

Masonic Benevolence and Charity

The word Charity has practically lost its meaning in these later days, and now seems to convey the intention of the giving of money to more or less deserving applicants. I totally disagree with this conception of the word, when applied to Masonry. To my mind it is to extend to a Brother, who is in distress, or who may have done wrong, or who may have committed a grave crime against the laws of the country, kindly sympathy and assistance as may be justified in a case under consideration. Do not mistake my meaning, I am unalterably opposed to the mantle of Masonic Charity covering the wrong doing of any kind, either Masonic or civil, but, I think, true Masonic Charity consists in a friendly interest and kindly sympathy to a Brother, whose pathway of life has not been of the rosiest, and in overlooking small personal faults and characteristic, sins of omission and commission, and all the frailties to which the human flesh is heir. No man is perfect, we have all our faults, some good in a greater or less degree, some bad in a greater or less degree, and our Masonic Charity should pardon and condone to the utmost, that strict justice will permit; but Masonic Benevolence is of another character, and brings to our minds certain definite duties, which we as Masons, owe to each other, and to the dependents of each other. Many, in fact all, Masonic Grand Bodies have a Rest or Reserve Fund for Brethren suffering from the misfortunes of life. Its administration is expressed in many different forms such as Masonic Homes, Orphan Asylums, Schools and direct money grants.

It is not my purpose to discuss the different forms in which the dispersal of Masonic Benevolence may be made, because each form has many good points, but rather to invite your attention to the fact, that owing to the great number of fraternal beneficent societies, now operating in our Country, there seems to be a subconscious feeling, in many cases, that grants from Masonic Benevolent Funds are a quid pro quo for money paid into the Craft. This sentiment cannot be too strongly condemned, as grants from Masonic Benevolence are in no wise similar to money paid for insurance to the different Fraternal Insurance Organizations, and must ever be regarded, as one of the sacred privileges of Masonry, whereby the Brethren, freely and voluntarily, extend to a needy Brother such help as may be needful in the time of trouble.

Sources:

Proceedings of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada at the annual convocation, 1919 Address of the Grand First Principal, A. S. Gorrell.