

For God and Country!

Liberty has always been a rare commodity in the annals of human history. Rather tyranny has been the norm. Even during the great Renaissances that brought about the American and French Revolutions, imperfections abounded. During these so-called shining times of liberation, the blacks were enslaved and the native population of the New World slaughtered in mass! Although the governing authorities that reigned in those times did provide some semblance of freedom for particular people, some were ALWAYS privileged to be MORE equal than others.

The great quandary in understanding the history of these things in their proper perspective however, is the fact that the people have insisted on bringing GOD into the mix. As though He is personally responsible through His Divine Providence in providing them these freedoms and sustaining them as a Nation. Thus you have the notion of "Inalienable Rights" (or rights bestowed upon us by God!). Herein the conflict of divided loyalties exists and the effort to make God our benefactor.

I wish it to be understood clearly by all who read this article that I am not advocating disloyalty against home and country. It would not be in the nature of a genuine Christian to promote infidelity toward the governing authorities or his fellow man. Rather the "Christian" (in the true Biblical sense) MUST promote "Peace with all men" and never return evil for evil! (Heb. 11:14, 1Pet. 3:9, 1Thess. 4:11-12) Therefore promoting nationalism, fanatical patriotism or insurrection that would trample the rights of some while protecting the rights of others, is OUT of the question.

The early Christians understood this divine concept perfectly and OBEYED it. Although they were victims of the worse kind of Roman tyranny history had to offer, they endured it as CITIZENS of Heaven and Christ's representatives on earth. (Phil. 3:20) Name a generation since then who suffered more than they did or were MORE justified in EVERY way to revolt against their oppressors. Yet they not only endured it as good soldiers of the cross, but NEVER spoke an evil word against the ruling authorities oppressing them! To them to suffer for righteousness sake was "COMMENDABLE" before God. (1Pet. 4:12-16) The "Fiery Trials" of persecution were expected as a TEST of Faith. (1Pet. 1:6-9)

Freedom and Liberty were unknown to them and generations that followed. They were strangers on the earth, sojourns, passing through a foreign (and hostile) country (Heb. 11:13, 1Pet. 2:11), always engaged in pitched battle against the principalities and powers of spiritual evil! (Eph6:12) They DID NOT wrestle against flesh and blood, nor did they WAR with carnal weapons of death and destruction. (2Cor. 10:4-

5) They pulled down the strongholds of LIES, ignorance and false doctrines with the WORD OF GOD!

And "most" of the time, it COST them everything to do so.

Peace and righteousness were their banner and LOVE to change the hearts of men was their weapon.

Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men - as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. 1Pet. 2:13-17

They were indeed "Revolutionaries" BUT not in worldly sense. They did not march against the armies of Rome or overthrow the Governments of the Gentiles. Rather, they OVERTHREWED the hearts of men! They brought them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God! (Acts 26:18) Through this is the ONLY true reform. Morality can never be legislated into existence, even at the point of a sword. Not while men's hearts remain EVIL. They can be restrained and compelled to obey the laws of the land, but they can NEVER uphold the righteousness of Christ's Kingdom unless transformed from within.

Those of you who profess to follow Christ and believe in such a thing as a "Just War," have you ever REALLY considered what the Bible has to say about these things? The Americanized version of Christianity so prevalent in our churches today has forced MOST of you to presume that God is "ON OUR side" no matter what the endeavor. Therefore, if a situation meets the correct criterion, war is justified and those who serve under the flag are NOT deemed murderers but Patriots!

Yet does GOD have a Country? Is He a respecter of persons? Does He show partiality toward one person or nation over another? Our fathers who answered the call to defend the home land against the Tyranny of the Japanese, Germans, etc., DID God love these "our enemies" LESS than He loved us? NOT according to the Bible! God indeed chose Israel to bring forth His oracles and the Messiah, but that relationship ENDED at the CROSS. NOW He is has established a SPIRITUAL Kingdom in the hearts of men who will follow and obey Him. (Luke 17:21)

He HIMSELF did not revile the Roman authorities, nor did He speak an accusatory word against Pontius Pilate. (1Pet. 2:21-24) His Purpose was NOT insurrection, but to

EXPOSE the counterfeit religious system that had corrupted the word of God and rendered it null and void. Against false doctrine and hypocrisy He was MOST harsh, but toward the World He extended His Mercy if they would receive it.

