

BULLETIN -- OCTOBER 8

The bulletin needs to go out to the printer early in the week for the following Sunday. That makes it impossible for us to guess what good or evil might transpire between the time we send it and the time you read it. This paragraph is being added as a preface to an already-completed bulletin column, just nine hours after the terrible incident in Las Vegas in which dozens of lives have been lost and hundreds injured--all by one man whose motives are only a matter of speculation. Such evil overshadows so much of the other nonsense with which we become preoccupied. The selfless heroism and courage of first responders in these situations will momentarily turn our attention from the blather of those who routinely chant against the police things like "Pigs in a blanket, fry 'em like bacon." Perhaps even some of those unfortunates will be moved to contemplate what they *do* have and enjoy in this country instead of dwelling only on what they *don't*. Perhaps they'll be inspired to genuinely *contribute* to society rather than simply using it as a waste basket for their physical and emotional trash. Whatever the case, we as Christians must be all the more zealous in our pursuit and practice of virtue, as agents of God's love. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:5).

Not just about statues, not just about the flag. Since a column of a few weeks ago about the history of the statues of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson in Charlottesville, VA, the predictable has happened. Anarchist voices and even those in the fringes of the media have been heard calling for the removal of statues of Christopher Columbus, Washington, Jefferson, Franklin (an abolitionist and never a slave owner!), and even of their memorials in D.C. and around the country. You'll recall that people resigned their posts as counselors and advisors to the Administration, fearing that they and their corporations would be smeared with the "racist" tag being hurled at the President (no matter *what* he says or when he says it). Calls are heard around the nation, seeking the renaming of elementary and high schools bearing the familiar names of founding fathers.

The steady drumbeat has begun. We should be familiar with it by now, whether the issue is same-sex unions, transgender restrooms, or any other kind of cultural shock. Academia picks it up, Hollywood picks it up, the media pick it up, local boards of education/indoctrination pick it up, businesses fearful of losing advertising and customers pick it up, and slowly but surely the reverberations begin to knock against the door of every unsuspecting household in the country. You'll hear it at work or at school: "Well, after all, they *were* slave owners." "Well, after all, they *were* very flawed men. *And* they were all rich and white and Christian." And there you'll have it. In the name of diversity, fairness, inclusion, reconciliation, reparation, etc., etc., the drumbeat will begin to echo through the mouths of those whose minds have been anesthetized by its incessant rhythm. After all, there's nothing wrong with diversity, as long as you're in lockstep agreement with those who propose it.

Then something else occurs, like the ongoing football flag-and-anthem flap. With every statue that has been pulled down, with every refusal to stand for the anthem or honor the flag, with every slur that's exchanged on Twitter, with every editorial that cries

boo-hoo over endless pain and suffering and anguish--is anything actually *improved* in the lives of the countless billions who are supposedly hapless victims of ruthless, rich, white men? Has the frequency of murders been plummeting on the streets of Chicago after all the hand-wringing about and spotlighting of *police* brutality?

It's not just about statues, and certainly not about truth, which relativism shapes and molds to make of it whatever we want. It's about bringing down to the dust the founding fathers and anyone who has ever honored them, or who values the ideals and the immeasurable gift they gave to the world in the American Revolution. It's about hatred of the Constitution, and of the very structure of a country which has brought more liberty, justice, and equality to a world than had ever been seen before. It's about keeping people divided over race and income equality and gender and whatever else can get them fighting one another. *Anarchy* literally means "without rule." There really doesn't have to be a target. The goal is just to keep stirring the pot, to keep people divided. As Jesus describes it, "The thief comes only to snatch and scatter and destroy" (John 10:10). And if all leadership is discredited, the thief becomes the one in charge. Satan's hoofprints are all over such tactics, and he leaves his tracks on those he dupes.

Jesus, however, identifies himself as the Good Shepherd, the one who comes so all might have LIFE, and have it to the full. For a Christian in our country, this is about living out *genuine* American exceptionalism, not jingoism. It's not about exalting "my country, right or wrong." It's about recognizing *where* we have gone wrong, and working together to correct it so the dream of liberty and justice for all can become more and more of a reality every year, every day. It's also about recognizing what we have done *right*. That cannot be done by obliterating the memory of what has already been done and of who the people are who have done it. We LEARN from them and BUILD on it, according to the needs and circumstances of our own times.

So please recall that statues should be taken as symbols of the BEST that their subjects have offered the country and the world. Were they slave owners? Were they adulterers? Were they ever on "the wrong side of history"? Perhaps, because they were sinners like us. And yet, some element of character, some timeless truth which they enunciated, some heroic deed they performed, can stir what is deep inside us and make better people of us, even as we discipline ourselves to avoid their flaws, as those who admire *us* will do well to avoid ours.

Keep in mind that there are plenty of statues of Lenin and Stalin in warehouses, barns, and even in lakes throughout the old Soviet Union, just waiting to be brought to our shores by the anarchists to take the place of whoever is brought down in the purge-of-the-week club. Those who want us to forget our Declaration of Independence and our Constitution are going to keep beating their drums. They've seen how effective the rhythm is in paralyzing the populace and making them lie down for anything. Don't be misled by their drumroll. It's NOT calling you or anyone else to liberty and justice for all. Make no mistake about it: Hugo Chávez, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and all the other champions of the anarchists have had a hand in the continuing enslavement and impoverishment of millions more than the founding fathers could ever have claimed to control. As disciples of Christ, we have come in his Name that all might have *life*, and have it to the full. Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord! God bless you!

Thought for the week: In a democracy, it's your vote that counts. In feudalism, it's your count that votes.