

A Godless Nation

by: Ronald L. Dart

Was Jesus a liberal or a conservative? That's an easy question to answer. He was neither. Those labels don't mean very much when you get right down to it. Have you noticed that people have to distinguish between classical liberals and ordinary liberals? And now we have conservatives and neo-conservatives. They call that neo-common in political speak. I can't describe myself in political terms. On some issues I agree with liberals and others I agree with conservatives. On some I might even be libertarian. So why should I imagine that we could describe Jesus in political terms? He said, "My kingdom is not of this world." But here we are, his children, living in a society where we are actually a part of the government. Remember? This is a government OF the people, BY the people and FOR the people. And we are faced with a host of questions that we really can't sidestep. Jesus also said "You are the light of the world." So, if people who believe in Jesus don't speak to the world and its issues, then we aren't doing our job. It isn't always easy to know what to say, because as soon as you open your mouth someone hangs a label on you. It's just a whole lot easier to label someone than it is to think about what he had to say. And nowadays people don't give you very much to think about.

Television has turned the political process—all but ruined it—because every political idea has to be distilled into sound bytes. We're given "spin," not explanations and ideas, and spin. . . well spin is just a polite word for propaganda. It's a way of lying so that you can claim you actually didn't lie. It's insulting to you and me as ordinary Americans and it makes it harder for us to do our job as citizens. It's easy to forget that we are the government, and if God ever decides to hold this country accountable, it's all of us who are going to pay the price. There, I did it. I put God into the equation. And that's the fundamental issue on the table in this country today. Are we now a nation under God? Or are we determined to divorce ourselves from God? The vast majority of people in this country want no such thing. They may not understand what it is God wants of them, they may not be ready to let God be the lord of their life, but they are not ready to ask God to go away. As this country becomes increasingly polarized, hardly anyone wants to talk about the central political issue today—whether we will be a nation under God, or whether we will become a godless nation. The Islamists think we are already there. They watch our political battles and call us infidels. Are we a nation under God however imperfectly, however fallibly, or are we

an infidel nation? Once in a while someone stumbles over the truth and tells us about it. Sometimes people listen and sometimes they don't.

I came across an interesting piece by John Leo in *U.S. News* recently. He looked into the increasing polarization of the American voter and he saw clearly what is going on. His article was called "Splitting Society, Not Hairs." He said, "The more polarized American Society becomes, the more we see intellectuals explaining that this polarization isn't real—it's just the swordplay of media and political elites. Each new bundle of evidence saying, 'We're deeply divided,' is closely followed by some prominent commentator saying, 'No, we're not.' Last month, the Pew Research Center released a major study of today's political landscape. The title of the study said it all: 'Evenly Divided and Increasingly Polarized.' Andrew Kohut, director of Pew polls, told me the anger level is so high that if the demonstrators of 1968 had felt like this, 'there would have been gunfire in the streets.'" Not everybody agrees with that assessment, but I have to tell you that I have never seen this kind of polarization, even hatred, over political issues.

Continuing with John Leo, "Is this really so? If polarization is essentially confined to a small number of actors clashing swords in front of klieg lights, why do polls show that the number of centrists and swing voters are dwindling? This would explain why both parties seem to spend much more time and money appealing to their base—they are no longer convinced that there is much of a middle to appeal to." Did you get that? They're no longer convinced that there is any middle that they can appeal to, so all they can talk to is their base. The other party's base isn't going to listen to them. In fact, true swing voters may be as low as 7% of the electorate, and every election is decided by a handful of people. Whatever the numbers, it does seem there is a narrower strip of land for the undecided to stand on.

This may come as a surprise to you, but the dominant issue causing this increasing polarization is religion. Most of the fighting is about moral issues. The biggest noise in the Clinton administration was moral. He sodomized a young White House intern and then lied about it. The hatred toward President Bush is because he stole the election and lied about the reason for war with Iraq. Both of these are moral issues. But, without God, there is no basis for morals. The only thing that is important to politicians is what works, not what's right or wrong. There's a new word in the political vocabulary of this country. The word is "secularism," which means indifference to, or rejection or exclusion of, religion and religious considerations. Another word for secular is "godless." It's a move to keep religion out of public life. And, of course, if religion must go, then so must God. Hence the fight to get God out of the Pledge of Allegiance and the Ten Commandments out of the courthouse. Leo lays this on the table for us to consider. "Consider, too," he said, "the growing polarization that pits secularists against religious people. In the 2000 Senate race in New York, two thirds of the secularists voted for Hillary Clinton and two thirds of religious

people voted for Rick Lazio.” Did you catch that? That’s an incredible divide. Two thirds of the secularists voted for Hillary Clinton. Two thirds of people who do believe in God and are religious voted for Rick Lazio, her opponent. That’s something to consider.

