

THE ENTERED APPRENTICE DEGREE

QUALIFICATIONS OF A PETITIONER

The qualifications to be a Mason are clear and distinct. There are physical, moral and spiritual qualifications. The petitioner must be a man or woman of at least 18 years of age. He must be free of any previous felonious criminal convictions and be of good moral character. He must also at least believe in a Supreme Being. The physical qualifications are necessary because the person must be free to make his own life decisions and be responsible for himself/herself. The moral qualifications are self-evident for the viability of any brotherhood and the lofty ideals of our society. The two spiritual qualifications not only inform the entire structure of Freemasonry but also align the Fraternity with the great Mystery Schools and religions of the world. It is the transition from belief to knowledge that seals the mark of true spiritual initiation.

PREPARATION FOR INITIATION

Ideally, the candidate should find his/her way to the door of Freemasonry on his/her own. If a man/woman senses the stirrings in his/her heart for a deeper understanding of life than that he/she has heretofore found, he/she will seek until he/she finds the Organization of the Freemasonry. This turning of the heart is really the beginning of his/her initiation. Therefore, each candidate who comes seeking light is said to be first prepared in his/her heart. While Freemasonry is not a religion, its ceremonies are of a serious nature, dignified in its their presentation and which impart teachings that, if properly understood, obligate a man/woman to lead a better life. To get the greatest good from the ceremonies, a candidate should first prepare his/her mind to understand and absorb these teachings. The candidate should pay strict attention to every part of the ceremony, in order that he/she may gain some understanding of the teachings of Freemasonry. The methods we use in teaching may be new and unusual to the candidate, but these methods have been used for many centuries and have not changed significantly since they originated. Finally, he/she should remember that every Mason in the Lodge room is his/her friend, brother or sister.

DULY AND TRULY PREPARED

Being duly and truly prepared refers to the wearing of special garments furnished by the Lodge to emphasize our concern with man's internal qualifications, rather than his worldly wealth and honors. By wearing these garments, the candidate signifies the sincerity of his/her intentions. The symbolism of the Rite of Destitution reverts to those ancient times when men believed that the soul descended through the planetary spheres and vested itself with the qualities attributed to each sphere before birth. Each planetary quality corresponds to a specific metal. In ancient initiations, candidates were compelled to leave all metals behind, lest they bring into the assembly disturbing planetary influences. While this symbolism may no longer have an astrological character, the old point about excluding disturbing influences remains. The candidate is not to bring into the Lodge room his/her passions or prejudices, lest that harmony, which is one of the chief concerns of Masonry, be

destroyed. Being duly and truly prepared also refers to the state of the candidate's heart and soul as he/she seeks admission into our Order. "Seek and ye shall find. Ask and it shall be given unto you. Knock and it shall be opened unto you." There are other factors involved in the preparation of the candidate that we will address in the next degree.

THE HOODWINK

The symbolism of the hoodwink is twofold: first, it emphasizes the veil of secrecy and silence surrounding the mysteries of Freemasonry; secondly, it represents the mystical darkness, or ignorance, of the uninitiated. It is removed at the appropriate time; that is, when the candidate is in the proper attitude to receive Light.

THE CABLE-TOW

The Cable-Tow is a rope such as would be used to tow or restrain. It is also generally regarded as a symbol of the voluntary and complete acceptance of, and pledged compliance with, whatever Masonry may have in store. To many, the Cable-Tow is symbolic of the umbilical cord, which is necessary to begin life; but is severed when love and care replace it, and the individual grows on his/her own. The length of the Cable-Tow is frequently referred to in the language of Freemasonry, but many of the new Brethren do not understand its meaning. Formerly, a Cable-Tow was deemed to be the distance one could travel in an hour, which was assumed to be about three miles. Each Mason is bound to all other Masons by a tie as long and as strong as he/she himself/herself determines his/her ability will permit. One may also consider the idea of the silver cord (Ecclesiastes 12:6) and the Cable-Tow.

ENTERING THE LODGE

As an Entered Apprentice takes his/her first step into the Lodge room, he/she enters into a New World: the world of Masonry. He/She leaves the darkness, destitution and helplessness of the world for the light and warmth of this new existence. It is not an idle formality, but a genuine experience, the beginning of a new career in which duties, rights and privileges are real. If a candidate is not to be an Apprentice in name only, he/she must stand ready to do the work upon his/her own nature that will make him/her a different person. Lodges are quarries because they are scenes of toil. Freemasonry offers no privileges or rewards except to those who earn them; it places working tools, not playthings, in the hands of its members. To become a Mason is a solemn and serious undertaking. Once the step is taken, it may well change the course of a person's life.

