

FORWARD

This booklet has been prepared as one of a series of four to provide the new Mason with a greater insight into the degrees and to encourage him to seek additional Masonic Light. It is intended for a general non - technical explanation of the Entered Apprentice Degree.

This series has been prepared by the Grand Lodge of Alabama through the Committee on Masonic Education for the use of the Subordinate Lodges and their members.

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THE DEGREE OF ENTERED APPRENTICE

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell together in unity....”

No man ever lived who could possibly absorb the depth and beauty and meaning of the Entered Apprentice Degree on his first encounter with it as a candidate. It will be a long time before you begin to understand and appreciate its rich significance, for Freemasonry does not explain itself in elaborate detail, but hints, or suggests, or makes only a passing reference to something which may be of the utmost importance. It is for the candidate to ponder on these things, with the assistance of well - informed Brethren, so that he may come to understand them for himself.

It is to give you a bit more light on this degree, which is the personification of Freemasonry, that the following has been prepared. Read it over not once, but many times. Study it and refer to it frequently while you are an Entered Apprentice, and return to it from time to time in after years. You will find that it will be an enjoyable and instructive reminder of an occasion which you should never forget – your entrance into the Fraternity of Freemasonry. And you will find, too, that some of the teachings become increasingly plain to you with each reference to this booklet.

Let it be a constant reminder of the occasion when you were initiated an Entered Apprentice – and by so doing, entered upon your never - ceasing search for Light.

From what you have experienced in Masonry thus far, you know that you have embarked on an undertaking which is indeed solemn and serious, with nothing frivolous in its nature. This was made clear to you at once, for even though you had been carefully investigated by a committee appointed for that purpose, and the Brethren had voted unanimously for you to be admitted to membership, still you found it necessary before you could receive the Entered Apprentice Degree to declare:

1. That unbiased by friends and uninfluenced by mercenary motives, you freely and voluntarily offer yourself as a candidate for the mysteries of Freemasonry.
2. That you are prompted to solicit the privileges of Freemasonry by a favorable opinion conceived of the Institution, a desire for knowledge, and a sincere wish of being serviceable to your fellow creatures.
3. That you will cheerfully conform to all the ancient usages and established customs of the Fraternity.
4. Whether you have ever been rejected by another Lodge of Masons.

In these simple statements, which are required of every candidate, you find much of the essence of Freemasonry: Belief in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man;

that the man must seek Masonry, and not Masonry seek the man; service to others; conformity to the laws, written and unwritten, of the Institution.

The Entered Apprentice may be defined as “a learner”, a beginner. In this respect you are following the footsteps of those Entered Apprentices of the days of Operative Masonry, for they too, were learners. Back in the Middle Ages, when the great Gothic cathedrals were being erected to the glory of God, it was the custom for the master workmen to undertake the training of young apprentices so that skilled men would be available as the work progressed. These apprentices were usually ten to fifteen years of age. They were selected with great care from families of good repute. Of necessity they had to be boys of sound body in order to do the hard labor required, alert in mind so they could be taught the secrets of the master mason’s art, and willing to serve their masters faithfully during the long years of apprenticeship.

In return the master mason responsible for their care saw to it that they were trained properly for the work, provided them with food, lodging and clothing, and supervised their moral and spiritual upbringing.

After the passage of time and when they had proved their fitness they were enrolled upon the records of the Operative Lodge and became known as Entered Apprentices. This, in a sense, is what happened to you, for it was first necessary that you prove your fitness before you could receive the Entered Apprentice Degree and have your name inscribed on the roll of the Lodge.

Many of the teachings of Freemasonry are by means of symbols, which may be defined as tangible objects used to express an intangible thought, idea, or precept. There is a good reason why this symbolism is used in Masonry. A thought or idea which is communicated simply as a statement seldom lingers long in the mind and heart. But when this same thought is bound indissolubly to a visible object which logically symbolizes the thought, then the lesson is made more clear and long - lasting.

It is impossible here to touch on more than a few of the symbols you encountered as you received the Entered Apprentice Degree, but your instructor will cover the Degree in detail.

It is the world of Masonry, and hence as you entered through the West gate it was as if you were being born from darkness into the world of Light. When you passed through the door it symbolized that you were casting off all ties with the old profane world and entering into a new life.

You will recall that the manner in which you were “brought to Light” was a bit startling. It was so intended, in order that it might be more forcibly impressed upon your mind that as soon as you became an Entered Apprentice you were abruptly permitted to view the great lights of Masonry. It was most important that this transition from darkness to light be stressed, for all through Masonry you will find the central theme is Light, whether it be the Light of Knowledge, the Light of Truth, or the Light which radiates from Deity.

