

THE RISE OF STATISM

Dark clouds are gathering over the West, for authoritarian statism is on the rise. Whereas statism, otherwise known as etatism (from the French, *état* [state]), is the intensified control of society through executive powers intended to restrict rights and liberties, authoritarian statism goes the next step, actually imposing the restrictions.

Throughout modern history, lawless dictators and Communist parties monopolized authoritarian statism. In the West, however, Judeo-Christian belief in God's supreme authority overturned absolute monarchies and bridled governing authority. Yet, things are changing, for today's rebellion against God is, for reasons we shall see (page 2), making a god of the state.

AUTHORITARIAN STATISM IMPOSED

Consider prayer outside abortion clinics. The U.S. Department of Justice has listed 10 individuals currently imprisoned for between 10 and 57 months for breaching The Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act.

Best known is Heather Idoni, 59, a mother of 5 and adopter of 10 boys from Ukraine. States the website free-heatheridoni.com, "In March of 2021, Heather quietly prayed and sang hymns, peacefully, in the hallway of a medical office complex in Mt. Juliet, TN." In 2022, she was arrested again, along with nine others for peaceful protest outside the notorious all-term Washington-Surgi Center (D.C.), including the recovery of the late-term remains of the "D.C. Five." Heather has since suffered 22 days of solitary confinement for sharing food with an inmate, contrary to the U.N.'s international rules for the humane treatment of prisoners (rules 44 and 45). Given that the pro-life movement is increasingly slandered as far right, it is worth noting that of those arrested, Lauren Hardy and Herb Geraghty belong to the left-leaning *Progressive Anti-Abortion Uprising*. (Photo: www.theepochtimes.com)



Meanwhile, in the U.K. there occurred on October 16 the first ever conviction for prayer outside an abortion clinic, and this in the country whose Magna Carta (1215)



declared the sovereign subject to the rule of law, documented the liberties of "free men," and set the foundation for Anglo-American jurisprudence. Nevertheless, out of sight of the clinic, and holding a silent personal vigil for his son aborted 22 years earlier, army reservist Adam Smith-Connor, a survivor of a tour of Afghanistan, was charged by police and pursued by the bankruptcy-threatened Christchurch and Poole Council to the cost of £90,000 in taxpayer money to obtain a maximum penalty of £1,000. (Photo: www.advertiserandtimes.co.uk)

Claiming to protect the abortive-minded from harassment (more likely persuasion), the council and the police have made an example of a loyal citizen, convert to Christianity, and remorseful parent. They will claim Smith-Connor violated the buffer zone, but only because, as was argued by the prosecution, he gave evidence of his disapproval of abortion by his head slightly bowed and hands clasped in silent prayer. This, then, was clearly a thought crime.

AUTHORITARIAN STATISM EXPOSED

Such authoritarian statism is riddled with hypocrisy. Such states buy the postmodern claim that there is no truth, yet deem irrefutable "truth" the fallacy that abortion is healthcare. Statism claims the backing of science, but callously ignores the proven humanity of the unborn. It tends toward the denial of God, yet is troubled by prayer! Hitherto, crimes had victims, but now big brother looks for them, asking a man standing alone behind a tree, "What is the nature of your prayer? ["Guilty," <https://adfinternational.org/>]). We could go on.

Suffice it to say that the gathering storm looks ominous for those reared in free societies. We must learn from Pastor Martin Niemöller's experience of the Nazis:



First they came for the Jews, but I did nothing because I'm not a Jew. Then they came for the socialists, but I did nothing because I'm not a socialist. Then they came for the Catholics, but I did nothing because I'm not a Catholic. Finally, they came for me, but by then there was no one left to help me.

But there is good news. Statism's overreach is what finally destroys it, for there is and can ever be only one God.



THE RETURN TO GOD

The defeats of authoritarian statism litter history. They prove the correctness of Georg Hegel (1770–1831), “experience and history teach us . . . that people and governments have never learned anything from history, or acted on principles deduced from it.” Thus, today, vested interests, support the expansion of state authority—those pro scientism seeking to ride the vehicle of state to promote their naturalistic religion, lobby groups drooling over the state as a cash cow, corrupt career politicians maintaining their hold on power, and those voters putting self before their grandchildren. How we need to think again.

