



# PAPER

## Hoodwink

**Summary:** A short Talk which seeks to explain why the Candidate is hoodwinked.

*'And God said, let there be Light; and there was light.'* (Genesis 1:3)

In spite of the Ritual only a very ill informed man can imagine that the Hoodwink is for the purpose of concealing the Lodge Room and the Brethren from the Initiate until he is obligated. Yet these thoughts do pass through the minds of some of the Brethren as they wait with keen anticipation to watch the effect that the Ceremony has upon the Candidate. There is nothing secret about the inside of a Masonic Temple. The Architect who designed the building, the builders who completed the contract, and all the workmen, maintenance and cleaning staff have all seen the inside of the Lodge Room. The United Grand Lodge of England has conducted tours on a daily basis, around the Temple at Great Queen Street, London, for many years. In many Lodges, it is the custom to invite the Ladies and non-Masons who attended Ladies Evening Festivals to have a look around the Lodge Room. This is to say nothing about the recent policy of openness and the resulting implications of 'Freemasonry in the Community'.

So, what is the meaning, and the purpose behind the Hoodwink? What is its Symbolism? To begin with let us look back into history, at other systems of Initiation. Surrounding ancient mysteries, and their systems of Initiation, darkness has always been the symbol of ignorance. Many different rituals required that the eye should not see until the heart has conceived the mysteries of the Order. It was therefore commonplace for the aspirant to membership to be shrouded in darkness as a preparation to the reception of the full light of knowledge; whatever that may be!

The time for the confinement of a Candidate into darkness and solitude varied dramatically across the different mysteries. It is believed that amongst the Druids of Britain the period was nine days and nine nights. Some of the Grecian Mysteries required three times nine days. In select Persian Orders, that period of time was extended to an incredible fifty days of darkness, solitude and fasting. So, upon reflection, we have all had a relatively comfortable ride during our admission into the Craft!

Taking our minds back to the creation of the world; darkness is thought of as existing before light was created, it was originally worshipped as the firstborn, as the progenitor of day and the state of existence before creation. In a more sinister context it was of course the origin of the debasing worship of darkness and evil. In the Old Testament, as well as many other ancient religions and philosophies, darkness is symbolic not only of ignorance, but of sin, evil and wrong. This is not so with regards to Masonic darkness of the Hoodwink. The reason for this is because evil, sin and wrong are matters of a voluntary nature. They are the result of going against knowledge. There is no implication in any Masonic Degree that the candidate is

or does evil. The Hoodwink is not voluntary. The Candidate submits to it because the Degree requires him to do so. It is a requirement to emphasise the concept of ignorance now, and knowledge to come; not sin now and redemption to come. A Freemason's darkness indicates only a helpfulness to emphasize the worth of knowledge. In a Freemason's Lodge it is not used to emphasise a moral regeneration, as a candidate for Freemasonry is already a moral individual or he would not be an Initiate.

Interestingly - there is an appropriate extract from Isaiah (45:3) which exclaims: *'I will give thee the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places'*. The *'treasures of darkness'* are in the knowledge that enlightenment will be forthcoming; that secrets will be revealed, and that the darkness is essential to that revelation. Without darkness he could neither see nor appreciate the light. The darkness of unseeing eyes is in itself a treasure in that it teaches the lesson of dependence upon others; of friendly hands, of the eventual unveiling to come, and the anticipation of new knowledge. It is only by a knowledge of, and a dependence upon, The Great Architect of the Universe, that illumination is possible. This is at the very heart of Freemasonry.

The Hoodwink may be explained thus:

- The anticipation of knowledge to come
- Its removal - a reminder of the treasures of darkness
- Its revelation of the hidden riches of secret places
- Its removal is a profoundly important moment in the life of a Freemason; the Entered Apprentice is given a precious possession to have all his life.

Doctor Oliver, an eminent Masonic historian had this to say about the subject:

*'The temporary blindness of the hoodwink is symbolic of the deprivation of moral and intellectual light. Therefore the Masonic candidate represents one immersed in intellectual darkness, groping in the search for that Divine light and truth which are the objectives of our Fraternity.'*

William Preston, maybe the best known authority upon these matters describes in his *Illustrations of Masonry* published in 1772, what is described as the sense of sight; he wrote:

*'Seeing is: that sense by which we distinguish objects, and are enabled in an instant of time without change of place or situation, to view armies in battle, array, figures of the most stately structure and all the agreeable variety displayed in the landscape of Nature.'*

*By this sense find we our way in the pathless ocean, traverse the globe of this planet earth, determine its figures and dimensions and delineate any region or quarter of it. By it we measure the planetary orbs, and make new discoveries in the sphere of the fixed stars.*

*Nay, more - by it we perceive the tempers and dispositions, the passions and affections of our fellow creatures, when they wish most to conceal them. Although the tongue may be taught to lie and dissemble; countenance will display the hypocrisy to the discerning eye.*

*In fine, the rays of light which administer to this sense are the most astonishing parts of the inanimate creation, and render the eye a peculiar object of admiration'*



Besides the symbolism of the hoodwink, there are two psychological reasons for temporarily depriving the candidate of his sight. Firstly, man has only a certain amount of power to receive impressions. If this power is divided between the eye and the ear and the sense of touch the deprivation of one sense will increase the strength of the remaining senses. The blindfold will therefore increase and emphasise the words which the Initiate hears which means that he will pay more attention to the spoken words of the ritual. Secondly, a Candidate is more impressed when he is 'part of the action'. The more that he becomes part of it the greater the impression is made upon him.

Hoodwinking the Candidate singles him out from his fellows. In fact, for a time he is put into a different situation from the people around him. He is immediately made to feel dependent upon a friend. He can no longer defend himself. He has to put his trust in his fellows. Above all he is directed to *'safely rise and follow his leader with a firm but humble confidence for where the name of God is invoked no danger will ensue.'* There you have it! There is a power for good in the darkness induced by the temporary withdrawal of sight. Let no man who has worn the Hoodwink ever forget that for all mankind. *'It is only after darkness falls - that man can see the stars!'*

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Papers offer a simple, direct means of advancement in a particular aspect of Masonic knowledge. They can be used in a variety of ways:

- Read at home for private study
- Shared for pre-reading by members of a discussion group
- Read aloud in Lodge or Chapter, or in an LOI/COI/new members forum
  - Followed by 'any questions'
  - As a precursor to a discussion (in which case much more time is needed, possibly more than double that allocated to the paper itself)
  - Supported by audio-visual aids, if necessary

They can be delivered by a single person or split into bite-sized pieces and read by multiple presenters (in which case, the speaker(s) should have read and practiced the delivery of the paper beforehand).

\*Note: All biblical passages are taken from the Authorized King James version unless otherwise specified.

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

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