Thus you found on the Altar before you the Great Lights in Masonry and nearby were the representatives of the Less Lights. The Holy Bible, the great light which is the Volume of Sacred Law used in countries where it is regarded as the revealed word of God. All Masonry centers around this Great Light. But you should know that in a Mohammedan Lodge, for example, this Volume of Sacred Law required on the Altar would be the Koran; in a Lodge of Brahmans it would be the Vedas, and in a similar way it could be still others depending on the religions involved. This is a striking example of the toleration of Masonry for individual religious convictions. The sole religious requirement of a Mason is that he believe in Deity. A classic instance is given of a Lodge opened in India with the Holy Bible, the Vedas, and the Koran resting on the Altar together so that all present could see before them the Book of their particular faith – an excellent testimonial to the true universality of Freemasonry.

The Square is the Emblem of the Master; of conduct; of morality, truthfulness, honesty. So universal is the knowledge of its meaning that the word is used in all areas of society. The “square man” is the honest man. To “act upon the square” is to act honestly.

Perhaps a word of explanation should be given here concerning the compasses. In Masonry the compasses – never pronounce “compass” in this jurisdiction – are to circumscribe our desires and keep our passions in due bounds. The word “passions” is another term which has come down to us from antiquity. For instead of the commutation which is commonly attributed to it, the word “passion” is applicable to any very strong feeling such as anger, envy, inability to forgive, or any of the other blemishes and imperfections which we are taught to remove from our rough ashlar so that it may become a perfect ashlar and truly have a place in that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

You were told that the tenets of our Order are Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth. The fact that Masonry regards these as tenets is a testimony to the nature and greatness of the Institution. A tenet is something which is accepted as so obvious that it requires no proof whatever. Thus, Masonry does not say that these should be true – it says without equivocation that they are true, and it accepts them as three of the firm and everlasting pillars which help support the structure of the Order.

When we speak of Brotherly Love, it is exactly that. It is the feeling of respect and understanding and sympathy which enables us to rejoice in a Brother's good fortune, to cherish his welfare, and to overlook his little imperfections even as we know he will overlook ours. It means that even though we may meet him only occasionally there is a lift of the heart when we do see him in good health and vigor. It is this spirit which produces the almost tangible feeling of Brotherhood and unity you will come to experience when the Lodge—a feeling that brings with it a sense of peace and contentment, as if when you stepped into the Lodge you left behind the worries and troubles of the profane world and came home, even if for only a few hours, to the security of your place among true Brothers.

Just as we accept Brotherly Love as a tenet, so do we cherish Relief. And as is the case with many words when used Masonically, Masonic relief is a bit different and more inclusive and far-reaching than relief as we usually think of it. Charity has nothing in particular to do with the rich.

At your leisure hours, that you may improve in Masonic knowledge, you are to converse with well-informed brethren, who will always be as ready to give as you will be to receive instruction.

Finally, keep sacred and inviolate the mysteries of the Order, as these are to distinguish you from the rest of the community, and mark your consequence among Masons. If, in the circle of your acquaintance, you find a person desirous of being initiated into Masonry, be particularly attentive not to recommend him unless you are convinced he will conform to our rules, that the honor, glory and reputation of the institution may be firmly established, and the world at large convinced of its good effects.

The more fully you study this degree, the more you will appreciate it and its great teachings. You will find Masonry always fascinating to the mind, forever inspiring to the soul.

Attend your Lodge. Meetings are held each second and fourth Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m.

and to yourself, in avoiding all irregularity and intemperance which may impair your faculties, or debase the dignity of your profession. A zealous attachment to these duties will insure public and private esteem.

In the State you are to be a quiet and peaceful subject, true to your government, and just to your country; you are not to countenance disloyalty or rebellion, but patiently submit to legal authority and conform with cheerfulness to the government of the country in which you live. In your outward demeanor, be particularly careful to avoid censure and reproach.

Although your frequent appearance at our regular meetings is earnestly solicited, yet it is not meant that Masonry shall interfere with your necessary vocations; for these are on no account to be neglected; neither are you to suffer your zeal for the institution to lead you into argument with those who, through ignorance, may ridicule it.