To claim or believe that God then favors our Nation over others because we endorse human liberty (to a degree) is a fallacy. God has no team, nor does He choose sides in the conflicts between men. It would violate His divine nature to do so. Certainly He allows Nations to exist, as well as establishes and judges them through providence in due time. (Rom. 13:1-7) But He seldom overrides the free will of man. Rather it appears that He patiently endures their arrogant rebellion for a SPACE of time (Known only to Himself) and then allows nature to take its course in the destructive process they call history. (Rom. 2:7-10) Thus man becomes his own judge suffering the proper consequences of his individual actions.

The objection is naturally raised, are not "Christians" called to oppose wrong doing, protest corruption and attempt to put things on a right path? YES! But REAL Christians PROTEST by preaching repentance and faith according to the Bible! They put down corruption in the hearts of men through conviction and godly sorrow for sin. They put things right by correcting error, exposing disobedience and bringing minds into the captivity of Christ. Marching down the sidewalks with signs in front of an abortion clinic or making a fuss about legalized gambling, WILL NOT change the hearts of men doing these things. Pass all the laws you wish to forbid them and see if it alters the situation. History proves that it does not.

But people have a physiological need to associate their religion with the politics of change. Which makes for divided loyalties and a compromised message. It's inevitable when you align yourself with either side of political debate that the "issue" itself will cause dissension in the ranks and create an atmosphere of distrust. That's why the early saints avoided these things like the plague and focused their efforts on repentance and faith instead of social change. Not that ancient society was any less corrupted than the present day morass, or wasn't replete with human vice. But they understood that if ANY change was to take place, (that would make an impact) it would have to originate in the HEARTS of men, not the halls of Government.

Throughout time men have always attempted to mix Christianity with the affairs of State in order to justify their conquests and greed. Consequently, the history of mankind is besmeared with inquisitions, crusades and genocide, all done in the NAME of God. Therefore, it is no small wonder why War is looked upon as a "Necessary" evil, serving the greater good of man, (if the right side wins!) and the ONLY way liberty can be preserved against the forces of Tyranny. Yet with all its death and destruction, War never seems to bring about a permanent solution to man's

problems. There is always another battle to fight and foe to defeat. (Because the "foe" is man himself, unregenerate, serving a false god created in his own image.)

The difficulty from a "Christian" perspective is finding justification for these wars and conflicts without wrapping yourself in a Flag of Nationalism and going forth as soldier of God. What makes this subject so problematical is our inherent need to find a PURPOSE in all of this. War is so appalling to our human consciousness with all its carnage and bloodshed that we must find a way to divorce the horror from our minds and see beyond senseless slaughter to something of value. We cannot as human beings cope with the knowledge that our precious loved ones have died for nothing or given their lives in vain. Rather they are "HEREOS" people of grand courage who we can honor the memory of for their ultimate sacrifice!

This is where God and Country come into play. WHO could defame the memory of these fine men and not be deemed a traitor to the cause? So we honor the flag draped coffins, march in the memorial parades and listen to the speech makers tell us that God is on our side. But do any of us reflect on the casualties of our enemies? The millions of innocents who died in bombing raids, missile attacks and the collateral damage of war? Did God love them LESS, is that why they were defeated? Is the blood of Christ sufficient to forgive their sins and redeem their souls, as it has "supposedly" redeemed ours?

