

MISTAKEN NATIONAL IDENTITY: SAMUEL HUNTINGTON'S WHO ARE WE?

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In his 2004 book, Who Are We?, Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington argues that America's national identity is in danger of being lost because of the influx of immigrants, particularly Hispanic, who are not being assimilated to American society. Huntington believes that the American identity was formed through the interaction of the Protestant Christianity of the original settlers with the New World. He calls for a revival of the American identity through a return to its sources, but fails to see that the liberalized and attenuated Protestant Christianity of today is no longer capable of revitalizing the American identity.

I.

Harvard Professor Samuel P. Huntington has long been considered one of America's most distinguished political scientists. With his 1996 book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*,¹ he demonstrated that human societies and civilizations are not driven by politics, economics, and secular concerns alone, as so often seems to be the way they are viewed and described today. Much more fundamentally, they are based on religions and cultures.

Huntington's division of the world into eight major "civilizations," for the most part, corresponded with the territories of the world's great religions. Interestingly enough, however, he identified no single Christian civilization, but rather distinguished three of them: Western, Latin American, and Orthodox.² His analysis of the past, present, and possible future "clashes" between the various world civilizations has since resonated very widely, especially after 9/11, since Huntington gave considerable attention to what he called "a high propensity to resort to violence" among Muslims, and he also noted, pertinently, that "wherever one looks along the perimeter of Islam, Muslims have problems living peaceably with their neighbors."³

In his new book, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*,⁴ Professor Huntington takes up again some of the themes of his *Clash of Civilizations*, but this time from a somewhat

different perspective. In this book, he examines America's national identity in the context of today's globalization; and, in an impassioned analysis that could almost be called a polemic except for the author's relentless and dry factual piling up of data and citations one upon the other, he analyzes the threat he sees that various aspects of globalization pose to the integrity of the United States as a nation as well as to the very national identity of Americans. For him this threat derives primarily from the virtually unrestricted immigration policy that has been followed by the United States since 1965.

Professor Huntington is alarmed in particular by the huge numbers of immigrants of Hispanic origin coming to the United States who, in his opinion, are no longer being assimilated into American society in the way that earlier generations of immigrants were assimilated. He is especially concerned at the number of immigrants from a contiguous country, Mexico, crowding into the United States, legally and illegally, in ever increasing numbers. From constituting only 14 percent of all immigrants into the United States in the 1970s, Mexicans in the 1990s amounted to 25 percent of the total immigration. In the year 2000 alone, nearly 8 million Mexicans legally entered the U.S., where Mexican immigrants already constituted 27.6 percent of the total foreign-born population in that year. The next largest contingents, by comparison, were Chinese and Filipinos, who constituted only 4.9 and 4.3 percent of the foreign-born population respectively. Professor Huntington sees current Mexican immigration as "leading toward the demographic *reconquista* of areas Americans took from Mexico by force in the 1830s and 1840s."⁵

Professor Huntington is hardly the first to raise the question of what all this means for the future of America. In fact, the number of his sources and citations is quite astonishing: we would never have believed that so much had been written on the subject if we did not see it all laid out in his extremely dense text and notes. He certainly manages to make the case that there is a problem. He himself fears that America "could lose its core culture," become "bi-furcated," and "evolve into a loose confederation of ethnic, racial, cultural, and political groups with little or nothing in common apart from their location in the territory of what had been the United States of America" (emphasis added).⁶

Professor Huntington is not at all unmindful—quite the contrary!—that the current trends he fears in addition to unrestricted immigration—namely, multiculturalism, diversity, bilingual education, affirmative action, the downgrading of patriotism, and the like—are strongly favored within the United States by powerful secularists and

Enlightenment-based liberal elites, if not by what might be called the current American “establishment” itself. Undaunted by today’s reigning notion of “political correctness,” or the idea that we should never be critical of those of “diverse” ethnic, cultural, or religious “identities,” he is apparently little concerned about the sensibilities that usually moderate today’s discourse on anything thought to be covered by political correctness. He is quite bluntly critical, in fact, of all those he sees undermining or harming the traditional America and the American identity that he loves. He attacks multiculturalism in particular and constantly reminds his readers that, since declaring independence from Britain in 1776, the United States has embodied a distinct culture based upon the noble ideas enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and the 1789 Constitution of the United States.

