

## *And Justice For Some*

*By Bro Andy Albright, 32°, Valley of Charleston*

Situated in downtown Charleston, SC, are some of the best examples of middle and late Colonial-era architecture in the southern United States. The famous “Rainbow Row” is a series of homes that have been restored and rebuilt over the many years of their existence, dating back to the middle to late 18th century. Among the building of interest to Scottish Rite Masons would be the famous Shepherd’s Tavern<sup>1</sup>. Although the tavern no longer exists, historical markers can be found at the current structure. One little known area of Charleston contains a unique arrangement of buildings called the *Four Corners of Law*. On one corner, St Michael’s Episcopal Church with its iconic steeple; on another corner, Charleston City Hall; another, Charleston County Courthouse; and the last, the United States Post Office and Federal Courthouse. At this one intersection, a person can stand amidst the most important institutions for the preservation of spiritual and social law and mercy, the basic fundamentals of justice of the laws of God and of man. We, as a civil society, have every expectation to rely on each one of these four institutions to manage our government and church in accordance with the law. The Four Cardinal Virtues, like these four buildings, are situated on the four corners of a square, providing mankind with the base on which we erect our spiritual edifice. Remove one of the corners and the structure will fail. If one corner is not square, the entire building will not pass the level and plumb.

The close examination of Justice will reveal to the inquisitor how the remaining Cardinal Virtues depend on the preservation of Justice. Temperance remains a viable virtue as we know that we will face a just reaction to the failure to avoid indulging in excessive and licentious behavior. The suffering of the soul should we fail to guard it against attack installs in us a necessary reinforcement of the virtue of Fortitude and that the hand of Justice will sooner or later be laid on our attackers. The government of our conduct can be held in check by the potential of justified repercussions when we fail to

---

<sup>1</sup> On May 31, 1801, the tavern was not call Shephard’s Tavern. The tavern had been bought and sold several times. At time of the founding of the Scottish Rite in Charleston, the tavern was called City Tavern.

act with prudence. Justice should have no name, no identity, no political association, and no expectation of favoritism. Justice must remain chaste daughter of Liberty and Freedom, committed to none and a beneficent friend to all. Always, Justice has to be the cement foundation of society, able to support with weight of all else constructed. All men should gaze upon her with hope and despair, joy and terror, knowing that all her actions must neither be good or evil but just and righteous.

As an American people, we conduct our lives under the protection of Justice under the law as a democratic right. Suppose, however, the conduct of our courts and those charged with administering the law were no longer bound by democratic right. Let's presume that Justice was no longer a right freely given to all but purchased by means of the social status of some as a commodity. Justice no longer becomes the cement of society. She yields to her vile twin, Injustice, who rules on the shifting sands of a desert, always changing with the winds of the day with no sense of consistency. Injustice makes herself loyal to no one, the darkly personified by the immorality of a woman who makes herself available to any willing to sacrifice their soul. The behavior of injustice reverberates through civil society, bringing destruction to the foundations freedom and liberty.

People living under the protection of a constitutional government expect to conduct their lives with autonomy. If the democratic right to justice were removed, would a people still enjoy that autonomy? I would venture to say that the enjoyment of autonomy would be based on social status. The common man would no longer the benefit of making his own choices and become compelled by force to enact the will of others in prominent positions of authority. While we might consider such a travesty to be inconceivable, we must remember we are not too far removed from the history of Europe and the days when the Church of Rome dictated to all how their lives should submit to the canonical tyranny of the Pope. What about in our modern times? Conceive in your mind a life where your educational opportunities were dictated to you, what labors you will perform, and where you must reside. Without Justice protecting our autonomy, what you have conceived in your mind would be your reality.

The stability of society would be absent. The threat of an uprising by the oppressed would cause those in power to be on a constant vigilance, always influenced by rumors and unfounded speculations. Lies would become fact so that unjust actions could be justified for the preservation of despotism. Have we forgotten the lessons of the Salem witch trials and the horrors inflicted on innocent men and women due to little more than a hint of wrongdoing? Revenge usurps Justice, falsehoods snuff out truth, and none would be safe. The speed of our modern communication abilities could destabilize society in just moments and in the hands of a despot becomes a formidable weapon that can crush the cement of society into nothing more than pebbles. When the despot and the tyrant are free from the firm hand of Justice, what hope would the people governed have for a stable and peaceful country?

