

Born to Win

Are We Losing the Culture Wars?

by Ronald L. Dart

Are Christians losing the culture wars? All the various battles—all the big battles—seem to be about such *trivial* things: a statue commemorating the Ten Commandments—a sculpture. Think about this. In all that big argument, we're not talking about an attempt to *govern* on the basis of the Ten Commandments; we're talking about an artwork—a sculpture—that commemorates one of the most ancient law codes in the world. We could put Hammurabi's code in there but, you know, the truth is that probably had religious overtones, too. We could have put a statue of the god Eros there and nobody would complain (maybe except some missionaries) but put up a code that says "You shall not commit adultery" and all hell breaks loose.

And don't make any mistake about it, that's where the issue is. That's where the problem lies. The Ten Commandments interfere with our moral conduct, and that's a problem. Now, sure, there are the first four commandments about God. And that's what everybody starts making noise about: Who God is and "We can't have just one God as opposed to another god." But putting a sculpture in the rotunda of a court building doesn't mean that the state demands the *worship of that God*.

Unless there's a constitutional amendment that allows God back into the public place, though, the courts (not the people in Congress assembled, but the courts) will continue to disallow every aspect of God in public life. So I asked the question, "Are Christians losing the culture wars?"

Did you know that the University of Michigan has a course on "how to be a homosexual"? Now, I never had any idea you needed to go to college to learn how to do that. I didn't, at least, until Ben Shapiro pointed it out in a recent column. The course, he said, is actually English 317. Now, that gave me a little whiplash. Here's a course titled "How To Be A Homosexual" and it's under the *English* department in a major state university. He said this:

"How to be Gay" is a real course at the University of Michigan. The course description states: "This course will examine the general topic of the role that initiation plays in the formation of gay male identity . . . In particular, we will examine a number of cultural artifacts and activities that seem to play a prominent role in learning how to be gay: [including] camp, diva-worship, drag, muscle culture, taste, style and political activism."

Professor David Halperin, the teacher of English 317, claims that his class "does not teach students to be homosexual." But in his more honest days, back in 1996, Halperin wrote: "Let there be no mistake about it: Lesbian and gay studies, as it is currently practiced in the United States, expresses an uncompromising political militancy." He also explained that lesbian- and gay-studies intellectuals were the leaders of the militant gay movement, pushing universities and governments "to recognize same-sex couples, to oppose the U.S. military's anti-gay policy, to suspend professional activities in states that criminalize gay sex or limit access to abortion, and to intervene on behalf of human rights for lesbians, bisexuals and gay men at the local and national levels."

Ben Shapiro - Militant Gay English On The Rise

And, by the way, University of Michigan is not the exception. Such courses exist at the University of Pennsylvania, University of Maryland, UCLA. And, according to Ben Shapiro, “Amherst Regional High School in Massachusetts began offering a course on gay and lesbian literature in 2002, designed to explore the ‘sexual identity’ of homosexuals.”

So, coming to a high school near you, a course—in the English Department—on how to be a homosexual. So I ask: Are Christians losing the culture wars? All this stuff was in the closet, so to speak, until the supreme court of the land declared that we have a constitutional right to commit sodomy. Homosexual studies have been there for a while, actually, but they’ve been buried in the English departments. Now, everyone is free to talk about it. Since the Supreme Court decision, we have been virtually *assaulted* with information about the gay subculture. (It’s not a subculture any longer. It seems on the way to being the *dominant culture of the day*.)

Now, how on earth did we get to the place to where the highest court in the land is reduced to ruling on *sex acts*? Can’t they let us govern ourselves? Can’t our legislatures do what’s *right* at the most basic levels of human interaction? Must the Supreme Court intervene on such trivial matters?

Actually, I don’t think Christians are losing the culture wars. I think we have already lost. We may have lost when we decided to try to fight this battle on the level of politics instead of the spirit. I’m not sure what prompted the apostle Paul to say this, but listen to what he wrote to the Corinthians on this very issue, in 2 Corinthians, chapter 10, verse three:

2 Corinthians 10

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³ For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.

⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

⁶ And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.

Now, the context of this passage really focuses on that last sentence: “We’ll be ready to punish every act of disobedience once your obedience is complete.” You can’t really go out and fight this battle until you have got your own house in order. You can’t stand up in public and argue on morals when your own morals are not right. You just can’t *do* this. And so, consequently he says, we have the power of God. We don’t have the weapons of the world. We have spiritual power to demolish arguments and to just remove every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.

But we can’t do that until we put our own house in order. He says the battle is fought at the level of the *persuasion of people*, and you can’t go out and persuade people when your own life denies what you’re trying to persuade them of. But we have the power to demolish arguments and the pretense that sets itself up against the knowledge of God. But it’s all useless if we don’t take up the weapons—if we do not arm ourselves spiritually.

The battle is not won in the courtrooms. The battle is not won on the floor of Congress. The battle is won at the dinner table when you talk to your kids. The battle is won when you’re out to dinner with good friends, and you’re sitting around after dinner or over coffee, and discussing issues and things that are going on in society. The battle is won *there*—where you can actually destroy arguments, where you can destroy the pretenses that set themselves up against the knowledge of God. That’s where this battle is won. The battle is won as you walk through the woods with a friend and talk to him frankly about the issues of God’s existence and of power and of God’s will for man. The battle isn’t won by asking a stranger on the plane, “Do you know the Lord, Brother?” It’s won by listening to the pain and the hurt of the people you meet and talking to them from the platform of the information provided by the Bible. As the song goes, “I

will share my faith with every troubled soul, for I may never pass this way again.” The battle is not won by persuading your senator. The battle will be won by persuading *your neighbor*.

So if Christians have lost the culture wars, how did we do it? We may have lost when we decided that the Bible was no longer the fundamental rule of our faith. Somewhere along the line (I don’t know where it was, specifically) churches came to the decision that tradition and culture could trump scripture. It may have been not completely trump it at first, but we’ve come to the place now to where they really feel that they can set aside scripture *entirely* in the name of tradition and culture. And, in fact, in some cases it’s culture, *even tradition* is being set aside. It’s just like the Supreme Court, who decided the sodomy issue on the last half-century of human progress. Read Justice Kennedy’s opinion in that case and you’ll understand exactly what they did it for. They actually did it on that, rather than on the written constitution. In the same way, the grand old Episcopal Church decided to ordain an *openly-gay priest* as a bishop of the church. And, why not? He was already accepted as a priest.

Now, in case you don’t understand what they did, imagine this: Imagine a man who was married, and had a couple of kids, and was a priest in the church. He leaves his wife, he leaves his kids, and his marriage, and he shacks up with another woman. Is there a church *anywhere* who would allow this man to be a minister—much less a pastor or a bishop—living out of wedlock, with a woman not his wife, having *left and divorced* his wife and his children? But, you see, the Episcopal Church did just that. The only difference is that the priest left his wife and kids for a homosexual relationship instead of a heterosexual relationship. That’s the only difference at all. One reporter asked one of the officials at the conference about this. She said, “Isn’t that a a double standard that you’re going by?” And the man she was talking to denied it, but how can you deny it? It’s *obviously* a double standard. You can go leave your wife and kids and live with a man, sexually, but you can’t do it with a woman.

Now, so far I’ve not really seen or heard or read *anyone* who has offered any explanation for this double standard, but count on it this issue will be joined somewhere down the road. Somebody is going to say, “Yeah, I divorced my wife and my kids and I moved in with a woman I’m not married to, but that shouldn’t disqualify me for the priesthood. After all, look at what our bishop did.” You know, the ultimate irony of this little skirmish in the greater wars is that *for years* gays complained about gay bashing. And it really is a tragic thing, what was done in some cases, about the beatings they took, about the violence against homosexuals. The irony is that recently, since the Supreme Court decision as some church leaders have spoken out against homosexual behavior, there have been violent acts against ministers and churches who have taken a stand against homosexual conduct. And I don’t think that violence is being perpetrated by heterosexual people.

