

# MASONIC TERMS

## **First Degree Catechism**

**Allegory:** "Freemasonry is a system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols." Allegory is an extended simile; metaphors is an abbreviated simile. Allegory is a parable, fable, fiction. It tells its story as if true, leaving the hearer to discover that it is fiction and from the discovery, learn the lesson. The fictitious character of the allegory is not deceptive; the fiction is used to teach just as the Great Teacher used parables to instruct.

**Cable tow:** Probably from the German "Kable tau." Originally the term was "cable rope." Symbolically, like the umbilical cord which attaches infant to mother, it attaches the initiate to his Lodge. It is removed as soon as the spiritual bond of the obligation takes the place of physical restraint. The Baltimore Masonic Convention of 1843 defined the length of the cable tow as "the scope of a brother's reasonable ability." Half a mile might be beyond the length of a cable tow for a lame man and a hundred miles within its length for one with a car and a good road.

**Hele:** A word that has caused a considerable amount of enquiry and some controversy. It is old, Saxon and is pronounced hail or hale. It means to conceal.

**The Lambskin Master Mason apron:** Derives from the working apron of the ancient stone masons. It is an Emblem of Innocence and the badge of a Freemason. Thus, the apron is proudly compared with the noblest decorations of ancient Rome and of both ancient and modern Europe.

**The Order of the Golden Fleece:** Was of high repute as an Order of Knighthood. It was established in Flanders, France in 1429 by the Duke of Burgundy, a member of the then royal family, who selected the fleece for its badge because wool was the staple production of the country. Since that time, it has been considered as one of the most illustrious Orders of Europe.

**The Roman Eagle** was to Romans the ensign of imperial power. Made of silver or bronze, the Roman Eagle was placed atop the pole of the military standards (flags). (circa 104 B.C.)

**The Order of the Garter:** Was and is, still considered the highest decoration that can be bestowed upon a subject by a sovereign of Great Britain. It is an order of chivalry or knighthood originating in medieval England. It is the pinnacle of honor in the United Kingdom to have the Order of the Garter bestowed upon you.

### **Innocence of Conduct and Purity of Heart:**

The Master Mason apron teaches the aspiring Mason that none are admitted to that honor but such as were cleansed of all impurities of both body and mind.

Purity of life and rectitude of conduct is essential and necessary to gain admittance into

that Celestial Lodge on High where the Supreme Architect of the Universe forever presides.

In primitive times, it was an ecclesiastical (religious) decoration more than a civil decoration.

The earliest mention of the apron was when Melchizedek, with Abraham, started the priesthood. (circa 2100 B.C.) Melchizedek was the Most High Priest and the first to wear the apron as the badge of religious authority. The apron is a high honor and is the symbol of a holy man.

### **Second Degree Catechism**

**Apron:** (verb) to put an apron on; furnish with an apron

**Laudable:** worthy of praise

**Off or From:** 'Will you be off or from?' Is this a test-question or a 'catch-question'? This is not a catch-question. It is a question in what is known, in Scottish working, as the 'short method' of passing or raising the Lodge from one degree to another. "From" (if the Lodge is going up in the degree). If the Lodge is coming down, "Off instead of 'From". This method of getting the Lodge up and down from one degree to another is quite popular and is much used by the Scottish country Lodges.

In Ireland, Scotland, certain Canadian jurisdictions, California, Texas, and doubtless in many other places too, the question 'Will you be off or from?' is still used as part of the 'Entrusting' and subsequent testing of candidates, i.e., for passing from the grip of one degree to the one immediately above, and also from the pass-grips to the second and third to the proper grips of these degrees.

**Supplant:** to supersede (another) especially by force or treachery

**Water Ford:** a shallow part of a body of water that may be crossed by wading

### **Third Degree Catechism**

**Dotage:** Does not refer to any specified number of years, as does nonage (see below) but to mental condition. A man may be in his dotage at fifty and in full possession of his faculties at ninety. Dotage is that age at which a man is senile, regardless of his years.

