

THE ENTERED APPRENTICE DEGREE
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Let us look at the Entered Apprentice Degree. It symbolizes a youth entering upon life, helpless, destitute, blind, dependent on others and on God. The very word apprentice means "a learner or beginner". Entering Freemasonry, therefore, means to enter upon a new life; an Entered Apprentice is like a child, or a young man under age, for he is not yet a full member of a lodge, is without voice or vote, cannot hold office or join in public procession, and is not entitled to Masonic burial; his principal duties are to give childlike obedience, to trust his leaders, to follow his guide. According to MacKay, he has but two rights: to sit in his lodge when it is on the Entered Apprentice Degree, and to apply for advancement to a higher degree.

Initiation represents man's advent from pre-natal darkness into the light of human fellowship, moral truth, and spiritual faith. The Latin word *initium* means "a beginning, a birth". Initiation is a common human experience. We are initiated into a new world when we first go to school, when we enter business life, when we accept a new religious experience. Masonic initiation merely sets the candidate in the path which he must follow in search of light.

Our Masonic initiation, the Entered Apprentice Degree, is our first step in Freemasonry and will never have to be repeated, just as childhood does not have to be lived again. This Degree is a permanent status, a grade or rank, to be built upon, just as the physical, moral, intellectual, and spiritual teaching we receive in childhood proves a permanent basis for all that follows in life. The obligation we assume is the basis for all later Masonic disciplinary law and is binding throughout our whole career, just as the instruction and discipline we receive in childhood are permanent for life and form the basis for everything in later life. Certain means of recognition are given us to be used later, just as lessons in deportment and social intercourse learned in childhood serve us through life. The principles and moral instruction taught us are permanent and binding, whatever the degree to which we may later attain, just as the teaching of childhood is permanent and basic. "The child is father of the man" and of all man becomes. Childhood is the most important part of life; for what the child is, the man will be.

The Entered Apprentice Degree is as binding on Master Masons as on Entered Apprentices. It is not something to be left behind as finished and done with, not a bridge to be crossed on our way to the Master Mason Degree and then forgotten. Its teachings are set forth through the use of various symbols and symbolic actions. It will be worth our while to pause and ponder on these symbols and their significance, their teaching.

The Hoodwink symbolizes the child's state of darkness and ignorance regarding the experiences of life. When the candidate enters the lodge, it is as a child. he is not his own master; he cannot find his own way; he must follow his guide. He is helpless, destitute, ignorant, blind, as a new-born babe.

The Cabletow is a symbol of one's dependence on others in childhood and also that every man must remain under control of others until he is able to control himself. It symbolizes our helplessness. On our arrival at the door of the lodge, we are not permitted to walk casually in; our entrance is a ceremony as significant as human birth - a reminder that entrance into any of the great realms of human life should be made in a certain way and that we must be qualified and prepared.

The Pillars at the entrance of the temple are symbolical of the entrance into the temple of life. It is from the entrance to the temple that the candidate, as a youth, begins his journey from the seen and temporal (the material world) to the realm of the unseen and eternal (the spiritual realities).

The candidate's formal procession around the lodge is called a Circumambulation (the word is derived from two Latin words: circum, around, about, and ambulare, to walk). It is a ceremony characteristic of all ancient religions, ceremonies, and rites, such as the Eleusinian Mysteries, the Rites of Mithras, etc. The candidate made a formal circuit of the sacred altar travelling in the direction of the sun's apparent journey from East to West; so, our candidate, when he first circles the lodge, walks in step with the shades of thousands of men as they worshipped their gods in the distant past. Circumambulation also symbolizes cooperation. Only by working with nature do we win her favour. Not by striving against our fellows, but by working with them, do we achieve our purpose. We must keep step, go in the same direction, cooperate, and we must be taught this principle early in life.

The East represents the region of light, that is, of enlightenment, knowledge, wisdom, skill, insight. The West is the region where the day is engulfed in darkness. In the Egyptian religion, it meant the region of the dead. What an

expressive phrase is "Come west"! To travel from west to east therefore means to travel from ignorance and darkness towards enlightenment and knowledge, a we do in our childhood and youth.

The word Obligation means something which binds or ties. A man's life involves numerous obligations: obligations to his parents, his family - obligations involved every time he makes a promise, incurs a debt or a duty, pledges himself to do something, makes a contract, enjoys or accepts privileges, or professes a creed. WE all live under legal obligations, under moral, social, and religious ties. And we are bound to carry ut all our obligations. When a man becomes a Freemason, he assumes new obligations and he is bound to carry them out. An obligation is a form of law. "Thou shalt not" is a reminder that, in the world of men, we are bound by laws to be respected. It is as a child that we learn that we are under many ties.

There are three Great Lights: the Volume of the Sacred Law, the Square and the Compasses. The Holy Bible is the symbol of divine truth to the Christian, the Old Testament to the Hebrew, the Koran to the Mohammedan. When we say "The Holy Bible is the rule and guide for our faith" we mean that what it symbolizes (Truth) should be the rule and guide of our beliefs, thoughts, words, and actions. This symbol of Divine Truth is placed in the very centre of our lodge, and on it are placed the Square and Compasses. The Square is an emblem of virtue and right conduct to others. The Compasses are the emblem of self-restraint. The three go together - the symbols of Divine Truth, Virtue, and Self-Control - our guide through life, for they speak to us of three duties: our duty to God, to our neighbour, an to ourselves.

The Apron teaches the need for work and industry in life. Man is a worker; he must live by honest toil and constructive work. it is his duty to be a builder, a creator, not an idler, a spoiler, or a destroyer. But the apron has an even greater significance: it is an emblem of innocence and the badge of a Mason. White is an emblem of purity and innocence; purity and innocence are associated with childhood. The apron had the same significance to the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Incas, and Aztecs. Its presentation to the candidate is a symbol of his acceptance into our great Brotherhood and Fellowship.

In the North-East Corner operatives laid their cornerstones, for the northeast is midway between the north (the region of darkness) and the east (the region of

light). The Entered Apprentice also stands midway; he has left the darkness of the uninitiated but has not yet entered the full light of the new life.

The Twenty-Four Inch Gauge teaches the necessity of measuring time. >From our first entrance into the world, we begin to measure time. The >child must learn that there is a time for everything - for school, for nourishment, for worship, for play, for work, for rest. If he does not learn that in his childhood, he will never grow up.

The Common Gavel is the first tool used by an apprentice to break off the corners of rough stones. It is not adapted to giving polish or fine lines and edges to a stone, and hence does not symbolize culture but, rather, the first shaping and training of youth, the rudiments of learning and of social habits, the foundation principles of department and behaviour.

Freemasonry is a programme for life, which we are given in three easy lessons. For the journey through life we need to be well equipped. We need to believe in God, to practice charity towards all man "more especially a Brother Mason", to value the virtues of Temperance, Prudence, Fortitude and Justice, to cultivate a brotherly love, to protect the good name of a Brother and that of his family, to curb our desires and passions, to aim at purity of life and rectitude of conduct, to seek truth and the love of beauty in nature and in art. We need to be reverent before God, to seek His help and to give Him thanks, to practise the Golden Rule, to be quiet and peaceable as citizens, humble and obedient to authority. We must not countenance disloyalty or rebellion, nor neglect our labours. If we have been taught these lessons in our youth, we will be worthy citizens.