THE METHOD OF RECEPTION

The reception of the candidate into the Lodge room is intended to symbolize the fact that our rituals are serious and confidential and that there are consequences for violating this confidence. It also reminds a man/woman that his/her every act has a consequence, either in the form of a reward or a penalty. The method of reception also points out the value of a certain virtue needed to gain admission into the mysteries of Masonry.

PRAYER IN LODGE

No Lodge can be opened or be closed without prayer, which is offered by the Master or Chaplain. The prayer is universal in nature, and not peculiar to any one religion or faith. But the act of invoking the blessings of Deity is a central Masonic practice.

THE PRACTICE OF CIRCUMAMBULATION

Circumambulation means to walk around some central point or object. In Masonry, the act is performed in a clockwise manner, patterned after the movement of the sun as it is seen from the earth, moving from East to West, by way of the South. The candidate's journey around the Altar also enables the brethren to observe that he is properly prepared. Circumambulation is an ancient practice found all over the world. Much the same idea as the labyrinth, it portrays the path of initiation as that of a journey. In another sense, it symbolically aligns one to a proper relationship with the order of the universe. There are references to circuitous routes in Psalms 26:6 and Job 22:14. And one may remember the action at Jericho.

KNEELING AT THE ALTAR

The central piece of furniture in the Lodge is the Altar. The Altar is symbolic of many things. As a temple symbolizes the presence of Deity, the altar symbolizes the point of contact. Its location, in the center of the Lodge also symbolizes the place which God has in Masonry, and which he should have in every person's Mason's life. It is also a symbol of worship and faith. The candidate approaches the Altar in search of light and also assumes his/her obligations there. In the presence of God and his Brethren, he/she offers himself/herself to the service of the Supreme Architect of the Universe and to mankind in general. The Altar is the point on which life in our Masonic Lodges is focused and it should be accorded the highest respect. The wisdom of the Master is said to flow from his/her station in the East to the Altar. Thus, one should never cross between the Master's Station and the Altar when a Lodge is in session.

THE HOLY SAINT JOHN

Freemasonry, long ago, chose as its patron saint, John the Baptist. By doing this, the Brethren arrived at the conclusion that their patron saint belonged to a Lodge and that it must have been in the city in which they lived - Jerusalem. By this tradition, all Lodges symbolically come from one at Jerusalem. By tradition, also, every Mason hails from such a Lodge. By coming from this mythical Lodge, he proves that he hails from a "just and legally constituted Lodge."

THE OBLIGATION

The Obligation is the heart of the Degree; for when it is assumed by the candidate, he/she has solemnly bound himself/herself to Freemasonry, and assumed certain duties which are his/hers for the rest of his/her life. The taking of the Obligation is visible and audible evidence of the candidate's sincerity of purpose. The Obligation has a two-fold purpose. In addition to binding the candidate to Freemasonry and its duties, it also protects the Fraternity against someone revealing the modes of

recognition and symbolic instruction. The candidate should understand that the great truths which Masonry teaches are not secret, but the manner in which Freemasonry teaches these truths is considered secret. Like much in the Fraternity, the roots of this practice are ancient. Making vows was a common practice in the Mysteries and was even a form of personal religion to the general populace. In many ways the vow defined their relationship with the deities of their homeland. Many vows were expressed in terms such as promises to a deity in return for safe voyages, successful crops, healing and so on. Although the nature of making vows and obligations has changed in modern times, it remains a very powerful method for setting direction in one's life and the building of character. The Latin *obligato* literally signifies a tying or binding. The relationship between the Cable Tow and the Obligation, along with the changing nature of this relationship as the candidate progresses, should not go unnoticed. The ancient oral penalties, already mentioned, are retained in our ritual to impress upon the mind of each Brother/Sister how serious a violation will be regarded by members of the Organization. The Obligations were voluntarily assumed, and every means possible is used to impress the new Mason with the solemnity and the necessity for faithful performance of them.

THE THREE GREAT LIGHTS OF MASONRY

The Three Great Lights of Masonry are the Holy Bible, Square and Compass. The Volume of the Sacred Law (no matter what religion) is an indispensable part of the furniture of a Lodge. La Meditation uses the Holy Bible on their Altars. In our Lodge, a candidate may have request to have his own sacred book present on the Altar with the Bible during his degree ceremonies. In some Lodges in other countries, other sacred texts are placed on the Altar in place of the Holy Bible, but our Lodge may stand officially open, unless the Holy Bible is opened upon its Altar with the Square and Compass displayed thereon. The open Bible signifies that we should regulate our conduct according to its teachings because it is the rule and guide of our faith and is a symbol of man's acknowledgment of his relation to Deity. The Square is a symbol of morality, truthfulness and honesty. To "act on the square" is to act honestly. The Compass signifies the propitious use of action and is a symbol of restraint, skill and knowledge. We might also properly regard the Compass as excluding beyond its circle that which is harmful or unworthy. The Square and Compass are recognized by the general public as the symbol of Freemasonry. The symbolism of the square and compass is seen in many ancient carvings and artwork. A stonemason's square has been seen to represent the earth, while the compass has related to the arc of heaven. Thus their union has represented the union of heaven and earth. The Volume of Sacred Law can also represent God's communication to man through scripture and inspired writings. The triple symbol can also be seen as representing God's expression through the creation of heaven and earth. One way of interpreting the triple symbolism is seeing human nature as divided into three parts - body, mind, and soul with a Degree for each part. In the same way, the Three Great Lights are the guiding principals of the three natures: the Square to the body, the Compass to the mind, and the Volume of Sacred Law for the soul.

