

“Fervent Patriotism”... Is It The Same Thing As Godliness?

Not since the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor has the United States been swept up in such fervent patriotism! Flags are waving everywhere; “God Bless America” is the standard conclusion of every presidential speech; prayers are offered in Catholic and Protestant churches, in synagogues, mosques and temples. Memorial services and funerals are held in their thousands, as believers in hundreds of different religions recite prayers to their concept of God.

America is truly united! But are we also closer to God?

If you are somewhat like me, you may be having difficulty these days with your emotions. I find myself having moving, profound, often tearful feelings of patriotism; love of country; love of America; love of freedom; and yet, at the same time, sadness at the seeming inability of our nation to confront our personal and national sins.

Up front, I need to tell you I do NOT believe those fanatical, hate-filled, suicidal mass murderers were “agents of God” sent to “punish the United States.” Let us not try to “blame God” for mindless, insane murder and horrifying mass death. God was simply not involved.

Here is the simple logic of the situation. God does exist. God COULD have prevented those attacks. God DID NOT PREVENT them. But neither did God CAUSE them to occur. He was simply not involved, one way or the other.

Does this offend you? What other possible conclusion can you offer? Oh, I know what Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson said in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks. I also know they recanted their early, emotional outburst. However, I suspect there are any number of others who see the terrorist attacks as punishment heaped upon a commandment-breaking, godless society; who see it as something God Himself caused.

But God neither caused, nor prevented the actions of fanatical Muslims whose perverted twists of religious fervor led them to joyfully commit the most destructive act in our nation’s history.

Throughout the history of God's people Israel and Judah, God sent His prophets to WARN the leaders and the people about their two greatest national sins: idolatry and Sabbath-breaking! Time and time again, their warnings fell on deaf ears. The result was death and destruction; invasion from foreign nations, and captivity!

But God did not CAUSE such destruction. The pagan nations did! God simply DID NOT PREVENT it! Jeremiah cried out, "The Lord hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not pitied: he hath thrown down in his wrath the strong holds of the daughter of Judah; he hath brought them down to the ground: he hath polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof.

He hath cut off in his fierce anger all the horn of Israel: he hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy, and he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, which devoureth round about" (Lamentations 2:2, 3).

While Jeremiah lamented that "The Eternal hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob [Israel]," he goes on to explain that God has simply WITHDRAWN HIS PROTECTION from Israel! He has ALLOWED foreigners to murder, pillage, burn, and destroy! God Himself is in His high heaven, beholding all the petty machinations of men! He was not at the controls of those hijacked jetliners! No, insane, murderous, hate-filled Muslims were! But God had "drawn back His right hand" from before America, just as He did in the case of ancient Israel and Judah!

Usually, when some inexplicable tragedy strikes, people tend to blame God. They say, "Where was God on September 11th?" They plaintively cry, "Why did God let this happen?"

Some, as the two well-known evangelists (who later recanted), immediately assume such a horrifying event as September 11 was direct "punishment from God." Others wonder why God did not stop it! For the answer, read my commentary published on our web site (<http://www.garnertedarmstrong.org/>), or call for my brochure entitled "Why Did God Let It Happen?"

The ASSUMPTION in the minds of millions is the same false assumption that was in the minds of the Pharisees and religious leaders of Jesus' day. Jesus Christ showed His own nation their hypocrisy in claiming God was working among them; that they were "God's country"; that wherever God's eyes were, they were assuredly right there, among the Jewish race of Jesus' time.

Read the following detailed experience of Christ in your own Bible, and understand. First, I will quote it entirely, then comment: "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

"And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

"To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

"And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

"And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

"And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?

"And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.

"And he said, Verily, I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.

"But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;

"But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

"And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

"And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,

“And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

“But he passing through the midst of them went his way” (Luke 4:16-30).

