

“Under Orders”

Who are the happy people? The only happy people are those who are living and working “under orders.” Human beings need an authority over them to give both meaning and direction to life. If you could always, and under all circumstances, do just as you yourself pleased – without reference to orders, without respect for authority – you would not be happy – you would not be free as you might imagine; your life would be chaotic; you would soon be in an institution for the criminal or the insane – for without a master – a mastering thought, a masterful leader – one feels the tow of the underworld, the pull of the demonic. Without a sense of God and his demands life becomes a living hell, lived among pigs and wasps. The existentialist is soon nauseated by his meaningless existence.

This need for a master explains what we Americans have such difficulty accepting – the rise of the totalitarian state. We ask ourselves – How can it happen? What happened in Germany and Italy and Japan before the 2nd world war is happening today across a wider belt of the earth. To great masterless masses of people today – drifting and bored – the communist party offers a master thought and a leader to incarnate it. What the leader says is exciting because he assumes the significance of God. He gives life meaning and direction. “Follow me,” he says, and life is no longer drifting. “Do as I say,” he commands, and life is no longer chaotic. So the great masses develop a new respect for an all-powerful authority. They have something to live for and die for - to which they can give themselves heart and soul. Thus each forgets the nausea of his own life in the thrill of common adventure. Martial music begins playing in the little man’s soul – his spirit marches. Why? Because he is “under orders.” He is an adherent of a new religion. He is a dedicated Communist. He will fight and die for the cause. He is one among mushrooming millions. More people belong to the communist faith today than belong to the Christian faith.

More souls are under the orders of the Kremlin today than under the orders of Christ.

Now we think communism is a false religion – we think its masters and its orders diabolical – its adherents tragically deluded – we think it dangerous too– and we do well to think so – for the new faith is boiling up in the orient like a typhoon – only waiting for a new fullness of time to sweep down upon us. Communism would like nothing better than to add our Christian culture to the list of those long since drowned by stronger ones.

We pray God this day shall never be.

And it shall never be if Christendom also lives “under orders.” We have our master, if we only look to him. He is Christ and we know he is stronger than any human creation. And we are under his orders. We belong to a great cause.

“And ye are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” 1 Pe. 2:9

This means that all of us are under Christ’s orders. Not just this ordained man in your pulpit or these men ordained today. In the New Testament, there is no distinction between clergy and laity, there is rather Christian commonality – all Christians having a common standing and a common responsibility. The New Testament words for “clergy” and “laity” refer alike to all Christians. The New Testament knows nothing too high, too holy, too spiritual for any man to handle. We are all ministers of God. “Every shoemaker can be a priest of God and stick to his own lot last while he does it,” said Martin Luther.

And this is important – vitally important to the ongoing of Christianity. If Christians feel that they can safely leave Christian thought and Christian action to that small group of black-robed men usually called priests or pastors – as though they were somehow by their ordination supposed to be more religious, more holy, more spiritual – then Christianity is in great danger from its enemies – for all Christians ought to have the sense of being ordained, or “under orders.” All Christians should be equally religious, holy, spiritual – You are all priests, all under orders for Christian thought and Christian action.

When all of us feel the responsibility of being priests of God – that we cannot leave Christ’s cause in the hands of a few who have been ordained for the special task of teaching like me or administration like these - but that each man is Christ’s pastor to Christ’s people – to “declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light,” – then the force of Christendom is greatly strengthened.

If you and I believe we are a part of a holy nation, if we see ourselves as belonging to God’s own people – then we are no longer drifting and bored. We have a master thought – what is it? – that behind the universe is a God of love – and we have a leader to incarnate it – who is he? – even Jesus Christ our Lord. What the leader Christ says becomes supremely significant to us, exciting. He gives our life meaning and direction. “Follow me” he says, and in his service we are no longer drifting. “Do

as I say” he orders – and our days are no longer chaotic, but lived out under a higher command. We develop a new respect for an all-powerful authority. We have something – some one – to live for and die for, to whom we can give ourselves, heart and soul. We forget the nausea of the self-absorbed life in the thrill of the common adventure. Martial music begins to play in our souls - our spirits march. Why? Because we too are “under orders.” We are the adherents not of a new – but of an old and still vital religion. To a man – we are dedicated Christians. We will fight and die for the cause. We are one among millions in the church triumphant.

Aren't we?

Aren't we?

We better be – We will be – by Christ's grace.