



Pillars of Light



Compiled by the
Editorial Team of the
Grand Lodge Library

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EDITORIAL

An open discussion with a younger Mason...

An adapted "meeting" with a younger Mason, inspired by the One Day Class Crisis-T. Bonney's FM Resources.

I met him in the corridor leading to the Museum and the Library. He is an Insurance executive, working in the City who preferred to spend his short lunchtime break in our Masonic Centre, in search of some more information...

He is in his early thirties and joined only a couple of years ago. A young, keen Mason.

After a tour of the Museum, I invited him in the Library for a chat.

"I have been told by many older experienced Masons", he said, "that we have to make it easier for young candidates to join. That the serious decline in membership is partially due to the fact that it is too hard for young men to find time from family and work and dedicate to Freemasonry... So we have to make it easier for them.

So, in order to make it easier, the time between degrees has shortened and the rules on proficiency have been bent as well. Some say that the dues have to be kept low to accommodate men who may not have the funds to pay higher dues.

In many lodges - my visitor seems already to know it - we have been less rigorous in our examination of new candidates for initiation. In my short period in the Craft, I have never heard of a black ball being used in a ballot... because, after all, don't we need new members? And everything is done for an efficient recruitment.

But, there has been one basic problem with all this, my young visitor comments, it seems that only very seldom have we asked any younger man, what he expects from the Craft and what he expects the Craft to expect from him... and if an "easier" Freemasonry is what he really wants!

To my maze, the young Mason continued on a very convincing tone:

In fact, I have come to believe that easier Freemasonry is not what younger men who want to join our Fraternity are wanting at all! I became a Freemason in great part because of the example I received from my Grandfather. When he died I attended his Masonic service and was impressed by the men in dark suit, wearing aprons, who paid tribute to my Grandfather. At the funeral I promised myself that some day I would be a Mason if such a fraternity of honourable men would accept me.

More than a decade passed before I acted on that promise. During that time I read every web page, book, and article I could find on Freemasonry. I read about the history and the ethics of the Craft.

When I petitioned to be accepted, I was actually astonished how basic my interview and how little I was asked. It was merely a formality, but that was probably because my Grandfather was a Mason. Or was it? From this moment, I felt I was ready for much more.

I wanted to experience the full initiatory experience of my Grandfather and prepared myself for the important day in my life, with great anticipation. I wanted to memorize every word and understand every symbol that was presented to me. I did not want to have anybody cut me any slack.

And I have met other young fellows like me, and I found out that they want many of the same things I wanted. Young Masons do not want anyone to make it "easy" for them. Younger Masons that I have talked to, believe that we need to make it harder and not easier to receive the degrees.

They want to really have to show proficiency before being passed or raised. Not just easy automatic advancement. They want their degrees to become achievements. Younger Masons want to read and learn about the philosophy and teaching of Craft Masonry.

They do not want Freemasonry handed to them. They want to earn it!

Young people are searching in our society. They are searching for meaning, depth and focus in their life. They are searching for a philosophy and ethic that will help them to live a better life. They are searching for growth and self-improvement. In short they are searching for what Ancient Craft Freemasonry in its purest form, can offer them.

If older Masons really ask young Masons what we really want, I believe you will find that we want the fundamentals of the ancient Craft of Freemasons. We want the Freemasonry of Anderson's Constitutions. We want the Freemasonry of our Grandfathers. We want to be challenged, stretched, educated and trained.

We want the opportunity to take our rough ashlar and begin to smooth them. We want to be Freemasons in the fullest sense of the word.



MASONIC STEPS

The word "step" has a number of meanings. It may be either a single movement of the foot; the distance covered by a single step; a rest for the foot in climbing; a short distance or journey; a degree or unit of measurement; a stage or any of a series of acts. Steps in Masonry can befit many of these interpretations. More importantly "steps" refers to what our French brothers call "Voyages Symboliques", special symbolic steps forming an integral part of an endless journey through Masonry .

Each degree in Masonry has a different number of steps which may be performed in a different way, each having allegorical significance pertinent to the teaching of the particular degree.

