

Official Visit to Seymor Lodge No. 272

April 10, 2007

Lecture

We are the Company We Keep

Good evening Worshipful Master, Right Worshipful Sirs, Very Worshipful Sirs and Brethren in all. When I first joined the Lodge, I knew I was joining a group of good men who strive to become better men; a group of men who honoured brotherhood, justice and high standards of morality. I knew that by joining this fraternity, I too will have the opportunity to grow and become a better man myself. Right-a-way, I began to absorb the teachings and tenets of our ancient fraternity. Such as the ones in the J.W.'s lecture; where we learn of symmetry, balance and beauty; where we learn of temperance, fortitude, and prudence. This lecture teaches us the morals of Virtue, Honour and Mercy. It also teaches to live with Hope, have Faith and practise Charity.

Years later, I came to the realization that, even though, from time to time, progress is made, a long learning journey laid before me. The more I learn about the tenets and principals of Freemasonry, the more I realize I need to learn.

There is an old Spanish saying that goes like this: "Tell me who you are accompanied by and I tell you who you are". I am sure you have heard the English version as: "We are the company we keep". Whichever version you may be familiar with, the fact is that this is very true. As District Deputy

Grand Master this year, I have attended a Masonic gathering, of one sort or another, almost every night of the week. Four, and sometimes even five nights a week, I find myself in a Masonic gathering; surrounded by trustworthy men with whom a share warm fellowship, brotherly love and truth. This familiar environment which I am part of so regularly has developed in me a strong sense of faith in humanity. I have often seen great acts of charity, fraternity and love to one another. I have witnessed what good men can do to help one another and what they can do to help their communities.

Today, we appear to live in a world where having Morals and living by them is, in some quarters, considered to be only for 'fuddy duddies', the old fashioned or those who are 'not on their way up'. This kind of thinking, that Morals are no longer relevant in modern society, allows some men to commit all sorts of actions against their fellow citizens.

Freemasons claim no moral high ground, claim no monopoly on morality or the application of it in their everyday lives. Indeed there are many hundreds of thousands of people who live lives which could be described as being Masonic in nature and yet who are not Freemasons. The difference is that Freemasonry, as an Institution, teaches morality to its members in an unusual way during the course of its degrees. Thus is a **System of Morality**. This 'system' has existed for hundreds of years and remains a central feature of Freemasonry today.

Morality: n. used to describe ethics, upright conduct, conduct or attitude judged from the moral stand point.

Moral: adj. Concerned with right and wrong and the distinction between them.

A Morality Play: A medieval allegorical play (1400s & 1500s) England and France. Teaching moral lessons, typically with characters representing virtues and vices, though there are many types. The greatest English Morality Play, 'Everyman', c. 1530's, allegorizes man's journey through life.

Morality from a Masonic point of view goes like this:

'**Morality** runs like a silver thread through the dogma of Freemasonry from the Ancient Charges to the regulations and ordinances of the present day. No tenet of Freemasonry has been more consistently maintained and free from question than that of living a life of high morals. In the very oldest document of the Craft, the *Regius MS.* (c.1390), the Articles for the Master prescribed that he should be steadfast, trusty and true; must accept no thief for an apprentice lest it turn the Craft to shame', must not supplant another Master but be a brother to him; must be fair and free and do nothing that would shame the Craft. The Craftsman was charged to love God and Holy Church and his Master and Fellow's; work truly. He was to be not false to the Craft; stand well in God's law; respect the chastity of his Master's wife and his fellow's concubine; be a true mediator; act fairly to all; pay his debts; and swear to be no thief. *Antiquity*, another book written MS. (1686), is another example, it charges the Master to be a true man of God; to follow the

Golden Rule; not to commit any felony against a fellow's wife nor to servant or daughter; truly to pay for his meat; do not commit acts of felony whereby the Craft might be slandered; undertake no work that he is not able to finish; take only reasonable pay for work; be no common player at cards, dice, or hazard; not to go into town by night unaccompanied by a fellow to bear witness that he was in an honest place. Substantially the same was repeated in all the Gothic Constitutions. Nowhere did Dr. James Anderson (c.1678 - 1739) catch the spirit of the Ancient Charges so accurately as on the subject of morality. In his *Constitutions* of 1723, he made not attempt to make the Fraternity sacrosanct or to paint it as pretending to a degree of morality that it had not attained but, with a commendable restraint, he prescribed only ordinary standards. Masons were required to obey the moral law, to be good men and true, men of honour and honesty; to work honestly on working days that they might live creditably on holy days, to avoid ill language and behave courteously within and without the lodge, not to envy a brother or supplant him, to avoid excess and offensive language, not to continue together too late, or to stray away from home after lodge, and to avoid gluttony and drunkenness. The Master was directed to take work as reasonably as possible and truly to disperse his employees' goods as though they were his own.

Both the Masters and the Masons were advised to be faithful to employers and honestly finish the work. The Wardens were to be true to both Masters and to Fellows and carefully

oversee the work in the Masters absence. While many defects showed up in the so-called landmarks presented to the Fraternity commencing at the middle of the 19th century, none was so serious or showed the shallowness of the writers so clearly as the omission of any rule of Morality or of any reference to the Moral Law.

Today, Masons still follow the ways to live a life a morality. We are taught to have faith in God, and to believe in natural justice. The Almighty will reward virtue and punish vice. This is a fundamental belief if a man is to live by the square. Even when the laws of men fail, there will be a final judgement by the Creator of all things. That is why we need to live our lives by the rectitude of the square. Keeping within the moral bounds and living a moral life is a necessity for all members of the Craft.

Finally my Brethren when I am in Lodge I know I am amongst men who have similar beliefs as I do. I believe that I am amongst men who fear God, and are willing to follow a life of justice, brotherly love and truth. Through the years, I have seen that by keeping their company I gain spiritual strength, hope in salvation and that I am given that wonderful opportunity to help my fellow men and my community just the same. This year as District Deputy has been for me, a year of learning. I hope I never get to the point when I think I know it all. With humility to the Almighty and with respect to his creation, I know one of the most important lessons to learn is that I still have a long ways to go in the search of light and wisdom.