Justice is the manifestation of the theories of deontological ethics<sup>2</sup>. If we remove Justice from her duties, then we would be faced with the terror of consequentialism<sup>3</sup>. When the rule of law is removed as the guide of right judgements, rash and impulsive actions will become the new guide serving only the will of self-appointed masters, fulfilling their deformed perceptions of what is the greater good. Licentious and vicious actions are no longer seen as unjust if the end result satisfies the desires of despots and tyrants. The working class will no doubt feel the brunt of unethical actions when they are judged as unworthy to receive mercy due to their economic and educational status.

Once removed from her place of prominence in society, Justice does not easily return to her rightful throne. The tyrant and despot, having indulged in their unquenchable lust for power, will not quietly lay down their scepter of cruelty. The tyrant will summon his forces to put down any rebellion with no concern of life and property. I don't mean to suggest that these forces will be armed men in conflict. The

---

<sup>2</sup> Deontological Ethics: A system of ethics where rules and moral duties determine the rightness of an action, not the outcome.

<sup>3</sup> Consequentialism: The theory that the morality of an action is justified by the outcome. "The end justifies the means."

wealth of a tyrant is alluring temptation to the poor and suffering, and comfort and ease will not easily be turned away. Mental manipulation by means of false reports can incite the weak minds of fanatics into carrying out the will of despots. The tyrant and despot will follow after the council of Sun Tzu, who said the smartest general can win a battle without ever fighting<sup>4</sup>. The virtue of Veracity would be sacrificed on the altar of lies to appease the gods of deceit. Justice will sooner or later have her say although many will not witness such judgements.

Freemasons across the world are charged to never deviate from the minutest principle of Justice. The devastation of allowing Justice to be compromised is unimaginable to us. Do we, the Craft, believe that we would remain unscathed if Justice fails? The rights of men to gather together under the banner of a fraternal organization would most certainly be called into question when ignorance prevails, and unjust actions are taken to prevent our assemblies. None can escape the unfairness of rules and laws created to disperse those whom the despots fear. Confidentiality of private fraternities would cease to exist, and the privacy expectations of the people would suffer. The rights of mankind to gather together and worship according to their faith is a fundamental closely guarded by Justice, but tyrants across the course of human history have always challenged this right. The self-righteous edicts of tyrants are not concerned with the liberty and freedoms of those under their rule.

Our laws are established with the intent of ensuring protection under the law regardless of a person's education level, economic standing, or social status. Absent of Justice, the law would receive her sight and become focused only on the will of those who exert influence over the courts. Maleficence takes the role of justice and the judgements handed down would cripple society. No one would have a reasonable expectation of protection of the law against the will of despots and the common people would be in fear of the harm that would be inflicted on them. The courtroom, no longer bound by the civility of the law, ceasing to have any measure of respect for individual,

---

<sup>4</sup> A common theme in Sun Tzu's "Art of War" is that fighting was a waste of resources and the wisest leader can win without combat.

would issue orders based on the biased opinions of the judge without regard to the rights of person. Rulings would not be to support the rights of an individual, but to serve the means of promoting the agenda of tyrants.

Justice is not limited to just the courtroom. Every person has the ability to view his fellow man with the eyes of justice and treat them with fairness. We must constantly exercise the virtue of veracity and not speak lies of our brothers to serve our own interest. Freemasonry teaches us to be tolerant of those of whose views differ from our own for the sake of improving humanity. Under the wide arms of toleration are we, the Craft, able to look justly on those whose political and religious opinions differ from our own; only by the virtue of toleration can Masonry demonstrate true and just universality. No measurement would be possible to provide the dimensions of arrogance when a man looks upon another and issues a judgement against one who differs in matters of faith or politics.

Masonry teaches us that Justice in great measure will distinguish the real good man.<sup>5</sup> The preservation of Justice is not as simple as we would hope, and the necessity for the preservation of civil society can never be overstated. I have only offered to you brief examples of the calamities that could befall humanity if Justice becomes compromised. The assumptions made in this essay are based solely on what I believe would occur and every person is free to draw their own conclusions as to the state of civil society if Justice as a democratic right was removed. Freemasons must always be vigilant to see Justice maintain her rule in the court and her honor always remain intact.

---

<sup>5</sup> From the Ahiman Rezon of the Grand Lodge of South Carolina: “..and as Justice in great measure distinguish the real good man, so should it be the invariable practice of all good Masons never to deviate from the minutest principles thereof.”