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Legends
And
Martial Men

**LEGENDS
AND
MARTIAL MEN**

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Legends are a way of communicating belief systems.

From the beginning there have been men who were willing to use weapons or other implements on other men. Some for good. Some for ill.

Those who use weapons or other implements for ill have always operated in their own immediate and personal interest. There are no rules of conduct. They exercise their own will.

Those men who use such items for good have always abided by a set of rules. A fashion of communicating the rules within a culture had to be developed.

The rules had to be standardized and generally agreed upon by not just the Practitioners but by the populace.

Examples of desired conduct were developed and put in story form as a teaching tool.

The Legend was born. The Martial Man had a standard for conduct.

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The key elements of a legend is that it is “popularly accepted” as history.

It is teaching by example and given credibility by asserting a long history of practice also known as tradition.

One of the reasons that legends are “unverifiable” is that the legend evolves over time as it is adapted to the needs and tastes of the new audience.

For the Martial Man, legend helps inculcate an understanding of right and wrong.

Martial Man as Legend

- **Willingness to wager.**
- **Acceptance of right and wrong.**
 - **Dedication to duty.**
- **Dedication to honor construct.**
 - **Skill at arms.**
- **Understanding and acceptance of treachery.**

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WILLINGNESS TO WAGER

- **Martial men are willing to wager their well-being on the outcome of the event at hand.**
 - **The understand that the solution to the current problem may not allow for their survival.**
- **They have an understanding of the traditional principles of right and wrong. They are willing to confront wrong and engage in actions to make right prevail.**
- **They understand and accept the existence of a duty to something greater than themselves.**
 - **This may be a duty to preserve themselves for the well-being of their family.**
 - **It may be preserving their family or other for whom they are morally and legally responsible.**
 - **It may be a duty to the well-being of comrades as in a military or police operation.**
- **They understand honor construct and its dictates. Honor is a gift a man gives himself. No one can give it to him. No one can take it away. Only he can cast it aside.**
- **The Martial Man has a skill at arms.**

- **He trains regularly.**
- **He is able to demonstrate his skills at will.**
- **Adapts his weapons and technology as changes in circumstance require.**

- **He understands that there will always be acts of treachery among those who are a part of his own association group.**
 - **He accepts such conduct as the reality of dealing with other men.**
 - **He is confident in his ability to deal with the problem as it occurs.**

In Martial Men, legends create what David Hackett Fischer calls “habits of the heart”.

Even is there is no clear understanding of the origin of these concepts that guide his behavior, the Martial Man has an innate understanding of what is “right”.

Western Culture Legend

- **Beowulf**
- **Arthur**
- **Roland**
- **Robin Hood**
- **William Wallace**

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BEOWULF

The oldest written story in English or even related Teutonic languages.

Written in about the 10th Century, but was centuries old at the time it was written down.

The story was about a Scandinavian war lord. At the time it was originally constructed the Norse people would have been pagans. As it is written in the English language it is characterized as a Christian tale.

Details of the story tell much about the life of Martial Men at the time.

Beowulf is the leader of a group of about 15 warriors. He hears that a near-by King is having trouble with a wanton killer named Grendel. Grendel is a descendent of Cain. After the Kings best Champions are killed or scared off the King searches other lands for a Champion to take on the monster. All decline.

Beowulf and his band go to the King and promise to solve the problem.

As part of his vow, Beowulf says he will confront Grendel unarmed. Because Grendel kills with his bare hands Beowulf considers it a matter of **honor** to confront him in the same way.

Grendel strikes at night. He has a green scale covering that make blades slide off him. The band settles down to wait for their visitor. In preparation Beowulf removes his weapons and armor and has one of his men take them away.

When Grendel appears he is confronted by Beowulf and an empty hands fight occurs. In the end Beowulf rips Grendel's arm from his body. Grendel escapes leaving a blood trail.

The next night Grendel's mother appears to take revenge for the killing of her son. The King's ward is killed.

Beowulf and his men, accompanied by some of the king's men follow the blood trail left by the carrying away of the ward's body. His head is discovered by a lake. There are all kinds of large water serpents swimming about. Beowulf shoots one "through the heart", showing his **skill at arms**.

He then swims to the killer's lair and kills her in a fight.

