

# Behind the Veil of Scriptures

A lecture By Rob Lund

## Introduction

In one of our rituals, there is a part that takes a retrospective look at the various degrees. It states that *“you learned to free the soul from the dominion of pride and prejudice; to look beyond the narrow limits of particular institutions, whether civil or religious”*.

The purpose of this paper is to help you to see what that statement might mean.

The following is a quote from a source that I have not positively identified (it may be the French philosopher Rene Guenon):

*“All things have their interior and exterior, the apparent, open or exoteric meaning and a hidden, concealed or esoteric meaning. One relates primarily to the legalistic or material, the other to the spiritual or metaphysical. So it is with the great religions of humanity, particularly Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The Holy Books of all these Faiths have both an inner (esoteric) and an outer (exoteric) meaning.”*

Professor Huston Smith makes the following remarks in his introduction to *“The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam”*:

*"Religiously, people tend to fall into two categories. Some find the meaning they seek in religious forms - commandments, observances, and texts straightforwardly, largely literally, interpreted - while others, without bypassing or abandoning these, sense their provisional character and reach out for meanings that the forms contain but which cannot be equated with those forms. If we call the first type of person **exoteric**, out of his concern for meanings that attach to outward or manifest forms, the second type that is drawn to the meanings that underlie those forms is conveniently designated **esoteric**. Both types turn up in all the historical religions and very likely in tribal ones as well."*

### **In Judaism**

The distinction between outer doctrines and their higher inner meaning was known to Moses (who was, as you will know if you have done any study in this area, an initiate of Egyptian wisdom). This distinction was also known to the prophets of the Israelites. The exoteric form of the Mosaic revelation contained laws and commandments well suited to the people and the conditions of that era. While the esoteric doctrines, explaining the meaning behind the external forms and rituals, were preserved by inspired prophets and high priests.

While some scholars have realized that the Bible is a book of allegories, there are few who seem to have investigated its symbols and parables. When Moses instituted his school of Mysteries (which came to be known as the Tabernacle Mysteries and which was founded on the temples of Egyptian mysticism), he is said to have given to a chosen few initiates certain oral teachings which could never be written but were to be preserved from one generation to the next by word-of-mouth transmission. Those

instructions were in the form of philosophical keys, which were made to reveal their hidden significance of those allegories. These mystic keys to their sacred writings were called by the Jews: the *Cabbala*.

By the time of Jesus, the esoteric spiritual side of the Hebrew religion had been corrupted and virtually lost. The ordinary people were enslaved to the “letter of the law,” and kept in the mental bondage of ignorance by false teachers. The Essenes, being the true priests and the mystic precursors of the first Spiritual Christians (and the evidence is that Jesus was an Essene), concerned themselves with the inner meaning of the Mosaic Law.

### **In Christianity**

That there are hidden teachings in the Christian Gospels is suggested by the following texts: *(Matthew 13:11) “He answered and said unto them, because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.”*

*(Luke 8:10) “And he said, unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.”*

Jesus himself says, in Matthew 7:6 *“Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs.”*

Within the first four centuries after the time of Christ, the teachings of Jesus underwent the same corruption and loss as those that were proclaimed by Moses. Christianity was instituted as a political tool – to unite the peoples of various conquered lands under one religion. This redefined religion and dogma was enforced under penalty of death to those who would not accept it, and emerged as a powerful institution dominated by a largely power-hungry clerical hierarchy ignorant of the original esoteric truths. The Gospels, like the books of the Old Testament before them, underwent editing and revision to comply with the exoteric Christian creed devised by the so-called “founding fathers of the church”. The many Christian Gnostic texts that spoke of secret doctrines were denounced and confined to the flames, and anyone speaking about them was imprisoned, tortured, or killed.

### **In Islam**

The Holy Koran has both an exoteric meaning and an esoteric meaning. Within Islamic esotericism, as in the Mosaic and Christian revelations, knowledge was made accessible depending on the integrity and the cognitive ability of some of its recipients, consequently withholding information from the uninitiated. There was a gradual unveiling of spiritual truths to a selected few in what Muslim esotericists call the “wisdom of gradualness”.

Most Sufi Orders meticulously observe the Islamic law, but believe it to be only the outer clothing or external shell protecting the core, the esoteric truth. The Holy Koran calls

those who know the essence of things “the possessors of the kernels.” The Sufis liken esoteric wisdom to a “kernel” hidden within a shell.

