

## Symbolism of painting of The Wayfarer by Hieronymus Bosch

The reproduction of the painting by Hieronymus Bosch on the cover of this book is filled with symbolism, and much of it is Masonic in nature. The title of this painting is called the Wayfarer.

In the painting the wayfarer has the left leg of his trousers above the calf of his leg, and while there is a bandage on his left calf a wound in that part of the leg would not require that he should wear a slipper on his left foot, which in the painting he is wearing.

The straps on the Wayfarer's backpack are not placed in the normal position over the shoulders. Instead they are around his chest, which suggests to some the symbolism of the Cable-Tow.

In his left hand he is holding his hat, and the hat has a decoration, but it is not a feather which would be a common decoration, but instead the hat has for a decoration a Plumb Bob, which is a symbol thought by some to be Masonic.

The wayfarer has a cloth on his heads instead of his hat, this is thought to be a hood type of headgear, and the symbolism of that is that when we look at it the painting it is portrayed in such a manner that it may be pulled down in front to resemble a Hood-Wink. This by the way was the way a Hood-Wink was originally used; a cloth from the headgear draped over the face and tied from behind, and it is believed that the expression "pull the wool over the eyes" comes from this practice.

Ahead of the Wayfarer on the path is a gate he must pass through, and obstruction if you will, and the gate is braced in an unusual manner. Normally a gate brace would not extend higher than the top rail, but here the artist made it extend to depict a right-angled square, and some triangles depicted in the framework of the gate.

"Now consider the painting as a whole. The traveling man is moving from left to right, or from west to east, leaving behind him a rude crude world. A serving made lounges in the doorway of a decrepit tavern, holding a pitcher, while a customer kisses her, holding his left hand on her breast. Around the corner a man is urinating against the wall. In the courtyard, pigs feed at a trough, while an angry dog with a spiked collar crouches, deciding whether or not to attack.

With a few more steps the Wayfarer will pass through the gate of the square, and enter a land of peace and plenty, as symbolized by the placid milk cow. In the tree above his head is perched an owl, the medieval symbol for wisdom."<sup>i</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> A Pilgrims Path, by John J. Robinson. Page 118