Well, if we should not have been fighting politically—you know, if we don’t take our physical weapons of warfare—where *should* we be fighting? Well, as I said, Supreme Court Justice Kennedy told us that when he wrote that majority opinion in the sodomy ruling [*Lawrence v. Texas*] they were guided not by the words of the Constitution alone, but by the experience of the past half-century. That’s from 1953 forward. So I conclude that we have not—as a people, as a nation—we have not given the Supreme Court *the right guidance*. And we can’t give them the guidance unless we have come to it ourselves.

The decision to legalize abortion and the decision to legalize sodomy were only the legal expressions of the popular culture. We actually lost that war when we abandoned the Bible. Christians may have lost the culture wars when they abandoned the Bible as their most basic authority. Jesus addressed the question of scripture versus authorities or tradition in one of the most basic of all Christian teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew chapter five, verse 17, he said:

Matthew 5

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¹⁷ Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

¹⁸ I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

You know, the King James version is even stronger, in a way. It basically says, “Till heaven and earth pass, not a jot not a tittle will pass.” Now, you need to understand the issue that’s going on here. In this time there was a major theological difference of opinion between Pharisees and Sadducees. The Sadducees believed that only the Written Law could be binding upon people. The Pharisees believed in Written Law plus their own traditions. Jesus is saying, “I’m not fighting with the Written Law.”

Matthew 5

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¹⁹ Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

²⁰ For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

And then, Jesus proceeds in the Sermon on the Mount to discuss how the *popular culture* had led teachers to different interpretations of the Law. How he had said, “Well, you know, it’s okay. You must not commit adultery and they left it there.” He says, “Oh, no, no. That’s not good enough. If you look upon a woman to lust after her in your heart you have *already* committed adultery.” And on and on he goes about so many things that the popular culture had said, whereas Jesus said, “No, no. They don’t have it right.” So we may have begun to lose our way and to lose the culture war when we began to abandon the scriptures—the written Word of God—as the guide to our faith.

We also may have lost the culture wars when we began to think of our church as a *safe* place to be—as a retreat from the world. We can have family life centers where we can get away from the world and be *safe*. Our kids don’t have to hang out at the mall. We can withdraw into our own world with racquetball courts and bowling alleys and video games and pool tables. Yes, yes, some church family life centers have all this stuff. It is there to keep the kids off the streets and out of the malls and out of trouble and all that. It’s not a bad thing to do, but it also may be a manifestation of withdrawing from the world to be *safe*. And instead of going out into the malls with our kids to see to it that the malls themselves are safe place where the kids can be, we pull them away from the world and leave the world to go to hell.

We can have beautiful sanctuaries, actually, where we can sing with people who think just like we do, and where we can listen to sermons that we approve of (because if we don’t approve of them, we can just get rid of the guy who’s doing the sermon). We can have our own little potluck suppers and fellowship in safety with people who are *just like us*, and we don’t have to deal with people who are different or are dangerous. But you know this; I don’t have to tell you: Choosing safety is not what Christianity was all about. It certainly was not what Jesus was all about. Oh yeah, I know he said to his disciples, “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you.” But that’s not all he said. It’s found in John 14, verse 27:

John 14

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²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Now, the implication here is that you might have good reason to be afraid, but don’t be. And he is saying, “I’m going to give you peace, but it’s not the kind of peace that you’re thinking about. It’s peace in the face of persecution.” My idea of peace is lying on a bank of green grass, and a stream flowing by, the shade over me, and a little lunch in a pail by me, a fishing line in the water with a cork bobber and no bites—so we’ve got *real peace of mind* right there. But that’s not the kind of peace he was talking about. He was talking about the kind of peace that Paul had when he was in prison, with his feet in stocks, in the middle of the night, and he and Silas sat there and *sang songs of praise to God [Acts 16]*. They had been arrested. They were in jail, feet in stocks. They were uncomfortable. And they were at peace. Jesus told his boys:

John 15

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¹⁸ If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.

¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

²⁰ Remember the words I spoke to you: "No servant is greater than his master." If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. [...]