Upon his return the King gives Beowulf horses, armor, weapons and jewelry. (**The Lord as "loaf giver".**)

Beowulf returns to his home land and distributes his gifts. He gives his King the best horse.

The King of the Geats dies. Beowulf is offered the kingship. He refuses and insists the King's son be made King. As the son is young, Beowulf acts as his protector and trainer. When the young King is killed in battle Beowulf is again offered the crown. He accepts. He then rules for 50 years. His Kingdom prospers because no other land will take him on because he is so powerful and capable.

Finally, his land is invaded by a dragon. It is laying waste to the country side and can not be stopped. Beowulf, realizing he is much

older, but must stop this monster has a shield covered with metal for his coming fight.

He takes his band with him to confront the dragon. His band is clearly scared. He leaves them to cover the entrance to the cave in case he is killed. He uses the shield to protect himself from the dragon's fire. He is, nonetheless badly burned. His band deserts him. The dragon seizes him by the back of the neck. Just then, one of his band who was overcome by the shame of leaving him returns and delivers a fatal blow to the dragon with a sword. Beowulf uses his last strength to cut the dragon's throat.

Before he dies he bequeaths his armor to the man who returned.

When the others return the Wiglaf says, "Better is death to every man than a life of shame!"

Beowulf dies knowing his kingdom is in for a rough ride because adversaries will recognize his kingdom is weakened as evidenced by the actions of those who were to be his fighters.

The legend of Beowulf shows that he was:

Willing to wager his life.

- He did so when he faced Grendel and his mother.
- He did so when he confronted the dragon.

He knew Grendel was a killer and had to be stopped. That was right.

He was dedicated to his duty. It was his duty to kill the dragon without regard to the cost. He understood he would not survive the encounter.

He considered it dishonorable to fight Grendel with weapons because his opponent did not use weapons.

He showed a skill at arms with the bow when he shot the water serpent.

He had a powerful personal weapon in the form of his **sword, Hrunting**.

He understood the treachery of relying on other men who were not of his determination. He knew they would desert him but he went anyway.

Beowulf is the one legend where the character has no known historical character associated with the story.

The most recent telling of the story is a movie titled “The Thirteenth Warrior”.

ARTHUR

Arthur is best known today as a product of Sir Thomas Mallory’s work of 1485. We have discussed the story in detail in the past. We will not go over it again.

What is interesting is that the Arthur legend was constructed by many groups over centuries. The earliest tellings of the story come from about the 5th century.

The Welsh, the English and even the French have contributed to the evolution of the story.

The length of time involved and the various cultural groups contributing is shown in various aspects of the story.

The wizardry of Merlin and the Lady of the Lake references are two examples of the Pagan influences on the story.

Part of Merlin’s wizardry is used to get Arthur on the throne. Merlin knows that Arthur is the illegitimate son of Uther, the recently deceased King of England.

England is in civil war as the nobles fight over who is to assume the throne. Merlin says the person with the rightful claim to the throne will be able to remove the sword from the stone. All the nobles try and fail. A young squire to a knight is able to remove the sword from the stone. Arthur is made King.

This was, of course, a different sword than his powerful personal weapon the sword Excalibur.

As the audience changes it is necessary to appeal to Christian virtues. Arthur and his knights set the standard for honor and virtue. They become the knights in shining armor.

As the Church is brought down by the pedestrian self interest of leaders like the Medici and the Borgia's, the writers of the time begin to morph the Arthur legend into a story of professions of virtue used to cover vile conduct.

Lancelot, the best knight, is characterized as a routine violator of every aspect of the honor code as he uses his martial skills to intimidate or challenge and kill anyone who would dare accuse him of dishonorable conduct.

The lesson to be taken from the many stories and versions of the Arthur legend is that from early times men have sought to instruct other men in the components of being an honorable Martial Man.

The long temporal reach of the Arthur legend also shows how the changing nature of the audience sought to characterize the concept of honor as vile.

There is historical evidence that an Arthur character lived. There is no reason to believe he engaged in anything like the occurrences of the stories that were eventually told about him. Yet, various people over time and place did things similar to those stories told.

The historical Arthur likely had some following among his people and they started telling stories of his exploits. As others heard the original and likely modest stories of his actions they added to those stories episodes that actually reflected the behavior of other unnamed actors. The story grew from there.