Continuing to quote from John Leo: “This kind of split showed up in the House races around the country for 2000 also. The Pew study shows that the most religious states vote Republican, the least religious go Democratic. More and more, religiously committed people tend to vote Republican, largely because of the increased prominence of secularists within the Democratic Party and the party's resulting antagonism toward traditional values. That's the judgment of Mr. Bolce and his colleague, Gerald De Maio, of Pew Polls.” This is really interesting because it is telling us is that there is a movement going on—not so much a movement toward the Republican Party as a movement away from, a revulsion toward, the Democratic Party and Democratic standards by people who believe in God.

“The gap started opening at the 1972 Democratic convention that nominated George McGovern: A third of the white delegates were secular, compared with 5% of the general population. By 1992 (20 years later), the culture war is said to have broken into the open. Sixty percent of first-time white delegates to the Democratic convention were secularists or nominally religious people who said they attend services five times a year or less. The secular-religious gap, larger than the gender and class gap journalists like to focus on, is simply not on the media radar.” This isn’t on the talk shows. Nobody is kicking this around. These people think the Republicans became the traditionalist party almost by default. It had less to do with Republican efforts than the impact of secular progressives on the Democratic Party. Think about that. The change has less to do with anything the Republicans have done, than the impact of those people in the Democratic Party who are progressives who don’t really believe in God. Many secularists in the Republican Party are leaving to vote Democratic. The most intensely religious Democrats are headed the other way. The obvious word for a shift like that is “polarization.” Something is going on in this country and we need to start paying attention.

Continuing with John Leo: “Like most analysts who say they see no polarization, Samuelson cites America's great improvement in racial attitudes and increased tolerance for homosexuals. That’s true, but left unsaid is that a fierce and apparently growing majority of Americans oppose gay marriage (up 6 points to 59%, according to Pew) and an even larger percentage of the public opposes racial preferences. Wolfe found that 76% of blacks and 83% of whites oppose racial preferences even when the euphemism ‘priority’ is used. These are not random findings but hot-button issues in a continuing war over basic values. If the left keeps using the courts to impose minority opinions on unwilling majorities, conflict will broaden and intensify.” That is exactly where we are today.

Back to the question of liberals versus conservatives, I think these labels have lost their meaning in the present world. The real battle is a religious battle—a battle between Theism, that is a belief in God, and secularism, a belief that there is no God. Secularism is probably short for secular humanism which means a humanistic philosophy viewed as a non-theistic religion antagonistic toward traditional religion. It's not as though it's no religion; it is a religion in its own right, it is a godless religion. And like any religion, it is jealous of other religions, other faiths. The political war in the United States right now is a religious war. It's time everyone woke up to it. In most of the other nations around us, including Canada, this war is all but over and the secularists have won. The issue in the United States is still open. The confusion over this issue is even muddying the waters around the Iraq War. People try to pretend that the war on terror is not a religious war. This is a dangerous mistake. The war on terror is entirely a religious war. We didn't make it so; they did.

Where does this road lead us? Where will we end up? We're not the first people to travel this way, so maybe we should hear what happened to those who traveled it before. The Apostle Paul writing in Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." In his opening words Paul lays down the challenge for Christian people. Are we ashamed of the Gospel of Christ? Paul was saying, "I'm not ashamed of it. It's the power of God and it can save everyone who believes." This is the only way the direction of this country can be changed, by the simple and old-fashioned means of evangelizing one person at a time. If we aren't willing to persuade people of the truth of the Gospel, who is going to do it?

