated into the building fabric. The officers of a Lodge are figured as columns because they are the supports of the official fabric of the Lodge. The Great Pillars are symbolical representations of the two pillars, which stood on the Porch of King Solomon's Temple.

COMMUNICATION

There is some dispute as to the origin of this word but usually it is held to have come from *communis*, a Latin term for general, or universal, whence our *common*, *common wealth*, *communion*, *communism*, *communal* and many similar words. To *communicate* is to share something with others so that all may partake of it; a *communication* is an act, transaction, or deliberation shared in by all present. From this it will be seen how appropriate is our use of the word to designate those official Lodge meetings in which all members have a part or a voice.

COMPASSES

This is the plural of compass, from the Latin *com*, meaning "together," and *passus*, meaning a pass, step, way, or route. *Contrivance*, *cunning*, *encompass*, *pass*, *pace* derive from the same roots. A circle was once described as a compass because all the steps in making it were "together," that is, of the same distance from the center; and the word, *natural transition*, became applied to the familiar two-legged instrument for drawing a circle. Some Masons use the word in the singular, as in "square and compass," but the plural form "square and compasses" would appear to be preferable, especially since it immediately distinguishes the working tool from the mariner's compass, with which it might be otherwise confused by the uninformed.

CONSECRATION

Sacer was the Latin for something set aside as holy. By prefixing *con*, meaning "together," *consecrare* resulted, the general significance of which was that by adding to some holy object a formal ceremony the object was declared to be holy to the public, and must therefore be treated as such. The ceremony of consecrating a Lodge room is a way of giving notice to the public that it has been dedicated, or set aside, for Masonic purposes only.

CONSTITUTION

Statuere meant that a thing was set, or placed, or established; when *con* was added (see immediately above) *constituere* meant that an official ceremony had set, or fixed, or placed a thing. From the same source come *statue*, *statute*, *institute*, *restitute*, etc. A Lodge is "constituted" when it is formally and officially set up, and given its own permanent place in the Fraternity.

COWAN

The origin is unknown, but it may be early Scotch. It was used of a man who practiced Masonry, usually of the roughest character as in the building of walls, who had not been regularly trained and initiated, corresponding in some sense to "scab" as used by labor unions. If a man has learned the work by some illegal method he is a *cowan*. An "eavesdropper" is one who spies on a Lodge, and may be such without having learned anything about it before. A "clandestine" is one who has gone through initiation ceremonies but not in a regular Lodge.

CRAFT

In Anglo-Saxon, *craft* meant *cunning*, *skill*, *power*, *dexterity*, etc. The word became applied to trades and occupations calling for trained skill on the part of those practicing it. The distinction between such trades and those not requiring trained workmen, so rigidly maintained, was one of the hallmarks of the Middle Ages. Freemasonry is called a *Craft*, partly for historical reasons, partly because, unlike so many fraternities, it requires a training (given in the form of initiation ceremonies) of those seeking its membership.

DEACON

Despite the fact that the bloom has been rubbed off by our slangy use of it, this is one of the most beautiful words in our language. In Greek, *diakonos* was a servant, a messenger, a waiting man. In the early Christian Church a deacon served at the Lord's Supper and administered alms to the poor; and the word still most frequently refers to such a church officer. It appears that the two

Lodge offices of Senior and Junior Deacon were patterned on the church offices.

DEDICATION

The Latin dedicatus was a participial form of dedicare, the latter having the meaning of declare, devote, proclaim - the root from which "diction" comes. To dedicate a building means by public ceremony to declare it built for some certain purpose. Dedication and consecration are closely allied in meaning, but the latter is more religious in its purposes.

DEGREE

The Latin gradus from which are derived grade, gradual, graduation, etc., meant a step, or set of steps, particularly of a stair; when united with the prefix, da, meaning "down," it became degradus, and referred to steps, degrees, progress by marked stages. From this came our "degree," which is a step, or grade, in the progress of a candidate toward the consummation of his membership. Our habit of picturing the degrees as proceeding from lower to higher, like climbing a stair, is thus very close to the ancient and original meaning of the word.

DEPUTATION

A group of words such as compute, repute, depute sprang from the Latin putare, which meant (among other things) to estimate, to think, to count among. From this came deputatus, to select, to appoint. The idea was that from a number of persons one was told off for a special duty, hence our word "deputy." A deputation is an instrument appointing some man or group of men to act for others officially. Our Deputy Grand Master is thus set apart to act in the place of the Grand Master on need, and a District Deputy Grand Master is so called because he is appointed or told off by the Grand Master to act as his personal representative in a District.

