

## What Is The Future Of Our Union?

President Obama delivered his final State of the Union (SOTU) address last night (1/13/16). He described his administration's accomplishments while addressing our fears about national security and terrorism. However, The Washington Post noted that "the gulf between his vision of a unified America, one he has trumpeted from his earliest days on the national scene, and the political reality has never seemed wider." The Post lists guns, immigration reform, Middle Eastern refugees, the Iran nuclear deal, the opening to Cuba, and war with terrorism as issues over which we are more divided than ever.

My point is not to criticize either President Obama or his critics. I'm not writing to blame the Democrats or the Republicans. I think something more significant than partisan politics is at work in our culture today.

Unity in diversity is always a challenge. Presidents Adams and Jefferson faced enormous vitriol from their critics. The Civil War killed more Americans than did any other conflict. But two world wars, the Great Depression, and the looming specter of communism unified Americans against our common enemies.

Our unity has been severely tested in recent decades, from the Vietnam War and sexual revolution of the 1960s to same-sex marriage, the economic crisis and the immigration crisis today. Prosperity usually breeds complacency. Absent an external threat, we normally turn to advancing our personal agendas and ideals. Disagreements divide us, and then our divisions foster more disagreement. The result is red states and blue states, fragmentation exacerbated by political rancor and moral dissolution.

In 2 Chronicles 26 we meet King Uzziah, one of Judah's greatest rulers. Tragically, "when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the Lord his God" (16). As their leader fell, his nation's unity and character fell with him.

King David noted, "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3). General Douglas MacArthur said: "History fails to record a single precedent in which nations subject to moral decay have not passed into political and economic decline." That is what is happening to us!

Unity is not found in uniformity. Nor is it sustainable as an end unto itself. Unity is strongest when it is the consequence of a larger cause.

What should be the unifying center of our culture? Or better, Who? We pledge allegiance to "one Nation under God, indivisible." Unless our words become reality, what is the future of our union?