

## HOLY HELPS

## LIBERTY AND LAW

We sing, “My country ‘Tis of Thee, sweet land of liberty....” Within this “land of liberty” we pledge allegiance to our flag under which there is “liberty and justice for all.” Liberty is tempered by justice, that is, law. However, liberty is being abused and misused increasingly in our society by those who are bent upon doing and saying anything they desire, anywhere and at anytime, insisting that they have the right of unbridled self-expression. That is a Libertine. Libertine living does not recognize authority except the law of the self. Libertines acknowledge the rule of the self over society. Proponents of liberty hold to the rule of law over individuals. Libertines believe, and try to practice, full and unrestrained individual freedom of thought, expression and action. The result is that law is ignored and authority is distained.

Let’s think this through: if society were to have full and unrestrained individual freedom of thought, expression and action, we would need to empty all jails, releasing criminals who do not now have full and unrestrained individual freedom of thought, expression and action. Furthermore, it would be necessary to dismiss all bank guards, school-crossing guards and international border guards. We could have no policemen, law courts or government. We would need to remove all stop signs, red lights and speed limit signs from our streets and highways. All workplace rules would have to be eliminated; airplanes, trains and busses would have no departure or arrival regulations, etc. – in short, society would be plunged into a state of total chaos and collapse.

The earth has two geomagnetic poles, the North Pole and the South Pole, which define its axis. They keep the earth balanced. Both are necessary for the orderly rotation of the earth. The material universe is governed by laws. Likewise, the moral universe is governed by laws. In the moral universe there is the Pole of Liberty and its opposite, the Pole of Law. Liberty without law is anarchy. Law without liberty is slavery.

Liberty becomes license without law. A spirit of license results in individuals believing and acting as though they are entitled to unrestricted conduct and consequently, they refuse to comply with any standards. When society reaches that stage and there is no standard of right and wrong, the individual becomes the standard. A yardstick is however many inches he/she wills it to be. My idea of morality is just as good as your idea of morality. Then we have the same situation that prevailed in Israel many centuries ago: “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.” (Judges 21:25)

This is where law brings order. Law is authority. Without submission to authority there is tyranny. The libertine lives outside the law – is an outlaw. Those persons would say that they are experiencing the freedom that liberty guarantees when in fact they are in bondage to unbridled self-interests.

The universe is governed by laws. It is as it is, not as we prefer it to be. By obedience to its laws we have liberty. We are at liberty to break its laws, if we so desire and dare, such as jumping out of an airplane without a parachute, or staring at the noon-day sun wide-eyed, but to do so is to be punished.

We live in a day when the desire for liberty in our country is taking the place of the discipline of obedience. We are in danger when the demand for liberty outweighs the duties of obedience. St. Thomas Aquinas said, "The respect that one has for the rule, flows naturally from the respect that one has for the person who gave it." Authority, therefore, must have behind it some quality which elicits respect and reverence. Jesus Christ said, "If you love me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15) In other words, loving respect leads to liberty within law!

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