

## **Stepping Up**

### **Or, The Church, History and the Truth**

We don't know much about the prophet Isaiah, except that he was born in Jerusalem and served in the function of a prophet during the reigns of several kings of Judah, beginning his prophetic work the year that King Uzziah died. Some speculate that he may have been a member of the royal family, but speculation is all that it is without further evidence. What we know for certain is that, regardless of his heritage, he served for decades in ministry to the Lord. And yet, part of his function involved the teaching of history. Most prophets did the same thing, because the message to Israel (later Israel and Judah) involved reminding the people and their leaders of the circumstances regarding the nation's founding and the work of God in doing just that. This was especially important in the face of the Baal, Ashterah, Molech, Tammuz and the Queen of Heaven cults in vogue in those days which, being false, likely had fictionalized accounts of the creation of the world in general and Israel in particular.

A similar competition may be forming in America. The truth of the history of the founding of our nation as a nation devoted to God has been under attack for years; first, by driving prayer from the public education system, then by the formation of school district rules prohibiting employees from practicing their religion, essentially violating the First Amendment rights of employees and students alike. This leaves a largely secularized account of the founding of America to be taught in the public schools, as students are forbidden to learn about the settling of the New World by people anxious to fulfil the Great Commission and to practice their faith as their consciences dictated.

With the underpinnings of the Christian faith thus removed from the story of America, this leaves a void in the story of European settlement in the New World. And, since we all know how nature feels about vacuums, a new story has come along in the form of The 1619 Project, a creation of a writer for The New York Times, which teaches that the foundations of the United States truly began with the first slaves imported to North America, and that the nation's original purpose was to perpetuate the slave trade. The scholarship of the project has been called into question, but that has not stopped some large school districts across the country from adopting 1619 for use in their schools.

Some states with more conservative leanings in their governments (Texas, for instance) have banned the use of the curriculum. However, this by itself does not solve the problem for several reasons. First, it is a political solution only and as such is far from permanent. Any progressive push to "flip" the state, if successful, would mean the reversal of the ban and the installation of 1619 as required curriculum. Second, even with the ban there are some dedicated progressive educators and schools led by the same willing to defy it and teach 1619 anyway. Finally, unless a student and/or their parents are disciplined enough spiritually to eschew what they know to be wrong, there is a natural curiosity about something that is "banned." Some refer to this as the *Forbidden Fruit* ploy. Under these circumstances, such people will seek out the project under their own power, regardless of whether it is correct and true or not.

The bottom line is that, without the full truth of the nation's founding to counter this fictionalized account, all that is left standing is the fiction and a large number of people unable to tell the

difference. And because of an incorrect interpretation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment and subsequent laws and rules, all of which remain in force although *clearly* unconstitutional, public school districts are restrained from giving the full story to their students. And that is where we as believers come in.

Why go to all this trouble? The obvious answer is that proponents of 1619 and secularism do not believe and wish to erase the influence of the Gospel from all areas of American life. Behind that, however, lies a more sinister idea; that if the influence of the Gospel is removed, then the moral character of our elected officials becomes irrelevant to the people – leading to the downfall of the nation (Proverbs 14:34). Whether they realize it or not, whether they accept it or not, those who advocate pure secularism in government become the enemies of the nation. This is an unpleasant fact, and I wish I did not have to say it, but it is, nonetheless, true; and the sooner we acknowledge it as a people, the better.

As followers of Jesus, we are to bear witness to the truth as He did (John 18:37). And if the public schools cannot or will not teach the truth regarding the nation's founding, then the Church must step up and do the job itself. There are a number of ways this can be done. The obvious way is through the pulpit, with pastors, priests and ministers informing their congregations (some, perhaps, for the very first time) of the nation's true history. A second approach could be through the congregation's Sunday School classes, small groups and other programs. Another could be opening the church house, wherever and whatever it is, to homeschool groups studying American history. Finally, if the congregation is financially able to do so, church-run schools and academies can teach the truth as part of its history curriculum. Some already do this, though they may have to contend with state laws governing such things in the process.

Will there be opposition to this? Probably, and congregations taking up the challenge will have to take critics into account and be ready to answer them (1 Peter 3:15). But there is good news in that the "heavy lifting" has already been done in preparing curricula, textbooks and support materials. The Texas-based group WallBuilders has a number of materials to support such efforts, and various faith-based colleges and universities have programs prepared for just this purpose. A quick check online should provide you with all the information you need to begin.

The nation cannot be turned back to God if it does not know the old landmarks (Proverbs 22:8, Jeremiah 6:16), or if its members are not even aware of their existence. This, too, is ministry.