PRESENTATION OF THE LAMBSKIN APRON

The Apron is at once an emblem of innocence and the badge of a Mason. By innocence is meant clean thinking and clean living, a loyal obedience to the laws of the Craft and sincere good will one's Brethren. The Badge of a Mason signifies, among other things, that Masons are workers and builders. Other aspects of this most visible vesture of our Organization should be mentioned. The apron as a mark of distinction has been found in many similar organizations of initiatory nature including: the Essenes and the Mythraic Mysteries, and has been conspicuous on statues of some Egyptian and Greek deities. The lamb has always been a symbol of innocence and sacrifice. There are two senses in which innocence is being used here. Innocence in one sense is free from moral defect. The other sense used is that of being new born. Another consideration of the white lambskin apron is that the Sign of the Ram begins at the Spring Equinox - the time of year that life is renewed. The Masonic Apron is made up of two parts: a square and a triangle, representing four and three respectively. The symbolism of these numbers, as well as their sum, should be studied in connection with the form of the apron in the different degrees. Finally, it should be mentioned that the word candidate comes from the Latin *candidatus* which means, "clothed in white."

THE RITE OF DESTITUTION

The symbolism of the Rite of Destitution reverts to those ancient times when men believed that the planets determined human fate and controlled human passions, and that there were metals by which each planet was itself controlled. In ancient initiations, candidates were compelled to leave all metals behind, lest they bring into the assembly disturbing planetary influences. While with us, this symbolism no longer has an astrological character. However, the old point about excluding disturbing influences remains. The candidate is not to bring into the Lodge room his/her passions or prejudices, lest that harmony, which is one of the chief concerns of Masonry, be destroyed.

WORKING TOOLS OF AN ENTERED APPRENTICE

The Working Tools, presented to the candidate, were those used by the ancient operative craftsman in the erection of the building on which he was working. To the Speculative Mason, these represent the moral habits and forces by which man shapes and reshapes the essence of his human nature. By these symbolic tools, he/she also fits his/her own behavior to society and community. While they do not contain the whole philosophy of Masonry, the various Working Tools allocated to the three degrees, by their very presence, declare that there is constructive work to be done; and by their nature, indicate the direction this work is to take. The Working Tools of this degree are specified as the twenty-four inch gauge and the common gavel. It is interesting that one tool (gauge) is used passively and the other (gavel) is used actively. One is a tool of measurement and calculation, while the other is one of force. One tool decides what to keep, while the other gets rid of the rest. The three parts may also be seen to represent the tripartite nature of the soul defined by Plato: the

desirous, emotional, and mental. When properly cultivated, they embody the virtues temperance, fortitude, and prudence. These three virtues combined in proper order promote the supreme virtue of the whole self: equilibrium or justice.

THE NORTHEAST CORNER

The Northeast Corner is traditionally the place where the cornerstone (the first stone) of a building is laid. The Apprentice is thus placed, because from here he/she will erect his/her own temple by the principles of Freemasonry. Other considerations on the northeast corner are the following. The north in Masonry is attributed to darkness and the east to light. Therefore, the northeast is a place midway between darkness and light. Being midway, it is also symbolic of equilibrium. Furthermore, this spot representing equal light and darkness corresponds with the point of the Spring Equinox when the nighttime is equal to the daytime. There is some evidence that the lambskin apron was presented to the candidate at one time in the northeast corner of the lodge. It needs to be mentioned that there is a seeming contradiction of this symbolism with physical reality. If we imagine the lodge's boundaries to be the eastern and western horizons, with the north and south walls being the Tropic of Cancer and Capricorn (where the sun reaches its northern and southern limits), then the day that the sun rises in the northeast corner of the "lodge" is the Summer Solstice near St. John the Baptist's Day. Sometimes symbolism overlaps, but in many cases it is a hint at a deeper meaning.

