

THE CASE FOR

C AMERICA'S  
CHRISTIAN  
HERITAGE

AN ILLUSTRATED JOURNEY OF HOW  
CHRISTIANITY BUILT AMERICA

GARY DEMAR



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**The Case for America's Christian Heritage**  
*An Illustrated Journey of How Christianity Built America*

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# 1

## “AMERICA’S CHRISTIAN HISTORY”

### *Fact or Fiction?*

Our Founders understood that every society is founded on some ultimate principle. Even with their unorthodox religious views—a minority opinion when compared to the majority of Founders—they understood that the “folly and wickedness of mankind,” to use Alexander Hamilton’s words, and reason alone could never serve as the stable foundation for a nation. They discounted the absolutism of a single ruler, the majority-rule concept of a pure democracy<sup>1</sup> where the “voice of the people is considered to be the voice of God” (*vox populi, vox dei*), or an oligarchy where a self-appointed group of experts claim sovereignty and control.

A system of values (laws) always flows from a fundamental set of operating principles even among regimes as diverse as Nazism under Adolf Hitler, Communism under Lenin and Stalin, Fascism under Benito Mussolini, and Socialism. Modern-day socialists Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez claim that their socialistic system is the most rational and moral form of civil government because it is founded solely on human reason, the brotherhood of man, and a strong centrally controlled civil government that is designed for the salvation of mankind. Our Founders had no delusions about the folly of building a civil government on such a precariously laid foundation. They were all religious men, even the most skeptical of



Adolph Hitler

them. As we will see, however, the founding of America did not start in 1776, and it was not constructed by a handful of men.

[M]any of the other men who were instrumental in the Revolution and the Continental Congress were orthodox Christians, including: Patrick Henry, Sam Adams, John Hancock, John Witherspoon, Roger Sherman, and many more. These men represented viewpoints that had to be heeded by the likes of Jefferson and Madison, who were not just philosophers but also politicians who assembled coalitions. It is even clearer that *none* of these Founders was as “secular humanist”; they believed in God and that He shaped their lives and fortunes.<sup>2</sup>

America has a long history that starts with a commitment to Jesus Christ that can be seen in the earliest charters. But like the men and women in the Bible, they were not in any way perfect in their faith or works. We can learn as much from their failures and sins as we can from their successes and acts of righteousness.

### **“America is Not a Nothing Country”**

At a 1992 Republican governor's conference, former governor of Mississippi Kirk Fordice (1934–2004) stated that “America is a Christian nation.”<sup>3</sup> As you can imagine, many objected to the factual basis of the claim and its social, cultural, and political implications. Does a nation that rests on certain religious tenets affect the belief and value systems of those who do not identify themselves with the Christian faith? The governor's controversial remarks landed him on CNN where he repeated the claim:

Christianity is the predominant religion in America. We all know that's an incontrovertible fact. The media always refer to the Jewish state of Israel. They talk about the Muslim country of Saudi Arabia, of Iran, of Iraq.



**KIRK FORDICE** (1934–2004)

As governor of Mississippi stated that “America is a Christian nation.”

We all talk about the Hindu nation of India. America is not a nothing country. It's a Christian Country.<sup>4</sup>

A *Washington Post* editorial<sup>5</sup> criticized Fordice for demonstrating what they believed was his historical ignorance and “‘politics of exclusion,’ suggesting he was a bigot who was ‘attempting to cut large categories of people out of the [American] process.’”<sup>6</sup> Fordice was making an appeal to the facts of history.

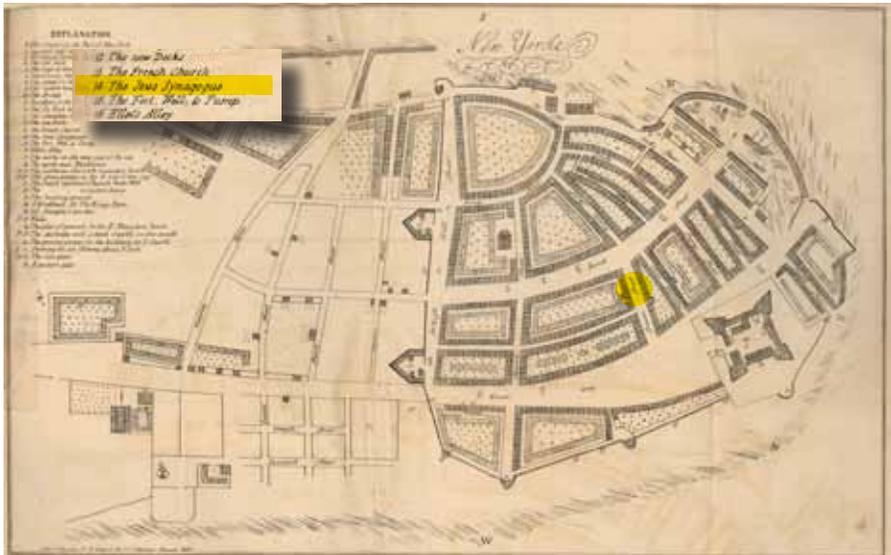
The debate over whether America was or is a Christian nation has not gone away. In 2006, then Senator Barack Obama stated, “Whatever we once were, we’re no longer a Christian nation. At least not just. We are also a Jewish nation, a Muslim nation, and a Buddhist nation, and a Hindu nation, and a nation of nonbelievers.”<sup>7</sup> Stated this way, America has always been made up of people who have held diverse religious opinions. Joachim Gans, an English metallurgist and Jewish, was recruited by Sir Walter Raleigh in 1585 to join an expedition to explore the Virginia territory. He later returned to England in 1586.

Solomon Franco, a Sephardic Jew from Holland, is believed to have settled in the city of Boston in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1649. A map of New York, dated 1695, shows the location of a Jewish synagogue on Beaver Street (no. 14 on the map below).<sup>8</sup> The first major Jewish settlement was in Newport, Rhode Island. The Touro Syna-

gogue was constructed in 1762 and dedicated in 1763. It is the only surviving synagogue built in colonial America. George Washington wrote a letter of commendation to the congregation on August 21, 1790 in which he stated the following:

The Citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy: a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.<sup>9</sup>

But there is no doubt that the majority of the earliest settlers to these shores were Protestant Christians. Of course, there were also unbe-



lievers and probably even some Hindus and Buddhists in early America. While America is the most religiously diverse nation in the world today, it was Christianity that shaped America's founding.

## **The Ideals and Values of a Nation**

In 2009, President Obama made these comments while in Turkey where 99 percent of the population is Muslim:

“Although . . . we have a very large Christian population, we do not consider ourselves a Christian nation or a Jewish nation or a Muslim nation; we consider ourselves a nation of citizens who are bound by ideals and a set of values.”<sup>10</sup>

Turkey does consider itself a Muslim nation even though it has a relatively secular government because nearly everyone in the nation is a Muslim and its value system is based on Islamic principles. Here's the question that goes to the heart of the Christian nation debate: What is the origin of the “ideals” and “set of values” that the citizens of the United States acknowledge and ultimately obey?

A lack of historical knowledge of the role the Christian religion played in the founding of America is rampant. Rob Thomas, front man for the band Matchbox 20, goes beyond the usual claim that our nation's founders were deists to argue that they were atheists:

I believe that America is a great nation of even greater people. I also believe that anyone who says that this is a “Christian nation” has RHS, or revisionist history syndrome, and doesn't realize that most of our founding fathers were either atheist or at least could see, even in the 1700s, that all through Europe at the time, religion was the cause of so much persecution that they needed to put into their brand new constitution a SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE so that the ideals of a group of people could never be forced

onto the whole.<sup>11</sup>

Definitions are important in debates. If “Christian nation” is defined in terms of how many Christians there were at America’s founding, then America was a Christian nation. President Obama acknowledges this when he said, “Whatever we once were, we’re no longer a Christian nation.” If population is the determining factor, then America is still a Christian nation. But it’s more than this.

### What Others Have Said

If we look at how others have assessed America’s Christian heritage, we can see a similar definitional trend. Terry Eastland, publisher of *The Weekly Standard*, has confirmed the following after an in-depth study of the history of America. “Protestant Christianity has been our established religion in almost every sense of that phrase. . . . The establishment of Protestant Christianity was one not only of law but also, and far more importantly, of culture. Protestant Christianity supplied the nation with its ‘system of values.’”<sup>12</sup> This statement of historical fact, inscribed into law by the United States Supreme Court, etched into charters and state constitutions, and echoed by presidents and governors for nearly four centuries, clashes with modern-day secular



**FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT** described the United States as “the lasting concord between men and nations, founded on the principles of Christianity.”

assumptions and the unanchored ideals of multiculturalism, political correctness, and moral relativism. James Billington, Librarian of the United States Congress, said in a news conference on the opening of the exhibit “Religion and the Founding of the American Republic,” that “the dominant role religion played in the earliest days of this country is largely ignored by media, academics and others.”<sup>13</sup>

America's Christian roots run deep and wide throughout the landscape of our nation's history. At every point in our nation's past, America's Christian heritage can be seen at nearly every turn through the voluminous historical records that have been painstakingly preserved. And beyond the proof inscribed in the official story of America, there is the abundant anecdotal evidence that surfaces from every corner of the globe. For example:

In 1931 the U.S. Supreme Court noted that the United States is a Christian nation. In a mid-Atlantic summit with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in the darkest hours of World War II, President Roosevelt—who had described the United States as “the lasting concord between men and nations, founded on the principles of Christianity”—asked the crew of an American warship to join him in a rousing chorus of the hymn “Onward, Christian Soldiers.”

In 1947, writing to Pope Pius XII, President Truman said flatly, “This is a Christian nation.”

Nobody argued with any of them.<sup>14</sup>

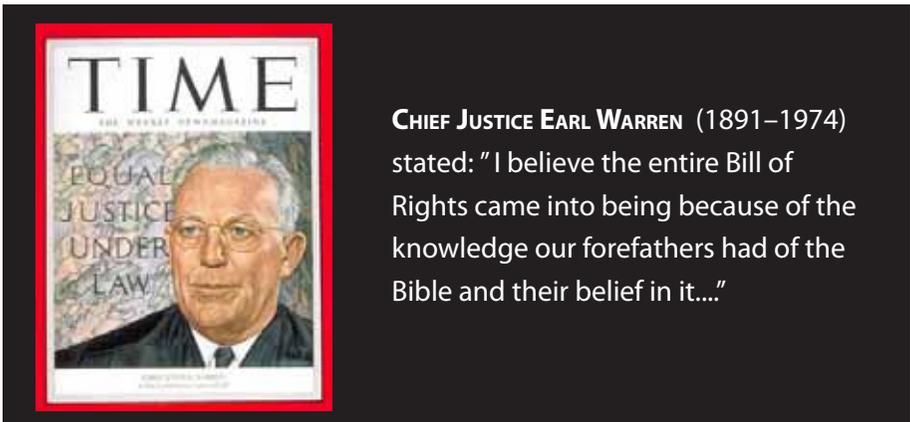
If any president made such claims today, he would be derided by a hostile press and mocked by academic elitist in the highly charged atmosphere of political correctness that has imbedded itself into discussion forums at every level of our society. So would former presidents Woodrow Wilson and Jimmy Carter. In his famous address, “The Bible and Progress,” delivered in Denver, Colorado, on May 7, 1911, President Wilson told his audience that “America was born a Christian nation. America was born to exemplify that devotion to the

elements of righteousness which are derived from the revelations of Holy Scripture.”<sup>15</sup> As a presidential candidate Jimmy Carter told reporters in June of 1976 that “We have a responsibility to try to shape government so that it does exemplify the will of God.”<sup>16</sup>

Chief Justice Earl Warren (1891–1974), who led the way in gaining a unanimous opinion in the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, made the following remarks about the role that Christianity played in the founding of America:

I believe no one can read the history of our country without realizing that the Good Book and the spirit of the Savior have from the beginning been our guiding geniuses. Whether we look to the first charter of Virginia or to the Charter of New England . . . or to the Charter of Massachusetts Bay or to the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut . . . the same objective is present: A Christian land governed by Christian principles. I believe the entire Bill of Rights came into being because of the knowledge our forefathers had of the Bible and their belief in it: freedom of belief, of expression, of assembly, of petition, the dignity of the individual, the sanctity of the home, equal justice under law, and the reservation of powers to the people. . . .

I like to believe we are living today in the spirit of the



**CHIEF JUSTICE EARL WARREN** (1891–1974)

stated: “I believe the entire Bill of Rights came into being because of the knowledge our forefathers had of the Bible and their belief in it....”

Christian religion. I like also to believe that as long as we do so, no great harm can come to our country.<sup>17</sup>

A 1982 article in *Newsweek* magazine stated the following: “[F]or centuries [the Bible] has exerted an unrivaled influence on American culture, politics and social life. Now historians are discovering that the Bible perhaps even more than the Constitution, is our founding document.”<sup>18</sup> *Time* magazine said something similar in 1987: “Ours is the only country deliberately founded on a good idea. That good idea combines a commitment to man’s inalienable rights with the Calvinist belief in an ultimate moral right and sinful man’s obligation to do good. These articles of faith, embodied in the Declaration of Inde-



pendence and in the Constitution, literally govern our lives today.”<sup>19</sup> Our nation’s values were rooted in the Bible. Of course, this does not mean that all Christian Americans followed the biblical precepts that they claimed to believe.

Even those who would dismiss the Bible as a standard of moral righteousness cannot help themselves from appealing to the Bible when it suits their purpose. An editorial in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* cited the words of Jesus to “love your enemies” as a moral

prescription against torture.<sup>20</sup> Good for them. I wonder if the same editors are ready to adopt Jesus' definition of marriage as being between a man and a woman (Matt. 19:4–6)? The governor of the state of Alabama wanted to raise taxes based on the article “An Argument for Tax Reform Based on Judeo-Christian Ethics” that appeared in the *Alabama Law Review*.<sup>21</sup> There were very few if any atheists in early America, although there were a number of religious skeptics. But even these could not develop a moral worldview on reason alone. They continually pointed to the Bible.

A great deal of the editorial savagery leveled against Governor Fordice could have been alleviated if the historical record had been studied in an objective way. But even this would not have been enough. Facts are not the problem. There is often a bias against things Christian. Religion is fine, say the secularists, as long as it remains a private affair and does not spill over into the areas of morality, education, and politics unless it can be used to support some secular cause. But this is not the America of history.

### **What It is Not**

The claim that America has a distinct Christian heritage does not mean that *every* American is now or ever was a Christian. Moreover, it does not mean that either the Church or the State should force people to profess belief in Christianity or attend religious services. Furthermore, a belief in a Christian heritage for America does not mean that non-Christians, and for that matter, dissenting Christians, cannot hold contrary opinions in a climate of a general Christian consensus.

### **What It Is**

It's one thing to claim that there is no evidence of a Christian heritage for America and prove it. It's another thing to fabricate history to suit one's entrenched presuppositions. An honest study of America's past

will show that a majority of Americans shared a common religion and set of values. America's earliest founders were self-professed Christians, and their founding documents expressed a belief in a Christian worldview. John Winthrop's sermon aboard the *Arbella* in 1630 is one piece of evidence supporting this historical truth.

For the persons, we are a Company professing ourselves fellow members of Christ. . . .

For the work we have in hand, it is by a mutual consent through a special overruling providence, and a more than an ordinary approbation of the Churches of Christ to seek out a place of Cohabitation and Consortship under a due form of Government both civil and ecclesiastical. . . .<sup>22</sup>

Freedom and liberty, ideals cherished by all Americans, were rooted in a biblical moral order. Liberty was not license. Freedom was not the right always to do what one pleased. Winthrop's definition of liberty is far from the modern meaning. As it is usually defined today, liberty is freedom *from* moral restraints. One is not truly free, according to the contemporary use of the term, if one is bound by any moral code.

### **A Foreigner's View**

In 1831 the French social philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville landed in America to observe the new nation and her institutions. Tocqueville's work was published in two parts at the mid-point of the nineteenth century as *Democracy in America*. It has been described as "the most comprehensive and penetrating analysis of the relationship between character and society in America that has ever been written."<sup>23</sup> His observations on America's moral ideals are revealing and worthy of study.

The sects that exist in the United States are innumerable. They all differ in respect to the worship which

is due to the Creator; but they all agree in respect to the duties which are due from man to man. Each sect adores the Deity in its own peculiar manner, *but all sects preach the same moral law* in the name of God. . . . Moreover, all the sects of the United States are comprised within the great unity of Christianity, and *Christian morality is everywhere the same*. . . . [T]here is no country in the world where the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America.<sup>24</sup>

Two-hundred years after John Winthrop's sermon aboard the *Arbella*, Tocqueville continued to find in America "an ostensible respect for Christian morality and virtue."<sup>25</sup> This is the substance of a working definition of "Christian America"—the sharing of common moral values that have been shaped with reference to the Bible. "The biblical model of a 'city on a hill,'" to use Winthrop's phrase, "was the relevant goal for political action. Puritan divines called for the establishment of a 'Holy Community,' governed according to standards derived from Christian principles of morality and justice."<sup>26</sup>

### The Supreme Court Has Spoken

For many American's official recognition of anything is found in the Supreme Court. So what has the highest court in land determined?



**ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE** (1805–1859), author of *Democracy in America* (1835), stated: "*[T]here is no country in the world where the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America.*"

In 1892, the Supreme Court declared in the case of *The Church of the Holy Trinity vs. United States*, that America was a Christian nation from its earliest days. After examining a full range of historical documents, Associate Justice David J. Brewer concluded that Americans are “a religious people. This is historically true. From the discovery of this continent to the present hour, there is a single voice making this affirmation.” Beginning with Ferdinand and Isabella’s commission to Christopher Columbus through a survey of then current state constitutions, the court concluded:

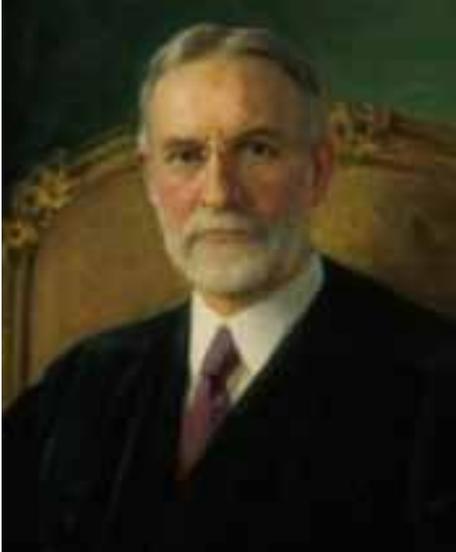
There is no dissonance in these declarations. There is a universal language pervading them all, having one meaning; they affirm and reaffirm that this is a religious nation. These are not individual sayings, declarations of private persons: they are organic utterances; they speak the voice of the entire people.

If we pass beyond these matters to a view of American life as expressed by its laws, its business, its customs and its society, we find everywhere a clear recognition of the same truth. Among other matters note the following: The form of oath universally prevailing, concluding with an appeal to the Almighty; the custom of opening sessions of all deliberative bodies and most conventions with prayer; the prefatory words of all wills, “In the name of God, amen”; the laws respecting the observance of the Sabbath, with the general cessation of all secular business, and the closing of courts, legislatures, and other similar public assemblies on that day; the churches and church organizations which abound in every city, town and hamlet; the multitude of charitable organizations existing everywhere under Christian auspices; the gigantic missionary associations, with general support, and aiming to establish Christian missions in every quarter of the globe. These, and many other matters which might be noticed, add a volume of unofficial declarations to the mass of organic utterances that this is a Christian nation.<sup>27</sup>

In 1931, Supreme Court Justice George Sutherland reviewed the 1892 decision and reaffirmed that Americans are a “Christian people.” As late as 1952, even the liberal Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas declared that “we are a religious people and our institutions presuppose a Supreme Being.”

In addition to writing the opinion in the *Holy Trinity* case, David Brewer wrote *The United States: A Christian Nation*, lectures that were published in book form in 1905 while he was still a member of our nation's highest court?<sup>28</sup> In it, Brewer reiterates the history behind the 1892 *Trinity* case and states clearly that America was founded as a Christian nation, as the following citations from his book indicate:

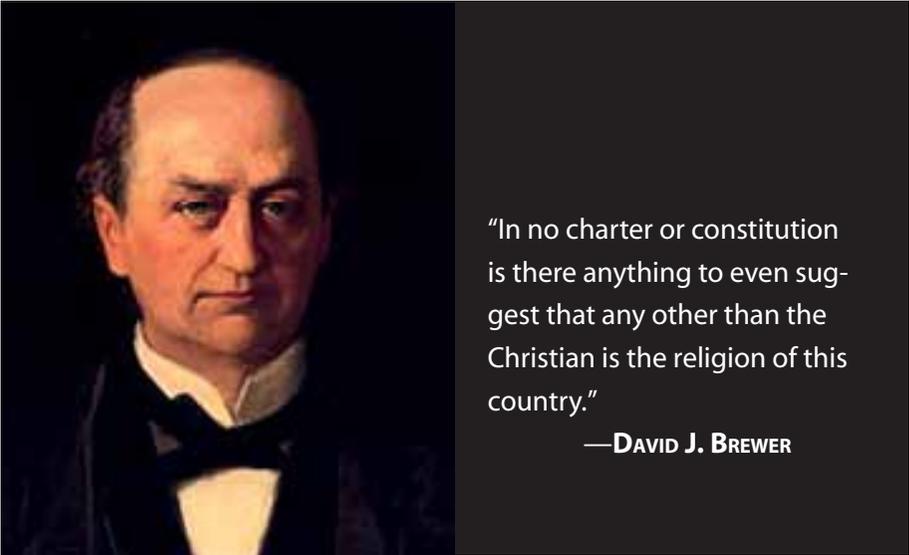
- “This republic is classified among the Christian nations of the world.”
- “In the case of *Holy Trinity Church vs. United States*, 143 U.S. 471, that court, after mentioning various cir-



In 1931, Supreme Court Justice **GEORGE SUTHERLAND** reviewed the 1892 decision and reaffirmed that Americans are a “Christian people.”

cumstances, add, ‘these and many other matters which might be noticed, add a volume of unofficial declarations to the mass of organic utterances that this is a Christian nation.’”

- “[W]e constantly speak of this republic as a Christian nation—in fact, as the leading Christian nation in the world. This popular use of the term certainly has significance. It is not a mere creation of the imagina-



tion. It is not a term of derision but has a substantial basis—one which justifies its use.”

- “In no charter or constitution is there anything to even suggest that any other than the Christian is the religion of this country. In none of them is Mohammed or Confucius or Buddha in any manner noticed. In none of them is Judaism recognized other than by way of toleration of its special creed. While the separation of church and state is often affirmed, there is nowhere a repudiation of Christianity as one of the institutions as well as benedictions of society. In short, there is no charter or constitution that is either infidel, agnostic, or anti-Christian. Wherever there is a declaration in favor of any religion it is of the Christian.”
- “You will have noticed that I have presented no

doubtful facts. Nothing has been stated which is debatable. The quotations from charters are in the archives of the several States; the laws are on the statute books; judicial opinions are taken from the official reports; statistics from the census publications. In short, no evidence has been presented which is open to question.”

- “I could show how largely our laws and customs are based upon the laws of Moses and the teachings of Christ; how constantly the Bible is appealed to as the guide of life and the authority in questions of morals.”

David Brewer’s conclusion?—“This is a Christian nation.” Our study would be incomplete if we did not take the same road that Justice-Brewer and others have taken to come to their conclusions. A look at all the available evidence must be considered.

## NOTES

1. "From this view of the subject it may be concluded that a pure democracy, by which I mean a society consisting of a small number of citizens, who assemble and administer the government in person, can admit of no cure for the mischiefs of faction. A common passion or interest will, in almost every case, be felt by a majority of the whole; a communication and concert result from the form of government itself; and there is nothing to check the inducements to sacrifice the weaker party or an obnoxious individual. Hence it is that such democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths. Theoretic politicians, who have patronized this species of government, have erroneously supposed that by reducing mankind to a perfect equality in their political rights, they would, at the same time, be perfectly equalized and assimilated in their possessions, their opinions, and their passions." ([The Federalist No. 10](#): "The Utility of the Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection," November 22, 1787 [James Madison]).
2. Steven Waldman, *Founding Faith: Providence, Politics, and the Birth of Religious Freedom in America* (New York: Random House, 2008), 192.
3. *U.S. News & World Report* (November 30, 1992), 21.
4. "Mississippi Governor Criticized for 'Christian Nation' Remark," *Dallas/Fort Worth Heritage* (January 1993), 14. Quoted in John W. Whitehead, *Religious Apartheid: The Separation of Religion from American Public Life* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994), 149.
5. November 19, 1992.
6. David T. Moore, *Five Lies of the Century* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1995), 3.
7. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmC3levZiik> (2007)
8. "It was not until 1730 that the Congregation was able to build a synagogue of its own; it was built on Mill Street in lower Manhattan. Before 1730, as is evidenced from a map of New York from 1695, the congregation worshipped in rented quarters on Beaver Street and subsequently on Mill Street." For additional information on Jews in America, see Daniel Dorchester, *Christianity in the United States from the First Settlement Down to the Present Time* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1888), 43, 286, 416, 624 and Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987, 278–280).

