

A Pilgrimage Through the Morals & Dogma

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One day while rummaging through an antique shop, I sighted a rather old looking copy of the *Morals and Dogma*, printed by L. H. Jenkins, Richmond, Virginia, March 1915. In the margins of almost every page were one-word notes and there was a note inside the book that said:

Books are the compasses and telescopes and sextant and charts which other men have prepared to help us navigate the dangerous seas of human life. (Jesse Lee Bennett)

Those tools of the traveler set me to thinking about the vast fraternal system we called *Freemasonry*: its tenants and superstructure of degrees and orders; the various tools for the craftsmen; the sublime truths and inculcated lessons; and the directional signs on the highway of life wherein man learns to find a series of interpretations, to have his faculties awakened to the vista of sight, sound and ideas to which he can constantly return for new meanings and fresh understanding.



Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry

A pilgrimage is a journey or search for moral or spiritual significance or to a sacred place, like Jerusalem, Bethlehem, or Dharamshala, the Dalai Lama's residence and headquarters. Typically, it is a journey to a shrine or other location of importance to a person's beliefs and faith, although sometimes it can be a metaphorical journey into someone's own beliefs. As those who have

read and got some understanding of Albert Pike's *Morals and Dogma*, advancing through the esoteric philosophy and symbolism of its degrees is a metaphorical pilgrimage that imparts moral and spiritual instruction for the proper conduct of life.

Morals and Dogma are a rambling collection of thirty-two esoteric essays which provide moral, religious and philosophical instruction for Scottish Rite Masons, but I do not believe many Scottish Rite Masons have read the book. It consists of historical records from ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Persian civilizations as well as others; spiritual roots found in the Bible, Quran, Avesta, and other writings of sacred wisdom; and selected works of the best writers and eloquent thinkers.¹

The Scottish Rite is one of the appendant bodies of Freemasonry that a Master Mason may join for further exposure to the principles of Freemasonry. It builds on the ethical teachings and philosophy offered in Craft Masonry through dramatic presentation of individual degrees. Albert Pike did not use "Dogma" in the pejorative sense; it does not represent dogmatic or authoritative teachings, but he used it in a philosophical teaching sense – knowledge of oneself is important. Thus, this metaphorical pilgrimage begins in the Blue Lodge where the candidate ascends from a lower to a higher condition of knowledge² in the Symbolic Degrees of *Entered Apprentice*, *Fellow Craft* and *Master Mason*.



Blue Lodge – Symbolic Degrees (1st – 3rd)

The **Blue Lodge** confers the **Symbolic Degrees** under the authority of Grand Lodges in America and imply that future generations of Masons may discover what has not been given. A promise that can only be filled by those who "seek and you will find."

¹ *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*, Prepared for The Supreme Council, 33^o, S.J., USA, 1966, Preface

² *An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, Albert G. Mackey, The Masonic History Company, New York, 1924

Any Aspirant desiring this pilgrimage must serve an Entered Apprenticeship in the Temple. It conveys the principal tenants of Freemasonry and the ingredients for a well-ordered life – the foundation for lessons in moral and spiritual development. The Aspirant is qualified as a Craftsman of the Temple in the Fellowcraft Degree and introduced to the five senses which are stressed in developing the mind through the application of the liberal arts and sciences. Finally, the Master Mason Degree introduces an Esoteric theme and the “Lost Word”. It reveals the sublime truths necessary for a well-grounded life and hope for eternal life. The Hiram Legend and use of the Trowel are introduced and the drama of Hiram Abif, a ritualistic drama, is used in the clash of forces, the crises and fates of the human spirit. The drama in the Second Section of the Master Mason Degree is focused on the death of Grand Master Hiram Abif and the “Lost Word”.

Symbolic ritual propagates three levels of knowledge: Secular or physical, mental and spiritual.

The significance of the secular dimension of life is at least inferred in the Hiram Legend³ and is explicitly proclaimed in Scriptural passages dealing with the planning and construction of Solomon's Temple.⁴ Our ritual informs us there was a significant effort in the material building of Temple: in addition to the first three Most Excellent Grand Masters, there were 3,300 Overseers, 80,000 Fellow Crafts, and 70,000 Entered Apprentices – the availability of so massive a workforce and its utilization for construction suggests the presence of a well-structured, powerful, and widely-supported government, in the absence of which the venture could not have been launched or completed.

