

美国是不是基督教国家

Is America a Christian Nation?



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另外，法律不可支持或歧视信奉任何一门宗教的政府工作人员，可是同样，在民间，人们的判断又是不含糊的。一个没有任何信仰的总统候选人，连机会都不会有，不是说谁会禁止他，而是他不会得到选票。一个人的信仰，其实是其个人价值观、世界观、人生观源泉，有信仰的人做人有原则。多项调查显示，即便不怎么信教的人，都希望自己的领导人信仰。人们都说布什很笨，他怎么在这个精英统治的国家，当上了总统。当初我也不懂，但是听电台上的分析家说，他的价值观分明，爱憎分明，同时他有道德勇气。在一个制度十分完善的国家，小事其实好解决，决定一个国家方向的，是在重大问题上的道德所抉择，是一个领导者表现出的价值取向。如果这个问题不重要，为什么所有候选人都在强调自己是有信仰之人呢？里根说过：“若我们忘记美国是在神之下，美国就会没落。”

虽然强调政教分离，不成为中东一些国家那样“政教合一。”可是，小到写有“In God we trust”的每一枚硬币，大到总统选举中针对信仰问题的辩论，基督教的精神却无处不在。我甚至从房地产代理的广告上看到，有些房地产代理说自己是基督徒，当然他可能是打着这个旗号，目的是赢得他人信任，然而从另外一方面看，这也说明社会诚信的根基也是信仰。如果房地产代理在广告中说：某某某，什么都不相信，竭诚为您提供房地产代理服务，看他的客户还能留下几个？

邓小平当年曾提出“物质文明”“精神文明”两手抓，“精神文明”常被翻译成“spiritual civilization”，而在英文语境当中，spiritual的意思是“属灵的”，比如基督教三位一体论中的圣父圣子圣灵中的“圣灵”，就是 Holy Spirit。这个翻译歪打正着，它让人想起了精神文明建设和信仰的密切关系。脱离信仰的 Spiritual civilization 是难有根基的，就如同建在沙地上的房子。如果人的眼光超脱不了现世的需要，认为死后一了百了，什么帐都一笔勾销，仅仅是有法无天，那么在法律打盹的时候，就难怪人们不顾正义，不顾职责，而是及时行乐，甚至胡作非为了。

Moreover, though the laws forbid public organizations to discriminate on the basis of religious beliefs, people have been unreserved in their judgment that a candidate's religious belief counts in their public office. As a candidate one could say he does not believe in God, but he might as well not campaign. Polls show that even non-believers look at the faith of candidates they vote for, because faith is the source of values and principles. Americans do not want a leader without values and principles that make America what it is. Many people criticize President Bush as someone who is dumb. Why did he still get votes, you might wonder? Because he is perceived, as NPR put it, to be a person of moral clarity and moral strength. This is a country that could probably run itself without a president due to its sophisticated political system that takes care of lots of small issues. But it's the major issues that shape a country's future. And major issues would always involve the use of moral judgment. Nobody wants that judgment to be held in the hands of someone who does not believe in a power higher than himself. That would put a country's future in the sway of the individual's whims. Therefore President Reagan said that if the US were not a nation under God, it certainly would decline.

Yes, you could argue that the church and state are separated in this country, unlike many countries where they are one. However, you would see the whole country to be heavily influenced by the Christian faith in all sorts of ways: from the motto "in God we trust" on coins, to dialogue about faith in presidential debates. I even find real estate agents declaring themselves to be church-goers. Though that can be a controversial practice, that does say that personal credibility in this country is also tied to what a person believes in. If a real estate agent were to say in his ads: "I am a real estate agent without a faith system. I will serve you with all my heart." I would be curious to see whether he would have any clients.

When Deng Xiaoping started the reform in China, he emphasized that China should focus on both "material civilization" and "spiritual civilization" in the modernization of China. We as a country have been rather successful in the former, but not in the latter. Though the word "spiritual civilization" is a literal translation of the Chinese term, it does remind one of what faith does in providing a healthy social atmosphere for the country. "Spiritual" often has Christian connotations in the English language. For instance, we say "in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." Using mere propaganda to make people behave without involving their faith is like building a house on sand. If people cannot transcend the needs of their present lives, if they believe that death ends everything, why would they bother to lead honorable and virtuous lives, especially when the law itself does not answer to a Higher Power?