9. George Washington, "[George Washington's Response to Moses Seixas](#)" (August 21, 1790).
10. Quoted in Lynn Sweet, "[Obama and President Gul of Turkey Press Conference. Obama's Islamic outreach](#)," *Chicago Sun Times* (April 6, 2009).
11. Rob Thomas, "[The Big Gay Chip on My Shoulder](#)," *The Huffington Post* (May 27, 2009).
12. Terry Eastland, "In Defense of Religious America," *Commentary: A Monthly Publication of the American Jewish Committee* (June 1981), 39–41.
13. Quoted in Bill Broadway, "One Nation Under God," *The Washington Post* (June 6, 1998), B9.
14. Larry Witham, "'Christian Nation' Now Fighting Words: Fordice Fumbles in PC Territory," *The Washington Times* (November 23, 1992), A1.
15. *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, ed. Arthur S. Link, 57 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), 23:12–20. Quoted in Richard V. Pierard and Robert D. Linder, *Civil Religion and the Presidency* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie/Zondervan, 1988), 153.
16. Richard G. Hutcheson, Jr., *God in the White House: How Religion Has Changed the Modern Presidency* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 1.
17. Former Chief Justice Earl Warren, addressing the annual prayer breakfast of the International Council of Christian Leadership, 1954. Quoted in Jim Nelson Black, *When Nations Die: Ten Warning Signs of a Culture in Crisis* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1994), 253.
18. Kenneth L. Woodward, "How the Bible Made America," *Newsweek* (December 27, 1982), 44.
19. *Time* (May 25, 1987).
20. "Do unto others," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (May 23, 2009), B6.
21. Susan Pace Hamill, "An Argument for Tax Reform Based on Judeo-Christian Ethics," *Alabama Law Review* 54:1 (Fall 2002), 1–112.
22. John Winthrop (1588-1649), "A Model of Christian Charity," (1630), quoted in Mark A. Noll, ed., *Eerdmans' Handbook to Christianity in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 38.
23. Robert N. Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in*

*American Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), viii.

24. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 2 vols. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), 1:303. Emphasis added.
25. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 1:305.
26. A. James Reichley, *Religion in American Public Life* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1985), 55.
27. *Church of the Holy Trinity v. United States*. Argued and submitted January 7, 1892. Decided February 29, 1892. Justice Brewer delivered the opinion of the court.
28. David J. Brewer, *The United States: A Christian Nation* (Philadelphia, PA: The John C. Winston Company, 1905). The book has been reprinted under the same title by American Vision, P.O. Box 220, Powder Springs, GA 30127.



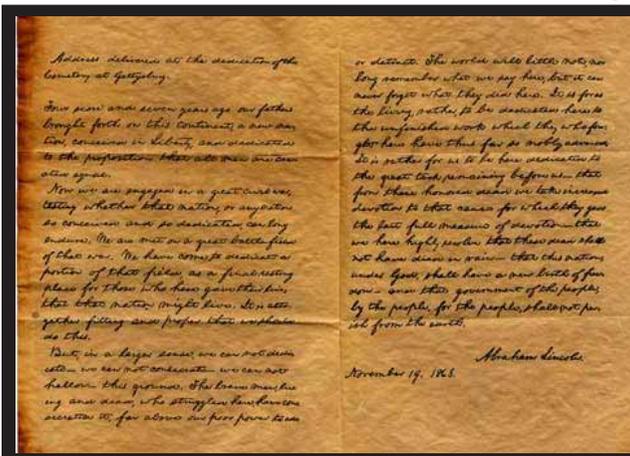
## 2

# “BY THE PROVIDENCE OF ALMIGHTY GOD”

## *Christianity in the Founding Era*

Knowing where to begin a study of a subject is often elusive. How far back do you go in history to say that it all begins here? In his book *Meet You in Hell*, a telling of the partnership and rivalry between steel magnates Andrew Carnegie and Henry Clay Frick, Les Standiford writes, “as is always the case when tracing history, there is no stopping anywhere, truly, for seeking out first causes is something like following the warp and weft of an enormous knitted sweater. Pulling one string always bunches up another, and smoothing that only leads to the knot in the next. . . .”<sup>1</sup> The same is true for determining the actual starting point of America’s founding. Our nation begins, not in 1776, but more than one hundred and fifty years earlier.

A misconception is held by many that the drafting and signing of the Declaration of Independence was the beginning of our nation.

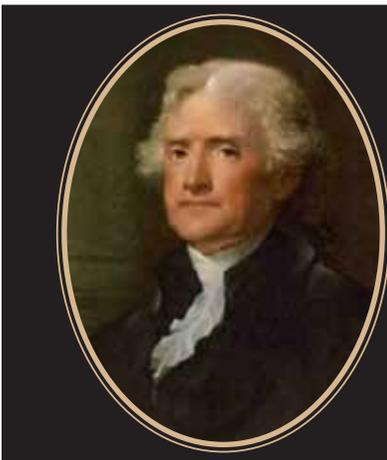


ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S  
Gettysburg  
Address mentions  
a “new nation.”

Abraham's Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" contributes to the confusion with the opening line: "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, *a new nation*, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." While America was not a nation of united states at the time, she was a nation nonetheless. Thirteen colonies with independent governments and intact constitutions were operating in 1776. The 52 signers of the Declaration weren't dropped from the sky in Philadelphia on July 2. The freshly printed document announced that the thirteen American *colonies*, then at war with Great Britain, were now independent *states*, and no longer a part of the British Empire. The decision was not made lightly. Thomas Jefferson expressed the sentiments of most of his fellow Americans in a letter he had written in November of 1775 to John Randolph, who was in England at the time:

Believe me, dear Sir: there is not in the British empire a man who more cordially loves a union with Great Britain than I do. But, by the God that made me, I will cease to exist before I yield to a connection on such terms as the British Parliament propose[s]; and in this, I think I speak the sentiments of America.

The political ideals of those who forged a more unified nation



"But by the God that made me, I will cease to exist before I yield to a connection on such terms as the British Parliament propose..."

**THOMAS JEFFERSON TO  
JOHN RANDOLPH, 1775.**

were not developed within a worldview vacuum. Since ideas have consequences, we should expect that the beliefs of the existing colonies would have an impact. Sadly, however, the truth about our once robust Christian heritage is being steadily dismantled. The early colonies’ reliance on God’s providence is nothing more than a faded memory for most Americans. If we are ever to restore what is about to be lost, we will need to learn the truth about our nation’s founding. A look at some of the earliest colonies is a good starting point.

### **First Charter of Virginia and the Jamestown Colony**

All attempts by the English to establish colonies in America during the sixteenth century failed. In the late 16th century, the Spanish, English, French, Swedes, and Dutch determined to colonize eastern North America. These early settlements—notably the Lost Colony of Roanoke, Virginia—failed, but successful colonies were soon established. The earliest efforts in successful colonization in the seventeenth century followed two main roads—the Jamestown Colony in Virginia (1607) and Plymouth Plantation in Massachusetts (1620). The London Company adequately planned and financed the expedition to establish the first permanent English colony in America at Jamestown. Like nearly all the colonial charters, the First Charter of Virginia emphasizes the Christian character of the purpose of the expedition:

We, greatly commending and graciously accepting of, their desires for the furtherance of so noble a work, which may, by the providence of Almighty God, hereafter tend to the glory of His Divine Majesty, in propagating of the Christian religion to such people, as yet live in darkness and miserable ignorance of the true knowledge and worship of God, and may in time bring the infidels and savages living in those parts to human civility and to a settled and quiet government, do,

by these Our letters patent, graciously accept of, and agree to, their humble and well-intended desires.<sup>2</sup>

While the expedition was well financed, those of the Virginia colony were not suitably prepared to handle the hardships that would confront them. Most who made the voyage were gentlemen adventurers. “There were no men with families. There were very few artisans, and none with any experience that would fit them to get a living out of the soil. . . . Of them Captain Smith said, ‘A Hundred good workmen were worth a thousand such gallants.’”<sup>3</sup> Even so, their Christian faith saw them through periods of hardships and despair. The Rev. Robert Hunt (1568–1608), described by Captain John Smith as “an honest, religious, and courageous Divine,” was chaplain of the expedition. Worship services began almost from the hour of landing in May of 1607. “There the first seed for English Christianity on the American continent was sown.”<sup>4</sup>

The 105 colonists and seamen carried the Geneva Bible with them to what would be known as Jamestown, named after the king of England, James I. Before finding what would be their permanent settlement, Rev. Hunt (1568–1608) offered the following prayer on April 29, 1607 at Cape Henry (now Virginia Beach, Virginia):

We do hereby dedicate this Land, and ourselves, to



The construction of the Fort at Jamestown began on May 12, 1607 and was completed by June 15 of that same year..

The 105 colonists and seamen carried the Geneva Bible with them to what would be known as Jamestown, named after the king of England, **JAMES I.**



reach the People within these shores with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to raise up Godly generations after us, and with these generations take the Kingdom of God to all the earth. May this Covenant of Dedication remain to all generations, as long as this earth remains, and may this Land, along with England, be Evangelist to the World. May all who see this Cross, remember what we have done here, and may those who come here to inhabit join us in this Covenant and in this most noble work that the Holy Scriptures may be fulfilled.<sup>5</sup>

Hunt was reminding his shipmates that the kingdom of God was their priority, and future generations were in view. “From these very shores,” Hunt reminded them, “the Gospel shall go forth not only to this New World but the entire world.” The following Bible passage was read at the conclusion of the prayer: “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord’s and he ruleth among the nations” (Ps. 22:27–28). They believed in a covenantal approach to history whereby future generations would “take the Kingdom of God to all the earth”—this is the important part—“as long as this earth remains.” These concepts came directly from the notes of the Geneva Bible with its kingdom-advancing approach:

[The Geneva Bible] provided much of the genius and inspiration which carried those courageous and faithful souls through their trials, and provided the spiritual, intellectual and legal basis for establishment and flourishing of the colonies. Thus, it became the foundation for establishment of the American Nation.<sup>6</sup>

Their goal was not to build a political empire. While God's kingdom included the political realm, it included everything else as well. Government meant more than politics: self-government first, then family, church, and civil governments.<sup>7</sup> Even after the 1607 settlement, the Geneva Bible was being used to encourage the colonists from afar in the preparation of later waves of English immigration for the same purposes:

Considerable literature was put out and numerous sermons were preached in London, in the interest of the colony in Virginia, and much of this, at least—practically all, in fact that we have been able to examine—was provided by men, who used the Geneva Bible, presumably Puritans. The *Good Speed to Virginia*,<sup>8</sup> written by Robert Gray, in the interest of the enterprise, was published in London, in 1609, and he quotes from the Geneva Bible. Several sermons were preached before the Virginia Company in London, for which service they chose freely, if not uniformly, Puritans. Perhaps the first such sermon was delivered at White Chapel on April 25, 1609, by the Rev. William Symonds, the minister of Saint Saviours in Southwark. He used the Geneva Bible, as his Scripture quotations prove.<sup>9</sup>

The Jamestown colonists suffered great hardship. At a time when they were nearly out of food, with their original colony down to about fifty, God provided sustenance from an unlikely source. Here is how one of the survivors, William Simmonds, describes their situation:

“But now was all our provision spent, the sturgeon gone, all helps abandoned, each other expecting the fury of the savages, when God, the patron of all good endeavors, in that desperate extremity, so changed the hearts of the savages that they brought such plenty of their fruits and provision that no man wanted.”<sup>10</sup>

Part of the problem was with how the colony was operating. The colonists had lost sight of God’s Word. John Smith became president of the Jamestown Colony on September 10, 1608. He required greater discipline of the colonists and announced a policy, based on 2 Thessalonians 3:10, that “he that will not worke shall not eate (except by sicknesse he be disabled).” The colonists were preoccupied with digging for gold. “There was no talke, no hope, no worke, but dig gold, refine gold, load gold,” one colonist remembered. Many of those who took the arduous voyage hoped to make their fortune and return home to England.

Colonists had been fed from a common storehouse. The assumption was that others would produce the food. There was no incentive to work hard if everyone was to get an equal share whether he worked or not. When the new governor of Jamestown, Lord de La Warr, arrived in 1610, the colony was on the verge of collapse. His first action was to organize a worship service and issue a biblical call for sacrifice and enterprise. The colony did survive. Five churches had been built in a span of 70 years. The first church services were held outdoors “under an awning (which was an old saile)” fastened to some trees. A wooden church was built inside the fort. It burned in 1608. Another wooden church was built. It was in this church that the First Assembly met. The fourth church was made out of brick. The tower of this church is the only seventeenth-century structure still standing at Jamestown. It’s all that remained after the church was burned during Bacon’s Rebellion in 1676. It is one of the oldest English-built edifices in the United States.

After a thorough study of the Virginia colonial period, Benjamin F. Morris, in his voluminous *Christian Life and Character of the Civil*



The restored brick church at Jamestown

*Institutions of the United States*, concluded, “The Christian religion was the underlying basis and the pervading element of all the social and civil institutions of the Virginia colony.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Massachusetts and the Mayflower Compact**

In the early part of the seventeenth century, England was a country of religious intolerance. Ministers of the gospel were silenced, imprisoned, or exiled. In 1609, because of persecution, a group of Christians left their village in Scrooby, England, and went to the Netherlands, where they found a fair amount of religious tolerance. Led by their pastor, John Robinson, this group settled in Leyden, Holland, where they formed an English Separatist Church.

After a few years, the English transplants began to be concerned because their children were adopting the Dutch language and customs while losing sight of their English heritage. In addition, they wanted to live in a society which was thoroughly founded on the Bible, not simply a place where they would have the freedom to go to the church of their choice. These Separatists (Pilgrims) decided to go to the New World where they could live as Englishmen and in accordance with the Bible.

Unable to finance the trip, the Separatists arranged financial support from a group of English businessmen. These businessmen were

to receive any profits the colony made in its first seven years. The Pilgrims were also granted permission from the London group of the Virginia Company to settle in Virginia, north of Jamestown. Prior to their departure from Holland, Rev. Robinson called for a solemn fast and then delivered an embarkation sermon as a portion of the flock prepared to depart for American shores:

I charge you, before God and his blessed angels, that you follow me no further than you have seen me follow the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord has more truth yet to break forth out of his holy word. I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the reformed churches, who are come to a period in religion, and will go at present no further than the instruments of their reformation.—Luther and Calvin were great and shining lights in their times, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God.—I beseech you, remember it,—’tis an article of your church covenant,—that you be ready to receive whatever truth shall be made known to you from the written word of God.<sup>12</sup>

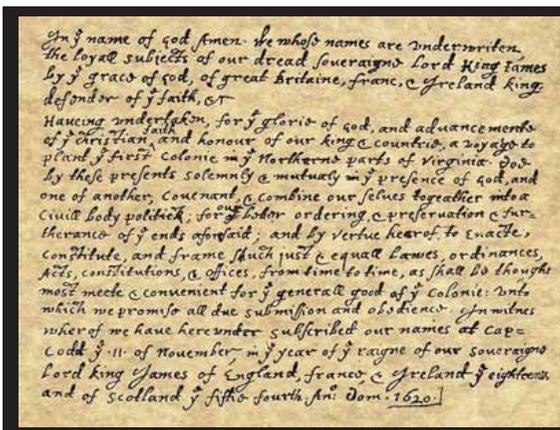


Sailing of the Pilgrims from Plymouth, England

In September of 1620, the Pilgrims set sail from Plymouth, England, in a ship named the *Mayflower*. After more than two months at sea, the *Mayflower* reached the American shore but at a destination not specified by the original charter. The original charter had given the Pilgrim travelers the right to settle in the “northern parts of Virginia.” The *Mayflower* had been drawn off course by stormy weather to a point that was north of the Virginia Company’s jurisdiction. Need for a governing document forced the weary travelers to draft what has become known as the Mayflower Compact. The Compact was drafted and signed by forty-one adult males while aboard the *Mayflower* in Provincetown Harbor, Massachusetts, at the tip of Cape Cod, on November 21, 1620.<sup>13</sup> The Pilgrims did not settle there, but went on to Plymouth where they landed in late December of that same year.

The Compact was to serve as a temporary legal “compact” for the arriving group of “saints and strangers.” “By the terms of the so-called Mayflower Compact, the Pilgrims agreed to govern themselves until they could arrange for a charter of their own; they were never able to arrange for such a charter, and the Compact remained in force until their colony at Plymouth was absorbed in that of Massachusetts Bay in 1691.”<sup>14</sup>

The preamble of the Mayflower Compact emphasizes religious themes and political loyalties which are reflected in later charters and



**The Mayflower Compact:** “Having undertaken for the Glory of God and advancement of the Christian Faith. . .”

state constitutions. The Compact reads in part:

In the name of God, Amen.

We, whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, etc.

Having undertaken for the Glory of God and advancement of the Christian Faith, and Honour of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the First Colony in the Northern Parts of Virginia; do by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and one another, Covenant and Combine ourselves together into a Civil Body Politic, for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of other ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof do enact, constitute and frame such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet [suitable] and convenient for the general good of the Colony, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.

These early settlers to the New World brought with them an old faith, a faith that was rooted in “the name of God. . . for the glory of God and advancement of the Christian faith.” Those aboard the Mayflower were conscious of the fact that they were acting “in the presence of God” as they drafted what would later be called “the foundation stone of American liberty”<sup>15</sup> and the basis of representative government in the New World.

## **Plymouth Plantation**

William Bradford (1589?–1657), who followed John Carver as governor of Plymouth after Carver’s death in 1621, also served as the colony’s historian. In Book I of *Plymouth Plantation*, Bradford chronicles the events that relate to the colony up to their landing at Plymouth

in the winter of 1620. The remainder of the work completes the history of Plymouth up to 1650. As Bradford's work demonstrates, the Pilgrims were motivated by "the gospel of the kingdom of Christ":

Last and not least, they cherished a great hope and inward zeal of laying good foundations, or at least of making some way towards it, for the propagation and advance of the gospel of the kingdom of Christ in the remote parts of the world, even though they should be but stepping stones to others in the performance of so great a work.<sup>16</sup>

Plymouth was first a religious society, secondly an economic enterprise, and, last, a political commonwealth governed by biblical standards. The religious convictions of the Pilgrims were early expressed in the drafting of the Mayflower Compact.

## Connecticut

The Rev. Thomas Hooker (1586–1647, who established Connecticut in 1636, preached a sermon using the texts Deuteronomy 1:13 and Exodus 18:21 which dealt with the biblical basis for civil government. He explained that in a sermon before the Connecticut General Court of 1638, that "the choice of public magistrates belongs unto the people by God's own allowance" and that "they who have the power to appoint officers and magistrates, it is in their power, also, to set the bounds and



**William Bradford:** "They cherished a great hope and inward zeal of laying good foundations . . . for the propagation and advance of the gospel of the kingdom of Christ."

limitations of the power and place unto which they call them.” He went on to say that “the privilege of election, which belongs to the people” must be exercised “according to the blessed will and law of God.”

New Haven was established by the Reverend John Davenport and Theophilus Eaton in 1638. It was at New Haven that the first general court convened in 1638 and enacted a body of laws. “After a day of fasting and prayer, they rested their first frame of government on a simple plantation covenant, that ‘all of them would be ordered by the rules which the Scriptures held forth to them.’”<sup>17</sup> Under the guidance of Davenport and Eaton, who was annually elected its governor for twenty years until his death, the colony prospered and maintained its faithfulness to the Word of God. A year after the meeting of the general court, the colonists desired a more perfect form of government. A committee consisting of Davenport, Eaton, and five others, who made up what was known as “the seven Pillars,” enacted a civil polity where God’s Word was “established as the only rule in public affairs. Thus New Haven made the Bible its statute-book, and the elect its freemen.”<sup>18</sup>

After a period of war with the Indians, the settlers of the western colony resolved to perfect its political institutions by forming a body politic by voluntary association. It was on January 14, 1639, that the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut, often called the world’s first written constitution, was adopted at Hartford by the colonists:

Forasmuch as it has pleased Almighty God by the wise disposition of His Divine Providence so to order and dispose of things that we the inhabitants and residents . . . ; and well knowing where a people are gathered together the Word of God requires that to maintain the peace and union of such a people there should be an orderly and decent government established according to God, to order and dispose of the affairs of all the people at all seasons as occasions shall require.

The founders further stated that one of the governing purposes of the document was “to maintain and preserve the liberty and purity of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus which we now profess, as also the discipline of the churches, which according to the truth of the said Gospel is now practiced among us.”<sup>19</sup>

### **New England Confederation**

The New England Confederation, put into effect on May 19, 1643, established a union of like-minded civil bodies. They shared a common understanding of limited civil government and the need to advance the cause of the gospel, a mission which they described as “to advance the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and to enjoy the liberties of the Gospel in purity with peace.”<sup>20</sup>

Civil rulers and courts were considered to be “ministers of God for the good of the people,” to “have power to declare, publish, and establish, for the Plantations within their jurisdiction, the laws He hath made; and to make and repeal orders for smaller matters, not particularly determined in Scriptures, according to the more general rules of righteousness, and while they stand in force, to require execution of them.”<sup>21</sup>

### **Conclusion**

A survey of all the colonies will lead any student of the era to conclude that they were founded on the religious precepts of Christianity. From the First Charter of Virginia granted by King James I in 1606 “to propagate the Christian religion” to the Pennsylvania Charter of Privileges granted to William Penn in 1701 where “all persons who . . . profess to believe in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the World, shall be capable . . . to serve this Government in any capacity, both legislatively and executively,” all the colonies were founded on the religious precepts of Christianity with the Bible as their statute book.

## NOTES

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4. Thompson, *The Religious Foundations of America*, 83.
5. [http://www.face.net/files/hunts\\_prayer.pdf](http://www.face.net/files/hunts_prayer.pdf)
6. <http://www.reformedreader.org/gbn/en.htm>
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8. The actual title is *A Good Speed to Virginia* (London, 1609).
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12. George Bancroft, *History of the Colonization of the United States*, 10 vols. 4th ed. (Boston, MA: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1837), 1:307.
13. The Pilgrims were still using the Julian Calendar which came into being in 46 B.C. The current Gregorian Calendar was developed in 1582, but England and the colonies did not use it until 1752. There is a difference of ten days between the two calendars. While the Mayflower Compact is signed on November 11, 1620, the Gregorian ten-day addition makes it the 21st.
14. Mortimer J. Adler, ed., "The Mayflower Compact," *Annals of America: 1493-1754*, 18 vols. (Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968), 1:64.
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16. William Bradford, *Bradford's History of the Plymouth Settlement, 1608-1650*, rendered into modern English by Harold Paget (Portland, OR: American Heritage Ministries, [1909] 1988), 21. A copy of Bradford's account of the Mayflower Compact, from his manuscript *Of Plimoth Plantation*, can be found in *Mourt's Relation: A Journal of the Pilgrims of Plymouth*, ed. Jordan D. Fiore (Plymouth, MA: Plymouth Rock Foundation, [1841, 1865] 1985), between pages 10 and 11.
17. Bancroft, *History of the Colonization of the United States*, 1:403.
18. Bancroft, *History of the Colonization of the United States*, 1:404.
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20. "The New England Confederation" (May 19, 1643), *Documents*, 26.
21. *Code of New Haven* (1656), 567. Quoted in Isaac A. Cornelison, *The Relation of Religion to Civil Government in the United States of America: A State without a Church, But Not without a Religion* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1895), 59.

# 3

## “THROUGH DIVINE GOODNESS” *Christianity in the Colonial Constitutions*

Like the colonial charters that preceded them, state constitutions expressed dependence on God for the maintenance of a moral civil order. These independent state governments with their representative officials created a constitutional system of government that has never been duplicated. The framers were wise enough to limit the power of the newly formed federal government by insisting that the states retain the major portion of their sovereignty. How the states handled religious issues is not one of the powers “delegated to the United States by the Constitution.” Religion is “reserved to the States” or “to the people” of those states. The state constitutions varied in the way they approached the issue of religion. This was by design. As we will see, the state constitutions are a remarkable testimony to the role that Christianity played in the formation of the American Republic.<sup>1</sup>



*The Constitution* mural by Barry Faulkner

There was a worldview prior to 1787 that did not pass into oblivion when the Constitution was finally ratified in 1791 with the added Ten Amendments. Many of the state constitutions were specifically Christian, and all were generally religious. Some states made changes after the ratification of the national Constitution but not because there was any constitutional or judicial mandate to do so. In fact, throughout their history, the 50 state constitutions mention God using various designations such as “Supreme Ruler of the Universe,” “Creator,” “God,” “Divine Goodness,” “Divine Guidance,” “Supreme Being,” “Lord,” “Sovereign Ruler of the Universe,” “Legislator of the Universe,” with “Almighty God” as the most common biblical phrase (Gen. 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; etc.). (The claim had been made by some that West Virginia is the exception. This is not the case.<sup>2</sup>) A number of state seals and mottoes carry religious references. Here are some examples:

### CONNECTICUT

*Qui Transtulit Sustinet:*  
“He Who Transplanted Still Sustains.”



### FLORIDA

“In God We Trust.”

### COLORADO

*Nil Sine Numine:*  
“Nothing without God.”





## SOUTH DAKOTA

“Under God the People Rule.”

## ARIZONA

*Ditat Deus:*  
“God Enriches.”



Kentucky’s official state *Latin* motto is *Deo gratiam habeamus*, “Let us be Grateful to God.” The state motto of Ohio is “With God All Things are Possible.” With this evidence in tow, those who claim that religion is constitutionally separated from government have a lot of explaining to do. Are we to assume that every state legislature and its courts missed the meaning of the national Constitution for more than 200 years? I don’t think so.



## Religion and the State Constitutions

The original 13 colonies, which later became states, created the national government. The national government is the creation of the states. Each colony sent representatives to Philadelphia and drafted a Constitution of *enumerated powers*: Only those powers actually listed in the Constitution were available to the national government. The colonial governments with their own constitution, representatives,



**The Federal Constitution:** Only those powers actually listed in the Constitution were available to the national government.

and governors wanted to insure that the issue of religion, as well as other freedoms, remained within their own limited jurisdictions. This is why the First Amendment begins with “*Congress shall make no law. . .*” If the people in the several states wanted to change the constitutional provisions in their state, there was a legislative process to do so.

The Constitution is the “supreme law of the land” in those powers that have been “delegated” to it. It was never meant to be an open-source document, although it has been treated this way. Even the United States Senate understood this . . . in 1837!

In the adoption of the Federal Constitution, the States acted severally free, independent and sovereign States. Each for itself, by its own voluntary assent, entered the Union with a view to its increased security against all dangers, domestic as well as foreign, and the more perfect union and secure enjoyment of its natural and social advantages. In delegating a portion of their powers to be exercised by the Federal government, the States retained, individually and respectively, the exclusive and sole right over their domestic institutions and police, and are alone responsible for them.<sup>3</sup>

The colonies had fought a war with England over the relationship

**The Bill of Rights:** Not satisfied with the restrictions put on the national government, the states would not ratify the Constitution until there was a Bill of Rights enjoined to it.



