



The Reflector

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The War Against God

J. R. Bronger

Have you ever wondered why there is such an effort to remove God from public consciousness? I see billboards along the interstate saying things like “God is an imaginary friend,” or “In the beginning man created God,” and “There is no God, don’t believe everything you hear.”

Those most militant in this often equate believing in God with believing in the Tooth Fairy, the Easter Bunny and Santa Claus. If this is the case, then why haven’t we seen billboards proclaiming “The tooth fairy is an imaginary friend”? There is no concerted effort to keep the Tooth Fairy out of schools? There is a reason you know!

Millions of people need money but there is no one who puts a tooth beneath his pillow expecting the Tooth Fairy to replace it with needed money. Yet, millions of people who believe in God pray diligently believing that God hears and answers prayers (1 John 3:22).

Hospitals are filled with the sick and dying but nobody asks Santa to heal their loved ones. However, countless sick petition God to intervene and providentially provide healing. But suppose people actually put a tooth under the pillow expecting an answer from the Tooth Fairy. Or suppose people really wrote Santa asking for healing—would any try to make such unconstitutional? It is doubtful anyone would respond with little more than a “ho hum—how silly can people be?”

An article in the New York Times lamented just how out of touch America is with the rest of the industrialized world. The article pointed out that all

the other industrialized countries were secular rather than religious, and America (in their view) remains religious. Do you really think the writer just wants us to get in step with the rest of the world?

The apostle John closed his first letter with this profound admonition: “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 Jn 5:21). What these “anti-God” zealots are pushing is idolatry. They seek to replace God with the State. They wish to have all our “prayers” answered by the “gods” we have elected to federal and state offices.

This nation was established upon biblical principles—none can with honesty deny this. The Declaration of Independence asserts this link when it says: All men “are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Do you know why the Liberty Bell (located in Independence Hall in Philadelphia, PA) is called the liberty bell? Because it has engraved on it Leviticus 25:10, “proclaim liberty throughout all the land.”

For centuries Americans have acknowledged that our liberties come from God not man. God, not government gives us our freedoms. Because the Creator of the world is the source of our freedom, no state, no human being, no government may take it away. If the State were the source of liberty, then obviously the State could take it away. So, there is a push underway to remove God and replace Him with the State. Then the State (Idol) can dispense rights or withhold rights.

While there is a war being waged against God, there seems to be an acceptance of Islam. If there

are efforts to remove the God of the Bible (Whom they call the Judeo-Christian God), why isn't there the same effort to remove Allah (the god of Islam)? It is because Allah is not regarded as the source of liberty, but as the object of submission ("Islam" means "submission"). On the other hand, "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor 3:17).

In 1962 the war against God gained momentum. The Supreme Court ruled that it was unconstitutional for schools to allow a non-denominational prayer to be said. Something as humble as "Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers and our Country." The purpose of the ruling was to impose secularism upon this country. Skirmishes and battles have continued and frankly the secularists are winning. Now, a valedictorian cannot thank God for his/her success. Efforts are underway to remove "under God" from our Pledge of Allegiance. Professional sports teams are told to stop having the song "God Bless America" sung before games.

God is replaced by the government, the Lord by the President, the Bible by the edicts from the Supreme Court. Generations of Americans are more afraid of the government (political correctness—not speaking out against homosexuality, hate speech you know) than God. Christians also seem to fear government more than God ("I can't mention God, Christ or church at work, I might get fired"). Obedience to state has replaced submission to God. Where are the bold among us who stand up and say "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29)?

Peter warned: "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage" (2 Pet 2:19). Without God in the heart and consciousness of this land, we will become slaves of corruption; unimaginable corruption.

Without God there is no good and evil. Who is to say that murdering the unborn, or the aged is evil? Flash mobs, knockout games and random acts

of violence will become more pronounced.

To God we are always important, but without God, there is no objective meaning to life. If you cease being important to society (old, infirmed, disabled, etc.) then the state can give you "end of life" care (translated euthanasia).