ROLAND

This story has a combination of Frenchmen and Muslim Arabs. That should be a clue.

There was a historical Roland. He was a member of Charlemagne's army and one of his close counselors. He was killed, along with his rearguard, in the Pyrenees protecting the movement of Charlemagne's army from Spain to France. The year was 788 AD.

From there, the story tellers take over. With their help he became the Achilles of the West.

The story was originally written down in the 11th Century, but had many iterations in the centuries prior to that.

Charlemagne had been campaigning in Spain for 7 years. He had conquered all of Spain except Saragossa. The Saragossa area was ruled by a Muslim Saracen named Marsile.

Marsile feared Charlemagne. He was concerned he would be defeated and be compelled to convert to Christianity.

Marsile's chief counselor suggested a plan.

Marsile would pledge allegiance to Charlemagne and convert in exchange for being made the chief magistrate of Spain, reporting to Charlemagne. Marsile agreed.

The Counselor was sent to meet with Charlemagne. When he arrived he explained the offer to Charlemagne, who gathered his 12 Peers together to seek their counsel.

Roland said do not trust him. Ganelon, another Peer, and Roland's step-father (who hated Roland) counseled accepting the deal. Another Peer backed Ganelon. Charlemagne decided to accept the deal. Roland volunteered to handle the deal. Charlemagne vetoed the offer and told Ganelon he was going.

Ganelon leaves with the counselor from Marsile. On the way he reveals to the Saracen that he hates Roland. The Saracen realized that Roland was the most **feared of Frankish warriors and suggested to Ganelon that**

if he helped set a trap to kill Roland it would result in great gifts from Marsile. Ganelon agreed to the **treachery**.

Marsile agrees to the plot and rewards Ganelon.

Ganelon returns to Charlemagne and tells him that Marsile told his army of his decision. 300,000 refused to convert. They set sail for their homes and were all killed in a storm. Charlemagne, who has already moved to the pass through the Pyrenees in preparation to returning to France in anticipation of the truce, declares Ganelon a loyal and successful arbiter.

Still, a rearguard must protect the Frankish army's move through the pass. Ganelon suggests Roland handle the duty. He accepted the dangerous assignment. He gathers his equipment including his mighty **sword, Duranda** and leaves.

Roland rejects the suggestion that he take half of the army with him and takes only 20,000 men. He sends 1000 of those to scout the area, anticipating there may be treachery by the Saracens.

All but one of the scouting party is killed by Marsile, who has moved his army to a place of hiding near the pass. The lone survivor returns to warn Roland.

Roland tells his men it is a knight's duty to protect their king and die if necessary.

Roland is beseeched to use his war horn to call Charlemagne back to the fight. He refuses saying such action would be cowardice. "Death we choose, but not **dishonor!**"

Roland and his men kill all the Saracens only to learn they are an advance team. Marsile bears down on them with the main force.

All are killed while exacting a heavy price of killed men among the Saracens due to their **skill at arms**. They did their **duty**.

ROBIN HOOD

The story of Robin Hood comes into existence in the 14th century. In fact, there were several men who lived in England in the late 12 hundreds and into the 13 hundreds with the name Robin Hood or corruptions of the name close enough to count. There is no proof that any of them ever did anything close to the events portrayed in the Robin Hood stories.

The timing of the story is important because of the social changes that have occurred since the development of the stories we have thus far reviewed.

Those stories were told for centuries before they were written. The values reflected were from pre-medieval and medieval society. Following the Norman Invasion of 1066, England evolved a proto-bureaucratic structure. Nobles and the church each evolved their own form of hierarchy. They collected money. They had money to lend. They were both corrupt in their practices to gain more money and land. Each used the other to advance their individual and joint interests to the detriment of others.

The stage was set for a discussion of right, wrong and out-laws.

A rudimentary judicial system was in place. An accused person, whether for a criminal or civil wrong, was summoned before the court. If they failed to appear, they were declared and outlaw, which meant they were outside the protection of the law. If they failed to appear after being summoned multiple times their property was seized by the crown.

One of the earliest stories of Robin Hood puts him with Little John, Will Scarlet and Much. Robin dispatches his group to find someone to dine with. That means they are to find someone of position, clergy or noble, and bring them to dinner. After dinner they would be compelled to “pay” for the dinner.

