

The Remaking of America

Gary DeMar

America's Christian Heritage is a fading memory for most Americans. Decades of value-neutral public education have left our nation without a moral anchor. While the Bible is a perennial best seller, and Americans publish and purchase more Bibles than any other people on earth, **“the Bible has virtually disappeared from American education. It is rarely studied, even as literature, in public classrooms.”** And yet, it was the Bible that made America. **The rejection of the Bible in our day is resulting in the unmaking of America.** On May 28, 1849, Robert C. Winthrop (1809-1894), speaker of the Thirtieth Congress, addressed the Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Bible Society in Boston and issued this warning:

The voice of experience and the voice of our own reason speak but one language...Both unite in teaching us, that men may as well build their houses upon the sand and expect to see them stand, when the rains fall, and the winds blow, and the floods come, as to found free institutions upon any other basis than that morality and virtue, of which the Word of God is the only authoritative rule, and the only adequate sanction.

All societies of men must be governed in some way or other. The less they may have of stringent State Government, the more they must have of individual self-government. The less they rely on public law or physical force, the more they must rely on private moral restraint. Men, in a

word, must necessarily be controlled, either by a power within them, or by a power without them; either by the word of God, or by the strong arm of man; either by the Bible, or by the bayonet. It may do for other countries and other governments to talk about the State supporting religion. Here, under our own free institutions, it is Religion which must support the State.

The bayonet rules in those nations which reject the Bible. As the Bible ceases to govern in the hearts of the people, and those who rule reject the Bible as a moral standard, we will see more of the glistening steel of the sharpened bayonet govern in America.

How is it that a nation that seems to be in love with the Bible works so hard to reject its teachings? First, while Americans seem to honor the Bible, they are ignorant of its contents. **“Americans revere the Bible but by and large they don't read it. And because they don't read it, they have become a nation of biblical illiterates.”** Six of ten adult Americans, George Gallup, Jr. and Jim Castelli report, have no idea who delivered the Sermon on the Mount. Fewer than half of those surveyed can name the first four gospels. If a majority of the people don't know what the Bible says, certainly we cannot expect them to know what it means and how it applies.

A similar deficiency exists in the area of American history and the record of men and women who knew, understood, and applied the Bible to every area of

Life.

One college teacher tells of a student who didn't understand why World War II was so named, since he'd never heard of World War I; another teacher tells of a student who was puzzled that George Washington is sometimes referred to as "General," since the student was unaware of Washington's role in the American Revolution. A recent survey of the general population done for the Hearst Corporation found that of those responding, 45 percent thought that the phrase, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need," is from the U.S. Constitution.

History is a teacher. "History," Thomas Jefferson wrote, "by apprising [people] of the past will enable them to judge...the future; it will avail them of the experience of other times and other nations; it will qualify them as judges of the actions and designs of men...."

Second, in addition to rampant biblical and historical illiteracy, a prevailing belief persists that "religion" is strictly a private affair. On one level this is certainly true. Regeneration is a work done on the heart. But regeneration, as defined by Scripture, was never meant to stop at the heart. "What use is it," James asks, "if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?" (James 2:14). Works, that is, acts of righteousness, are evidence that regeneration has taken place. Things external are to confirm that something has happened internally. A religion that is solely a private affair is a false religion. Sadly, it seems that

most Americans are comfortable with this type of religion. While they might be *personally* against abortion and special rights for homosexuals, they do not believe it is proper to impose such laws on society.

Ideas Have Consequences

Ideas, or the lack of them, have consequences. Ignorance of the Bible and the way it has been used by our forefathers is having disastrous results. To reject the Bible as the foundation upon which our nation rests is the rejection of America and its ideals, imperfect as they were. John Adams, an eyewitness to America's beginnings, in a letter to Thomas Jefferson, calls on us to remember the "general Principles" that made this nation great:

The general Principles, on which the Fathers achieved Independence, were the only Principles in which that beautiful Assembly of young Gentlemen [representing the numerous religious denominations of the country at the time of the Revolution] could Unite.... And what were these general Principles? I answer, the general Principles of Christianity, in which all these Sects were United: And the general Principles of English and American Liberty, in which all these young Men United, and which had United all Parties in America, in Majorities sufficient to assert and maintain her Independence.

Now I will avow, that I then believed, and now believe, that those general Principle of Christianity, are as eternal and immutable,

as the Existence and Attributes of God; and that those Principles of Liberty, are as unalterable as human Nature and our terrestrial mundane System.

A similar observation was made by Franklin D. Roosevelt when he said: “We cannot read the history of our rise and development as a nation, without reckoning with the place the Bible has occupied in shaping the advances of the Republic....[W]here we have been truest and most consistent in obeying its precepts, we have attained the greatest measure of contentment and prosperity.” The common ground of Christianity united the country.

The God America trusted in is the God of biblical Christianity. Thomas Jefferson, who was by no means orthodox in his religious beliefs, still turned to the pages of the New Testament for ethical guidance. Jefferson reminds us in the Declaration of Independence that “we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights.” Yes, Jefferson couched his meaning for morals in something called the “law of nature” or “natural law.” Jefferson realized, however, that natural law needed a source of authority. Jefferson’s “law of nature” needed “nature’s God.” “The point of the matter has always been that natural law itself needed divine sanction to become binding for men.”

