

Question marks and exclamation points

This article is from the "Edifying the Body" section of the Church of God Big Sandy's Web site, churchofgodbig sandy.com. It was posted for the weekend of Aug. 14–15, 2010.

By Lenny Cacchio

LEE'S SUMMIT, Mo.—I know we sing it with an exclamation point, but the national anthem ends in a question mark: "Oh say, does that Star-Spangled Banner yet wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?"

That's a question, not an exclamation. And it's a question that each generation of Americans must answer for itself.

This is my home because I value every shred of freedom the Constitution protects. Where else in the world can a woman shout aloud proclaiming her disgust with a government that is bound to protect her right to make such statements?

Where else in the world can a person provide for his own physical protection, practice an unorthodox religion, succeed or fail on merits, yet be a part of a society that is for the most part compassionate toward the weakest among us?

Where else are people free to pursue their own dreams and potential and freely search for God and meaning?

Where else have people from every race and nation, of various creeds and languages, been welcomed as part of the great experiment we sometimes call the melting pot?

Where else is it recognized that our freedoms come from God and not from some benevolent elite who believe that they "allow" our freedoms?

Where else can one shout from the mountaintop one's faith in God, proclaim the Word in print and media and know that the vast majority of the people believe in that same God even though they may fall short in understanding and practice?

The question is not whether we are the land of the free. It is whether we have the courage to protect that freedom for our children.

It aggravates me to see some of my own countrymen stating publicly that this country is not worth fighting for. What, pray tell, is worth fighting for if freedom is not?

Should Americans passively watch as our freedoms are slowly eroded by confused judges, pandering legislators and internationalist lobbyists who want to subjugate our Constitution to some multinational body?

The current conflicts in which our nation is engaged, which like it or not are struggles between worldviews, are very much about whether our freedoms and lives are worth protecting.

The question is whether we have the patience when it takes longer and costs more than expected. Would our generation of Americans have stayed more than the decade-long course that spanned the time between the Declaration of Independence and the ratification of the Constitution?

Would our generation tolerate the hundreds of thousands lost in World War II and the financial burden that went with it?

Today's enemies of this country want to take away our cherished freedoms, and some of them want to kill as many of us as they can. Those are stated aims.

Are we still the home of the brave so that we can remain the land of the free?

The Star-Spangled Banner yet waves, but it waves only because the land of the free has been the home of the brave.

Unlike the first verse of our national anthem, the seldom-sung last verse of "The Star-Spangled Banner" is an exclamation and not a question. May that ever be so.

Then conquer we must,
When our cause it is just;
And this be our motto:
"In God is our trust!"

And the Star-Spangled Banner
In triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free
And the home of the brave!