God Is Not So Easily Defeated

by Phyllis Schlafly Apr. 7, 2004

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The atheists had their day before the Supreme Court, but they are not in good spirits about it. Their attempt to drive "one nation under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance now looks like a legal boomerang.

A CBS poll reports that nine out of ten Americans still want "under God" to remain in the Pledge. Those particular words, used by Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address, describe perfectly who we are as a people.

Before going insane, Friedrich Nietzsche declared that "God is dead," and now atheists want the Supreme Court to make it official. But the public will not stand for this; a movement is already afoot in Congress, as allowed by the Constitution, to take authority away from the federal courts over this issue.

The liberal justices are in a quandary. Over the last several decades, they have again and again censored and excluded prayer and morality from public life and schools.

The Supreme Court in 1962 banned prayers from public schools, and now schools are awash in drugs, sex, and violent acts. The courageous Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore was even removed from office for displaying the Ten Commandments.

A moment of silence in school? An invocation at graduation? A prayer before a football game? The Supreme Court said no, no, no. In no other area of the law have the liberals enjoyed such a run-up of victories over such a long time.

The religion-haters' mischievous use of the federal courts has persisted because the American public was not paying attention and because the legal community has fostered the myth that the Constitution is whatever the Supreme Court says it is. Dr. Michael Newdow looked at the long series of pro-atheist High Court rulings and concluded that precedents now require removing "under God" from the Pledge.

It would be the ultimate censorship to prevent our society from acknowledging the very nature of our existence. It would relegate the Declaration of Independence, the Gettysburg Address, and countless presidential proclamations to historical curiosities from a once-glorious era.

But Newdow has probably overplayed his hand by his frontal attack on God instead of contenting himself with the incremental erosion that has been so successful. Newdow's more experienced anti-religious and secularist elders, who quietly agree with his goal and his arguments, lament that he will lose.

Newdow probably thought he was scoring points in his oral argument before the Supreme Court when he attributed the unanimous congressional approval of "under God" to the lack of atheists in Congress. But the spontaneous applause among the spectators confirmed that most Americans do not want atheists or atheism running our country.

Newdow's challenge to God lays bare how badly the Left wants to banish religion and morality. His mistake was to take too seriously the prior Court decisions that irrationally prohibited acknowledgment of our Creator.

In serving up the reductio ad absurdum of the atheists' agenda, Newdow has enabled the public to focus on the liberals' intolerance, and the impending Supreme Court decision will be very big news. The liberal media are very uncomfortable with the hand Newdow has dealt them.

The media are eager to protect John Kerry from the fate suffered by Michael Dukakis, whose veto of a Massachusetts Pledge law helped the first George Bush in his 1988 campaign for President. Kerry, seeking the same office that Abraham Lincoln held, mustered all the eloquence in his body to declare that removing "under God" from the Pledge was "half-assed justice ... the most absurd thing. ... That's not the establishment of religion."

The Supreme Court is now faced with the choice between abandoning its misguided precedents or affirming them, which would plunge the Court into the angry sea of public scorn and congressional retaliation. Justice Scalia has recused himself, so the liberals can't depend on the conservative justices to save them from their follies by outvoting them.

Maybe the anti-God justices will lose their nerve and hide behind Newdow's lack of legal standing: neither he nor a child under his custody was ever exposed to the Pledge. Or maybe the Court will duck its dilemma by declaring that "under God" has no religious meaning, a ruling that would outrage Americans who are quite sure that God is alive and well.

The lawsuit to censor God out of the Pledge and America's public life is looking no better than the failed attempt to restrict the showing of Mel Gibson's popular "Passion of the Christ." God is not so easily defeated in America.