



THE
UNITED
STATES
A CHRISTIAN REPUBLIC



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The United States: A Christian Republic

by R. J. Rushdoony

Was the United States established by the Constitution to be a Christian republic, or was it designed to be a secular non-religious nation? The liberals and left-wingers are generally agreed in declaring the United States to have been non-Christian from the beginning and dedicated to the separation of church and state. Many conservatives object strenuously if anyone raises the question: they want no part of a Christian America. For at least one prominent conservative organization, it is permissible for members to be anti-Christian, but they dare not be anti-Semitic! Others have similar standards: members of these conservative groups must avoid offending various pressure groups, but they are left free to be as hostile to historic, orthodox, evangelical Christianity as they please!

But the plain fact is that the United States has only in recent years departed from its Christian foundations. The Hoover Commission, a few years ago, stated that “the most fundamental change in the intellectual life of the United States is the apparent shift from biblical authority and religious sanctions to scientific and factual authority and sanctions.” Let us examine those older foundations.

Separation of Church and State

First of all, the idea of the separation of church and state never entered into the thinking of the founding fathers at the Constitutional Convention, and it does not appear in the Bill of Rights. The First Amendment simply bars Congress or the federal government from establishing any religion: it left the states free to continue their existing established churches and thereby gave its clear-cut sanction and protection to the establishment of Christianity and of Christian churches by the states and as a state right. Second, the idea of the separation of church and state was a new idea in that age, held only by some atheistic philosophers and first put into practice only with the French Revolution. Prior to

the French Revolution, every government in the world held that it was essential to the state to hold a religious faith. The only questions were, first, what religion and, second, on what level of government, national and imperial, or local and provincial? Not even the French Revolution broke with religion at once: it tried to palm off deism, a pseudo-religion of the day claiming to be a natural world religion, as the new religion of the state.

All Colonies Christian Republics

The American colonies were all Christian republics. They were, first of all, free and independent states, self-governing republics. They were never a part of England, whatever the school textbooks may say. Each colony began its existence with a charter or constitution, created its own governmental bodies, and had no relationship to the mother country, England, *except* that they shared a king in common, and the king was a feudal, contractual monarch over the colonies.

There were mutual obligations between king and people. The royal governor represented the king; the freely elected legislators represented the people. Each colony could issue its own money, an obvious sign of an independent country. The trouble between king and people came in two ways. First, the English kings claimed divine rights and the absolute power of rule, and, after 1688, the English Parliament claimed this right for itself. After the French and Indian War, Parliament, a foreign government, took over the king's power in America, and then it tried to usurp the powers of the American legislatures and the American peoples. Parliament had no legal relationship to the Colonies except in imperial matters, none with respect to the internal affairs of these American states.

Parliament invaded the American colonies in three ways: first, it tried to take over their internal affairs by taxing and governing them; second, it quartered troops on them when they resisted this invasion; third, it declared war on them and a full-scale invasion of America. The American states then declared their independence of King George III for violating his contractual kingship. They did not declare their independence of Parliament because they had never been subjects of the English Parliament or of England. The Declaration of Independence was directed against King George III and cited the reasons why his relationship to America had been rendered null and void by his own actions. The Declaration plainly stated: "these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be FREE and INDEPENDENT STATES."

Thus, the American states asserted that their independence dated from their first settlement: they had never been subjects of England; they had been his majesty's loyal subjects until King George himself destroyed the constitution and rendered it null and void.

All of the American colonies being Christian republics brings us to the other great reason for the War of Independence, a war to maintain independence against invasion. John Adams declared that, "as much as any other cause," the American resistance to Parliament was aroused by the projected attempt of Parliament to force bishops onto the colonies. Adams wrote in a letter to Dr. Jedediah Morse, December 2, 1815, that, "The objection was not merely to the office of a bishop, though even that was dreaded, but to the authority of Parliament, on which it must be founded" (John Adams, *Works*, vol. 10, 1865 edition, 185.). Each American state had its own religious settlement; none of them wanted an outside government to force a religious establishment on them. They wanted the freedom to be Christian republics according to their own Biblical beliefs. Every state, when the Constitution was adopted, was a Christian republic. Nine of the thirteen had one or more established churches. Christianity as a religion, rather than a particular church, was the established faith of the other states.

