

11/25/09 - What patriotism is NOT

"'My country, right or wrong,' is a thing that no patriot would think of saying. It is like saying, 'My mother, drunk or sober.'" G.K. Chesterton

I remember when I first heard that the U.S. had invaded Iraq for the second time under George Bush the II. I was filled with glee that the U.S. was going to go in and kick those scum buckets out of their country. We were going to rescue all those poor souls who were longing for a deliverer. In doing so we would remove the Middle Eastern version of Adolph Hitler. I heard about it at church and spoke of it all the following week. I felt like a sports fan watching his football physically manhandle their opponents. I could have shouted, "We're number one. We're number one."

Now that I look back, I wonder how it happened. Not how did we go in and smash a third-world army that could barely hold its own against a High School ROTC, but what was I so jubilant about? I was surrounded by war hawks who said numerous times that anyone who speaks out against the war was at best anti-patriotic and at worst treasonous and I agreed with every word. But somewhere between discovering G.K. Chesterton and Bill Kauffman, it hit me that fighting without an objective and spending lives like they are pieces on a *Risk* board is wrong. And not just "That's not nice," wrong, but wicked wrong. And for a Christian, there are biblical principles of warfare that should be followed (I believe the Bible gives us objective standards for how to conduct life here on earth, not just some ethereal abstract ideas for later on).

As usual, G.K. Chesterton is right? patriotism means loving your country. But love does not mean blindly accepting whatever the politicians lead us in doing; sometimes it means speaking out against their leadership . I don't speak out against the war because I hate the U.S., I speak out because I love her. I don't say bring our military men (and women, sadly) home because I don't support them; I support them by calling upon our government leaders to bring them back where they can lead and support their families (and have a better chance of remaining alive). We could use more of that kind of patriotism.