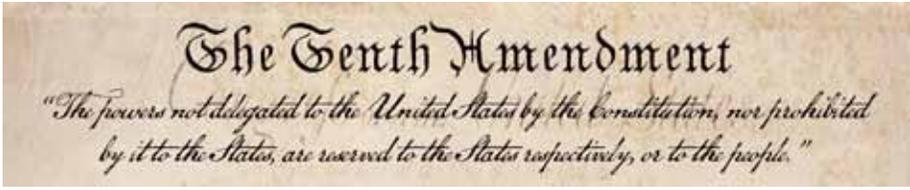
between national and local sovereignty. It's doubtful that the states would have turned around to create a national government that put them in the same political predicament that they had shed blood over just twelve years earlier.

Not satisfied with the restrictions put on the national government, the states would not ratify the Constitution until there was a Bill of Rights enjoined to it. The states realized that not everything could be put in the amendment process, so they covered the limited sovereignty issue with the Ninth and Tenth Amendments, with the Tenth being the most clear and all-encompassing:

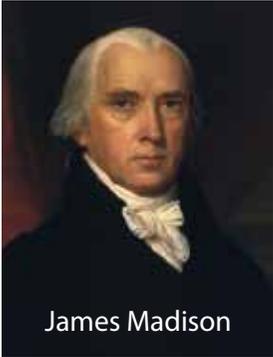
**Ninth:** “The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.”

**Tenth:** “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”

There were those who believed a Bill of Rights was unnecessary because, as Alexander Hamilton put it, “Why declare that things shall not be done which there is no power to do?”<sup>4</sup> Since the Constitution



listed the powers of the national government (e.g., Art. 1, sec. 8), why make a list of those powers it did not have? Madison argued in a



James Madison

similar way in his letter to Jefferson: “I conceive that in a certain degree ... the rights in question are reserved by the manner in which the federal powers are granted.”<sup>5</sup> Both Jefferson and Madison expressed their limited government views in the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions. Consider Jefferson’s argument in the Kentucky Resolutions of 1798:

*Resolved*, that the several States composing the United States of America, are not united on the principle of unlimited submission to their general government; but that by compact under the style and title of a Constitution for the United States and of amendments thereto, they constituted a general government for special purposes, delegated to that government certain definite powers, reserving each State to itself, the residuary mass of right to their own self-government; and that whensoever the general government assumes undelegated powers, its acts are unauthorized, void, and of no force: That to this compact each State acceded as a State, and is an integral party, its co-States forming, as to itself, the other party...each party has an equal right to judge for itself, as well of infractions as of the mode and measure of redress.<sup>6</sup>

James J. Kilpatrick is correct when he writes, “And so long as the Tenth Amendment remains a part of the Constitution, it is elemen-

tary that it must be given full meaning—that the intention of its framers must be acknowledged and respected. Plainly, the intention of the Tenth Amendment was to restrict the Federal government—to hold it within the strict boundaries of the delegated powers.”<sup>7</sup> This included religion, as the First Amendment and the state constitutions make abundantly clear.

## **DELAWARE**

“Liberty and Independence”

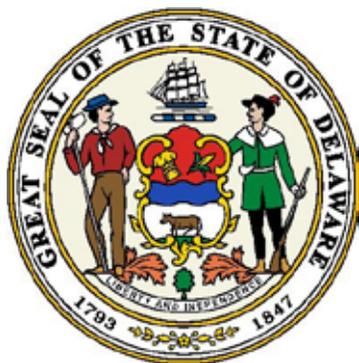
The Delaware constitution established the Christian religion while not elevating “one religious sect” in the “State in preference to another”:

ART. 22. Every person who shall be chosen a member of either house, or appointed to any office or place of trust, before taking his seat, or entering upon the execution of his office, shall take the following oath, or affirmation, if conscientiously scrupulous of taking an oath, to wit:

“I, \_\_\_\_\_ will bear true allegiance to the Delaware State, submit to its constitution and laws, and do no act wittingly whereby the freedom thereof may be prejudiced.”

And also make and subscribe the following declaration, to wit:

“I, \_\_\_\_\_ do profess faith in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ His only Son, and in the Holy Ghost, one God, blessed for evermore; and I do acknowledge the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration.”



And all officers shall also take an oath of office.

ART. 29. There shall be no establishment of any one religious sect in this State in preference to another; and no clergyman or preacher of the gospel, of any denomination, shall be capable of holding any civil office in this State, or of being a member of either of the branches of the legislature, while they continue in the exercise of the pastoral function.

A jurisdictional separation between church and state was maintained by prohibiting a “clergyman or preacher of the gospel, of any denomination” from “holding any civil office” in the state, “or of being a member of either of the branches of the legislature, while they continue in the exercise of the pastoral function” (Art. 29). This state prohibition was in effect prior to 1787, and Article VI, sec. 1 in the national Constitution did nothing to change this at the *state level*. This is why it can be truly said that the First Amendment does not deal with the separation between church and state. Church-state separation was best handled at the state level. The First Amendment, as we will see, deals with the relationship between *Congress* and the states regarding religion, speech, press, assembly, and political dissent.

Revisions to the Delaware constitution were made in 1792. The new Preamble declared, “Through divine goodness all men have, by nature, the rights of worshipping and serving their Creator according to the dictates of their consciences.” The people of Delaware are exhorted “to assemble together for the public worship of the Author of the universe,” although not through compulsion by the state. In addition, “piety and morality” are to be “promoted.”

## NEW JERSEY

“Liberty and Prosperity”

The earliest settlers in New Jersey were Christians who came from the eastern end of Long Island, New York. They settled at Elizabethtown where the first colonial legislative assembly convened to transfer the chief features of New England laws to the statute book of New Jersey. The New Jersey constitution of 1776 stipulated that “no person shall ever . . . be deprived of the inestimable privilege of worshipping Almighty God in a manner agreeable to the dictates of his own



conscience.” A citizen of New Jersey was not compelled by state law “to attend any place of worship, contrary to his own faith and judgment.” Neither was he “obliged to pay tithes, taxes, or any other rates, for the purpose of building or repairing any church or churches, places of worship, or for the maintenance of any minister or ministry.”

These religious liberty provisions did not disestablish Protestant Christianity or secularize civil government. They merely stated that the civil government could not establish “any one religious sect . . . in preference to another.” The constitution did give Protestants special constitutional privileges in that “no Protestant inhabitant of this Colony shall be denied the enjoyment of any civil right, merely on account of his religious principles; but that all persons, professing a belief in the faith of any Protestant sect . . . shall be capable of being elected into any office or profit or trust, or being a member of either branch of the Legislature.”

The following instructions from the legislature of New Jersey to its delegates in Congress in 1777 exemplify the Christian sentiments of the men who directed the civil and military concerns of the War for Independence:

We hope you will habitually bear in mind that the success of the great cause in which the United States

are engaged depends upon the favor and blessing of Almighty God; and therefore you will neglect nothing which is competent to the Assembly of the States for promoting *piety* and *good morals* among the people at large.<sup>8</sup>

New Jersey's history of its Christian foundations goes back as far as 1683 with the drafting of the "Fundamental Constitution for the Province of East New Jersey." Religious liberty was upheld, and every civil magistrate was required to affirm this by law and swear a binding oath to Jesus Christ. Following this requirement we read: "Nor by this article is it intended that any under the notion of liberty shall allow themselves to avow atheism, irreligiousness, or to practice cursing, swearing, drunkenness, profaneness, whoring, adultery, murdering, or any kind of violence. . . ." Marriage was defined by "the law of God."<sup>10</sup>

## GEORGIA

"Wisdom, Justice, Moderation"

General James Oglethorpe (1696–1785) conceived a plan to provide a refuge for persecuted Protestants of Europe. On June 9, 1732, he was granted a charter by George II to establish a new colony. Oglethorpe named his colony Georgia. He was motivated primarily from strong Christian principles, which are evident in his denouncement of slavery. In London, in 1734, he praised Georgia for its anti-slavery policy:



Slavery, the misfortune, if not the dishonor, of other plantations, is absolutely proscribed [prohibited]. Let avarice defend it as it will, there is an honest reluctance in humanity against buying and selling, and regarding

those of our species as our wealth and possessions. . . . The name of slavery is here unheard, and every inhabitant is free from unchosen masters and oppression. . . . Slavery is against the gospel as well as the fundamental law of England. We refused, as trustees, to make a law permitting such a horrid crime.<sup>11</sup>

Oglethorpe’s words were not heeded. The “horrid crime” of slavery was soon introduced to Georgia. “In 1750 the law prohibiting slavery was repealed and Georgia became a slave-worked plantation colony like its neighbor, South Carolina.”<sup>12</sup> If the Bible had been followed on the prohibition of “man stealing” (kidnapping), America never would have been cursed with the sin and crime of chattel slavery.



James Oglethorpe

In keeping with the original charter which gave the colonists of Georgia “a liberty of conscience” to worship God, the 1777 Constitution retains its essential religious character. Article VI states that “The representatives shall be chosen out of the residents in each county . . . and they shall be of the Protestant religion.” Article LVI declares that “All persons whatever shall have the free exercise of their religion; provided it be not repugnant to the peace and safety of the State.” The Preamble to the revised Georgia Constitution in 1945 stated: “To perpetuate the principles of free government, insure justice to all, preserve peace, promote the interest and happiness of the citizen, and transmit to posterity the enjoyment of liberty, we, the people of Georgia, relying upon the protection and guidance of Almighty God, to ordain and establish this Constitution.”

## **MARYLAND**

“With Favor Wilt Thou Compass Us As With A

Shield" (Ps. 5:12)<sup>13</sup>

While the other colonies were settled by Protestant Christians, Maryland was first settled by English Catholics in 1634 under the direction of Cecilius Calvert, Lord Baltimore (1606–1675). Baltimore's proprietorship was often challenged and was eventually lost when Maryland became a royal colony in the late seventeenth century.



It cannot be disputed, however, that Maryland's civil government was dedicated to defending the Christian religion. Article XXXIII of its 1776 constitution declares, "All persons, professing the Christian religion, are equally entitled to protection in their religious liberty; wherefore no person ought by any law to be molested in his person or estate on account of his religious persuasion or profession, or for his religious practice; unless, under colour of religion, any man shall disturb the good order, peace and safety of the State."

## MASSACHUSETTS

"By the Sword We Seek Peace, but Peace Only Under Liberty"

Massachusetts has a long history of advancing and protecting the Christian religion. Its constitution of 1780 continues the state's Christian history by asserting that "It is the right as well as the duty of all men in society, publicly, and at stated seasons, to worship the



SUPREME BEING, the great Creator and Preserver of the universe." After stating that the "governor shall be chosen annually," qualifica-

tions for holding office are next listed: “no person shall be eligible to this office, unless . . . he shall declare himself to be of the Christian religion.” The following oath was also required: “I do declare, that I believe the Christian religion, and have firm persuasion of its truth.”

## **NEW HAMPSHIRE**

“Live Free or Die”

New Hampshire became a separate colony from Massachusetts in 1679. Because of its Puritan origins it shared the religious views of Massachusetts. The constitution of 1784 states:



Every individual has a natural and unalienable right to worship GOD according to the dictates of his own conscience, and reason; and no subject shall be hurt, molested, or restrained in his person, liberty or estate for worshipping GOD, in the manner and season most agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience, or for his religious profession, sentiments or persuasion; provided he doth not disturb the public peace, or disturb others, in their religious worship.

The constitution recognized that “morality and piety” are “rightly grounded on evangelical principles.” State office holders—governor, senators, representatives, and members of Council—must be of the “protestant religion.” New Hampshire’s 1792 constitution, drafted after the ratification of the United States Constitution, retained all the religious liberties as well as all the religious restrictions of the 1784 constitution.

## **NORTH CAROLINA**

“To Be Rather Than to Seem”

The French and Spanish were the first to explore the area of the Carolinas in the early sixteenth century. The English were the first to colonize the region. Sir Walter Raleigh led three expeditions to the area. The first permanent colony was founded about 1653 near Albemarle Sound by settlers from Virginia. In 1711 Carolina was divided into North Carolina and South Carolina. North Carolina became a royal colony in 1729.



The 1776 constitution upholds religious freedom. Article XIX reads, “All men have a natural and unalienable right to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences.” Article XXXII is more specifically Christian in content: “No person who shall deny the being of God, or the truth of the Protestant religion, or the divine authority of the Old or New Testaments, or who shall hold religious principles incompatible with the freedom and safety of the State, shall be capable of holding any office or place of trust or profit in the civil department within this State.” This provision remained in force until 1835, when it was amended by changing the word “Protestant” to “Christian,” and as so amended remained in force until the Constitution of 1868 where North Carolina is describe as a “Christian State” (Art. XI, sec. 7). The Preamble reads:

We, the people of the State of North Carolina, grateful to Almighty God, the Sovereign Ruler of Nations, for the preservation of the American Union and the existence of our civil, political and religious liberties, and acknowledging our dependence upon Him for the continuance of those blessings to us and our posterity, do, for the more certain security thereof and for the better government of this State, ordain and establish this Constitution.

And in that Constitution among the persons disqualified for office were “all persons who shall deny the being of Almighty God.” This provision remained in effect until 1876.

## **SOUTH CAROLINA**

“Ready in Soul and Resource”

James Underwood, a professor at the University of South Carolina Law School, has stated that South Carolina’s constitution includes “provisions that are unconstitutional under the federal constitution.”<sup>14</sup> These provisions, as of 1989, included the following:



- “No person shall be eligible to hold office of Governor who denies the existence of the Supreme Being.”
- “No person who denies the existence of a Supreme Being shall hold any office under this constitution.”

South Carolina’s Constitution reflects principles set forth in the 1778 version. Article XXXVIII assured that “all persons and religious societies who acknowledge that there is one God, and a future state of rewards and punishments, and that God is publicly to be worshipped, shall be freely tolerated.” In addition, the “Christian Protestant religion shall be deemed, and is hereby constituted and declared to be, the established religion of this State.” While religious requirements were mandated by law for all who held political office, “No person shall, by law, be obliged to pay towards the maintenance and support of a religious worship that he does not freely join in, or has not voluntarily engaged in support.”

## **PENNSYLVANIA**

“Virtue, Liberty, and  
Independence”

Pennsylvania was founded by William Penn, a Quaker who had once been imprisoned for blasphemy. In his 1682 “Charter of Liberties,” Penn noted the biblical origin of civil government, and maintained, citing 1 Timothy 1:9–10, that the law of God was made for the unrighteous. He went on to reference



Romans 13:1–5 in acknowledgment that civil government is neither morally neutral nor the sole propriety of the people: “This settles the divine right of government beyond exception, and that for two ends. First, to terrify evil doers; secondly, to cherish those that do well.”<sup>15</sup>

A 1705–1706 act of the Pennsylvania legislature to regulate the number of members of the assembly required that to serve as a civil magistrate a person had to “also profess to believe in Jesus Christ, the saviour of the world” and take the following oath: “I profess faith in God the Father and in Jesus Christ his eternal son, the true God, and in the Holy Spirit, one God blessed for evermore; and do acknowledge the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration.”<sup>16</sup>

The Pennsylvania constitution of 1776 declared that the legisla-



**WILLIAM PENN:** “The divine right of government [is designed] for two ends. First, to terrify evil doers; secondly, to cherish those that do well.”

ture shall consist of “persons most noted for wisdom and virtue,” and that every member should subscribe to the following:

I do believe in one God, the Creator and Governor of the universe, the Rewarder of the good and the Punisher of the wicked; and I acknowledge the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be given by Divine inspiration.

The 1790 constitution reaffirms the liberties established in 1776 and goes on to affirm, “That no person, who acknowledges the being of God, and a future state of rewards and punishments, shall, on account of his religious sentiments, be disqualified to hold any office or place of trust or profit under this commonwealth.”

## Conclusion

All of the colonial constitutions acknowledged that God had a hand in their founding and development. “Even in the fundamental law of the Province of Rhode Island,” best known for the religious dissension of its founder Roger Williams, “Christian purpose is expressly stated and a particular form of Christianity (Protestantism) was required as a qualification for office.”<sup>17</sup>

**ROGER WILLIAMS**, the founder of Rhode Island, stated that there was a Christian purpose for office holders.



## NOTES

1. The material in this chapter can be found in a number of sources: Francis Newton Thorpe, *The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and Other Organic Laws of the States, Territories, and Colonies*, 7 vols. (Washington, DC: 1909) and W. Keith Kavenaugh, ed., *Foundations of Colonial America: A Documentary History*, 3 vols. (New York: Chelsea House, 1973). Edwin S. Gaustad's *Neither King Nor Prelate: Religion and the New Nation, 1776–1826* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993) includes similar and more accessible information but in an abbreviated form.
2. See “God in the State Constitutions”: [www.usconstitution.net/states\\_god.html](http://www.usconstitution.net/states_god.html). The West Virginia Preamble of 1872 reads, “Since through Divine Providence we enjoy the blessings of civil, political and religious liberty, we, the people of West Virginia reaffirm our faith in and constant reliance upon God.” In 1960, the voters of the state of West Virginia ratified the following Preamble to their state’s Constitution: “Since through Divine Providence we enjoy the blessings of civil, political and religious liberty, we, the people of West Virginia, in and through the provisions of this Constitution, reaffirm our faith in and our constant reliance upon God, and seek diligently to promote, preserve, and perpetuate good government in the State of West Virginia for the common welfare, freedom, and security of ourselves and our posterity.” (Robert Bastress, *The West Virginia State Constitution* [Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995], 27). The Preamble can be found at [http://www.legis.state.wv.us/WVCODE/WV\\_CON.cfm](http://www.legis.state.wv.us/WVCODE/WV_CON.cfm)
3. Quoted in *We the States: An Anthology of Historic Documents and Commentaries thereon, Expounding the State and Federal Relationship* (Richmond, VA: The William Byrd Press, Inc., 1964), xvi-xvii.
4. Alexander Hamilton, [Federalist, no. 84](#) (May 28, 1788).
5. James Madison, [Letter to Thomas Jefferson](#) (October 17, 1788).
6. [“The Kentucky Resolutions”](#) (November 10, 1798).
7. James Jackson Kilpatrick, *The Sovereign States: Notes of a Citizen of Virginia* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Com., 1957), 47.
8. Cited in Benjamin F. Morris, *Christian Life and Character of the Civil Institutions of the United States* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, [1864] 2007), 235.
9. “Fundamental Constitution for the Province of East New Jersey, 1683,” in W. Keith Kavenaugh, ed., *Foundations of Colonial America*, 3 vols. (New York: Chelsea House, 1973), 2:1107.

10. “Fundamental Constitution for the Province of East New Jersey, 1683,” in Kavenaugh, *Foundations of Colonial America*, 2:1108.
11. Jesse T. Peck, *The History of the Great Republic, Considered from a Christian Stand-Point* (New York: Broughton and Wyman, 1868), 80.
12. Irwin Unger, *Instant American History: Through the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1994), 34.
13. Also appearing on Maryland’s seal is the motto “*Strong Deeds, Gentle Words*.”
14. Reported by Tom Strong, “S.C. Constitution labeled archaic,” *The Sun News* (Myrtle Beach, South Carolina) (July 9, 1989), 3D.
15. “Charter of Liberties and Frame of Government of Pennsylvania, April 25-May 5, 1682,” in Kavenaugh, *Foundations of Colonial America*, 2:1134.
16. “Act to Ascertain the Number of Members of Assembly and to Regulate the Election, 1705-06,” in Kavenaugh, *Foundations of Colonial America*, 2:1169.
17. Isaac A. Cornelison, *The Relation of Religion to Civil Government in the United States of America: A State Without a Church, but Not Without a Religion* (New York: G.P Putnam’s Sons, 1895), 85.

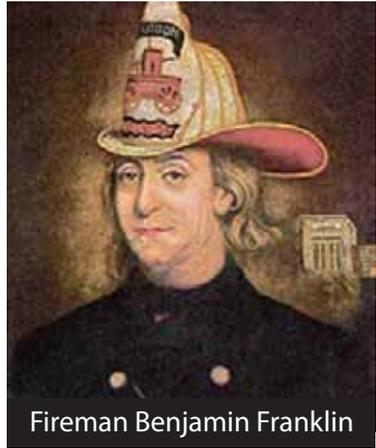


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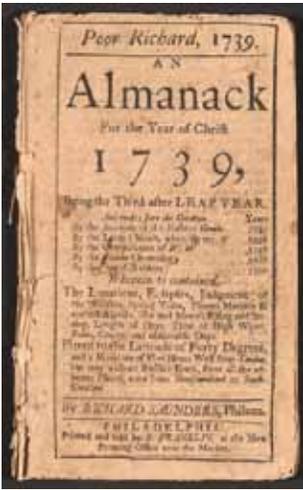
## “IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD”

### *Christianity and the Constitution*

On June 28, 1787, eighty-one-year-old Benjamin Franklin addressed George Washington, the presiding president of the Constitutional Convention, and the delegates. Franklin helped found the University of Pennsylvania, created the first volunteer fire department, established the first public hospital, helped start the first lending library, and published *Poor Richard's Almanac*. Among his many creations as an inventor were the lightning rod, glass harmonica, bifocal glasses, and what has become known as the Franklin stove. Franklin could play the harp, violin, and guitar. He served as America's ambassador to France, was Pennsylvania's delegate to the Second Continental Congress, and was one of the five men on the committee who drafted the Declaration of Independence. He was not known for his religious beliefs except where they diverged from what the general Christian population believed. So it was probably surprising the elder statesman asked for time to deliver the following message:



The small progress we have made after 4 or five weeks close attendance & continual reasonings with each other—our different sentiments on almost every question, several of the last producing as many noes as



eyes, is methinks a melancholy proof of the imperfection of the Human Understanding. We indeed seem to feel our own want of political wisdom, since we have been running about in search of it. We have gone back to ancient history for models of Government, and examined the different forms of those Republics which having been formed with the seeds of their own dissolution now no longer exist. And we have viewed Modern States all round Europe, but

find none of their Constitutions suitable to our circumstances.

In this situation of this Assembly, groping as it were in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of



The Constitutional Convention

humbly applying to the Father of lights to illuminate our understandings?

In the beginning of the contest with G. Britain, when we were sensible of danger we had daily prayer in this room for the Divine Protection.—Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a Superintending providence in our favor. To that kind providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful friend? or do we imagine that we no longer need His assistance. I have lived, Sir, a long time and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice [Matt. 10:29], is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings that “except the Lord build they labor in vain that build it” [Ps. 127:1] I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the Builders of Babel. We shall be divided by our little partial local interests; our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and bye word down to future ages. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing Governments by Human wisdom and leave it to chance, war and conquest. I therefore beg leave to move—that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the Clergy of this City be requested to officiate in that Service.

The motion was immediately seconded by Roger Sherman. Alexander Hamilton and “several others expressed their apprehensions that however proper such a resolution might have been at the beginning of the convention, it might at this late day . . . bring on it some disagreeable [strong criticisms][that would] lead the public to believe that the embarrassments and dissensions within the Convention, had suggested this measure.” Other objected to the argument by stating “that the past omission of a duty could not justify a further omission—that the rejection of such a proposition would expose the Convention to more unpleasant [strong criticisms] than the adoption of it. . . .” Another had argued that there were no funds to bring a clergyman. In a word, the convention neither began nor did it pause to take part in a time of prayer.



Alexander Hamilton

The Constitution is a document developed by a “mixed multitude” of beliefs. There were disagreements about the Preamble. Patrick Henry contended that it should begin with “We the States” rather than “We the People,” since the national government was a creation of the states and not the people generally. Henry had reservations about the Constitution. When invited to attend, he told Madison that he “smelt a rat.” While there are remnants of Christian principles in the Constitution, there are some glaring omissions that are haunting us today.

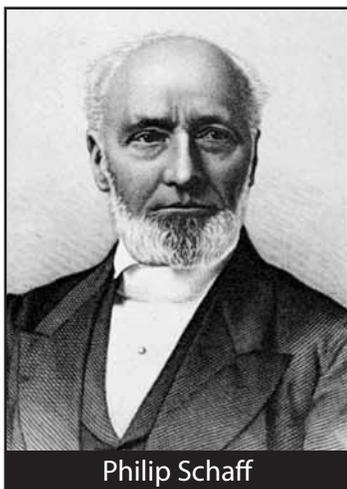
### No Mention of God

A story has been told about a chance meeting between a minister and Alexander Hamilton after the Philadelphia Convention had adjourned.<sup>1</sup> The minister asked Hamilton why “the Constitution has no recognition of God or the Christian religion.” Hamilton is reported

to have said, "we forgot it."<sup>2</sup> Many now ask how is it possible that men from states whose constitutions were not shy about acknowledging God could leave out any mention of Him in the Federal Constitution? Certainly biblical principles of limited and representative government, a sound monetary policy, the establishment of justice, the maintenance of liberty, and the preservation of peace are biblical principles that ripple through the document.<sup>3</sup> But is the Constitution without any mention of God or the Christian religion?

### **A Political Document**

As we have seen, the state constitutions were explicitly Christian in their design. The Federal Constitution as a creation of the states did not nullify the states' rights to govern their religious affairs. The absence of direct references to God and the Christian religion in the Constitution, as compared to the state constitutions, is due in part from an understanding that it was drafted for a very limited civil objective. Since the thirteen colonies/states had their own constitutions, governors, and representatives, the newly created national government would only



Philip Schaff

do what the several states could not do individually. Powers not delegated to the national government remained with the states. Church historian Philip Schaff offers the following defense for the absence of references to Providence, the Creator, nature and nature's God, and the Supreme Being in terms of the document's political purpose:

The absence of the names of God and Christ, in a purely political and legal document, no more proves denial or irreverence than the absence of those names in a mathematical treatise, or the statutes of a

bank or railroad corporation. The title “Holiness” does not make the Pope of Rome any holier than he is. . . . The book of Esther and the Song of Solomon are undoubtedly productions of devout worshippers of Jehovah; and yet the name of God does not occur once in them.<sup>4</sup>

The argument is that theology did not draw the delegates to Philadelphia in 1787. These issues had already been settled at the state level. Instead, the delegates came to debate and construct the best form of civil government at the national level.

