

Deity, Pike and the Enlightenment

DEISM

Deism is the belief that reason and observation of the natural world are sufficient to determine the existence of God, accompanied with the rejection of revelation and authority as a source of religious knowledge. Deism is a theological position concerning the relationship between "the Creator" and the natural world. Deistic viewpoints emerged during the scientific revolution of 17th century Europe and came to exert a powerful influence during the eighteenth century enlightenment. Deism stood between the narrow dogmatism of the period and skepticism. Though deists rejected atheism, they often were called "atheists" by more traditional theists. There were a number of different forms in the 17th and 18th century. Deism holds that God does not intervene with the functioning of the natural world in any way, allowing it to run according to the laws of nature. For Deists, human beings can only know God via reason and the observation of nature, but not by revelation or supernatural manifestations (such as miracles) – phenomena which Deists regard with caution if not skepticism. Deism does not ascribe any specific qualities to a deity beyond non-intervention. Deism is related to naturalism because it credits the formation of life and the universe to a higher power, using only natural processes.

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deism>)

God Concerns Himself with Human Affairs

From this degree, the text of *Morals and Dogma* it becomes quite apparent that Pike was not a Deist as Deism is described above. Deism states that God does not intervene with the functioning of the natural world in any way, allowing it to run according to the laws of nature only. It denies the presence of revelation and authority. On page 291 *Morals and Dogma*, Pike states “The Mason regards God as a Moral Governor as well as well as an Original Creator; as a God at hand and not merely one afar off in the distance of infinite space, and in the remoteness of Past or Future Eternity.” So here his statement is that God is both the past Creator and the current Governor. Not only the Creator of Deism but also the active participating Governor of His creation. **Pike tells us in this degree that God is Present, God is Active and that God has a plan.**

Revelation and Authority

The Enlightenment came about when a certain part of humanity in the west grew tired of the absolutism that came about by the combination of the church and state. Their belief system was established to directly challenge the predominant system of power. And as with most competing systems, the truth normally lies somewhere in the middle. This is where Pikes teaching in this degree and Masonry itself lies, in the middle nearer to the truth. What the Scottish Rite Mason is taught to call Equilibrium. In this degree he teaches us that no system of religious belief will hold the absolute truth in regards to the big questions we face in life, but that we must be open to accepting viewpoints that are differing from ours and hold to the understanding of One God of all and the brotherhood of man. In Pikes statement referenced above, he also warns us about the other end of this spectrum, which is to over emphasize the spiritual in this world. IF it is the tendency of the Deist to discount God's presence too much, it is the tendency of the overly religious to tolerate injustice here and now in the hopes of a future heaven. “Those only who feel a deep interest and affection for this world will work resolutely for

its amelioration; those whose affections are transferred to heaven, easily acquiesce in the miseries of earth, deeming them hopeless, befitting, and ordained and console themselves with the amends which are one day to be theirs. It is a sad truth that those most decidedly given to spiritual contemplation and to making religion rule in their hearts, are often most apathetic toward all improvement of this world's systems, and in many cases virtual conservatives of evil, and hostile to political and social reform, as diverting men's energies from eternity" (M&D page 298) So here Pike firmly establishes the philosophy of the Mason as the philosophy of balance between those who say that there is no spiritual and those who say that is all spiritual. Both are wrong. Both have fallen prey to the folly's of ignorance intolerance, tyranny and fanaticism.

God Is Present Present and Active through His Children

Pike does believe that the Hiram legend is symbolic of Christ (M&D page 292 note 29) and that God directly revealed himself through Christ. In this regard Pike is telling us that God is active and present in this world through his creation Man. That Jesus was the perfection of Man. Now man is not God separate from God, as Jesus stated "if you have seen me you have seen the father" but man is the individualization of the one God. It is in this sense that we are brothers. As the apostle Paul put it "we hold this gift in earthen vessels". We are created in the image of, and are impregnated with the presence of the Divine. We are created equally in this sense. So the fact that we see other humanity around us should remind us that God is here present with His creation. Pike states (M&E pg 291) " the conscience is the very voice of Deity". God is present through His Children. This is the good news, that God can be found by man by looking inside. While much of this was discussed in the 13th degree and is represented by the vertical chamber of that degree, the 14th degree concerns us with the horizontal chamber representing how God reveals himself of the physical plane. His most powerful and important revelation is in the hearts of his children.

God is Present and Active through Nature and Law.

Here Pike agrees with the Deists. God does reveal himself through nature and the laws of nature itself. The topic of the Law of retribution of the 13th degree is a good example of how God reveals himself through Nature. As physical science teaches us, for ever action there is an equal and opposite reaction. God does reveal himself through the order of the universe itself. We as humans have learned to recognize this aspect of nature. That there is a law of cause and effect. We also recognize this law in the law of gravity. We know that there is some natural force that acts equally upon us all. Whether you are Mitt Romney or Barack Obama. This law is equal for us all and we should recognize that the order around us is evidence of a Divine Being.

God Reveals Himself Through Numbers

Pike ends his discussion of this degree by talking about certain numbers that are repeated over and over again by many different sources. The number 12 and the number 7 being the prime characters of repetition among many religious, philosophic and geometric systems, buildings and temples. He is using this as another example of the evidence of order and structure being a language by which God reveals himself to the seeker.

Which is the conclusion of this degree. The seeker will find not only the presence of God within but also the evidence of the Creator and ongoing Governor present without. The two chambers, the Chamber of Enoch of the 13th degree, united with the horizontal Chamber of Solomon, uniting to form the Cross and leading us as Scottish Rite Masons to the degrees of the Chapter of the Rose Croix

