

# TEACHING PATRIOTISM

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You may wonder, how does one teach patriotism or can patriotism be taught? Are not the citizens of the country naturally loyal and patriotic to their own country? Don't children, growing up in a country, become loyal to their native land? It seems to be a human characteristic that a person is loyal to the particular city, state, school, or nation in which that person finds himself. We all have, no doubt, come in contact with persons from other states, cities, countries, or schools that are more than willing to show by arguments the superiority of their locality over all others. So called school spirit is really based on this human characteristic of "sticking up" for one's own school in any type of contest, whether scholastic or athletic. As another example of this trait, I could point to the fact that immigrants to this country have a tendency to speak fondly of their former homeland, boasting of its many virtues and advantages.

Others may object to the teaching of patriotism on the grounds that it is not proper to teach such an attitude to the covenant child. These will say that patriotism, or love of country, has no place in the proper set of attitudes of the covenant child. These children, who must take their places in the church, must not think in terms of patriotism to a certain nation, but, instead, must think in terms of loyalty to the cause of the true church which is not national but cosmopolitan. Our churches certainly show not interest in patriotism to any particular nation; neither should this attitude be introduced to the seed of the church in their formal education. We are all aware of the fact that there are no flags of our nation displayed in our churches or flying from flag poles in front of our schools. We, as a group, certainly do not make outward displays of loyalty to our country, either in our churches or our schools.

So much for some of the reasons why patriotism does or should not be taught in our schools. The question is, what are some reasons for teaching it if it is to be taught, or how should it be taught. Perhaps you even think this is not such an important question, therefore, not in need of much discussion. It is true that today in our country there is not a great amount of emphasis on patriotism and the teaching of this quality to our school children. Today we live in a more cosmopolitan time in which the national needs and feelings are of secondary importance to the world needs and problems. The question is not which country are you loyal to, but what ideological system has your favor, democracy, communism, or socialism. We live in an age when rapid means of transportation and communication have made us as a nation very much concerned with what goes on in the rest of the world. Those of my readers who have lived through either of the last two world wars are very aware of the time in which nationalistic feelings were very high. Patriotism to one's native country was a matter of prime concern; any doubt as to one's loyalty was treated with great concern. Anyone not willing to show a marked patriotism to our country viewed with suspicion or even branded a traitor. Today this does not appear to be the situation: there is not much question of one's patriotism or lack of it. War, of course, has much to do with this; today if there were to be a war, I think the emphasis would not be our loyalty to the United States, but rather to our capitalistic democratic form of government.

All this brings me to the question, what about teaching patriotism to the pupils in our schools? Should we? Should we not? Should we ignore it? I being a teacher in one of our schools could answer this question by relating what I do about this situation in any classroom.

First, let me state what I think that both of the reasons given earlier in this article for not teaching patriotism have part of the answer in themselves for the teaching of patriotism; the fact

that people naturally acquire a form of patriotism because of the way they are by nature, and the fact that the church in itself is not national but universal. Because of pupils pick up various ideas about loyalty toward country and to any other social group, it is not wise to let this go unattended, in their education. The very fact that they acquire such attitudes should not be considered enough, it is equally important that they have the right attitude to such social entities. I don't think that patriotism as such is much in need of being taught, it seems to be something that everyone "picks up" in their everyday living in a certain country, state, city, or other social group. Because this is so, the need is more to insure the proper ideas of patriotism than to teach patriotism itself.

On the other hand, since these ideas of patriotism are so easily acquired, and the idea of national loyalty is contrary to the universal concept of the church, this side of the question certainly must receive due consideration. One's place in the church as a citizen of the kingdom of heaven certainly comes before any loyalty to any country. Because of this prior citizenship, it certainly should not be left to some haphazard events to insure proper ideas of patriotism. The pupils under the care of the teachers in our schools are, first of all, citizens of the kingdom of heaven and, in a secondary matter, citizens of this country.

My proposition is this; to insure that our children have the right ideas about patriotism, it is necessary that it be taught. This does not mean that we have to have classes on patriotism in our schools. Instead, I follow the practice of teaching those things such as national songs, national anthems, and pledge to the flag as a display of our loyalty to the government of our country on the basis of obedience to authority. The pupil and adult he will be must be loyal to his country as it represents government on this earth and must subject to those in authority. At the same time, it must be pointed out that loyalty to one's country, in obedience to the government, and respect for the symbols of that country, do not mean that there are no faults in that country, or that it is of primary importance. The pupils must know that, first of all, they are citizens of God's kingdom; and, in a secondary sense, are members of a particular nation on this earth. Only in such a way do I think it is possible to insure the proper ideas of patriotism and guard against false ideas.

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