

ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS...

Go on, say the rest of it...
MARCHING AS TO WAR... A friend, employed by the Presbyterian Church regularly spoke of the members of the Governing Body and of the churches as "the troops..." "Must get the word out to the troops... got to get the troops in line..." There was nothing wrong in the use of "troops" in that fashion but I always cringed just a bit. For me "troops" had a special meaning. I remember WWI. I was a little tot but I remember standing on the side of the road with some of my family, a young black man and his mother, and some others. We were waiting for someone from the Army to come and take the young black boy to 'join' the army. Of course he had no choice... he was drafted. There were tears in the eyes of the group.

But, "... hello, the Kaiser has to go, 10,000 of our Yankee boys will surely lay him low..." Well, the Kaiser did have to go. And we aided his going!

I not only remember WWII, I was in it! I remember one cold clear morning we saw planes coming over, our planes. We knew that the Battle of the Bulge, the great final struggle of the war had been joined. More 'troops' would die and be wounded in 15 seconds than died or were wounded in two years of the war in Iraq. But there were no self-serving politicians around seeking a campaign issue. No gloating news media counting bodies, seeking to discredit the effort. Hitler had to go, and we hastened his going. Who can imagine what would have happened to Europe if Hitler had won! I asked a German college student how it was that Hitler had so captured the minds of the people. The reply was,

"Oh, if you could have heard him speak...!" Well, I hear politicians speak all the time. Roosevelt and Hitler often used the same words and phrases, but how different were the intended meanings!

Saddam, the dictator, had to go. He had murdered thousands of his own people, was building a huge war machine---was using bribes in France, Germany, the UN, and other places. If anyone had spoken of Saddam as some of our people have spoken of our President, their heads would have been separated from their bodies before the echo of their words had faded. His existence as a ruthless dictator enabled other dictators to exercise their wills.

The 'troops'. The troops in war terms are trained to KILL, TAKE CAPTIVES, CONQUER, AND CONTROL. War is no entertaining sport! It is deadly conflict. The only victory in war is that of curbing a vile evil. Onward Christian Soldiers is a war in the broad sense of the meaning war but 'victory' has a totally different meaning. The Christian soldier is engaged in a war in which the ultimate goal is freedom. Not the freedom to do as one pleases, but a freedom that is bounded by, and supported by, certain standards of moral and ethical reasons and behavior. It is a freedom that requires specific concepts of justice, honesty, personal dignity and worth. It was the freedom concept that enabled our Nation to become a great Nation. In the beginning we fought the war of Independence. It was a war for judicial, governmental, and social freedom. We engaged in a 'Civil' war that was basically a struggle for human rights and freedom. The freedom of, or for, or to worship has always been a central

issue. When President Washington signed the Thanksgiving Day proclamation in 1789 it is not certain that he was establishing a national holiday. It is certain that he was calling the nation to be thankful, count their blessings, and reflect upon their privileges as a free people. Washington, leader of the great war for "Independence", knew well the cost and meaning of that freedom. President Washington did not hesitate to mention God and prayer in his declaration of Thanksgiving. President Reagan, while recovering from a gunshot wound that was almost fatal caught the spirit of Washington's declaration when he quoted Poet Carl Sandburg: "The Republic is a dream. Nothing happens unless there is a dream..." Reagan continued: "That is what makes us, as Americans, different. We have always reached for the new spirit, and aimed at a higher goal..." There you are, Christian Soldiers, it is a time in the life of our Nation, to get the "troops" in line and march toward that higher goal!

Is Christmas just a "holiday" dedicated to a rash and rush of spending? Christmas commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ and is usually a holiday, says a classic definition. The evergreen tree ultimately became a symbol in the celebration of Christmas. Now a "holiday tree". A large store had a big lot of "holiday" trees. Overnight the trees became "Christmas" trees. What happened? Likely the store management got a whiff of the American dream. Maybe they realized that the stability of their business was more secure when the Nation's traditions and beliefs were honored.

Sound the bugle! Pastors and preachers, it is time to prepare the

"troops". The 'atheists' have come into town! (People who deny the existence of God, and reject all religious faith and practice.) We have always had atheists in our country. Some have been excellent citizens. Atheists fall into two general classes: Content and Discontented people. The content are at ease with their belief system and can abide by the standards and practices of a free society. The discontent are not at ease with their belief system, and want everyone else to give them support by abiding by their concepts. They say, take "in God we trust" off our money. Why cannot they be content just using a credit card? Nothing offensive on a credit card. Nothing offensive on their pay check. Nothing offensive on the check they use to pay the credit card balance... Oh, no you must abide by my belief system... President Lincoln put "under God" in the pledge of allegiance and it is like a burr under the saddle to the discontented.

Marshal the troops! Our world is changing and changing fast! That little cell phone glued to the ear is a symbol of technical advances that will make communication to all parts of the world immediate. Telephones lines become obsolete. The Spitzer telescope is revealing a Universe more fantastic than any scientist ever dreamed of and Washington has become a political slum! No one should be elected to or allowed to serve in Washington for more than 12 years!

Oh yes, Christian soldiers, we are marching as to???

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