### A Campaign to Dechristianize a Nation

There were two revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century, two new constitutions drafted, and two different reactions to the Christian religion. France was caught up in revolutionary fever in 1791, not with a foreign power but with itself. The French revolutionaries were self-conscious about their efforts to turn France into a secular state, devoid of even a remnant of religion. Throughout the nation a “campaign to dechristianize France spread like wildfire.”<sup>5</sup> The dechristianization of the French Republic meant the crowning of a substitute civil religion. The leaders of the Paris Commune demanded that the former metropolitan church of Notre Dame be reconsecrated as a “Temple of Reason.” On November 10, 1793, a civic festival was held



A depiction of the dechristianization of the French Republic with Reason and Philosophy as moral absolutes.

in the new temple, its façade bearing the words "To Philosophy." In Paris, the goddess Reason "was personified by an actress, Demoiselle Candeille, carried shoulder-high into the cathedral by men dressed in Roman costumes."<sup>6</sup> The Commune ordered that all churches be closed and converted into poor houses and schools. "Church bells were melted down and used to cast cannons."<sup>7</sup>

Blatant infidelity precipitated that storm of pitiless fury. The National Assembly passed a resolution deliberately declaring "There is no God;" vacated the throne of Deity by simple resolution, abolished the Sabbath, unfrocked her ministers of religion, turned temples of spiritual worship into places of secular business, and enthroned a vile woman as the Goddess of Reason.<sup>8</sup>

The French Revolution replaced the God of Revelation with the Goddess of Reason, with disastrous results. Blood literally flowed in the streets as day after day "enemies of the republic" met their death under the sharp blade of Madam Guillotine. "France, in its terrific revolution, saw the violent culmination of theoretical and practical infidelity."<sup>9</sup>

The French calendar was also changed to reflect the new anti-Christian spirit of the revolution. "The Convention voted on 5 October 1793 to abolish the Christian calendar and introduce a republican calendar."<sup>10</sup> The new calendar divided the day into ten hours



"Blatant infidelity precipitated that storm of pitiless fury. The National Assembly passed a resolution deliberately declaring 'There is no God.'"

each with one hundred minutes which was further sub-divided into one hundred seconds. The founding of the Republic on September 22, 1792, was the beginning of the new era and a new “Year One.” Instead of the birth of Jesus Christ being the focal point of history, the founding day of the new French Republic would define how time would be kept. While the year still had twelve months, all were made thirty days long with the remaining days scattered throughout the year and celebrated as festival days. The seven-day week was replaced with a week of ten days with the result that Sunday as a day of rest and Christian worship was eliminated.<sup>11</sup>

The French Republic went beyond a new calendar by changing place names that had “reference to a Christian past.” In addition, “children were named after republican heroes such as Brutus and Cato, and observance of the new Revolutionary calendar, which abolished Sunday and Christian Feast days, was enforced.”<sup>12</sup>

While we moderns have not gone as far as the French Revolutionaries, some tinkering has been done with the way dates are designated. Most academic works no longer use B.C. (Before Christ) and A.D. (*anno domini*, “in the year of our Lord”) but have adopted B.C.E. (Before the Common Era) and C.E. (Common Era) in a self-conscious effort to distance the study of history from the person and work of Jesus Christ.



Trying to keep track of the French Revolutionary calendar.

## **Christian Continuity**

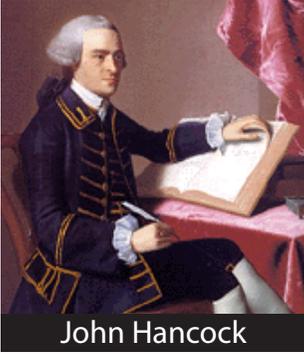
When compared to what the French did, the United States Constitution establishes continuity with the nation's Christian past by linking it with the Christian calendar. Article 1, section 7 of our Constitution exempts *Sunday* as a day to be counted within which the president may veto legislation. If the framers had wanted to strip every vestige of religion from the Constitution, why include a reference to an obvious religious observance? Sunday observance remained under constitutional protection at the federal and state levels for some time in the United States. As Supreme Court Justice David Brewer observed, the recognition of Sunday as a day of worship and rest is "a day peculiar to [the Christian] faith, and known to no other."<sup>13</sup>

The Constitution itself states that the drafting took place "in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and Eighty seven." While this might seem insignificant to some, but when compared to what the French did in creating a new "Year One," it takes on special meaning. The constitutional framers could have taken the direction of the French Revolutionaries and created a "new order of the ages" based on a new calendar if they had wanted to make a complete break with the Christian past. They did not.

The Articles of Confederation include the phrase "it hath pleased the Great Governor of the World to incline the hearts of the legislatures . . . to approve of, and to authorize us to ratify the said Articles of Confederation and perpetual Union." Like the Constitution the Articles close with "Done at Philadelphia in the State of Pennsylvania the ninth day of July in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy-Eight, and in the Third Year of the independence of America."

The several states continued to follow the Christian calendar where Jesus was placed at the center of history. When John Hancock was Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts he issued "A Proclamation for a Day of Public Thanksgiving" in 1791:

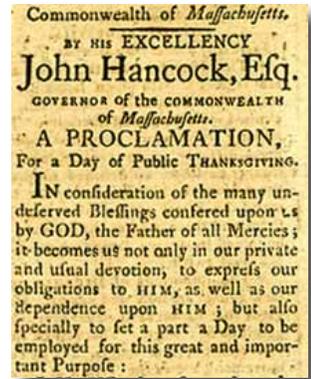
In consideration of the many undeserved Blessings conferred upon us by GOD, the Father of all Mercies;



John Hancock

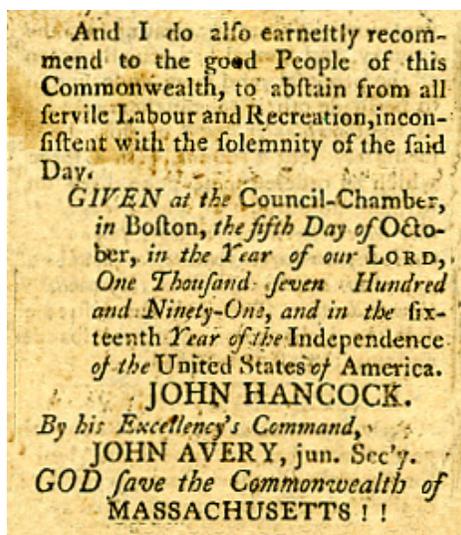
it becomes us not only in our private and usual devotion, to express our obligations to Him, as well as our dependence upon Him; but also specially to set a part a Day to be employed for this great and important Purpose. . . . And above all, not only to continue to us the enjoyment of our civil Rights and Liberties; but the great and most important Bless-

ing, the Gospel of Jesus Christ: And together with our cordial acknowledgments, I do earnestly recommend, that we may join the penitent confession of our Sins, and implore the further continuance of the Divine Protection, and Blessings of Heaven upon this People; especially that He would be graciously pleased to direct, and prosper the Administration of the Federal Government, and of this, and the other States in the Union—to afford Him further Smiles on our Agriculture and Fisheries, Commerce and Manufactures—To prosper our University and all Seminaries of Learning—To bless the virtuously struggling for the Rights of Men—so that universal Happiness may be Allies of the United States, and to afford his Almighty Aid to all People, who are established in the World; that all may bow to the Scepter of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the whole Earth be filled with his Glory.<sup>14</sup>



Above Hancock's signature, we find the following: "Given at the Council-Chamber, in Boston, the fifth Day of October, in the Year of our Lord, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Ninety-One, and in the

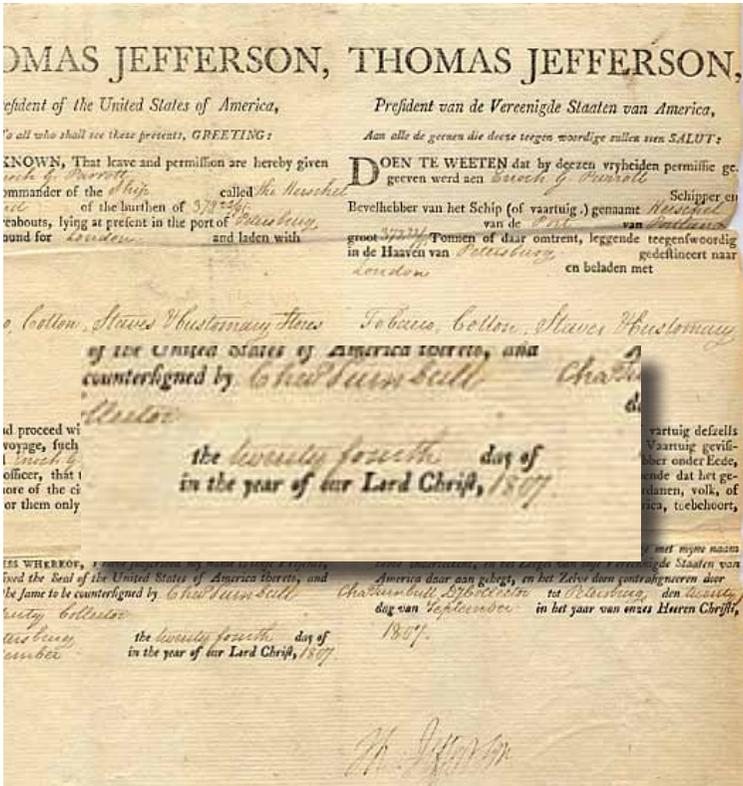
*sixteenth Year of the Independence of the United States of America.* "In the Year of Our Lord" continued to be used, even through Jefferson's administration. In 1807, Jefferson signed a federal passport that allowed the ship *Hershel* to proceed on its Journey to London and dated the letter September 24, 1807 "[in the year of our Lord Christ](#)" (see page 68). Notice the addition of "Christ." There is no misunderstanding that "in the Year of Our Lord" is a reference to Jesus Christ and no one else.



## Religious Discord and States Rights

One theory to explain why the Constitution addresses religion only in an indirect way is that there were different Christian sects represented at the constitutional convention in Philadelphia: Congregationalist, Episcopalian, Dutch Reformed, Presbyterian, Quaker, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, and Methodist.<sup>15</sup> "James Madison tells us there was 'discord of religious opinions within the convention,' which undoubtedly kept theological controversy off the floor."<sup>16</sup> Some maintain that the proliferation of religious opinions among the delegates steered the convention away from including specific religious language in the Constitution.

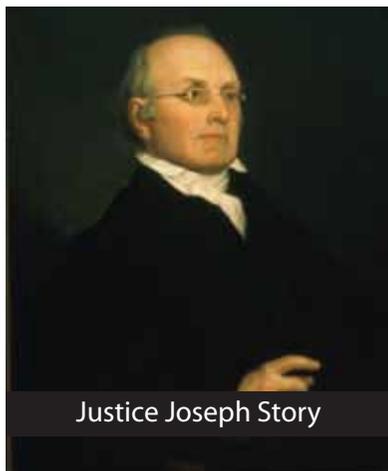
A variation of Madison's explanation is that the representatives wanted to guard the states from federal intrusion, preserving the authority of the states to establish their own religious parameters. Since the religious issue was already settled at the state level, there was no need for the federal government to meddle in an area in which the



national government would have no jurisdiction. The prohibition of a religious test in Article VI, section 3 “as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States” applied only to *national* office holders: congressmen, senators, the president, and Supreme Court Justices. States were free to apply their own test and oath, which they did. Schaff maintained that the article’s inclusion secured “the freedom and independence of the State from ecclesiastical domination and interference.”<sup>17</sup>

The First Amendment as well as the “no religious test” provision “are expressly made to apply to the general government alone. They do not apply to the States. It may have been the intent in framing the Constitution to assign the matter of religion to the domain of the States, rather than to accomplish an elimination of all religious character from

our civil institutions."<sup>18</sup> In his *Commentary on the Constitution of the United States*, Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story (1779–1845) wrote, "Thus, the whole power over the subject of religion was left exclusively



to the State governments, to be acted on according to their own sense of justice, and the State Constitutions."<sup>19</sup>

Story's *Commentary* clearly shows that the First Amendment was designed to prohibit the federal establishment of a national Church or the official preference of a particular Christian sect over all others. The First Amendment, according to Story, was not designed to disestablish the Christian religion at the state level but only to insure that no

single Christian sect (denomination) would be established in terms of constitutional preference:

Probably, at the time of the adoption of the Constitution, and of the . . . [First Amendment], the general, if not the universal, sentiment in America was, that Christianity ought to receive encouragement from the State, so far as such encouragement was not incompatible with the private rights of conscience, and the freedom of religious worship. An attempt to level all religions, and to make it a matter of state policy to hold all in utter indifference, would have created universal disapprobation, if not universal indignation.<sup>20</sup>

While the national government received new powers as a result of the ratification of the Constitution, denying the states jurisdiction over religious issues was not one of them. The Tenth Amendment supports this view: "The powers, not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to

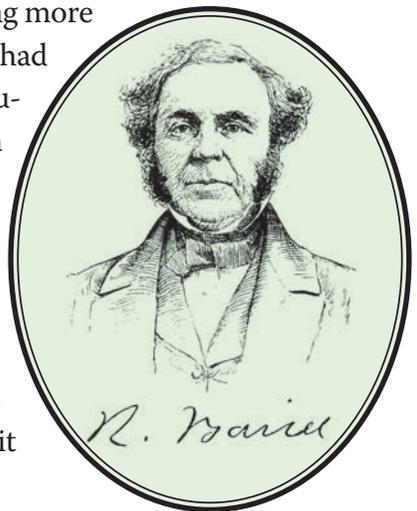
the States, respectively, or to the people.” In the Circuit Court of Tennessee, August 1, 1891, the Court said, “As a matter of fact they (the founders of our government) left the States the most absolute power on the subject, any of them might, if they chose, establish a creed and a church and maintain them.”<sup>21</sup>

### Christianity Assumed

Another argument put forth to explain the Constitution's lack of explicit religious language “is that the Christian premises of the American Constitution and the people's reliance on the Christian deity were assumed by the framers, and thus explicit reference was unnecessary. ‘The Bible,’ argued Robert Baird, the trailblazing student of religion in America, ‘does not begin with an argument to prove the existence of God, but assumes the fact, as one [of] the truth[s] of which it needs no

*“The powers, not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States, respectively, or to the people.”*

attempt to establish.”<sup>22</sup> Having said this, even Baird had to acknowledge his regret at the absence of “something more explicit on the subject. . . . Sure I am that, had the excellent men who framed the Constitution foreseen the inferences that have been drawn from the omission, they would have recognized, in a proper formula, the existence of God, and the truth and the importance of the Christian religion.”<sup>23</sup> The belief was that Christianity was so much a corner stone of American thought and law that there was no need to make it



an official constitutional declaration. Cornelison expressed the prevailing Protestant view of the time that "the government of these United States was necessarily, rightfully, and lawfully Christian."<sup>24</sup>

## **The National Reform Association**

In 1861, a small Presbyterian denomination known as the Covenanters, founded in 1809 in Western Pennsylvania, created a petition that pointed out that the Constitution made no reference to Jesus Christ and the law of God. "The petition received initial support from Senator Charles Sumner, and in 1862 two Covenanter ministers presented the document to President Lincoln. Lincoln was noncommittal. . . ."<sup>25</sup> The Covenanters saw a causal relationship between the sin of slavery and other national sins and the outbreak of the "Civil War." At a February 1863 conference held in Xenia, Ohio, representatives from eleven Protestant denominations from seven northern states were in attendance. "On the second day of the conference John Alexander, a local attorney, delivered a paper on the topic 'Religion in the Nation.' . . . As a means of regaining God's favor, Alexander proposed" the following:

We regard the neglect of God and His law, by omitting all acknowledgment of them in our Constitution, as the crowning, original sin of the nation, and slavery as one of its natural outgrowths. Therefore, the most important step remains to yet to be taken—to amend the Constitution so as to acknowledge God and the authority of His law; and the object of this paper is to suggest to this Convention the propriety of considering this subject, and of preparing such an amendment to the Constitu-



Senator Charles Sumner

tion as they may think proper to propose in accordance with its provisions.<sup>26</sup>

A similar convention was being held in Sparta, Illinois, that same month and came to a similar conclusion. "Representatives from both conventions met in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, the following January to organize the Christian Amendment Movement, soon to be called the National Reform Association. The Association elected John Alexander its first president, and in 1864 set out to obtain an amendment to the United States Constitution to acknowledge God's divine authority and, in doing so, establish a Christian basis for popular government in America." The proposed revised Preamble read as follows (the additional wording is in brackets and italicized):

We, the People of the United States [*recognizing the being and attributes of Almighty God, the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, the law of God as the paramount*

*rule, and Jesus, the Messiah, the Savior and Lord of all*], in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and to our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

*The*  
**CHRISTIAN STATESMAN**  
Founded in 1867  
Jesus Christ Is Civil Governor among the Nations

ITS KEYNOTE

Lift up your heads, O ye gates;  
And be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors:  
And the King of Glory shall come in.—PSALM 24:9

\* \* \* \*

All Hail the power of Jesus name  
Let angels prostrate fall.  
Bring forth the royal diadem  
And crown Him Lord of all.

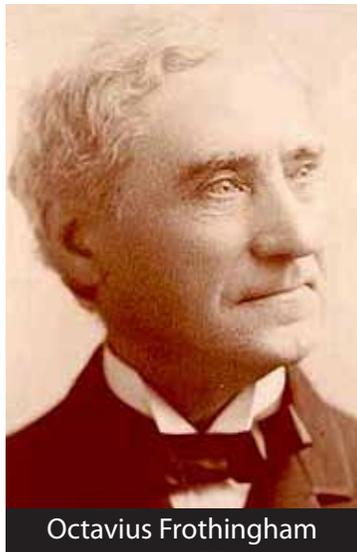
\* \* \*

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Little progress was made in getting the proposed emen-

dation before Congress for a vote. A motion to discharge the Judiciary committee from any further consideration passed. Even so, efforts to get the Amendment passed continued, but they were continually stalled. "One reason suggested for the lack of action was that some Congressmen were concerned about possible Free Exercise of religion implications that might arise with regards to a Christian Amendment to the Constitution."<sup>27</sup> In addition, the National Free Religious Association was founded in 1867 and presided over by Octavius Frothingham (1822–1895) to oppose the Christian Amendment efforts. Frothingham was pastor of the North Unitarian Church of Salem, Massachusetts. He was a radical Unitarian and an outspoken anti-supernaturalist.



Octavius Frothingham

cal Unitarian and an outspoken anti-supernaturalist.

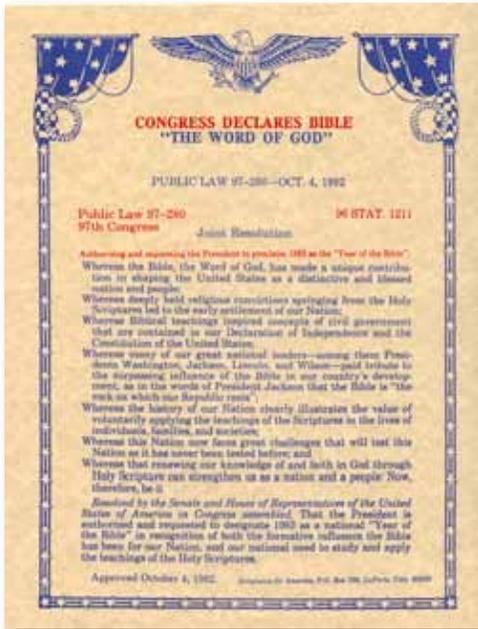
Radical changes were taking place in Ohio public schools. In an attempt to get students from parochial (Roman Catholic) schools to attend public schools, "a group of school board members had two resolutions prohibiting religious instruction and 'reading of religious books, including the Holy Bible,' in the common schools."<sup>28</sup> Many Roman Catholic schools were started because the public schools were thought to be too Protestant.

## Conclusion

If the majority of the constitutional framers could get a glimpse of America today, would they have rethought their decision only to make passing reference to the lordship of Jesus Christ in the body of the Constitution? Would they have been more specific in their mention of God and the need for the nation's reliance on Him in light of

the secularizing spirit that seems to have America in its grip? We will never know. But when all the testimony is in, it is an undeniable fact that Christianity served as the foundation for the political edifice we know as America. In 1983 Congress declared 1983 to be the “Year of the Bible.” In his official pronouncement Ronald Reagan stated the following:

Of the many influences that have shaped the United States of America into a distinctive Nation and people, none may be said to be more fundamental and enduring than the Bible.



Deep religious beliefs stemming from the Old and New Testaments of the Bible inspired many of the early settlers of our country, providing them with the strength, character, convictions, and faith necessary to withstand great hardship and danger in this new and rugged land. These shared beliefs helped forge a sense of common purpose among the widely dispersed colonies—a

sense of community which laid the foundation for the spirit of nationhood that was to develop in later decades.

The Bible and its teachings helped form the basis for the Founding Fathers' abiding belief in the inalienable rights of the individual, rights which they found implicit in the Bible's teachings of the inherent worth and dignity of each individual. This same sense of man pat-

tered the convictions of those who framed the English system of law inherited by our own Nation, as well as the ideals set forth in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

For centuries the Bible’s emphasis on compassion and love for our neighbor has inspired institutional and governmental expressions of benevolent outreach such as private charity, the establishment of schools and hospitals, and the abolition of slavery.<sup>29</sup>

## NOTES

1. No one knows for sure the identity of the questioner or whether the encounter actually took place. Benjamin F. Morris identifies him as the Rev. Dr. Miller, a distinguished professor at Princeton College (*The Christian Life and Character of the Civil Institutions of the United States* [Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, (1864) 2006], 248). Isaac A. Cornelison identifies him as Rev. Dr. John Rogers, a chaplain of the War of Independence and Presbyterian minister (*The Relation of Religion to Civil Government in the United States of America: A State without a Church, but Not Without a Religion* [New York: G.P Putnam’s Sons, 1895], 204).
2. George Duffield, Jr., *The God of Our Fathers*, An Historical Sermon, Preached in the Coates’ Street Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, on Fast Day, January 4, 1861 (Philadelphia, PA: T.B. Pugh, 1861), 15. See Morris, *Christian Life and Character*, 248. Further references can be found in Daniel L. Dreisbach, “God and the Constitution: Reflections on Selected Nineteenth Century Commentaries on References to the Deity and the Christian Religion in the States Constitution,” 22, note 77. This paper is unpublished.
3. Gary DeMar, *God and Government: A Biblical and Historical Study* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 1990), 141–167 and Archie P. Jones, *Christian Principles in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights* (Marlborough, NH: Plymouth Rock Foundation, 1994).
4. Philip Schaff, *Church and State in the United States or The American Idea of Religious Liberty And Its Practical Effects* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1889), 40.
5. Walter Grab, *The French Revolution: The Beginning of Modern Democracy* (London: Bracken Books, 1989), 165.

6. Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?* (1976) in *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview*, 5 vols. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1984), 5:149.
7. Grab, *The French Revolution*, 166.
8. Charles B. Galloway, *Christianity and the American Commonwealth; or, The Influence of Christianity in making This Nation* (Nashville, TN: Publishing House Methodist Episcopal Church, 1898), 25.
9. Jesse T. Peck, *The History of the Great Republic Considered from a Christian Stand-Point* (New York: Broughton and Wyman, 1868), 321.
10. Grab, *The French Revolution*, 165. Also see "Marking Time: Different Ways to Count the Changing Seasons," *Did You Know? New Insight into the World that is Full of Astonishing Stories and Astounding Facts* (London: Reader's Digest, 1990), 267.
11. Grab, *The French Revolution*, 165.
12. Richard Cobb, gen. ed., *Voices of the French Revolution* (Topsfield, MA: Salem House Publishers, 1988), 202. Also see Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 771-80.
13. David J. Brewer, *The United States: A Christian Nation* (Philadelphia, PA: 1905), 26.
14. <http://www.wallbuilders.com/LIBissuesArticles.asp?id=18294>
15. M.E. Bradford, *A Worthy Company: The Dramatic Story of the Men Who founded Our Country* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, [1982] 1988).
16. R. Kemp Morton, *God in the Constitution* (Nashville, TN: Cokesbury Press, 1933), 71.
17. Schaff, *Church and State in the United States*, 21.
18. Cornelison, *Relation of Religion to Civil Government in the United States of America*, 94.
19. Joseph Story, *Commentary on the Constitution of the United States* (Boston, MA: Hilliard, Gray, and Co., 1833), 702-703. Story served as a justice of the United States Supreme Court from 1811 to 1845.
20. Joseph Story, *A Familiar Exposition of the Constitution of the United States* (Lake Bluff, IL: Regnery Gateway, [1859] 1986), 316.

