

# THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING LOYAL...TO ARMENIA

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**Z. S. Andrew Demirdjian, Ph.D.**, Los Angeles, 4 January 2019

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Loyalty to the government when it deserves it."

**Mark Twain**

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Mesopotamia

As a concept loyalty goes back to Mesopotamia (i.e., Armenia, Assyria, Babylonia, and Sumeria) and later to Ancient Greece. Urartians (proto-Armenians) were the first to have engineered mountain roads in northern Mesopotamia through loyalty to the community and to the kingdom. Sumerians envisioned that without loyalty there couldn't be solidarity to plan and execute large projects such as irrigation canals, high-rise temples (ziggurats), trained armies to fight their enemies, governance of city-states, entailing the establishment of policies, and continuous monitoring of their proper implementation by the members of the governing body. Loyalty to the community (i.e., state), gods, and the rulers made it possible Mesopotamians to turn the mountainous and desert regions into the cradle of civilization.

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The works of Greek philosophers and poets who wrote extensively about the virtue of loyalty were influenced by the Mesopotamian nations. Thus the concept of loyalty became entrenched in the lives of ancient Greeks. Socrates (470-399 B.C.) remained loyal to the laws of the state even though they were unjust and resulted in his own death. Plato (428-348 B.C.) considered internal political conflict as a far stronger test of loyalty than a foreign war, demanding the death penalty for any citizen who turned against the gods or the state. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) suggested that loyalty based on usefulness or pleasure, such as that accorded a tyrant or a corrupt politician, would disappear as soon as the motives vanished.

Greek poets also celebrated loyalty to family, community (i.e., state), and the gods as an important quality in the lives of citizens. These qualities are demonstrated in Homer's *The Odyssey* characters. The teachings and practices of ancient Greeks have remained important lessons on which many societies around the world still base their laws and ethics. The Greeks implemented their values of *loyalty, glory, intelligence and hospitality* into everyday life. Although these values sound simple, they have been instrumental in shaping an entire civilization into a culture that is one of the most emulated.

To foster *intelligence* in ancient Greece, men were required to go to school. Boys were taught at home until age six and then they were sent to school. They were trained in the arts and good citizenship-- training based on loyalty. Citizenship training prepared Greek boys for two aspects of adult life: peace and war.

Helping one's fellow man was important aspect of Greek society, just as it has been in Armenia for the millennia as chronicled by Xenophon (philosopher, historian, soldier, mercenary, and a student of Socrates). Homer depicted the importance of hospitality throughout *The Odyssey*.

*Loyalty* permeated in everything the Greeks did. They believed in loyalty to the family, the community (i.e., state) and, most importantly, to the gods. Loyalty to the family meant doing what was the best for one's family. Loyalty to the community meant doing what you could do for your community members whether it involved giving money or putting up a stranger for the night or whether you were called to take arms to fight the enemy. Like the other values, loyalty to the gods meant never questioning their motives.

Sparta, whose culture was centered on loyalty to the state and to military service, was a Greek warrior society that reached the height of its power after defeating its arch rival city-state Athens in the Peloponnesian War (431-404 B.C.).

## Middle Ages

One thing you could count always on in the Middle Ages was loyalty. A kingdom was based on loyalty toward the king and the state. The main reason for this was without loyalty to the state, the

king would end up having an army consisting of defectors.

Loyalty also created allegiance conflict through divided loyalty. When the people of a country shared the same religion, loyalty involved allegiance to the rulers or forms of government. The advent of Christianity threatened this type of exclusive loyalty by presenting a strong competing claim for allegiance. The early Christians are recorded as asking Christ for guidance on dual loyalties. They were advised in no uncertain terms that no compromise was possible where spiritual matters were involved. Duty to God involved strict obedience to all of the commandments. Any deviation from God's word, thus any act of disloyalty, would be considered as sinful.

### Modern Times

In modern times the definition of loyalty in law and political science has been widely accepted as the fidelity of an individual to a nation, either one's nation of birth, or one's adopted home nation by oath through nationalization. In its general use, loyalty is defined as a devotion and faithfulness to a nation, cause, philosophy, country, group, or person. As a philosophical concept, however, loyalty as a subject had received scant attention in the philosophical literature in modern times until the seminal work of Josiah Royce. From the 1980s onwards, loyalty as an important subject gained attention with philosophers, variously relating it to professional ethics, whistle blowing, friendship, virtue theory, and faithfulness to one's state. According to Royce (*The Philosophy of Loyalty*), loyalty is a primary virtue. "The heart of all the virtues, the central duty amongst all the duties," Royce said and presented loyalty as the basic moral principle from which all principles can be derived. Furthermore, loyalty is social. Loyalty to a cause unites the many fellow-servants of that cause, binding them together in their service. Loyalty is willing in that it is freely given, not coerced. Loyalty is thoroughgoing in that it is not a casual interest but a wholehearted commitment to a cause such as to country. Loyalty is innate in humans, but it needs to be cultivated to accentuate it.

Mark Twain stated: "My kind of loyalty was loyalty to one's country, not to its institutions or its officeholders. The country is the real thing, the substantial thing, the eternal thing; it is the thing to watch over, and care for, and being loyal to institutions are extraneous, they are its mere clothing, and clothing can wear out, become ragged, cease to be comfortable, cease to protect the body from winter, disease, and death." His entire perspective on loyalty can be summed up in the following statement: "Loyalty to the country always. Loyalty to the government when it deserves it".

Times have changed. We have surveyed the importance of loyalty through the ages. In every epoch, loyalty was regarded essential to the internal and external smooth functioning of the state.

Is it by accident that King Leonidas stood against a huge Persian army estimated to consist of one million soldiers with only 300 Spartan and 6,700 allied Greek soldiers? Loyalty instilled, indoctrinated in schools by dedicated teachers, reinforced by patriotic parents at home, encouraged and rewarded by the state and society at large created citizens with unswerving loyalty to the state.

To overcome its many challenges, Armenia requires a citizenry which holds loyalty at the highest

esteem. The Armenians of Armenia need an elevated sense of loyalty to the country to slow down the future exodus of highly educated and skilled men and women direly needed by their Motherland Hayastan.

We admire King Leonidas and his brave Spartan soldiers who remained loyal to their state and leader by fighting against a huge Persian army. Instinct is not enough to have loyalty toward the country. It needs to be cultivated and nurtured.

Loyalty is the essential ingredient in friendship, love, business, patriotism, in almost all facets of life. It is the glue that bonds individuals to their country. Without loyalty, there is no love, no liberty, no freedom, no progress and no growth in population. The absence of loyalty is an invitation to our enemies to see us as weaklings to be swallowed.

War is looming. We need to make young men and women stay in Armenia and when the time comes to defend the Motherland. The alternative is another national calamity similar to what happened to the Armenian nation in 1915-1923.

Against the backdrop of increasing Azerbaijan's anti-Armenian rhetoric and the rising of Pan-Turkism, let us not throw caution to the wind and find ourselves erred again. Let us all contribute toward instilling of loyalty in our new generations since it takes a village to raise a kid the right way to make them remain loyal to Hayastan by internalizing my recently coined motto, the mantra *For True Patriotism, Invest Yourself in Your Country!* Then--and only then we shall all be winners--for without numbers our Homeland cannot continue producing great writers, scientists, leaders, generals, and soldiers to safeguard the survival of Armenia's sovereignty, culture, and heritage.

