



Thinking About Patriotism

In the 1950s, talk of God and country went together like a hand in a glove. Some sixty years later, church and state relations are often nothing short of suspicious adversaries. Both sides seem to “shoot first and ask questions later.” In what follows, I want instead to ask questions first. I am not here interested in analyzing what happened to cause the change, but I do hope we can take a step toward a Biblically founded viewpoint. Here are ten questions. LH

1. Does being a Christian remove my ethnic or national identity? If I don't have to renounce being an American (or other nationality) in heaven (all nations and tribes come to worship, Revelation 7:9), do I have to pretend I am not an American (or other nationality) now?
2. Is it acceptable for a Christian to be proud of his or her school, family, home or sports team? Is patriotism (defined as being proud of one's country) compatible with being a Christian?
3. Are allegiance to God and allegiance to country inherently incompatible? If God is my king, is it possible to have any earthly king?
4. On the one hand, the words of Peter, (“We must obey God rather than men”) show there can be “duties” of government that conflict with our higher duty to God. On the other hand, can there be duties to government that do not infringe on my ultimate duties to God? When Jesus said, “Render to Caesar, Caesar's and to God, God's,” was He showing it is possible to honor God and to honor Caesar?
5. If the church is not the state, and the state is not the church, does this mean that the church must always be against the state?
6. If I sing my national anthem and get choked up, say during an Olympic ceremony, am I automatically to feel guilty?
7. Is it possible to honor lesser authorities in good conscience because they have been instituted by a greater authority?
8. Are God's people tied to any one nation?
9. A friend of mine works for a church where his nation's flag is prominently displayed beside the pulpit. Do you think the display is a wise decision?
10. Do you agree or disagree with the statement: while patriotism can be good, the church is not a good place for patriotism?

PRAYERS AND PRAISES

Our brothers/sisters in Africa: Jac Agak, Charles Ngoje, Jacob Randiek, and your orphan(s)

- Lisa Grimenstein as Pregnancy comes full term
- Cheyenne's father for healing from cancer
- Shannon's father for healing of nose
- Wisdom from above for Elders, counselors, and those at crossroads
- Bless our families as many travel this weekend
- Remember folks in Phil Campbell, Alabama in losses
- Lord please supply those in need of work with a job
- Bless Lord the Hearts & Hands of many ministering from FH
- Lord pursue our wandering ones to return home to Jesus
- Thank You for the gracious hearing of our prayers
- Thank You for many who gave their lives to better our lives
- Teach us to put you in the highest place in devotion and memory



"Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." Proverbs 14:34

"Honor is better than honors." Abraham Lincoln

"To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society." Theodore Roosevelt

"Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted." Einstein

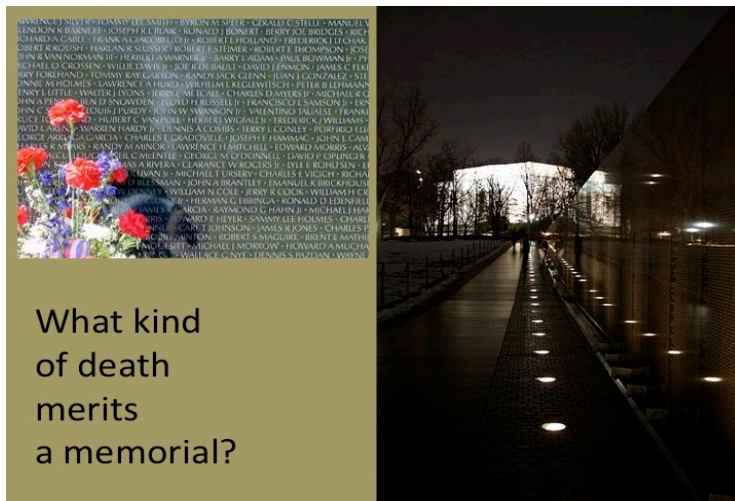
"Seven deadly sins: politics without principle; wealth without work; pleasure without conscience; knowledge without character; business without morality; science without humanity; and worship without sacrifice" E. Stanley Jones

"A people that values its privileges above its principles soon loses both." Dwight D. Eisenhower

"We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." President John Adams, 1798

"Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." (Isaiah the prophet, Isaiah 40:31).

Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Revelation 19:10



What kind of death merits a memorial?

I am glad to have stumbled on the musings of Kevin DeYoung (minister of University Reformed Church in MI) regarding "Thinking Theologically about Memorial Day." I quote several of what I take to be some good insights:

In making us for himself, God didn't mean to eradicate all other loves. Instead he wants those loves to be purer and in right proportion to our ultimate Love. . . . Of course, we can turn patriotism into an idol, just like family can be an idol. But being proud of your country (or proud to be an American or a Canadian or a Russian or whatever) is not inherently worse than being proud of your kids or proud to be a Smith or a Jones or a Dostoevsky. I find it strange that while it is fashionable to love your city, be proud of your city, and talk about transforming your city, it is, for some of the same people, quite gauche to love your country, be proud of your country, and talk about transforming your country. . .

Sometimes Christians talk like you should have no loyalty for your country, as if love for your country was always a bad thing. To be sure, this must never be ultimate loyalty. We must always obey God rather than men. But most Christians have understood the fifth commandment to be about honoring not only your parents but all those in authority over you. . . . Moreover, Jesus shows it's possible to honor God and honor Caesar. . . .

If you read all that the New Testament says about governing authorities in places like Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2, you see that the normal situation is one of compatible loyalties. The church is not the state and the state is not God, but this does not mean the church must always be against the state. In general, then, it's possible to be a good Christian and a good American, or a good Ghanaian or a good Korean. Patriotism is not bad. Singing your national anthem and getting choked up is not bad. Allegiance to God and allegiance to your country do not have to be at odds.

