

America First Committee

"If you do nothing in a difficult time, your strength is limited. Rescue those being taken off to death, and save those stumbling toward slaughter. If you say, "But we didn't know about this," won't He who weighs hearts consider it? Won't He who protects your life know? Won't He repay a person according to his work?" - Proverbs 24:10-12 HCSB

In September of 1940, the America First Committee was created. While a war was brewing in Europe that would eventually result in 165 million deaths of mostly Africans, Asians, and Europeans, six million "Gold Star Mothers", many wearing fine clothing and living comfortable, safe lives, protested not only participating in the war but even rendering aid to the victims.

The leaders of the AFC claimed they were motivated by concern for American lives. For some, this was no doubt true. Unfortunately, however, the literature published by and records of the debates in the AFC in the year prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor reveals xenophobic and anti-Semitic sentiment within its leadership as well as among its supporters.

The study of the history of the America First Committee is thus a cautionary tale. Those who stand aside in self-imposed isolationism are doomed to suffer the fate of those to whom they fail to offer mercy. It is also a moral tale, asking an important question. Exactly what does one nation owe another in times of mortal danger?

As we watch the continent of Africa unravel under the onslaught of AIDS, witness that same terrible plague invade India, Russia and China, and as we tremblingly see its first inroads amongst our own population, we are warned by God.

We dare not hold back. We dare not hesitate. We dare not stand idle in the face of the ongoing slaughter of millions of fellow human beings. If we do, these same plagues will overrun us. In an age of international flights and mass migrations, we are not isolated. We are not immune. In fact, we are already beginning to see super viruses rear their ugly heads in our own country.

Dealing with these folks will be risky. But no one has greater love than this, that someone would lay down his life for his friends.¹ What better way can you imagine to illustrate to others the love that Christ had for us? He became one of us, becoming subject to our weaknesses, our frailties, our diseases, our suffering and even death – and He did this while we were still sinners!²

What a great Master! The Master challenged us to surpass His works, powered by prayer and a deep desire to see Him glorified. He called us to obey His commands.

Attempt great things for God. Ask Him what your part should be in combating these terrible scourges. Pray for solutions. Pray for healing. Pray for opportunities to demonstrate Christ's love to the sick and dying. Keep His commandment. Love your neighbor as yourself.³ Even the one with AIDS.

¹ John 15:13

² Romans 5:8

³ Matthew 22:37-40