

What Does Patriotism Mean?

“Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” It’s an old adage, to be sure, but the message remains true. The dictatorships of Mao, Stalin, Lenin, and even the fictional Big Brother in George Orwell’s *1984* become reality if free nations begin to forget the lessons that others have endured for them. In *Saving Dr. Warren ... A True Patriot*, Dr. Warren makes a profound insight into this land and the freedom that must be a part of it: “The delegates recognize the sacrifice that those in Massachusetts are making to preserve the freedom that our fathers craved when they first came to this land. This land is America. This land is a land of promise. This was a land of freedom for those who came before us. *It must remain that way for those who come after!*”¹ That is the truth. America’s people should uphold the morals and values that make America a free nation. Patriotism, and the standards and principles that come with it, must prevail. The patriots of this land must understand the value of freedom as their ancestors did. They must uphold the Constitution and stand for the flag and for a country which they love. They must strive to preserve freedom to throw off the oppressive yoke of tyranny, which is already showing itself.

In the first of his pamphlets titled *The American Crisis*, Thomas Paine expressed his thoughts on freedom’s worth: “What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly. It is dearness only which gives every thing its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as freedom should not be highly rated.” An interesting insight is found towards the beginning of *Saving Dr. Warren ... A True Patriot*, where Steve O’Dell is reciting the Pledge of Allegiance with the attendees at the Veterans’ Day celebration in Portsmouth. “The years of reciting the pledge in elementary school, and now since September 11th, enabled Steve to recite the pledge without any meaning, no thought, no feeling,

¹ See *Saving Dr. Warren ... A True Patriot* by Jeffery J. McKenna, 142 (italics added)

and certainly not remembering what it meant.” I have seen this all too often. When I am in school with my class, we recite the Pledge of Allegiance every morning, but it is as described in the book - no thought or feeling for the words, and a lack of remembrance for them. Some people are “too busy” to even stand for the flag. They fail to realize what that flag really stands for, even as they recite it. The pledge is not the only problem - many young peoples’ attitudes toward honoring this country today are similar to Rob’s on page 29, where he complains that, “I’m wasting my holiday!” while driving to a Veterans’ Day ceremony. Their feelings mirror the observation on page 293, that Veterans’ Day and other holidays to honor our country are nothing more than days off from school. They do not understand the sacrifice of others because they do not really know what it means. I have seen so-called intellectuals at school and elsewhere who will readily denounce this country in order to look “sophisticated”. Worse than that, some of them seem to mean it. They have, as Thomas Paine warned, obtained freedom too cheap and esteemed it too lightly. They fall for the trap that the book warns of: “If we fail to remember our history, if we fail to remember our veterans, and if we fail to remember those who have sacrificed for our freedom as Americans, America will lose the roots that make it strong.”² Forgetting the lessons from the past, the lessons that make us strong, will bring about a free nation’s doom.

I do not say this with an attitude of gloom. Patriotism will save America if we let it enter the hearts and minds of a people similar to the type that could be found in New England 250 years ago. They believed in this land but they did not trust only in themselves. They trusted in God, who was guiding them. They believed in the Bible and did their best to follow its precepts. Mercy Scollay, Dr. Warren’s future wife, expressed her faith and belief in God on page 190: “...God grants us His grace and protection...” In this scene, Betsy Scollay, who “looked about

² See *Saving Dr. Warren ... A True Patriot* by Jeffery J. McKenna, 293

ten,” offers a humble but powerful prayer. One of the best paths to ruin is pride - forgetting God and trusting instead in one’s own power. I can see so much of that today. We have not only lost our historic roots, but we are losing our religious and even moral ones as well. *Saving Dr. Warren* has countless references to trust and belief in God - a God who had not forgotten but was watching, helping, and protecting them.

To be patriotic is to help to uphold the Constitution, to love this country, to stand for the flag, and remember and stand alongside the veterans, the presidents, the citizens and all those who sacrifice so that this country can become better. Remember that freedom does indeed come at a high price, but that as President Ronald Reagan pointed out, the price of losing it is ever so much more costly. Being more patriotic will help the people to remember the fragility of freedom and remember history. Remembering history will help them to remember the sacrifice of those thousands who came before, and even be more willing to sacrifice, whether or not they are called upon to do so. They will also remember God, who has given them their country and freedom. Or, if they do not believe in God, they will at least recognize something special about America. There are many in the world who would like to destroy all free peoples and nations, but to do so they need us to bow. The shield of patriotism encourages people to stand and fight, to lift and uphold. Patriots will not bow.✠.