

# Hero Worship or Honor

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The assassination of the late President J.F. Kennedy has provided the news media with an abundance of material. Every newspaper and news periodical carried comment of varying proportion concerning the late president and prediction concerning that which is to come.

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of time...” and in these times God spoke. He had something to say but there were few who heard his voice resounding in the events of the times. Almost everyone was too engrossed in the immediate problem. These were the events that will form an integral part of the content of future social science and history textbooks. History was being made and historiographers were attempting to interpret the events; but the deeper historical perspective of the Whole as differentiated from the Partial eluded most of those who wrote or spoke. They were groping for an answer but the real answer to the catastrophe eluded them. God was not in all their thoughts. As the dead President was eulogized and the dead assassin was denounced, there was no mention of God and His Providence in all the transactions of men.

Lee Harvey Oswald, morally and rationally responsible, fired a weapon but it was according to the determinate counsel of God that this man accused of the murder took the lethal weapon to his work that memorable November 22<sup>nd</sup>. It was then that infidels forgot that not a hair falls from our head or a sparrow to the ground except it be according to the will of God. Scriptural imperatives were forgotten that day; false philosophy and pseudo petitions were intoned. The Scriptures were too long forgotten by men in an age of sedatives and psychoanalysis. These men had established the axiom that the Scriptures in order to be effective or genuine must be demythologized. Higher criticism knows better than to accept the Scriptures as the only rule for faith and conduct of thankful, sanctified Christians. It is only faith that can pray; that accepts the Word of the Gospel as truth. Natural man would not hear the Word of the Gospel. This Word has nothing to say concerning the direction of history and the particulars in history.

A perplexing question faces the writers and thinkers of the age. How could anyone in this civilized society commit such a brutal crime? How could anyone take the life of the chief executive of this great, progressive nation? He was at the height of his career; he was peace-loving; he advocated an alliance for peace; he had always recognized diplomacy, peaceful coexistence, and compromise as the method for solving difficulties. How could such primitive, barbarous methods still prevail? With these questions psychiatrists, sociologists, and social historians, struggle and have attached significance to various aspects of the contemporary American way of life. The attacks made upon the present administration by the Right Wing and Conservative Front in national politics is considered by some to be the cause. Others have concluded that the accessibility of weapons with lethal potential is the cause for this crime. There are those who claim that the crime was the result of a deranged fanatic.

Over against such argumentation has come the counterattack that free society permits for freedom of expression and freedom to differ. This is part of the American way of life. These are the guarantees of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Besides the American right to own guns goes back to the early minutemen. It is argued that the second amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees this freedom. “A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.”

To the Reformed Calvinist, however, these are peripheral matters. The discussion of these matters give no answer to the Whole question of right and wrong, justice and injustice. The discussion of these matters is a part of the “vanity of vanities”. The basic issue to the Reformed thinker is not one of cause and effect, of ideological difference, of civic righteousness but is one of a good conscience and righteousness as a citizen in the midst of a sinful generation. The Reformed Calvinist recognized Esau and Jacobs and reckons with them. The Calvinist knows of two kinds of people irrespective of their position in life.

Liberals and moderns with their post-millennial dreams wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction. They are those who with Satan clothe the lie in the garb of truth. Let it be unequivocally stated that the issue is not one which deals with the peripheral problems such as sale of firearms or personal invective, but the issue is one of loving the neighbor for God’s sake. The issue is one of showing honor, love, and fidelity to all that are in authority over me. The issue is that I begin to live not according to some of God’s commandments but according to all of the commandments of God. The issue is not the moralistic one which simply states that I wouldn’t do anyone any harm because that isn’t the way I myself should want to be treated. This is moralism, false Christianity and a twisting of the moral imperative of Christ. The moral requisites of the Saviour were more far-reaching and of deeper significance than the social reformer and do-gooder would mean. This is not the message of the Gospel. This lowest common denominator type of message is far from the message of the Reformers who declared that good works are those done out of faith and are not founded on the imagination and institutions of men.

The Mosaic, God-ordained Code for good living is not founded on the imaginations of men. It was thundered in lovingkindness from the smoking mount of God’s holiness. Jesus Christ who was the fulfillment of all that lovingkindness was not the vain babler that contemporary rabbis claimed that he was. He spoke concerning the mysteries of the kingdom and placed the *imprimatur*, “Truth” upon the work of holy men inspired by the spirit of God.

Paul, the apostle, had the answer to the problem. His exhortation was that supplications and prayers be made for all men; for kings and all that are in high places. (Cf. I Timothy 2:1-3) The imperative of the Scripture is that prayer be made for all kinds of people. The scope of prayer is universal; it is not limited to the particular. It includes all kinds of sinners. This included Nero who after setting fire to Rome blamed the Christians whom he was persecuting.

In the age of “Kennedyism” Paul would advocate a distinction between hero worship and respect for divinely appointed authority as an institution of God. In his day, there was a Cult of Caesar; he was the reigning emperor and was called “saviour”. This anti-Christian dogma is accursed idolatry.

Is this fundamentalism? Is this fatalism? The Word of God is then fundamentalistic and fatalistic. This is fundamental Calvinism. Prayers are to be offered for all men, for kings so that the people of God may lead a quiet and peaceable life. Calvin states that Christians might wrongly neglect prayers for kings because they of all men were most monstrous in their attitude toward the kingdom of Christ. Jeremiah said to the Israelites, however: “Pray for the peace of Babylon for in their peace ye shall have peace.” Jer. 29:7.

The position that we take is that prayers be made that peaceful conditions may prevail so that we, the Church, may lead a peaceful and quiet life. The magistracy is armed with the sword, that wicked men may be punished and sinners may be restrained. This is not the restraint of sin in the individual through the operation of Spirit. Godliness and freedom of religion is the prayer of the saints so that God can be worshipped in a free society.

Hence, we conclude, that fanatics, who wish to have magistrates taken away, are destitute of all humanity, and breathe nothing but cruel barbarism. How different is it to say, that we ought to pray for kings, in order that justice and decency may prevail.      John Calvin

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