THE LECTURE OF THIS DEGREE

The Lectures given to the candidate by the Worshipful Master are intended to elaborate certain phases of the ritual, giving a broader explanation of the ceremonies in order for the candidate to understand the lessons of Freemasonry. The four cardinal virtues of Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence and Justice are explained here as well as the three tenets of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. The lodge is dedicated to Saint John the Baptist. The form of a lodge is an oblong square, or a rectangle. It extends from East to West (horizon to horizon) and between North and South. The covering of the Lodge is the canopy of heaven. It is not a coincidence that the two major patrons of the Masonic Lodge have their birthdays near the Summer and Winter Solstices where the sun reaches its most northern and southern limits. The East in a Masonic Lodge does not necessarily mean the actual point of the compass. The East in the Lodge is the station of the Worshipful Master whence he dispenses light and instruction to all his brethren. Some Lodges may actually have the Master sitting in another compass location, but the important point is that the Master is always symbolically located in the East and the other symbolic points of the West, South and North are located in proper relation to the station of the Master. Further instruction is given in the long form of the lecture regarding the Supports of the Lodge: which are the three pillars of Wisdom, Strength and Beauty, which also relate to the three immovable Jewels of the Lodge: the Square, Plumb and Level, which still further relate to the three principal Officers; The Master, Senior Warden and Junior Warden and the three Lesser Lights of the Lodge. The three movable Jewels of the Lodge consist of the Rough and Perfect Ashlar and the Trestleboard. The Rough and Perfect Ashlars are precise symbols of the process of initiation. In a Hermetic sense, the Rough Ashlar is the prima

materia, while the Perfect Ashlar is the Philosopher's Stone. The Ornaments of the Lodge consist of the Mosaic Pavement, the Indented Tessel, and the Blazing Star. We walk in a world of opposites: good and evil, night and day, hot and cold, love and hate. The Mosaic Pavement symbolizes this fact. Again, all of these symbols should be studied further to find out what they conceal and what they reveal.

THE CHARGE

At the end of the ceremony and instruction in each degree, the candidate is charged to perform his Masonic duties. The Charge given him/her explains these duties especially in their relation to the particular Degree. These Charges should not be ignored as mere conventionalities.

MASONIC DECORUM AND ADVANCEMENT

THE PROFICIENCY

The Proficiency is a series of questions and answers which the candidate is required to commit to memory prior to being advanced to the next degree. Among other things, it is intended to:

- (1) Teach each candidate the language of Freemasonry.
- (2) Fix in his memory the teachings and structure of the Degree.
- (3) Impress upon his consciousness the different points of the Obligation.
- (4) Give each candidate an ancient method to contemplate the meanings behind the degree.
- (5) Give the new candidate a point of contact with an established member.

THE LANGUAGE OF FREEMASONRY

Why is the language of Freemasonry so different from that which we normally use? This question is often asked by new members of our Organization. The Ritual of Freemasonry is a product of the early decades of the 18th century. It contains much of the language of that time period and other words and phrases from the very old work have been incorporated. This is why the language is written and spoken as it is. If the time and effort is spent to study the words of our Ritual, one will discover that the thoughts and teachings imparted cannot be put in fewer words and still retain their meaning.

SUBJECTS NOT PROPER FOR DISCUSSION IN LODGE

Sectarian religion and politics should not be addressed in Lodge, and there are good reasons for this. When we meet in a Lodge, we are all on a common level, and are not subject to the classes and distinctions of the outside world. Each Brother is entitled to his own beliefs and convictions. Our objective is to unite men, not to divide them. These subjects create honest differences of opinion

that might well cause friction between brethren. There will also be subjects concerning the Lodge's business that should not be discussed. All deliberations should be kept within the bounds of propriety and everyone should show tolerance for the opinion of others. Every Master wants harmony in his Lodge. Once a matter has been put to vote in the Lodge and a decision is made, the decision should be accepted by all members, regardless of how they voted. We try to teach every Mason to be a good citizen and to perform his civic duties. We do not try to keep anyone from expressing his opinion or from serving his city, county, state, or nation, in an honorable manner. Anyone who serves in political office should not act politically as a Freemason, nor use the name of Freemasonry, in exercising his political rights, such as showing affiliation with any Lodge in his campaign advertising.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF AN ENTERED APPRENTICE

An Entered Apprentice Mason has very few actual Lodge responsibilities. He/She must keep secret everything entrusted to him/her, conduct himself/herself with proper decorum and diligently work to learn his proficiency and as much about the Craft as possible. He/she should not be content with learning the words letter-perfect, but should study the meanings also. If he/she cannot interpret these for himself/herself, he/she should seek help from others. Complete faithfulness to his/her obligations and implicit obedience to the charge are among his/her important and lasting responsibilities. Freemasonry preserves a secrecy about all its work in the Lodge: it meets behind closed doors; it throws over its principles and teachings a garment of symbolism and ritual; its Art is a mystery; a great wall separates it from the world. Nor is its work easy to understand. If this be true, we urgently advise you not to be content with the letter and outward form of this, your beginning period, but to apply yourself with freedom, fervency and zeal to the sincere and thorough mastering of our Royal Art.

Welcome.