Given the rather unpopular stands which Professor Huntington takes, especially in the present cultural climate, it should not be surprising that *Who Are We? The Challenges to America’s National Identity* has not met with a uniformly favorable response from the critics. Most of the reviews of the book to date, in fact, are as critical of Professor Huntington as he is of those whose agendas he opposes. Perhaps not surprisingly, he has even been attacked as a “racist,” possibly the most damaging epithet that can be applied to anyone in the United States today. To call someone a racist is immediately to place him outside the pale of acceptable society and discourse. Professor Huntington does not seem to care, however; he seems quite unshakably convinced of the rightness of his views. Meanwhile, though, some of his other critics have more temperately made a number of perhaps valid points suggesting that while his thesis is certainly grounded in some troubling current realities, his fears for the future of America and of the American identity may nevertheless be more than a little exaggerated.⁷

However that may be, this Harvard professor’s book has stirred up a lively and in many ways an acrimonious debate among the intellectual classes, and it will probably continue to do so for some time to come, given the author’s prominence, the book’s subject matter, and the rather belligerent, almost defiant way the author has approached that subject matter.

II.

In this paper, I want to concentrate on an issue to which most of Professor Huntington’s critics—and his votaries and supporters, for that matter—have given little attention, preoccupied as most of them are by his lack of political correctness and unwillingness to observe some

of the taboos in our contemporary society. I want to talk about his idea of what constitutes the American national identity to which he refers so prominently in this title. Although he is impressively learned in the history and development of the United States and of the American character, and fervent in his patriotism and his allegiance to traditional Americanism as he understands it, I believe he is in some ways quite wrong-headed and indeed ultimately mistaken in his explanation of what basically constitutes the American character and America's national identity.

Briefly, his account stresses that the United States was founded by British settlers who brought to these shores a distinct culture and way of life that included the English language, a "dissenting" version of Protestant Christianity, a love of freedom, and a respect for the rule of law. These factors eventually developed into what many have styled an "American Creed"—a civic "creed," obviously, not a religious one—that included principles of "liberty, equality, democracy, civil rights, non-discrimination, and the rule of law."⁸

The successive waves of immigrants that came to the United States quite naturally and regularly tended to accept these values, and thus they became assimilated into what Professor Huntington calls America's "*Anglo-Protestant* culture." I think he exaggerates unduly the extent to which "dissenting" Protestantism constitutes an essential and continuing component of the American identity. Even the earliest settlers of America had to modify some of the tenets of their original Puritanism or Protestantism merely in order to live in peace with each other, much less have a society that could eventually admit Catholics, Jews, and even unbelievers on the "equal" basis in which these original settlers also strongly believed, on Professor Huntington's own testimony.

It is, of course, undeniable that the Protestantism of America's early and even some of her later settlers had an enormous influence on the formation of America's national identity. Once formed, however, that identity then constituted a new thing in itself, which did not necessarily require a continuing link with all of the elements that had once originally served in its formation. Specifically, it was no longer necessary to *be* a Protestant or to subscribe to a Protestant version of Christianity in order to be an American in the full sense, possessed of an authentic American national identity. Catholics or Jews or non-believers could also qualify as Americans in the full sense. And in any case, the Protestantism of the early Puritans, like that of the later "revivalist" Christians, eventually became attenuated to the point where nearly all Protestant Americans today have a very different outlook and

very different attitudes than those exhibited by their Protestant co-religionists back in the days when the American identity was being formed.