Okay, so Christianity is not just about being safe.

John 15

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²⁰ [...] If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.

²¹ They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.

²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin.

You know what? I think Jesus expects us to be the ones in this world who come and speak to them, so that they have no excuse for what they're doing.

Now, it isn't necessary that we fight the world. We can go along and the world will love us. But that does not seem to be what the Lord had in mind for you and me. They didn't hate Jesus because of what he did, you know. They hated him because of what he *said* and because *his own goodness* made their evil all the worse. There was no compromise in Jesus.

Do you suppose it's possible that we lost the culture war because we made peace with the enemy? This is an aside, but it's a perfect illustration. The United States just keeps on pressing Israel to make peace with an enemy that is absolutely determined on their utter destruction. It's a complete contradiction in terms. You're making peace with an *implacable* enemy. They cannot make peace with the Palestinians because the Palestinians do not want peace. What they want is *Israel gone*. They want the peace that they can have when there is no one there who is not Islamic. That's all they want and it's really very simple. Even so, Christians cannot make peace with the world for the world is determined upon our destruction.

It may turn out in the end that, like the Israelis, we Christians have lost the culture wars because we went to Oslo and made peace with a snake.

The world is determined, as I said, upon our utter destruction and Jesus told his disciples about this. He said:

John 16

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¹ All this I have told you so that you will not go astray.

² They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God.

³ They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. [*They don't know anything about God*]

⁴ I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you.

Later, in verse 32, he says:

John 16

AKJV

³² Behold, the hour comes, yes, is now come, that you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

³³ These things I have spoken to you, that in me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: [...]

Well, what are we talking about here, then? What are we willing to sacrifice? What is it we're going to give up in order that we have peace—so that we can just *get along* with the people who are around us all the time? Jesus said, “in the world *you shall have* tribulation.” He doesn't mean that we should go *looking for it*; he just means that if we do what we're supposed to do, we're going to have trouble. And then he says this:

John 16

AKJV

³³ [...] but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Now, I think we may have made a misjudgment here. If Jesus has overcome the world, does that leave us with nothing to do? Or does it mean that overcoming the world *can be done*, it's within reach, and that you and I are also expected to overcome the world.

The apostle John, writing very late in his life, wrote to some Christians and he had this to say. (You'll find it in 1 John, chapter 2, verse 13.)

1 John 2

AKJV

¹³ I write to you, fathers, because you have known him that is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father.

¹⁴ I have written to you, fathers, because you have known him that is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God stays in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.

So it can be done. It can be done through the Word of God. And that's the *written word*. You can't abandon the Bible and make it work. And then he says:

1 John 2

¹⁵ Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

¹⁷ And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God stays for ever.

Don't make peace with your enemy. He's a snake. 1 John 5, verse 2:

1 John 5

AKJV

² By this we know that we love the children of God [*How do we know?*], when we love God, and keep his commandments.

³ For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not

grievous.

⁴ For whatever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.

⁵ Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Folks, we aren't put down here to roll over. God didn't call us into his great Kingdom, and into his Church, in order that we would be a doormat. He didn't expect us to give up; he expected us to stand firm for the faith once delivered to the saints. And that may cost us. It's not safe. It can be dangerous. It can get us in trouble. But we're supposed to *overcome*, not give up. Fundamental to the Christian faith is overcoming. The vision of John—where Jesus, standing in the midst of the seven churches of God in Revelation 2 and 3 three, repeatedly said:

Revelation 2

KJ2000

⁷ He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches; To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Who? To the man who overcomes.

Revelation 2

KJ2000

¹¹ He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches; He that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death.

Who? The one that overcomes. In Revelation 21, verse six:

Revelation 21

AKJV

⁶ And he said to me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to him that is thirsty of the fountain of the water of life freely.

⁷ He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

⁸ But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Is it odd to realize that the first two categories of people headed in that direction are the fearful and the unbelieving?

Playing it safe is not an option. After all, Jesus did not play it safe, and neither should we. Overcoming is just another word for winning. And you, my friend, were *born to win*.

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