

Light in Masonry



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FOREWORD

This publication has been prepared for presentation to you, an Entered Apprentice Mason, after your receipt of the Entered Apprentice Degree. It is hoped that you will welcome additional "light" on the Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons.

One's appreciation of Masonry grows with the increase in his understanding of its history, its symbolism, its philosophy, its worldwide character, its ethical standards, and the ideal of genuine brotherhood fostered among the multitude of its members.

Such is your heritage after initiation; and as you progress you will discover Masonry inexhaustible in interest and life-long in its appeal. In your own interest, therefore, give thoughtful attention to the materials contained in this publication.

LIGHT IN MASONRY

The Meaning of "Entered Apprentice"

You are now an Entered Apprentice or EA Mason. The first step in your journey to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason has been taken. Doubtless you found your initiation an experience you will always remember. A degree in Masonry is not an isolated experience, but a lasting privilege. You are now entitled to sit in an Entered Apprentice Lodge. You can return to observe, to participate and to study. The language and ceremonies of the Entered Apprentice Degree may have seemed unique, perhaps even strange, to you. A brief explanation of the term "Entered Apprentice" may help you to understand better the unique character of the language and ceremonies of the degree.

The builders of the remarkable structures erected in the Gothic style of architecture in the middle Ages in Europe and Great Britain from 600 to 900 years ago are called "Operative Masons". They were builders in the literal sense, hewing stone from the quarries, shaping the stones, laying it in the walls, constructing roofs, doors, windows and spires. It was their trade and means of livelihood.

These Operative Masons were organized into Guilds and Lodges, governed by Masters and Wardens. The members were divided into grades. They employed ceremonies of initiation and used signs, symbols and passwords. Only men were admitted to membership. The Lodges of the Operative Masons were, in many ways, strikingly similar to ours.

It was necessary for the Operative Masons to recruit new members to replace those lost through removal, accident, illness or death. To do this they used the apprenticeship system, which was in vogue in all crafts for many centuries.

The word "Apprentice" means "learner", or "beginner", one who is taking his first step in mastering a trade, art or profession. The Operative Apprentice was a boy, usually from ten to fifteen years of age. He was required to be sound in body in order to do work requiring physical strength and endurance. He had to be of good habits, obedient, willing to learn, of unquestionable reputation and well recommended by Masons already members of the Craft.

When such a youth was chosen as an Apprentice, he was called into the Lodge where all of the members could assure themselves of his mental, moral and physical qualifications. If they voted to receive him, he was given much information about the

Craft. He was told something of its early history and tradition. He was also told what was required of the members and what his specific duties would be. He promised to obey his superiors, to work diligently, to observe the laws and to keep the secrets.

After being thus obligated, he was bound over, or indentured, to one of the more experienced Master Masons. As a rule he lived with this Master Mason. Day by day the Apprentice learned the methods and secrets of the trade from the Master Mason. This apprenticeship usually lasted seven years. When the Apprentice was able to give assurance of his fitness to master the art and to become an acceptable member of the society, his name was entered on the books of the Lodge and he was given a recognized place in the Craft organization. Because of this official entering of his name, he was given the title "Entered Apprentice".

It is difficult to exaggerate the care our Operative Masonic forbearers devoted to these learners. The Master Mason to whom the Apprentice was indentured was required by law to teach him the theory as well as the practice of Masonry. Not until the apprentice, after many years, could prove his proficiency by meeting the most rigid tests of skill, was he permitted to advance to a higher rank in the Craft. Other Master Masons with whom he worked were also his teachers. The Apprentice was given moral instruction, and his conduct was carefully scrutinized. Rules were laid down to control his manner of life. When we read the Old Charges and ancient documents that have come down to us, we are impressed by the space devoted to Apprentices. The Operative Masons knew that the Apprentice of today becomes the Master Mason of the future.

As time passed, there grew up an organized set of customs, rules and ceremonies. These became a well defined unit, which we may describe as the Operative Entered Apprentice Degree. After the Reformation, Operative Masonry was transformed into Speculative Masonry; and the Entered Apprentice Degree was retained as the first of the three degrees of the Speculative Lodge. It was modified, of course, to meet the needs of the Speculative Fraternity, but its substance and meaning is fundamentally the same as it always has been.

As an Entered Apprentice Mason, you are a learner, a beginner in Speculative Masonry. You have taken the first step in the mastery of the art.

What is expected of an Entered Apprentice Mason?

First, you must recognize that you are a learner and that you will have certain guides and teachers. You should listen to the Master Masons who are interested in helping you become a Master Mason yourself.

Second, you must learn certain portions of the Degree and be able to prove your proficiency in open lodge. You are to learn these parts, not only to pass a test, but because you will have need of them many times in the future.

Third, you must study to improve yourself in Masonry in other ways. You should learn the laws, rules and regulations by which an Entered Apprentice Mason is governed.

As you stood in the Northeast Comer of the Lodge during your initiation, you were taught a certain lesson concerning a cornerstone. The meaning of that lesson should now be clear to you. You are a cornerstone of the Craft. The day will come when the responsibilities of the Lodge will be in your hands.

