

SOLDIERS OF CHRIST, ARISE!

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Whatever your images of the church may be, (e.g. kingdom, temple, body, assembly, bride, household, family, vineyard, etc.), they are not complete unless they also include the image of a fighting army. While the Bible does not explicitly declare that the church is an army, it implies that image by designating military garments of a Christian, and describing the Christian's warfare (Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Timothy 1:18; 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:4; 2 Corinthians 10:3-6). We frequently sing the hymn "Soldiers of Christ, Arise", and sometimes we also sing "Onward Christian Soldiers."

It may well be that some Christians are really not fighting because they do not think they must fight, or that they have battles they must win. However, Jude exhorted brethren to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3), and Paul told Timothy to "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12). That Christians must be engaged in spiritual warfare has been stated by many people in many different ways. A man who called himself "Brother Andrew" wrote a book, *The Ethics of Smuggling* in 1974, about his smuggling of Bibles into Russia. He likens that work to warfare, saying, "[t]he first principle for any Christian work is this: The Lord Jesus Christ, who crushed Satan and conquered death, commands us to invade this enemy-occupied world and reclaim it for God. We march under his exclusive authority and are forbidden to make any deals with the foe. No compromises. No concessions. And no excuses!" (18).

The war now being waged in America and throughout the world against Christianity by humanism and its allied philosophies may not be perceived by most of us as having come so far to the detriment of Christianity because we presume that our Christian freedoms are as great today as they were when this nation was established. They are not! Not having lived in the first century of our nation's history, we do not now realize the deprivation of Christian liberties our forefathers knew, nor the liberties they gained with the founding of a new government. Some insight can be gained about our eroding freedoms, however, by reading what was said by one who lived between then and now. In 1881, Henry B. Smith observed that "[t]he main characteristic of the attack upon, and the defense of Christianity is, that it is all along the line. Forces that have been gathering for centuries are concentrating simultaneously. Forces of science and philosophy hitherto at war have made peace with each other that they may attack the common foe, viz., Christianity."²

That statement is even more relevant today than it was over a hundred years ago. After quoting that statement, Wilbur Smith, in the first chapter of his book, *Therefore Stand*, then named a number of enemies he perceived to be attacking Christianity. Among many others, he identified and discussed modern philosophers, Marxism, the theory that Christianity is an enemy of man's welfare, the depersonalization of God, the deification of humanity, the dethronement of

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²Henry B. Smith, *Apologetics*, 11, as quoted by Wilbur Smith, *Therefore Stand*, Natrick, MA: W. A. Wilde Co., 19451, 7

Christ's deity, distinguishing between Christ of faith and Jesus of history, denials of the importance of the historical Christ, denials of the significance and importance of the Bible, the repudiation of supernaturalism, the rise of humanism, atheism being openly taught in theological seminaries, etc.

It is surely fair to observe that, without exception, all these enemies of Christianity are just as strong now, if not stronger, than they were when mentioned by Wilbur Smith over forty years ago. Moreover, these enemies have been joined by others and they are all better entrenched now within the culture of the whole world than they were then. Together they have produced the sexual revolution, a multi-billion pornography industry, a growing acceptance of homosexuality, the rise of profanity, and other evil social symptoms. Anticipating just that possibility, Wilbur Smith then declared,

Unless some unexpected supernatural force enters our contemporary civilization compelling a change in the course which it is now pursuing, no carefully drawn chart of the intellectual, religious and economic tendencies of the twentieth century will foretell anything else, for the years immediately before us, than that there will be even more frequent and increasingly powerful attacks upon the Christian faith. If the next fifty years should reveal in western civilization an apostasy from the Christian faith, and a widening of its hold upon thinking people, as great as the last fifty years have witnessed, true believers will then become hardly more than a persecuted remnant, the church for the most part nothing more than an institution devoted to the welfare of men, and a true knowledge of the Bible rarer than a knowledge of Greek myths.³

It is indeed possible that unless Christians arise and contend earnestly for the faith in every arena where Christianity is now being attacked, some now living may behold physical and violent persecution against Christians in America! Many folks act like they think Christian persecution can never happen in America as other lands. They are wrong! As Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn has said, "The revolution will come. Tragically, however, the free West will only believe it when it is no longer free. To quote a Russian proverb, "When it happens you will know it is true, but then it is too late."

Christian values are now under attack in every area of our culture. Many Christian values have already been destroyed in most major professions. Christianity is no longer the major system undergirding the professions of law, medicine, the arts, journalism, education, industry entertainment, and other major professions. While Christian values yet exist within these and other professions anti-Christian values are often dominant and their powers are being consolidated. As anti-Christian values permeate society, they infiltrate civil governments, and then civil governments become the means by which Christian values are made illegal. Already, Christian freedoms have been greatly diminished in America.

John W. Whitehead, an attorney who is deeply concerned with these developing trends in America notes that "historically there have been two major stages in the attack on the church. First, the state and its agencies are secularized and, second, every prerogative or privilege of the

³Same source, 101-102

church is attacked in an indirect manner so that, in disguised fashion, its right to exist is denied.” He then declares that “in the name of freedom, the Supreme Court has, in large measure, accomplished the secularization of the state in America. And as the state has been secularized the privileges of the church have come under attack.”⁴

Another observer of anti-Christian developments in America is Donald E. Wildmon, who has been in the forefront of many battles against indecency in America. In 1985, he noted that there are “five steps of regression in ridding our society of Christian influence: (1) ignore the church and censor it as an integral part of our society; (2) question the church and present one-sided arguments belittling it; (3) attack the church verbally; (4) ostracize from the mainstream of society those who would overtly practice their faith; and (5) physically persecute those who practice their faith.” He then said, “We are now in step four. The decision as to whether step five comes is, at this point, still in the hands of the Christian community. Without dedicated, concentrated effort now, in another five years the decision will no longer be ours to make.”⁵

No longer do Christians in America have freedom of religion. What Christians in America now have is religious toleration. There is a difference between religious freedom and religious toleration. Freedom of religion means there is no restriction upon the practice of religion. Religious toleration, on the other hand, means that religion is tolerated to a certain degree. We now have a generally high degree of Christian toleration in America. There are now few restraints upon the Christian religion in America. However, that degree of toleration can be lessened any time it suits the will of governing authorities. As anti-Christian values grow within our culture, the degree of toleration for the Christian religion will be less and less as more and more restrictions are placed upon Christians.

If there ever was a time in American history when Christian soldiers were needed to arise to fight the enemies of the Christian faith, now is that time. If Christian soldiers do not arise quickly, and fight courageously, widespread physical and violent persecution against Christians may happen in America. Will you step forward as a soldier of Christ, and arise to fight against anti-Christian forces that are now attacking the Christian faith?

⁴ John W. Whitehead. *The New Tyranny: the ominous threat of state authority over the church.* 1982, 58.

⁵ Donald E. Wildmon. *The Home Invaders.* Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985, 182.