



PAPER

Our Journey Begins

Summary: A short paper evoking and exploring the beginning of a Freemason's Journey, which starts with a knock on the door of the Lodge.

He stands outside the door of the Lodge room. A poor candidate divested of everything of 'value', clothed in an apparently ridiculous manner, with odd shoes on his feet, blindfolded and with a cable-tow about his neck.

One reason seems to be that he is looking for something better in life. Perhaps he is looking for answers to those important questions which have plagued mankind since the dawn of history.

In front of him is a door, a door that is shut fast and firmly locked against him. The Tyler, standing beside him, takes his right wrist, guides his right hand to the door knocker and tells him to strike it, slowly and very deliberately, three times (in some Lodges this is '*one distinct knock*', given by the Tyler). By doing so, he shows the desire to begin a journey to receive knowledge. The Ceremony of Initiation has begun.

The word *initiation* comes from the Latin and means 'a beginning'. The word *candidate* also comes from the Latin and originally meant 'clothed in white'. This derived from the custom of Roman candidates for public office being obliged to wear a white robe, the *toga candida*.

The Masonic candidate is a man who requests the favour of a Degree, or one who aspires to one. Some of the early French exposures speak of the uninitiated as profane (a heathen), a man not initiated into religious rites, or one who is outside the Temple.

The candidate is a free man and of twenty-one years. This was a requirement in the Middle Ages (as it is today in many countries) for he must be free to make his own decisions, free to travel and seek employment as a journeyman without fear of pursuit and capture by his liege Lord, or his father. If he were less than twenty-one, a man was not legally an adult and this was the minimum age that anyone might normally be admitted into the Craft.

The Ceremony of Initiation has begun with those '*three distinct knocks*' upon the Lodge door, spaced well apart from each other and not the knocks of the Degree. This is how the Inner Guard knows that a Candidate is outside the door. The triple knock is said to refer to three doors, one real and two symbolic. As the Evangelist Saint John said of Christ,

'Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me' (Revelation 3:20).

In operative lodges the triple knock was considered a symbol of the Trinity; Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The Lecture and Old Catechisms tell us they allude to an ancient and venerable exhortation which is mentioned in the Gospels of both Matthew and Luke;

'Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you'.

They also allude to the virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity; not only in donations of money but in giving time and effort to another, who is in need of it. As our Ritual states, *'... part in serving a friend or Brother in time of need, without detriment to ourselves or connections'.*

The door of the Lodge is of great importance. It has of course two sides and faces two ways. Its outer face looks on the profane world, its other face looks into the Lodge where we conduct our business after leaving our worldly cares outside.¹

Going through a spiritual door hopefully represents a change for the better, an opportunity for spiritual growth and self-development. It must therefore be with faith in the Supreme Being for a new beginning, and with hope and charity in his heart that the candidate knocks to gain admission.

The Password which gains him entry is *'By the help of God, being free and of good report'*. When the Inner Guard admits the candidate, he tries him on the point of a sharp instrument which is presented to his naked left breast. The Poignard is a narrow dagger with a cross-hilt and is the Collar Jewel of the Inner Guard. If held upright by the blade, for some it will form the Christian emblem of the cross, an emblem of peace. In medieval times, the possibility of evil spirits impersonating human beings was very firmly held by many people and the infallible means of frightening him away was to confront him with the sign of the cross.

The Door Guard of the operative masons would use a trowel, a razor-sharp tool that used to be the Collar Jewel of the youngest apprentice *'who kept the door'*. Today, the trowel is emblematic of industry and has been transferred to that of the Collar Jewel of the Charity Steward. By the prick of the poignard or trowel, the Candidate is reminded that he is about to embark on something sacred and solemn. It also emphasises the difficulty of entrance.

The Candidate is led into the Lodge in a humble posture by the Deacon(s) and he is taken to the kneeling stool in the West to answer some questions. He is then instructed to kneel or to *'stand covered'* to receive the benefit of Masonic Prayer. The wording of the prayer is straightforward; asking God's help that the candidate may prove to be a worthy Brother and during the prayer, all those present give the *'Sign of Reverence'* (sign of prayer).²

The Master then puts a question to the Candidate, *'...In all cases of danger and difficulty, in whom do you place your trust?'* The question is a forerunner of a test of faith; without such faith could he face the trials that follow? An old Lancashire Working states; *'Mr It is only fair to inform you that one holding a drawn sword is before you and another holding a cable-tow about your neck is behind you. In this position of difficulty and danger, in whom do you put your trust?'* Therefore, the initiate is in real and actual danger here. He then affirms his trust in God, which is essential, and admits no compromise.

He is then instructed to rise and the Master asks the Brethren in the North, East, South and West to take notice. The specific path of North, East, South and West is one the candidate will take, following the path of the Sun; the symbol of light and good. Bearing this in mind, it is logical that a candidate should enter from the North, as it is the place of darkness, and indeed, something that does occur in some older Lodges in the country.

He now begins a perambulation to show that he is fit in faith and mind to accept that which is before him. The initiate's journey has truly begun.

Bibliography

1. Ars Quatuor Coronatum (Various Volumes) Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076.
2. Baker, B., (2008), Why do Deacons carry Wands?, Seek & Learn: First Degree, Solomon.
3. Baker, B., (2015), The Apron - the Distinguishing Badge of a Mason, Seek & Learn: Masonic History, Solomon.
4. Hamill, J.M., (1986), The Craft - A History of Freemasonry, Guild Press.
5. Hart, Ronald J.R., (2013), Enhance Your Masonic Lodge, Lewis Masonic
6. Karn, M., (2016), Lodge Talks, Lewis Masonic.

Endnotes

1. The Roman God *Janus* (after whom the month of January is named) was also a god of change; much like the Hindu god *Shiva*. Statues of Janus show him with one head and two faces; he looks back on the Old Year and at the same time looks forward to the New Year.
2. This is a most ancient gesture and should be dropped or cut; as is often seen in our Lodges

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 - Supported by audio-visual aids, if necessary

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If the paper is to be used to introduce a discussion, the presenter will need to have thought about the material, done a little research, and prepared some open questions to engage with the audience. Kipling's dictum can be of help in preparing open questions, which should begin with one of his 'serving men', as follows: *'I keep six honest serving men (they taught me all I knew). Their names are, What and Why and When and How and Where and Who'*. Rudyard Kipling

*Note: All biblical passages are taken from the Authorized King James version and any reference to ritual will be from Emulation unless otherwise specified.

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