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I often hear people debate whether America is a Christian nation. From a legal perspective, it may not be so classified. But one really needs to step back and examine what he means by a "Christian nation." I do not pretend that I know much about the law, so I shall not answer this question from a legal perspective. However, American society is certainly deeply grounded in the Christian spirit so far as I have observed after living in this country.

People often quote the First Amendment to the US Constitution to prove that the USA is not a "Christian" country, because the amendment forbids the congress to write laws to establish a national religion. We should not understand the intention of this amendment to be the exclusion of Christian faith from this country. America was founded by puritans who tried to escape religious persecution. The separation of church and state is to protect religious diversity so that other faiths will not be persecuted as the American forefathers had experienced in Europe. In Chinese we say that a poorly treated daughter-in-law would also become mean once she becomes a mother-in-law herself. In the case of the first amendment, I guess some people just decide not to be the mean mother-in-law anymore. In 1982, President Reagan addressed the Alabama State Legislature: "To those who cite the First Amendment as reason for excluding God from more and more of our institutions and everyday life, may I just say: The First Amendment of the Constitution was not written to protect the people of this country from religious values; it was written to protect religious values from government tyranny."

In theory, with this amendment, you would expect Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and atheism to play an equal role in US society. But that has not been the case. It is exactly like the fate of languages in the US. At the time being, no law has been written to establish an official language for the country. Theoretically, Spanish, Chinese, Greek, etc. should have equal status in this country, but you don't find that when you want to enroll in a college by taking the TOEFL, GRE etc. English is the de facto official language. You find it very inconvenient if you don't speak the language. You could protest by saying that English does not have to be the only language to be used in your GRE exam, but I doubt that anybody will change the exam into another language.

In addition, while public places like city hall can get sued for displaying the Ten Commandments, you would find, as I have, people who erect tablets of the Ten Commandments in their yards as an expression of their faith. I have seen people in my neighborhood do this. I also see people who have the fish sign (a symbol of Christianity) on their cars as a public confession of their faith. The more people try to remove the Christian faith from public places, the more other people emerge to show their endorsement of it.

常听人争论美国这个国家究竟是不是基督教国家。我个人认为，如果从法律角度去看，这个国家未必是基督教国家。这也要看你如何去定义何为基督教国家，因此“美国是不是基督教国家”的这个问题我无法提供答案。可是从个人理解的社会特征上看，分明感觉到这是一个以基督教精神为价值观基础的社会。

人们常援引美国宪法第一修正案（First Amendment）来说明美国不是一个基督教国家。因为该修正案禁止国会制定关于确立国教或禁止信教自由的法律。然而第一修正案的初衷未必是要将基督教扫地出门。这个国家的创立，本来就是一群清教徒逃避宗教迫害而来，因此，此修正案的根本精神，是在多年媳妇熬成婆之后，决计不再迫害其它信仰的人，或者持任何一门信仰或是无信仰的人。里根 1982 年曾说过：“对于那些以宪法第一修正案为借口，越来越多地从各组织和日常生活中将神逐出的人，我要对他们说：宪法第一修正案不是写来保护本国人民免于宗教价值，乃是保护宗教价值免受政府的专制。”

从理论上说，应该是伊斯兰教、基督教、无神论、佛教统统一样，事实上也不是。这就好比语言。在美国，没有一门语言是官方语言，理论上说英语、汉语、西班牙语、希腊语，等等等等，应该都平起平坐。英语却成了这个国家事实上（de facto）的主要语言。生活在这里，不会英语还是不行。而且托福考试这些，统统都用英文，你可以根据宪法规定进行抗议，可这还是无法让它将 GRE 改成其他语种考。

另外，法律管辖的范围是公共场所，市政厅里有“摩西十诫”纪念碑，会被人控告。然而去年这时候人们会在自家门前插上牌子，让更多的“摩西十诫”涌现出来。我们这里有户人家就在门前放上了摩西十诫的牌子，还写道：别的地方控告，我这里欢迎。美国还有很多人车后贴有表述自己基督徒身份的小鱼符号，也是在表明自己的个人信仰。每回有人试图将基督教信仰分离出公共场所时，就有更多人跑来自报家门，以各种方式阐述自己的信仰。