Do you understand why they tried to kill Him? What an incredible result of a simple reciting of scripture; a simple recounting of historical fact! Have you ever attended a church service where the congregation tried to violently MURDER the preacher because of his sermon?

That is what the Pharisees tried to do!

If you missed the import of Christ’s words, consider: The Pharisees, a stern, strict religious sect, were fervent nationalists. They were patriotic to the point of xenophobia! They looked down upon “lesser races,” speaking evil of them.

They were “God’s chosen”! To them, wherever God was working, it was certainly NOT among the hated Goyim or the “Gentiles.”

To them, they were the proud children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Theirs was “God’s country.” God was right there among them, they thought. His eyes were on them, they thought. They were “God’s church.” They were “administering God’s government on earth.” They were “God’s agents; His priests; His ministers.” Their prayers were surely heard. Their fasts probably brought tears to the eyes of God Himself! Their entire lives were wrapped up in “godly pursuits.” God, to them, was the silent witness to every one of their meetings, to all of their religious services!

Yet, here was some “local boy,” (and one with an unsavory birth record at that, they all believed) who was telling them that during the days of the two greatest prophets in their national history, God had TURNED HIS BACK ON ISRAEL, and instead sent each of those two powerful prophets to a Gentile woman, a Syro-Phoenician, and to a Syrian king!

Raging inwardly, they seethed in righteous indignation! Why, this was preposterous! It was outrageous, incredible, blasphemous!

Losing all sense of dignity, decorum, or decency, these posturing religious leaders, who preached “Thou shalt not kill,” rose up in shrieking wrath, and tried to murder Jesus Christ!

If they had been allowed, they would have dragged Him to the precipice of a steep hill (I have been there, and seen the hill mentioned), and cast Him down headlong, surely killing Him!

When a person is so filled with a prideful mixture of patriotism and godliness, and such a person is told, "but this is not God's country, and God is not working here," it fills such a person with a mindless rage! Do you see why they tried to kill Christ?

What If Jesus Christ Were Here Today?

What if Jesus Christ should read the same passage of scripture, and say virtually the same things to an audience in a Roman Catholic Cathedral, or the National Cathedral, or in a major Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, Episcopalian or Pentecostal church?

What if Christ were to say, "This is not God's country. This is not where my Father is working?" What would be the reaction from the priests, clergy, and laity?"

Think of conditions in our nation, and among so many other nations, such as Britain, Europe, Australia, South Africa and Canada, today. God says, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

"For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

"Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

"Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away"
(2 Timothy 3:1-5).

What an indictment! Yes, our peoples truly ARE laboring under the burden of all those carnal, sinful emotions and actions! People ARE lovers of PLEASURES more than lovers of God! People ARE proud, blasphemers, traitors, vain and high minded! Children ARE disobedient to parents!

We have a FORM of "godliness." We freely use the expression, "God bless

America," or "God bless you." By our millions, we flock to our cathedrals, synagogues, mosques, temples, or neighborhood church buildings, and listen to false doctrines, myths, superstitions, and lies.

We are told we have an immortal soul, which is conscious, and goes either to heaven or to hell instantly upon death. We are told God is maintaining an "ever-burning hell fire" where victims are writing in pain, blistering, singeing, burning, shrieking in agony for decades, centuries, and "for ever and ever." We are told that God is an impersonal "hypostasis" or a "trinity," or that Mary overshadows her Son, Jesus Christ, as the "mother of God" who is to be worshiped.

We adopt the sign of the cross, which is a pagan symbol; worship on the day of the sun instead of God's commanded Sabbath day; believe the Ten Commandments were "nailed to the cross," and that Christmas is the birthday of Jesus

Christ. We believe Hallowe'en and "Harry Potter," though soundly condemned in scripture, are harmless "fun" for our children.

We are a society riddled with crime, drug abuse and addiction, pornography and child molestation, divorce, desertion, and abandonment; a nation with mass murders taking place even in schools and churches; a nation which exports our vaunted "Western culture" in the form of "MTV," violent, murderous movies, featuring huge explosions, hundreds killed by automatic weapon fire, and insane "music" such as "heavy metal" to countries around the world.

