

‘One Nation Under God’: Could a Divided America Once Again Fulfill This Historic Prayer?

America today seems hopelessly divided along political, cultural, religious and moral fault lines. Exacerbated by an emotionally-charged election, the hatred and vitriol have reached levels unseen in my lifetime, and I lived through the 1960s with its assassinations, race riots and an unpopular war that provoked widespread protests.

Only two times in history has America been as divided as it is today: 1) During the Civil War and 2) during the early 1700s before the Great Awakening in the 13 Colonies. The answer for both situations was the same.

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In this essay, I will address how the 13 divided Colonies became the United States of America and fulfilled George Whitefield’s prayer that they would become “one nation under God.”

The Deep Divisions of Colonial America

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Most do not realize the deep divisions that characterized colonial America between the Anglicans who settled Virginia, the Puritans who settled New England, the Baptists who settled Rhode Island, the Quakers who settled Pennsylvania and more.



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In the Old World, Anglicans (as the state church) had imprisoned Puritans, even putting some to death. They had also persecuted Baptists and Quakers. In the New World, Puritans had persecuted Quakers and Baptists, banning them from their colony and going so far as to put some to death. Anglicans in Virginia jailed Baptist preachers who entered their colony to preach the gospel. Baptists and Quakers did not get along and considered Puritans and Anglicans to be part of the false, harlot church of Revelation.

It seemed that these groups would never reconcile. Their history was too long and their pain too deep. But God had an answer. It lay in a great, spiritual awakening based on the preaching of the gospel, wherein Jesus was presented as the central object of faith.

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