However that may be, Professor Huntington still insists on characterizing American culture, even today, as an “Anglo-Protestant Culture,” and his great fear today, as already noted above, is that more recent immigrants, especially Hispanic, are not assimilating any longer into America’s basic society and culture. He even declares that “the principal theme of this book is the continuing *centrality* of Anglo-Protestant culture to American national identity” (emphasis added).⁹

As I say, though, I believe his insistence upon the “Protestant” component of America’s basic identity today is greatly overdrawn, but Professor Huntington is nevertheless surely quite unusual among modern American academic political scientists in according to religion such an important role in the formation and continuation of the American identity. He goes further. He unabashedly affirms that America is a “religious and primarily Christian country, encompassing several religious minorities, adhering to Anglo-Protestant values, speaking English, maintaining its European cultural heritage, and committed to the principles of [its] Creed. America was founded, in large part, for religious reasons, and religious movements have shaped its evolution for almost four centuries.”¹⁰

The fact alone that Samuel Huntington is prepared to affirm that “America is a Christian country” would *ipso facto* probably be enough today to provoke the kind of opposition that he has in fact aroused, if most of his critics were not otherwise so strongly focused on his alleged “racism.” It is indeed remarkable that in our present secularized society an American academic—and from Harvard of all places!—would dare to make such an affirmation. True to his insight in the *Clash of Civilizations* that religion is often the basis of society and culture, he is certainly prepared to affirm this in the case of America as well.

It is important for us to remember, however, that for Samuel Huntington, the Christianity that informs American culture is *Protestantism*. He makes this point over and over again and very plainly. In his view, the successful Americanization of, for example, Catholic immigrants has necessarily involved what he calls the “Protestantization” of the Catholic Church in this country. Even American Jews, he holds, have undergone this kind of “Protestantization.” As for Catholics, he admits that they do not “like people referring to the ‘Protestantization’ of their religion. Yet in some degree that is precisely what Americanization involves.” He goes on:

Given the Protestant origins of America, the overwhelming predominance of Protestantism for over two centuries, the central and pervasive role of Protestant values and assumptions in American culture and society, how could it be otherwise?...Catholics in societies that have historically been shaped by Protestantism—Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and the United States—typically have values more similar to those of their Protestant countrymen than to Catholics in other countries. “Catholics and Protestants *within* these societies [he quotes another study] do not show markedly different values: Dutch Catholics today are about as Calvinist as the members of the Dutch Reformed Church.”¹¹

Probably, from his own point of view, Professor Huntington thinks he needs to posit a “Protestantized” Catholicism which—unlike Hispanic Catholicism, for example—is compatible with authentic Americanism as he defines it. Otherwise, he would be excluding at one stroke the largest organized body of Christians by far in his “Christian America,” namely, the nation’s sixty-plus million Catholics. But his analysis and explanations here are really quite superficial and defective. Although there is no doubt some truth in the idea that Catholics living in countries or societies *along with* Protestants often share with them some common (national?) values and attitudes, his idea that the nature of Catholicism and of the Catholic Church has somehow been changed—or could be changed—by the interaction of Catholics with their fellow citizens in America—or, more pertinently, that Catholics who are true Catholics (not “Protestantized” ones) would be incapable of being loyal Americans and adherents to the “American Creed,” all this is nothing more than blatant prejudice and harkens back to the days when an Al Smith could never be elected president of the United States because he was supposedly subservient to a foreign potentate, the pope. The history of Catholics in America over the past couple of centuries has surely demonstrated the contrary, as Professor Huntington, of all people, ought to know.

His basic problem seems to be an inability even to imagine—contrary to the plain evidence of history—that Catholics (or Jews) might possibly remain firm adherents to their own authentic religious faith and yet still be patriotic and loyal Americans also able to subscribe sincerely on a civic level to the “American Creed.” It is *not* necessary to be “Protestantized” in order to qualify as a true American or share an American identity. The notion that it might bespeaks on Professor Huntington’s part a prejudice against, and an ignorance of, the Catholic

Church that is quite unworthy of him, but which unfortunately is at least sporadically evident throughout his book. In spite of his impressive erudition, he really seems to know very little about the Catholic Church, including the Church in America, and what he does know, he does not appear to like. He almost never quotes Catholic sources, for example, and seems to be mostly unaware that any such sources even exist.