An Interpretation of the Ritual of the First Degree

The Masonic Lodge room is represented in the ritual as a symbol of the world. This symbol relates to earlier times when man believed the earth to be square and the sky to be a solid dome. While this no longer represents our idea of the physical shape of the world, the significance remains the same.

The world thus represented is the world of Freemasonry. The West Gate through which the candidate enters represents his beginning of a new relationship in the Craft. Freemasonry requires that its members be good and true men. While Freemasonry offers opportunities for good fellowship and social contacts, it satisfies the mind with the great teachings of a profound philosophy.

In the First Degree an Apprentice takes his first step into the life of Masonic Brotherhood. The Apprentice leaves the darkness, destitution and helplessness of his former situation for the warmth of this new existence. This is the great meaning of the First Degree.

Symbols of the First Degree

A few brief explanations of some of the symbols of the Entered Apprentice Degree will show that every detail of the ritual is filled with significance. For more complete explanations, your Counselor will be of assistance.

Hoodwink; The Hoodwink represents the darkness in which an uninitiated man stands as regards Masonry. It is removed at the moment of enlightenment, suggesting that we do not make the great things of existence such as goodness, truth and beauty but find them. They are always there, it is our blindness that conceals them from us.

Cable Tow; The Cable Tow is a symbol of those external restraints by which a man is controlled by others or by forces outside himself. If a man does not keep the law of his own free will, he must be compelled to keep it. The removal of the Cable Tow signifies that when a man becomes master of himself, he will keep the law instinctively, by his own character.

Reception; The Reception typifies the one real penalty for violation of one's obligations, the destructive consequence to a man's nature of being faithless to his vows, untrue to his word and disloyal to his obedience.

Rite of Circumambulation; The Rite of Circumambulation is Masonry's name for the ceremony of walking around the Lodge room, an allegorical act rich with many meanings. One of these is that the Masonic life is a progressive journey, from station to station, and that a Mason will always search for more light.

Approaching the East; The East is the source of light that station in the heaven in which the sun appears to dispel the darkness. For this reason, a Mason faces the East.

Altar; The Altar is a symbol of that place which the worship of Deity holds in Masonry - the center around which all else revolves.

Obligation; The Obligation is a tie, a contract, a pledge, a vow and a duty that is owed. In addition to the obligations which we voluntarily assume, there are many in which we stand naturally - obligations to Deity, to our families, to employers or employees, to friends and neighbors. A Mason can be depended upon to fulfill his

obligations to the best of his ability.

Great Lights in Masonry; The Great Lights in Masonry are the Holy Bible, Square and Compasses. As a Great Light, the Holy Bible represents the will of God as man understands it. The Square is an emblem of virtue; the Compasses signify the moral and spiritual life. If a man acts in obedience to the Will of the Supreme Being, according to the dictates of his conscience, he will be living in the illumination of the Great Lights and cannot go astray.

Lesser Lights; The Lesser Lights represent the Sun, Moon and Master of the Lodge.

Word and Grip; These are Masonry's means of fraternal recognition. Among strangers we are able to prove others or ourselves as regular Masons in order to enter into fraternal fellowship.

Rite of Salutation; This is the name Masonry gives to the procedure in which the Candidate salutes each of the Wardens and the Master. It symbolizes the Candidate's recognition of the authority of the principal Officers within the Masonic Lodge. It is also a symbol of a Mason's respect for and obedience to all just and duly constituted authorities. The Old Charges state this in a single sentence: "A Mason is a peaceable subject to the Civil Powers wherever he resides or works."

Worshipful Master; The Worshipful Master is a symbol as well as the Executive Officer of the Lodge. The title "Worshipful", is a title of respect. The English use this term of respect in addressing judges and other persons in authority. It does not mean that Freemasons "worship" the Master in the sense that one might worship Deity. Rather, it means that we respect the office of Master.

Apron; The Apron is the badge of a Mason. Operative Masons wore aprons when they worked as builders. Modern Freemasons wear aprons to signify that they work as builders of men.

Rite of Destitution; In ancient times men believed that the planets determined human fate and controlled human passions, and that there was a metal by which each planet was itself controlled. In ancient initiations, candidates were compelled to leave all metal behind, lest they bring into the assembly disturbing planetary influences. In modern Freemasonry, this symbolism no longer has its astrological character, but the old point about keeping out disturbing influences remains. The Candidate is not to bring into the Lodge room his passions or prejudices. Harmony, which is one of the chief concerns of Masonry, must prevail at all times.

Northeast Corner; Halfway between the North, the place of darkness, and the East, the source of light, is traditionally the place where the cornerstone of a building is laid. The Apprentice stands there because he is a cornerstone of the future Craft. What the Apprentice is today, Masonry will be in the future.

Working Tools; These Tools, used by Operative Masons, represent those moral and spiritual virtues by which a man adjusts himself to the requirements of human

society. To become a Mason, a man must learn to systematize his life, as signified by the Twenty-four Inch Gauge. The Common Gavel teaches a Mason that he must shape the "corners of the rough stones" of his character speech and temperament.