Read again the charge at your initiation into the first degree: "As you are now introduced into the first principles of Masonry, I congratulate you on being accepted into this ancient and honorable Order – ancient, as having existed from time immemorial, and honorable, as tending in every particular so to render all men who will be conformable to its precepts. No institution was ever raised on a better principle of more solid foundation; nor were ever more excellent rules and useful maxims laid down than are inculcated in the several Masonic lectures. The greatest and best of men, in all ages, have been encouragers and promoters of the art, and have never deemed it derogatory to their dignity to level themselves with the fraternity, extend their privileges, and patronize their assemblies. There are three great duties which, as a Mason, you are charged to inculcate, to God, your neighbor and yourself. To God, in never mentioning His name but with that reverential awe which is due from a creature to his creator; to implore his aid in all your laudable undertakings, and to esteem Him as the chief good. To your neighbor, in acting upon the square, and doing unto him as you wish he should do unto you,

A word of caution to you as a beginner or learner in Masonry: Guard carefully the secrets of the Order. As an Entered Apprentice you are not entitled to wear or display any Masonic emblem. This is a privilege and an honor afforded only to those who receive the Master Mason degree but the mere fact that a stranger you meet may wear a Masonic ring or emblem is no guarantee that he is a member of our Fraternity. Be watchful and guarded in your conversations, especially when among strangers.

The rituals of Freemasonry and its affairs are for its members alone.

In conclusion, it is the desire of the Lodge that you become a well - informed Brother within the scope of this degree. You are encouraged to ask questions of your officers and instructor and they will answer them fully so long as they do not pertain to the degrees to follow. Remember that the title Entered Apprentice means a learner.

Should you be charged with un-Masonic conduct, you have the right to a just and lawful trial in an Entered Apprentice Lodge.

You have means of identifying yourself as an Entered Apprentice to other Masons and the right to use these methods of making yourself known.

You should learn something here of Lodge organization. Your instructor will go into this matter in detail, but in capsule form this is the structure of the Lodge:

The Worshipful Master is the principal officer, with powers and duties and obligations far greater than those of the presiding officer of many other organizations. He is not bound by the customary rules, and is indeed "Master" of the Lodge, accountable only to the Grand Master and the Grand Lodge. He attained his high station after years of service to the Lodge and proof of his ability. He is truly entitled to the term "Worshipful", which means worthy of respect.

As an Entered Apprentice it is one of your responsibilities as well as a requirement, to become proficient in this Degree before you can be passed to the Fellowcraft Degree, when this has been accomplished the stage will be set for your advancement, provided that nothing has transpired which would change the opinion of one or more of the members who may stop the advancement by objection.

If the Worshipful Master has not sufficiently explained to you how to obtain the instructor you will need, it is suggested that you take the initiative in this matter and ask him, one of the other officers, or any well informed Brother to assist you.

In a great many Lodges there are standing committees who are appointed to instruct. If your Lodge has such a committee you should have no hesitation in calling upon them.

If you do not advance for a period of one year it will then be necessary for you to apply for advancement.

Masonry consists of the degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason. Most business meetings of the Lodge are conducted in the Master Mason Lodge. Hence you, as an Entered Apprentice may not attend such meeting and consequently have no voice or vote in Lodge affairs. Naturally, it follows that you may not hold office in the Lodge while an Entered Apprentice.

As an Entered Apprentice you are subject to certain restrictions and have certain inalienable rights.

You are not entitled to Masonic burial.

You are not permitted to march in public processions while an Entered Apprentice.

You may visit or sit in any Lodge when it is opened in the Entered Apprentice Degree, and this you should do.

You are expected to conform with complete fidelity to the obligation you have assumed and to the instructions of the Charge which you have received.

Any person, however poor he may be, who has charity in his heart is rich, for he practices it in various ways in spite of his slender means. It goes much further than financial help. Indeed, it may not take the form of financial aid at all. It may be the understanding hand on the shoulder during the time of grief, the assistance with duties which have temporarily become too pressing, the good counsel in a time of crises. It may be finding a position for a Brother who has met with misfortune. It may take the conventional form of financial aid. It is the right of every Brother to request such aid when driven by necessity. Relief in one form or another usually will be forthcoming.

Truth is a divine attribute and the foundation of every virtue. To be good men and true is the first lesson we are taught in Masonry. Unless we could depend on our Brethren around us as men to whom truth is an instinctive characteristic, the Fraternity could not long endure. Thus we accept truth as a tenet – the third of the tenets on which our Order stands so firmly.

SCRIPTURE VERSES OF INTEREST

Psalms 133:1 - 3 Leviticus 22:19 - 25 Hosea 11:4 Matthew 14:10 - 20 Psalms 56:11 - 13 Numbers 30:2 Genesis 1:1 - 3 Genesis 1:14 - 16 Ezekiel 13:10 - 16 Matthew 25:31 - 46 2 Corinthians 5:1 - 4 1 Samuel 16:7 Ruth 4:1 - 12 Matthew 7:7 - 8 Isaiah 28:16 - 17 Proverbs 27:26 1 Corinthians 13:1 - 13 2 Thessalonians 3:15 Exodus 20:7 Luke 6:27 - 38 1 Kings 5