Actually, his treatment of religion generally, including his favored Protestantism, is often quite superficial, in spite of some of the genuine insights about religion for which he has been widely credited. He is given, for example, to quoting statistics from polls where people say they are “religious,” though little or nothing is evident from these polls about their actual religious beliefs or real degree of their religious commitment. Nevertheless, this is the kind of evidence he adduces for the proposition that Americans continue to be a “Christian people.”¹² He virtually never gets into questions of what might or might not be *true* in religion, or what moral demands upon the individual or the citizen a true religious commitment might entail. It is significant that one of his often-used words is “religiosity.”¹³ This word aptly describes what, too often, he himself erroneously takes to be “religion.”

III.

It was surprising enough, in this day and age, that a Harvard political scientist could declare the United States to be still “a Christian country.” But in another sense it was perhaps even more surprising that the scholar in question would then promptly turn around and deliberately limit the meaning of Christianity to exclude in principle and from the start the major Christian body existing not only in America, but in the world, namely, the Catholic Church. Since he believes that Christianity is an essential element of the American identity—which he also believes is seriously threatened today—we might have imagined that he would at least want to widen his definition of Christianity in order to include as many Christian Americans as possible who just might be of his way of thinking, and who might wish as ardently as he to affirm America as the unique historical “experiment” that America has in fact been.

Nothing of the sort, however: he makes quite clear that the only Catholics he fully accepts are those he believes have been “Protestantized” by America. Otherwise, his basic hostility towards the Catholic Church—the word “hostility” is not too strong—comes across in a number of places in the course of his narrative. His strong disapproval of Mexican and Latino immigration, for example, seems in

significant part to be based upon “the culture of Catholicism”¹⁴ which he believes these immigrants bring with them (although he himself documents the equally significant number of conversions to Evangelical Christianity among Mexicans and other Latino immigrants).

The “culture of Catholicism” itself, however, will evidently never do. Suddenly, it even begins to become clear why he perhaps classified Latin America as a separate “civilization” in his earlier book, and was unwilling to posit one “Christian” civilization *tout court*: some versions of Christianity, including perhaps also the separate “civilization” of Eastern Orthodoxy, evidently for him simply do not measure up to the demands of the “Anglo-Protestant culture” he champions.

An integral part of his project, then, amazingly enough, thus seems to entail the celebration and revival of: WASPism, that is, of the ascendancy of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, or WASP. This is hard to believe. Of all the contemporary projects that might be attempted or imagined today, surely the revival of the WASP ascendancy would seem to be one of the least likely ever to succeed. Most of us had thought that former President George H.W. Bush, for example, was one of the last of the WASPs; his son, President George W. Bush, already quite consciously places himself in the ranks of the Evangelicals, who continue to demonstrate a certain vitality that is no longer evident in most of the old-line, “mainline” Protestant denominations in America.

For when we look at Protestantism in America today, we no longer discern the strong Christian conviction and commitment that motivated both the early Puritan settlers in America and the later “revivalist” Christians. The *Puritans* believed in the faith they professed and in the “city on the hill” they were striving to build. The same thing was true of some of the subsequent “revivals” in American history that Professor Huntington identifies. However, we see nothing remotely comparable on the religious scene in America today. Who today believes in the Protestantism that the early American settlers believed in? Does Professor Huntington? Does he subscribe, for example, to the Augsburg Confession, the Westminster Confession, the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church, or some more modern version of Protestantism? Or does he simply affirm the importance of Protestantism because it was clearly one of the most important elements in the formation of the original American identity?

If the latter, he has gotten it all exactly backwards. He resembles those idealists who have sometimes praised the Catholic Church, not because they believed in her creed, but because they admired the achievements of Western civilization, and they understand

that the Catholic Church was the “mother” of that civilization. We are almost inevitably reminded here of a figure such as the French nationalist Charles Maurras, a notable figure especially in the period between the two world wars. Maurras decreed that Catholicism had to be an integral component of the French national identity that he cherished because he understood what the Catholic Church had contributed to the greatness of France; meanwhile, though, he scarcely believed a word of the Church’s creed.

