

A RELIGIOUS VIEW WHEN OUR COUNTRY IS THREATENED

by Rev. Donald L. Rose

In heightened concern for our country many of us turn for light to our religious teachings. In doing so I have chosen some passages that others may find useful.

The book *True Christian Religion* talks of the Ten Commandments. Concerning the fourth commandment on honoring father and mother it says: "In the broadest sense this commandment means that people should love their country since it supports and protects them."

What if our country is attacked? The book goes on to say:

"That one's country should be loved, not as one loves himself, but more than himself, is a law inscribed on the human heart; from which has come the well-known principle, that if the country is threatened with ruin from an enemy or any other source, it is noble to die for it. This is said because so great should be one's love for it."

Another theological book of Emanuel Swedenborg speaks of the charitable duty of people in different walks of life, and here's what it says of the commander of a country's army:

"He does not love war, but peace; even in war he continually loves peace. He does not go to war except for the protection of his country, and thus is not an aggressor, but a defender. But afterwards, when war is begun, if so be that aggression is defense, he becomes also aggressor. In battle he is brave and valiant; after battle he is mild and merciful. In battle he would be a lion; but after battle, a lamb. He does not glory in the overthrow of enemies; but in the deliverance of his country and his people from the invasion of an enemy, and the destruction and ruin which they would inflict. He acts prudently; cares faithfully for his army, as a father for his children and loves them, every one, according as he does his duty sincerely and valiantly."

And what about the men doing the fighting?

"*Charity in a soldier.* If he looks to the Lord and avoids evil, and sincerely does his duty, he becomes a form of charity. He is against unjust war and the wrongful shedding of blood. But in battle it is another thing. There he is not averse to it; for he does not think of it, but of the enemy as an enemy who is out to kill him. When the battle is over his fury ceases. He looks upon his captives after victory as neighbors, according to their quality. Before the battle he raises his mind to the Lord, and commits his life into His hand; and then he lets his mind down from its elevation into the body and becomes brave; the thought of the Lord, which he is then unconscious of, remaining still in his mind, above his bravery. And then if he dies, he dies in the Lord; if he lives, he lives in the Lord."

I have thought of the above passage in honoring those who took action on the plane in Pennsylvania which otherwise would have been directed to wider destruction.

May the casualties be as few as possible and the conflict as brief as possible. May we be given strength for whatever comes, and may there be in the end justice and peace.

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