

IS AMERICA A CHRISTIAN NATION?

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The phrase “separation of church and state” has been misunderstood

A. The phrase is not found in the founding documents

- It does not appear in the Declaration of Independence.
- It does not appear in the Constitution.

B. Jefferson’s phrase was meant to protect the church from the state

- The concern was not keeping the church out of public life.
- The concern was preventing the state from controlling, weaponizing, or corrupting the church.

C. The Establishment Clause preserves the church’s prophetic role

- The church must remain free to correct the state.
- The church must remain free to restrain the state.
- The church must remain free to speak truth to the state.

D. If the state controls the church, the church loses its conscience role

- A compromised church cannot rebuke public evil.
- A controlled church cannot speak prophetically.



The central question is whether America was, and remains, a Christian nation

A. America was founded as a Christian nation

- The claim is emphatic and unqualified.
- The nation's roots are presented as distinctly Christian.

B. Whether America remains a Christian nation depends on Christians now

- The past is fixed.
- The present and future are shaped by Christian obedience and witness.

C. This is not merely a historical question

- It is a practical question.
- It is a spiritual question.
- It is a present-tense question.

Denying America's Christian roots is spiritually serious

A. Denial robs God of glory

- If America's blessing is severed from America's Christian roots, God is denied credit for the nation's flourishing.

B. Denial removes the true center

- Jesus Christ is presented as the center of the American experiment.
- If Christ is removed, something false will replace him.

C. There is no true freedom apart from Jesus Christ

- Not spiritually



- Not socially
- Not politically

D. No nation that denies Christ achieves true freedom and flourishing

- America's prosperity cannot be honestly explained apart from biblical principles and gospel influence.

The colonial states openly established Christian public life

A. Early state constitutions were explicitly Christian

- They were not neutral.
- They were not secular.
- They were not merely generically religious.

B. Christian assumptions shaped public order

- Observance of the Lord's Day
- Protestant Christianity established in public life
- Officeholders required to profess faith in Jesus Christ
- Public officials required to affirm belief in the Trinity
- Public office tied to belief in the inspiration of Scripture
- Public office tied to Christian morality and doctrine

C. The founders did not build a neutral nation

- They built on Christian assumptions.
- Often they built on explicitly Protestant assumptions.



D. The Establishment Clause did not secularize the nation

- It prevented one Protestant denomination from being imposed on all the states.
- It protected diversity within Christian orthodoxy, not neutrality toward religion.

E. The idea that the founders were basically secular deists is false

- It is historically false.
- It is spiritually dangerous.

The pulpit was central to the moral formation of the colonies

A. Before strong formal government, preaching held the colonies together

- Protestant pulpits
- The preaching of the Word of God
- A shared Christian moral framework

B. The size of government is related to the strength of the pulpit

- The quieter pulpits get, the more government is needed.
- The louder pulpits get, the less government is needed.

C. When God is big, man is small

- The gospel teaches the limits of every sphere.
- The fear of God restrains man's self-exaltation.

D. When the church is silent, the state expands

- The state grows to fill the vacuum left by a silent church.



E. Cultural decline is tied to weak pulpits

- Silence
- Compromise
- Cowardice
- The culture did not simply drift on its own.

The church is called to apostolic and prophetic boldness

A. Bold preaching is the permanent calling of the church

- It is not reserved for extraordinary moments.
- It belongs to the church in every age.

B. If pulpits stop speaking truth over all of life, the world disciples the culture

- Public life will not remain neutral.
- Silence in the church creates space for false discipleship.

C. The claim that churches should avoid politics is false

- It is a lie.
- It is spiritually destructive.
- It helps explain the nation's current condition.

America's earliest institutions were founded for Christian purposes

A. Harvard

- Founded for knowledge, holiness, and godliness

B. William & Mary



- Founded to train ministers
- Founded to spread the Christian faith

C. Yale

- Founded to prepare young men for public employment in church and civil state

D. Institutions now seen as secular began as Christian

- Their roots reinforce the Christian character of the nation's founding.

The Declaration of Independence is saturated with biblical worldview

A. The Declaration is not godless

- It speaks in categories shaped by biblical theology.

B. Its God-language is substantial, not decorative

- The laws of nature
- Nature's God
- The Creator
- The Supreme Judge of the world
- Divine Providence

C. These references point to biblical realities

- Moral law
- Divine authority
- Accountability before God



- Rights given by God, not by the state

Rights come from God, not government

A. Government does not create rights

- God gives rights.

B. Government's role is limited

- To acknowledge rights
- To protect rights
- Not to invent rights
- Not to revoke rights

C. Fundamental rights named

- Life
- Liberty
- The pursuit of happiness

D. If government gives rights, government can take them away

- If rights come from God, government is under higher authority.

The founders rejected illegitimate government, not government itself

A. The American founding was not anarchist

- The founders did not cast off authority as such.

B. They resisted illegitimate authority



- Britain had moved outside God's design for government.
- Britain had demanded godlike allegiance.
- Britain had claimed what belongs only to God.

C. Caesar has limits

- Render to Caesar what is Caesar's.
- Render to God what is God's.
- When Caesar demands what belongs to God, Christians must refuse.

Providence in the founding was the providence of the God of the Bible

A. Providence did not mean a distant deity

- It did not mean a detached higher power.

B. Providence meant God's active rule

- God's general and specific work
- God moving all things toward his purposes
- God ruling history in detail

C. The Declaration's appeal to Providence is biblical in substance

- Even where Jesus is not named in every sentence, the worldview is governed by biblical categories.