Is Professor Huntington touting Protestantism in the same way? If so, he is trying to link America’s future prospects to a diminishing force. That National Opinion Research Center, in a recent report entitled “The Vanishing Protestant Majority,” noted that the various Protestant denominations in the United States dropped from 63 percent of the population of the United States in 1993 down to only 52 percent in 2002.¹⁵ And these numbers continue to dwindle. It would seem that Protestantism today is hardly in any condition to lead any revival or revitalization of America as God’s new chosen people. Nor is it just a matter of decreasing numbers; it also comports a seemingly drastic loss of faith and conviction. We can only contemplate with dismay such things as, for example, the spectacle of the Episcopalians blessing homosexual unions and ordaining as a bishop a man who deserted his family in order to enter into an open homosexual relationship. We see a United Methodist Church at its recent quadrennial general conference voting only by a narrow margin, after an unedifying internal battle, to uphold traditional Christian morality in sexual matters. The Presbyterians, for their part, put off voting on the issue until another year because they apparently could no longer agree on what Scripture nevertheless very plainly says about sexual morality. Several Protestant denominations in America have actually endorsed, and some even promote, such phenomena antithetical to the Gospel as so-called same-sex marriage or legalized abortion.

On the evidence, Protestantism in America today is not the Protestantism that inspired and motivated America’s early settlers. If the American identity truly depends upon the continued vitality of Protestantism, then we are perhaps in bigger trouble than even Professor Huntington imagines. And while it is true that many sincere Christians, Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox, continue to try to affirm their faith in a society and culture increasingly hostile to religious faith, the degree to which some Protestant denominations in particular seem to have succumbed to the pressures of the dominant secular culture cannot inspire much confidence in their ability to revive any “Anglo-Protestant culture.”

In our increasingly morally decadent America, it is true that Evangelical Christians have shown more conviction and commitment than mainline Protestants. Many Evangelicals have proved to be quite admirable both in embodying their faith in action, and in working in the public square to oppose America's current slide into moral permissiveness and decadence. As Professor Huntington himself documents, however, neither the Moral Majority in the 1980s, nor the Christian Coalition in the 1990s, turned out to have either the consistency or the staying power to oppose effectively today's secular humanist juggernaut currently in the process of crushing all the laws governing "morals" that happen to be in its path.

None of this is said in order to criticize or denigrate Protestants or Protestantism as such. Americans generally are implicated in the marked and rapid moral decline in America in our day, a moral decline that probably represents a greater challenge to American identity than any of the challenges that worry Professor Huntington. But if the revival of his cherished Anglo-Protestant culture truly is what is necessary to the salvaging of America's threatened identity, then there would seem to be some need for America's culture to be Protestant in the traditional sense described by Professor Huntington, namely, as denoting what Protestants once believed was "right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate."¹⁶ But, in fact, all this has been drastically *changed* from what it was in the predominantly Protestant culture that characterized America at its founding.

Today in America, courtesy of the U.S. Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision, abortions for any reason or for no reason have been legal since 1973. Over 40 million Americans have been subtracted from today's American population over the past 35 years by virtue of not being allowed to be born. Today in America, the same U.S. Supreme Court, in its recent 2003 sodomy decision, *Lawrence v. Texas*, legalized not merely sodomy between consenting adults, but, in effect, any and all sexual acts whatsoever between consenting adults. In America's original culture, the commandments, "Thou shalt not kill" and "Thou shalt not commit adultery," among other commandments, had some meaning. They no longer have as much in America today. In its most recent session ending in June, 2004, the very same Supreme Court was unable to find any way to protect children from gross obscenity and pornography on the internet, because under the court's current understanding of "the rule of law," obscenity and pornography must be allowed as constitutionally "protected speech."