The real Christian (Living according to the Bible) would not deprecate the sacrifice of war or do anything to smear the memory of those who died, on either side. His loyalty to home and country would NEVER be in question. BUT his concern would be mankind itself and more specifically, the SOULS of men redeemed from the corrupting influence of sin! His Banner would be PEACE (Rom. 12:18-19) and his message LOVE. He would NEVER seek to overcome evil with evil or take vengeance on anyone. (Rom. 12:21, 1Thess. 5:15, 1Pet. 3:9) If slain by the evil doers, he would take his place among the faithful who have gone before him into the heavenly country of whom the world was not worthy. (Heb. 11:13-16, 38)

In all times of human history the real Christian would be considered a stranger and pilgrim on earth, passing through hostile territory - hunted, despised and rejected. Would the REAL message of the Bible ever be welcomed in the halls of Congress or at the highest levels of human government? Try to imagine John the Baptist, Jeremiah, Isaiah or Ezekiel addressing a joint session of the House or facing the Great Monarchs of the world. Would there be handshaking and accolades cast at their feet, (as our modern day preachers receive) or distain because they were EXPOSING sin and calling for Repentance to God!

WHO crucified Jesus? Was it NOT the Religious establishment (system of error) rotten to the core and corrupted by political intrigue? TOGETHER they conspired against the Lord of glory and thought to SILENCE His message against them through bloodshed. (Acts 2:23, 1Cor. 2:8) (Which is the natural course of man.) Has anything changed in 2000 years? Is man any less wicked and deceived? Has he NOT AGAIN married politics to religion in an unholy alliance that would do the EXACT SAME thing to anyone who confronted them with truth? BUT America is a "Christian Nation!" you claim, founded on divine principles by men of high moral standing. It's written into our Creed and part of our National Tradition!

Try to look through your haze of Patriotic fervor for a moment and ask yourself: WHAT can save the souls of men from SIN? The WORD of GOD or the Declaration of Independence? Is it SCRIPTURE or the Constitution that you are to OBEY? Ask the Apostles when confronted with the same issue! (Acts 5:28-30)

Did they make it their mission to reform the religion of the Jews or get elected to the high Councils so they could effect change? Was there a protest against the Tyranny and injustice of Rome? NO! They preached Christ crucified and brought about conviction of sin which lead to REPENTANCE! What changed?

THE HEARTS OF MEN and THEN came the possibility of a social reform.

Where then does Country fit into this? For the Christian it doesn't. According to the Bible he has no Country, but seeks a heavenly homeland. (Heb. 11:14) Does he owe his earthly loyalty to anyone? Again, according to Scripture, in the Rom. 13 since only. But it's here that most professing Christians have great difficulty with comprehension. They insist that this passage of Scripture is only speaking about just forms of Government, not tyrannical. And that we have a right and duty to depose ourselves of oppressive political systems, by force if necessary. (The Just war concept!)

But this passage makes no distinction between "forms" of Governing authorities. Read it yourself:

"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who

practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor." Rom. 13:1-7

Basically the Christian is instructed to obey the authorities, pay his taxes, and render respect to those due it. Nothing is said about the nature of the Government, good or bad. But it does mention "resisting" authority is the SAME as resisting God. Accordingly, the early Christians took this literally, since they DID NOT in any way whatsoever partake in an insurrection against the Roman Empire. They did however preach Christ against all opposition and in the face of brutal hostility. Obedience to God is always paramount no matter what the authorities may say or do. Even if it cost your life, nothing is to interfere or stop the preaching of the truth.

The paradox of modern times however is finding a way to reconcile the demise of the Gospel Message in our churches to the fact that our open and free society has allowed it to go unchallenged for generations. If indeed the United States is a "Christian" Nation founded on biblical values, WHY has it become the central source of all the deception in modern day preaching? During the times of Great Persecution the Gospel Message flourished and the preaching remained pure, focusing on repentance and faith. But as Governments became more tolerate and people were able to enjoy the fruits of liberty, the focus changed.

Like third Century Rome, Christianity came into the main stream and began mixing politics with religion. This was the Devil's master plan! History had taught him that he could not abolish the church through persecution, but in "tolerance" he was able to SILENCE their voice against the corruption of sin! As the American church grew and prospered in our free and open society, the "weightier" matters faded into the background. The professed grew lazy, complacent and lukewarm. Churches were rich and increased with goods, in need of nothing, but the message turned, wretched, miserable, blind and naked!

