

Scottish Rite Drama

The use of dramatic presentations to depict degree work within the Scottish Rite was redefined by Albert Pike at the request of then Grand Secretary General, Dr. Albert Mackey. Pike took a distinctive approach to portray the gradual and, often times, destructive development of modern society whose thoughts, ideas, institutions and laws trace their lineage from religions, superstitions, prejudices, and practices of both near and long since past history.

The timing of these revisions is important to note as it followed a clearly anti-Masonic period in the United States, and elsewhere in the world. With the ancient history of his topics and the recent events of the first half of the Nineteenth Century, Pike chose to adopt allegorical dramas to convey the lessons and effectively reach as wide an audience within Masonry as possible.

The dramas used in the Scottish Rite Ritual generally follow a pattern of:

- Introduction, which may include a Lodge Opening,
- Drama, usually very allegorical in nature,
- Lecture or Summary of the Lesson of the Degree

The design was a very familiar use of drama to impart lessons and reinforce virtues and principles. Indeed, as far back as the Middle Ages, Morality Plays and other secular venues were a traditional method for portraying the biblical and religious lessons of the church. In that era, attending church could be a frustrating exercise for an illiterate population to understand the Bible and the lessons therein when the service was delivered in Latin. Short dramas were developed, written in common language but designed to teach a specific moral lesson by parable or example. This allegorical presentation evolved over centuries gradually including music, costumes, and larger casts of characters. As the dramas grew in popularity, the early theatre was born from these Morality plays and eventually the use of the specific genre or type of Morality presentations lost their audience and faded from popular use. It can be shown that Morality Plays did evolve into various modern entertainments where a simplified version of "Good versus Evil" was portrayed including comedy sketches within traveling shows, during the Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries as well as popular electronic games of today.

The Morality Play format afforded Pike with the platform to engage the less educated man, using the drama to graphically illustrate the lessons of each degree. It also provided a glimpse into history for the younger man within the Introduction, a thought-provoking examination of the precepts and characteristics examined in the degree for the learned man in the Lecture or conclusion of the degree, and an entertaining method for all men to re-evaluate their commitment and dedication to their duty to those morals and principles which unite Masons and indeed all men of character, benevolence and integrity.

David J. Boyd
Barrie, Ontario
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