

The Research Lodge of Otago

September 1957

LOYALTY

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As citizens of a free nation we believe in liberty. We also believe that we owe loyalty to this nation of ours that guards our freedom. We are dedicated then, to at least two great principles: Liberty and Loyalty.

Are these two principles compatible? That is to say, can we have a high degree of loyalty without sacrificing, to some extent, our liberty to think for ourselves and to criticise? Or, to put the matter in opposite terms, can we have a full measure of liberty unless we treat loyalty as rather a minor and expendable virtue?

Much of our thinking today, it seems to me, is based on the assumption that we cannot enjoy both these values at once. There are not many persons, perhaps, who would dare to say that loyalty must be scrapped in order to preserve liberty. There are a great many, however, who are willing to say that liberty must be sacrificed in the interests of loyalty. In my judgment, both positions are wrong. They are worse than wrong—they are dangerous.

These two fallacies spring from the same source. In the last analysis, liberty and loyalty are being treated in these arguments as negative virtues. Liberty is supposed to mean nothing more than absence of restriction. And loyalty is supposed to mean nothing more than punishing subversives. In these dangerous times, we must find a positive approach to liberty and loyalty—particularly loyalty—if we are to approach and preserve both, and it is this positive approach to loyalty that constitutes my subject today.

The word loyalty is so black-and-white, so often misapplied, so double-faced and hard to recognise from one side to the other, that perhaps it would be better to leave it altogether out of use. Its presence is assumed, its absence blamed, with a partial and unreasonable passion—rarely the same for him who speaks and him who hears, from even the most slightly divergent angle, and the fact is that the word is a collective, whose use with a singular meaning is almost without exception a mistake.

However, let us look at the meaning as it is applied today. The word is derived from the Fr. 'loyal', old Fr. 'loial', 'leial', 'leal', and from the L. 'legalis', 'legal', from 'lex', 'legis', a law, applying as true and faithful in allegiance, faithful to the lawful government, to a prince or superior ; true to plighted faith, duty or love ; not treacherous ; constant. The noun applies to a person who adheres to his sovereign, or to constituted authority.

There is always more than one loyalty to be considered. Race, government, custom, origin, religion—one has to choose between them, and the problem is not a simple matter easily dismissed.

Justice, Charity, wisdom, spirituality, are all definable in terms of loyalty, but above all loyalty must be something larger than oneself, untainted by private purposes or selfish ends.

Loyalty must not be treated as something empty and blind, but as implying content, knowledge and scope that is to something.

Loyalty means commitment, and there can be no commitment that is not committed to something. The loyalties of the craft, however many and however divergent, have grown respectable with age—and the only way to supersede them—and indeed the only way to establish lasting unanimity—was to form our own supreme body in New Zealand.

I have very painstakingly looked through a lot of Masonic literature, charges, rituals and orations, and in very few have I come across any lengthy discourse on loyalty as it applies to the Masonic scene. There are the usual admonitions familiar to you all to be loyal to this and that. Is this absence because loyalty is taken for granted, and, like a previous remark, prefers to be black and white?

A. G. Mackey observes that notwithstanding the calumnies of Barruel, Robinson and a host of other anti-Masonic writers who assert that Masonry is ever engaged in efforts to uproot the governments within those countries in which it may exist, there is nothing more evident than that Freemasonry is a loyal institution, and that it inculcates in all its public instructions obedience to Government. Thus in the Prestonian Charge given in the last century to the Entered Apprentice, and continued to this day in the same words in English-speaking Lodges, we find the following words:—

"In the State, you are to be a quiet and peaceable subject, true to your Sovereign, and just to your country; you are not to countenance disloyalty, or rebellion, but patiently to submit to legal authority, and conform with cheerfulness to the Government under which you live, yielding obedience to the laws which afford you protection, but never forgetting the attachment you owe to the place of your nativity, or to the allegiance due to the Sovereign or protectors of that spot."

The charge given in French Lodges, though somewhat differing in form, is couched in the same spirit, and teaches the same lesson. It is to this effect:

"Obedience to the laws and submission to the authorities are among the most imperious duties of the Mason, and he is forbidden at all times from engaging in plots or conspiracies."

The charge given in the American Lodges varies but slightly in its language to the Prestonian Charge:

"In the State you are to be a quiet and peaceful subject, true to your government, and just to your country ; you are not to countenance disloyalty or rebellion, but patiently submit to legal authority, and conform with cheerfulness to the government of the country in which you live."

The charge given to New Zealand Grand Lodge adherents is of the same import, and varies but slightly in its language:

"As a citizen of the world, you are enjoined to be exemplary in the discharge of your civil duties; by never proposing, or at all countenancing any act that may have a tendency to subvert the peace and good order of society; by paying due obedience to the laws of any State which may, for a time, become the place of your residence, or afford you its protection; and above all, by never losing sight of the allegiance due to the Sovereign of your native land, ever remembering that nature has implanted in your breast a sacred and indissoluble attachment to that country whence you derived your birth and infant nurture."

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Arthur Bestor : *A Positive Approach to Loyalty*.

Alan Barth : *The Loyalty of Free Men*.

Henry Steele Commager : *Freedom, Loyalty, Dissent*.

Albert G. Mackey.