Without God, the human being has no free will. That is, we become like robots programed by our genes or our environment. Homosexuality becomes a genetic predisposition rather than a choice. The murderer is not to be held accountable because he became that way because he was abused and unloved by his mother.

Without God, there are no inalienable human rights. Nothing can be granted by "our Creator" if a Creator does not exist. Rights are then granted and removed by the capricious whim of the government under which we are forced to live. Think **Nazi** Germany! In their 25-point Party Program, published in 1920, **Nazi** party members publicly declared their intention to segregate Jews from Aryan society and to abrogate Jews' political, legal, and civil rights. They were stripped of all rights to own property, operate businesses and were expected to pay restitution to the aggrieved. The result? More than 6,000,000 murdered in the holocaust.

For sure, as David proclaimed before his encounter with the giant Goliath, "the battle is the Lord's" (1 Sam 17:47). But we must, like David, seek out five smooth stones and go to the front lines. Stand in our place, take up the sword of the Spirit, and do not fear what man might do. We must have the commitment of another great warrior who said: "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh 24:15).

(We are looking forward to having brother Bronger for our Fall meeting this year - Ed). ■

Bits and Pieces

This generation did not **originate** evil, nor will it **eradicate** it. But, this is no excuse to **tolerate** it.

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When one chooses to take it upon himself to worship the God any way he pleases, he is but a step away from choosing to worship a god of his own liking.

Traditions, Changes, and Peace

Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

In recent years there has arisen a kind of subculture among the churches professing to be of Christ that is bent on forcing congregations out of a perceived rut. They all but badger churches into trying something new to “improve” their worship and work and make it “more meaningful” to them.

In the Bible the word “tradition” does not necessarily indicate something to avoid. It is from the Greek *Paradosis* meaning “a handing down or on” according to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. When we speak of traditions, we are talking about doctrines or practices that have been handed down to us by those who have gone before us.

There are basically three kinds of “traditions” that affect the church:

1. Divine traditions handed down to us by the apostles and prophets. (2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6).
2. Human traditions adversely affecting the apostolic traditions.
 - a. Those that transgress the commandment of God (Matt. 15:3).
 - b. Those that render the word of God of none effect (Matt. 15:6).
 - c. Those that cause one to reject the commandment of God (Mark 7:9).
3. Human traditions in the area of expedients (helpful aids or lawful expedients) for implementing the divine traditions.

The modern “tradition busters” are very subtle in their teaching on “tradition.” They get brethren to thinking that tradition is always bad by pointing to biblical references to the second kind listed above. After establishing(?) human tradition to be bad, then they switch their attack to the third kind listed above – traditions in the area of expedients. They, in their (not so) infinite wisdom, come up with new and better ways (expedients), either having originated with them or having borrowed them from someone, that will enhance worship and make it more to their liking. If the church does not think it is a great idea, then they play the “tradition”

card. The card that says it must be changed because it has become tradition and Jesus condemned all human tradition. No matter that the present expedient has become “tradition” because it has and continues to work well. It may not be that the brethren are tradition bound, but rather they are not convinced that the new approach will work as well or any better than what they already have. More often than not, the pushing of the new idea unnecessarily disturbs the peace of church. There is a scripture that these would do well to heed:

“Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.” (Romans 14:19).

There is only one thing that takes precedent over the peace among brethren. That is purity. (James 3:17). If a “tradition” is adversely affecting the purity of the church, then it should be dropped or replaced. But if the only objection we can raise about an expedient is that it has become “traditional” then that is poor reason to risk the peace by pushing for a change over the misgivings of good brethren.

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity! (Psalms 133:1)

Of course, if the kind of tradition that is opposed is the kind described in number 2 above, it must be opposed and rooted out because it affects the purity of the church. It has to be done even if it disturbs the peace. As someone has said, “There is only one thing worse than division, that is unity in error.”

We must contend for keeping the “traditions” described in number 1. We must actively oppose the traditions described in number 2. But the traditions described in number 3, may or may not need changing. To insist on change just for the sake of change is a poor reason. If brethren are comfortable with a long standing scriptural way of doing a thing and I know that my insisting on a change may well cause them discomfort – why rock the boat?

