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God's Providence in American History

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God's Providence In American History

As a rule, Americans are ignorant of history. We are at a loss especially when it comes to recognizing the Lordship of Jesus Christ in our own country's history. The thought that Jesus Christ is Lord over America is enough to trigger all sorts of outcries about civil religion and heresy. But if Jesus Christ is not Lord, who is? Think about it. Then think about this: If Jesus Christ *is* Lord, how does He exercise His sovereign rule over the earth? Does He use the institutions He established to govern our affairs? Does He use nations? Magistracies? Churches? Families? If so, what is our responsibility in each of these areas of government?

For a statement of our responsibilities, we must turn to Scripture. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16,17) Consider what this says: Are good works forbidden? Unimportant? Not at all! The fact that we are not regenerated or saved by good works does not diminish our responsibility to do them.

Is it too much to say, then, that we are saved in order that we may be able to perform the good works to which we are called? Our faith is known by our works. As James put it: "Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works." (Jas. 2:18) The point is this: Faith without works is dead. But the regenerate Christian is empowered by God to fulfill the "cultural mandate" described in Genesis 1:28: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it."

All men are governed by their faith. Poor government—whether personal or corporate government—is a sign of faithlessness. It is an evidence of God's Judgment. Because we are ignorant of history, we lack a sense of how God governs in history. Without a sense of God's providential control, our Christian service is reduced in effectiveness. Our God is the Living God: the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob: the God of our fathers and our children. We live in time as well as space. The community of the saints is historical as well as contemporary, temporal as well as eternal. We are commissioned to disciple the nations and commanded to love one another. We must therefore not forget that "love is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom. 13:10)

We can best show our love by upholding God's stand-

ard of righteousness in all areas of government: national, civil, ecclesiastical, and domestic. We must speak out for a Christian law-order, not because people will automatically start leading Christian lives, but because this is how we can best fulfill the command to "love thy neighbor as thyself." (Rom. 13:9; Matt. 22:39; Lev. 19:18) Even more importantly, we can best show we love God by obeying His commandments. (Deut. 11:1; John 15:10; I Jn. 3:22-24)

Christianity was once recognized as the basis of the common law in America. And not just by Christians. This view was expressed by Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story, a Unitarian and one of the great commentators on the Constitution. Even Justice William O. Douglas, who repeatedly expressed a strong distaste for orthodox Christianity, was forced to concede that religious practices

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which violate standards of Christian morality are not constitutionally protected by the "free exercise" of religion guarantee of the First Amendment. (Douglas, William O. *An Almanac of Liberty*. Garden City, NJ: Dolphin Books, 1954, p. 304.)

Unfortunately, many Christians are unwilling to recognize our legal heritage. We would do well to remember Jesus' teachings concerning servants: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." (Luke 12:48)

Have we American Christians shirked our responsibilities? Have we unburdened ourselves of our original commitments? These are the questions we need to consider and ponder when reviewing the Christian heritage bequeathed us by our forefathers.

—Steven Alan Samson
—*Salt Shaker*

An idea is not worth much until someone is found who has the energy and the ability to make it work.