We are a nation which saucily sneers at the true values of God, and speaks of "our values" when it comes to homosexuality and "gay rights." Look at my commentary on Hillary Clinton and her statement about the "values" of gay rights published on our web site if you doubt this. We murder millions of the unborn, and call it "a woman's choice." We legislate against teaching the Bible in schools, but freely allow homosexuals to teach our preschoolers about "Adam and Steve" or about "Daddy's Roommate." We pass laws against praying in public, and attempt to pass laws to force the Boy Scouts to accept homosexuals as leaders.

Under the guise of "civil liberties" such organizations as the ACLU file lawsuits against those who would pray in school, those who would put the words "In God We Trust" on public buildings, or those who dare to display the American flag.

The point is, our nation cheerfully admits, nay, boasts, that we are NOT a commandment-keeping nation! Those who SHOULD be in the forefront of teaching God's laws; God's WAY OF LIFE, are instead the principal attackers of His laws. God says to us, "And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination.

"The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.

"Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead" (Jeremiah 2:7-9).

He is doing precisely that! Today, God is pleading with the children's children — with the latter-day generations of those who rejected His laws in the past! Today, He pleads with YOU, and with every person to heed His call, "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel!" Peter said to the frightened people on Pentecost, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:38, 39). To repent means to be deeply sorrowful; to be remorseful, ashamed, heartsick over what one has said, thought, and done! It means to CHANGE; to "turn around, and go the other way!" It means to GIVE oneself to God! Paul wrote, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1, 2).

When Jeremiah said "they that handle the law," he did not only mean pastors and preachers. They that handle the law includes the U.S. Supreme Court, all the State Supreme Courts; the entire judiciary of our people! God's laws against divorce, homosexuality, murder, abortion and assorted crimes of all kinds are flagrantly set aside by human legislators.

Those who “prophecy by Baal” are those who preach and predict “in the name of the Lord.” The Hebrew word “Baal” means, quite simply, “The Lord.” Jesus Christ said, “Take heed that no man deceive you.

“For many shall come in my name, saying I am Christ; and shall deceive many” (Matthew 24:4, 5). Men divided the original Greek into verses, and added punctuation marks. The inference here is that many would aver that CHRIST is Christ, and yet deceive many! Only rarely does some crazed would-be “Messiah” claim to BE Christ! But MILLIONS speak His name, and continually say, “Lord, Lord,” in their sermons and emotional songfests. Jesus Christ says to these, “...why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

Baal was a PAGAN “god” who never existed! Ancient pagans worshiped their “Lord” or “Baal” in many guises. He was called “Baal-Abarin,” or “Lord of the mighty ones”; Baal-Aberin, or “the winged one”; Baal-Aph, or “Lord of wrath”; Baal-lashon, or “Lord of the tongue”; Baal-hatzim, or “Lord of Arrows.”

He is referred to in ancient writings and monuments as “Bel, or Belus,” and is found in many societies from ancient Babylon to Scandinavians. He is found in the origin of tree worship, and is called “Baal-bereth” or “Lord of the Fir Tree;” and masquerades as Christ in his title “Baal-Berith,” or “Lord of the Covenant.”

Is it a truthful indictment from God that MODERN preachers “prophecy by Baal”?

Absolutely! Christmas is replete with symbols of Baal worship! The day of the sun was deliberately foisted off on apostate nominal Christians over the second and third centuries after Christ!

NONE of the Apostles EVER worshiped on Sunday! God never made Sunday holy! Jesus Christ NEVER worshiped on Sunday! If you have not yet read my book Why Would Anyone Keep Saturday for Sunday? you may access it on our web site, or call or write, and request your free copy.