The public devotions of the Fatimids differed very little from the orthodox Muslims, the esoteric teachings being restricted to those of the community *able* to receive them. The Fatimids established the Grand House of Wisdom for the training of missionaries skilled in the propagation of Islamic esoteric philosophy. The account of the different degrees of initiation adopted in the House of Wisdom became the model of all the Freemasonic Lodges created in Christendom.

At the end of the eighth century, many Muslims who secretly followed the spiritual path openly declared their connection with Islamic esotericism. They divulged truths based on spiritual experience that, because of their outward appearance, brought on them the condemnation of orthodox Islamic theologians. Some were imprisoned, flogged, and even killed.

Nineteenth century historians believed that secret Islamic communities, mainly the Druzes, the Ismailis, and the Nusairis, were responsible for transmitting hidden knowledge to Europe through their influence on the Knights Templar, the Rosicrucians, and the Freemasons. These groups were thought to have derived their doctrines and practices from the Ismaili Assassins, who in turn inherited them from the ancient Gnostics.

In the Western world, Islam is generally equated with the narrow interpretation upheld by fundamentalist groups. This Islamic fundamentalism is relatively modern, originating

in the early eighteenth century. This fundamentalism was thought to have been started by Ibn 'Abd al Wahhab, who branded all who disagreed with him as heretics, and even declared holy war against fellow Muslims (which is actually forbidden by traditional Islamic law). This fundamentalism came to dominate the Islamic Holy Places and was embraced in the 1920s by the Muslim Brethren and spread internationally. Yet the truth and purity of Islam eludes those believers obsessed with law, theology and exoteric practices, which are only the outer forms of religion.

### **In all the Abrahamic Religions**

Religious fundamentalists, whether they are Christian, Jewish or Muslim, are all only concerned with a literal interpretation of their Holy Books, and reject the mystical or esoteric view. History has shown that it is often from the ranks of these self-proclaimed fundamentalists, obsessed with outward observance and a one-dimensional reading of sacred scripture, that intolerance, bigotry and violence emerge.

By studying the Ancient Wisdom teachings within the respective Scriptures of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, we derive the essence of their original purity. It is a sad fact that contemporary Judaism has little relationship with the original Israelite revelation and in fact has departed far from it. The hosts of Christian churches are, at most, only a ghostly copy of the highly esoteric Gospel message, and seem to have lost sight of the historical Jesus. Much of the Islamic world has maintained a degree of its Traditional

purity and original essence, but many Muslims suffer from a narrowness of mind and vision that leads to dogmatism.

It is a sad irony that these three religions, each fighting against the other over the centuries, when studied esoterically, all have the same messages.

For those wanting to find out more about the esoteric side of these religions, there are many books to be found on the subject.

### **In Freemasonry**

Within the rituals of Freemasonry too, there are both exoteric and esoteric interpretations. Understand that I am not equating Freemasonry to religion, but pointing out that there are hidden signposts to the esoteric knowledge handed down through the ages. Freemasonry does not, however, contain this knowledge, but points to it through symbols.

What is Freemasonry? *“A beautiful system of morality...”* it says in the ritual. And it is so. However, there is more to Masonry than that. The text continues with: *“veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols.”* The very words indicate something hidden. **Veiled** means concealed, and an **allegory** is a story that has another meaning. Furthermore, one part of the ritual corresponds masonry with the Egyptian Philosophers, *“who concealed their particular tenets and principles beneath certain hieroglyphical figures, which were revealed to the Priests and Magi alone”*. These hieroglyphical figures are symbols, and Masonry uses them for similar purposes.

For this reason, not one word of Masonic ritual should be changed. If changed by those who do not understand the hidden meanings, so much can be lost, as has already happened in the past.

To get an idea of what these esoteric meanings might be, read my lectures on the Deeper Meaning of the various degrees.

### Conclusion

From this lecture, I hope that you will learn to *not* take so-called teachings at face value and that you should look beyond the narrow limits of those particular institutions. The Theosophical Society, which is a school of ancient wisdom, has this motto: “There is no religion higher than truth”. Remember the fundamental principles of Freemasonry are “Brotherly Love, Relief, and **Truth**”.

**Look for Truth.**

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