In a word, both sexual morality and marital fidelity have now virtually been legally *abolished* in America today. This is no

exaggeration. Many other indications besides court decisions point to the same kind of precipitous, perhaps irremediable, moral *decline*. The marriage rate in America, for example, has fallen by nearly 50 percent since 1960, with approximately 1.5 million divorces now occurring annually. At the same time, what the U.S. Census Bureau calls “unmarried partner households” have climbed from 523,000 couples in 1970 to 4,900, 000 in 2000, a ninefold increase.¹⁷

Now none of this is the fault of Protestants in particular. The “acids of modernity” have affected all Americans. Indeed, much of the problem can be said to stem from the decline of Protestantism—and of Christianity generally—in America today. A falling off of religious practice verifiably does correspond to the decline of personal moral behavior. One scholar makes this point unmistakably:

Sociologists predictably see a close linkage between declining church attendance among young Americans and a rising willingness to engage in premarital sex. Young women eagerly availed themselves of the Pill in the Sixties and Seventies largely because they were simultaneously letting go of the New Testament: whereas only 29% of college age females reported having had premarital intercourse in 1965, that percentage had sky-rocketed to 63% by 1985. In the post-Sixties world, young Americans were clearly taking their behavioral cues from someone other than St. Paul. By the 1980s, millions of heterosexual couples would flout the religious doctrines forbidding fornication: over two million unmarried heterosexual couples were living together in 1986, and 44 percent of all American heterosexual couples who married between 1980 and 1984 had cohabited before taking vows.¹⁸

Thus has personal morality “evolved” in America today. But what is the point of citing all this evidence of moral decline in a paper dealing with America’s national identity? The point is that America’s national identity is said by Professor Samuel Huntington to be in danger from many of the effects of today’s globalization, especially from immigrants deemed not easily assimilable to America’s supposed “Anglo-Protestant culture.” The reality, however, is that the Anglo-Protestant culture in question (if that is really what it is) is itself in a steep moral decline characterized by the progressive abandonment by Americans today of the Christian morality which the Founding Fathers of the country, by Huntington’s own testimony, certainly regarded as an *essential* component of America’s national identity.

IV.

In *Who Are We? The Challenge to America's National Identity*, Professor Samuel Huntington says that he would like to see “Americans of all races and ethnicities attempt to reinvigorate their core culture.”¹⁹ But then, as we have seen, he insists on defining America’s core culture as “Anglo-Protestant,” thereby as a practical matter excluding, on account of their religion, at least some of the “races and ethnicities” about which he speaks. He states flatly, for example, that “America is the child of [the] Reformation. Without it there would be no America as we have known it.”²⁰ He probably thinks that he has explained and defined things so that American Catholics and Jews, or even American Muslims, will not be put off by his narrow identification of America with Protestantism. In fact, however, his attitude can only be described as rather condescending towards the many Americans who might well be disposed to share his positive commitment to America’s “core culture,” but who might not want to be obliged thereby to be committed to the Protestant Reformation as well. As far as he is concerned, however, they will just have to accept his *ipse dixit* that America is fundamentally “Protestant.”

More than that, the American core culture in question is currently in the throes of a radical secularization and a drastic moral decline, of which we have noted only a few of the more salient contemporary indications. Ironically, some of the undesirable immigrants he thinks cannot easily be assimilated might in fact help check the current moral decline by bringing with them personal moral standards more consonant with traditional Christian morality. While the divorce rate among Americans generally today is around fifty percent, the divorce rate among the immigrants from Mexico whom he fears is around five percent. Throughout his long and detailed work, however, Professor Huntington scarcely takes any notice at all of the fact that his touted American core culture is in the midst of a grave moral crisis that surely threatens America’s national identity every bit as much as unrestricted immigration, for example, threatens it. He has thus not correctly identified the major challenge to America’s national identity. He unaccountably denies, for example, that America has become “secularized.”²¹