Religious Requirements for Office

In every state, there were religious requirements for holding office and for voting. As a rule, it was at least necessary to hold to Trinitarian Christianity and the inspired and infallible nature of the Bible. It was only in 1902 that New Hampshire dropped the suffrage requirement that one be a "Protestant" in its "Bill of Rights" and changed it to "Christian," and as late as 1912, New Hampshire refused to eliminate that word "Christian." In recent years, the courts, and constitutional revisers in the states, have been busy dropping the Christian requirements from the various state constitutions and hiding and burying our Christian heritage.

It was only in 1964 that the New Jersey Supreme Court tossed out a state law barring testimony from atheists unless they are parties to a lawsuit. Such laws were once commonplace. An atheist once could not testify in American courts of law. Some historians speak of New York and Pennsylvania as the liberal states at

the time of the founding fathers. But in December, 1880, in “Rise and Progress of Revolution: A Charge to the Grand Juries of the Counties of the Fifth Circuit of the State of Pennsylvania, by Alexander Addison, President of those Courts” (Reprinted by Robert Donner, 7 West Las Vegas, Colorado Springs, CO, 15c), atheism was singled out as the basic anti-American subversive force and the root of all revolutions. Over a quarter of a century later, Alexis De Tocqueville, in his American travels, reported that a New York state judge in 1831 disqualified an atheistic witness, declaring “that he had not before been aware that there was not a man living who did not believe in the existence of God; that this belief constituted the sanction of all testimony in a court of justice: and that he knew of no cause in a Christian country, where a witness had been permitted to testify without such a belief” [Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 1 (New York, 1841 ed.), 344.].

In “liberal” Pennsylvania, atheism is called subversion in a grand jury charge in 1800, and in 1831, a judge in “liberal” New York met his first atheist! These two facts alone give us a glimpse of a very different United States than that pictured in our textbooks, in textbooks written by socialists for socialist state schools. But some will object, what about Thomas Jefferson and his deistic and anti-Christian opinions? The answer is an obvious one: Jefferson never published such statements in his lifetime. They were privately written or expressed and were never published until a much later era, some only in our day. It is simply not honest to read opinions which were in their day held to be heresy or subversion and were only privately expressed as typical of that age, but this is precisely what most scholars insist on doing.

The Constitution—A Christian Document

But, some will still object, what about the Constitution? There is no reference to Christianity in it, except for the legal exemption of Sunday with respect to presidential vetoes (in Article I, Section 7), and the dating “in the year of our Lord” in Article VII. What is Christian about a Constitution which never mentions Christianity? The answer is everything. First, the laws reflect Christian moral law, and the checks and balances system reflects the Christian distrust of man as sinner. Second, the Constitution stayed out of the area of religion deliberately because it recognized that Christianity was already the established religion of every state, and because it also recognized that this was a matter of state and

local rights. It did not dare to touch on the subject. The states had not fought Parliament only to submit to another centralized government in matters of religion. Every state was jealous of its own Christian framework: those who did not agree could move to another state or into the territories.

No Separation of Church and State

The First Amendment therefore did not separate church and state. All that it says with respect to religion is simply this: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” All this means and all that it meant to the thirteen states was simply this: First, the federal government was barred from interfering with the Christian laws and establishments of the thirteen states. This was a matter of states rights exclusively. Each state was free to develop its own Christian legal framework without any interference from the federal government. The Supreme Court today has interfered with that right. It has barred prayer from the schools as supposedly unconstitutional, although not only prayer, but extensive Bible teaching had prevailed from the beginning of the Constitution up to the Warren Court. Second, the First Amendment, by barring the federal government from interfering, was thereby underwriting the validity of every state establishment and law in every one of the states. It was not only affirming the right of the states to be Christian republics, but it was also pledging itself against interference with those Christian orders and giving them its tacit approval. The First Amendment was thus a guarantee to Christian establishments and laws.

