

If America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great

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This morning as I awoke to the news of rioting in the streets of Milwaukee, I saw an urgent appeal by a city official begging churches to get involved with quelling the rampant violence and looting.

I also saw a story about a boy who had been working very hard to raise money by collecting and selling scrap metal so that he could send the money to a friend of his age who was living in poverty in Uganda.

So, which story represents the real America? The story about the boy is commendable; all Americans should be instilled with a sense of charity and selflessness as that young boy. There was no mention whether this boy was a Christian, but I would not be at all surprised that he was. Having said that, I have to ask, where has the press been for the last few hundred years as our nation's churches have been giving their lives or their fortunes, or both?

The truth is, Christian charity is deeply embedded in American culture because of our Christian roots, but as progressivism and secularism has been taking the church's place, we see the kind of behavior we are seeing in Milwaukee today.

And not only that, but our educational system – which was established not to proselytize, but to teach Christian principles – has been instructed and fooled into teaching a revisionist form of history that teaches that Christianity never had anything to do with our nation's formation and thus any notion that it did must be summarily rejected.

Fortunately, in America we have not reached the point that we are burning books to hide the truth, because among the books that would be burned are those of the French jurist who came to America in 1831 to see what made America so successful, Alexis de Tocqueville. Here is what he wrote about education in America at that time:

“In New England every citizen receives the elementary notions of human knowledge; he is taught, moreover, the doctrines and evidences of his religion, the history of his country, and the leading features of its Constitution. In the states of Connecticut and Massachusetts, it is extremely rare to find a man imperfectly acquainted with all these things, and a person wholly ignorant of them is a sort of phenomenon.”

This was not something that was particular only to those two states. Christianity was systemically spread with the westward expansion into what would become other states. He wrote:

“The Americans combine the notions of Christianity and of liberty so intimately in their minds that it is impossible to make them conceive the one without the other...I have known of societies

formed by Americans to send out ministers of the Gospel into the new Western states, to found schools and churches there, lest religion be allowed to die away in those remote settlements, and the rising states be less fitted to enjoy free institutions than the people from whom they came.”

This westward expansion of Christianity became an intimate part of American culture for well over a hundred years, until progressivism and secularism began its slow and deliberate subtraction of Christianity.

I once heard it said that a depression in the 1930s and a depression now would be far different. In the 1930s, people were not rioting and looting at every opportunity, they were not looking for government to support them when they could not find work or even if they did not want to work. The difference between the people then and now is their character. A depression now would be met by angry people demanding free support and redistribution of wealth.

Perhaps the most famous quote attributed to Alexis de Tocqueville is one that describes the character and Christianity of people of the former of the two conditions I just described:

“I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her commodious harbors and her ample rivers, and it was not there; in her fertile fields and boundless prairies, and it was not there; in her rich mines and her vast world commerce, and it was not there. Not until I went to the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because she is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.”

Where is America headed now? Most polls show that the majority of Americans believe that we are headed in the wrong direction. The question is, have we been taken so far away from our Christian roots that we are likely never to find our way back again?



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