21. *The Federal Reporter*, 46:912. Quoted in Cornelison, *Relation of Religion to Civil Government in the United States of America*, 95.
22. Dreisbach, "God and the Constitution," 28.
23. Robert Baird, *Religion in America; or, an Account of the Origin, Progress, Relation to the State, and Present Condition of the Evangelical churches in the United States. With Notices of the Unevangelical Denominations* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1844), 119. Quoted in Dreisbach, "God and the Constitution," 29.
24. Cornelison, *The Relation of Religion to Civil Government in the United States of America*, 341.
25. Steven Keith Green, *The National Reform Association and the Religious Amendments to the Constitution, 1864–1876*. An unpublished Master's thesis. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (1987), 14.
26. Green, *The National Reform Association and the Religious Amendments to the Constitution, 1864–1876*, 1–2.
27. <http://candst.tripod.com/nra.htm>
28. *The Rhetoric and Reality of the "Christian Nation" Maxim In American Law:1810–1920*, by Steven Keith Green, An unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, (1997), 292.
29. Public Law No. 97-280, 96 Stat. 1211 (October 4, 1982): <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/20383b.htm>



# 5

## “TO LAY CHRIST AT THE BOTTOM”

### *Christianity in the Colleges*

“One of the most useful tools in the quest for power is the educational system.”<sup>1</sup> The implication of this statement is obvious: Whoever controls the schools will set the goals for the nation, establish its religious values, and ultimately control the future. From Sparta and Athens to Geneva and Harvard, education has been the primary means of cultural transformation. It’s no accident, therefore, that secularists have worked diligently and methodically to control education. Consider the following from a noted humanist:

I think that the most important factor moving us toward a secular society has been the educational factor. Our schools may not teach Johnny to read properly, but the fact that Johnny is in school until he is sixteen tends to lead toward the elimination of religious superstition. The average American child now acquires a high school education, and this militates against Adam



“In *Mein Kampf* Hitler stressed “the importance of winning over and then training the youth in the service ‘of a new national state.’”

and Eve and all other myths of alleged history. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Education is not neutral; it's not just about "the facts." Facts are always interpreted and explained in a way so they fit within the parameters of the prevailing worldview. Facts that don't fit are either not discussed or are trimmed and cooked in such a way so they are forced to conform to the prevailing ideology so the new worldview can advance without opposition. We can see how important education was to Adolf Hitler to realize his political dreams of a Nazi State. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler stressed "the importance of winning over and then training the youth in the service 'of a new national state.'"<sup>3</sup> William L. Shirer, an eyewitness to the rise of Hitler and the Nazi worldview, offers an objective but chilling prospect of what was in store for Europe and possibly the world:

"When an opponent declares, 'I will not come over to your side,' [Hitler] said in a speech on November 6, 1933, 'I calmly say, 'Your child belongs to us already . . . What are you? You will pass on. Your descendants, however, now stand in the new camp. In a short time they will know nothing else but this new community.'" And on May 1, 1937, he declared, "This new Reich will give its youth to no one, but will itself take youth and give to

"Your child belongs to us already . . . What are you? You will pass on. Your descendants, however, now stand in the new camp. In a short time they will know nothing else but this new community."



youth its own education and its own upbringing.”<sup>4</sup>

Educational control was taken away from parents and local authorities and “Every person in the teaching profession, from kindergarten through the universities, was compelled to join the National Socialist Teachers’ League which, by law, was held ‘responsible for the execution of the ideological and political co-ordination of all the teachers in accordance with the National Socialist doctrine.’”<sup>5</sup> The State educational system was to be supported “without reservation” and teachers took an oath to “be loyal and obedient to Adolf Hitler.”<sup>6</sup>

Hitler’s goal was to remake the social, cultural, political, educational, and moral climate of his day in the image of the Nazi worldview. “In Germany there was Nazi truth, a Nazi political truth, a Nazi economic truth, a Nazi social truth, a Nazi religious truth, to which all institutions had to subscribe or be banished.”<sup>7</sup> All competing worldviews were expunged from the State educational curriculum. Neutrality was never an option for Hitler. In fact, neutrality is not even possible. Not to take a side is to acquiesce to the competition.<sup>8</sup>



Under the leadership of **ALFRED ROSENBERG**, an outspoken pagan and anti-Christian, “the Nazi regime intended eventually to destroy Christianity in Germany.”

## Christianity's Destruction

Religion was not exempt from the plotting Hitler. Under the leadership of Alfred Rosenberg, an outspoken pagan and anti-Christian, "the Nazi regime intended eventually to destroy Christianity in Germany."<sup>9</sup> Martin "Bormann, one of the men closest to Hitler, said publicly in 1941, 'National Socialism and Christianity are irreconcilable.'"<sup>10</sup> While we hear a great deal about the suppression of Jewish thought, little attention is given to Nazism's most formidable rival—Christianity. War correspondent Shirer wrote, "We know now what Hitler envisioned for the German Christians: the utter suppression of their religion."<sup>11</sup> The internal intelligence agency of the Nazi SS "regarded organized Christianity as one of the major obstacles to the establishment of a truly totalitarian state."<sup>12</sup> This was all done by taking control of the educational system, the curriculum, and those who would teach.

A similar thing has happened in America, but with a different twist. Religion has been expunged from government and education through various Supreme Court decisions beginning in the early 1960s (1962<sup>13</sup> and 1963<sup>14</sup>) when the Warren Court based its decisions



1960's Supreme Court Justices

on (1) a narrow reading of the First Amendment, (2) the secularization of the curriculum in the name of “religious neutrality,” and (3) the domination of the teaching profession through the powerful National Education Association, the nation’s largest and most influential union that has become an ally of Leftist political philosophy.

It’s the curriculum that has undergone the most revision. The majority of students, beyond not gaining an understanding of a comprehensive biblical worldview, are bereft of a solid understanding of the principles that have made the United States the envy of the world. This “dumbing down” of the curriculum makes young people easier to manipulate. John F. Kennedy stated, “The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie—deliberate, contrived, and dishonest, but the myth—persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic. Belief in myths allows the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought.”<sup>15</sup> Myths, especially about our nation’s founding, are easier to embrace when there is a lack of knowledge about the past. Consider the following study by the McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum on the First Amendment:



John F. Kennedy

“Americans apparently know more about ‘The Simpsons’ than they do about the First Amendment.

“Only one in four Americans can name more than one of the five freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment (freedom of speech, religion, press, assembly and petition for redress of grievances.) But more than half can name at least two members of the cartoon family, according to a survey.

“The study by the new McCormick Tribune Freedom

Museum found that 22 percent of Americans could name all five Simpson family members, compared with just one in 1,000 people who could name all five First Amendment freedoms. . . . The survey found more people could name the three “American Idol” judges than identify three First Amendment rights. They were also more likely to remember popular advertising slogans.”<sup>16</sup>

It's no wonder that Americans have been duped to believe that the First Amendment was designed to keep religion out of every vestige of government under the subterfuge of “separation of church and state” language.

The knowledge factor runs deeper if the results of a survey of Arizona high school students is any indication of their knowledge of civics, or lack thereof, is considered. To determine students' level of basic civic knowledge, [The Goldwater Institute](#) surveyed Arizona high school students with questions drawn from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) item bank, which consists of 100 questions given to candidates for United States citizenship.<sup>17</sup> The longstanding practice has been for candidates to be tested on 10 of the 100 items. A minimum of six correct answers—a failing percentage in any American high school—is required to pass. The USCIS recently reported a first-try passing rate of 92.4 percent.

The Goldwater Institute survey, conducted by a private survey firm, gave each of the Arizona students in the survey 10 items from the USCIS item bank. The Goldwater Institute grouped results according to the type of school students attend—public, charter, or private. Only 3.5 percent of Arizona high school students attending public schools passed the 10-question set of questions. The passing rate for charter school students was about twice as high as for public school students. Private school students passed at a rate almost four times higher than public school students. The surveyor interviewed 1,134 high school students attending public schools. The total number of students surveyed was 1,350. Not a

single student surveyed got more than seven of the 10 questions correct. Under Arizona’s 8<sup>th</sup> grade academic standards requirement, students should be exposed to all of the material needed to pass the citizenship test. Apparently, however, these students are not learning these facts and principles which make them susceptible to political propaganda. Here’s the test (the answers can be found in the footnote<sup>18</sup>):

1. What is the supreme law of the land?  
(46.5% did not know)
2. What do we call the first ten amendments to the Constitution? (48% did not know)
3. What are the two parts of the U.S. Congress?  
(77% did not know)
4. How many Justices are on the Supreme Court?  
(42.2% did not know/9.4 got it right)
5. Who wrote the Declaration of Independence?  
(50.4% did not know)
6. What ocean is on the East Coast of the United States?  
(29.1% did not know, in addition 12.1% got it wrong)
7. What are the two major political parties in the United States? (38.5% did not know/49.6% got it right)
8. We elect a U.S. Senator for how many years?  
(only 14.5% got it right)
9. Who was the first President? (26.5% got it right)
10. Who is in charge of the executive branch?  
(26.5% got it right)

## The Reformation in Education

Christians learned how important education was for advancing Christian civilization. They noted how the Bible stressed education and how the Bible was the starting point for all learning:

“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deut. 6:4–9).

The Reformation of the sixteenth century stressed the reclamation of all of life, with education as an essential transforming element. Martin Luther in Germany (1483–1546) and John Calvin (1509–1564) in Geneva, Switzerland, did much to advance education as they worked to apply the Bible to every area of life. For these principal reformers, the outgrowth of the gospel included the redemption of all of life, not



One of **MARTIN LUTHER**'s first acts as a reformer was to propose that monasteries be turned into schools.

just the salvation of the soul.

The Academy of Geneva, founded by John Calvin in 1559, attracted students from all over Europe eager for an education that applied the Bible to all of life. The effects of the training at Geneva were far reaching: “It was not only the future of Geneva but that of other regions as well that was affected by the rise of the Geneva schools. The men who were to lead the advance of the Reformed Church in many lands were trained in Geneva classrooms, preached Geneva doctrines, and sang the Psalms to Geneva tunes.”<sup>19</sup> Samuel Blumenfeld writes of the impact that Christian education had on the advancing reformation:

The Bible was to be the moral and spiritual authority in every man’s life, and therefore an intimate knowledge of it was imperative if a new Protestant social order were to take root.<sup>20</sup>

In our own nation one of the first acts accomplished in the New World was the establishment of schools and colleges. The Virginia colony was the first to charter a college at Henrico in 1619, nineteen years before Harvard and seventy-four years before the College of William and Mary. Like all the colonial colleges, Henricus College was designed around the precepts of the Christian faith, “for the

The Academy of Geneva, founded by **JOHN CALVIN** in 1559, attracted students from all over Europe eager for an education that applied the Bible to all of life.



training and bringing up of infidels' children to the true knowledge of God and understanding of righteousness."<sup>21</sup> The natives for whom the school was established killed 347 settlers in the area and the idea for the school in Henrico was abandoned.

The New England colonial colleges were designed to further the gospel of Christ in all disciplines. The founders of these early educational institutions understood the relationship between a sound education based upon biblical absolutes and the future of the nation. Putting the Bible in the hands of the people was an essential first step toward religious and political freedom. "From the very beginnings, the expressed purpose of colonial education had been to preserve society against barbarism, and, so far as possible, against sin. The inculcation of a saving truth was primarily the responsibility of the churches, but schools were necessary to protect the written means of revelation."<sup>22</sup> This is why Noah Webster, educator and compiler of the 1828 *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, expressed the convictions of the earliest founders that "Education without the Bible is useless." This sentiment is no less true today. Given the premise that man is an evolved animal, and animals are evolved cells, and cells are nothing more than chemicals, how does the secularist account for morality, reason, logic, hope, and love? What is the ultimate purpose of education? Given materialist assumptions in a chance universe, is

**NOAH WEBSTER** expressed the convictions of the earliest founders that "Education without the Bible is useless."





The *New England Primer*, widely used to teach colonial children, included the Apostle's Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Westminster Shorter Catechism

purpose even possible?

### A Colonial Curriculum

A young colonist's education in New England was provided by a curriculum that consisted of three books in addition to the Bible: the *Hornbook*, the *New England Primer*, and the *Bay Psalm Book*. The *Hornbook* consisted of a single piece of parchment, covered with a transparent substance attached to a paddle-shaped piece of wood. The alphabet, the Lord's Prayer, and religious doctrines were written or printed on the parchment.

In 1690 the first edition of the *New England Primer* appeared. By 1700 the *Primer* had replaced the *Hornbook* in a number of places. The *Primer* expanded the religious themes of the *Hornbook* by including the names of the Old and New Testament books, "An Alphabet of Lessons for Youth," the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Westminster Assembly Shorter Catechism, and John Cotton's "Spiritual Milk for American Babes." The *Primer*, developed by Benjamin Harris, included an ingenious way to learn the alphabet while mastering basic biblical truths and lessons about life.

A~In Adam's Fall,  
We sinned all

B~Thy Life to mend,  
This Book attend

C~The Cat doth play,  
And after slay



The *Primer* was later enlarged in 1777. Additional biblical material was added. The rhyming alphabet was updated and made more Bible centered. For example, in the 1777 edition the letter C reads “Christ Crucified, For Sinners Died.”

### Higher Education in Colonial America

“At Duke University, famous today for basketball championships and postmodernist literary theory, a plaque at the center of the campus states that ‘The aims of Duke University are to assert a faith in the eternal union of knowledge and religion set forth in the teachings and character of Jesus Christ, the son of God.’ That was what Duke officially stood for at its initial endowment in 1924, and many other universities would then have articulated their mission in similar terms.”<sup>23</sup> A study of colonial colleges will show that the character of Duke’s founding was nearly identical to those colleges started in the seventeenth century. Unfortunately, Duke and its educational predecessors no longer hold to their original denominational affiliations or their religious affirmations. “When Duke formulated a new mission statement in 1988, however, its aims had become entirely secular in character, stressing only values like ‘the spirit of free inquiry’ and the promotion of ‘diversity and mutual tolerance.’ The University’s previous Christian identity was relegated to history with a statement that

‘Duke cherishes its historic ties with the United Methodist Church and the religious faith of its founders, while remaining nonsectarian.’<sup>24</sup>

As the following chart demonstrates, with the exception of the University of Pennsylvania (1755), all of the colonial schools began as distinctly Christian institutions.

### **Colonial Colleges and Religious Affiliation**

<i>Date</i>	<i>College</i>	<i>Colony</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
1636	Harvard	Massachusetts	Puritan
1693	William and Mary	Virginia	Anglican
1701	Yale	Connecticut	Congregational
1746	Princeton	New Jersey	Presbyterian
1754	King’s College (Columbia)	New York	Anglican
1764	Brown	Rhode Island	Baptist
1766	Rutgers	New Jersey	Dutch Reformed
1769	Dartmouth	New Hampshire	Congregational

While most of the earliest colleges were established to train men for the gospel ministry, the curriculum was much more comprehensive than the study of divinity. “Regardless of the vocation for which a student was preparing, the colonial college sought to provide for him an education that was distinctly Christian.”<sup>25</sup> The curriculum of Harvard, for example, emphasized the study of biblical languages, logic, divinity (theology), and skills in communication (public speaking and rhetoric). The study of Latin linked students to classical studies and the writings of the church fathers going back to the first century. Ministers were often the most educated people in the colonies.

## Harvard (Massachusetts)



John Eliot

John Eliot (1604–1690), who is known as the “Apostle to the Indians,” first proposed a college for Massachusetts Bay in 1633. Eliot’s desires were realized three years later in the founding of Harvard College by the Massachusetts legislature, even though it is a private educational institution. “Harvard College” was named after John Harvard<sup>26</sup> (1607–1638) on [March 13, 1639](#). Harvard had donated half his estate and his library of 400 volumes to the fledgling institution, and thus secured for himself a name in his-

tory. Harvard began with one instructor and nine students with the goal to establish a school to train Christian ministers. No records or illustrations remain of the earliest college buildings which were destroyed by fire in 1764. All but one of Harvard’s original 400 volume donation were burned in the fire.

The founders of Harvard wanted the Christian legacy they brought with them from England to continue. One of the best ways to accomplish this was to train men for the gospel ministry. The following history, taken from *New England’s First Fruits* (1643), explains what led to the founding of Harvard College.



John Harvard

After God had carried us safe to *New England* and we had built our houses, provided necessities for our livelihood, raised convenient places for God’s worship, and settled the Civil Government: One of the next things we longed for and looked after was to advance *Learn-*

ing and perpetuate it to posterity; dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches, when our present Ministers shall lie in the Dust.<sup>27</sup>

Fifty-two percent of the seventeenth-century Harvard graduates became ministers.<sup>28</sup> The Puritans “did not distinguish sharply between secular and theological learning; and they believed that the collegiate education proper for a minister should be the same as for an educated layman. They expected that the early colleges would produce not only ministers but Christian gentlemen who would be civic leaders.”<sup>29</sup>



Harvard College

While entry to Harvard required a thorough knowl-

edge of Greek and Latin, a commitment to Jesus Christ and a belief that the Bible was the foundation for truth were even more essential. Harvard’s “Rules and Precepts,” adopted in 1646, included the following requirements:

2. Let every student be plainly instructed, and earnestly pressed to consider well, the main end of his life and studies is, to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John 17:3) and therefore lay Christ at the bottom, as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning.

And seeing the Lord only giveth wisdom, Let every one seriously set himself by prayer in secret to seek it of him, *Prov. 2:3*.

3. Every one shall so exercise himself in reading the Scriptures twice a day, that he shall be ready to give such an account of his proficiency therein, both in *Theoretical* observations of the language, and *Logic*,

and in *Practical* and spiritual truths, as his Tutor shall require, according to his ability; seeing *the entrance of the word giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple*, Psalm 119:130.

An early motto of Harvard was *Veritas Christo et Ecclesiae* (“Truth for Christ and the Church”).



“Religion was so much a part of everyday learning in the early days of Harvard that for nearly two centuries no one thought of setting up a separate Divinity School. In the college, students gathered daily for prayer and readings from the Scripture. Hebrew as well as Greek were required subjects, because an educated person

was expected to be able to read the Bible in the original tongues.”<sup>30</sup>

Harvard remained steadfast in following its foundational guidelines until the presidency of Increase Mather, who served from 1685 to 1701. “His young colleagues regarded him as too conservative, or unmovable, out of touch with their generation.” Mather was frequently absent from the school. He often traveled to England in an attempt to secure the school’s charter and that of the Bay Colony itself. It was during these trips abroad that some began to promote

Harvard remained steadfast in following its foundational guidelines until the presidency of **INCREASE MATHER** served from 1685 to 1701.



"a new spirit of innovation on the campus. The main instigators of this 'broad and catholic [universal] spirit' were Thomas and William Brattle and John Leverett."<sup>31</sup>

The changes were not direct attacks on theological orthodoxy or biblical morality. But there was a call for an attitude of tolerance for differing opinions in areas where compromise did not seem to affect core issues. In time, there was not only a breakdown in doctrinal beliefs but in morality as well. Samuel Morison describes life at Harvard in the first quarter of the eighteenth century in rather modern terms:

It was an era of internal turbulence: for [President Benjamin] Wadsworth was no disciplinarian, and the young men resented a puritan restraint that was fast becoming obsolete. The faculty records, which begin with Wadsworth's administration, are full of "drinking frolics," poultry-stealing, profane cursing and swearing, card-playing, live snakes in tutors' chambers, bringing "Rhum" into college rooms, and "shamefull and scandalous Routs and Noises for sundry nights in the College Yard."<sup>32</sup>

By 1805, Harvard had appointed Henry Ware, a Unitarian, to the Hollis Chair of Divinity. Harvard was now lost. The tolerance door had been opened in the spirit of fair play and an irenic spirit. But once the intruders had made their way through the door, the original Puritan orthodoxy would be shut out forever.

The history of Harvard's slide into theological liberalism and moral libertinism was gradual and methodological. Those holding the minority and opposing worldview were willing to bide their time as conservatives set the stage for their own self-destruction. Conservatives

believed that "playing nice" and inviting the opposition to the party



Henry Ware

in terms of “dialog,” “civil discourse,” tolerance, and pluralism would lead to acceptance and good will. Harvard’s current motto has been reduced simply to *Veritas*. The question is, “Whose truth?”

### Yale (Connecticut)

By the eighteenth century, a growing number of New England colonists had seen that Harvard had drifted from its original course. Soon a new institution of learning was founded. Yale College, name after the college’s first benefactor Elihu Yale (1649–1721), was established in 1701 in Connecticut. “The founders of Yale required the ‘Westminster Confession to be diligently read in the Latin Tongue and well studied by all the Scholars,’ ‘for the upholding of the Christian protestant Religion by a succession of Learned and Orthodox men.’ The State of Connecticut in the Yale Charter of 1701 asserted its desire to support ‘so necessary and Religious an undertaking.’”<sup>33</sup>

The founders of Yale yearned to return to the Christian foundation first laid at Harvard: “Yale in the early 1700s stated as its primary goal that ‘every student shall consider the main end of his study to wit to know God in Jesus Christ and answerably to lead a Godly, sober life.’”<sup>34</sup> Yale demanded the same rigorous academic concentration as Harvard as well as a religious commitment to the cause of Christ and His Word: “All scholars shall live religious, godly, and blameless



Yale College, name after the college’s first benefactor **ELIHU YALE** (1649–1721), was established in 1701 in Connecticut..

lives according to the rules of God’s Word, diligently reading the Holy Scriptures, the fountain of light and truth; and constantly attend upon all the duties of religion, both in public and secret.”<sup>35</sup> The Yale Charter of 1745 made it clear that the College, “Which has received the favourable benefactions of many liberal [generous] and piously disposed persons, and under the blessing of Almighty God has trained up many worthy persons for the service of God in the state as well as in the church.”<sup>36</sup>



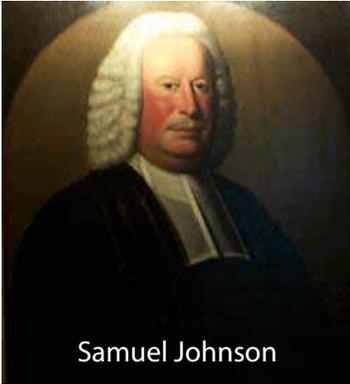
Yale’s original motto, written in Latin (*Lex et veritas*), is “Light and Truth.” The shield also includes the Hebrew phrase (*Urim v Tumim*) taken from the Bible’s reference to the Urim and Thummim of the High Priest’s breastplate. It has the meaning of “lights and perfections,” “revelation and truth,” or “doctrine and truth.”

### King’s College (New York)

An advertisement appeared in the *New York Mercury* on June 3, 1754, announcing the opening of King’s College, known today as Columbia University. It had been placed by Samuel Johnson (1696–1772), a graduate of Yale. In 1754 the theologian and philosopher accepted an invitation to become the first president of King’s College, an office he held until 1763. Similar to the guidelines demanded by Harvard and Yale, King’s College required a knowledge of Latin and Greek. Although the college was affiliated with the Anglican Church, the advertisement assured students and parents that “there is no intention to impose on the scholars the peculiar tenets of any particular sect of Christians, but to inculcate upon their tender minds the great principles of Christianity and morality in which true Christians of each de-

nomination are generally agreed.”<sup>37</sup> The advertisement went on to state:

The chief thing that is aimed at in this college is to teach and engage the children to know God in Jesus Christ and to love and serve Him in all sobriety, godliness, and righteousness of life, with perfect heart and a willing mind, and to train them up in all virtuous habits and all such useful knowledge as may render them creditable to their families and friends, ornaments to their country, and useful to the public weal in their generations.<sup>38</sup>



Samuel Johnson

The original shield of King's College was adopted in 1755. The college's commitment to a biblical worldview is evident in the shield's figures and inscriptions. Over the head of the seated woman is the (Hebrew) Tetragrammaton, YHWH (*Jehovah*); the Latin motto around her head means "In Thy light we see light" (Psalm 36:10); the Hebrew phrase on the ribbon is *Uri El* ("God is my light"), an allusion to Psalm 27:1; and at the feet of the woman is the New Testament passage commanding Christians to desire the pure milk of God's word (1 Peter 2:1-2).<sup>39</sup> Columbia long ago adopted a new seal. The only line remaining from the original shield is the Latin phrase "In Thy light we see light" without any reference to its biblical source.

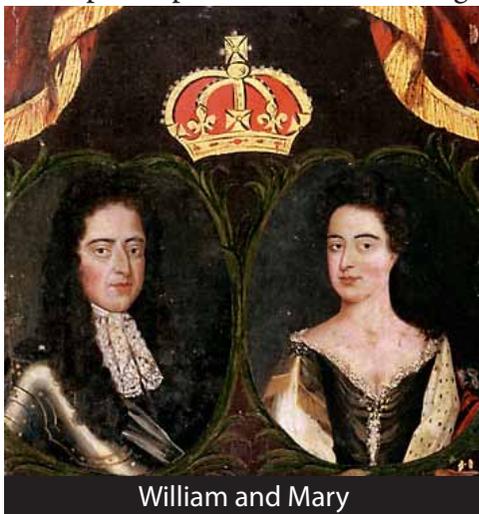


### William and Mary (Virginia)

In 1662, the Assembly of Virginia passed an act to make permanent provision for the establishment of a college. The preamble of the act

recites “that the want of able and faithful ministers in this country deprives us of those great blessings and mercies that always attend upon the service of God”; and the act itself declares “that for the advancement of learning, education of youth, supply of the ministry, and promotion of piety, there be land taken up and purchased for a college and free school, and that with all convenient speed there be buildings erected upon it for the entertainment of students and scholars.”<sup>40</sup>

Although an act had passed for the establishment of a college, the College of William and Mary was not actually founded until 1693. But like nearly all the colonial schools, William and Mary began with an evangelical purpose. The



William and Mary

school would supply the church of Virginia “with a Seminary of Ministers” that the “Christian Faith may be propagated amongst the Western Indians, to the Glory of Almighty God.”<sup>41</sup> These and other evangelical goals were reiterated in 1727.

## Conclusion

The establishment of schools in the colonies was a way of maintaining and advancing the Christian faith. Education, therefore, was a religious exercise: “The schools were intended to form Christian men, Christian citizens, and Christian ministers, not as a by-product but directly. They were instruments of the Church, which was, at least in the beginning, virtually coterminous with the community. Education was an enterprise undertaken primarily in the interests of religion, with religion of course defined in terms of the Calvinist orthodoxy

then dominant in New England.”<sup>42</sup>

In time, however, a philosophical shift took place. Colleges and universities in the nineteenth century were built by wealthy entrepreneurs for decidedly secular purposes. “Ezra Cornell (telegraph, banking), Johns Hopkins (banking, railroads), Cornelius Vanderbilt (steamships, railroads), Leland Stanford (railroads), James Duke (to-



Andrew Dickson White

bacco), and James D. Rockefeller (oil) were only a few of the prominent businessmen who poured vast sums into the creation of modern universities.”<sup>43</sup> Some institutions were more secular than others. For example, Andrew Dickson White, the founding president of Cornell University, promised that he would use the institution to “afford asylum for Science—where truth shall be sought for truth’s sake, where it shall not be the main purpose of the Faculty to stretch or cut sciences exactly to fit

‘Revealed Religion.’”<sup>44</sup>

America’s institutions of higher learning have come a long way, from Harvard’s declaration that the main end of man’s life is to “know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John 17:3)” to viewing Darwinian evolution as “a scientifically credible theory of random and purposeless change.”<sup>45</sup>

## NOTES

1. Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction: Christian Faith and Its Confrontation with American Society* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, [1983] 1993), 209.
2. Paul Blanshard, “Three Cheers for Our Secular State,” *The Humanist* (March/April 1976), 17. Quoted in John W. Whitehead, *The Stealing of America* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1983), 94.
3. William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 248–249.
4. Shirer, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 249.
5. Shirer, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 249.
6. Shirer, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 249.
7. C. Gregg Singer, *From Rationalism to Irrationality: The Decline of the Western Mind from the Renaissance to the Present* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 28.
8. Randy Thomasson, president of the Campaign for Children and Families, explains, “It’s because Christian colleges and churches have ignored the political process for so long. Now the political process, absent religious values, is coming back to assault the church.” (“Gov. Arnold tosses school moral codes” [August 29, 2006]: [www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=51732](http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=51732)).
9. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 240.
10. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 240.
11. William Shirer, *The Nightmare Years: 1930–1940* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1984), 156.
12. Donald D. Wall, “The Lutheran Response to the Hitler Regime in Germany,” ed. Robert D. Linder, *God and Caesar: Case Studies in the Relationship Between Christianity and the State* (Longview, TX: The Conference on Faith and History, 1971), 88.
13. *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962)
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15. President John F. Kennedy (1917–1963), commencement address at Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, June 11, 1962. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1962, p. 234.
16. Survey: Americans Ignorant on First Amendment (March 1, 2006): <http://newsmax.com/archives/ic/2006/3/1/90059.shtml?s=ic>
17. You can download a copy of the citizenship bank of questions [here](#).
18. 1. The Constitution; 2 The Bill of Rights; 3. The Senate and the House; 4. Nine; 5. Thomas Jefferson; 6. Atlantic; 7. Democratic and Republican; 8. Six; 9. George Washington; 10. The President

19. John T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 196.

20. Samuel L. Blumenfeld, *Is Public Education Necessary?* (Old Greenwich, CT: Devin-Adair, 1981), 10.

21. "Funds for a College at Henrico, Virginia (1619)," in Sol Cohen, ed., *Education in the United States: A Documentary History*, 5 vols. (New York: Random House, 1974), 1:336.

22. Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 32-33.

23. Quoted in Phillip E. Johnson, "[How the Universities Were Lost](#)," *First Things* (March 1995). Also see George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 322.

24. Johnson, "How the Universities Were Lost." "Duke University was created in 1924 around Trinity College, a school that the Duke family had been supporting since the late 1880s. John C. Kilgo, our president from 1894 to 1910, is the likely author. In 1902, Trinity's Board of Trustees asked him to prepare a major revision of the College's bylaws. Of course, the statement then started out 'The aims of Trinity College....' The wording was changed in 1924 when the University was organized. Here is the text : 'The aims of Duke University are to assert a faith in the eternal union of knowledge and religion set forth in the teachings and character of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; to advance learning in all lines of truth; to defend scholarship against all false notions and ideals; to develop a Christian love of freedom and truth; to promote a sincere spirit of tolerance; to discourage all partisan and sectarian strife; and to render the largest permanent service to the individual, the state, the nation, and the church. Unto these ends shall the affairs of this University always be administered.'" <http://library.duke.edu/uarchives/history/charterlink.html>

25. William C. Ringenberg, *The Christian College: A History of Protestant Higher Education in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 38.

26. The statue of John Harvard that sits outside University Hall in Harvard Yard states that he founded the institution in 1638. He was not the founder. Harvard had been founded two years earlier in 1636. In fact, since there was no official likeness of Harvard, the depiction is of someone else. Some say it was a student; others claim it was the third president of Harvard.

27. Reprinted in Richard Hofstadter and Wilson Smith, eds., *American Higher Education: A Documentary History* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 1:9.

28. Marsden, *Soul of the American University*, 41.

29. Hofstadter and Smith, "From the Beginnings to the Great Awakening," *American Higher Education*, 1:1.

30. Ari L. Goldman, *The Search for God at Harvard* (New York: Random House, 1991), 17.

31. David Beale, “[The Rise and Fall of Harvard \(1636–1805\)](#),” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* (Fall 1998), 94.
32. Samuel Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard 1636–1936* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964), 78.
33. H. G. Good, *A History of American Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1956), 61.
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35. “Yale Laws (1745)” in Cohen, *Education in the United States*, 2:675.
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38. “Advertisement on the Opening of Kings College,” in Cohen, *Education in the United States*, 2:675.
39. See Gabriel Sivan, *The Bible and Civilization* (New York: Quadrangle/New York Times Book Co., 1973), 237.
40. Benjamin F. Morris, *The Christian Life and Character of the Civil Institutions of the United States* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, [1864] 2007), 94.
41. “Charter of William and Mary,” in Cohen, *Education in the United States*, 2:645.
42. Will Herberg, “Religion and Education in America,” *Religious Perspectives in American Culture*, eds. James Ward Smith and A. Leland Jamison (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 12.
43. Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 365.
44. Cited in Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, 366.
45. Cited in Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, 366.



# 6

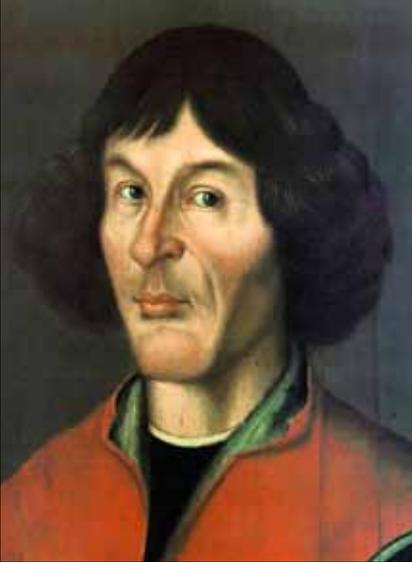
## “THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIANITY”

### *The Enlightenment in America*

Brooke Allen claims in her article “Our Godless Constitution” that America “was founded not on Christian principles but on Enlightenment ones.”<sup>1</sup> The Enlightenment is a term used to describe a period in eighteenth-century Europe and America when reason, coupled with advances in science, was declared to be the principal source of intellectual and moral authority. Ideas had to be argued rationally and demonstrated empirically to be true. The Greek philosopher, logician, and theoretician Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) was the model for an older worldview where often untested theories were promulgated as universal laws. It is unfortunate that up until the 15<sup>th</sup> century, a majority of scientists, church scientists included, adopted his untested theories and made them scientific and church dogma.



The Greek philosopher, logician, and theoretician **ARISTOTLE** (384–322 B.C.) was the model for an older worldview where often untested theories were promulgated as universal laws.



**NICOLAS COPERNICUS**  
(1473-1543)



**GALILEO GALILEI**  
(1564-1642)

The geocentric (earth-centered) Aristotelian cosmology was part of scientific and religious dogma until the time of Nicolas Copernicus and the publication of his *De Revolutionibus*, published just before his death in 1543, and the later observations and writings of Galileo Galilei.

It would have been a simple thing for Aristotle and any of his later disciples for 2000 years to demonstrate empirically that objects of differing weights fell at the same rate of speed by actually testing the theory. Instead, Aristotle *deduced* and *reasoned* that different weighted objects should fall at different rates of speed.<sup>2</sup> He did a similar thing when it came to explaining our solar system. He reasoned that the earth was the center of the universe based on philosophical reasons. Each element has its “natural place” in the universe. The earth’s natural place is at the center. He further argued that the sun, moon, and planets were perfect spheres that revolved around the earth in circular orbits because the sphere and circle are perfect shapes, and the heavens should not have any imperfect things in them. This geocentric (earth-

centered) Aristotelian cosmology was part of scientific and religious dogma until the time of Nicolas Copernicus (1473–1543) and the publication of his *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (*On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres*), published just before his death in 1543, and the later observations and writings of Galileo Galilei (1564–1642). But even after the publication of Galileo’s observations and findings, the scientific establishment had its reservations. Aristotle’s ideas seemed logical as they might seem logical to lots of people even today.

Aristotle’s physics is complex and differs greatly from what is now taught as science in our schools, but it would be a great mistake to suppose that it was therefore foolish or self-evidently wrong.... The reader must remember that the majority of early-seventeenth-century astronomers were Aristotelians for reasons defended in logic and observation.<sup>3</sup>

Those who claim the Enlightenment was an overthrow of a Christian worldview seem to have forgotten that the scientific world had made Aristotle’s view of the universe the source of truth. Even scientists associated with the Church read the Bible through the writings of Aristotle. The battle the Church had with Galileo was because his new cosmology contradicted Aristotle! In reality, “it is the Christian world which finally gave birth in a clear, articulate fashion to the experimental method of science itself.”<sup>4</sup>

## **A Predictable World**

Before science as we know it today could get started in proposing theories, certain assumptions about the way the world works had to be understood to be valid and operationally consistent. These universal laws operated predictably because the majority of people—scientists included—accepted that they were God’s laws, established and upheld by Him, even if they did not know how the world worked the way it does.



The poet **ALEXANDER POPE** (1688–1744) describes a Deist as a

*Slave to no sect, who takes no private road, but looks through nature up to God.*

Deists still needed God to explain the origin of nature, the predictability of the universe, the source of moral laws, and the way to account for the reasonability of reason.

It has even been suggested that such a view played a key role in the successful development of science in the Western cultures, and did so because they were influenced by the Judaeo-Christian tradition which fostered faith in the underlying rationality and orderliness of Nature during periods of history when human ideas were inbred by all manner of magical and occult notions.<sup>5</sup>

Life is predictable because God is predictable. Even those who did not embrace a *biblical* worldview knew that they could not develop an ordered world without the shared belief that God was necessary to make it happen.

In cultures where progress was made in mathematics, science, medicine, political theory, and law, people assumed that the world was not an illusion, that truth mattered, and man was a rational being created by a rational God even though at times man behaved irrationally and believed irrational things. Cultures that believed that spirits inhabited trees, rocks, and animals made very little progress culturally and scientifically because they never knew what the spirits might do. There was never a guarantee that what people did one day could be repeated on another day. The world was at the mercy of forces controlled by capricious gods who were always changing the rules. The Bible makes it

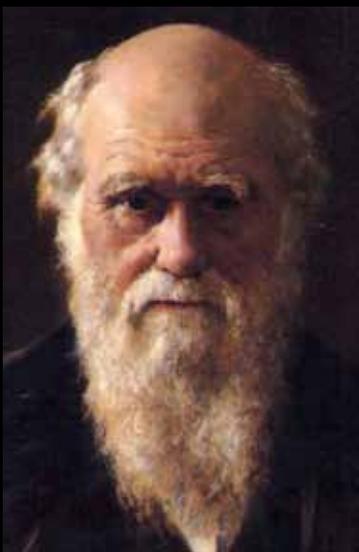
clear that neither people nor things are controlled by impersonal forces. The world was created by God (Heb. 1:1) and is held together by Him in terms of physical laws that He established (Col. 1:17).

## **Borrowed Capital**

It's true that many "Enlightenment thinkers rejected the idea that religion can be a source of truth, and believed instead that the application of reason to the evidences of the senses is the sole source of the truth."<sup>6</sup> For them, reason was in, and the Bible was out. These early Enlightenment figures were not atheists; they were deists. Deists believe in God, but they do not believe in divine revelation or that God interacts with His creation. God can only be understood through the right use of reason and the study of nature. "A deist is described by the poet Alexander Pope (1688–1744) as a 'Slave to no sect, who

How can an evolved being with an evolved brain be trusted to reason rightly? **CHARLES DARWIN** understood the problem, and confessed:

*The horrid doubt ... whether the convictions of man's mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would any one trust in the convictions of a monkey's mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?*



takes no private road, but looks through nature up to God."<sup>7</sup> Deists still needed God to explain the origin of nature, the predictability of the universe, the source of moral laws, and the way to account for the reasonability of reason.

In 1859, everything changed with the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. The natural world is all there is, and

it is always evolving. This view of the cosmos could hardly explain the order of nature or the origin and reliability of reason. Morality and personal rights could be situational, something our founding fathers rejected. And there was one more nagging problem: How can an evolved being with an evolved brain be trusted to reason rightly? Darwin saw the problem. “Darwin confessed ‘the horrid doubt ...whether the convictions of man’s mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would any one trust in the convictions of a monkey’s mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?’”<sup>8</sup> C. S. Lewis said something similar:

If the solar system was brought about by an accidental collision, then the appearance of organic life on this planet was also an accident, and the whole evolution of Man was an accident too. If so, then all our thought processes are mere accidents—the accidental by-product of the movement of atoms. And this holds for the materialists’ and astronomers’ as well as for anyone else’s [thought processes]. But if their thoughts—i.e., of Materialism and Astronomy—are merely accidental by-products, why should we believe them to be true? I see no reason for believing that one accident would be able to give correct account of all the other accidents.<sup>9</sup>

There would not have been an America if Darwin’s evolutionary worldview had been around in seventeenth and eighteenth century America. There would not have been, in the words of the Declaration of Independence, any “inalienable rights” since there would not have been a Creator to endow us with rights. The mind could not have been made free since the mind, given evolutionary assumptions, is nothing more than the random firing of electrical impulses among the synapses in the brain. There would not have been any protection of life or liberty since there is no way to account for inviolable moral laws that could have accomplished such a protection.

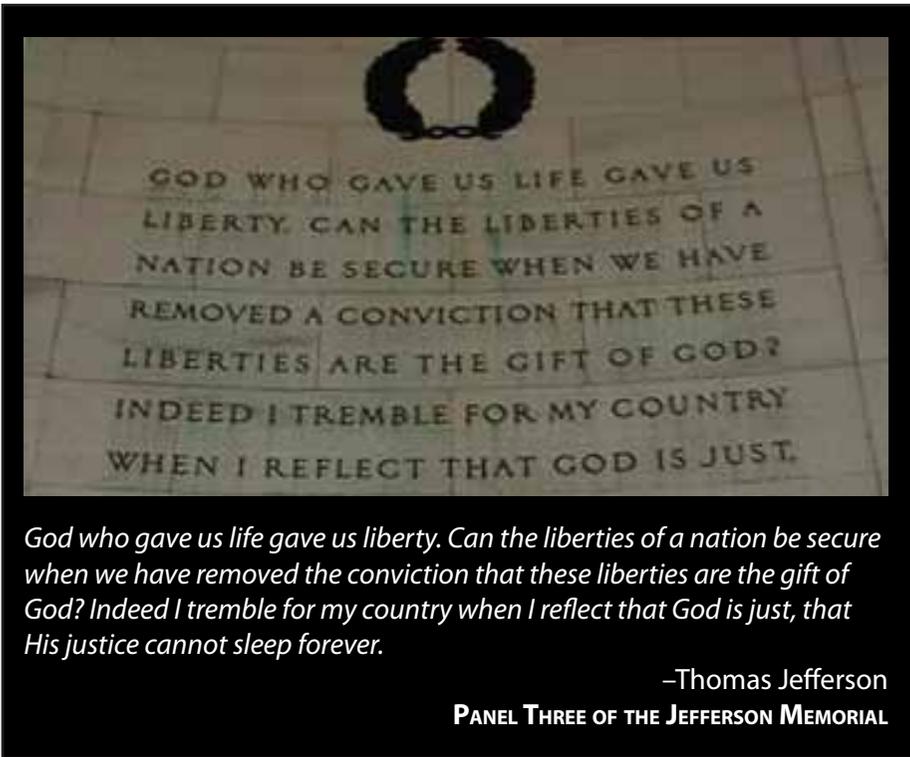
So when modern-day critics of America’s Christian heritage argue that America was founded by Deists on Enlightenment principles



There would not have been an America if Darwin's evolutionary worldview had been around in seventeenth and eighteenth century America. There would not have been, in the words of **THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE**, any "inalienable rights" since there would not have been a Creator to endow us with rights.

and call into evidence Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson and for good measure James Madison, John Adams, and Thomas Paine, they fail to acknowledge that even Deists could not escape America's Christian heritage. Here's one of many examples that could be cited: "The founding fathers were predominately deists: Washington, Madison, Franklin, Jefferson."<sup>10</sup> But after making this claim, the author states, "Yet none was overly dismissive of traditional religion. Indeed, religious concepts ... kept creeping into their pronouncements, from the Declaration of Independence to the American Constitution."<sup>11</sup> The late historian C. Gregg Singer (1910–1999) tells us why:

A Christian world and life view furnished the basis for this early political thought which guided the American people for nearly two centuries and whose crowning [achievement] lay in the writing of the Constitution of 1787. This Christian theism had so permeated the colonial mind that it continued to guide even those who had come to regard the Gospel with indifference or even hostility. The currents of this orthodoxy were too strong to be easily set aside by those who in their own thinking had come to a different conception of religion and hence government too.<sup>12</sup>



For example, the following words appear on Panel Three of the Jefferson Memorial: “God who gave us life gave us liberty.”<sup>13</sup> Thomas Jefferson then asked, “Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God?”<sup>14</sup> This is hardly a Deist belief, and to a certain degree, it does not square with an Enlightenment philosophy.

In an address to the military on October 11, 1798, John Adams stated that “We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion.... Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”<sup>15</sup> In a letter to Thomas Jefferson, Adams wrote the following:

The general Principles, on which the [founding] Fathers Achieved Independence, were the only Principles in which that beautiful Assembly of young Gentlemen

could Unite, and these Principles only could be intended by them in their Address, or by me in my Answer. And what were these general Principles? I answer, the general Principles of Christianity, in which all those Sects were united: ...Now I will avow, that I then believed, and now believe, that those general Principles of Christianity, are as eternal and immutable, as the



In a letter to Thomas Jefferson, **JOHN ADAMS**, wrote:

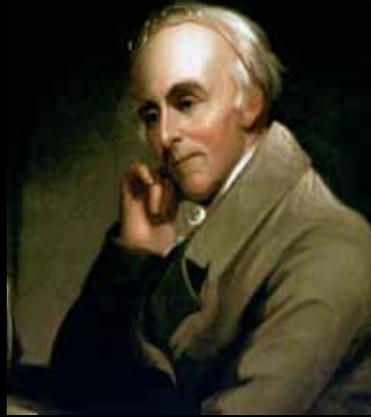
*The general Principles, on which the [founding] Fathers Achieved Independence, were the only Principles in which that beautiful Assembly of young Gentlemen could Unite... And what were these general Principles? I answer, **the General Principles of Christianity**, in which all those Sects were united...*

Existence and Attributes of God; and that those Principles of Liberty, are as unalterable as human Nature and our terrestrial, mundane System.<sup>16</sup>

George Washington warned the American people in his Farewell Address, “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports.... Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be sustained without religion.... Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle. Physician and Christian Benjamin Rush affirmed Washington’s assessment that religion is the prerequisite for morality, virtue, and liberty: “The only foundation for a useful education in a republic is to be laid in Religion. Without this there can be no virtue, and without

Physician and Christian **BENJAMIN RUSH** (1745-1813) affirmed George Washington's assessment that religion is the prerequisite for morality, virtue, and liberty:

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virtue there can be no liberty, and liberty is the object and life of all republican governments.... All [of Christianity's] doctrines and precepts are calculated to promote the happiness of society, and the safety and well being of civil government."<sup>17</sup>

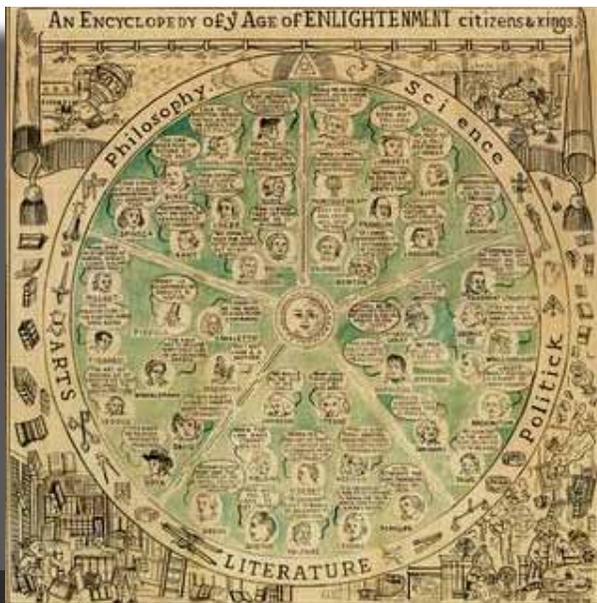
### **Left-Wing and Right-Wing Enlightenment**

One of the problems in answering the Enlightenment charge is that not all Enlightenments are created equal. There were actually two Enlightenment philosophies in the eighteenth century: a Left-Wing Enlightenment and a Right-Wing Enlightenment. The Left-Wing Enlightenment which festered in France about the same time that America was putting its final touches on the Constitution promoted an anti-Christian rival religion that promoted a top-down, centralized social and political philosophy that was sanctioned by the blood Madam Guillotine. The Right-Wing version kept the basic elements of a Christian world and the adoption of a social and political philosophy that promoted a bottom-up, decentralized society that led to the War of Independence, but without the excesses of the French bloodletting that became known as the "Reign of Terror."

Right-Wing Enlightenment philosophy was tempered by Christianity. The French version had thrown off every vestige of Christianity and declared Reason to be god. This did not happen

in America. Right-Wing representative James Madison understood that reason has its limitations and man's nature is often governed by passion:

As long as the reason of man continues fallible, and he is at liberty to exercise it, different opinions will be formed. As long as the connection subsists between his reason and his self-love, his opinions and his passions will have a reciprocal influence on each other; and the former will be objects to which the latter will attach themselves.<sup>18</sup>



There were actually two Enlightenment philosophies during **THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT**: a Left-Wing Enlightenment and a Right-Wing Enlightenment. The Left-Wing Enlightenment promoted an Anti-Christian rival religion with Reason as its god. The Right-Wing Enlightenment philosophy, on the other hand, was tempered by Christianity. The Left-Wing Enlightenment had little if any influence on the founders of America, but it devastated Revolutionary France.



**JAMES MADISON**, 4<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, denied the Enlightenment faith in the objectivity of reason, which, in Christian terms, he saw as inalienably tied to self-love. Man's reasoning is thus not objective reasoning; it is personal reasoning and will be thus governed by 'the nature of man' rather than an abstract concept of rationality.

Rousas J. Rushdoony writes that Madison “denied the Enlightenment faith in the objectivity of reason, which, in Christian terms, he saw as inalienably tied to self-love. Man's reasoning is thus not objective reasoning; it is personal reasoning and will be thus governed by 'the nature of man' rather than an abstract concept of rationality.”<sup>19</sup>

Today's Enlightenment figures, many of whom go by the moniker “Brights,” have made reason an absolute. For them, man's nature is not the problem; it's man's claim that there is something more than nature that riles them. For them, nature is all there is. They are *Nothing Butters*: “As evolved *homo sapiens*, we are nothing but (fill in the blank).” Evolutionary philosopher Daniel Dennett presupposes that “the mind is somehow nothing but a physical phenomenon.”<sup>20</sup> Atheist Richard Dawkins assures us that the universe is “nothing but blind pitiless indifference.”<sup>21</sup> Francis Crick tops it off with we're “nothing but a pack of neurons.”<sup>22</sup> If we are all “nothing butters,” why is it wrong for white “nothing butters” to own and sell black “nothing butters”?<sup>23</sup>

Of course, the Nothing Butters can't tell us what really matters. Like Enlightenment figures of centuries ago, the Nothing Butters must borrow from a Christian worldview to make sense of the world.

## The Enlightened before The Enlightenment

Benjamin Franklin is a representative example of a Right-Wing Enlightenment figure whose worldview was profoundly impacted by Christianity. Franklin was influenced by Cotton Mather's *Essays to do Good* which he maintained gave him "a turn of thinking that

**COTTON MATHER** (1663-1728) was a Puritan minister whose book, *Essays to do Good*, had a profound influence on Benjamin Franklin. Mather wrote:

*The power and opportunity to do good, not only gives a right to the doing of it, but makes the doing of it a duty.*



had an influence on some of the principal future events of [his] life.”<sup>24</sup> Mather was a Puritan minister who believed and taught that “the power and opportunity to do good, not only gives a right to the doing of it, but makes the doing of it a duty.” Mather saw good works as the reasonable outworking of faith. The Bible says as much when it states “faith without works is dead” (James 2:20, KJV).

Mather's influence on Franklin can be seen in the actual wording of Franklin's *Autobiography* where he acknowledges his belief in God and the place of good works in God's plan for the world: “I never doubted, for instance, the existence of the Deity; that He made the world, and govern'd it by his Providence; that *the most acceptable service of God was the doing good to man*; that our souls are immortal; and that all crime will be punished, and virtue rewarded, either here or hereafter.”<sup>25</sup> One of Franklin's recent biographers writes: “Franklin's belief that he could best serve God by serving his fellow man may strike some as mundane, but it was in truth a worthy creed that he deeply believed and faithfully followed.”<sup>26</sup>



**BENJAMIN FRANKLIN** (1706-1790) was not a Left-Wing Enlightenment thinker. He wrote:

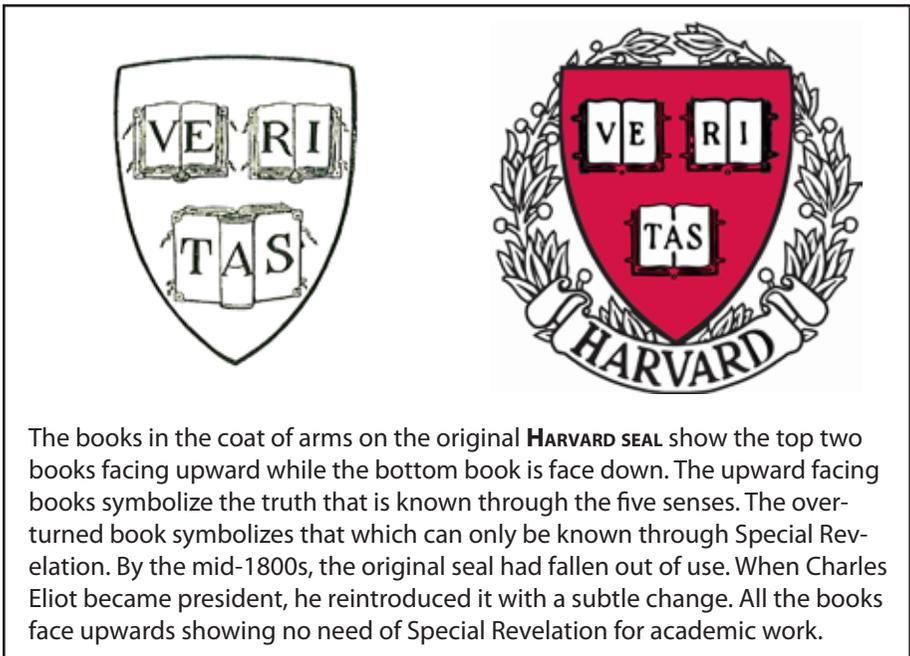
*I never doubted, for instance, the existence of the Deity; that he made the world, and govern'd it by his Providence; that the most acceptable service of God was the doing good to man; that our souls are immortal; and that all crime will be punished, and virtue rewarded, either here or hereafter.*

While some Enlightenment thinkers elevated reason to the position of a secular god—which the French revolutionaries did to a bloody excess—Christian thinkers understood that reason, logic, and science were a natural outworking of a biblical worldview. “The language of Europe and America had as its common feature an emphasis on calm, rational discourse, but we must not confuse this with rationalism,”<sup>27</sup> the belief that reason alone could ever be the basis for all knowledge and morality. By the time someone like Franklin came along, there had been a long history of scholarship in the colonies that rested on the foundation stones of Special Revelation, rational inquiry, and scientific investigation.