The mental (intellectual) virtues of freemasonry are found in the significance of the Symbolic Lodges' three great pillars that represents wisdom, strength and beauty. Wisdom denotes those mental qualities that enable us to understand situations, anticipate their consequences and make sound decisions. Wisdom implies the highest and noblest exercise of all the faculties of the moral nature and the intellect, suggesting a combination of discretion, maturity, keenness of intellect,

³ *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia*, Henry Wilson Coil, 33^o, Macoy Publishing & Masonic Supply Company, Inc., New York, pp 308-309

⁴ I Kings 7:1-51, NIV

broad experience, extensive learning, profound thought and compassionate understanding. Strength signifies power, might, force, solidity, toughness, fortitude, courage and many other things. Beauty signifies elegance, grace, symmetry, seemliness, fairness and a wide range of related attributes. The freemason is exhorted to apply wisdom in all his undertakings, to bring strength of character to bear when in difficulties and to adorn his inward self with beauty. These precepts provide a fitting conclusion to any study of Freemasonry's mental dimension.

The spiritual dimension of life is brought to a climax in the prayer at the raising of a Master Mason. It is a Prayer of intercession and supplication, a plea for compassion and salvation, which is shared by the whole brotherhood. By it, and by the incidents preceding and following its recitation, the astute brother learns to appreciate the rewards of a well spent life. Thus, the Aspirant has died and arisen as a new Master Mason which teaches us that our unavoidable destiny is death; but at the same time, in the ceremony and in the very name of Hiram, it shadows forth the great doctrine of another life, and the immortality of the soul.

All Master Masons should be conversant in the tenants of Freemasonry taught in the *Entered Apprentice Degree*, the tools for the workman in the *Fellow Craft Degree*, and the sublime truths, the Hiramic Legend, and use of the Trowel introduced in the *Master Mason Degree*.



Lodge of Perfection – Ineffable Degrees (4th – 14th)

The first of four bodies of the Scottish Rite System is the Lodge of Perfection. Its Fourth to the Fourteenth degrees inclusive are called “Ineffable Degrees” because their purpose is the investigation and contemplation of the ineffable name of Deity and are based upon the operative dramas and legends

of King Solomon's Temple. The elaborate teachings of symbolic Freemasonry are applied to practical situations which man faces in everyday life in character building. He is taught to venerate the virtues of the dead and emulate those of the living; to respect the rights of others, to strive to render service to his fellow man, to refrain from assuming prerogatives and powers that are not his, to not be overzealous in a worthy cause, to reverence Deity, avoiding disrespect, and to control his tongue by maintaining in his mind purity of thought. He is taught Perfection is but one of the fundamentals of character; the other two are Self-respect and Integrity. These lessons are learned and applied to life and are essential to a complete character structure.

The *Secret Master* (4th Degree) and the *Perfect Master* (5th Degree) degrees teach honesty and trustworthiness are a Mason's cornerstone of honor and teaches us to honor our relationships with God, family, country, and Masonry.

The *Intimate Secretary* (6th Degree), *Provost and Judge* (7th Degree) and *Intendant of the Building* (8th Degree) degrees have to do with personal character and teach charity, patience, and self-control.

The *Elu of the Nine* (9th Degree), *Illustrious Elu of the Fifteen* (10th Degree), and *Sublime Elu of the Twelve* (11th Degree) degrees are at the heart of Scottish Rite Freemasonry and teach that today's Mason must be a forward-thinking man of strong moral and ethical quality, to weigh his actions between his own convictions, cultivation to his own character, and service to others.

Grand Master Architect (12th Degree) degree teaches optimism as it moves from operative masonry to speculative or philosophical aspects of Masonry and that life and time constitute but a point in the center of eternity while the circle of God's attributes is infinity.

The *Royal Arch of Solomon* (13th Degree) and the *Grand Elect, Perfect Elu, and Sublime Mason* (14th Degree) degrees should be considered together. The Temple has been destroyed, Solomon has broken with God, and man is left to consider his own spirituality. The Fourteenth degree summarizes that which has been taught and is a moral and philosophical climax.