The Masonic journey starts in darkness with a first uncertain step "symbolique" of the ignorance of the candidate but expressing the desire to actively partake in the mysteries, spiritual practices and fellowship of Freemasonry .The next small but very important journey of discovery comprises three rather awkward steps, each a little longer, taken towards the Altar, symbolic of the three degrees in Freemasonry and the three stages of life; childhood, youth and old age. These steps challenge the candidate at the commencement his journey to a personal commitment to the moral and spiritual obligations of Freemasonry.

Then follows the first regular step when each candidate is instructed in the character, respect and physical uprightness that must be exhibited at all times as an essential quality before receiving the many and precious secrets of the Craft. It is also the first important part of the act of recognition of the reverence, authority and spiritual significance of our God in Masonry, The Great Architect of the Universe.

The act of demonstrating by way of special steps, respect to the Deity or a Ruler is quite ancient. The custom of advancing in a peculiar manner and form to some sacred place, or elevated personage, has been preserved in almost all countries, especially Orientals who resort to prostration of the body when approaching the Throne of a Sovereign, or the Holy part of a religious edifice. In like vein regular steps in Freemasonry are symbolic of respect and veneration of the Altar, whence Masonic Light emanates.

In former times, and in some higher degrees, a bier or coffin was placed in front of the Altar as a symbol, and in passing over this to reach the Altar, various positions of feet were necessarily taken, which constituted a proper mode of recognition. (Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, A.A. Mackey, p 743). Respect was thereby paid to a worthy artist as well as to the Holy Altar. Figuratively, three grand steps symbolically lead from this life to the source of all knowledge.

Steps in the Second degree are highly relevant and rich in the symbolism of its teaching - the pursuit of knowledge of liberal art and the sciences.

Ascending each new step is symbolic of acquiring and understanding the knowledge, the ritual instructs to pursue as a basic obligation, namely those of grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, music and astronomy; thus also to enable our brethren to achieve in every aspect of their life our Masonic goals of truth, justice, morality, equality and charity. The degree further obligates brethren to dedicate themselves to continued learning, with the ultimate aim of making good men better men, more useful to them-

selves, their family and the society in which they live.

The several unusual steps towards the Altar in the third degree are symbolic of progress in the three degrees. They trace our progress towards that ultimate point where, inevitably, each of us must face the final reality of our mortal life; and pass across the abyss that is the final challenge in our ultimate journey to reach our Final Home.

The solemn steps of the perambulation during raising constitute perhaps the most dramatic, memorable and symbolic recognition of our transit to the ultimate goal of Freemasonry, being welcomed into our Spiritual Home.

Steps in Freemasonry take brethren forward into each new stage of an endless journey of discovery, not only of the science of life, but also as a means of emancipation to discover other important aspects of the world and self, rarely experienced in contemporary society. They are intended to lead to discovering ones self, and the profound needs of human nature - which a Mason should seek to serve.

The history of the Masonic steps practiced in our modern ritual is relatively recent in time. In his seminal book " The Freemason at Work", H. Carr concludes that it appears certain the first three regular steps made by candidates to the Altar before obligation were in use in Masonic ceremonies prior to 1730. When, some years later, the third degree was introduced, originally in Europe around 1745, the peculiar steps and the symbolism arising there from subsequently became an important, accepted part of Freemasonry in England and internationally. Masonic symbolism has since evolved progressively over the years intervening to the present.

It is also certain that the step of forming a square was in use prior to 1730 and, at that time, was used as a means of recognition.

The use of three steps to approach the altar is symbolically explained (in R. Browne's work, The Master Key, in 1802) as follows:

"What do they morally teach us

Upright lives and well squared intentions".

Around that time, in the older initiation ceremony, the squared step was explained as "symbolic of a just and upright man and Mason", words perpetuated into our modern ritual. This latter exultation to our older brothers is equally as relevant today.