Harvard College, founded in 1636 by Puritans, required that students be able “to resolve [the Scriptures] Logically.”<sup>28</sup> What was true of Scripture was also true of “natural philosophy,” politics, and every other area of life.<sup>29</sup> The Puritans despised an “illiterate ministry.” Ministers generally were the most educated men in the colonies and served as popular educators. “No other thinker had such a wide audience as did the preacher in his pulpit, and his printed sermons

and treatises were the staple reading matter of his parishioners.”<sup>30</sup> When the preacher delivered his message, the community at large was impacted by it. “On Sundays, ministers would be gospel heralds proclaiming the way of personal salvation through faith in Christ.”<sup>31</sup> These same ministers would use weekdays, as the occasion required, to become “social guardians telling the nation who they were and what they must do to retain God’s special covenant interest.”<sup>32</sup> There was duty involved in the Christian life. Preaching on the reality of sin and the promise of redemption had a broader relevance. “Since all of society fell under the mastery of God’s Word, it was necessary that there be a provision for formal presentation of the Word at every significant event in the life of the community. More than any other custom or institution, the occasional sermon symbolized New England’s claim to peculiar peoplehood and proclaimed that in all events bearing on public life, God’s Word would be preeminent.”<sup>33</sup>

Reason was considered a tool, not the final arbiter of truth. Given Enlightenment assumptions where reason was viewed as the final arbiter of what is good and right, whose version of reason would be considered ultimately reasonable? No one could say. Even so, reason



was valued and necessary because it was a reflection of God's nature. The reason-alone approach was displayed in all its horrid consistency when the worst elements of the Enlightenment philosophers came full circle during the French Revolution. Heads rolled and blood flowed in the streets. America's dance with the Enlightenment was held in check by the underlying tenets of Christianity.

Cotton Mather's *The Christian Philosopher* (1721), the first systematic book on science published in America and based in part on Robert Boyle's *The Christian Virtuoso* (1690),<sup>34</sup> stands as ample testimony to the use of reason by Christians long before Deists and infidels made exclusive claim to it. We shouldn't forget that Mather was a forward thinking scientist who promoted inoculation for smallpox after hearing stories from African slaves and reading about success in Turkey in reports of the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society of London. It was a medical practitioner who opposed Mather and turned some clergymen against him. And it didn't help that Benjamin Franklin's brother, James, incited hostility to Mather through his new weekly newspaper the *New England Courant*. Because of James Franklin's published anti-inoculation efforts, an incendiary device was thrown into Mather's house.<sup>35</sup>



**ROBERT BOYLE** published *The Christian Virtuoso* in 1690. Boyle also wrote other works showing the relationship between the Christian faith, reason, and science: *Of the High Veneration Man's Intellect owes to God, Peculiar for his Wisdom and Power* (1684) and *Discourse Of Things Above Reason, Inquiring Whether a Philosopher Should Admit There are any Such* (1681).

[Benjamin Franklin] later became a fervent advocate of inoculation, painfully and poignantly espousing the cause right after his 4-year-old son, Francis, died of the pox in 1736. And he would, both as an aspiring boy of letters and as a striver who sought the patronage of influential elders, end up becoming Cotton Mather's admirer and, a few years later, his acquaintance.<sup>36</sup>

Mather also experimented with plant hybridization. The publication of his *Curiosa Americana* (1712–1724) won him membership in the Royal Society of London. He wrote and published more than 400 works in his lifetime. “By the time Franklin was born, Cotton Mather had built a private library of almost three thousand volumes rich in classical and scientific as well as theological works. This appreciation of books was one of the traits shared by the Puritanism of Mather and the Enlightenment of [John] Locke,<sup>37</sup> worlds that would combine in the character of Benjamin Franklin.”<sup>38</sup>

For the record, it was Thomas Jefferson who received early training in Latin, Greek, and French from Reverend William Douglas, a Scottish clergyman. After his father's death, Jefferson continued his education with the Reverend James Maury who ran a classical academy. When Alexander Hamilton entered King's College (now Columbia University) in 1773, he was expected to have mastered Greek and Latin grammar. In addition, he had to read three orations from Cicero and Virgil's *Aeneid* in the original Latin as well as translate the first ten chapters of the Gospel of John from Greek into Latin. The ministers of that time were very enlightened when it came to the use of reason in their studies of God and nature and the pursuit of scientific investigation. They did not believe in a random universe with unpredictable laws. While they may not have believed every major tenet of a Christian worldview, they certainly knew that the foundation of their scientific and political theories rested on a belief that God governed the world and, according to the Declaration of Independence, was its “Supreme Judge.”

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3. Philip J. Sampson, *Six Modern Myths about Christianity and Western Civilization* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 31.
4. Loren Eisely, *Darwin's Century* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958), 62. Quoted in Nancy R. Pearcey and Charles B. Thaxton, *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 18.
5. John D. Barrow, *The World Within the World* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1988), 23.
6. Herbert Kohl, *From Archetype to Zeitgeist: Powerful Ideas for Powerful Thinking* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1992), 65.
7. Kohl, *From Archetype to Zeitgeist*, 49.
8. Sampson, *Six Modern Myths about Christianity and Western Civilization*, 21.
9. C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 52–53.
10. Meic Pearse, *The Age of Reason: From the Wars of Religion to the French Revolution—1570–1789* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 330.
11. Pearse, *The Age of Reason*, 330.
12. C. Gregg Singer, *A Theological Interpretation of American History* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1964), 284–285.
13. This phrase originally appeared in "A Summary View of the Rights of British America" (July 1774).
14. The original phrase ("And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God?") appear in Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*. (Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* [Boston: Lilly and Wait, 1832], 170). These notes were written in 1781 and corrected and enlarged in 1782.
15. John Adams, *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States*, ed. Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1854), 9:229. October 11, 1798.)
16. John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, June 28th, 1813. Lester J. Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence Between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 338–340.
17. Benjamin Rush, "Of the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic" (1798).
18. *The Federalist*, No. 10.
19. Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The Nature of the American System* (Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1965), 73.
20. Quoted in David Gelman, *et al.*, "Is the Mind an Illusion?," *Newsweek* (April 20, 1992), 71
21. Richard Dawkins, *River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life* (New York:

Basic Books, 1996), 133.

22. Francis Crick, *The Astonishing Hypothesis* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 1. See Daniel Voll, "Soul Searching with Francis Crick," *Omni* (February 1994), 46. Also quoted in Jay Tolson, "Is There Room for the Soul?" *U.S. News & World Report* (October 23, 2006), 60.

23. Adapted from "If we are all biological accidents, why shouldn't the white accidents own and sell the black accidents?" (James Scott Bell, *The Darwin Conspiracy* [Gresham, OR: Vision House, 1995], 64).

24. Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. John Bigelow (Philadelphia: J.P. Lippincott & Co., 1868), 92.

25. Franklin, *Autobiography*, 211. Emphasis added.

26. Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 492.

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28. Samuel Eliot Morison, *Founding of Harvard College* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 337.

29. Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans As They Were* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie/Zondervan, 1986).

30. Richard B. Schlatter, *The Social Ideas of Religious Leaders, 1660–1688* (New York: Octagon Books, [1940] 1971), v.

31. Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 27.

32. Stout, *The New England Soul*, 27.

33. Stout, *The New England Soul*, 27.

34. The use of *Virtuoso* by Boyle (1627–1691) has the meaning of "natural philosopher" or "naturalist," what we would call today a scientist. In addition to *The Christian Virtuoso*, Boyle also wrote other works showing the relationship between the Christian faith, reason, and science: *Of the High Veneration Man's Intellect owes to God, peculiar for his Wisdom and Power* (1684) and *Discourse Of Things Above Reason, inquiring whether a Philosopher should admit there are any such* (1681).

35. Laurence Farmer, "When Cotton Mather Fought the Smallpox," *American Heritage Magazine* 8:5 (August 1957): [www.americanheritage.com/articles/magazine/ah/1957/5/1957\\_5\\_40.shtml](http://www.americanheritage.com/articles/magazine/ah/1957/5/1957_5_40.shtml)

36. Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin*, 24.

37. In addition to writing his two-volume work *An Essay on Human Understanding*, Locke wrote "*The Reasonableness of Christianity*" with "A Discourse on Miracles" and a part of "A Third Letter Concerning Toleration." See Gary T. Amos, *Defending the Declaration: How the Bible and Christianity Influenced the Writing of the Declaration of Independence* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt Publishers, 1989).

38. Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin*, 24.



## “GOD GOVERNS IN THE AFFAIRS OF MEN”

### *God as a Major Player in America*

Brooke Allen makes a second claim in her article “Our Godless Constitution.” She tries to argue that God was a “very minor player”<sup>1</sup> in the history of the founding of America. How much evidence is necessary to disprove her assertion? Does she get to make the decision of what counts for determining the role God played? Of course, there is always the problem of identifying the starting point of America’s founding. But even if we start with 1776 her claim is easily disproved since the Declaration includes four direct statements that reference God: “Nature’s God,” “Creator,” “Divine Providence,” and “Supreme Judge of the World.” Then there is the list of phrases<sup>2</sup> that can be gleaned from the writings of the founders and the documents they drafted:

- |                                    |                                     |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Almighty God                    | 9. Supreme and Universal Providence |
| 2. Nature’s God                    | 10. Overruling Providence of God    |
| 3. God of Armies                   | 11. Creator of All                  |
| 4. Lord of Hosts                   | 12. Indulgent Creator               |
| 5. His Goodness                    | 13. Great Governor of the World     |
| 6. Providence                      | 14. The Divinity                    |
| 7. Providence of God               | 15. Supreme Disposer of All Events  |
| 8. God’s Superintending Providence |                                     |

IN CONGRESS,

SATURDAY, MARCH 16, 1776.

*[The text of the resolution follows, including the phrase "GOD SAVE THE PEOPLE."]*

JOHN HANCOCK, President.  
CHARLES THOMPSON, Secretary.

**G O D S A V E T H E P E O P L E .**

*Congress therefore, ... desirous ... to have people of all ranks and degrees, duly impressed with a solemn sense of God's superintending providence, and of their duty devoutly to rely in all their lawful enterprises on his aid and direction—do ... recommend, that Friday, the seventeenth of May next, be observed by the said colonies as a day of HUMILIATION, FASTING, and PRAYER; that we may with united hearts confess and bewail our manifold sins and transgressions, and by a sincere repentance and amendment of life, appease his righteous displeasure and through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, obtain his pardon and forgiveness; humbly imploring his assistance to frustrate the cruel purposes of our unnatural enemies ... that it may please the Lord of Hosts, the God of Armies, to animate our Officers and Soldiers with invincible fortitude ... By Order of Congress,*

John Hancock, President  
Saturday, March 16, 1776

- |  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 16. Holy Ghost                               | 21. Christian State               |
| 17. Jesus Christ                             | 22. Our Lord                      |
| 18. Christian Religion                       | 23. Supreme Ruler of the Universe |
| 19. Christian forbearance, love, and charity | 24. Supreme Ruler of Nations      |
| 20. Free Protestant Colonies                 | 25. God                           |

This list alone is a direct refutation of Allen’s claim. She does not name any prominent atheists during the founding era who had any impact on America’s written documents. She admits that Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and even Thomas Paine believed in God. Six weeks before his death, Franklin wrote the following in a letter<sup>6</sup> to Yale College President Ezra Stiles:

Here is my creed. I believe in one God, Creator of the universe. That he governs it by his providence. That he ought to be worshipped. That the most acceptable service we render to him is doing good to his other children. That the soul of Man is immortal, and will be treated with justice in another life respecting its con-



**EZRA STILES** (1727–1795)

American academic and educator, a Congregationalist minister, theologian, author and dedicated supporter of the War for Independence. He was president of Yale College (1778-1795).

duct in this. These I take to be the fundamental points in all sound religion, and I regard them as you do in whatever sect I meet with them.

It's obvious that Franklin believed in God as creator and governor of the cosmos. These are hardly the beliefs of a Deist. To choose Franklin as a champion of secularism is rather humorous given the fact that his credal statement could *not* be recited in our nation's public schools because of its many religious statements.

*Here is my creed. I believe in one God, Creator of the universe. That he governs it by his providence. That he ought to be worshipped. That the most acceptable service we render to him is doing good to his other children.*

—**BENJAMIN FRANKLIN**





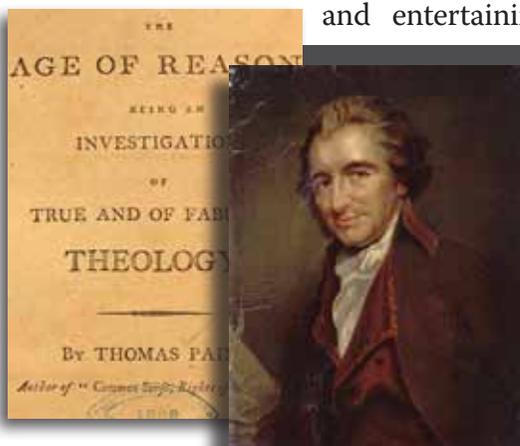
The following Regent's School Prayer was declared to be unconstitutional by **THE SUPREME COURT** in the 1962 *Engel v. Vitale* decision:

*Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers and our Country.*

The following Regent's School Prayer was declared to be unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in the 1962 *Engel v. Vitale* decision: "Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers and our Country." Franklin's credo says a great deal more, so to put him forth as a champion of secularism is the height of hypocrisy. It's true that Franklin did not believe in the deity of Jesus Christ. He made it clear, however, that he did not "dogmatise upon" the subject. He was honest enough to admit that he had "never studied it, and think it needless to busy myself with it now [at age 84], when I expect soon an Opportunity of knowing the Truth with less Trouble." He died six weeks later.

Allen states that Thomas Paine’s “rhetoric was so fervent that he was inevitably branded an atheist.” Of course, Paine was not an atheist in the usual definition of the term. His anti-Christian book *The Age of Reason* (1793–1794) opened with this statement: “I believe in one God.” Why Paine is singled out as a Founding Father is a mystery since he had no part in any official founding document. Paine’s later religious views forced even unorthodox men like Franklin, Jefferson, and Adams to distance themselves from the political rabble rouser who wrote the 1776 pamphlet *Common Sense*.

Allen fails to point out that Paine appealed to reason, history, *and the Bible* in *Common Sense*, referencing Gideon in Judges 8, Saul in 1 Samuel 8, and Jesus’ discussion with the Pharisees over Caesar’s coin in Matthew 22:21, to make his case for independence from England. Apparently the Bible wasn’t a book of myths for him in 1776. But by the 1790s, Paine expressed a different view of the Bible and Christianity. It was because of these later writings, Allen argues, that “Jefferson got into a good deal of trouble for continuing his friendship with Paine and entertaining him at Monticello. These



THOMAS PAINE’s anti-Christian book *The Age of Reason* (1793-1794) opened with this statement:

*I believe in one God.*

statesmen had to be far more circumspect than the turbulent Paine, yet if we examine their beliefs it is all but impossible to see just how theirs differed from his.” Why would these men have to worry about being identified with Paine if America’s beliefs were not fundamentally Christian? The fact is, America’s Christian heritage was rooted deeply in the nation. That’s why, for example, Jefferson got in trouble for continuing his friendship with Paine after the publication of *The Age of Reason* and did not publish his edited version of the gospels in his lifetime.

Even these most skeptical of our founding fathers could not distance themselves from the root and fruit of Christianity. Franklin stood up at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787 to remind the delegates how their prayers to God had been “heard and graciously answered” in their “contest with G. Britain.” He also pointed out “that God Governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured ... in the sacred writings, that ‘except the Lord build the House they labour in vain that build it.’ I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better, than the Builders of Babel.” These are hardly the sentiments of a Deist.

In a letter to William Canby dated September 18, 1813, Jefferson stated, “Of all the systems of morality, ancient or modern, which have come under my observation, none appear to me so pure as that of Jesus.” Of course, none of these statements and observations makes these men Christians, but it does show that the beliefs of Jefferson, Franklin, and Paine, to name just three, are far from the beliefs of members of the ACLU, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and the judiciary who rule on religious matters.



**JOHN DICKINSON (1732–1808)**

Lawyer, militia officer during the American Revolution, Continental Congressman from Pennsylvania and Delaware, delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1787, President of Delaware, and President of Pennsylvania.

### **There are More than Four**

A further study of American history will show that there were many founders who were outspoken Christians who are rarely if ever mentioned by historical revisionists. Consider, for example, John Dickinson (1732–1808) who was a lawyer, militia officer during the

American Revolution, Continental Congressman from Pennsylvania and Delaware, delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1787, President of Delaware, and President of Pennsylvania. On the Bible, he wrote the following:

“The Holy Scriptures are able to make us wise unto Salvation, through Faith which is in Jesus Christ.” “All Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness that the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works.” The Scriptures give a full and ample testimony to all the principle Doctrines of the Christian Faith; and therefore no Divine or inward Communication at this Day, however necessary, do or can contradict that testimony.<sup>7</sup>

There are others, all of whom signed the Constitution: Charles Pinckney and John Langdon were founders of the American Bible Society; James McHenry was founder of the Baltimore Bible Society. Rufus King helped found a Bible society for Anglicans. Abraham Baldwin served as a chaplain in the War for Independence. Roger Sherman, William Samuel Johnson, and Jacob Broom wrote on theological subjects. James Wilson and William Patterson were placed on the Supreme Court by President George Washington. They had prayer over juries in the U. S. Supreme Court room. John Witherspoon was a Presbyterian minister and signed the Declaration of Independence, helped draft the Articles of Confederation, served twice in the New Jersey Legislature, and strongly supported the adoption of the United States Constitution during the New Jersey ratification debates.

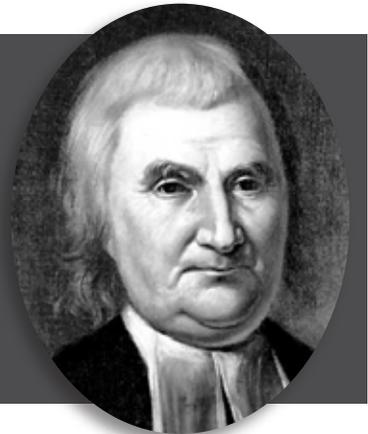
Why don't these men count? Why do we only hear of Franklin, Jefferson, Madison, and Adams? Witherspoon, like so many men of his day, believed that reason and revelation were not in opposition. “Hence arises a question,” Witherspoon wrote in his *Lectures on Moral Philosophy*, “is it lawful, and is it safe or useful, to separate moral philosophy from religion? It will be said, it is either the same or different from revealed truth; if the *same*, unnecessary—if *different*,

*false* and dangerous.... If the Scripture is true, the discoveries of reason cannot be *contrary* to it; and, therefore, it has nothing to fear from that quarter.”<sup>8</sup>

Many Christians of that period agreed with Witherspoon. As we've already seen, even skeptics like Franklin and Jefferson operated within the moral framework of Christianity. They, like Witherspoon, believed that reason could get a person to the same place morally as revelation. None of these men saw what was on the horizon—the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) that turned the moral universe of Franklin, Jefferson, and Witherspoon upside down.

**JOHN WITHERSPOON** (1722–1794)

Presbyterian minister, signer of the Declaration of Independence, framer of the Articles of Confederation, and New Jersey legislator who strongly supported the U.S. Constitution during the ratification debates.



## The Age of Revelation

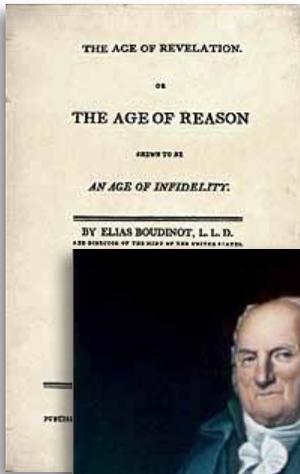
Elias Boudinot (1740–1821) was a lawyer who served three congressional terms representing New Jersey (1789–1795). He was a delegate to the Continental Congress, served as commissary general of prisoners at the request of George Washington, and presided as President of the Continental Congress from 1782 to 1783, making him the chief executive officer of the United States. Boudinot signed the Treaty of Paris in 1783 that ended the Revolutionary War, and while he did not participate directly in the drafting of the new Constitution in 1787, he “looked on approvingly at the events.”<sup>9</sup> He, along with other representatives, witnessed George Washington take the presidential oath with his hand on an open Bible.<sup>10</sup>

He helped design the Great Seal of the United States and served as Director of the United States Mint from 1795 until 1805. After his retirement from politics, Boudinot was a trustee of what is now Princeton University where he founded the natural history department in 1805. He was an early opponent of slavery.<sup>11</sup> This led him to found the American Bible Society in 1816 of which he served as its first president until his death in 1821. In accepting the position, Boudinot stated the following:

I am so convinced that the whole of this business is the work of God himself, by his Holy Spirit, that even hoping against hope I am encouraged to press on through good report and evil report, to accomplish his will on earth as it is in heaven. So apparent is the hand of God in this disposing the hearts of so many men, so diversified in their sentiments as to religious matters of minor importance, and uniting them as a band of brothers in this grand object that even infidels are compelled to say, "It is the work of the Lord, and it is wonderful in our eyes!" Having this confidence, let us go on and we shall prosper.

Boudinot donated \$10,000 to the ABS when an annual salary of \$400 was considered respectable. What is often not known about Boudinot is that he wrote a lengthy response to Thomas Paine's *An Age of Reason* titled *The Age of Revelation* which was first written in pamphlet form to his daughter in 1795. In a letter to his daughter, Boudinot described his motives for his critique of Paine's attack on the Bible:

I confess that I was much mortified to find the whole force of this vain man's genius and art pointed at the youth of America.... This awful consequence created some alarm in my mind lest at any future day, you, my beloved child, might take up this plausible address of infidelity; and for want of an answer at hand to his subtle insinuations might suffer even a doubt of the



truth, as it is in Jesus, to penetrate your mind.... I therefore determined ... to put my thoughts on the subject of this pamphlet on paper for your edification and information, when I shall be no more. I chose to confine myself to the leading and essential facts of the Gospel which are contradicted or attempted to be turned into ridicule by this writer. I have endeavored to detect his falsehoods and misrepresentations and to show his extreme ignorance of the Divine Scriptures which he makes the subject of his animadversions—

not knowing that “they are the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth” [Rom. 1:16].<sup>12</sup>

While Paine’s *Age of Reason* gets a great deal of press from skeptics, misinformed separationists, and atheists of every stripe, almost no one mentions Boudinot’s response. One of the reasons for this is that historians have dismissed him as “one of the founders of American fundamentalism,”<sup>13</sup> a movement that did not begin until around 1925. Paine is considered to be an American Founding Father, and yet, unlike Paine, Boudinot actually served in a high-ranking civil capacity in the United States that included the design if not writing of the Constitution. Paine’s only elective office was in France. Boudinot is a true American Founding Father. Paine had no role in the founding conventions of America and their documents.

Boudinot expressed the religious views of the majority of Americans at a critical point in America’s history. Supreme Court Justice William Rehnquist wrote the following in his Dissent in the 1985 *Wallace v. Jaffree* Separation of Church and State decision: “On the day after the House of Representatives voted to adopt the form of

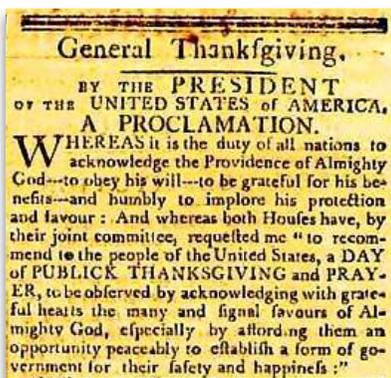
the First Amendment Religion Clauses which was ultimately proposed and ratified, Representative Elias Boudinot proposed a resolution asking President George Washington to issue a Thanksgiving Day Proclamation. Boudinot said he ‘could not think of letting the session pass over without offering an opportunity to all the citizens of the United States of joining with one voice, in returning to Almighty God their sincere thanks for the many blessings

**ROGER SHERMAN** of Connecticut apparently saw no conflict between his vote for the First Amendment and the Establishment Clause and his support for the Thanksgiving Day Proclamation.



he had poured down upon them.’ Boudinot’s resolution was carried in the affirmative on September 25, 1789”<sup>14</sup> with only two recorded objections.

Constitutional scholar Robert L. Cord remarks, “It is quite clear from the record that James Madison did not object to the resolution requesting the Thanksgiving Day Proclamation. It is also plain from the day’s proceedings that [Roger] Sherman of Connecticut, who voted for the First Amendment and the Establishment Clause, apparently saw no conflict between his vote for the Amendment and his support for the Thanksgiving Day Proclamation....”<sup>15</sup> It is this singular recommendation



by Boudinot that sheds a bright light on the First Amendment. He argued by citing “further precedents from the practice of the late Congress” that had approved a series of thanksgiving-day proclamations. If the First Amendment had been designed to exclude God from all government affairs, then why agree to call for a day of thanksgiving to thank God for allowing them to

draft an Amendment that would forever exclude Him? Why did “they proceed to violate an important principle which, only a day earlier, they had voted to recommend to the States as a part of the constitutional amendment?”<sup>16</sup>

Boudinot waited some time before deciding to respond to Paine’s *Age of Reason*. His measured rejoinder to Paine’s work indicates that a great deal of thought went into the humble, well-argued reply:

For a considerable time past, I have ardently wished to see some more able hand, meet Mr. Paine more on his own ground, in a plain and simple manner—but after waiting several years, I have lost all hopes of being gratified; and therefore have been more easily persuaded to undergo, amidst a variety of other business, the labor of copying once more, what was designed for a particular and special purpose; and altering the address, by applying it more directly to the author of the *Age of Reason*, and through him to all his brethren in skepticism.

