

Our Masonic Apron
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After each of us was raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, he was presented “with a lambskin or white leather apron, . . . which is an emblem of innocence and the badge of a Mason,” and it was hoped that we would “wear it with pride” to ourselves and “honor to the fraternity.” We have worn our white apron at Lodge meetings and at other special occasions. Many of us wish to wear it to our graves, to “the starry-decked heaven,” to that “spiritual building, that house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens.” However, when we don our apron, do we think of what it stands for? Of its symbolism in the three principal Masonic degrees? Let us consider them now.

Our apron appears to be of two parts, a triangular flap and a larger rectangle; yet it contains a third. To find it, raise the flap and count the number of points in the perimeter of this five-sided shape; it forms *the badge of a Mason*. Now lower the flap to “*At ease*,” that is, to its usual position and due form. The apron includes the quintuple shape and its five points, which explains why we can say the apron itself, which contains three parts, is the badge of a Mason.

Let us consider the principal symbolism contained in the triangular flap, the rectangle, and the quintuple badge.

The Triangular Flap

contains many 3's of Masonry and their symbolism. Among the principal 3's:

1) *The Three Great Lights* in Masonry: “*The Holy Bible*, is dedicated to the service of God, because it is the inestimable gift of God to man, a true rule and guide to our faith and practice; *The Square* [of Morality] to the Worshipful Master, because it is the proper Masonic emblem of his office; and *The Compasses* to the Craft, because, by a due attention to their use, we are taught to circumscribe our desires, and keep our passions within due bounds toward all mankind, especially a brother Mason.”

2) Three levels of symbolism (a, b, c) in *The Three Lesser Lights* follow:

a) is a straightforward metaphor and simile: “The Sun, Moon, and Worshipful Master [are] represented by three burning tapers placed in a triangular position about the Altar.” The taper in the South represents the Junior Warden; the taper in the North-west corner of the Altar, the Senior Warden; the taper in the East, the Worshipful Master. “As the Sun rules the day and the Moon governs the night, so should the Worshipful Master, with equal regularity, endeavor to rule and guide the Lodge.”

b) is veiled imagery: “The Lodge is metaphorically supported by three great pillars, denominated *Wisdom, Strength* and *Beauty* . . . represented by the three principal officers of the Lodge”: The Worshipful Master, with *Wisdom* and intelligence to invent and manage, contrives to build our temple, as did King Solomon his temple; the Senior Warden is *Strength* to support, as did King Hiram of Tyre; the Junior Warden adorns with *Beauty*, as did Hiram Abiff.

c) is a still deeper level of imagery: The *Worshipful Master* in the East also personifies *Spiritual Light*, the *Divine Principle* in man. As the earth’s moon reflects light from the sun — without light from the moon, our night would be completely dark — the Masonic *Moon*, the *Senior Warden*, reflects the *Spiritual Light* coming to him from the East; he personifies the immortal soul. The *Sun*, the *Junior Warden*, whose position in the South is midway between the Worshipful Master and Senior Warden in the Lodge room, symbolizes the meeting of man’s intelligence and spiritual consciousness.

3) In the Entered Apprentice degree, the candidate learns the three-fold tenets *Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth* are truly commendable virtues; in the Master Mason degree, he is taught “the most vital tenets of Freemasonry . . . are *Friendship, Morality and Brotherly Love*.”

4) Of the three immoveable jewels: “*The Plumb* admonishes us to walk uprightly in our several stations before God and man, squaring our actions by *The Square of Virtue*, ever remembering that we are travelling upon the *Level* of time toward that ‘undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns.’” That is, Level’s finality posits equality. The three moveable jewels are the *rough ashlar* (ignorant man, without moral and intellectual Light), the *perfect ashlar* (regenerated, reborn man, who seeks perfection and unity with

the supreme *Spiritual Being*), and the *Trestle Board*, whose “designs laid down by the Supreme Architect of the Universe” we have pledged to obey.

5) From earth to heaven, the three theological rungs in Jacob’s Ladder will aid Masons to achieve heaven: *Faith* in God, *Hope* in immortality, and *Charity* toward all mankind — of these, the greatest is Charity. They are the three supernatural or theological virtues infused in mankind by God. The usual modern connotation of charity is help-the-needy; but in its original Latin context, the word *caritas* meant Love, unbounded love and, for Masons, both Brotherly love and God’s love that Masons seek in mankind and in all things.

Most important to remember is the triangular flap represents man’s spiritual nature: his mind, his spirit, his soul.

The Rectangular Portion of the Apron

has four points which, in the Entered Apprentice degree, we call *The Perfect Points of Entrance*. There are four in number: *Pectoral*, which represents Fortitude; *Manual*, Prudence; *Gutteral*, Temperance; and *Pedal*, Justice.

In ancient philosophies, the number 4 represented physical things; e.g., the Greek philosopher Plato distinguished Fortitude, Prudence, Temperance, and Justice as *four cardinal virtues*. (Later, religious moralists called them *natural virtues*.) Through them, Masons govern their conduct in the Lodge and in the world. Because Pectoral, Manual, Gutteral, and Pedal “allude to the body, the hands, the tongue, and the feet,” and because “certain [physical] signs, a token, a word,” make us known as Masons, the rectangular portion of our apron represents the physical. The rectangle is physical; the triangular flap, spiritual.

When we add the number 3 of the *spiritual triangle* and the number 4 of the *physical rectangular portion*, the total is 7, the perfect number which, the Holy Bible tells us, was beloved by God; so God created man with spiritual qualities and a physical body, and He was pleased with His creation.

The Apron as the Badge of a Mason

I previously demonstrated that our apron contains a “badge” with five points. As the Fellow Craft degree taught us, it reveals *the five physical senses* — hearing, seeing, feeling, smelling, and tasting; at the same time, this badge includes *The Five Points of Fellowship*, whose physical actions are also symbolic: the feet (we will travel barefoot, if required, on a necessary Masonic errand), knee to knee (devotion to Deity and to our Brethren is ever present), breast to breast (secrets between Brothers are secure and inviolate), hand to back (a Brother will support a falling Brother), and mouth to ear “at low breath” (to give “wise counsel” to an erring Brother, or to impart a special word.) And so, the three-part apron itself becomes the badge of a Mason.

Conclusion

Our Masonic apron is precious and reminds us every time we don it we should recall it symbolizes our inner, immortal soul, the basis of innocence, and also our physical state, both of which we should always seek to improve so we will become better men and better Masons, thereby strengthening our Hope that some day our soul will merge with the ineffable spiritual *Light of Deity*. And so, it follows, all else in Freemasonry is secondary to our regeneration, our spiritual rebirth, and our efforts to improve ourselves so that they will lead us, eventually, to the *Grace* of heaven.

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