No Atheism in Early America

These are facts which cannot be explained away. We cannot read modern atheism into early America. America in those days had its problems; it had its subversives and it had its share of sins and shortcomings. But it was clearly Christian and Christianity prevailed in both the hearts of Americans and the laws of their governments—local, county, state, and federal. Congress began with divine worship, not merely prayer as today. The Northwest Ordinance provided, both before and after the Constitution, free land for Christian schools. And, for many years, Christian schools were the only schools American had, until

Unitarians and socialists worked to establish state-controlled schools.

Why is this side of our history by-passed or denied? Why is it that virtually nothing is published about our Christian heritage in America? Alexander Addison saw the reason clearly in 1800: atheism is the basic subversion and most of our schools are controlled by it. As Addison stated it, "The object of the first conspiracy was the destruction of the Christian Religion." Conservatives who are not Christian are a party to that subversion.

By way of conclusion, let us turn for a moment to Patrick Henry, whose resounding words, "Give me liberty or give me death," echo to the shame of our current socialists and appeasers. As that great Christian patriot lay dying, his last words were to his physician and friend, Dr. George Cabell, a man who doubted the Faith. First, Patrick Henry, according to his grandson, Patrick Henry Fontaine, who was present, told his family "that he was thankful for that goodness of God, which, having blessed him all his life, was then permitting him to die without pain. Finally, fixing his eyes with much tenderness on his dear friend, Dr. Cabell, with whom he had formerly held many arguments respecting the Christian religion, he asked the doctor to observe how great a reality and benefit that religion was to a man about to die." Henry then died quietly, trusting his Savior. In his will, after disposing of his sizeable estate, he added these words:

This is all the inheritance I can give to my dear family. The religion of Christ can give them one which will make them rich indeed.

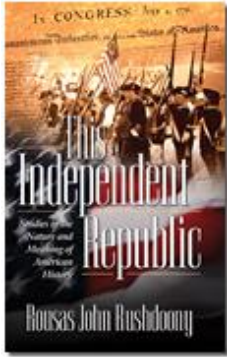
Patrick Henry felt that his resolutions of May 29, 1765, against the Stamp Act, together with his famous speech, were his gifts to America. With them, he left at his death these parting words to every American citizen:

Whether this will prove a blessing or a curse will depend upon the use our people make of the blessings which a gracious God hath bestowed on us. If they are wise, they will be great and happy. If they are of a contrary character, they will be miserable. Righteousness alone can exalt them as a nation. Reader! Whoever thou art, remember this; and in thy sphere practice virtue thyself, and encourage it in others. [William Wirt Henry, *Patrick Henry, Life, Correspondence and Speeches*, vol. 2 (New York, 1891), 625-632.]

Patrick Henry, Christian, had been so eager to counteract infidelity or atheism that in 1789, alarmed by the influx of French atheism, he had reprinted a book defending Christian faith against unbelief and circulated it at his own expense, carrying copies in his travels and humorously asking Judge Winston not to mistake him “for a travelling monk” (*ibid.*, 490). We are told that, “He approached the communion table with the greatest reverence, after having prepared himself by fasting, and spent the day in retirement” (*ibid.*, 575).

Patrick Henry knew what it is high time we know: the issue is liberty or death, and the only ground of our liberty is Jesus Christ, and our Christian Faith and heritage.