THE BOUNDARIES OF THE STATE

While God has ordained government, he never intended the state to replace him. To support our lives, yes; but not to become our ultimate reliance. Notice—

God’s delegation of power. He governs earth through the individual, the family, the church, and the state. To the individual he grants free agency for self-governance, and thus, unlike machines, we are not to mindlessly do what the state dictates. The same goes for the families in which God has set us (Psalm 68:6), as also the church (Acts 5:29). Thus, we honor governing authorities, paying set taxes in trust that the state, as God’s servant, avenges the wrongdoer and approves our good (Romans 13:1-7). (Photo: www.pixabay.com)

God’s direction of power. To guide the judicious use of power God has given us his moral law, *aka* the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21). The letter and spirit of God’s law are the measure by which states are to determine the good to approve and the wrongdoing to punish. Authoritarian statism is so outrageous, then, not only because it seeks to take over the individual, family, and the church, but because in doing so it typically distorts or contradicts God’s law. As historian Lord Acton (1834–1902) famously observed, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

God’s denunciation of power. Given the foregoing, how God hates the “legality” of killing our offspring and euthanizing our weak (contra the sixth commandment); and divorce on demand, same-sex “marriage,” and drag queens polluting our children (contra the seventh commandment), *etc.* God, though, will not be mocked. States flounder not only because leaders tire and die, but because God brings down rogue states that set themselves up as

God. He “*rules by his might forever, whose eyes keep watch on the nations—let not the rebellious exalt themselves*” (Psalm 66:7). Their humbling occasions the rescuing of individuals, families, and the church from oppression. Absolute monarchies become constitutional, dictatorships become democracies, and hell on earth is thwarted.

THE BOUNDLESSNESS OF GOD

Thus, a choice lies before us. We acquiesce in the evils of authoritarianism—its hubris, greed, and callous disregard for others—or we can learn from rogue states to humble ourselves before God. To do so, we recognize that:

Unlike states, God has boundless presence. Everlasting, he lives without beginning or end, and is unwaveringly vibrant throughout pre-history, history, and post-history. As an infinite Spirit, God exists everywhere, filling heaven and earth (Jeremiah 23:24), yet without ever being confused with or reduced to his creation. By comparison “*the nations are as like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales*” (Isaiah 40:15).

Unlike states, God has boundless knowledge. He is not only omnipresent but omniscient. How he scoffs in the heavens at the raging of the nations and the plotting of the people. He holds the agents of the state in derision as they search out “crime” (Psalm 2:1, 4). Why? Because God has no need to launch such fishing trips. Wrote King David, “**O LORD, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up, you discern my thoughts from afar**” (Psalm 139:1-2).

Unlike states, God has boundless power. He is omnipotent, possessing power the likes of which unchecked dictators and states can only dream: power without end. The sole limit on God’s exercise of power is his self-regulation. There are things God cannot do because of the virtues of his character, and things that he doesn’t do because of his will. Nevertheless, God can do anything that accords with the perfection of who he is and what he wills.

The state, by contrast, has no such power or perfection. In revolt against God it claims a sort of power, adopting at its worst Hitler’s maxim: “Brutality creates respect.” Yet, under God’s merciful hand, such “respect” is short-lived, as God brings to ruin those setting themselves up as God.

This poses us the question: Will we, to save face or the freedom to be immoral, side with rogue states or awaken to the realization that the God we naturally hate is the One who, through his law and grace, can free the individual, the family, the church, and the state to pursue his best for us?





THE REALITY OF GRACE

Siding with God is vital, for he rebukes nations and makes the wicked perish (Psalm 9:5). Yet, respecting God, while wise, makes us but theists, or cultural “Christians” at best. God offers you so much more, namely, his boundless grace.

OUR NEED OF GOD’S GRACE

It is possible for us to be so caught up with the evils of state overreach that we ignore our own evils. Indeed, societies are rife with chatter about what’s gone wrong morally, all the while our hearts are scarred by sin, our families are often fragmented, and the church is abandoned. This tendency to deflect we label “Phariseeism” (*aka* hypocrisy). It is worth recalling, that just as God sees all that authoritarian states are up to, so he sees everything about our lives, noting all our breaches of his law—sins done in the dark as well as the light; sins of thought as well as of word and deed; of commission (what we think, say, or do) and of omission (thoughts, speech, and actions left undone); sins done in ignorance of their true gravity as well as of those done with willful consciousness of their offence to God; sins long covered up as well as sins exposed. King David expressed this well, *“If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,’ even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you”* (Psalm 139:11-12).

God, then, is not like the policeman approaching Adam Smith-Connor to sniff out a crime to charge. Rather, he sees us all at once. Since he is omniscient he cannot switch off his knowledge of our sin, and since he is just he cannot ignore it. Rather, his law must be upheld in the face of our iniquity (our inner character), our every sin (the ways we have fallen short of his law), and our every transgression (the ways we have shot beyond his law). We are condemned, then, not because God is vindictive, but because we are lawbreakers by nature and by practice.

OUR COMFORT IN GOD’S GRACE

It is the profundity of our need which makes God’s grace so amazing. Knowing the very worst about us, God has, in love and in mercy, found a way of justifying the ungodly, without compromising his character or his law (Romans 3:26). Were he able to do either, he would no longer be God. Instead, by an agreement within the Godhead, God sent his Son to pay for the sinner’s shattering of his law. Thus, in breathtaking self-sacrificing love the Son of God became flesh, and headed to the cross to atone for sin.