DEMIT

(Also spelled "dimit.") As a verb this hails from the Latin dimettere, to send away, to release, to let go; we have it in our "dismiss." To dimit from an organization is, using the official form, to resign, to relinquish one's membership. It has this meaning in Masonry.

DISCALCEATION

While this is not as familiar to Masons as the preceding words, it should come into more popular use because it is the technical name to describe an important element in the ceremony of initiation. Calceare was the Latin for shoe, calceatus meant shod. When united with the prefix dis, meaning apart, or asunder, our discalceate was originated, the obvious meaning of which is the removal of one's shoes, as suggested in the familiar Bible passage, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." The ceremonial removal of the shoes is properly called the "rite of discalceation."

DISPENSATION

Pendere was the Latin word for a weight, the root from which came many English words, notably pendent, expend, spend, dispense, etc. With the prefix dis, explained in the preceding paragraph, dispendere meant to weigh out, to pay off, to expend. From this came dispensatus, meaning to manage, to regulate, to distribute. In our usage a dispensation is a written instrument by which authority is made over to a group of brethren to form a Lodge.

DOTAGE

This is not a very beautiful word but it is interesting. It first came into existence among the early English, Dutch, German, and Scandinavian peoples, generally in the form dotten, dutten, meaning to nod with drowsiness, to nap. Since it was old people who most frequently sat nodding in their chairs it became associated with old age. "An old man in his dotage" is one who nods or prattles like a sleepy child, and whose faculties have begun to decay through old age. Old age is never a bar to Masonic membership unless it has reached this stage.

DUES

In Latin debere meant to owe something; it is preserved in our familiar, too familiar, "debt," in debit, indebted, debenture, duty, dues, etc. Related is the French devoir, often employed in English, meaning a piece of work one is under obligation to do. The same idea appears in "duty," which means that which is due, or that which is owed, in the moral sense. Dues represent one's fixed and regular indebtedness to his Lodge which he placed himself under obligation to pay when he signed the by-laws.

EAVESDROPPER

Early European peoples used a word in various forms - evese, obasa, opa, etc., -which meant the rim, or edge, of something, like the edge of a field; it came in time to be applied wholly to the gutter which runs along the edge of a roof. (Our "over" comes from this root.) "Dropper" had an origin among the same languages, and meant that which drips, or dribbles, like water dropping from a thawing icicle. Eavesdrop, therefore, was the water which dripped from the eaves. If a man set himself to listen through a window or keyhole to what was going on in a house he had to stand so close that the eavesdropping would fall upon him, for which reason all prying persons, seeking by secret means what they have no business to know, came to be called eavesdroppers.

EDICT

The root of this word is the Latin dicere, speak; united with the prefix e, meaning out, to come forth, it produced edicere, meaning to proclaim, to speak out with authority. It came in time to be applied to the legal pronouncements of a sovereign or ruler speaking in his own name and out of his own authority. When a Grand Master issues a certain official proclamation in his own name and out of the authority vested in his office it is an edict.

EMBLEM

This beautiful and significant word, so familiar to Masons, has historical affiliations with the original idea embodied in "mosaic work," on which something is said below. Emblem is derived from the Greek prefix en, meaning in, united with ballein, meaning cast, put. The word became applied to raised decorations on pottery, to inlay work, tessellated and mosaic work; and since such designs were nearly always formal and symbolical in character, emblem came to mean an idea expressed by a picture or design. As Bacon put it, an emblem represents an intellectual conception in a sensible image. It belongs to that family of words of which type, symbol, figure, allegory, and metaphor are familiar members.

ESOTERIC

This is the opposite of exoteric. The root of it is the Greek eso, within. It means that which is secret, in the inner circle. Exoteric is that which is outside. In Masonry the "esoteric work" is that part of the Ritual which it is illegal to publish, while the exoteric is that part which is published in the Monitor.

FELLOW

In Anglo Saxon lagu (from which we have "law") meant that which was permanently ordered, fixed, set; fe meant property; fela suggested properties set together, in other words, a partnership. From this we have "fellow," a companion, mate, partner, an equal, a peer. A man became a "fellow" in a Medieval guild or corporation when admitted a member on the same terms as all others, sharing equally in the duties, rights, and privileges. In Operative Masonry, in order to be a fellow a man had to be a Master Mason, in the sense of having passed through his apprenticeship, so that Masters were fellows and fellows were Masters. Prior to about 1740 "Fellow of the Craft" and "Master Mason" referred to the same grade or degree, but at about that year a new division in ranking was made, and "Fellow Craft" was the name given to the Second Degree in the new system, Master Mason to the Third.

