

Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction

Hauts Grades Academy

Modern Society Needs Scottish Rite Freemasonry.

Why society needs Albert Pike's moral lessons.

A review of how Scottish Rite degrees can apply in Modern Society.

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Freemasonry describes itself as a progressive, moral science. This “system of morality, disguised in allegory” is the reason modern society needs Scottish Rite Freemasonry. Through the Scottish Rite degrees we learn: Reverence to God, Devotion to Country, Justice, Toleration, Integrity, and Service to Humanity. The universal Masonic values of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth are not enough to cause a societal paradigm shift. Societal norms currently in the United States have arguably embraced immorality. Leaving sexual orientation and gender selection out of the argument, socio-political, pop-culture, and social media have arguably caused a paradigm shift of excess, debauchery, manufactured “truth narratives” and immorality when compared to the lessons of the Scottish Rite Masonic core values.

In order to discuss where Freemasonry should be in the future, we must discuss from whence the fraternity hailed. One could write a novel on the origins of Free Masonry, but the following are highlights for the sake of brevity. Freemasonry is reportedly linked to the stone mason guilds in the ancient time of King Solomon. There are unproven but numerous reports that Templar Knights fleeing arrest under the orders of France’s King Philip IV and Pope Clement V hid themselves within the ancient stone mason guilds of medieval Europe, more specifically reports tell they fled to Scotland, and being “free-masons” were able to escape any country by traveling with the “free-masons” who were able to travel through foreign countries unimpeded (Mann ix-xxii, Penn p 20). Modern speculative Freemasonry can reportedly source its written origins to the 1700’s (Ridley pp 1-7). In June of 1717, four London lodges made up of speculative and operative Masons (craftsmen and non-craftsmen) made up a Grand Lodge (Bullock P14-15). This is arguably the “birth” of the modern day Free Masons. It is argued the Free-Masons in Scotland developed a series of higher degrees we know today as the Scottish Rite (Koltko-Rivera P26). “During the late 1700’s, Free Masons were one of the organizations

most responsible for spreading the ideals of “enlightenment”, which are the dignity of man and the liberty of the individual, the right of all persons to worship how they choose, the formation of democratic governments, and the importance of public education. Masons supported the first public schools in both Europe and North America. These ideals gave rise to the belief that freedom, democracy and tolerance should be central to Human existence” (Penn p11). In North America, it can be argued without any definitive proof (aside from many founding fathers being Freemasons) that Freemasonry is the basis of or had a significant bias on the founding principles of the United States (Hodapp & Bollock). Freedom of religion and Christian principles is another arguable founding set of principles for the Colonies of the United States. But if the founding Fathers lived their lives based upon the moral principles of Freemasonry, one could assume by default any great venture they undertook such as founding a nation would have characteristics of their moral beliefs (Kalian, Hodapp & Ridley). In June 1739, it is reported a parade of Free-masons, who were prominent members of Boston’s society, adorned in gentlemanly suits with their aprons paraded through the streets of Boston (Bollock P52). Similar parades in the ensuing years occurred in major colonial cities in the US. (Bollock P53). It is argued that every prominent member of society either was a Free Mason or associated with them in the course of social and business practices during the 1700s. There are Masonic symbols and references on United States currency to include the reported layout of the streets in Washington, District of Columbia, our Nation’s Capitol (Hodapp, P162). Author Christopher Hodapp, devoted an entire chapter of his Book “Solomon’s Builders” to “How the Freemasons Invented America”. In this chapter, Hodapp argues Benjamin Franklin and lesser known Daniel Coxe proposed systems of delegates with a central figure that is strikingly similar to how Grand Lodges govern their jurisdictions. Eventually the Continental Congress, would be loosely based

on this structure (Hodapp, pp105-131). We also know our first President, George Washington, was a Freemason, it would stand to reason that a society built on Masonic principles would have a Free Mason as its first official President.

One would think that any system of good morals wouldn't have its challenges, but that has not been the case. Freemasonry, much like the Templar Knights has experienced opponents throughout their existence (Hodapp, Cerza). Darkness has been described as the absence of light. Light is an ambiguous term used by Freemasons to describe many things, some of which are the Holy Bible, or Holy Writings, the square, the compasses as well as the Master and Wardens of a Masonic Lodge. "Light" is also that which is received by all Masons, which allegorically can be argued as the moral teachings of Free Masonry, and "more or further light" through the Scottish Rite degrees. Alphonse Cerza in his Book "Let there be Light: A Study in Anti-Masonry" discussed numerous anti-Masonic events from 1698-1935. There are numerous anti-Masonic movements to include a political party in the 19th century United States. This anti-Masonic party was reportedly precipitated by "the Morgan incident" (Cerza p 20, & Ridley p184-186). Exact details are probably lost to time, but the various reports all centralize among a William Morgan, who may or may not have been a Mason, but who had threatened to reveal Masonic secrets in an expose' he was writing. Reports state he was in deep financial trouble around this time and was even arrested on theft charges. Reportedly whomever paid his bail is subject to debate and William Morgan was picked up from the jail and never seen again. Based on his threats, Free-Masons were blamed for his disappearance (Cerza P20-21). This anti-Masonic movement had grown to a level it was reportedly a topic of discussion in the Presidential Elections for Presidents Andrew Jackson and James Buchanan (Ridley PP184-188).