The twentieth century has seen the results of shoving God out of the moral arena. Millions were slaughtered under Stalin and Hitler. Under these regimes, “morality” was defined by the State, an idea inherited from the Enlightenment. Charles Colson of Prison Fellowship

shows its contemporary application and results:

Nazism arose as a result of the Enlightenment and what is called the rights of man. Until that time, human rights in Western civilization rested on the Bible and the belief that all are equal before the creator.

But as Christianity was rolled back, people tried to find a new basis for rights. Hannah Arendt, in her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, says the rights of man “meant nothing more nor less than that from then on man, and not God’s command....should be the source of law.”

But what is man that he should possess all these wonderful rights by the bare facts of his existence? Apart from God, the rights of man dangle in the air without any basis.

So into the vacuum rushed all sorts of ideologies, Nazism tried to lay a basis in race. Hitler’s motto was that right and wrong are defined by what’s good for the German people.

Marxism tried to fill the vacuum with class structure. Lenin’s motto was that right and wrong are defined by what’s good for an individual’s own race or gender group.

America is now being defined in terms of “multiculturalism.” An appreciation of diverse cultures is being used as a dodge to smuggle in aberrational moral standards that will have the effect of diluting the impact of biblical Christian-

ity. Multiculturalism is a type of ethical polytheism: many moral law-orders based on many gods.

Polytheism (all gods are equal) leads to relativism (all moral codes are equal); relativism leads to humanism (man makes his own laws); and humanism leads to statism (the State best represents mankind as the pinnacle of power). As Rushdoony remarks, “because an absolute law is denied, it means that the only universal law possible is an *imperialistic law*, a law imposed by force and having no validity other than the coercive imposition.”

We are being driven back to the Tower of Babel on the theological bus of multicultural education: Multiculturalists want to make a name for *themselves* to displace the name of God. The multiculturalists are forcing the position, and the word is *forcing*, that all cultures are inherently equal, except, of course, Western culture which did not accept the view that all cultures are *ethically* equal. Christianity is what makes the difference.

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Fundamentally, the real question is not whether America was or is a Christian nation. Rather, the question must be, Should America be a Christian nation? President Woodrow Wilson affirmed that a Christian nation is not in its slogans but in the ethical system it chooses, the values that Wilson described as “elements of righteousness.” What standard should be used to determine

“righteousness”? Our earliest founders had the answer.

Whether we look at the Puritans and their fellow colonists of the seventeenth century, or their descendants of the eighteenth century, or those who framed the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, we see that their political programs were the rather clear reflection of a consciously held political philosophy, and that the various political philosophies which emerged among the American people were intimately related to the theological developments which were taking place. Political philosophies are not created in a vacuum, but are in turn the product of systems of thought which find their inspiration and nurture in theology. What is true of colonial and Revolutionary America is no less true of the America of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Because of this there appeared in an early date in the colonies a kind of political orthodoxy, a way of looking at government and its functions and of the proper relationship which should exist between government and its citizens. *A Christian world and life view furnished the basis for this early political thought which guided the American people for nearly two centuries....* This Christian theism had so permeated the colonial mind that it continued to guide even those who had come to regard the Gospel with indifference or even hostility. The currents of

this orthodoxy were too strong to be easily set aside by those who in their own thinking had come to a different conception of religion and hence of government also.

There is, however, something even more fundamental. The law cannot save, no matter how righteously or vigorously it is embraced and applied. **America was great because she was good. She was good because so many Americans embraced Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.** The leaven of the gospel was a force for good in America. If America is ever to regain her greatness, the churches of America must once again preach an authentic gospel—the gospel of free grace and biblical discipleship—not the gospel of works and superficial religiosity. Man must be told that he is a sinner, and he must also be told that Jesus is his only hope of redemption, two simple truths that are lost on most Americans, including many so-called “Christians.” The remaking of America will come by way of the gospel and a love for God’s commandments (John 14:15).

As Benjamin Franklin so eloquently stated at the Constitutional Convention: “God governs in the affairs of men.” God governs because He is King, and this world is part of His universal kingdom-realm. While His kingdom is not “of this world,” it certainly operate *in and over* this world. Franklin continued as he addressed the members of the constitutional convention: “And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice [Matthew 10:29], is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured...in the sacred writings that ‘except the Lord build the house, they labor in

vain that build it’ [Psalm 127:1]. I firmly believe this, and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel.” The kingdoms of men are dependent upon the operation of the Kingdom of God *in and over this world*. Birds do not fall and kingdoms do not rise without the overruling of God’s providential hand.

A Christian Commonwealth

More than a century before the drafting of the Declaration of Independence, John Eliot, the Puritan missionary to the Indians, wrote in his *The Christian Commonwealth* (a documents intended as a plan of government for the Natick Indian community), that it is not for man “to search humane Polities and Platformes of Government, contrived by the wisdom of man; but as the Lord hath carried on their works for them, so they ought to go unto the Lord, and enquire at the Word of his mouth, what Platforme of Government he hath therein commanded; and humble themselves to embrace that as the best....[**The] written Word of God is the perfect System or Frame of Laws, to guide all the Moral actions of man, either towards God or man.**” Because we are living in God’s kingdom, Eliot taught, it is our duty to follow the rules of the King and not to look at earthly rulers as saviors.

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