FORM

We speak of the "form of the Lodge," "due form," etc. The word is derived from the Latin forma, which meant the shape, or figure, or frame of anything; also it was used of a bench, or seat, whence the old custom of calling school benches "forms." It is the root of formal, formation, informal, and scores of other English words equally familiar. The "form of the Lodge" is its symbolical shape; a ceremony is in "due form" if it have the officially required character or framework of words and actions.

FORTITUDE

The key to the meaning of this magnificent word lies in its derivation from the Latin fords, meaning strong, powerful, used in the Middle Ages of a stronghold, or fort. Force, enforce, fortify, fortification, forceful, are from the same root. A man of fortitude has a character built strong like a fort, which can be neither taken by bribe nor over-thrown by assault, however strong may be the enemy, or however great may be the suffering or deprivation within. One is reminded of Luther's great hymn, "A mighty fortress is our God."

FRATERNITY

This the most prized, perhaps, of all words in Masonry, harks back to the Latin frater, which is so closely allied to "brother," as already noted in the paragraph on that word. It gives us fra, frater, fraternize, and many other terms of the same import. A fraternity is a society in which the members strive to live in a brotherly concord patterned on the family relations of blood brothers, where they are worthy of the tie. To be fraternal means to treat another man as if he were a brother in the most literal sense.

GAGE

Gage (also spelled "gauge") has an uncertain ancestry. Early French and English peoples had gauger, gagen, etc., which referred to the measuring of wine casks; some believe our "gallon" and

“gill” to have been thus derived. Its meaning became enlarged to include any kind of measuring, literally or figuratively. The instrument used to do the measuring came to be called “the gage.” Among Operative Masons it was used to measure a stone for cutting to the required “twenty-four-inch gage” is such a measuring rod or stick marked off into twenty-four inches.

GEOMETRY

It is unfortunate that for most men schoolroom drudgery has robbed this beautiful word of its poetry. The Greek geo (in compounds) was earth, land; metron was measure. The original geometer was a landmeasurer, a surveyor, but his methods became broadened and applied to many other kinds of problems, so that at last his craft became a portion of the art of mathematics. Geometry, that branch of mathematics which deals with figures in space, is associated in every Mason’s mind with the immortal Euclid, who figures 50 prominently in all the ancient Masonic manuscripts. It achieved its great place in Freemasonry because of its constant and prime importance in the builders’ art. Symbolically speaking geometry (to it the Letter G originally referred), consists of all those fixed principles and laws of morality and of thought to which a right character and a true mind adjust themselves.

GRAMMAR

The Greeks had graphein, to write, or draw (from this we have graphic, engrave, etc.) ; gamma was that which was written or drawn. Grammar now refers only to the skeletal framework of language, its parts of speech and their combinations, but formerly it included all forms of learning based on language, such as rhetoric and what is now taught in the schools as English; by the time our Monitor was written, however, grammar and rhetoric had become differentiated, nevertheless the Monitorial portion of the Second Degree makes it plain that a Fellow Craftsman expected to be a literate man, knowing something of the arts of language in both speaking and writing. In interpreting the Second Degree this wide meaning of “grammar must be kept in mind.

GRAND

Grandis in the Latin meant great, large, awesome, especially in the sense of imposing; it was afterwards applied to the aged, the ripe in experience, an application easy enough to understand when one recalls the reverence paid by the Romans to seniority, long experience, etc. this latter meaning appears in our grandfather, grandmother, grandsire, etc. In English the word developed in two directions, one toward that which is great, large, awe-inspiring, as in “grandeur,” the other toward dignity, exalted power. Our own use of the term in “Grand” Lodge, “Grand” East, “Grand” Master, harks back to the latter of the two usages. The head of the Craft is called “Grand” Master because he is its most exalted official.

GRIP

Grip, grope, grab, grasp, gripe came the same roots. The Anglo Saxon gripe meant to clutch, to lay hold of, to seize, to grasp strongly. A grip means to clasp another’s hand firmly; it differs from a mere hand clasp, which may be a meaningless formality. in that it is done earnestly, and for a purpose—for what purpose in our fraternal system every Mason knows. A grip should be given as if one meant it; half of its meaning lies in the way it is done.

Prepare By, Br. Florian for the benefit of the Craft, September, 2013