Paul continues, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (vv. 18-20). There is no reason why men should not understand that there is a Creator. They knew this at one time and they have suppressed that truth. "Because," Paul said, "that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (v. 21). That could be the epitaph of this country. We knew God but didn't glorify him as God. We weren't thankful and became vain in our imaginations and our foolish hearts were darkened. There was a time when we were thankful, but someone decided that we didn't really need a Creator. We have evolved to the place we are today and our destiny is to make ourselves better and greater than we are now. But, we have no idea what better and greater really mean beyond our own descriptions, our own decisions, and maybe our own delusions.

Our country is divided today between those who have chosen God and those who have chosen man as the standard of what is right and what is wrong. Paul said the same thing of his society. He said, “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (v. 22). We are the people. Wisdom will die with us. We know, and what we don’t know, we’ll find out. In Psalm 50:16-21 (NIV), God speaks to the wicked person who has gotten into this frame of mind. To the wicked, God says, “What right have you to recite my laws or take my covenant on your lips? You hate my instruction and cast my words behind you. When you see a thief, you join with him; you throw in your lot with adulterers. You use your mouth for evil and harness your tongue to deceit. You speak continually against your brother and slander your own mother’s son. These things you have done and I kept silent; you thought I was altogether like you.” We live our lives, we commit sin, we slander people, we speak evil, we harness our tongue to deceit, and because God doesn’t do anything about it right now, we assume that God is just like us. In fact, we kind of assume that he is us. The psalmist finishes by saying, “But I will rebuke you and accuse you to your face. Consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you to pieces, with none to rescue.”

We need to go back and take a hard look at what Paul is saying. “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man. . .” (Romans 1:22-23). He is saying that, in that society they exchanged man for God, which is precisely what we are doing right now. Paul, having looked hard at this, says, “God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen” (vv. 24-25). Paul isn’t talking about church; he’s talking about God, which is an altogether different thing. And he’s not talking about some abstract God; he’s talking about a God who is a Creator. The one who made the ground you stand on. This is what happens when people turn away from that God: For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

“And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet” (vv. 26-27). I don’t want to pick on anyone. I don’t want to point the finger at one sin or another, but I do want you to consider what Paul is saying. In that day and time, as men began to substitute man for God—when they substituted their own judgment, their own wisdom, for the Law of God and for God’s revelation to man—there was a natural outgrowth, which was uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts and the dishonoring of their own bodies between themselves. Men with men and women with women. There was, in that day and time, a natural confluence between secularization—the turning away from God, the substitution of man and man’s laws and man’s wisdom and man’s rights as it were for those granted by God—and a homosexual

agenda. It was there. Paul saw it; Paul identified it. Take up your argument with Paul if you ever get the chance.

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge (and I think that's a good description of what's going on around us), people just don't want to keep God in the picture. If you look on your money, it says "In God We Trust" and, up until now, we've been able to say the Pledge of Allegiance with "One nation under God." That may be about to change, and I wonder how long it'll take, including removing the Ten Commandments from the wall of the Supreme Court. Sooner or later it seems, God is going to go. "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" (vv. 28-29a). Paul uses a very mild expression for what he's about to describe.

So what follows on the heels of the abandonment of the knowledge of God? Or the refusal to acknowledge God or to allow God into public life? He says, "Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, [I suppose there have been societies more given to fornication— meaning sexual uncleanness, having sex with anybody and everybody you can find—but I'm not sure where you would go to find them.] wickedness, covetousness, [Oh yeah, we're always out to acquire, to gain, to collect.] maliciousness; [That's become very much a factor of public life now. There are actually websites dedicated to the hatred of the President of the United States.] full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful" (vv.29b-31). Wow. That's quite a list of things that you can expect as a result of the change that is taking place in our country right now. "That they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (v. 32). This is a perfect picture of what is happening around us in our country. We burdened down with this terrible hatred of God, with people who are spiteful and proud, boasters who are disobedient to parents, people who won't keep their word, and people without natural affection. Not only that, it's our entertainment as well. Is this the kind of person you want for a neighbor? Increasingly, it's going to be the kind of person you get, for there is a force at work in this country that is determined to drive God out of public life. There are those who look with ill-disguised contempt on those who believe in God. You can't speak to them in the jargon of the church. You're going to have to talk to them as Jesus did— with authority—one person at a time.

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