

THE LODGE

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I SHOULD like to derive the word Lodge from the Anglo-Saxon "lecgan," to "lay" or "lie." I like this derivation better than that from the Greek "logos," as none of the other derivatives of this word have the soft "g"; and I like it much more than that which derives it from the German "Laub," and makes it cognate with "lobby." Perhaps, however, some brother, more fortunate than myself, has access to Skeat's New Etymological Dictionary of the English Language, now being published in England, and probably the last word in etymological definition.

If Lodge is derived from "lecgan," however, we may formulate three definitions all containing the root meaning, and particularly applicable to Free Masonry.

The first definition, then, that we can give to the word Lodge is that it is a place where Free Masons "lie," or rest, during their travels in foreign parts, and is undoubtedly taken from the name given the huts that lay around the feet of the great Cathedrals on which the Craft lavished their art and skill. It was in these that the Craftsmen lay at night and spent the eight hours allotted to refreshment and sleep.

Symbolically, let us remember that, as Masons, we are, on this earth, traveling in foreign parts working at the erection of the Temple in which, when it is completed and the ledger--or cope-- stone is laid, the Stone rejected by the builders, we expect to possess the Word and to receive our due wages. The place of our labors, however, is the Lodge; and this is symbolically represented as the world wherein we rest until we receive the summons to travel on to another country.

Now let us examine the symbolism that compares the Lodge to King Solomon's Temple. This edifice, and particularly the Sanctum Sanctorum or Holy of Holies, was that in which the Word of God lay, and which, to the devout Jew, was the Lodge of God among men. But the Temple was but a symbol of that House not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens, and it is on this House, or Lodge, that we as Masons are laboring, preparing, by means of our working tools, the living stones. Let us notice, by the way, how the rough ashlar is taken by the cable-tow and, after the application of the point of a sharp instrument, made a perfect ashlar and set in the corner of foundation. Then again, more firmly held by the cable-tow and, having been tried by the square, it is passed to a more excellent position and caused to stand before the eye of the Supreme

Architect. Finally, still more securely bound by the cable-tow, according to the plans delineated by the Compasses, it is raised, after many trials, from earth to heaven, where finally it will contain the Word. Symbolism therefore teaches us that the Lodge is where our Mysteries lie.

In the lodge of the master of the work our ancient operative brethren gathered to transact such business as might properly come before them, and to make, pass and raise Masons. So an assemblage of Masons came to be called a Lodge. But here let us remember that with such a Lodge lay the power of conferring the degrees and of regulating the Craft, and so, authority having been deposited with a proper number, they might be considered, in an especial sense, the Lodge.

There is a striking similarity between Free Masonry and the Catholic Church. Corresponding to the Worshipful Master is the Bishop and to the brethren about the Lodge the Bishop's council of presbyters. To these was committed the deposit of the faith-- which is the Word of God--and the ministration of the Mysteries, by which men are introduced, passed and raised--by means of the Sacraments-- into a position of unity with God. So with the Master, Wardens and Brethren is lodged the "Landmarks"-- of some of which we should not speak too openly--and the power of ministering the Mysteries after the true Masonic manner, with the result of making a man ultimately the depository of the Masonic Word, which in itself is symbolic of unity with the Grand Architect of the Universe. Thus a body of men may be known as a Lodge, because of what "lies" with them.

There is another sense in which Masons use the word Lodge, and that is in connection with a piece of furniture seen only, as a rule, at the consecration of new lodges. It is used there as a symbol of the Lodge, and it may also be taken to be a symbol of the Ark of the Covenant--which was made, by the way, of the wood of the acacia-- which was the place of deposit of the Testimony of God (Ex. xxv., 16). I think that the Ark of the Lodge should be that which conceals what is revealed at the illumination of a Mason, the Word of God, and the Urim and Thummim of Direction and Truth, the Great Lights of Masonry. (cf. Hasting's "Dictionary of the Bible," and Pike's "Morals and Dogma" sub voce.)

It must be remembered that the Ark of the Covenant was the primary symbol of the Presence of God in the revelation of Religion under the older order. It lay first in the

Tabernacle and afterwards in the Temple, and was that for which the Temple was built to contain. At the destruction of the Temple it disappeared--"Arca Testamenti nostri direpta est, 4 Esdras x. 22, ad Vulgatam--and it, and the cavern in which it was hidden were objects of search to the pious Jew. (cf. Jerem. iii. 16, and 2 Macc. ii. 4, et seq.) Some scholars state that the Ark was destroyed; but certain traditions indicate otherwise.

We may further notice that, according to the Old Testament, it was not God's purpose to take Himself away absolutely from His people, but only to retire from them for a while as a punishment for their sins. It became necessary for Him to remove from them the abiding presence of His Word, because the people had profaned it by their misconduct, because they looked on the Mystery of godliness with less than that reverential awe due it, and had made it common among them. Therefore the Ark was taken from them, the Word was lost, but not forever. And so the Lodge of Consecration could well remain as the symbol of the resting place of the Word, and the abiding principle of Free Masonry.

Now all of this may be taken as a study in etymology, and some of the symbolism contained therein. And it is concerned here more with the objective philosophy of Free Masonry than the subjective, which seems to be the trend of Masonic study of today. But still we have seen that the Lodge, in all senses of the word, represents the Deposit of the Word of God, where it "lies," or is "lodged," for the benefit of the Craft, to be given each one at the completion of the Temple, if found worthy. Some of us, it is true, believe that the Word is to be found in Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, whom we call Emmanuel, God with us, the Tabernacle of God with men, the Temple destroyed and rebuilt in three days. So we strive to defend the Christian religion and spread the genuine cement of brotherly love and friendship, that we all may be "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Ephes. ii. 22.)