Robin reminds them they are to protect women and children. They are not to bother any group in which women and children travel.

The trios seize a Knight and bring him to Robin. At the end of the meal the Knight is told to pay-up. He tells Robin he has only 10 coins. He further explains he is on his way to a high clergy man of St. Mary's to whom he owes 400 #'s as part of a ransom he had to pay for his son sometime before. The Knight explains that while he had been away fighting in the Holy Land his son had been caring for the estate. He became involved in a tournament and a man had accidentally been killed. The penalty for the accidental killing had been the payment of money. The Knight used all of his cash and had to borrow money from the clergy to complete the fine. He was given a time period to repay the loan or he would have to sign over his property to the clergy man. Since he could not collect rents from his tenants while his lands were in the hands of the clergy he was unable to acquire the funds to repay the loan. He was on his way to beg for more time.

Robin says he will search the Knight. Any amount over 10 coins belongs to Robin. The Knight has only 10 coins. Robin decides to loan the Knight the 400 coins. They agree that they will meet at the same location in one year and the debt will be repaid.

Little John goes with the Knight to St Mary's. On the way there a scheme is hatched to teach the cleric a lesson. The Knight claims he has no money. He asks for more time. The cleric, sure the Knight has no money and wanting to immediately take possession of the estate has a justice of the peace at hand.

The Knight declares he will not sign his deed over to the cleric. The cleric asks the JP how much he wants to declare the land forfeit. The JP says he wants 100 coins. The cleric pays. Little John steps forward and pays the debt. The cleric is skunked and both the cleric and the JP are revealed as less than honorable.

Little John and Robin enjoy the story.

A year passes. Robin waits by the agreed upon tree for the arrival of the Knight. The appointed time is noon.

During that year the Knight does well. He collects the money for repayment. He asks his wife what gifts they should acquire to present to

Robin for his good turn. She acquires 100 of the best made bows and a similar number of quivers filled with high quality arrows.

The knight leaves with his payment and his gifts. On the way to the meeting he happens upon a wrestling contest. The winner is to receive many valuable prizes. As the Knight watches the tournament he realizes the winner, who is a stranger to the community, is about to be cheated out of his rightful winnings. He remains to assure the man is not wronged. At the end of the contest he and his men step in and protect the wrestler as he claims his prize. The Knight then purchases enough wine for the crowd. He celebrates with them for a short while and moves on to meet Robin. He is three hours past his agreed upon meeting time and still has hours of travel ahead of him.

Meanwhile, back at the tree, Robin is disappointed that the Knight has betrayed him. Little John intervenes and says give the knight some more time. Robin agrees and sends Little John, Will Scarlet and Much out for some more dinner guests.

They go to the same place they stopped the Knight a year before and encounter two monks and attendant servants with wagons. Realizing they are badly outnumbered one of the group suggests they let this group pass by. Little John says he has no intention of letting representatives of a corrupt entity pass. He steps forward and seizes the reins to the horse that one of the monks. He tells them his leader wants them to come to dine with him. They ask who his leader is. He names Robin. One of the monks curses Robin as an out-law. Much shoots him dead.

That may explain why Much is not heard of often in later tales.

The servants flee. The remaining monk and his wagons are taken to dine with Robin. Robin feeds him and asks how much money he has on hand to pay for the meal. The monk says he is from St Mary's and only has 20 coins. Robin tells him he will accept any amount over the 20 coins. Little John discovers 820 coins. The monk is sent on his way with 20 coins.

As it turns out the monk was taking the money to the chief magistrate as a gift to encourage him to seize the Knights property and deliver to the cleric.

The Knight arrives and apologizes for being late and makes his explanation. Robin rejects his payment of the loan, noting that the cleric of St, Mary's has already paid the loan with interest.

Robin does accept the gifts of weapons.

Other tales tell of Robin's skill at arms with bow and arrow.

The legend of Robin Hood introduced the concept of those who were willing to use their own judgment for right and wrong. They fought wrong and made wrongs right. They had honor and surfaced the dishonorable. They were willing to accept being declared as operating outside the law if necessary to follow their own concept of right and wrong.

This idea has been adopted by Americans. The most successful movies (new legend format) combine these ideas.

