

Ask Hiram

Why do we open our Lodges in "Due and Ancient Form," but we open Grand Lodge in "Ample Form?"

According to Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia, "Ample Form" is used only when the Grand Master is present. "Ample means plentiful, sufficient, or more than adequate..." "The origin of the term is unknown." The distinction between "Due Form" and "Ample Form" "seems to be purely a Masonic technicality..." "Due Form means proper, adequate, or correct form and in accordance with statute, custom or ritual."

According to Albert Mackey's An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, "When the Grand Master is present at the opening or closing of the Grand Lodge, it is said to be opened or closed "in ample form." Any ceremony performed by the Grand Master is said to be done "in ample form"; when performed by the Deputy, it is said to be "in due form"; and by any other temporarily presiding officer, it is "in form." "The terms Ample and Due Form appear to have been introduced by Anderson in his 1738 edition of the Constitutions (p. 110)."

Remember that the Grand Lodge of England was established in 1717 and its first Grand Master was installed.

Interestingly, please look at the "The Constitution of Masonry," commonly called "The Book of Constitutions," as adopted by the Grand Lodge of Virginia in 1791, (which you can find in front of your Virginia Methodical Digest and your Presentation Volume) do you see "Ample Form" mentioned?

What are the "Clefts of the Rock?"

As noted in the Masonic Bible, King James Version, Heirloom Bible Publishers, "In Palestine, many caves, dens in rocks, and vast clefts in rocks exist. These have been used as hiding places by refugees, exiles, and men hunted down for various reasons."

A partial definition of Cleft defined in Microsoft Bookshelf as a *noun*:

1. A crack, crevice, or split.
2. A split or indentation between two parts, as of the chin.

A partial definition of Cleft defined in Webster's Third International Dictionary:

1. A space or opening made by or as if by splitting
2. An abrupt defile, chasm or cut.

What is meant by a "sheaf of wheat?"

A partial definition as defined in Webster's Third International Dictionary:

1. A quantity of the stalks and ears of wheat, rye, or other grain bound together

What is meant by the term "or ever the silver cord be loosed?"

As noted in the Masonic Bible, King James Version, Heirloom Bible Publishers, it is a figurative expression in that beautiful passage descriptive of the debilitations of old age or approaching death. It is thought to refer to the weakening of the spinal cord which results in the loosening of the nervous system.

Hiram, in your opinion what is the most important part of the significance of being received in the middle chamber?

In answering your question, I will quote a few sentences taken from the Presentation Volume, page 309: "This signifies that man must acquire knowledge chiefly through his own effort..." "Emphasis, therefore, should be placed upon the expenditure of effort by the initiate, for without this he cannot reap the reward which he seeks." "The rewards found there must be stressed, for each act done by man brings to him either reward or punishment."

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