**Holden:** Ancient form of the word "held." It is good Masonic language to speak of a Lodge as "holden" under its Grand Lodge, or of the Feast of St. John as "holden" on St. John's Day in winter.

**Nonage:** Under the age of manhood; historically in this country, twenty-one years for a male. The NC Code was amended January 1, 2003, to lower the age to eighteen. No

boy can be made a Mason; in almost all Jurisdictions he must have passed his nonage before he can apply for Freemasonry, on the theory that a boy is yet under the control of his parents; only a man can ask for Freemasonry "of his own free will and accord."

### **Other Masonic Terms of Interest**

**Calendar:** Masonic Calendars differ from civil calendars. Four thousand years are added to civil dates to get Masonic dates; thus, this is the year 6014, A.L.-standing for *Anno Lucis*. (After Light). Each Rite of Freemasonry-Royal Arch, Royal and Select Masters, Knights Templar, Scottish Rite, has its own Calendar.

**Caviling:** Frivolous argument; raising hypercritical objections; asserting untruths to gain an end. Those who cavil attempt to persuade by means they know are not true; those who argue may present what they believe to be facts. The man who argues may be wholly sincere. He who cavils is not.

**Circumambulation:** Walking around a central object, as an Altar. The Rite of Circumambulation was practiced by the most ancient sun worshipers. Masonic circumambulation is from East to West by way of the South, an imitation of the apparent course of the sun in this hemisphere. Anciently circumambulation from East to West by way of the North was symbolic of death. Originally such reversed circumambulation was used in Freemasonry but "ritual tinkers" and well intentioned but ignorant Custodians of the Work have here and there sanctioned reverse circumambulation in Masonic degrees with no significance beyond that of convenience.

**Clandestine:** That Mason or Masonry who or which is not recognized, without authority. Often used carelessly as a synonym for irregular. A clandestine Mason is one made in a clandestine Lodge; one not holden under a regular Grand Lodge. An irregular Mason may be one raised in a regular Lodge without compliance with Masonic law; as on a Sunday, without due notice, without waiting statutory time between degrees and lacking a dispensation, etc. Irregularity can be "healed". The only way a clandestine Mason can become a real Mason is by application, investigation, ballot and initiation, passing and raising in a regular Lodge.

**Cowan:** Is not synonymous with eavesdropper (see below.) The Cowan, (old Scotch term, obsolete except in Freemasonry) is an uninstructed Mason; a Mason without the word; a self-taught workman who builds walls without mortar; an amateur stonecutter and setter. In modern times a Cowan is an Apprentice or Fellow Craft who attempts to sit in a Masters' Lodge.

**Eavesdropper:** Not to be confused with cowan, although the two are usually mentioned together. The eavesdropper tries to hear what is private; he is the man who listens at keyholes or conceals himself in a room where Masonic work is being done. The word comes from a time in England when the eaves of thatched roofs were raised above the walls for ventilation. Climbing up the wall to listen through the opening the spy on privacy received the droppings from the eaves-hence "eavesdropper". In modern

times the Masonic eavesdropper is the imposter, the profane who attempts to pass himself off as a Mason when he is not.

**Profane:** Masonically does not refer to blasphemy, but to non-membership. A profane is one without the Temple, not initiated; from the Latin pro, without, and *fanum*, Temple. The "profane world" then, is the non-Masonic world.

**Purge:** Means neither destruction of life or results of strong medicine. Masonically, to "purge the Lodge" means only to ascertain by proper Masonic means if all present are Masons and entitled to sit within the tiled doors.

**Strict trial:** Refers to the matter, not the manner of an examination. A trial is *strict* when it satisfies a committee that the one being examined is what he purports to be.

**Summonses:** Commands issued by a Master to his members to appear at a special meeting, or as a witness in a Masonic trial; commands issued by the Grand Master to appear before him or Grand Lodge.

**Tenet:** Any truth held to be self-evident; differs from doctrine as truth differs from theory. Truth demonstrates that the circle cannot be squared. According to theory it should be possible. The tenet is believed without proof; theories demand proof.

***\*This list was created from the "Coaches Clinic" presentation.***