As in the Symbolic Lodge, the Aspirant enters Freemasonry as a Rough Ashlar representing man's rough state in life and the need for improvement; he is raised as a Perfect Ashlar, a symbolic stone made ready by the hands of the workmen to be adjusted by the tools of the craftsman. In the Lodge of Perfection, the Aspirant has been raised to the status of a Perfect Elu, not in the sense of being "flawless", but rather in the sense of "complete" – in the sense of a Perfect Ashlar ready for his ever-present Masonic journey and should demonstrate continued dedication to that highest and most universal human aspiration: reverence for and service to God. Before leaving the Lodge of Perfection, remember Pike's words of encouragement to the Perfect Elu:

"To make honor and duty the steady beacon-lights that shall guide your life-vessel over the stormy seas of time; to do that which it is right to do, not because it will ensure you success, or bring with it a reward, or gain the applause of men, or be "the best policy," more prudent or more advisable; but because it is right, and therefore ought to be done; to war incessantly against error, intolerance, ignorance, and vice, and yet to pity those who err, to be tolerant even of intolerance, to teach the ignorant, and to labor to reclaim the vicious—these are some of the duties of a Mason."

⁵(Albert Pike, *Morals and Dogma*, Page 219)



Chapter of Rose Croix – Historical and Religious Degrees (15th – 18th)

The degrees of the Chapter of Rose Croix are very complex. They attempt to invest the Aspirant with a deeper understanding of Religion, Philosophy, Ethics, and History. The intellectual challenges presented in these degrees, are at times overwhelming, and can take years to master. Whatever your religious

⁵ *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*, Preface, Prepared for The Supreme Council, 33^o, S.J., USA, 1966, p 219

faith, you are encouraged to ponder the philosophy and teachings of the Nazarene, especially the doctrine of fraternal love and service toward all mankind. You will learn how the three cardinal virtues of Freemasonry, Faith, Hope and Charity were so beautifully illustrated in the life of Christ. The lessons presented give spiritual underpinning to the central Masonic concept of "The Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God." The Rose Croix Degrees are the spiritual centre and among the most important in the whole body of Freemasonry.

Knight of the East or of the Sword (15th Degree) and *Prince of Jerusalem* (16th Degree) relate to the rebuilding of the Second Temple by Zerubbabel.

Knight of the East and West (17th Degree) and *Knight Rose Croix* (18th Degree) degrees open a new path for Masonic teaching and are a distinct departure from the symbolism of the Symbolic Lodge and Lodge of Perfection.

The degrees of the Chapter of Rose Croix, the fifteenth to the eighteenth embody the period of the world in which they were written and apply with equal force today. They teach war against ignorance, intolerance and error, and that the chief stumbling block in the way to success is the indifference of its members and the world; every noble heart is God's temple and we should labor to establish the reign of love and peace thus building a lasting temple of God. The lessons of the Chapter of Rose Croix are supplemented by the beautiful Maundy Thursday and Easter ceremonies.

The history of religion refers to the written record of human religious experiences and ideas. This period of religious history begins with the invention of writing about 5,200 years ago. The prehistory of religion involves the study of religious beliefs that existed prior to the advent of written records. John the Baptist taught creeds older than Christianity, which must have belonged to the sect of the Essenes, very similar to Christianity. The Essenes believed that truth was scattered through the world in different sects. Light was the symbol of good; darkness was evil. In all times truth has been concealed in symbols. The cross has been a sacred emblem of earliest antiquity among many nations. The rose is a symbol of dawn, of the resurrection of life. Together the rose and the cross represent the dawn of eternal life.

The search for Light, Divine Truth, is an on-going process. The self-centered man will never find Light. The further we develop the more we become the servant and the less we become the master of others. There is a fundamental unity to all great systems of thought and philosophy which underlie any apparent differences. Truth is scattered throughout all religions and all systems of thought. It is the task of man to gather these scattered sparks of Light and to create, for himself, a true philosophy based on them. This Truth, when properly understood among nations, will produce perfect harmony and insight. Therefore, it must be cherished, protected and spread. We must base our lives on Faith, Hope and Charity, strengthen, purify and direct our personal quest for the divine within ourselves, and truly understand the basis of our relationships with others.



Council of Kadosh – Philosophical and Chivalric Degrees (19th – 30th)

The word “Kadosh” is a Hebrew word meaning Holy. A more precise meaning is "separated." The mission of Masonry is not to create "holy" men, but to set apart from the rest of humanity those exemplary men who practice her noble virtues in the pursuit of truth.

