



# THE HOUSTON VALLEY HERALD

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*Heraldic Laurel Wreath* by James Parker, with contributions by Henry Gough, 1894. Based on the book published by his father, J. H. Parker, in 1847.

## The 4<sup>th</sup> Degree, Secret Master: Silence, Obedience, and Fidelity

By ADAM B. OLIVIER 32°  
Editor-in-Chief

The 4° is atypical compared to most of the other Scottish Rite degrees. It does not heavily rely on narrative or plot to teach its lessons. Instead, it primarily focuses on symbolism and is the foundation for the rest of the Scottish Rite degrees that a new candidate would be going through. Throughout this degree the symbols and lessons are reminders of what the candidate should already know as a Master Mason, and a taste of what he should expect going forward.

The symbols for this degree include: a key of ivory, a blazing star, a wreath of laurel and olive leaves, the great Masonic camp, the three pillars, and the nine Masonic virtues. Three key principles taught in the degree are: silence, obedience, and fidelity. Illustrious Brother Albert Pike 33° discusses all three of these principles in *Morals and Dogma*.

**Secrecy** is something critical for any Freemason who has gone through any degree – be it the Blue Lodge, the Scottish Rite, the York Rite, or any other esoteric order within the craft. This is why secrecy is first introduced in the Entered Apprentice degree.

Brother Pike makes it clear that we are not a secret society for the sake of being a secret society. Imagine if the world knew, in exact and intimate detail, our obligations and modes of recognition. While there is nothing nefarious or wrong that the general public could find, it would put us at a significant disadvantage. It would be much more difficult to differentiate who is an actual Mason, and who is just a cowan. More importantly, imagine you realize that a Mason is trying to communicate he is in peril. But then, only after you go out of your way to help him, you find out that he is not a Mason and was just doing something that his friend who is a Mason

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## You are a Man: Be Industrious and Productive



*The Drinker* (1914) by Erich Plontke.

By ADAM B. OLIVIER 32°  
Editor-in-Chief

The 5°, Perfect Master, has two primary duties for the Mason: be industrious and be honest. We are reminded that death can come at any point – whether we are twenty years old, seventy-five. For this reason, we should be honest because it is the right thing to do and, at any time, we could lose our chance to reconcile the wrongs that we have done or said. It is a fundamental axiom in Western civilization that everyone should strive to be as honest as possible. However while industriousness, or being productive, is also highly valued and is a Masonic value, it is something not regularly discussed in the lodge or in Masonic writings.

The industry of a man in any society is what allows him to build a fortune and life for he and his family, to garner light, and also to help the rest of his compatriots. If self-interest is not enough of an encouragement for us to get to work (in whatever sense) then we should consider the wellbeing of our wives, children, family, and fellow countrymen.

What are the alternatives? Consider the picture printed above. Death is playing an instrument for a well-dressed plastered man in what appears to be a messy board room. We can succumb to our vices; be it drinking, drugs, lude women, eating, video games, smoking, or anything else. Instead of making any real progress in life, we focus on things that take us out of reality and bring us pleasure. While it is a terrifying concept to drown in water, no one ever considers how tempting it is to drown in pleasure – especially in the modern world. For those of us who succumb to this style of

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taught him. Without secrecy our modes of recognition and distress would become practically worthless outside of a lodge room. You can also consider how important it is that Masons are able to trust each other, and that one Mason can keep the secrets of another.

**Obedience** can, and has been, misinterpreted throughout history. Christians and non-Christians alike probably recognize the quote, "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." Christians are called to respect lawful authority, such as paying taxes, so long as they can still render what is required to God. Similarly, as Freemasons, we must respect and uphold the laws that are made by our democratically elected governments.

For those Masons who are so fortunate to live in democratic republics or parliamentary states, they and their fellow citizens are able to enjoy the fruits of forefathers who established sacrosanct institutions that govern their nation. With that being said, it is written no where that we are called uphold evil laws or autocratic governments that wish to withhold the natural rights of men. Autocracy is fundamentally anti-Masonic. That goes for unjust and oppressive laws passed by these states as well.

While someone might claim that standing opposed to an autocratic state - even one with evil laws - shows a lack of obedience, Brother Pike makes it clear that it does not. Our obedience should be to a form of government that has the consent of the governed and to laws and men that hold righteous morality and the rights of men close to their hearts.

