

The Law of Right Behavior  
(Rev. Dr. John Bartol)

*“A massive study concluded that no society has ever been known to maintain moral restraints without the aid of religion.” Historian Will Durant*

Philosopher Immanuel Kant testified that his mind and heart were turned Godward by, “The starry heavens above and the moral law within.” In this article, I am dealing with the moral law, sometimes called the law of right behavior. Almost every day we hear people say things such as: “That’s my seat – I was here first – It’s not fair – Come on, you promised!” In each case the person is appealing to a moral law of behavior, some standard of fair play, which they expect others to know about.

We turn to the moral law every day. Whether your pension plan has been defrauded or your neighbor has been mugged, you sense that an ethical standard has been violated. Even a person who denies such a law cannot live long without affirming its value. Try breaking a contract you made with such a person and promptly they will shout, not fair!

This concept of right and wrong appears to be universal. As we compare the moral teachings of ancient Babylonians, Greeks, Chinese and others, we find they all had a belief in some law of right behavior. Clearly a moral law must exist to differentiate between good and evil. But where does this law come from? A law cannot exist without a Lawmaker. If God does not exist, then objective moral values cannot exist either. Thomas Jefferson recognized that values such as equal dignity and equal rights come from “Our Creator.”

Even atheists recognize that values must have a spiritual foundation in order to survive. Without internal moral restraints any civilization will fall into barbarism.

In recent months, there has been no shortage of unwelcome behavior in our world and even in our Province. I do not wish to sound negative but is it not true that we have taken moral values out of our schools, discarded the 10 Commandments and then wonder why society is going to pieces at every level.

Criminologists are telling us that unlawful, deviant behavior stems from a lack of moral training and development of conscience in the early years. Children are born with an innate capacity to imitate the behavior of older siblings and adults. Therefore, I believe the war against crime must start in the home where parents of integrity need to be good role models for their children to follow. Also, the home, church and school must find ways to work together in meeting these needs.

We know that when basic virtues are mocked, sex perverted, violence glorified and prayer ridiculed, we can expect to see an alarming increase in unacceptable behavior. No society can survive unless moral virtues such as honesty, justice, kindness and love are written in our hearts from early childhood.

*“Point your kids in the right direction – when they’re old they won’t be lost”  
(Proverbs 22:6 WSG).*