The degrees within the Council are designed to explore further the moral, political and religious lessons taught in the Symbolic Lodge, the Lodge of Perfection and the Chapter of Rose Croix. The Council Degrees explain why morality and the practice of virtue are indispensable to the Mason. The political lessons within the Council explain why intolerance, superstition and bigotry are the special enemies of human freedom. Remember that these lessons are provided for instruction, not as doctrine. The way you worship the Creator is a private concern, and Freemasonry will not interfere with it. Our symbols are to be interpreted within the confine of your own beliefs, without intrusion.

Although Pike identifies the degrees of the Council of Kadosh as chivalric and philosophical, they are also mystical with respect to the lessons conveyed and symbols employed. The complexity of these degrees cannot be overstated, but they express our growing spiritual awareness in the world, performing the duties which that awareness requires of us, and using it to be a force for good in the world. Spiritual awareness is like any other attribute we possess--we use it or lose it. To do that requires much study, preparedness, knowledge, reflection, thought, and living in the right ways, both morally and ethically.

The Philosophical and Chivalric Degrees teach liberty, fraternity, and equality applied to our everyday life. The world will judge us by our acts and Masonry will be judged by the character of its members.

The lessons of the *Grand Pontiff* (19th Degree) are learned from the past and control the present and future and we should strive to endure, produce and improve the world as it surrounds us.

The *Grand Master of All Symbolic Lodges* (20th Degree) shows us Liberty, Fraternity and Equality and teach moral, religious and philosophical understanding and help us to comprehend Deity, forces of nature, good and evil.

The lesson of the *Noachite or Prussian Knight* (21st Degree) is that arrogance, defamation and cowardice are unworthy attributes of a Mason and that humility, modesty and courtesy are the true virtues of men and Masons.

The guidepost of the *Knight of the Royal Axe or Prince of Libanus* (22nd Degree) is that the spiritual development and self-discipline on which you are working so hard is worthless unless it manifests itself in the work you do in the world. All work is noble, and all work, properly understood, is creative: it is not "higher" or "more noble" to work with your head than with your hands, or *vice versa*.

The lesson of the *Chief of the Tabernacle* (23rd Degree) is that man who forgets his duty to God, family, country, and himself will be in danger of moral and spiritual destruction by unworthy thoughts.

In the *Prince of the Tabernacle* (24th Degree) a Mason must show evidence of compassion, piety and justice; work to make sure that your choices reflect your true values.

Knight of the Brazen Serpent (25th Degree) reminds us to be very careful, as we continue our development and continue to express the moral and ethical self in the world and do not fall into the error of confusing symbols with the thing symbolized. Search for knowledge is characteristic of man, but we should seek after wisdom, which is the ability to apply knowledge and insight to the problems and questions of the world.

Prince of Mercy or Scottish Trinitarian (26th Degree) reminds us not to neglect developing our Faith as we develop our spirituality; do not let our own ego get in the way of our self-development. As we become more aware of the divine it is even more important to say, "Not my will, but Thine be done."

In the *Knight Commander of the Temple* (27th Degree) we explore situational ethics, where right action is determined by circumstance and learn to uphold the knightly virtues of charity, truth and honor.

In the *Knight of the Sun or Prince Adept* (28th Degree) we are taught love for God manifests itself in love for Truth, Justice and the Nobility of the Soul. He who is in love with his own ideas and dreads to lose them, or who fears new Truths, can never truly be a Mason; we must always be willing to serve the world.

The virtues of the *Grand Scottish Knight of St. Andrew* (29th Degree) are Love of God, Truth is Immortal, and Strive for Enlightenment.

A *Knight Kadosh* (30th Degree) must be true to himself, to his duties and obligations, and the insights and knowledge gathered during his search of Divine Truth.

The Philosophical and Chivalric Chapters of the Council of Kadosh are some of the shortest while some are the longest in Morals and Dogma. They preserve the legends of the Knights Templar and the Knights of St John or Hospitaliers. They are a positive force against all forms of tyranny; laws, whether civil or ecclesiastical, which places limits on man's exercise of religion or his relationship with God, are wrong and must be opposed. It is never true that a state has a legitimate interest in keeping people ignorant. The rights of individuals belong to the individuals as free and independent thinkers and as children of God.

Today's Knight of Kadosh must be educated in the seven liberal arts and sciences symbolically represented with the Mystic Ladder and have an understanding of the mysteries of ancient religions. Nothing happens in

isolation or is isolated in its effects. But we can positively influence the course of history by right focus and universal feeling and caring. Good and wise men, in the past, powerful because they were in touch with their spirituality, have done things which have shaped the world. That is our task as well. Every Mason should leave a legacy of positive deeds behind him. Further Light is only earned by work and study, it cannot be given as a gift, and we will know little if we only read the sacred books in a literal sense.