The founding involved higher allegiance to God than to man

A. The men of the founding acted under conscience before God

- They believed they answered to a higher authority.



- They risked everything under that conviction.

B. Moral courage was exercised against illegitimate power

- Their action is presented as spiritually weighty, not merely politically clever.

Property rights are biblical, not merely constitutional

A. Property rights begin with God's ownership

- God owns all things.

B. Human stewardship reflects the image of God

- People are permitted to possess and steward what God entrusts to them.

C. The command against theft assumes private ownership

- "You shall not steal" only makes sense where ownership is real.

D. Biblical care for the poor did not erase private stewardship

- The gleaning laws required landowners to leave provision for the poor.
- The state did not seize and redistribute all property.
- Responsibility began with citizens and landowners.

E. Concerns about property are biblical concerns

- Liberty
- Stewardship
- Ownership under God

F. Systems that flatten ownership are contrary to biblical worldview



- Communism
- Socialism

The founders inherited a Protestant and biblical worldview

A. The Puritan and reformational inheritance mattered

- The English Reformation
- The Church of England
- Bloody Mary
- The Puritans
- The migration to the New World

B. The reformers brought more than theology for church life

- Biblical convictions
- Protestant doctrine
- A theology of society and government

C. Colonial life was shaped by that inheritance

- The nation emerged from a culture steeped in biblical categories.

The founders' assumptions align strongly with Calvin's political theology

A. Shared convictions include

- God's providence
- Revealed religion and Scripture



- Reason under revelation
- Man's sinfulness
- Government as restraint of sin
- Moral law and natural law
- Human law under divine law
- Resistance to illegitimate authority
- Just war
- Natural God-given rights
- Limited delegated powers
- Separation of powers
- Free enterprise as a means of flourishing

B. America's political architecture did not arise in a vacuum

- It emerged from a deeply Protestant and biblical worldview.

Separation of powers reflects divine order

A. Isaiah presents the Lord in three governmental categories

- The Lord is our judge.
- The Lord is our lawgiver.
- The Lord is our king.

B. The branches of government reflect that pattern

- Judicial



- Legislative
- Executive

C. Constitutional structure can be seen as an echo of divine order

- The pattern of government is not detached from theological vision.

America's legal tradition once openly acknowledged the nation's Christian character

A. Holy Trinity Church v. United States

- The Supreme Court surveyed the nation's history, laws, customs, and institutions.

B. Its conclusion was explicit

- "This is a Christian nation."

C. This serves as legal confirmation

- America's Christian character was once openly recognized at the highest judicial level.

The founders themselves testified to the necessity of Christianity in public life

A. The founders affirmed the importance of Christianity

- John Adams
- Noah Webster
- James Madison
- George Washington
- Patrick Henry

B. Their core conviction



- Religion and morality are necessary for civil life.
- Christian influence is necessary for freedom and public order.

C. Christianity was not decorative

- It was foundational to the republic.

The church must speak to politics

A. The church cannot withdraw from public life

- If the church retreats, the demonic fills the void.
- The world disciplines the culture.
- Government loses its conscience.

B. The church does not need politics as savior

- Politics needs saving.

C. Pastors must preach Christ over every area of life

- Including public life
- Including civil authority

Christian foundations created freedom even for those of other faiths

A. America's Christian foundation did not produce oppression of conscience

- It produced prosperity
- It produced asylum
- It produced freedom



B. Others benefited because the nation was founded on the gospel's moral order

- Christian public foundations created space for others to live in peace.

America's Christian identity was broad and public

A. Christianity was the overwhelming public identity

- Large majorities identified as Christian.
- Atheism was described as virtually unknown.

B. Public office was often tied to Christian confession

- Christian identity was not hidden or marginal.
- It was explicit and dominant.

Alexis de Tocqueville saw religion and liberty joined together in America

A. Tocqueville observed that Americans linked religion and liberty

- They could hardly imagine one without the other.

B. His witness confirms the larger argument

- Christianity was seen as indispensable to the republic.
- Christian morality sustained the American experiment.
- Religion and liberty were woven together in national consciousness.

The present question is whether America will remain a Christian nation

A. The founding question is settled

- America was founded as a Christian nation.



B. The present question is unsettled

- Whether it remains so depends on what Christians do now.

Christians must exercise political discernment

A. Christians must read political platforms

- Not just personalities
- Not just optics

B. Christians must think biblically

- They must discern what aligns with the Word of God.

C. Voting is a moral act

- To vote for policies that explicitly advocate sin is to participate in national condemnation under God's judgment.

D. The governing principle

- Righteousness exalts a nation.
- Sin condemns any people.

Final charge

A. The church must not surrender its prophetic role

- It exists to speak truth to power.
- It must not be controlled by the state.

B. America's roots are explicitly Christian



- In its constitutions
- In its institutions
- In its founding documents
- In its legal tradition
- In its public leaders
- In the witness of outside observers

C. Rights come from God, not government

- This truth limits the power of the state.

D. Silence in the pulpit strengthens the state

- Quiet churches produce expansive government.

E. Christians must think politically in biblical categories

- Public life is not outside discipleship.

F. Christians must act in this national moment as citizens of heaven

- Salt
- Light
- Faithful in the public square

Summary statement

- America was founded as a Christian nation.



- The First Amendment was meant to protect the church from state corruption, not remove Christianity from public life.
- The urgent question now is whether Christians will live, speak, discern, and act in such a way that the nation remains ordered by righteousness rather than condemned by sin.