It must be said that he is concerned about lawlessness, at least in the areas of civil rights and affirmative action, where he notes that judges and even legislators bend and stretch the law until it comes to mean the opposite of what it originally meant (e.g., supposedly “color blind” civil rights legislation is interpreted to favor affirmative action

for people of color!).²² But at the same time, he is entirely oblivious, or at any rate wholly indifferent, to the way civil rights legislation has been (and is being) interpreted to grant special rights to homosexuals, even though no federal or state legislation anywhere actually includes “sexual orientation” as a protected category (this does not, however, prevent many judges and administrators from treating it as if had been enacted into law somewhere). It is true that the current much-publicized drive for so-called “same-sex marriage” probably did not burst upon the scene until after Professor Huntington’s book was already written. Still, there were earlier indications, in Hawaii and Vermont, for example, that this so-called same-sex marriage was coming inexorably down the road. Any alert student of American society and culture should have been aware of these indications, especially someone positing a “revival” or “reinvigoration” of religion in order to reaffirm America’s national identity in the face of the dangers threatening it. Now that America has experienced the widespread recent lawlessness of witnessing the issuance of marriage licenses to same-sex couples by mayors, judges, and justices of the peace, not only in contravention of existing law, but often in open defiance of it, we can only speculate about what Samuel Huntington might think about “the rule of law” as one of the pillars of Anglo-Protestant culture and the American Creed.

Actually, Professor Huntington rarely mentions homosexuals, and, when he does, he takes an entirely morally neutral, if not actually favorable, stance towards them. He does not seem to regard today’s massive and aggressive homosexual-rights movement as representing any kind of threat or attack on traditional Christian morality or American culture. His first mention of “gay men and lesbians” comes in a quotation from Richard Rorty on leftism in academia.²³ On the same page, he refers non-committally to President Clinton’s policy on “gays in the military.” He mentions media bias in reporting crimes against “blacks, gays, and women.”²⁴ He includes the category of “gay rights” in a list of “cultural issues.”²⁵ And in one place, he actually refers to people willing to vote for a homosexual as *proof* that they are still “religious”!

In short, then, it seems that he regards the contemporary “gay rights” movement as legitimate. How he would reconcile this with what he must know the Founding Fathers would have thought about today’s open and flaunted homosexual “lifestyles”—or what the vast majority of Protestants would have thought about them up until very recently, not to speak of what the Holy Bible on which Protestants claim to base their religion very clearly says about them—is hard to imagine. If neither

traditional Christian morality nor the Bible is to count in the face of such modern secular humanist imperatives as so-called “gay rights”—as the current battles over the issue going on within a number of Protestant denominations suggest that both Christian morality and the Bible count less and less with more and more Protestants—then what is the status of the Protestantism that Professor Huntington insists must be equated with “American values” even today? It certainly does not appear that Protestants generally are engaged in building any shining “city on a hill” today.

Mention of homosexuality in the climate of today inevitably raises the question of marriage, which homosexuals too are now demanding for themselves. Long before the organized homosexual-rights movement ever conceived of this as a goal, however, regular marriage was already falling into an ever-deepening crisis, not only in America but in the Western world as a whole. The current state of marriage in the West today surely represents a “crisis of civilization” if anything does. Yet Professor Huntington discusses marriage only in connection with dual citizenship,²⁶ and in connection with interethnic and interracial *intermarriage*.²⁷ Once again, the savant who expatiates so confidently on the moral foundations of America shows himself to be simply oblivious to many aspects of the real moral state of the American society and culture that he otherwise describes in such almost excruciating detail.

