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Judgement of Morality

by Bro. Ken Jarabek Victoria-Columbia
Lodge #1 B.C. & Y.R.

Morality seems to get a lot of attention these days. More specifically, it is the alleged "lack of morals" in our society that seems to rouse people. According to many individuals who are unhappy with our society, all our troubles stem from the unethical and immoral behaviour of others. But is this true? What exactly is morality and who has the right to set standards for it? These are difficult questions to answer because it is difficult to define or conceptualize morality.

The gentle craft of Freemasonry is based on morality as by the following examples quoted from The Grand Lodge of B.C. and Yukon: "What is a Freemason?"

- He is a man of Faith, who uses tools of moral and ethical principles to serve mankind.
- He believes that there is such a thing as honour, and that a man has a responsibility to act with honour in everything he does.
- He becomes involved in the problems and needs of others.
- He believes that every person should strive to be a good citizen and that he has a moral duty to be true to the country in which he lives.

In the First Degree prove up, the Brother being examined is asked the question: "What is Freemasonry?" He answers: "It is a peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols."

Our Constitution is a moral document, a statement of principles and the voice of Brotherhood. It is as old and as modern as Truth because it was written by men who knew that Freedom was not granted by government but was granted by the Wisdom of God and that as long as government did not check that relationship between man and his Creator, the Constitution was performing its rightful function and as well men could be free to walk their unobstructed paths with God.

Freemasonry is a system of morality in the sense that it offers the accumulated experiences of man in his centuries of effort to arrive at a decision. "Having principles" means being consistent, non-hypocritical and having your morals ingrained into your psyche. In other words, you do not have to advertise your morals; they speak for themselves.

Morality is a large part of our integrity of character and man reaches towards a high moral condition through his ability to decide upon a course in life. The choice is a personal one, accepted by one who has in him both sides, "the moral and the immoral." In any system that is

honestly trying to teach morality, both right and wrong must be fairly presented. Without the two sides we would not understand or even recognize the accuracies of where moral boundaries begin and end.

However, morality isn't that simplistic. In fact, if we use that logic, then no one is truly immoral because no one believes they are immoral. Even in our free-and-easy society, you know when an action is immoral and when it isn't. No one can tell you that molesting a child, under any circumstances, is a moral act. Nor can anyone argue that donating bone marrow to save a stranger's life is wrong. We definitely know what is right and what is wrong but we can choose to ignore our moral code when it suits our purpose.

For example, if you see someone in distress, in which direction do you run — toward the victim or away from them or do you just stand where you are and take pleasure in the person's suffering? There can be no question of where morality lies.

Vegetarians may say that eating meat is immoral, the deeply religious say that atheism is wrong while neo-conservatives think that socialists are evil and vice-versa. Morality in these cases seems to suggest that whatever we choose to do and believe is moral, while those individuals who do not conform to our beliefs are immoral

But what exactly does it mean to be moral? Would it mean that being moral is having the courage* to carry out what we believe in, even if we are uncertain of the consequences?

Isn't it funny how simple it is for people to trash different ways of living and believing and then wonder why the world is going to hell. People can send a thousand jokes through e-mail and they spread like wildfire but when one starts sending messages regarding life choices, people think twice about sharing. How the lewd, crude, vulgar and obscene pass freely through cyberspace but public discussion of morality is often suppressed in school and workplace. When you go to e-mail this type of message, you may not send it to many on your address list because you are not sure what they believe or what they will think of you for sending it to them. Funny how we can be more worried about what other people think of us than what we think of ourselves! So therefore, do we arrive at our opinions and decisions by being "free thinkers" or by the leverage of peer pressure to be in agreement or in disagreement with what others think?

We say that we profess to love others, which is a demonstration of the truth and freedom of our individuality and at the same time is a reflection of our unity with another. Even so, our troubles may arise when we see only half of the picture.

This leads us to our next question: who should decide which actions are considered right and proper and which are thought wrong in our society; the government, the church, our parents or society in general? History has shown us that not one of these institutions is infallible or invulnerable to bigotry or abuse. Laws do not necessarily reflect morality; only what is practical for society at that point in time.

* Explanation of "Courage" as quoted by the R.Rev Richard C. Chartres, Bishop of London: "Courage is an expression of our deepest being, what is most deeply true about our common humanity."

Indeed, in numerous things and ways we see sometimes that others should not be commended but condemned and their methods of how they live life should be avoided. But because of this, we should not close our eyes to the many good things in their lives.

Our reasoning would be useless to us unless it teaches us what to accept and what to reject. We would be kin to a fool for refusing to accept good from a man or a race, unless everything of that man or race is perfect. There is no perfection in man at least on earth. All the good that we have ever received from other human beings has come from imperfect men and women. So, we would better be served to recognize the imperfections of those around us while taking lessons from them in those things that go to make a life fuller, richer and better. Keeping in mind that people are not all alike.

If we feel critical or judgemental to any degree, we can be sure of one thing. Either we are envious of the person in question for having a quality or circumstance that we feel we lack, or we are seeing something that we do not like in ourselves.

When we see our image in a mirror, that image is "only an image." That image in the mirror is the source of my actions and dependent on given circumstances can go hand in hand with moral thoughts. To look in the mirror is a painful thing as well as a pleasant surprise. When we look, we shall see that the truth is more than we thought and the more we look, the more the truth will grow.

While the institutions of government, church, parents and society can show what is right and wrong by example, we as individuals alone must decide on our own moral code.

By extension, morality is a form of bravery. It means being confident with your actions and beliefs, even if the whole world is screaming that you are wrong. It is also easier to make decisions in life when you are certain of and comfortable with the boundaries you set for yourself.

When you are truly moral, there is no question of what you can and cannot do — you never need justifications, excuses or extenuating circumstances. Your morals are just a part of who you are and you set your own standards and live by them. Is it really that simple?

In conclusion my Brothers, morality is a beautiful part of Freemasonry and both are carried in men's hearts. This is where Freemasonry lays the foundation to build its Temples. In the hearts of men is where you will find not only the beauty of the Temple but also the beauty of Morality that makes Freemasonry what it was, what it is and what it will always be.

References:

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