Whether we want to accept it or not, whether we believe it or not, the United States of America merely has a FORM OF GODLINESS, mixed in with a tremendous amount of patriotism, mom, and apple pie, but we DENY THE POWER thereof!

IF the pastors and those who for a few moments were center stage in the National

Cathedral; at Yankee Stadium; at the Pentagon, and in the many memorial services had called upon our nation to REPENT OF SIN — and then gone on to EXPLAIN WHAT SIN IS — perhaps some few would have heeded. Dr. Billy Graham DID say we needed to “repent of our sins,” but did not explain WHAT SIN IS!

God says, “SIN IS the TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW” (1 John 3:4).

Today, America is caught up in a wave of patriotism. The “name” of God is on the lips of millions. More people are going to church. More people are waving the flag. But, in truth, it is “business as usual.” There are NOT more people truly repenting of personal and national sins! There are NOT more people coming OUT of sun-worship and spiritual Babylon, and REPENTING in broken-hearted surrender to God and His laws.

God’s prophets were the greatest patriots of all! They, too, no doubt had difficulties when they saw clearly the impending national calamities coming upon their beloved nations! Jeremiah cried, “Thou hast made us as the offscouring and refuse in the midst of the people.

“All our enemies have opened their mouths against us.

“Fear and a snare is come upon us, desolation and destruction.

“Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people [Jeremiah cried many tears — was terribly distressed at the slaughter of his own countrymen!].

“Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission,

“Till the LORD look down, and behold from heaven” (Lamentations 3:45-50).

Ezekiel, who was one of God’s WATCHMEN to give warning of impending national calamities, said, “As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? (Ezekiel 33:11).

I know EXACTLY how these great men of God felt! I have shed many tears before and since September 11 because I know the horrifying punishments which are to befall our great land if we do not repent! I do not WANT to see any further

terrorist attacks! I WANT to see America find, and bring Osama bin Laden and all his “al Quaida” group to justice! I WANT to see a time of PEACE break out in the Middle East, and all over the world!

But knowing human nature, AND KNOWING BIBLE PROPHECY, I simply WILL NOT join the ranks of the false prophets who cry “peace, peace,” and there IS no peace! I DO NOT WANT to hear of a chemical or NUCLEAR attack against American cities! We have already experienced a small, fairly contained biological attack, which spread FEAR throughout the country! I share the feelings of all of God’s prophets! Patriots all — men who LOVED their country and their people — they were commissioned to take a very bleak, stern message to the leaders and the people! Yet, it was also a message of LOVE, and of deep compassion!

The great MERCIFUL God promised them protection, peace and safety, prosperity, happiness, JOY, if they would only turn to HIM and His righteous laws which PRODUCE such wonderful benefits! Ezekiel was warned he would be met with “foreheads more adamant than flint!” Jeremiah was lowered into a slime pit, and had to be rescued, and given diplomatic immunity by the conquerors of his people!

I, too, find myself with conflicting emotions! On the one hand, a great love; a vast respect for those who gave their lives from Concord to Gettysburg; from Tripoli to Tarawa, from Guadalcanal to Iwo Jima, and from Korea and Vietnam to Kuwait. On the other hand, a deep sadness; a kind of desperate anxiety, for what I see coming upon our peoples in the future!

I served proudly during my years in the Navy. I am proud of the campaign ribbons I was issued from my service aboard the USS Antietam (CV-36), an American aircraft carrier offshore Korea, during the Korean war. I am an American. I love my country. I dread what will happen to it if we do not repent!

Abraham asked God, when he knew God would destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, where his nephew, Lot, dwelt, “Abraham stood yet before the LORD. And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

“Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?

“That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

“And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

“And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes:

“Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it.

“And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty’s sake.

“And he said unto him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.

“And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty’s sake.

“And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten’s sake” (Genesis 18:22-32).

But there were not even TEN in those wicked cities who obeyed God. Only ONE, Lot himself! Let’s see, now. What is the ratio of a few thousand to three hundred and fifty million?

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