Indeed, each time a brother stands to salute the Master he should be conscious of the words of the First Degree, that he is again taking a "regular step" forming a square, erect in stance, the body being an emblem of uprightness and the feet the rectitude of his actions. Not only does this reflect the dignity of our ceremonies but it also reaffirms respect for our Order, its moral authority and its universally relevant symbolism. A poorly executed step and arm salute is a clear visual indicator of lack of appreciation and respect for the teachings and practices of Freemasonry.

Steps in Freemasonry are intended as symbolic signposts for what is intended to be an endless journey seeking knowledge and truth of the mysteries and purposes of life and of the Good Works of our Maker.

R. K. Whiteley

P.M. Port Jackson & Lewis

May we suggest to the Brother Secretary that it would be greatly appreciated if he could include regularly our link:

www.uglnsw.freemasonry.org.au/Library/Default.htm

in the Notice Paper sent to the members of the Lodge.



Dear Brother Librarian,

I'm doing some research into the Symbolic Voyages and have got a lot of information on the first Degree. But find it hard to get any on the others, but do know that there are five in the Second and seven in the Third. Would you be able to help at all with some information or where I might be able to find out? Hope you can help.

Yours fraternally,

VW Bro Ivo Bunker DGIW

My dear VW Bro Ivo,

Thank you for your question concerning the "Voyages Symboliques", mostly used in the French Rituals as a development of the Scottish Rite adopted by the French Masons and copied as part of the so called "Rite Francais" (the French Rite.) They represent the trials and circumambulations in the different degrees.

As you have mentioned, there are three voyages in the EA Degree, five in the FCF Degree and seven in the MM Degree. These voyages are made by fully Circling the Lodge.

They symbolize: in the First Degree, the three stages of a man's life, from birth to death. In the 2nd degree, the search of Knowledge over Arts and Sciences. In the 3rd Degree the wandering of the 3 ruffians, desperately trying to escape punishment .

No hero had a sedentary life. Voyage is testing man. It was and remains a necessity of his condition as a human being and in the same time the means of his emancipation, the opportunity for him to discover other aspects of the world and of self.

If patience is the test of the wise, the voyage is his way to knowledge.

Symbol and imagination, as well as voyage in time, as in space, is at the core of destiny.

In the French Rite, the Initiation symbolical voyage is the essential part of the ceremony. It is obvious that historical tradition, as well as the legendary tradition, the religious Rites and the scientifically proven theorems, are equally confirming the importance of the voyage for humans.

As a complement to all good education, voyage or travel, in modern times, represents an opening to mystery and unknown.

Pythagoras has acquired his wisdom during his voyages. Hercules has achieved his feats during his voyages. Ulysses has given Greece a Mediterranean itinerary , but in the same time an initiating itinerary.

Jesus, Jason, Lancelot, Siegfried, Parsifal have done the same ... as has done Columbus — in a different way...

In our days the Astronauts are following in the "footsteps" of past heroes .

The Symbolic Voyage during the Initiation includes several aspects: Firstly the Errant Quest - is the destiny of every

EA. The hesitant, unsure research that leads to the discovery of the inner and outer realms. It ends in the last stage, by a more confidently advancing towards Truth, by discovering himself and the profound needs of human nature.

We remember that the French Companion of the Tour de France, was travelling to improve his professional skills, then to learn how to adapt to the local architecture and conditions of building and later, to become more confident, to learn to better know himself, his character, his ambitions and consolidate his dedication to his trade. This is achieved in the Second Degree.

Finally the Voyages of the Master Mason - the approach to the grand Mysteries. The FCF is wandering in search of his Master. But he is not alone. Finally none will be able to replace the Master. The FCFs will all participate and take together the responsibility of which the Master was dispossessed so brutally.

In the York Rite, the Holy Royal Arch as well as in the Scottish Ancient and Accepted Rite , the voyage goes on to find the Truth and the Word that was lost.

The different Initiations, include the Symbolical Voyages, reproducing the 40 years of Moses' wandering in the desert.

In a way they represent not only the image of the long nomadic history of mankind, but the expression of its future , as well, - as it is progressively unveiling to the researchers and the men of wisdom.

Even if we are not perceiving the similarity, it is at the core of our daily events. Migration, travel, voyage, the true expression of man's continuous search for his "better", "perfect" life.

