

North versus South

by Wayne Goff

I have lived in both the North and the South. In the North, I have lived near Chicago, and here in Kansas City. In the South, I have lived in several cities in Arkansas and one in Texas. There is a difference **religiously** between these two groups situated in the middle of America.

Recently we visited Fort Smith, Arkansas where I picked up a free copy of the local paper, just to see what news that region received. I was *pleasantly surprised* to see a two-page listing entitled “Fort Smith & River Valley Guide to Area Churches” (Times Record, March 8, 2014, pp. 2B-3B). There were listed 373 religious organizations on those two pages! The two pages were sponsored by local businesses, and there was a weekly Scripture reading schedule given as well.

Now I said “*pleasantly surprised*” because I have lived in Kansas City for nearly twenty years now, and I had almost forgotten how **religious** the South is. If you have ever lived in states like Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, or Oklahoma, then you understand what I am talking about. All of these states were listed in the top ten “**most religious states**” last year! The two-page advertisement abundantly confirms this statistic, and I was reminded of similar advertisements in small town newspapers where I had lived before.

Furthermore, as a child many of the churches we visited in the North were *heavily populated* with brethren who came up from the South to find a job. Even in our own congregation it is interesting to see what families have southern connections. Today there are generations who have been born and raised in the North and are faithful members of the Lord’s church, so times are changing somewhat. Those of you who are reading this article can ask yourself if you have ever seen a two-page spread in any Northern paper, supported by local businesses, and encouraging religious attendance on Sunday. It may have been that way in the past, and it may be that way elsewhere in the North today, but it certainly is not that way in Kansas City!

Among the top ten “**least religious states**” are Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. These states are all northern states, situated in the Northeast. So this provides even more evidence to the claim.

Why Is There A Difference?

It would be interesting to learn the reasons why religion is more prevalent in the South than in the North. I know it did not used to be the case. Some of the **most religious states** in our country’s beginning are today some of the *most irreligious*! For an example consider Rhode Island whose capital is **Providence**! Today that state is one of the least religious in the country.

Likewise, some of the leading universities in our country are situated in the Northeast and had religious beginnings! Harvard, Yale, and Princeton are a few examples. Today they are bastions of unbelief!

You can look up the history of such schools and most were started to educate the “*clergy*” of the churches of that day. You can discern their religious backgrounds in their mottos to this day! For example, the motto for Yale is “**lux et veritas**” (light & truth). The motto for Harvard is “**veritas**” (truth). The motto for Princeton is “**dei sub numine viget**” (under God’s power she flourishes).

Harvard University began in 1636 by Congregationalist Puritans. Yale University began in 1701 by Congregationalists. Princeton was founded by Presbyterians. Today, one would be hard pressed to find the kind of religious fervor in those same states that started these educational institutions. Pardon the pun, but my educated guess is that these scholastic institutions **educated themselves** right

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