

The United States: A “Christian Nation”?

By Ethan R. Longhenry

In the eyes of many, the United States of America is considered a “Christian nation.” Some believe God has specially chosen the United States as His possession and uniquely blesses it and its citizens. Others are convinced the United States was founded on the Christian faith and can only endure if most of its citizenry maintains the Christian religion. Some characterize the United States as “Christian” because most of its citizens claim to be Christian. In many places around the world, people conclude that since most Americans claim to be Christians, the United States must be a Christian nation, and therefore everything promoted by the United States and Americans must represent the Christian faith.

Throughout its history, the United States has been populated by many people who have professed to follow Jesus and practice Christianity. Many of those who helped to establish the United States believed in Jesus and felt that Christianity would hold the country together. Statistics continue to show that most Americans profess belief in God, Jesus, and the Bible. The United States represents a force for good in many ways, and there can be little doubt that God has blessed the United States with many blessings. But can the United States truly be characterized as a “Christian nation”?

In the Old Testament, God did choose one particular nation, Israel, as His possession, uniquely blessing it (Exodus 19:3-6). Yet Jesus, through His life, death, and resurrection, paved the way for the establishment of a Kingdom which would transcend all national boundaries, over which He now rules as Lord (Daniel 2:44, Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 2:36, 10:34-43, Colossians 1:13). Jews and Gentiles were brought together with equal standing in Jesus’ Kingdom (Ephesians 2:11-18). Because of Jesus and His Kingdom one’s country of origin no longer matters; everyone in every nation is able to call upon the name of Jesus as Lord (Galatians 3:28, Colossians 3:11). Since Jesus’ Kingdom transcends all national boundaries, Christians are called upon to consider their citizenship in Jesus’ Kingdom as primary (Philippians 3:20-21). Because people from every nation are to find unity through Christ, Christians must privilege the bond of shared faith in Christ over the bond of shared nationality (cf. Isaiah 2:1-4, Ephesians 4:11-16). Christians are called upon to show concern for fellow Christians no matter their nationality or ethnicity (Romans 15:25-27, Galatians 6:10).

God has always shown concern for His chosen people; the New Testament makes it clear that God’s chosen people today do not reside in only one nation-state but represent all people who serve His Son Jesus as Christ (Romans 4:13-25, Galatians 6:14-16). Therefore, the only “Christian nation” in the world is the Kingdom of God as represented by Jesus’ church, which is not limited to the boundaries of any nation-state (Colossians 1:13, 18-20).

Many Americans are Christians, but there are Christians in other countries as well. While we can have little doubt that God has blessed the United States and uses it to accomplish His purposes, there is no reason to believe that Americans are privileged in God’s sight or have special standing before Him. No one will be saved because they were citizens of the United States; the only people who will be saved are citizens of the Kingdom of God (cf. Philippians 3:20-21)!

The United States is a nation with many Christians in it, but it never has been a “Christian nation,” nor ever will be. The United States has done many good things but has also perpetrated injustice and evil at times as well. Most Americans profess faith in Jesus, but that faith is not often deep, and many who “believe” do not really serve Jesus. Many aspects of American culture promoted in American media are considered immoral and sinful by God (cf. Galatians 5:19-21). The United States and its culture do not accurately reflect Jesus or Christianity. Let us all, Americans as well as citizens of other nations, serve Jesus as Lord, maintaining citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven, and find our salvation in Him!

Walking or Riding, Singing or Playing?

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16).

On November 15, 1843, Alexander Campbell rose to speak in a debate with N.L. Rice, a Presbyterian scholar. Campbell expressed the following: "Had the Messiah, in giving the commission, said, 'Travel into all nations and preach the gospel,' then, this word being generic, his apostles could have obeyed the precept by walking, riding, sailing, or any other mode of traveling. But had he said, 'Walk through all the world,' etc., he could not have been obeyed by riding." (Campbell Rice Debate, Old Paths Book Club, page 99).

Applying this thought to the music question, had the Lord said, "Make music with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs," the words, being generic, we could obey the precept by playing, whistling, and any other imaginable way to "make music." But since he said "sing," we could not obey the requirement by playing various kinds of musical instruments. (From Dudley Ross Spears)

A Moments Wisdom on Preaching

--If we preach the whole counsel of God, we shall be accused of extremism, not only by the world but also by a professing church that cannot endure sound doctrine.

--A preacher should have the mind of a scholar, the heart of a child, and the hide of a rhinoceros. His problem is how to toughen his hide without hardening his heart.

--The preacher who will not preach his heart out before a few people would be no good before a multitude.

--It is not enough to love to preach. We must love those to whom we preach.

--The task of the preacher is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.

--I trust I am not one who pounds because he can't expound.

--One should enter the pulpit as though it were the first time, as though it could be the best time, and as though it might be the last.

--Preaching the truth makes people either sad, mad, or glad. Too many people today leave church on Sunday neither sad, mad, nor glad; they go out as they came in. Better go out mad than just go out.

--An awful lot of preaching misses the mark because it proceeds from love of preaching, not love of people.

--Some preach the truth and don't have love. Some preach love and don't have the truth. Get the mixture right. The truth will keep you from dissolving into sentimentality; love will keep you from hardening into severity.

--The devil will let a preacher prepare a sermon if it will keep him from preparing himself.

--Too many church services start at eleven o'clock sharp and end at twelve o'clock dull.

--If you want to be popular, preach happiness. If you want to be unpopular, preach holiness.

--Preaching a sermon that is strong on information but weak on application, is like shouting to a drowning man, "SWIM! SWIM! The message is true, but it's not helpful.