

IS AMERICA A CHRISTIAN NATION?

This controversial question has been argued and debated since the founding of the nation. In spite of the arguments that have raged for decades the question “just what is the definition of a Christian nation?” has never been given. The beliefs and purposes of the founding fathers as well as the original intent of the Constitution has been a topic of discussion which has had no definite answer. If we are going to use the word “Christian” then it follows that the answer to the question should be found in the Scriptures. There are two passages that remotely describe such a nation: Psalm 33:12: “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord” and Proverbs 14:34: “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.” When speaking to the leaders of the Jewish nation Jesus said: “I say to you the kingdom of God will be taken from you, and given to a *nation* producing the fruit of it” (Matt. 21:43). This *nation* is describe in I Peter 2:9: “But *you* are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy *nation*, a people of God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” The criteria for a “Christian nation” according to these Scriptures are: God is their Lord; righteousness which exalts it; it produces the fruit of the kingdom and proclaims the excellence of Him (God). This seems to say there is a *Christian Nation* existing in the midst of all secular nations. Jesus said “My kingdom is not of this world, (It) is not of this realm” (John 18:36). Further when the Pharisees and the Herodians were trying to trap him with a question of paying taxes he asked for a coin with Caesar’s inscription on it and said: “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s” (Matt. 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25). This means that although our currency has “in God we trust” inscribed on it does not mean it is a valid argument that America is a Christian nation. The Psalmist said “Rule in the midst of Your enemies” (Ps. 110:2), and James states that “whosoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4). How many churches and Christians today have made themselves friends with the world?

This question will continue to be debated, but one thing we can be sure of: America is a *religious nation*. According to *The Hartford Institute of Religion* there are approximately 33,820 Protestant churches in America with a weekly attendance of 56 million; this includes 1,600 “mega-churches” having over 2000 members; 24,000 Catholic and Orthodox churches with 77,000 members. This does not include Bible and missionary societies, home Bible study groups, Christian media companies, Christian youth organizations, campus ministries, religious bookstores or Christian radio and TV stations. There are 2,106 Mosques and 193 Hindu temples. According to *Jewish weekly* there are 3,700 Synagogues in the U.S. *The World Almanac* states there are 500-600 Buddhist Centers and 2-3 million Buddhist in the U.S. The *Wikipedia Encyclopedia* states: “Buddhism is one of the largest religions in the United States behind Christianity, Judaism and non religious, and approximately equal with Islam and Hinduism.”

It is not religions that make a nation Christian or, considering the statistics above, religions are not the hindrance if the nation is not Christian. The two claimants to being Christian are the Protestants, with 33,820 churches and a weekly attendance of 56 million, and

the 24,000 Catholic and Orthodox with 77.7 million members. The deciding factor is to be found in the churches, but it is not in the number of churches and the size of their membership, but the effect they have upon America. The important question is not is the nation Christian, but is the organized church Christian? This may be taken as an insult to these churches but decline of Christian influence on the culture in America cannot be blamed on other religions. “For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God...” (I Pet. 4:17).

Christ inaugurated his ministry in the Synagogue of Nazareth by quoting Isaiah 61:1: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18, 19). By these words he announced his confrontation with a culture that was in conflict with God and had kept mankind enslaved since the beginning.. In order to understand this conflict we should have a definition of “culture.” A noted twentieth century theologian, the late Richard Niebuhr, president of Elmhurst College and later professor at Yale Divinity School, in *Christ and Culture* wrote: “culture is the total process of human activity, that is, our total way of life.” Webster defines culture as “the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; also a set of shared attitudes, values, goals and practices that characterizes an institution or organization, a way of life shared by people in a place and time.” Kenneth A. Myers in his book *All God’s Children And Blue Suede Shoes, Christians and Popular Culture* writes: “Any adequate definition of culture seems so encompassing as to include everything in human experience. Defining culture is not an easy task. We can easily come up with a dictionary definition, but such a definition tells us how to recognize the thing defined, but it doesn’t tell us much about how it behaves.” To understand how the culture of the world (inspired and ruled by Satan) behaves we have only to read about how it began in Genesis and see how it operated throughout the history of God’s people in the Old Testament. It is in his ministry and the life of the early church that we see how Jesus confronted the culture of the world and how the church dealt with it. To quote Niebuhr again: “Some have argued that Jesus ignored culture. Joseph Klausner writes, ‘He did not come to enlarge his nation’s knowledge, art, and culture, but to abolish even such culture as it possessed, bound up in religion.’”

Jesus confronted the culture of his day, not by attacking and trying to change the systems of the world, but by destroying Satan’s grip on culture. He did this not by a ministry of condemnation of a corrupt Roman system that held the people in political bondage, rather he directed his attention to the corrupt religious system that had long ago left the teachings and concepts of God’s revealed law. Douglas D. Webster states in *Christian Living In A Pagan Culture*: “The Pharisees knew full well that the leeway extended to them under Roman policy could easily be curtailed if they no longer commanded the respect and authority of the general populace (John 11:47, 48). What really disturbed them was Christ’s power and authority, his revolutionary approach to the ceremonial law, and his constant association with the despised people of society.” Jesus knew that if the world were changed

it would be changed by the people of God living according to the precepts of Divine revelation, not by trying to change the laws and practices of a worldly culture. Thus he taught that the people of God are “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:13, 14), and admonished them to “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). This is echoed to the early church in the words of the Apostle Paul: “prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (culture) among whom you appear as lights to the world, holding fast the word of life” (Phil. 2:14-16). The answer to the corruptness and decaying of society was and still is to be found in the faithfulness of the church. Leroy Garrett in his essays entitled *Soldier On* wrote: “The church is by nature sub-culture, called out from the world to be a holy people, different from the world. It is also anti-culture, at odds with the world, its values and methods. Malcolm Muggeridge, that old British cynic turned Christian, who resolved to take Christ seriously, insisted that if Jesus were on earth today he would not use TV. His methods would be ever so simple, as they were before, while the power would be his message. That is the problem. Even the church has hardly taken the message seriously. The power is the message, not in the methods.”