Throughout his life and ministry, Jesus knew:

What lay in man. Although he took on our humanity, Jesus did not cease to be divine. Accordingly, he was able, as God had testified of himself about 600 years earlier, to *“search the heart and test the mind”* (Jer. 17:10). Indeed, John the Apostle notes that Christ knew what was in man: *“Now when he [Jesus] was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man”* (John 2:23-25).

Jesus knew not only man’s exterior but his interior. Moreover, he knew the present *and* future actions of men. John 6:64 tells us that he not only knew that there were in the crowd before him those who did not believe in him, but *“who it was who would betray him”* (namely, Judas). Likewise, later, when being restored, Peter testified that Jesus knew that he loved him, and that he knew everything (John

21:17). (Photo: Neebish Island, Michigan.)



What lay in Jerusalem. Three times on the way to the cross, Jesus foretold what would happen to him in Jerusalem. The first time, he shared that he *“must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”* The second time, he mentioned that this would happen through his deliverance into the hands of men—a pointer to Judas’ betrayal. The third time, Jesus included his killing by the Gentiles (the Romans), promising to rise again on the third day (Luke 9:22, 44; 18:32-33).

In short, God’s Son came not to deny that our crimes are seen by God, or to affirm us in them (which is today’s false gospel), but to satisfy the penalty of God’s broken law and to atone for sin.

THE GIFT OF GOD’S GRACE

How God contrasts with authoritarian states! They *try* to know everything about their underlings and are willing to persecute them for the state’s ideals, but God, legally justified in leaving us condemned for our crimes, has arranged for their full penalty to be paid by Christ. The blood he shed in the course of dying covers the criminal’s nakedness before God, and turns away God’s wrath. Our crimes disallow anyone from ever gate-crashing God’s presence, yet in Christ the buffer-zone around God is taken away. In Christ we are offered the opportunity to ever live in fellowship with God, with none possessing the authority to move us on. Now *that* is good news for a groaning world!

Return Address:

Postage

Residential Address:



THE RECEIPT OF CHRIST

God's grace does not come to us automatically. It is an offer held by Christ for any to receive from him (Matthew 11:28). Those who do share three convictions, that—

GOD IS ALL-SEEING

When it sinks in that God is incomparably great, we see that we are *"like grasshoppers"* in his sight (Isaiah 40:22). We cease to brush God off, thinking that he is just like us (Psalm 50:21). Additionally, we begin sensing our guilt and our need of Christ. We start taking seriously the prophet Isaiah, *"Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he might have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon"* (Isaiah 55:6-7).

I AM ALL-SINFUL

In turning to God a tension develops within us. We need his grace, yet the more we draw near to God the more vulnerable we feel, for *"no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of whom we must give account"* (Hebrews 4:13). Yet, keep drawing near to God, for there is no peace for those endlessly running from him. We've nowhere to go from God's Spirit, not to heaven nor to *Sheol* (the abode of the dead), nor to the ends of the earth, for God is in all these places (Psalm 139:7-12). Hope lies in courageously looking our sin in the face and in earnestly seeking God for his pardon.

CHRIST IS ALL-SUFFICIENT

Understand that God convicts us of our sin not to crush us but to bring us, in his mercy, to rest fully on Christ. In him alone is our pardon found. When we collapse on him we gain three assurances. First, that Christ himself is our Savior. Second, that his righteous life has become our robe to cover our nakedness before God. Third, that our sin was impaled to Christ's cross for us to bear it no more. Fall, then, on Jesus. He has dropped none who do so.



THE REWARD OF TRUST

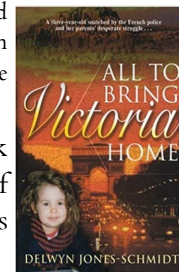
We close by returning to authoritarian statism, for wherever statism has got above itself, Christians, new and old, must courageously follow their Lord. This is not new.

During the reign of King Darius the Mede, his high officials, knowing they could not get charges to stick against their colleague the prophet Daniel, and aware of his commitment to prayer, deceived Darius into enforcing an injunction against any petitioning any god or other man for thirty days. Committed to God, Daniel continued his prayers three times a day with his windows open toward Jerusalem. To Darius' distress, for he esteemed Daniel, he was unable to change the law of the Medes and Persians, and thus cast Daniel into a den of lions. Praying and fasting all night that the God whom Daniel served would deliver him, Darius found great relief in answered prayer.

God rewarded Daniel's trust in him, so reminding us that he never lets down those who commit their ways to him. By contrast, Darius cast into the den of lions *"those men who had maliciously accused Daniel"* and their wives and children (Daniel 6:24). The lions immediately tore them to pieces. Darius then wrote to *"all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth,"* making a proclamation worth factoring into our allegiances today:

I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who saved Daniel from the power of the lions. [6:26-27].

Daniel's stand remains a live issue. Check out the Schmidts' traumatic experience of state overreach in Delwyn Jones-Schmidt's *All to Bring Victoria Home*.



NEXT ISSUE DUE OUT: MARCH 1