The Catholic Church has had their own versions of anti-Masonic movements off and on throughout the years, arguably starting with the arrest of the Templar Knights in France on October 13th, 1307 (Harwood, p14). It is reported that Templar Knights throughout the globe in hiding immersed themselves into the operative Stone Mason guilds in order that they may travel unimpeded in foreign countries (concept taken from numerous fictional movies and books, reported common knowledge as well as Mann, pp is-xxii, & Harwood, p 14-15). One of the main arguments of anti-masonry political movement is that Masons are oath bound to conceal the crimes of Masons (Cerza p.49). These types of arguments fail to consider that the commission of a crime is punishable by potential expulsion from the craft (Cerza p.49-50).

The origins of the craft were briefly discussed along with historical challenges, modern society shows intolerance to any differing socio-political thoughts outside of the narrative by profession of “tolerance”. Albert Pike has stated “after a state has been corrupted by luxury and idleness, it may by its mere greatness bear up under the burden of its vices” (Pike, p95). The 24th Scottish Rite degree “Brothers of the Forest”, is the best lesson for tolerance that we can use to teach everyone to understand the different beliefs of others. The setting of this degree is Native Americans seeking admittance into the craft and the ensuing argument that Native Americans do not believe in a supreme being with an underlying tone of racial bias. The Scottish Rite lesson of Tolerance in this particular degree was shown through the Free Masons sitting and talking with the Native American applicants and finding common ground and how the Natives believe in a “Supreme Great Spirit” that governs all other spirits, which are found in everything that surrounds us. Once everyone sat down and found common ground, despite their differences in ideologies, true toleration was attained as despite our differences we are very similar.

To paraphrase Albert Pike's theory "after a state has been corrupted by its luxuries and idleness it may fall due to its own vices", one Scottish Rite degree in particular, the 22° "Prince of Libanus" addresses idleness as the disgrace of man. This degree discusses the solution to idleness through the privilege of "labor". This degree allegorically uses the working tools of Lumberjacks consisting of the saw, plane, and axe for the more noble and glorious speculative purposes of: steady patience and persevering determination; cutting off the prejudices of ignorance and the absurdities of superstition; and to chop and cut the darkness of intolerance, bigotry and superstition to let the light of reason and truth shine on all mankind. The core value of this degree is service to humanity, but as one can tell by using the working tools of this degree, the true service to humanity is cutting out prejudices and intolerance and with steady patience and persevering determination we as Scottish Rite Masons can shine the light of reason and truth on all mankind.

In the book "The Vanishing Neighbor, The Transformation of American Community", author Marc J. Dunkleman discusses how "social architecture" is the way we live and interact as human beings as well as the effect of the internet on how we form our social relationships with many using the internet to seek out people of like interests. Dunkleman discussed a societal paradigm shift in the form of decay since the conclusion of the Cold War (Dunkleman pp 9-12). It is arguable this social decay can be seen in the shift from former societal norms such as corporal punishment for children in the form of spankings or paddling by parents and school officials to the loss of respect for authority figures. Today the misuse of a person's preferred pronoun could cost one many grievances in the form of "doxing" where people on the internet publish your information on the internet; to people contacting one's employer and creating boycotts until the offender is fired. These societal shifts from the end of the cold war are just

more noticeable today than they were in the nineties and early 2000's, these shifts arguably could have begun when the anti-establishment "flower children" of the sixties came into positions of leadership, where they could implement the changes they were unsuccessful with during the sixties and seventies. In the Blue Lodge degrees we learn that Freemasonry unites men who otherwise would have remained at a perpetual distance. Dunkleman points out "it is much easier for people to invest the bulk of their time and energy in the people you most want to seek out" (Dunkleman p139). This is evidenced by our participation in Scottish Rite Freemasonry. Many brothers labor to learn their lines for the various plays, and we attend and learn the moral lessons taught to us through these degrees. It has been said that Freemasonry is not a secret society, but a "society with secrets". Scottish Rite Freemasonry is part of our societal architecture we as Free Masons seek out to make us better men, and we actively seek out to participate and intermingle with other great men. The "secret of freemasonry" as described by Robert Kalian, is that "we are not on an island alone" (Kalian p23). This premise is the strength of brotherhood and how we as Scottish Rite Masons meet to improve ourselves through the 29 degrees of the Scottish Rite and the fellowship with other Scottish Rite Masons.