As in Masonry, is that attainable ?

French Masonic Literature is the place where you can find more ample explanations. This is what I can contribute, but you my Brother, trough study and research will surely achieve better than me.

I'm sorry I got back to you only so late in the day, but I couldn't find a moment in the Library to answer your quest. In the peace of my study, at home, I did my best.

Best fraternal regards,

Joe Haffner

We need you !!!

Do you have thoughts on Masonry to share or expand?

Do you want to express your views and enlarge our knowledge?

Then come and join in our Study Circle.

Call the Grand Librarian, (02) 9284 2825

e-mail: library@uglnsw.freemasonry.org.au



Enlightened Pillars of the Grand Librarian

Any Questions? Ask the Grand Librarian-POL edited by RW Bro J. V. Haffner

I was wondering what is the significance of the "Key" leading from the FC to the MM?

Regards, Jason Cutler

My dear Brother Jason,

I am not sure I clearly understood your reference to the "SIGNIFICANCE" of the "Key". It would have been quite easy to explain the etymology of the Hebrew words that are the basis of the two components of the artificer's name. But I doubt that this would have been your enquiry. I rather prefer to explain the importance (significance) of the choice made..

Firstly, the origin of the "Key" came into Freemasonry together with the character himself, in the Gothic Legends, where it was recited how the sciences were founded by the four children of Lamech. (see Gothic Constitutions)

This legend was based on the account in Genesis, where one of them was described as "instructor of every artificer in brass and iron", though the Hebrew text actually refers to him as being a "sharpener" instead of instructor.

Effort have been made to identify the scripture's artificer with Vulcan, just because the morphology of the name allows in Hebrew a different pronunciation : Tu - VulCan . I do not see any other reason for the relation between the "Key" and Vulcan the god of Iron and metal work and I remain unconvinced about this relationship. Amongst the oddities written into the English ritual, after the Union of 1813, was the statement that the man's name was symbolic of "worldly possessions" rather obscure in my view.

A very interesting approach to the subject is made by Albert Mackey, in his Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry. He advances several explanations and concludes that the use of the "name" as a significant word in the Masonic ritual is derived from the "Legends of the Craft," by which name was made familiar to the Operative and then to the Speculative Masons, but Historically to his Scriptural and Traditional reputation .If he symbolized anything , it would be labour; and a Mason's labour is to acquire truth and not worldly possessions.

I do not know, my Brother if the answer satisfies your quest; I am happy at all times to answer any question you may ask.

On another subject, may I suggest you register for the future use of our Library. It will become an enlightening decision.

J. Haffner

... and a very encouraging reaction followed...

Brother Joseph,

Thank you for your quick and insightful response, to a poorly worded question.

I have been in Freemasonry for almost one year - having joined Lodge Gowrie in Canberra before moving "back home" to Wollongong and joining Lodge Illawarra (and last month a Lodge of Instruction). *I was actually reading Pillars of Light before I was initiated into Masonry and it only cemented my thoughts that Freemasonry was the type of organisation I was looking for.*

Fraternal Regards, Jason Cutler

Dear RW Brother Joseph ,

During an installation, why does the newly installed Master take the obligation in the Fellowcraft Degree?

Regards, Jason Cutler

Dear Bro Cutler,

I believe the question is wrongly put, as the new Master is taking his obligation as an Installed Master, in the Board of Installed Masters and not in the FC Degree.

What you refer to, most probably is that the WM ELECT (before his Installation) is taking his obligation in the FC degree. That is understandable as during the Ceremony, after the EAs have left, the FC degree having been the highest degree, in more ancient times, and before the Master Mason Degree was created, it is considered right that the Master Elect must have been taking his obligation in the presence of his peers - the FC Freemasons. That is the reason.

Thanks for your question.

Joe Haffner

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as a valuable member of our Volunteers Team?

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Contact the Grand Librarian RW Bro. Joseph V. Haffner Ph. (02)9284 2825

E-mail: library@uglnsw.freemasonry.org.au