And then there is the scourge of legalized abortion. Professor Huntington mentions abortion several times casually or in passing, as if it were nothing out of the ordinary. The word does not appear in his Index, any more than “marriage” or “homosexuality” are to be found there. He refers to abortion offhand as one of the things Americans “argue about” today.²⁸ He mentions it again in connection with “conservative” efforts to impose restrictions on it.²⁹ The word appears again in connection with Southern Baptist opposition to it,³⁰ as well as in a list of some “cultural issues.”³¹ He takes note too of how some Christian rightist “efforts to prohibit abortion, [against] centrist opinion, came to naught.”³² Pretty clearly, for this author, “centrist opinion,” not opposition to abortion, occupies the moral high ground here. He is thus actually dismissive of those Protestants who are trying to deal with America’s real, acute moral crisis. Nowhere does he reveal the slightest hint that what could aptly be styled America’s pagan decision to acquiesce in the regular and steady killing of millions of her children by abortion might be anything but a perfectly normal and accepted thing today.

When Professor Huntington finally does touch upon the subject of America's contemporary moral decline, he is content with a bland and superficial summary—a bare list, in fact, with no discussion—of a few of the major problems: “teen-age pregnancy, single-parent families, mounting divorce rates, high levels of crime, widespread drug use, pornography and violence in the media, and the perception that a large number of people were living the easy life on the welfare rolls funded by hardworking taxpayers.”³³ He actually speaks of Americans becoming “concerned about *what they saw* as the decline in values, morality, and standards in American society.” (emphasis added).³⁴ Thus, according to Professor Huntington, these Americans were concerned only with “what they saw,” not with what has actually and undeniably happened to Christian morality in America today.

It turns out, then, that the famous Harvard professor who champions the idea that religion often lies at the basis of cultures and civilizations, and who has even been prepared boldly to declare America to be still a “Christian nation,” has a decidedly incomplete and defective idea of what Christianity actually is and entails, for example, what it must have been back in the era when the American identity was being formed as compared with today! He also has a very imperfect and myopic idea of what America has since become, morally and culturally speaking. His views on these things in the end evidently do not really differ all that much from those of his secular-humanist academic colleagues, in fact, in spite of the controversy that has surrounded his supposedly “racist” and other politically incorrect views. He thus never really gets at the heart of what once made America great, and he certainly has little idea of what a truly Christian America might have to be like today. If he seriously believes that Christianity is one of the necessary elements making up the American character and identity, then perhaps he should have addressed the question of what might need to be done to revive authentic Christianity in the world today, not just his favored “dissenting”-type Protestantism. As it is, whatever resources, religious and otherwise, America may still have to draw upon in facing the very real problems that beset her—which include but are certainly not limited to the problems stemming from today's globalization and unrestricted immigration—will have to await another and better study than this one.

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Notes

1. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).
2. *Ibid.*, p.2.
3. *Ibid.*, pp.256 & 258.
4. Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004).
5. *Ibid.*, p.221.
6. *Ibid.*, p.19.
7. See especially the many letters sent in by a distinguished array of critics to *Foreign Policy* magazine (May/June, 2004) critiquing an article mostly excerpted from *Who Are We? The Challenge to America's National Identity* which Professor Huntington had published in the March/April, 2004, issue of the same journal.
8. *Ibid.*, p.338.
9. *Ibid.*, p.30.
10. *Ibid.*, p.20.
11. *Ibid.*, pp.96-97.

12. Ibid., p.15.
13. e.g., Ibid., p.365.
14. Ibid., p.254.
15. Quoted by Greg Erlandson in *Our Sunday Visitor*, August 29, 2004.
16. Ibid., p.30.
17. Figures cited by Allan Carlson, "Rebuilding a Culture of Marriage," in *The Family in America*, December, 2003.
18. Bryce Christensen, "Why Homosexuals Want What Marriage Has Become," in *The Family in America*, April, 2004.
19. Huntington, *Who Are We?*, p.20.
20. Ibid., p.63.
21. Ibid., p.15.
22. Ibid., pp.148-149.
23. Ibid., p.272.
24. Ibid., p.313.
25. Ibid., p.352.
26. Ibid., p.212.
27. Ibid., pp.296-297; and pp.305-306.
28. Ibid., p.9.
29. Ibid., p.79.
30. Ibid., p.345.
31. Ibid., p.352.

32. Ibid., p.343.

33. Ibid., pp.343-344.

34. Ibid., p.341.