The Tenets: Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth; The principal Tenets of Freemasonry are Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. It is necessary not to overlook the word "principal" for it signifies that our Fraternity lays the greatest emphasis on these three teachings; yet, there are others which must not be forgotten. A "tenet" is a teaching so obviously true, so universally accepted, that we believe it without question. Examples are everywhere about us.

Good health is better than illness.

A truthful man is more dependable than a liar.

It is better to save money, than to waste it.

An industrious man is more useful than an idle one.

Education is to be preferred to ignorance.

These are but a few of the countless examples of teachings that no intelligent man can possibly question. Everyone takes them for granted. They are tenets.

Freemasonry considers Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth to be teachings of this kind, true in a sense that no man can question it. They are obvious, self-proving and axiomatic. It is not uncommon for men to consider Brotherly Love, while highly desirable, as not practicable, but rather a vision to be dreamed of and never possessed. It is a challenge for Freemasonry to call these "tenets", thus stating that they are obviously and necessarily true. If you are to understand Masonic teachings, you must see that these teachings are self-evident realities, not visionary ideals.

Freemasonry does not tell us that Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth ought to be true, not that it would be better for us if they were true; Freemasonry tells us that they are true. The problem is not whether we believe them. The challenge is what we are to do with them.

What, then, is Brotherly Love? To love is to place the highest possible valuation on another person. A man values his mother, father, wife, children and friends, not for the advantages he may gain from them and not for their usefulness; but he values each one in his own person and for his own sake. We work for such persons; we make sacrifices for them; and we enjoy being with them. Brotherly Love means that a man places on another man the highest possible valuation as a friend, a companion and an associate. To be with him, to spend time in his company and to work at his side is an enjoyable privilege. Freemasonry does not ask that from such a relationship, one makes money, furthers his business interests or achieves any selfish gain. One's relationship with a Brother is its own excuse for being, its own justification and its own reward.

Relief is the second principal Masonic tenet. It is a form of charity. The charitable activities which are particularly important to Wisconsin Masons are discussed in "Seeking Light In Masonry", and additional information can be obtained from the Grand Lodge office. We sometimes think of charity as relief for pauperism. To care for a person crippled or chronically ill, or a victim of unemployment, or addicted to alcohol or other drugs, so that his dependents are left in want, is usually deemed a responsibility resting on the public. As a rule, the public discharges that responsibility through some form of organized charity financed by general subscriptions or out of public funds.

One aspect of Masonic Relief is different.

The qualifications demanded of a petitioner exclude men who may be expected to lapse into poverty. However, no matter how industrious and frugal a Mason may be, through sudden misfortune or other conditions over which he has no control, he may be in temporary need of a helping hand. While this may not be generally thought of as charity, it is one of the natural and inevitable acts of Brotherhood. Every Mason must include this willingness to give necessary aid. Therefore, Relief, Masonically understood, is a tenet.

Truth, the last of the principal tenets, is more than the search for truths in the intellectual sense, although that is included. Masons frequently say, "Let there be light." Masons must be truthful in character and habit. They must be dependable and men of honor as well as of honesty. They must be men on whom others can rely.

The tenets of Freemasonry may not be novel, but novelty is unimportant. The tenets of Freemasonry are the tenets of a successful human life.

Privileges, Duties and Limitations of an Entered Apprentice

'An Entered Apprentice Mason has an immediate and personal interest in this subject. In another sense, however, it is of interest to every Mason. In a sense, a Master Mason always remains an Entered Apprentice Mason. The teachings of the First Degree are always in effect, and the obligation and charge, subject to additions in the succeeding degrees, continue to be binding.

An Entered Apprentice Mason has the right to be instructed on all matters pertaining to his degree. He has the right to apply for advancement to a higher degree. He possesses certain modes of recognition by which he can make himself known to other Apprentices as well as to other Brethren, and he has the privilege of using them. An Entered Apprentice Mason has the duty to be faithful to his obligation. It is also his duty to learn the required portions of the degree with thoroughness, not only because he must prove himself proficient in order to advance, but also because they contain Masonic teachings of fundamental importance that remain forever important to every Mason.

Freemasonry preserves certain privacy about its work. Business meetings and the ceremonies of initiation are held behind tiled doors. An Entered Apprentice Mason may sit in a Lodge which is opened in the First Degree. Such a Lodge is generally convened for the purpose of conferring the Entered Apprentice Degree. An Entered Apprentice Mason is generally welcome and encouraged to attend all social activities of the Lodge.

In Wisconsin, the business of a Lodge is conducted only after the Lodge has been opened in the Master Mason Degree. Thus, an Entered Apprentice Mason does not have a voice or vote on business matters.

An Entered Apprentice Mason is a Mason in the sense that a building under construction is called a building. Perhaps, more precisely, it will truly become a building when it is completed. Thus, an Entered Apprentice Mason is a Mason in the building or learning process. Freemasonry's goal is not simply to acquire members, but to make true Masons.