



## LODGE VEGAS # 32

### CADUCEUS

The Caduceus was the magic wand of the god Hermes. It was an olive staff twined with fillets, which were gradually converted to wings and serpents. Hermes, or Mercury, was the messenger of Jove. Among his numerous attributes, one of the most important was that of conducting disembodied spirits to the other world, and, on necessary occasions, of bringing them back. He was the guide of souls, and the restorer of the dead to life.

Thus, Horace, in addressing him, says:

Unspotted spirits you consign  
To blissful seats and joys divine,  
And powerful with your golden wand  
The light unburied crowd command.  
Vergil also alludes to this attribute of the magic wand  
when he is describing the flight of  
Mercury on his way to bear Jove's warning message to Aeneas:  
His wand he takes ; with this pale ghost he calls  
From Pluto's realms, or sends to Tartarus' shore.

And Statius, imitating this passage, makes the same allusion in his  
Thebaid (1, 314), thus translated by Lewis:

He grasps the wand which draws from hollow graves,  
Or drives the trembling shades to Stygian waves ;  
With magic power seals the watchful eye  
In slumbers soft or causes sleep to fly.

The history of this Caduceus, or magic wand, will lead us to its symbolism. Mercury, who had invented the lyre, making it out of the shell of the tortoise, exchanged it with Apollo for the latter's magical wand. This wand was simply an olive branch around which were placed two fillets of ribbon. Afterward, when Mercury was in Arcadia, he encountered two serpents engaged in deadly combat. These he separated with his wand; hence the olive wand became the symbol of peace, and the two fillets were replaced by the two serpents, thus giving to the Caduceus its well-known form of a staff, around which two serpents are entwined.

Such is the legend; but we may readily see that in the olive, as the symbol of immortality, borne as the attribute of Mercury, the giver of life to the dead, we have a more ancient and profounder



symbolism. The serpents, symbols also of immortality, are appropriately united with the olive wand. The legend also accounts for a later and secondary symbolism-that of peace.

The Caduceus then-the original meaning of which word is a herald's staff-as the attribute of a life-restoring God, is in its primary. meaning the symbol of immortality; so in Freemasonry the rod of the Senior Deacon, or the Master of Ceremonies, is but an analogue or representation of the Hermean Caduceus. This officer, as leading the aspirant through the forms of initiation into his new birth or Masonic regeneration, and teaching him in the solemn ceremonies of the Third Degree the lesson of eternal life, may well use the magic wand as a representation of it, which was the attribute of that ancient deity who brought the dead into life.

- **Source: Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry**

## **CATECHISM**

From the earliest times the oral instructions of Freemasonry have been communicated in a catechetical form.

Each degree has its peculiar catechism, the knowledge of which constitutes what is called a bright Freemason.

The catechism, indeed, should be known to every Freemason, for every aspirant should be thoroughly instructed in that of the degree to which he has attained before he is permitted to make further progress.

The rule, however, is not rigidly observed; and many Freemasons, unfortunately, are very ignorant of all but the rudimentary parts of their catechism, which they derive only from hearing portions of it communicated at the opening and closing of the Lodge, or from careless Brethren freely using Masonic expressions publicly.

- **Source: Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry**

## **EAST**

The East has always been considered peculiarly sacred. This was, without exception, the case in all the Ancient Mysteries. In the Egyptian rites, especially, and those of Adonis, which were among the earliest, and from which the others derived their existence, the sun was the object of adoration, and his revolutions through the various seasons were fictitiously represented. The spot, there fore, where this luminary made his appearance at the commencement of day, and where his worshipers were wont anxiously to look for the first darting of his prolific rays, was esteemed as the figurative birthplace of their god, and honored with an appropriate degree of reverence. Even among those nations where sun-worship gave place to more enlightened doctrines, the respect for the place of sun-rising continued to exist. The camp of Judah was placed by Moses in the East as a mark of distinction; the tabernacle in the wilderness was placed due East and West; and the practice was continued in the erection of Christian churches. Hence, too, the primitive Christians always turned toward the East in their public prayers, which custom Saint Augustine (Serm. Dom. in Monte, chapter 5 accounts for "because the East is the most honorable part of the world, being the region of light whence the glorious sun arises." Hence all Masonic Lodges, like their great prototype the Temple of Jerusalem, are built, or supposed to be

built, due East and West; and as the North is esteemed a place of darkness, the East, on the contrary, is considered a place of light.

In the primitive Christian church, according to Saint Ambrose, in the ceremonies that accompanied the baptism of a catechumen, a beginner in religious instruction, "he turned towards the West, the image of darkness, to abjure the world, and towards the East, the emblem of light, to denote his alliance with Jesus Christ." And so, too, in the oldest lectures of the second century ago, the Freemason is said to travel from the West to the East, that is, from darkness to light. In the Prestonian system, the question is asked, "What induces you to leave the West to travel to the East?" And the answer is: "In search of a Master, and from him to gain instruction." The same idea, if not precisely the same language, is preserved in the modern and existing rituals.

The East, being the place where the Master sits, is considered the most honorable part of the Lodge, and is distinguished from the rest of the room by a dais, or raised platform, which is occupied only by those who have passed the Chair. Bazot (Manuel, page 154) says: "The veneration which Masons have for the East confirms the theory that it is from the East that the Masonic cult proceeded, and that this bears a relation to the primitive religion whose first degeneration was sun-worship."

- Source: Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry

## **The Goat**

The vulgar idea that "riding the goat" constitutes a part of the ceremonies of initiation in a Masonic Lodge has its real origin in the superstitions of antiquity.

The old Greeks and Romans portrayed their mystical god Pan in horns and hoof and shaggy hide, and called him "goat-footed." When the demonology of the classics was taken up and modified by the early Christians, Pan gave way to Satan, who naturally inherited his attributes, so that to the common mind the devil was represented by a he goat, and his best-known marks were the horns, the beard, and the cloven hoofs.

Then came the witch stories of the Middle Ages and the belief in the witch orgies, where it was said that the devil appeared riding on a goat. These orgies of the witches, where, amid fearfully blasphemous ceremonies, they practiced initiation into their Satanic rites, became to the vulgar and the illiterate the type of the Masonic mysteries; for, as Dr. Oliver says, it was in England a common belief that the Freemasons were accustomed in their Lodges "to raise the devil." So the "riding of the goat," which was believed to be practiced by the witches, was transferred to the Freemasons, and the saying remains to this day, although the belief has long since died out.

- Source: The National Freemason - 1873

## **Web Master's Note**

The notion of riding the goat is still used by many masons in kidding a potential candidate especially when that candidate is a personal friend. So common is this inside joke that it has been used in at least one Masonic poem:

**I KNOW YOU!**  
**by R. Gould**

Don't cover me up - don't take my light  
I can tell who you are by day or by night  
I can tell by your walk  
I can tell by your talk  
I can tell by how you stand  
Or by the shake of your hand  
If you are lost - I know where you can be found  
All I have to do is take a look around  
I know who you are if you tell me your age  
Then I know what conversation we can engage  
I can tell if there is a spider on your coat  
That you are the man who had to ride the goat  
If you can't read or write but you can spell  
Then I know you very well  
But there is something I want you to know  
I am - the son of a widow  
If you know from whence I hail  
Then you are a man who is truly veiled

**- Source:** [Robert Freke Gould](#)

*Prepare By, Br. Florian for the benefit of the Craft, DEC, 2012*