As you progressed from the Symbolic Masonry of the Lodge of Perfection into the chivalric degrees, you learned that purity of Honor, integrity of the Sword, and spotlessness of the Shield were the three highest ideals of our Ancient Brethren. “Honor that never broke faith with anyone” was supreme and preserved despite danger or personal loss. “Integrity of the Sword in never failing to draw it in defense of innocent and right” was a duty embraced with fervor and acted upon with courage. “The Shield never to be sullied by protecting oppression and wrong” was the symbol of each brother's dedication to the knighthood. When the ancient knight passed to his eternal home he bequeathed his Honor, his Sword, and his Shield to another, one near and dear, one he knew would carry on his quest unblemished and victorious.



Consistory – Ceremonial and Official Degrees (31st – 32nd)

The meetings of members of the Thirty-second Degree, or Sublime Princes of the Royal Secret in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, are called Consistories. The Consistory Degrees are very different from each other in form and content; they attempt to illustrate the balance between the spiritual and the temporal world and how to emulate that balance in our daily lives.

The *Grand Inspector Inquisitor Commander* (31st Degree) reveals the dynamic relationship that has existed for centuries between human law as a means of achieving justice, and divine justice as an ideal.

The *Sublime Prince of the Royal Secret* (32nd Degree) reviews the degrees of the Symbolic Lodge, the Lodge of Perfection, the Chapter of Rose Croix and the Council of Kadosh.

The degrees in the Consistory are fictional adaptations of lessons found in the Old Testament and a parable in the New Testament. It dramatically exemplifies two of the Scottish Rite Core Values: Integrity and Service. It serves to remind us of our Masonic obligation which all of us have taken in some form, "...that I will help, aid, and assist all brother Master Masons..."

The Scottish Rite is clearly a school of ethical and philosophical instruction. We are engaged in the business of teaching men about life's journey. Freemasonry's lessons are aimed at a greater hope which comes from our faith, which cannot be fully understood, but which still require we know how to love unconditionally.



Encampment of the Masters of the Royal Secret

In conclusion, a Mason's quest is to seek Divine Truth and build that Temple made without hands.

In the *Symbolic Lodge* and the *Lodge of Perfection* we get the tools and the sublime truths necessary for a well-grounded life and hope for eternal life.

In the *Chapter Rose Croix*, we direct our energies for the Divine Truth within ourselves, and truly understand the basis of our relationships with others.

In the *Council of Kadosh*, we direct our energies for the Divine Truth in the world around us by being an example and strive daily to live up to our obligations.

Finally, the object in the Consistory, is to *Know Thyself* and requires continuous self-examination.

We are at the end of our metaphorical journey so far as instruction in the Rite is concerned. But be aware that we must constantly strive for improvement in all *Moral and Dogma* areas. We must serve Truth, Faith, Honor, the People, our fraternal teachings, and our own destiny. The great secret of the universe is equilibrium. In Truth, all things work in balance. When that balance is upset, it is our task to help set it right. Our duty in the world is the duty to understand and maintain balance and equilibrium in our life.

“Masonry, and all religions, teach each of us there are two paths in life. One is long, tedious, tortuous and beset with all manner of dangers and temptations--but finally leads to Peace and Rest--an eternity of Happiness. The other--a broad highway, easy to travel--with delightful groves and a plentitude of sunshine, music and flowers--everything to delight the eye and charm the senses--gently, almost imperceptibly, but none the less surely, leads downward to despair and death.”⁶

Robert Frost’s poems are concerned with human tragedies and fears, his reactions to the complexities of life, and his ultimate acceptance of his burdens. His “*The Road Not Taken*”, first published in the *Mountain Interval* in 1920, is about life’s choices—nobody can know what could happen if they made a different decision at a critical point—but, there are consequences either way:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood

⁶ S. W. Williams, “*The Two Paths*”, *The Builder*, February 1915

And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Man is a creature of free will and capable of recreating himself. He can attain a genuine power that can shake the limits of science, surpass the problems of this earth, decipher the secrets of space, and attain genuine enlightenment as a Master of the Royal Secret.

“Faith begins where reason sinks exhausted.”

