

T.F.S.
Three, five, and seven
3 5 7

By Ed Halpaus, Grand Lodge Education Officer.
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Dear Masonic Student,

Some of the questions I receive from time to time are about the Deacon's Rods, and Warden's Column. I've written about them before, but just recently I've received a few questions on this subject, so I thought it might be time to go over what I wrote before and update it a bit. I hope you enjoy the following article. - Ed

Rods and Columns
By Ed Halpaus, GLEO

Why do the wardens have columns? Why do the Wardens dispose them as they do, depending whether the Lodge is at Labor or Refreshment? What do those columns represent?

I was asked those questions a while back while visiting a Lodge. I thought I knew the answer and gave it since I was asked, but since I wasn't 100% certain of my answer - neither were the Masons I was visiting with 100% certain I knew what I was talking about: So when I returned home I started cracking the books.

I looked up the subject of "Warden's Columns" in Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia and this is some of what I found. "The two Wardens' Columns it is possible, but is not certain that these represent Jachin and Boaz."

Jones, in his 'Freemasons Guide and Compendium' says; "it seems that Jachin and Boaz do not stand like sentinels in English Lodges, for the two columns were formerly given more prominence by being placed on either side of the entry way so that one must pass between them to enter the Lodge." Passing between Boaz and Jachin is what is meant by the term 'Passed' in the 2°, so I think passing between these pillars each time one enters his Lodge is a nice thing. However, there are few Lodges that have the room for these pillars to reside on each side of the Tyler's Door, to enjoy passing between them as we enter the Lodge we need to think of symbolically doing it.

Jones also says he is of the opinion that the two Wardens' Columns took the place of the larger columns which were abandoned. And evidently in English Lodges the two Wardens' Columns are all that is left of the three great pillars. Well if that's true they couldn't represent Jachin and Boaz, they must be Strength and Beauty, Doric & Corinthian. But why then do the Warden's Columns have round globe-like features on their tops?

Again Coils: "Early rituals (1730) spoke of "three Grand Pillars" which supported the Mason's Lodge, and represented the first three Grand Masters. In the 18th century [the pillars] stood before, to the side, or behind, the Master, and one was similarly placed with respect to each Warden."

In the Encyclopedia of Freemasonry it says this about the Senior Warden. "He represents the Column of Strength. He has placed before him, and carries in all processions, a column, which is the representative of the right-hand pillar that stood at the porch of King Solomon's Temple. The Junior Warden has a similar column, which represents the left hand pillar." This refers to Jachin and Boaz respectively; Boaz on the left, and Jachin on the right. This placement is found in the 7th chapter of first Kings of the Great Light of Masonry.

I continued to look into books I have on hand and found that the Warden's Columns and the Deacon's Rods are related. And since someone also asked the question as to why the Steward's Rods are colored White, I pursued that too.

The Rod or staff is an emblem of power, and as with the Warden's Columns they are today a Badge of Office; when a King carries it, it is called a scepter, but when carried by an inferior officer it becomes a Rod, verge, or staff: At one time the Deacons, Stewards, and Marshal of a Lodge all carried Rods. The Rod or Staff in addition to being an emblem of power and authority is a symbol of protection. "Thy Rod and thy staff they comfort me."

In the Military the Rod became a "Baton" in the hands of the Marshal, and the Baton was adopted by Freemasonry as the badge of office for the Marshal of the Lodge.

"Smith's edition of the Pennsylvania "Ahiman Rezon" refers to a procession in 1778 where the Wardens carried "wands tipped with gold," and also the Warden's Columns."

At the time of Webb's Monitor, published in 1797, and as shown in Preston's Illustrations of Masonry, the Deacons received the Columns as the badges of their office: "A short time later, meaning soon after 1804 but most likely before 1807, the Columns were transferred to the Wardens and Rods were given to the Deacons." According to Mackey's Encyclopedia - after 1822 all the "Monitors" referred to the Columns for the Wardens and the Rods for the Deacons. So after about 1822 the columns were everywhere recognized as the insignia for the Wardens, and the Rods, Wands, or Staves, as belonging to the Deacons.

White as a color – Here is an explanation as to why the Steward's Rods are white, "the Steward's Rod is an imitation of the White Staff borne by the Lord High Steward of the King's household:" A real simple explanation as to why Freemasonry adopted the White Rods for the Lodge Stewards. The Rod is the badge or ensign of the office of the Stewards of the Lodge, or of the Grand Stewards in the Grand Lodge, on the top of which is the same insignia as is the Steward's Jewel and the same system of Jewels and Rod Tops follows for the Deacons as well.

The first formal account of the Stewards and their White Rods is found in the Book of Constitutions from 1738. On June 24, 1724, (St. John the Baptist Day) is recorded; the Stewards were walking "Two and two abreast with white rods."