WILLIAM WALLACE

William Wallace actually lived. His actions were similar to those portrayed in the movie Braveheart. His actions are legend.

The legend is designed to make the transition from the concept of liberty for the privileged to that of freedom for all men.

As the movie depicts, Wallace was not of noble birth. He was a fighter and a natural leader. As depicted in the film, the fact that he was not a noble set the stage for their treachery as he increased his following through displays of competence.

When he discovered their treachery he acted on his own and killed the nobles who were complicit. That merely sealed his fate.

He accepted his fate as duty.

American Legend

- **American Legend Martial Men tend to operate as individuals.**
- **Some legends are constructed around actual persons.**
 - **Some are fictitious.**
- **All further the conveyance of “habits of the heart”.**

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American Legends

- **Historical**
- **Fictional**
- **J. B. Hickock**
- **John Wayne**
- **W. Earp**
- **Clint Eastwood**
- **B. Masterson**

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J. B. Hickock

Hickock was an actual historical character. He engaged in many fights which he survived. Many of them were him against multiple antagonists.

He engaged in the first known revolver fight where he and his antagonist agreed to meet in a street and begin with their revolvers holstered.

He was literally a legend in his own time.

WYATT EARP

He was an actual historical character. He became a legend as a result of the incident at the OK Corral in Tombstone, AZ. The incident was little known until a writer who wanted to tell the story of the Manning's and Stoudenmire fight in El Paso was rejected by Doc Manning. Manning sent the writer to see Earp. Earp accepted the offer. The book made Earp a legend.

The TV western morality plays of the 1950's and 1960's expanded on the legend and provided a format for displaying the elements of the moral Martial Man.

In those shows, Hugh O'Brien was more likely to club the problem with his gun than he was to shoot him. The real Earp was known to club men viciously incident to arrest.

The song used to introduce and end the weekly show had a stanza that went: "Wyatt Earp, brave, courageous and bold. Long live his name and long live his glory and long may his story be told."

All the elements of a legend.

W. B. MASTERSON

Masterson became a legend in his own time. There were parts of the legend he rejected during his life. Chief among those he rejected was his reputation as a man killer.

The legend was he had killed close to two dozen men. There is only evidence he killed one. There is reasonable evidence he may have killed another. Of course, these statistics related only to what, in the vernacular of the time, was related to "white men". Indians did not count. He was in at least one long range rifle fight with Indians where it was credibly reported he made a number of very long range hits with "buffalo rifles".

Still, he served as a law man in most of the wildest towns of the west during those towns most raucous periods. He was well known for confronting very dangerous characters and resolving matters without having to shoot his gun. The accounts of the time point to his ability to position himself so that he had an advantage over his antagonist and convey his willingness to exercise his advantage in a way that was effective and did not shame the other man into an aggressive act. His reputation with a gun was reported to be useful in these encounters.

He too was characterized in the TV westerns of the 1950's. The song associated with show went: "Of all the legends of the west, one name

stands out from all the rest. The man who had the fastest gun. They called him Bat, Bat Masterson.”

JOHN WAYNE

No other name conjures the role of legend more than Wayne’s.

He played more historical and fictional characters of Martial man status than any other actor.

He understood the role of legend in conveying the moral Martial Man. In his last movie, “The Shootist”, in his last gunfight of his movie career, the script called for him to shoot one of his antagonists in the back. He made it clear he had never shot a man in the back in any of his hundreds of movie fights and he was not going to start in this one. The script would change or he was leaving.

CLINT EASTWOOD

While much less concerned with where someone got shot or even if they were always armed, Eastwood has portrayed fictional legendary characters who navigate through the minefields of moral decision making in various exercises that serves as a study of morally justified though extra-legal killing.

His body of work, whether intended or not, explores the subject of extra-legal killing in detail that no other group of fictional moral Martial Men has.

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Purpose of Legend

- **To provide a road map for Martial Men of accepted conduct in their practice.**
- **To identify the hall marks of constructs that guide the Martial Man as he navigates the complex moral decisions matrix confronted.**

Slide 7

Read from the screen. The wording has been changed.

Review the hallmarks in slide # 3.

Habits of the Heart

Legends create “habits of the heart” in moral Martial Men of Western civilization. They teach duty, honor, need for skill at arms, an understanding of the role of treachery and the role of wager in a scriptural fashion.