This paper has discussed an abbreviated history of the origins of freemasonry, the anti-masonic movement as well as the founding of the United States on Masonic principles, as well as a societal paradigm shift from what one can consider a moral society based on Judeo-Christian values in the 1600's through the Cold War. Today our society is more internet based, where strangers on the internet often times are given more credibility than our in-person contacts. The internet has shrunken the world through the basis of connecting people of similar interests on a focal point such as a website, or social media platform. Whether our society has now shifted to excess, debauchery, manufactured truth narratives and immorality is because of the internet, or

was it this “information super highway” the medium which either expanded target audiences or sped up the time in which all of these may have eventually become the societal norms? It is for this reason why our nation needs the Scottish Rite Degrees of Freemasonry.

In the 29 degrees of Scottish Rite Freemasonry, twelve different degrees teach the core value of “Reverence for God”. Eleven degrees teach the core value of “Integrity”. Nine degrees teach the core value of “Service to Humanity”. Seven degrees teach the core value of “Justice”. Six degrees teach the core values of “Toleration” and “Devotion to Country”. There are many degrees that teach multiple core values. Albert Pike stated “Above all, the Love of Country, State Pride, the Love of Home are forces of immense power. Encourage them all. Insist upon them in your public men. Permanency of home is necessary to Patriotism. If you have eloquence, it is a mighty force. See that you use it for good purposes – to teach, exhort, ennoble the people and not mislead and corrupt them. Corrupt and venerable orators are the assassins of the public liberties and of public morals” (Pike p91). Albert Pike noted it is men of will and action, not the men of pure intellect that will govern the world. Albert Pike as so stated, “the three greatest moral forces are *Faith*, which is the only true wisdom, and the very foundation of all government; *Hope*, which is strength, and ensures success; and *Charity*, which is beauty, and alone makes animated united effort possible. These forces are within the reach of all men; and an association of men actuated by them, ought to exercise and immense power in the world. If Masonry does not, it is because she has ceased to possess them” (Pike P92).

Albert Pike said “men daily become more free, because freedom of the man lies in his reason. He can reflect upon his own future conduct, and summon up its consequences; he can take wide views of human life, and lay down rules for constant guidance. Thus he is relieved of the tyranny of sense and passion, and enabled at any time to live according to the light of the

knowledge that is within him, instead of being driven by every present impulse” (Pike p94). This thought can be translated several ways, one being that as we age our accomplishments afford us more freedom. Another way can be through knowledge we are free when we let our minds wander. Another way is that a man is truly free with choices. Sadly, corrupt and venerable orators arguably have control of social and main stream media as well as pop culture to push agenda’s that were not the societal norm just a generation ago. This is another reason why America needs the lessons taught in Scottish Rite Freemasonry. This statement gives a glimpse at Albert Pike’s view on why the Scottish Rite was created, “The Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Masonry has now become, what Masonry at first was meant to be, a teacher of great truths, inspired by an upright and enlightened reason, a firm and constant wisdom, and an affectionate and liberal philanthropy” (Pike p 328).

The lessons of the Scottish Rite Core Values taught through the course of the 29 degrees, is in this author’s mind, what this Nation is missing for the population as a whole. Through these degrees Reverence to God is reinforced as well as the teaching of Integrity. Devotion to Country is missing as people become more enveloped in their individual socio-political identities. We have seen our citizens actively refuting the validity of Presidential elections, some assaulting other citizens over their support for a particular political figure or political ideology. Toleration is needed so that we can hear the other side’s view and listen to understand and not listening to retort. Once a small common ground can be found, true toleration can exist. Service to humanity is taught and one that every citizen should practice as we should try to help up those less fortunate. Justice is needed through this country but these degrees teach this as well as it is the duty of every mason to give each man his just due without distinction. Reverence to God is missing for a lot of society, as the societal norm has arguably shifted “freedom of religion” to

“freedom from religion”. We as Scottish Rite masons should be the example. Be the light that attracts the profane out of the darkness like bugs to a street light at night. If we shine our light through the moral teachings of the Scottish Rite Core values, by our actions and not necessarily teaching the degrees to the public, then our Nation can once again recalibrate it’s moral compass and put the populace as a whole on a moral azimuth.

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