

When 'Love Thy Neighbor' Becomes Nothing More Than Blatant Coercion

On Jan. 17, the National Hockey League's Philadelphia Flyers hosted the Anaheim Ducks at the Wells Fargo Center in the South Philadelphia Sports Complex. During the warmups, players were expected to wear 'Pride Night' jerseys and use sticks wrapped in Rainbow Pride tape, put in force as celebration and support of the LGBTQ community.

Flyers defenseman Ivan Provorov, a 26-year-old Russian Orthodox Christian, became the skunk at the picnic as he refused to participate in the warmups wearing a Pride jersey and a stick wrapped in rainbow colors. When asked afterward for the reason of his refusal, he voiced his commitment to Christ.

"I respect everyone. I respect everybody's choices," Provorov said. "My choice is to stay true to myself and my religion."

Constitutionally, Provorov had undeniably every right to stay true to himself and Christianity. Tal Fortgang gives the equally simple as sound reason for this in his excellent Wall Street Journal piece of Jan. 20, making clear that "a fundamental principle of free societies [is] that no one should be forced to show support for a cause that violates his conscience."

Fortgang titled his article "Ivan Provorov Went to a Hockey Game, and a Culture War Broke Out," providing it with the headline "The Flyers defenseman's detractors push liberation at the expense of American pluralism and tolerance."

Pride Night is part of the National Hockey League's 'Hockey Is for Everyone' campaign. The NHL is engaged in race-, gender-

and sexuality-based outreach in seemingly unassailable terms: All are welcome.

But as religious Americans are aware, this seldom is the meaning. A message of ostensible tolerance—be whoever you want to be and live your truth—is hardly the gentle embrace of “love thy neighbor as thyself.” Instead, it is quiet coercion: Bake the cake. Wear the jersey. Bend the knee.

“The purpose of a professional sports franchise has thus been inverted. No longer are the Flyers a hockey team that promotes its product with favored social causes. It is a social-justice organization on skates.”

Philadelphia Flyers coach John Tortorella came under fire by the gay community for not benching Provorov for refusing to celebrate the organization’s Pride festivities in support of the LGBTQ community. In defense of his defenseman, Tortorella pointed out that “Provy is not out there banging a drum against Pride Night. He quietly went about his business.”

“Banging a drum against Pride Night” is exactly what the NHL should be doing instead of facilitating grooming of children to be sexually abused by the likes of Canadian former ice hockey goaltender and LGBTQ advocate Brock McGillis and his Alphabet Sports Collective, officially aligned with the NHL.

Yahoo Sports Canada reports that McGillis is one of the first openly gay hockey players and “during a particularly terrifying time for LGBTQ communities, he’s continuing to work with children and teenagers to make the sport a safer space.”

“‘I think my community is really under attack right now,” McGillis told Yahoo Sports Canada. “It breaks my heart and it fuels me to push even harder to be quite honest, because these kids need to be able to exist. And they’re so brave that they are coming out younger and younger.”

“McGillis launched the Alphabet Sports Collective in January

2022 [an organization to support LGBTQ people in hockey and told Yahoo Sports Canada there needs to be less performative action and more of a corrective approach to addressing homophobic and transphobic language in locker rooms.”

This seems as good a place as any to bring up the outlandish oddity of rainbow lights decorating the White House on special occasions, rainbow flags flying above U.S. embassies around the world and rainbow recruitment at professional sporting events.

Due to the removal of Scripture and the biblically based culture established by the American Founders, homosexuality is extolled and glorified in today’s America and on social media platforms instead of being depicted as a transgression. Free rein is moreover given to secular government-run education’s immoral assaults on God. Completely indifferent to Scripture’s condemnation of homosexuality as an “abomination” in Leviticus 18:22 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, America’s collective and cultural conscience has been blunted and deadened.

All this can be easily understood when bearing in mind that secularists have gone to great lengths over the last 100 years to remove anything related to God’s Word from culture, public education, U.S. courthouses, federal government buildings, public school walls, etc. Their extreme efforts clearly show that the real battle for the Soul of America takes place between the eternal and immutable Jehovah God versus transient and mutable cultural Marxism and profane religious secularism.

The Holy Spirit works through and by means of God’s Word, as Dutch pastor M.B. Van ‘t Veer’s [1904-1944] aptly explains: “The Word of the Lord does something to people. No one is unaffected by its power. Every human being to whom the Lord’s Word speaks must take a position and must do something with that Word.

“Thanks be to God that the old dispensation with its

demonstration of strength in the miracle of raising people from the dead [1 Kings 17, the widow's son at Zarephath] had made way for the greater dispensation of the glorious appearance of the Word! The transitory miracle has given way to the abiding, continuing operation of the Word."

Pastor Van 't Veer derives spiritual discernment from Elijah's stay at the widow's place in Zarephath: "The light of Israel's great God was limited to the four walls of her home." It is an insight that American Christendom should take to heart.

If the Light remains hidden behind the four walls of the church building, as so often is the case in the America of today, Christianity's impact on society and culture will remain negligible as well. Christianity will do much better if it observes Acts 13:47 (NIV): "For this is what the Lord has commanded us: 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'"

 All cultural and political thought rests inescapably on a given foundation, as Dr. Joseph Boot sets out in his 2022 book "Ruler of Kings: Toward a Christian Vision of Government." One religious view or another is the unacknowledged basis for all forms of political philosophy. Either Christ and His Word provide that foundation—as America's Founders understood so well—or radical, seditious ideologies like cultural Marxism and pagan secularism take on the role of biblical authority.

In this battle for ideological supremacy and control in America's public square, the elevation of one will ultimately lead to the downfall of the other.

Thanks be to God that Gideon's and Rahab's are entering the public square. {eoa}

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