



Written by on May 20, 2011

Hang the Ten Commandments Back Up!

I am a fan of hanging the Ten Commandments (and the other great fundamentals of the Judeo-Christian moral system) back up in every public school showcase, every “hall of liberty,” or more to the point, in every public classroom right beside the American Flag so that they might be memorized, discussed, and lived by teachers and students alike as students and teachers once were free to do ... and did do, because they understood the connection between a truly religious and moral people and liberty.



At least I feel that every local public school, or local school district, ought to be free to decide upon such a policy, sensitive to the wishes of their real paymasters, the parents of the children they teach, not to some distant bureaucrat with an agenda.

Back in the day when the funding was fully local, the control was local, and thus the message was much clearer that the responsibility of teachers and administrators was to assist, not replace, parents (for they were their paymasters) in raising up their children in the way they should go; or, in other words, to raise them up to be good and wise adults who understand and responsibly apply the fundamental laws and principles that differentiate right from wrong, liberty from tyranny, prosperity from poverty.

Back in that day teachers attended teacher education programs that fed them such common sense truths as “integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, while knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful,” from a Samuel Johnson; and “to educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society,” from a President Teddy Roosevelt. Yes, morality was part of the program of education, because they knew that self government must be accompanied by self-control if a free society was to succeed.

And it wasn't that long ago when most all of our schools were this way. As a public school student in New York, in the late sixties, I remember reviewing the Old Testament story of the Ten Commandments (which hung in our classroom); and I remember learning a little bit about the New Testament story of Jesus Christ and his gospel (especially in relationship to Christmas and Easter): and I remember learning a little bit about the meaning of Passover and Hanukkah (in respect to the Jewish students in our midst); and I remember singing the now forbidden (and thus forgotten) last verse to the Star Spangled Banner which rang out:

Oh! thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand
Between their loved home and the war's desolation!
Blest with victory and peace, may the heav'n rescued land
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation.
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,



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And this be our motto:

“In God is our trust.”

And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave

O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

Yes, I remember these things. But the sad truth is, how many of our youth today, or our younger adults even know this verse exists? How many would benefit from its inspiring message? — a message that speaks of men taking a stand for freedom and family, a message that speaks of God's powerful hand in the founding and preservation of America, a message that teaches the just war doctrine of fighting only when absolutely necessary and, yet, when so tasked, to fight to bring about victory and peace (not unending, open-ended no-win wars), and finally, a message that teaches us the connection between the land of the free and a people who possess faith and bravery in defending that land of freedom.

We sang other songs in that public elementary school. Holiday songs that stroked religious strings in our hearts, of peace on earth and good will toward men, of loving our neighbor as ourselves.

In 1970 it was on to the junior high school, the largest in the United States at the time, and there the inspiration continued for me. I still remember the thrill I felt as I studied the lives and words of the founding fathers in my American History class. There was Sam Adams and the Boston Tea Party, Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence, John Adams and the Fair Trial, George Washington at Valley Forge, Paul Revere and his famous Midnight Ride, and most distinct in my memory, Patrick Henry's immortal oration “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death!”

At that impressionable age, I perceived little difference between these great men and their messages and the spirit they brought into my heart and soul than what I had felt when I heard the great stories of the Bible. The American Founders seemed literally to me, as prophets, dedicated to the “holy cause of liberty.” Heaven-sent men, called to inspire a generation to strip themselves of the sin of fear and allay themselves — even unto death — to duty, honor, and country. And I wanted to be like them!

And so what's wrong with that? Nothing. Isn't it all true? And isn't it the precise thing that we need to return to in our schools, and in our homes, and in the books we read and discuss with each other, if we hope to raise a generation like unto that mighty Founding Generation, a new generation that will, as their forefathers did, step up to the plate as men, as faith-filled men, to preserve this land of liberty that God has given us, and those great universal moral principles which lay at its root, and has kept her free and good for most of her history.

As to the Ten Commandments and the other Judeo-Christian precepts I remember being posted and discussed and believed in my classroom and maybe in some of yours; hang them back up! And the sooner the better.

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