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Newton Investigating Light (1870) by J. A. Houston, R. S. A.

Lessons From The 8°: The Degrees of Masonry are a Colorful Beam of Light

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

The 8° takes place after the murder of Hiram Abiff. After a period of mourning has taken place, King Solomon wishes to continue construction on the temple. He sees the advice of King Hiram of Tyre. The Master Hiram, who travelled to Egypt and the East to learn, had freely given knowledge to several young men who he felt could replace him. In the degree, each of these young men are symbolic in their own right. While it is likely exciting for a new “Intendant of The Building” to learn of events following the death of Hiram and the ceremony of the degree itself, the symbolism and lessons from the degree are equally important. Illustrious Brother Albert Pike 33° makes an important point about this degree, and the degrees of Masonry in general, in chapter eight of *Morals and Dogma*.

“These Degrees are also intended to teach *more* than morals. The symbols and ceremonies of Masonry have more than one meaning. They rather *conceal* than *disclose* the Truth. They *hint* it only, at least; and their varied meanings are only to be discovered by reflection and study. Truth is not only symbolized by Light, but as the ray of light is separable into rays of different colors, so is truth separable into kinds. It is the province of Masonry to teach *all* truths – not moral truth alone, but political and philosophical, and even religious truth, so far as concerns the great and essential principles of each,” Brother Pike wrote.

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An Educated, Enlightened, and Patriotic People

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

The 9° and 10° inculcate the importance of education, general enlightenment, and the patriotism of a people who wish to live and thrive in a free to society. The degrees take place after the murder of Hiram Abiff. Characters investigate and discover the several Fellowcrafts who, together, committed the murder of Hiram. Each of them is brought to justice by the protagonists. These acts, and the named individuals in the degree, each have specific and significant meanings for the candidate.

In *Morals and Dogma*, Brother Pike goes over several important lessons from the degrees including the importance of an educated



The Avenue in The Rain (1917) by Childe Hassam.

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Continued from front, "Lessons of The 8°".

In the same way that a light can be seen as various colors, so too do we see the degrees of the blue lodge and the degrees of the Scottish Rite. This is not to say that the degrees have no obvious moral lessons, or truths, to teach. But, the degrees can and often do have layers of lessons and symbolism that mean different things. A new Intendant of The Building will know a story, but he will also eventually recognize lessons and truths from the degree after further study.

"The degrees of this Rite are not for those who are content with the mere work and ceremonies," Brother Pike wrote.

He wrote extensively and abstractly about the 8°. These writings, based off the symbolism and ceremony in the degree itself, cover several topics including: What Freemasonry should be, that life is worth living and should be cherished, charity, and the intention of the degrees themselves. Of these, he focused the most on why a man should cherish his life and why life itself is worth living.

He recognized that the Supreme Architect made the world a place with both good and bad. Where there is happiness there is sadness, and where there is joy there can be horror as well. Our existence is based off this continuing battle for the good of the world while we endure the bad. Humans could not live on Earth if it was only filled with good and joy, just as we could not survive for very long on Earth if it was rotten with suffering.

"The world is not a wretched and a worthless one; nor is it a misfortune, but a thing to be thankful for, to be a man. If life is worthless, so also is immortality," Pike wrote.

Brother Pike evaluated how even those of us toiling in the darker parts of our lives should consider the things that we do have, and the opportunities that have been presented to us, because there are others in the world who have it even worse than we do. We cannot enjoy the fruits of our labor without the labor itself, and we cannot recognize the joys of life without knowing what misfortune is; and if life is to be lived. Because life is a "wonderful creation of God", it is something that we should cherish and, because we are already putting in the effort to do that, we should live it to its fullest.

Announcements

Upcoming Reunion

The next Houston Valley reunion will be three sequential Saturdays: October 1st, 8th, and 15th. Breakfast, lunch, and snacks will be provided each day of the reunion.

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 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.

Click "Dues Donations and Meal Fees" under the "Membership" tab.

Continued from front, "An Educated, Enlightened, and Patriotic People." populace, the importance of principles, why men should take patriotism seriously, and tolerance.

In essence, an educated society will be able to understand when and why it is being oppressed, and how to change the status quo. Throughout history there have been stories of slaves or indentured people with little to no education who lived under the boot of an oppressor. It is a common trope in literature for the people in these stories, who usually have large numbers, to suffer and continue to be ruled until they are united by a strong leader who can spread his message of liberty so that they can finally stand up to the continual drip of tyranny. Only with education can a populace sustain a democratic republic such as the United States.

"Most men have sentiments, but not principles," Pike wrote. "The former are temporary sensations, the latter permanent and controlling impressions of goodness and virtue."

Principles are something that a man decided to live by, while sentiments are unthoughtful and basic. There are specific virtues and instances of good moral character that men should build up around them to help guide them through life. Every journey has to start somewhere, even if it is firmly establishing the basics in one's own heart: stealing is wrong, bearing false witness is a crime against one's soul, and we should treat others as we wish to be treated. With ethical and sensible principles, a man can find his way even when he does not have all of the answers.

In regard to patriotism, a person familiar with the Declaration of Independence may find some conceptual similarities between a portion of that famous writing by Thomas Jefferson and a statement written by Brother Pike.

"...That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness," wrote Jefferson.

"Masonry teaches that all power is delegated for the good, and not for the injury of the People; and that, when it is perverted from the original purpose, the compact is broken, and the right out to be resumed; that resistance to power usurped is not merely a duty which man owes to himself and to his neighbor, but a duty which he owes to his God, in asserting and maintaining rank which He gave him in the creation," wrote Pike.

While patriotism is something that every Mason should embody, it does not mean that he should blindly follow his government if it is in pursuit of tyranny. While a patriot supports his country and its government, he does not blindly and quietly support every law, measure, and rule. He should, above all else, support a republican form of government, and the continuation of liberty for all of the people in his country, otherwise he will eventually find that he is the one without liberty.

Finally, we should be tolerant to the opinions and perspectives of Mason and non-Mason alike. Every man has the right to come to his own conclusions and to have his own ideas. While this may seem obvious, it is easy to forget that opinions cannot be wrong. A man should not be condemned and permanently scarred for having an opinion that is reasonably within the realm of social acceptability for a safe and free society. Instead, men must be able to share their ideas with each other in a civil way. This is important because, through respectable debate, the best ideas among men can rise to the top for the benefit of society.

A free country with a republican form of government is not something that can instantly be established, and sustained, anywhere in the world. It takes an educated society of people to partake in it, principled men to lead it, patriotic men to defend it, and tolerant men to ensure its betterment.

Contributing to *The Houston Valley Herald*

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