

We're Only Endangering Ourselves by Doing This

In his best-selling biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Eric Metaxas writes: "On January 30, 1933, at noon, Adolf Hitler became the democratically elected chancellor of Germany. The land of Goethe, Schiller, and Bach would now be led by someone who consorted with crazies and criminals, who was often seen carrying a dog whip in public. The Third Reich had begun."¹

The land of the Protestant Reformation was about to learn something that can be learned in no other way—there is no safety in distance from God.

In the spring of 1935 Bonhoeffer became the Director of Finkenwalde Seminary, focusing his student's contemplation on Scripture, prayer, and theological confession.

A diabolical serpent, Nazi fascism, was wrecking the birthplace of the Protestant Reformation. Bonhoeffer wisely focused the nation's future leaders on the Word and prayer to arm them spiritually for battle against pagan idolatry. Bonhoeffer rightly discerned that without a solid biblical foundation the church simply lacked the wherewithal to face-down secular paganism in the public square.

Nazi opposition was real and lethal: 27 pastors and former students were arrested. The Gestapo announced that Finkenwalde Seminary was outlawed, and they closed the seminary in August 1937.² The apparent removal of the Word two to three generations earlier had left the land of Luther naked and unarmed. Now, America finds herself in the same exact place in 2015.

"Fate" is not what led Germany to their Holocaust from 1933-1945, but the inevitable consequence of failing

to confront pagan ideology in the public square. As M. Stanton Evans writes, "When religious value is denied in the realm of spirit, but reasserted in the secular order, dominion of every facet of life converges in a single center; the political regime becomes both the church and state and claims authority over faith and conscience."³

Even a liberal German theologian hit on truth when he considered two essential questions posed by Plato: 1) Who teaches the children? and 2) What do we teach them? Rudolf Bultmann responded: "What has come of the Christian instruction given to our youth? Who feels bound today by Christian morality? We all know that Germany today no longer is a Christian country, that church life in only a remnant and that many wish and hope that even this remnant will disappear."⁴ Laxness (such as the liberalism of Bultmann) gave birth to disastrous consequences—and what murderous consequences they were!

Which brings us to the current spiritual crisis facing America. Nazism practiced Gleichschaltung, a process for conforming every aspect of society to its totalitarian control. Here in the United States, the Supreme Court looks to conform every vestige of American life and society to the worship of the golden calf of Secularism. Contrast that "conform-to-culture" vision with the words of the Apostle Paul: "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:2).

Another diabolical serpent is stalking the land. This is natural, of course, for freedom eternally faces a fundamental moral challenge. Why? It's part of God's unending order. "The serpent's final defeat under Messiah's heel (Gen. 3:15) is delayed to effect God's program of redemption through the promised offspring," Bruce Waltke writes. "In the interim, God

leaves Satan to test the fidelity of each succeeding generation of the covenant people (Judg. 2:22) and to teach them to 'fight' against untruth (Judg. 3:2)."⁵

Let's be clear, it was Christianity—not paganism, not so-called religious neutrality, and certainly not secularism—which produced freedom and liberty in America. As my friend Os Guinness noted, "The plain fact is that no free and lasting civilization anywhere in history has so far been built on atheist foundations."⁶

America's Founders "did not turn civil government, the making, enforcement and adjudication of laws, over to Satan and those who serve him. They did not surrender the ministry of civil government to those who are in rebellion against God. Instead, they sought to base civil government and law upon the truth. They knew that our nation's civil government and law must be based upon God's laws and principles of justice if we are to enjoy His blessings upon our land and people."⁷

Daniel Webster said it best: "If we and our posterity shall be true to the Christian religion, if we and they shall live always in the fear of God, and shall respect His commandments, if we and they shall maintain just moral sentiments and such conscientious convictions of duty as shall control the heart and life, we may have the highest hopes of the future fortunes of our country; and if we maintain those institutions of government and that political union, exceeding all praise as much as it exceeds all former examples of political associations, we may be sure of one thing, that while our country furnishes material for a thousand masters of the historic art, it will afford no topic for a Gibbon. It will have no decline and fall. It will go on prospering and to prosper."

Webster concluded, "But, if we and our posterity reject religious instruction and authority, violate the rules of

eternal justice, trifle with the injunctions of morality, and recklessly destroy the political constitution which holds us together, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us, that shall bury all our glory in profound obscurity.”

So, what is our call to action?

We are asking the 100,000 American Renewal Project pastors for two things as we begin to re-establish a Bible-based culture:

1. Return to Scripture, teaching the whole counsel of God
2. Schedule a one-hour weekly prayer service led by the senior pastor, asking God for mercy for what we have allowed to happen to a once-Christian nation

We need a Gideon or Rahab the Harlot to stand.

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ENDNOTES:

1. Eric Metaxes, Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy
- 2.
3. Evans, The Theme Is Freedom
4. Rudolf Bultmann, June 22, 1941, Marsburg, Germany
5. Bruce K. Waltke, Genesis Commentary
6. Os Guinness, A Free People's Suicide
7. Dr. Archie P. Jones