The use of the White Rods comes from the political usages of England, where the Steward of the King's household was appointed by the delivery of a staff, the breaking of which dissolved the office. In those times, going back to the reign of Edward the 4th, at least, the "White Staff" was the proper insignia for both the office of Steward and Treasurer. In 1792 Preston wrote about the "Grand Treasurer with his staff." In America the custom of the Treasurer carrying a Rod has been abandoned. However, the custom was derived from the old custom of the Treasurer of the King's household to carry a staff as the ensign of authority.

“In the old “customary books” we are told that the Steward or Treasurer of the household received the White Rod as a badge of office from the King himself. The King would present the Rods with these words: “Tenez le baston de nostre maison.” (Receive the Staff of our house.)”

An interesting comment in Mackey’s Encyclopedia of Freemasonry is this about the Deacons of a Lodge. “The proper Badge or Ensign of office of a Deacon, which he should always carry with him in the discharge of the duties of his office, is a Blue Rod surmounted by a pine-cone.” Over time the color of the Deacons Rods, at least here in America, became Black. In the two-volume set of the “New Century Dictionary,” which is from the beginning of the last century, (the 1900’s,) not our New Century; under the meanings and examples of the word “Black” I saw two words “Black Rod,” and this is what it says about the Black Rods. “The chief gentleman usher of the Lord Chamberlain’s department of the English Royal household; also usher of the Order of the Garter, whose principal duty is attendance on the House of Lords, in which he is responsible for the maintenance of order (named with reference to the Black Rod he carries); a similar official in British colonial legislatures.”

And since the duties of the Deacon’s is to carry messages from the Senior Warden and orders from the Master about the Lodge the Pine-cone was replaced with a Square and Compass as the top of the Deacon’s Rod. Inside the Square & Compass of the Junior Deacon is a representation of the Moon and of the sun for the Senior Deacon. And as mentioned above the same S&C with the Moon or Sun is in the Jewels of the Deacons, which they wear because it alludes to the Three Lesser Lights, and why the Senior Warden is in the West and the Master is in the East.

So after all of that I still stand by the answer I had in the first place. The Warden’s Columns represent the pillars at the porch of King Solomon’s temple, Jachin and Boaz. If one would inspect the Columns in some Lodges we might find that in addition to Globes being represented on the Wardens Columns there are also Lilies, Network and Pomegranates depicted in the carvings of the wood. While the Columns of Doric, (representing Strength,) would be quite plain, and the Corinthian, (being the most beautiful of the 5 orders of architecture,) would have two rows of leaves and eight volutes sustaining the abacus, and it would not look like an orb. But that is assuming that the Warden’s Columns are an accurate depiction of what they represent. In the more modern production of the columns it appears that they are turned out on a lathe for a faster, simpler product, and thus are made much plainer. From my observation of the Warden’s Columns when visiting Lodges it is evident that the construction of the columns varies; some older ones being very ornate and detailed, and newer columns being on the plain side, in short they don’t all look the same. Today it seems the very detailed and ornate columns are quite rare, valuable, and collectable.

I find it quite interesting that when looking up information about the Warden’s Columns I was led to the Rods, which was another question asked the same night, and on to other things that are also related in some way to the first question. In studying Speculative Masonry one thing many times leads to another.

So there is the answer to the question regarding why the Warden’s have Columns that they dispose when the Lodge is either at Labor or refreshment; they dispose them as they do to let the members of the Lodge know two things; whether the Lodge is at Labor or Refreshment, and which officer is assisting the Master in the governance of the Lodge. And also why the Deacon’s carry rods that are colored black, and why the Steward’s rods are white. The Stewards carry “White Rods” because it is reminiscent of the White Rod carried by the Steward in the King’s household. And the Deacons carry Black Rods because the Chief Gentleman Usher of the Lord Chamberlain’s department of the King’s household carried a Black Rod.

Words to live by: "Fear leads to anger — Anger leads to hate — Hate leads to suffering." Yoda

From the Great Light of Masonry: "No man has **authority** to restrain the wind with the wind, or **authority** over the day of death; and there is no discharge in the time of war, and evil will not deliver those who practice it. All this I have seen and applied my mind to every deed that has been done under the sun wherein a man has exercised **authority** over (another) man to his hurt." Ecclesiastes 8:8-9

Please remember: if you would like to participate in the latest Masonic Monday Question, please go to <http://www.lodgebuilder.org> and click on the Lodge Education forum. When you have an answer send it to masonicmonday@gmail.com the Masonic Monday Question for the week of 10/18/10 is: **When and by whom was the Holy Bible (the Great Light of Masonry) first divided into chapters?**

"The man whose authority is recent is always stern." Aeschylus

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"Authority without wisdom is like a heavy axe without an edge, fitter to bruise than to polish."
Anne Bradstreet

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With "Brotherly Love",
Ed Halpaus
Grand Lodge Education Officer

**Seek to mentor a Brother Mason:
It's good for him, it's good for you, and it's good for Freemasonry!**