



Nugget

Why do Deacons carry Wands?

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Origins of the Deacons' Wands.

Summary

An examination of the possible origins of the Deacons' Wands.

Keywords

First-Degree, Lodge, Deacon, Wand

Why do Deacons carry Wands?

We know that the Deacons use their Wands to form an arch over a visiting dignitary and processions in Open Lodge but what else are their Wands used for, and where did they come from? Like almost everything in Masonic Ritual, the Wands have several possible origins.

The first theory is that the Deacon's Wands are descendants of the '*asherim*' mentioned in the Bible as sacred staves or rods placed in the ground around idols of the goddess Asherah, worshipped by some Jews (including King Solomon) as the Wife of Jehovah. These '*asherah poles*' were condemned several times by God, including in the Torah, '*Do not set up any wooden Asherah pole beside the altar you build to the Lord your God*' (Deuteronomy 16:21). Later, King Josiah destroyed the Asherah poles in the Temple in Jerusalem, along with all the other idols there (II Kings 23:14).

The second theory is that they originated in the rod of Moses, which he originally used to tend sheep (Exodus 4:20) but which was later endowed with miraculous powers by God (Exodus 7:17) including parting the Red Sea to allow the Jews to escape from Egypt (Exodus 14:16). Moses' brother Aaron also had a similar rod, which became his badge of office as High Priest. The Ark of the Covenant was said to contain the rods of Aaron and Moses. Subsequent High Priests and their attendants carried similar rods as signs of their authority and status. Some Masonic historians have claimed the High Priest's rod of office was used to position the Tabernacle when the Jewish tribes made camp during the Exodus: its shadow at sunrise would indicate the East-West axis for the Ark of the Covenant and the Tabernacle (and later for the Temples in Jerusalem).

The third theory is that they are derived from the rods of office carried by a range of officials, including Bishops (croziers), Churchwardens (staves of office), Field-Marsals (batons), Sergeant-Majors (pace sticks or swagger sticks), the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod in the British Parliament and the Lord Chamberlain, originally a powerful Officer of the Royal Household. Indeed, the Lodge Deacons' wands resemble closely the willow wand carried by the Lord Chamberlain on state occasions and broken over the coffin of a dead Monarch, signifying the end of the Lord Chamberlain's term of office.

The ecclesiastical origin may be the most likely, given that 'Deacon' is also the name given to an Assistant Priest in the Christian churches: it derives from the Greek '*diakonos*' meaning 'assistant' or 'messenger', which is also closely related to their duties in the Lodge of carrying messages and assisting Candidates.

##END##

Recommended use of Nuggets

Nuggets offer a short, simple and readily absorbed means of progressing Masonic knowledge and an easy way to introduce learning to Lodges and Chapters. It is hoped that they will become a regular feature of Lodge and Chapter meetings as well as a source for private-study. Nuggets can be included as an item in the summons and read at most Lodge/Chapter meetings. They can be:

- Read by either a new or an experienced Mason with the minimum of preparation and practice; though ideally, they need to be read a few times beforehand.
- Themed with the meeting or activity.
- Used to initiate a discussion within a Lodge/Chapter, LOI/COI, or group.
- Read at home and shared as a topic for a future discussion.
- Used as a focus for an unplanned, informal discussion.

For further nuggets and other learning materials visit 'Solomon' at <http://solomon.ugle.org.uk>

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