In regard to **faith**, I do not think that you need me to summarize what Brother Pike wrote. He put it as well, in plain language, as I could so I will share it with you below.

"Be faithful, therefore, to the promises you make, to the pledges you give, and to the vows that you assume, since to break either is base and dishonorable. Be faithful, to your family, and perform all the duties of a good father, a good son, a good husband, and a good brother. Be faithful to your friends... Be faithful to your country, and prefer its dignity and honor to any degree of popularity and honor for yourself... Be faithful to Masonry, which is to be faithful to the best interests of mankind."

## Announcements

### 2022-2023 Capital Campaign

Join us in building the Next Chapter of the Houston Scottish Rite's Library Story by contributing to the expansion of the main library shelves. Donations of all sizes welcome!

With a minimum donation of **\$500**: You will have a bookshelf dedicated to you or someone you admire. A nameplate will be engraved and placed on a bookshelf in the Main Library.

Minimum donation of **\$100**: You will receive an Architect's Circle kit (limited supply!) including: Architect's Circle Commemorative Book Bag, Architect's Circle pen, Architect's Circle Certificate, and a book from the Premium book list.

Minimum donation of **\$50**: You will receive an Architect's Circle pen, and a Book from the Premium book list.

Minimum donation of **\$25**: You will receive a book from the Premium book list.

For more info visit [www.HoustonScottishRite.org](http://www.HoustonScottishRite.org) and click "Education Foundation" under the "Philanthropy" tab.

### Per Capita Program

The endowed, life members, and dues exempt members are encouraged to donate \$30 or more per year to offset their per capita membership assessment. Donations can be made through the Valley's website at:

[www.HoustonScottishRite.org](http://www.HoustonScottishRite.org). Click "Dues Donations and Meal Fees" under the "Membership" tab.

### Roles Available for the 11<sup>th</sup> Degree Team

The 11<sup>th</sup> degree team "Elu of the Twelve" has open parts for more actors! Contact Brother Andy Marcinkowska of Houston at: [Andrewm1390@gmail.com](mailto:Andrewm1390@gmail.com)

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life, we leave behind us a dirty path of broken promises, destroyed relationships, and a wasted life.

The beehive is often used as a Masonic symbol for industry. There are bees with different jobs and duties. While that small insect serves no purpose on its own, it can build a magnificent society and factory of honey with the rest of the hive. Moreover, while one bee may not even be noticeable to a predator, a swarm of bees can subdue or even kill animals that are an order of magnitude in size. We, as men, are the same in that regard.

We have gone from cave-dwellers to astronauts. As a citizen, a member of a society, the subject of a Creator, and the member of a bloodline, you have a sacred and irrefutable duty to do something. Repress your urge for vice and embrace what makes you a man: the ability to build, create, wonder, discover, help, learn, and lead.

## VMAP: Valley Membership Achievement Project

By **RONALD W. BROWN 32° KCCH**, Chairman of VMAP Committee Contributor

The VMAP is the Valley Membership Achievement Project. It is a nation-wide program; its purpose is to increase membership in the Valley in which it operates. It is our privilege and honor to try to increase membership, retain those that are no longer active, try to restore those who are no longer members, and to recruit new Scottish Rite Masons.

The VMAP program is divided into four different areas of interest:

1. Membership Retention & Engagement
2. Member Restoration & Reinstatement
3. Membership Recruitment
4. Reunion Experience

The new VMAP online system provides easy access to the VMAP on virtually any device while also allowing a Valley to work on and track progress throughout the year. Valleys also now have access to an "Online Resource Guide".

Included in the guide is: a searchable database of successful VMAP initiatives and tools, a VMAP Workbook Archive, an online library of completed VMAP Workbooks from previous years, and ongoing monthly VMAP Best Practices trainings. These trainings will support and enhance the Valley's VMAP efforts. This database is accessible through the Houston Valley Secretary or the Committee Chairman.

## Photo From Last Meeting



Photo by **Adam B. Olivier 32°**. Photo of Joel Wiggins 32° KCCH, Illustrious Clint Stevens 33° IGH, and Travis Normand 32° KCCH.

### Contributing to *The Houston Valley Herald*

If you are interested, contact Brother Adam B. Olivier 32° at [HoustonValleyHerald@gmail.com](mailto:HoustonValleyHerald@gmail.com) if you wish to contribute articles or pictures for future issues of *The Houston Valley Herald*.