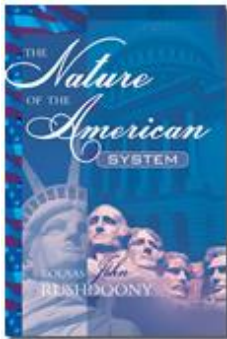
Reference: *This Independent Republic* by R. J. Rushdoony, which describes in details various aspects of our Christian heritage.



This Independent Republic

By R. J. Rushdoony. First published in 1964, this series of essays gives important insight into American history by one who could trace American development in terms of the Christian ideas which gave it direction.

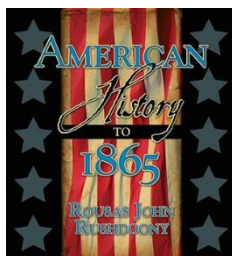
These essays will greatly alter your understanding of, and appreciation for, American history. Topics discussed include: the legal issues behind the War of Independence; sovereignty as a theological tenet foreign to colonial political thought and the Constitution; the desire for land as a consequence of the belief in "inheriting the land" as a future blessing, not an immediate economic asset; federalism's localism as an inheritance of feudalism; the local control of property as a guarantee of liberty; why federal elections were long considered of less importance than local politics; how early American ideas attributed to democratic thought were based on religious ideals of communion and community; and the absurdity of a mathematical concept of equality being applied to people. **Paperback, 163 pages, index**



The Nature of the American System

Originally published in 1965, these essays were a continuation of the author's previous work, *This Independent Republic*, and examine the interpretations and concepts which have attempted to remake and rewrite American's past and present. "The writing of history them, because man is neither autonomous, objective nor ultimately creative, is always in terms of a framework, a philosophical and ultimately religious framework in the mind of the historian... To the orthodox Christian, the shabby incarnations of the reigning historiographies are both absurd and offensive. They are idols, and

he is forbidden to bow down to them and must indeed wage war against them." **Paperback, 180 pages, index**



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marked the beginning of the secular attempts to rewrite history. There can be no understanding of American History without an understanding of the ideas which undergirded its founding and growth. Set includes 37 CDs (which includes a bonus lecture CD and a CD of Transcripts for

both CD and books), Teacher's Guide and Student's Guide. **37 discs in album, Set of "American History to 1865"**

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The Author

Rousas John Rushdoony is a well-known American scholar, writer, and author of over thirty books. He holds B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of California and received his theological training at the Pacific School of Religion. An ordained minister, he has been a missionary among Paiute and Shoshone Indians as well as pastor of two California churches. He is founder of Chalcedon Foundation, an educational organization devoted to research, publishing, and cogent communication of a distinctively Christian scholarship to the world at large. His writing in the *Chalcedon Report* and his numerous books have spawned a generation of believers active in reconstructing the world to the glory of Jesus Christ. He resides in Vallecito, California and is currently engaged in research, lecturing, and assisting others in developing programs to put the Christian faith into action.

The Ministry of Chalcedon

CHALCEDON (kal•see•don) is a Christian educational organization devoted exclusively to research, publishing, and cogent communication of a distinctively Christian scholarship to the world at large. It makes available a variety of services and programs, all geared to the needs of interested ministers, scholars, and laymen who understand the propositions that Jesus Christ speaks to the mind as well as the heart, and that His claims extend beyond the narrow confines of the various institutional churches. We exist in order to support the efforts of all orthodox denominations and churches. Chalcedon derives its name from the great ecclesiastical Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), which produced the crucial Christological definition: “Therefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man” This formula directly challenges every false claim of divinity by any human institution: state, church, cult, school, or human assembly. Christ alone is both God and man, the unique link between heaven and earth. All human power is therefore derivative: Christ alone can announce that “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18). Historically, the Chalcedonian creed is therefore the foundation of Western liberty, for it sets limits on all authoritarian human institutions by acknowledging the validity of the claims of the One who is the source of true human freedom (Galatians 5:1).

The *Chalcedon Report* is published monthly and is sent to all who request it. All gifts to Chalcedon are tax deductible.

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