

The End of White Christian America

By Robert P. Jones

(Simon and Shuster, 2016)

309 pages

I wish I could say that this book was a good read – don't get me wrong. The book was well written, thoroughly sourced and referenced and was easily comprehensible. However, it was “good book”, but it did not make me feel comfortable.

The book challenged some of my cultural preconceptions about how our world and society currently is – what our values, identities, and mores are. The book forced me to look at a different perspective of our American culture and religious environment.

As written on the jacket of the book (to summarize the direction of the writing), “For most of the country's history, White Christian America – the cultural and political edifice built primarily by white Protestant Christians – set the tone for our national policy and shaped American ideals. But in recent decades new immigration patterns, changing birth rates, and religious disaffiliation have transformed the United States.” Jones does well to delineate the demographic shifts in our country and to draw implications of this on the nation's social and religious environment.

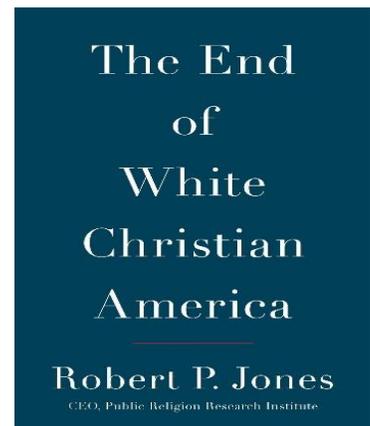
One of the issues addressed is the idea of “the politics of nostalgia”. This political approach to our culture is one where a group tries to reclaim the past and recover a sense of stability of a bygone era. I see this taking place in much of America's political debate today. I often find churches and believers wanting to recovery the “good ole' glory days” of the past when churches were growing; Christianity was respected; Protestants were the “majority” and life was ‘good’.

Jones' book reminds us that this is changing and will never return to the demographics (or the religious environment of the 1950's). And this is ok – as church leaders and Christ-followers, we must learn to speak to our current culture, as it presently exists and call people to the person of Christ. We are not obligated to bring our country back to former days; we are called to present the claims of Christ to the world in which we *currently* live.

One of the insights I wrote in the margin of the book as I read was this: “Any religious, political or practical interpretation of Christianity that leads a person to intolerance or bigotry is not ultimately Christian.” One of the things that I think we have seen in the cultural transitions is a move away from the inclusive, loving embrace of people who are different from the “church” to an attempt to make people culturally and religiously like “the church”.

Jones does not argue whether this cultural and religious shift is good or bad. He documents quite thoroughly (in a way that was very difficult to deny) that this shift has occurred and we must understand it and embrace the reality of it.

The book is a challenging one. The writing is good and as I mentioned well sourced. However, his thoughts, ideas, and conclusions challenged the way I look at the world. It also helped me to see why so many people are resistant to the gospel message.



I have found that I do not want to reclaim our country or our culture and make it a Christian or White or Protestant one; I do want to live my life as a faithful follower of Jesus so that others can chose to follow him freely and without compulsion!