A Free Country?

Given that we have just celebrated out semi-quincentennial (250th birthday as a nation; I had to look up what that anniversary is called), I thought I would offer this article I wrote several years ago. It offers a commentary on some of the changes we have seen as a nation over those 250 years.

One evening last week, my wife and I were watching television when we saw a preview for a program scheduled to run on PBS this past Friday evening. Since I'm writing this on Thursday morning, I haven't seen the program, so I'm sure I would be taking any comments out of context that I would address here. I don't even know the context. Therefore, I'm not going to try to say that program was good or bad in its intent. I just want to comment on the one statement someone made in the preview. The preview showed a man standing in a sizeable room of some kind during some sort of meeting (it looked like a school lunchroom during a P.T.A. or school board meeting). The one statement they played that he said was, "If you are a Christian, you have no right to be on the school board." Then, cruelly, the announcer came back on and urged us to watch on Friday night. I don't know what else the man said. I don't know if the program agreed or disagreed with such a statement. I'm convinced, though, that there are more and more people in this country who wholeheartedly agree with that statement.

I learned in history class that one of the reasons our forefathers came to this country was to escape religious persecution. They were tired of being told by men what religious beliefs they had to have. That didn't mean they were tired of religion. The men and women who founded this country were very religious. It would seem, however, that times have changed. Religion is condemned as being intolerant by those who refuse to tolerate religion. The "religious right" is being touted as the next great evil in politics, simply because religious people are becoming politically active and exercising their rights as citizens. Those who oppose abortion for the horror that it is are called "murderers" by those committing the unspeakable type of murder in what ought to be the safest place on earth; the mother's womb.

I've noticed a disturbing trend over the past few years. I don't believe it's universal or that we could make a blanket statement about it, but it happens often enough to cause us concern. I've noticed that very often when someone makes an accusation against someone, the accuser is often himself guilty of that which he accuses someone else. For example, consider what we have already identified, e.g., intolerant accusers attacking others as intolerant; those who hatefully accuse others of being "hateful." I don't believe this means that any time someone stands against a sin or sinful behavior, he is guilty of that sin. I do believe that this trend is simply a manifestation of the truth of Jesus' words in John 3:19, 20: "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed." Those in the world who want to live their lives in darkness, who want to do whatever they want without anyone being able to say, "This is wrong!" feel threatened when the light of God's Word is shed upon them. Their way of meeting this threat is that of the common street thug who is threatened by the new streetlights that have just been put up in the neighborhood he thought he ran…knock out the light. Given what Jesus says in Matthew 5:14-16 about us being the light of the world, we may have to endure some rock-throwing at some point.

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