Consider this as well, if one succeeds in getting it changed, and his concept of “traditionalism”

prevails, the process of cleansing(?) the church of “traditions” will have to be done all over again in a generation of two, because by then the “new thing” of today will be the “traditional” of tomorrow. So, the beat goes on. Me thinks that we can better spend our time keeping the “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” while contending earnestly for the faith and against **unauthorized** traditions of men.

Yes, I am aware that sometime brethren equate their traditional expedients as divine law. Yes, and this should not be. But the solution is not to clamor for change for change’s sake. It is to teach them the difference in law and expedients. They need to know this whether or not they are doing it for the first time or the 10,000th time.

For example, there is a law that we must sing. There is no law that says how many songs and how many verses we should sing. That is left to expediency. Singing 3 songs may be expedient for a congregation whether it is done occasionally or whether it is traditional with the congregation. If I were worshiping there, I would not spend 10 seconds trying to buck their “tradition.” Whether they sing 1,2,3,4, or 5 verses is scriptural. Whether this is the first time or 10,000th time they have done it is of little consequence to me. But, adding instrumental music is of consequence, whether this is the first time or the 10,000th time. This would set aside the commandment of God in regard to music. The command is to sing (Eph. 5:19). The instrument is another kind of music. Whether it is an instrumental solo or an accompaniment to singing, it is still another kind of music – an addition to what is commanded.

My brethren, we have enough “issues” to occupy our time without creating issues over authorized liberties – whether by pushing them on reluctant brethren for the first time or insisting on setting aside traditional, but scriptural, expedients over the objections of good brethren. ■

Eli: a Weak Leader

David Hartsell

Eli was the next to the last Israelite judge. He was not only a judge but he was also the high priest. As political and religious leader, Eli was in prime position

to influence many to follow God. However, though Eli was personally good, he failed as a leader – first as a father and then as a judge.

Eli had two sons, Hophni and Phinehas that were priests. They were not dedicated to God but were extremely evil. They violated the sacrificial laws and were immoral with the women who assembled at the tabernacle. Their sins were so blatant that they caused many in Israel to abhor “the offering of the Lord.” (1 Sam.2:12-22) Eli reprimanded his sons for their evil behavior. “So he said to them, ‘Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people.’” (1 Sam.2:23) They ignored their father’s warnings and continued in their sinful ways. The text says that this was “because The Lord desired to kill them.” (1 Sam.2:25) Clearly, God’s nature does not want to kill anyone or does not wish anybody to be lost. The meaning here is that they had such an irreverent, defiant manner toward all godly things that The Lord was determined to punish them. The greatest lesson is that Eli failed in raising his sons. Training children involves modeling proper behavior before them. But that’s not all. We must teach them God’s will and discipline them too. Eli refused to restrain his sons from their wickedness. (1 Sam.3:13) He did not have the moral courage to do what he knew was right. Fathers are given the enormous task of raising their children in “the training and admonition of The Lord.” (Eph.6:4) Eli did not do this but we can.

Israel needed a strong leader during Eli’s time. The Philistines were threatening and Israel greatly needed God’s help. Yet, The Lord does not bless a people whose leaders show disdain for righteousness. You might say, “Eli was good. He followed The Lord.” It is true that Eli did not participate in any of the iniquities of his sons. Yet, he did not truly follow The Lord. In fact, God sent a prophet to tell Eli that his family was going to be punished because he honored his sons more than God. (1 Sam.2:29)

Hophni and Phinehas were killed in battle with the Philistines. The Philistines captured the ark of God. Upon hearing of its capture, Eli, fell backward out of his seat and died. (1 Sam.4:18)

Too often as fathers we console ourselves by saying we don’t approve of what our children do. We are washing our hands of their evil deeds. Yet, we might not do the difficult work of standing against their sins. When we refuse to stand against evil, we fail as a parent and as a leader of God’s people. ■