



## PAPER

### This Journey Makes Me Think

**Summary:** A Journey through the Three Degrees via a recapitulation and explanation of the First Degree, moving on to an explanation of some of the aspects of the Second Degree and then the Exhortation and Charge after Raising in the Third Degree.

#### The First Degree

He stands outside the door of the Lodge Room. A poor Candidate, divested of everything of value, clothed in a strange manner, with odd shoes on his feet, blindfolded and with a cable-tow around his neck. Before him is a door, which is shut and firmly locked. The Tyler standing beside him knocks slowly and very deliberately three times:

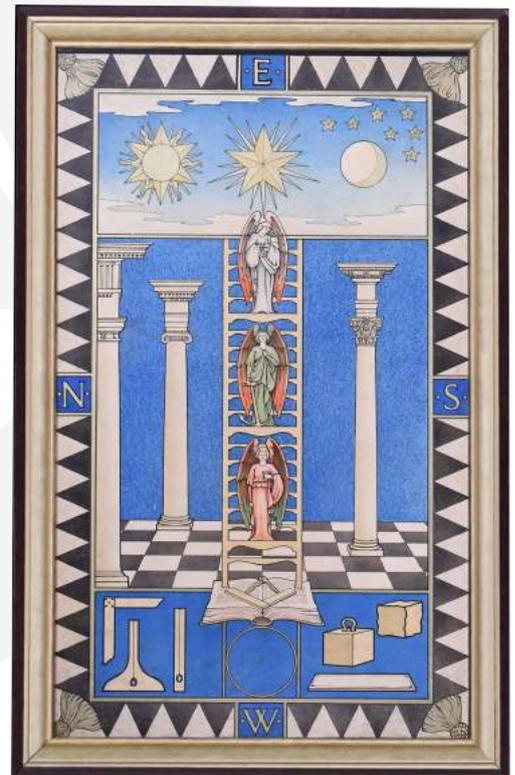
*'Seek and ye shall find; Ask and ye shall receive; Knock and it shall be opened to you.'*

The Ceremony of Initiation has begun; a journey to receive knowledge.

The three knocks tell the Inner Guard that a Candidate is outside. In Operative Lodges, they were often considered a symbol of the Trinity (God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit) or an allusion to the virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity.

The door of the Lodge is of great importance; it has two sides and faces two ways. The outer face looks out at the profane world, and its other side looks into the Lodge where we conduct our Masonic business after leaving our worldly cares outside the door. Going through a spiritual door hopefully represents a change for the better as opens to admit a Candidate with faith in God for a new beginning and with hope and charity in his heart. The key to his entry is *'the Tongue of Good Report'*!

When the Candidate is admitted, he is tried by having the point of a sharp instrument presented to his naked left-breast. The sharp instrument used in most Lodges is known as the poignard; a narrow dagger with a cross-hilt as seen on the Collar Jewel of the Inner Guard. If held upright by the blade, it forms the Christian emblem of the cross, used in mediaeval times to frighten away evil spirits masquerading as human beings.



The Candidate is led by the two Deacons into the Lodge in a humble, halting, movement and he is taken to the kneeling stool in the West. Then, having answered three key questions, kneels to receive the *'benefit of Masonic prayer'*, asking God's help that the Candidate may prove a worthy Brother. Following which, he is asked a question:

*'In all cases of difficulty and danger, in whom do you put your trust?'*

The Candidate was in real danger here, because in front of him was a man with a dagger and behind him was another holding a cable-tow with a running noose around his neck. The Candidate affirms his trust in God which is essential and admits no compromise.

The Candidate then follows a specific path, *'... from the North, East, South and West...'* the path of the Sun, the symbol of light and goodness. The Candidate moves forward from the North, the place of darkness; his journey has begun.

## The Second Degree

*'No man has ever reached excellence in any one art or profession without having passed through the slow and painful process of study and preparation'* wrote Horace.

'Being properly prepared' is a phrase heard at Initiation, and at Passing and will surely be heard again. The Second Degree points out the importance of education and the individual's responsibilities to himself. The Brethren are still there to offer support, but Freemasonry reflects life itself; progression requires individual effort and application and Freemasonry is indeed a progressive science.

If you asked which part of the Second Degree ceremony is the most interesting, many would probably refer to one of the stories of Biblical origin, because they conjure up memorable pictures and ideas. The explanation of the Second Degree Tracing Board gives us a very detailed description of the two great pillars of the Temple, Jephtha's campaign against the Ephraimites and a full account of the way in which our ancient Brethren received their wages.



There are other memorable and beautiful pieces of prose in this Degree, for example the extended version of the explanation of the working tools:

*'To steer the bark of this life over the seas of passion without quitting the helm of rectitude is the highest perfection to which human nature can attain.'*

Another is the charge given to the Candidate standing in the South-East of the Lodge, which ends with:

*'...as in the previous Degree you made yourself acquainted with the principles of Moral Truth and Virtue, you are now permitted to extend your researches into the hidden mysteries of Nature and Science.'*

You are now acquainted with the concept of the seven liberal arts and sciences (grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy). The hoodwink was removed during your Initiation, so now as Fellow Craft, you have the gift of light to observe the ‘wonderful works of the Almighty’. As an Entered Apprentice, you had already embraced the principles of moral truth and virtue. It is time to move on and the progress you can now make through study and reflection will improve the way you perceive the world and the way the world perceives you. From now on, as a Fellow Craft, you are encouraged to question yourself and challenge your thoughts and actions to better equip you to discharge your duties as a Freemason. At your Initiation, the assistance of the Almighty was invoked, but in the ceremony of Passing, you had the additional assistance of the Square, the central symbol in Freemasonry and one of the working tools of the Second Degree, the others being the Level and the Plumb-Rule; all used for measuring and testing.

### The Third Degree

The Exhortation, in which: *‘a retrospect of those degrees in Freemasonry through which you have already passed’*, leads to the objects of the Third Degree and the statement that: *‘to the just and virtuous man, death has no terrors equal to the stain of falsehood and dishonour.’*

Who amongst us should not be fearful if these are to be the criteria for admission to the Grand Lodge above? Perhaps we can take some comfort from what we were taught about faith, hope and charity in the First Degree. For none of us is perfect and even the best of us still has much to learn.

Lastly, the words of the Charge after Raising are most worthy of our thoughts: *‘Let the emblems of mortality which lie before you lead you to contemplate on your inevitable destiny, and guide your reflections to that most interesting of all human studies, the knowledge of yourself’*. Thus, we are urged to gain knowledge of ourselves and perhaps conclude that only by an understanding of our own nature can we hope to develop the understanding of others.



## Recommended use of Papers

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).

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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