David W. Bercot in *Will The Real Heretics Please Stand Up* notes that “early Christianity was a revolution that swept through the ancient world like fire through dry timber. It was a countercultural movement that challenged the pivotal institutions of Roman Society, but the relationship of the early Christians to their culture is not simply a matter of history. It is something that should deeply concern the church today. For most of the cultural issues facing twentieth century Christians are the very same issues that faced the early church. However, our response to these issues has generally been quite different than theirs.” It is not unusual for Christians to complain about how the world is living. For example, people playing golf or fishing on Sunday and not “attending church” is a complaint of many Christians. They should realize that is how the world works and they have no obligation to live as the Christian lives. The Apostle Paul states: “when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness (Rom. 6:20), and “The natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them” (I Cor. 2:14). However when the world (or government) forces its beliefs and life-style upon the church, then the Christian must face these moral issues. It is a fact that such issues as the examples below are issues that the early church encountered and are comparable to the issues the 21st century church faces.

Abortion: Over one million, two hundred thousand six hundred thirty-five abortions have been performed in the U.S to date this year (12/23/2012). [From: *Abortion Clock.org*]. Women identifying themselves as Protestants obtained 43% of all abortions in the U.S; Catholic women account for 27%; Jewish women account for 1.3% and women with no religious affiliation obtain 23:7% of all abortions. 18% of all abortions are performed on women who identify themselves as “Born again/Evangelical”. [From: *The Center for Bio-Ethical Reform*].

Divorce: To cite David Bercot again, he quotes B. A. Robinson in *Divorce Rates for Various Faith Groups* Barna Research Group as having researched divorce among various religious groups and found that the divorce rate among born again American Christians was higher than the divorce rate among Americans as a whole.

And that the divorce rate in the Bible Belt is higher than it is in any other part of America, except for the state of Nevada.”

Pornography: The following statics are taken from internet reports by: *Adams Media Research, ABC Primetime News, USA Today, Focus on the Family, The Smoking Jacket, On Line Psychology* and *New Scientist Magazine*: Pornography in America has grown to a \$13 Billion business, bigger than the NFL, the NBA, and MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL combined. Also it is said it’s larger than the revenues of the top technology companies combined including Microsoft, Google, Amazon, eBay Yahoo, Apple, Netflix and EarthLink. Every second 30,000 people are viewing porn, 42.7% of internet users view porn; that is 102, 434,517 people in America. Adams Media Research states “Adult videos bring in a total of \$500 million to \$1.8 billion per year; Internet \$1 billion; pay per view 128 million; Porn magazines \$2.6 to \$3.8 billion. Although we cannot verify that all these statistics are accurate, this shows pornography is a major problem in America. We may add to these three mega problems in America today: the erosion of our educational system, high fashion and low modesty in the entertainment system, uncontrolled drug traffic and use, an epidemic of drunk driving fatalities, the entrenched racism in the country, the extremists in the gay community and their zealous commitment to a gay agenda, the breakdown of the family, teenage pregnancy, the ongoing spread of sexually transmitted diseases, corruption in the government, unemployment, and the list goes on. We might add to all this: the concern for the environment, poverty, wars and the threat of wars, and the list of America’s problems does not cease.

Add to these one of America’s greatest problems: the multitude of organizations trying to solve these problems. It is not liberal organizations such as the ACLU, ACORN, MOVE ON.ORG, PEOPLE OF THE AMERICAN WAY, “OCCUPY” GROUPS, and THE NAACP, nor Conservative organizations such as CHRISTIAN COALITION (formerly the Moral Majority), AMERICAN FAMILY ASSOCIATION, EAGLE FORUM, THE TEA PARTY, ALLIANCE DEFENCE FUND or AMERICANS UNITED FOR SEPERATION OF CHURCH AND STATE that will save America. Neither is it the Democrat or Republican parties. Our loyalty to these organizations sometimes takes precedent over our loyalty to God. This is something these conservative causes are in the most danger of doing. There is the danger of thinking their agenda is the agenda of God, so He is on their side. We need to learn the lesson God taught Joshua when He was about to lead the nation of Israel into the Promised Land. “Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man (an angel) was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua said to him, ‘Are you for us or for our adversaries?’ And he said, ‘No, rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the Lord’” (Josh. 5:13, 14a). This was a message from God that He had not come to take sides, but to take over. We need to realize to God, “the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales” (Isaiah 40:15). America is in that bucket. It is from God, not political entities that all power is derived (John 19:10, 11; Rom.12:1).

Is America a Christian nation? The answer is not found in what the founding fathers were or said and did, nor in the fact that America has been blessed by God to have been the vehicle for the proclamation of the gospel around the world. The answer is Psalm 33:12: “Blessed is (present these) the nation whose God is the Lord.”