The preachers became more willing to wrap themselves in the flag than denounce sinful behavior. They would take up a social cause, but leave the people in BONDAGE to their sin. Parishioners would sign petitions, march in rallies and protest against human vice, but NEVER admonish a (so-called) brother overtaken in sin and try to bring him back to Repentance! Rather support the right candidate and vote for the proper cause; send our soldiers off on another "holy" crusade in the name of freedom! Raise the social consciousness in your community and get more of them involved in the churches.

But preach the simple message of Repentance and faith, with godly sorrow for sin and a clearing of wrong doing that leads to purity of heart? NEVER! The message is no longer "REPENT" but "RECEIVE." You don't meet God's conditions, HE meets YOURS! You are received into the fold by professing "Belief" in the Americanized Version of Jesus, who isn't concerned about your behavior but your political affiliations! The churches spend more time disputing legalized gambling than they do making sure their youth directors aren't molesting the children or the Sunday school teachers aren't drunks and reprobates.

The Whole System is based on the hypocritical notion that God has somehow CHOSEN us as His special people to bestow blessing upon and that makes it our DUTY to be His representatives of freedom and liberty throughout the world. Christianity then becomes anthropology and our preachers are no longer evangelists but philanthropist, improving the lot of mankind by social reform instead of godly sorrow for sin. This is the BIG tent philosophy, everyone is included! It doesn't matter what you believe or how awful your addiction. We can have churches for the homosexuals, drug addicts, adulterers, murderers, etc., all fighting for the SAME cause, a BETTER life and more ways in which to enjoy our Freedoms!

Thus the Devil has succeeded in defeating the purpose of the Gospel Message and turning the focus of the church away from the simple truths of Scripture. All without firing a shot, so to speak. Tolerance has led the way to compromise and now the spirit of error is in control. The "Christian" response is based on the Bill of Rights, not the Ten Commandments! This mix has brought in a huge gray area concerning our attitudes toward war, self-defense and conquest. The "Christian" today does not divorce himself from the issues and love his enemies as commanded, he asserts his RIGHT to kill them in defense of his freedoms!

The Church sanctions his actions (as heroic) and puts God's seal of approval on the endeavor. America was founded by on Christian principles by godly men and that makes it just to eradicate anyone who interferes with the process! This is nothing new however, from the very beginning men have sought to justify his actions by including God. Even the American Revolution suffered from this discrepancy. The King of England was "Christian" ruling a "Christian" country! (So-called, at least.)

History shows that he was tolerate of religious freedom and even stepped in to prohibit persecution of traveling evangelists preaching in the open air from town to town. Why then the rebellion? Was it also, "CHRISTIAN"? - sanctioned by God to establish the United States of America? Like ALL conflicts between men, it was based on self-interest and greed, or WHO controls the "Real estate!" Did it benefit mankind as a whole, change his heart, bring him closer to a repentance and faith that

may save him? In reality, some gained others lost, but SOULS on BOTH sides fell hopelessly into perdition for eternity.

Is it therefore our just response, as real Christians (if that's the case) to get all weepy eyed and choked up when the flag is raised and the band strikes up another anthem in honor of these things? Patriotism is so deeply engrained in most of us that NOT reacting this way would be considered TREASON! Yet I can't imagine the early Christians watching the processions of Rome in all their regalia, feeling anything but PITY for the blindness in their hearts.

We've all had precious loved one who served or died in wars. Some of us had entire families involved in world conflicts of immense proportion. As human being we cannot help but weep with them for their losses and feel the pain of their awful memories. It's in our human mechanism to make "heroes" out of these people and try to offer them some sort of consolation for what they had to do! But as real Christians we are not to spread distain against our government, neither can be show disrespect toward our veterans. NEVERTHELESS, wouldn't it better serve the TRUE purpose we are called for IF they were HEARING the REAL MESSAGE of Repentance and Faith, instead of the LIE?

RAISE the banner Of Christ and LOOK to the Heavenly Kingdom! Our Battle is against SIN in the hearts of men, NOT political corruption.

By Mike Desario