I am averse to increasing the number of books, unless it be on important occasions, or for useful purposes; but an anxious desire that our country should be preserved from the dreadful evil of becoming enemies to the religion of the Gospel, which I have no doubt, but would be introductive of the dissolution of government and the bonds of civil society; my compliance with the wishes of a few select friends, to make this work public, has been more easily obtained.

Boudinot feared what we are experiencing today in America. “I confess,” he wrote, “that I was much mortified to find, the whole force of this vain man’s genius and art, pointed at the youth of America, and her unlearned citizens.” Even though there are tens of thousands of churches and tens of millions of Christians, it seems that the skepticism of Paine has the upper hand. The prevalence of skepticism is more the inaction of Christians than the accomplishment of skeptics. Boudinot knew that he could no longer wait for someone else to respond. He understood that the duty was his, even if he did not consider himself worthy of the

task. It's remarkable that *The Age of Revelation* was written by a layman who had a comprehensive knowledge of the Bible, classic philosophy, and history.

Like Paine, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams, Boudinot saw flaws in the clergy of his day and was not shy about making his views public. In a letter to Edward Griffin in 1809, Boudinot wrote, "I have wished, among other improvements in Theological Studies, a professorship of Common Sense and Prudence was established in our Seminaries. I really have known as many ruinous Errors in practice, among our pious and zealous Ministers, for want of this celestial quality, that I am sure it is of more importance than is generally believed."<sup>17</sup> But unlike the skeptics of his and our day, the follies and foibles of some clergy were not enough for him to reject all clergy. Their misuse of the Bible was not the fault of the Bible anymore than the misuse of the Constitution by politicians is the fault of the Constitution.

It was Boudinot's opinion that if *The Age of Reason* had not been written by the popular author of *Common Sense*, the 1776 pamphlet that argued that America was justified in breaking away from the British monarchy, the book would not have been given much of a hearing. Boudinot shows that Paine did not uncover anything new under the sun. Modern-day atheists have only repackaged Paine for an audience that is not familiar with Boudinot's *The Age of Revelation* which is a remarkable work of scholarship for that time. He quotes sources from nearly every field of knowledge. He seems to be acquainted with several languages, including Latin and Greek. He has a broad knowledge of the Bible and a keen sense of logical analysis. His work shows what an educated layman can do when spurred on by the need to answer a once-respected writer who abused his popularity to rail against a religious system that he either did not fully understand or had no wish to understand.

Little has changed since Paine and Boudinot battled one another. "We are again living in the Age of Reason versus the Age of Revelation."<sup>18</sup>

## NOTES

1. Brooke Allen, "Our Godless Constitution," *The Nation* (February 21, 2005).
2. Anson Phelps Stokes and Leo Pfeffer, *Church and State in the United States*, one-vol. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 561–565.
3. "As the safety and prosperity of nations ultimately and essentially depend on the protection and blessing of **Almighty** God; and the national acknowledgment of this truth is not only an indispensable duty which the people owe to Him, but a duty whose natural influence is favorable to the promotion of that morality and piety, without which social happiness cannot exist, nor the blessings of a free government be enjoyed; and as this duty, at all times incumbent, is so especially in seasons of difficulty and of danger, when existing or threatening calamities, the just judgments of God against prevalent iniquity are a loud call to repentance and reformation...." (President John Adams' March 23, 1798 National Fasting and Prayer Proclamation).
4. "Whereas it hath pleased **Almighty God**, the **Father of Mercies**, remarkably to assist and support the United States of America in their important struggle for liberty against the long-continued efforts of a powerful nation, it is the duty of all ranks to observe and thankfully acknowledge the interpositions of his Providence in their behalf;—Through the whole of the contest from its first rise to this time the influence of Divine Providence may be clearly perceived in many signal instances, of which we mention but a few:" (A proclamation issued on October 26, 1781 by Thomas McKean, while serving as President of Congress. The Day of Thanksgiving was to be December 18, 1781).
5. Proclamation for a Day of Thanksgiving and Praise issued by Samuel Adams on October 14, 1795 declaring November 19, 1795 the day of Thanksgiving.
6. March 9, 1790.
7. John Dickinson, "Religious Instruction for Youth," undated. R.R. Logan Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania." Quoted in James H. Hutson, ed., *The Founders on Religion: A Book of Quotations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 24.
8. John Witherspoon, *Lectures on Moral Philosophy* (Philadelphia: William W. Woodward, 1822), 5.
9. Donald W. Whisenhunt, *Elias Boudinot: New Jersey's Revolutionary Experience*, ed. Larry R. Gerlach (Trenton, NJ: The New Jersey Historical Commission, 1975), 29
10. George Adams Boyd, *Elias Boudinot: Patriot and Statesman, 1740–1821* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1952), , 165.
11. Forrest Church, *So Help Me God: The Founding Fathers and the First Great battle Over Church and State* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc., 2007), 401–403.
12. Elias Boudinot, *The Age of Revelation, or the Age of Reason Shewn to be An Age of Infidelity* (Philadelphia: Asbury Dickins, 1801), xii–xiv. *The Age of Revelation* has been republished by American Vision (Powder Springs, Georgia, 2009).
13. Richard H. Popkin, "The Age of Reason versus The Age of Revelation:

Two Critics of Tom Paine: David Levi and Elias Boudinot,” *Deism, Masonry, and the Enlightenment: Essays Honoring Alfred Owen Aldridge*, ed. J. A. Leo Lemay (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press), 165.

14. United States Supreme Court Justice Rehnquist’s Dissent in *Wallace v. Jaffree* (472 U.S. 38, 105 S.Ct. 2479 [1985]): [www.belcherfoundation.org/wallace\\_v\\_jaffree\\_dissent.htm](http://www.belcherfoundation.org/wallace_v_jaffree_dissent.htm).

15. Robert L. Cord, *Separation of Church and State: Historical Fact and Current Fiction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 28–29.

16. Cord, *Separation of Church and State*, 29.

17. Elias Boudinot to Edward Griffin, October 24, 1809. Boudinot Papers, Princeton University Library. Quoted in James H. Hutson, ed., *The Founders on Religion: A Book of Quotations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 66–67.

18. Popkin, “*The Age of Reason versus The Age of Revelation*,” 170.



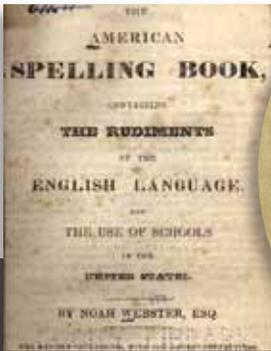
# 8

## “CHOOSE JUST MEN WHO WILL RULE IN THE FEAR OF GOD”

### *The Ten Commandments on Trial*

#### The Ten Commandments on Trial

Noah Webster (1782–1852) was the author of *An American Dictionary of the English Language*. For decades, he was one of the most prolific authors in America, publishing textbooks, political essays, and newspaper articles. A modern bibliography of his published works runs 655 pages. His “Blue-Backed Speller” was used to teach spelling and reading to generations of American children. Along with his dictionary, it helped to Americanize English spelling. The speller was grounded in Scripture. The first lesson began, “Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor for your body, what ye shall put on; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things” (Matt. 6:25).

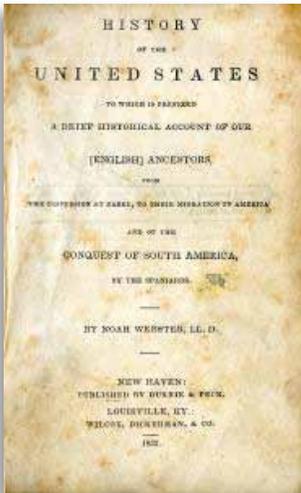


**NOAH WEBSTER** (1782–1852) was a prolific author of widely used reference and educational books, all of which were distinctively Christian.

Webster was a devout Christian who understood the relationship between God's law and everything else, including civil government. His 1828 *American Dictionary* contained the greatest number of biblical definitions given in any reference volume. It's no wonder that Webster considered education "useless without the Bible." From the Preface to his dictionary, the following is found:

In my view, the Christian religion is the most important and one of the first things in which all children, under a free government ought to be instructed. No truth is more evident to my mind than that the Christian religion must be the basis of any government intended to secure the rights and privileges of a free people.

In addition to his dictionary work, Webster published his own edition of the Bible in 1833. It was designed to be more readable for the average Christian. It was a limited revision of the King James Version (KJV) that was used as the foundation for his work. He consulted the original Hebrew and Greek as well as other versions and commentaries. He corrected some of the grammar of the KJV, replaced words that were no longer used, and did away with words and phrases that some people found offensive.



Webster's work was not only about definitions and standardizing the spelling of English words. He understood that if a nation is to prosper, it must ask these two fundamental questions: Who's ultimately in charge, and what does the one who is in charge require of us? Webster puts it this way in his book the *History of the United States*:

Let it be impressed on your mind that God commands you to choose for rulers, *just men who will rule in the fear of God* [Exodus 18:21].... If the citizens neglect their duty and place unprincipled men in office, the

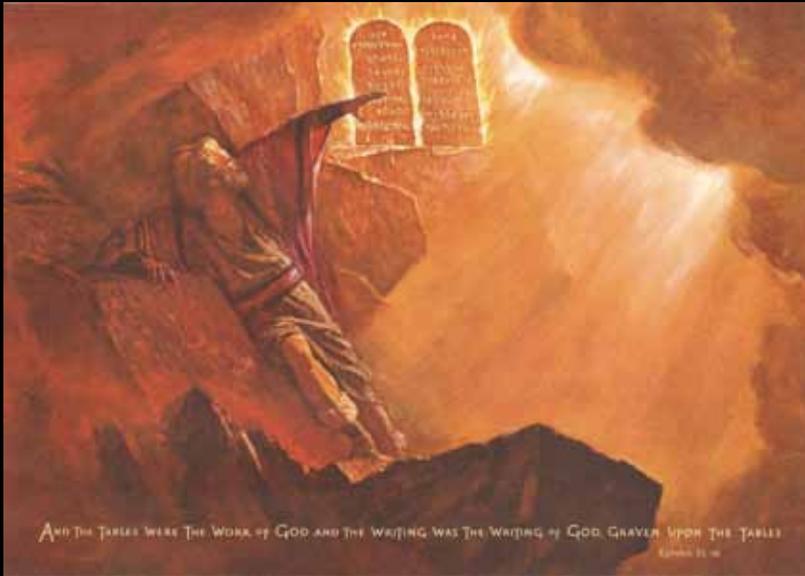
government will soon be corrupted ... If a republican government fails to secure public prosperity and happiness, it must be because the citizens neglect the Divine commands, and elect bad men to make and administer the laws.<sup>1</sup>

What are these “Divine commands”? Where are they found? Webster stated, “The duties of men are summarily comprised in the Ten Commandments, consisting of two tables; one comprehending the duties which we owe immediately to God—the other, the duties we owe to our fellow men.”<sup>2</sup> Webster went on to say, “If we and our posterity neglect religious instruction and authority; violate the rules of eternal justice, trifle with the injunctions of morality, and recklessly destroy the political constitution which holds us together, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Ruled by God or the Whims of a Dictator**

Webster’s statement is similar to what Cecil B. DeMille said when he introduced his 1956 film *The Ten Commandments*. For the original theatrical release, DeMille filmed an onscreen introduction, which is included in video editions of the movie but not when it is shown on television. Most people who have seen the *Ten Commandments* only on television have never seen DeMille’s opening monologue. DeMille had something more in mind than just making a film about a religious figure from the Bible. He considered his production to be so important that he came out on stage to deliver a short but powerful statement on the nature of freedom under the law of God:

The theme of this picture is whether men ought to be ruled by God’s laws or whether they are to be ruled by the whims of a dictator like Rameses. Are men the property of the State or are they free souls under God? This same battle continues throughout the world today.



An image from the original Souvenir Book for Cecil B. DeMille's  
*The Ten Commandments*.

The elaborate film Souvenir Book that was made available in theaters includes a preface with the title “The Law by Which Men Live”:

*THE TEN COMMANDMENTS are not laws. They are THE LAW. Man has made 32,000,000 laws since they were handed down to Moses on Mount Sinai more than three thousand years ago, but he has never improved on God's law.*<sup>4</sup>

All law is a reflection of some worldview.<sup>5</sup> Law is an inescapable concept. Thomas Jefferson wrote, “Every religion consists of moral precepts, and of dogmas.”<sup>6</sup> There is a corollary to Jefferson’s observation: “Every non-religion consists of moral precepts, and of dogmas.” Jefferson himself proved this by compiling a moral philosophy in his *Literary Commonplace Book*. Even the most lawless person has his own sense of justice.<sup>7</sup> We hear people talk about “prison justice.”

Prisoners will actually judge other prisoners, especially those involved in child abuse cases. There are some crimes that even murderers will not tolerate. Someone is ultimately in charge: the sovereign individual where “every man does what is right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6), a single ruler who claims a “divine right,” the call for a political savior by the people best exemplified in the way Israel asked for a “king like all the other nations” (Judges 8:22–23; 1 Sam. 8), a “we the people mentality” where the decisions of the majority become law, or placing the final arbitration of what is right in the hands of nine Supreme Court justices where only five are needed to change a law.

### **Natural Law and the Higher Law**

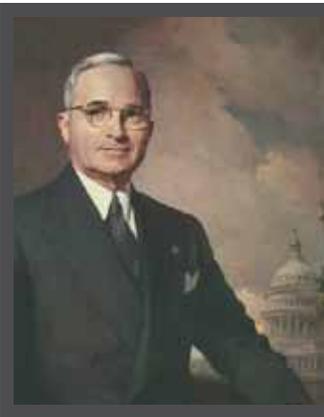
When Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas appealed to Natural Law theory in some of his legal opinions and writings, there were those on the Senate Judiciary Committee during his confirmation hearings in September 1991 who took exception. The most vocal critic was former Senator Joseph Biden. As long as Thomas defined Natural Law as Biden did, Thomas’ appeal to it was acceptable. But if he defined it as “Higher Law,” the belief that God was its author as eighteenth-century jurist William Blackstone (1723–1780) did, then his view of Natural Law would not be tolerated. Biden wrote an article that appeared in the September 8, 2001 issue of the *Washington Post*<sup>8</sup> in which he claimed the following for his version of natural law:



**WILLIAM BLACKSTONE** (1723-1780), a jurist, defined “Natural Law” as “Higher Law” and believed that God was its author.

- It does not “function as being a specific moral code regulating individual behavior.”
- It is not “a static set of unchanging principles.”
- It is “an evolving body of ideals.”

Basically, law is whatever the courts say it is. “In our system,” Biden wrote, “the sole obligation of a Supreme Court justice is to the Constitution. Natural justice can supply one of the important means of understanding the Constitution, but natural law can never be used to reach a decision contrary to a fair reading of the Constitution itself.” This is why the Left wants to be the gatekeepers to the Supreme Court by mandating a liberal litmus test to all prospective judges. Biden’s article does not tell us anything about how we determine what’s right or wrong. Morality is a matter of “individual choice,” and if you can get enough justices to agree with you, then it’s the law, and they are the ones who determine what “individual choice” means. But no matter the form of government, authority and law are foundational.



*The fundamental basis of this nation's laws was given to Moses on the Mount... If we don't have the proper fundamental moral background, we will finally wind up with a totalitarian government which does not believe in rights for anybody.*

**—President Harry S. Truman**

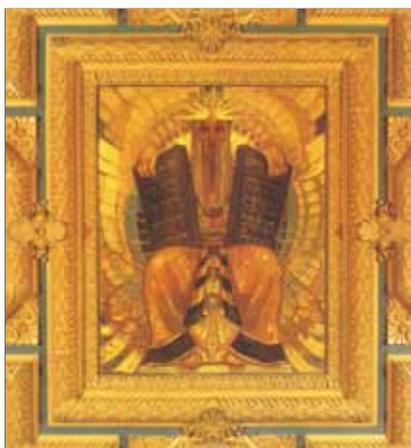
Every system of government exists to produce or enforce certain laws, and every law necessarily entails a set of moral assumptions. All morality—even that which is usually supposed to be, or touted as being, based upon an “irreligious” or anti-religious” philosophical foundation—is ultimately religious in its nature, since it is founded upon . . . fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality, about God, man, and

things, which are taken on (a usually unacknowledged) faith. In this deepest sense, then, the question for every legal system is not whether it will be based upon “religion” but rather which religion or religious philosophy will be its foundation?<sup>9</sup>

The modern conception of law is a far cry from the moral principles on which America was founded. Critics point out that America had its forms of injustice, for example, slavery. True enough, but it was because there was a “Higher Law” ethic based on biblical moral values that slavery was overturned. President Harry S. Truman voiced the common and prevailing sentiment of his day:

The fundamental basis of this nation’s laws was given to Moses on the Mount. The fundamental basis of our Bill of Rights comes from the teachings which we get from Exodus and St. Matthew, from Isaiah and St. Paul. I don’t think we comprehend that enough these days.

If we don’t have the proper fundamental moral background, we will finally wind up with a totalitarian government which does not believe in rights for anybody.<sup>10</sup>



A ceiling mural in the Supreme Court Chamber of Pennsylvania in Pittsburgh.

We cannot live within the fluid boundaries of legal relativism. There must be a definitive and final legal standard of appeal to justify moral decisions at the personal and governmental levels. If not, then one judge’s opinion is as good (or as bad) as another.

The Ten Commandments, a summary statement of a broader body of revealed laws, have been that fixed standard in America since before its official founding. As *Nightline* host Ted Koppel stated in a 1987 commencement address at

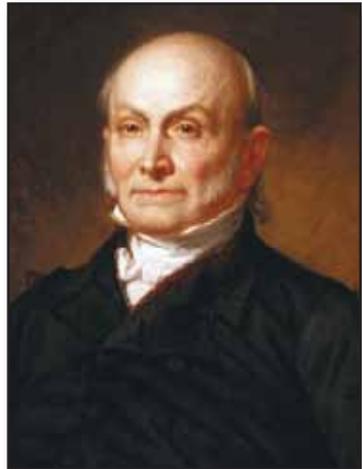
Duke University, “What Moses brought down from Mt. Sinai were not the Ten Suggestions. They are commandments. *Are*, not *were*. The sheer brilliance of the Ten Commandments is that they codify in a handful of words acceptable human behavior, not just for then or now, but for all time. Language evolves. Power shifts from one nation to another. Messages are transmitted with the speed of light. Man erases one frontier after another. And yet we and our behavior and the commandments governing that behavior remain the same.”<sup>11</sup> In H. B. Clark’s book *Biblical Law* we find a helpful summary of the importance and impact the Ten Commandments have had on society and culture and its close association with formulating the specifics of natural law:

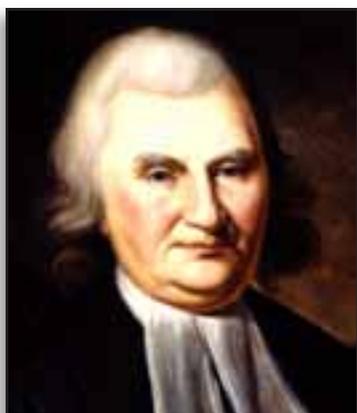
The Ten Commandments are the basis of Mosaic law—the constitution of the Mosaic dispensation. They have been called the greatest short moral code ever formulated<sup>12</sup> and the idealized model for all law, and it has been argued that the whole of natural law may be deduced from them.<sup>13</sup>

A brief study of the colonial and later periods in American history will prove Clark’s claim to be true.

### Law in Early America

**JOHN QUINCY ADAMS** (1767–1848) stated, “The law given from Sinai was a civil and municipal as well as a moral and religious code. These are laws essential to the existence of men in society and most of which have been enacted by every nation which ever professed any code of laws.” He added that: “Vain indeed would be the search among the writings of [secular history] ... to find so broad, so complete and so solid a basis of morality as this Decalogue lays down.”<sup>14</sup>





**JOHN WITHERSPOON** (1723–1794), the president of what later came to be known as Princeton University and a signer of the Declaration of Independence, wrote that “moral law published upon Mount Sinai [is] the publication or summary of that immutable law of righteousness, which is the duty of creatures, and must accompany the administration of every covenant which God makes with man.”<sup>15</sup>

**JOHN JAY** (1745–1829) was one of the authors of *The Federalist Papers* and served as the first Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court. He wrote the following in a letter dated April 15, 1818 to his friend John Murray: “The law was given by Moses, not however in his individual or private capacity, but as the agent or instrument, and by the authority of the Almighty. The law demanded exact obedience, and proclaimed: ‘Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.’”<sup>16</sup>



Some of the earliest court cases in the United States make statements that show the importance of the Decalogue in the reinforcement of our nation’s legal tradition. In a 1914 case, the court acknowledged, “The laws of spiritual life, of civil life, and moral life are all set forth in the ten commandments.”<sup>17</sup> The 1899 West Virginia case *Moore v. Strickling* argued in a similar way:

These commandments, which, like a collection of diamonds, bear testimony to their own intrinsic worth—in themselves appeal to us as coming from a superhuman or divine source; and no conscientious or reasonable man has yet been able to find a flaw in them. Abso-

lutely flawless, negative in terms but positive in meaning, they easily stand at the head of our whole moral system; and no nation or people can long continue a happy existence, in open violation of them.”<sup>18</sup>



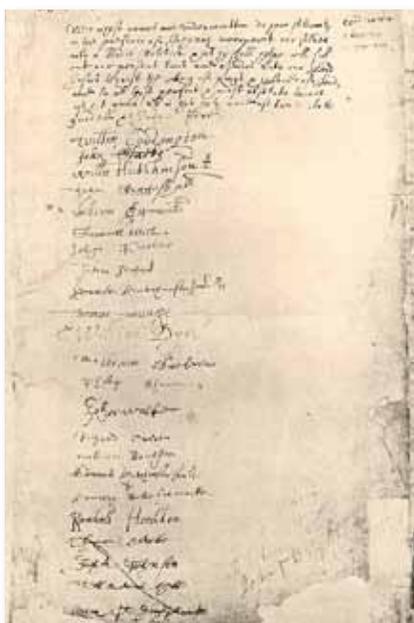
**KING ALFRED THE GREAT** in his Doom Book adopted the Ten Commandments and other selections from the Pentateuch, together with the Golden Rule in negative form, as the foundation of the early laws of England.

In a 1931 case, Judge Charles Sumner Lobingier declared that “Israel’s law is the connecting link between the earliest and the latest legal systems and has proved itself one of the most influential forces in the evolution of the world’s law.”<sup>19</sup> But long before these modern statements, we find that “King Alfred in his Doom Book adopted the Ten Commandments and other selections from the Pentateuch, together with the Golden Rule in the negative form, as the foundation of the early laws of England.”<sup>20</sup> America was no less influenced as H. B. Clark states:

The Scriptures doubtless have been a potent influence upon American Law. In the early colonial period, the Bible seems to have been commonly regarded among the people as law. Several of the colonies formally adopted provisions of Mosaic law.<sup>21</sup> For example, Plymouth Colony in 1636 adopted a “small body of Lawes” largely

based upon the laws of Israel. And New Haven Colony in 1639 resolved that “the word of God shall be the only rule to be attended to in ordering the affairs of government in this plantation,”<sup>22</sup> and in 1655 adopted a code in which 47 out of 79 topical statutes were based on the Bible.<sup>23</sup>

Early American colonies incorporated the entire Decalogue into their legal code. In 1638, prior to leaving Boston, Massachusetts, the leading men of the proposed Rhode Island colony incorporated themselves into political body. The Portsmouth Compact, signed by 23 men, stated the following: “We whose names are underwritten do hereby solemnly in the presence of Jehovah incorporate ourselves into a Bodie Politick and as He shall help, will submit our persons, lives and estates unto our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and to all those perfect and most absolute laws of His given in His Holy Word of truth, to be guided and judged thereby.” The following Bible passages accompany the text: Exodus 24:3–4; 2 Chronicles 11:3; 2 Kings 11:17.



**THE PORTSMOUTH COMPACT** of 1638 reads,

*We whose names are underwritten do hereby solemnly in the presence of Jehovah incorporate ourselves into a Bodie Politick and as He shall help, will submit our persons, lives and estates unto our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and to all those perfect and most absolute laws of His given in His Holy Word of truth, to be guided and judged thereby.*

## The First Commandment



God is described in numerous ways in the colonies and later in the states as everything from “God Almighty” to “Governor of the Universe.” The First Commandment was made part of the law in the Virginia Colony. The 1610 law reads:

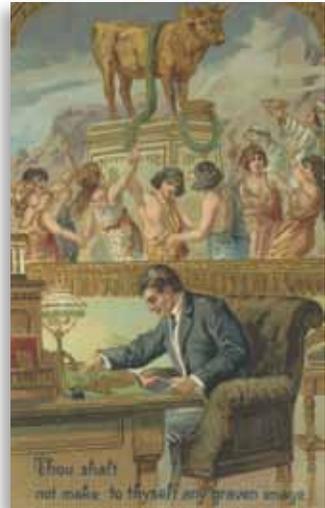
Since we owe our highest and supreme duty, our greatest and all our allegiance to Him from whom all power and authority is derived, and flows as from the first and only fountain, and being especially soldiers impressed in this sacred cause, we must alone expect our

success from Him who is only the blesser of all good attempts, the King of kings, the Commander of commanders, and Lord of hosts, I do strictly command and charge all Captains and Officers of what quality or nature soever, whether commanders in the field, or in town or towns, forts or fortresses, to have a care that the Almighty God be duly and daily served, and that they call upon their people to hear sermons, as that also they diligently frequent morning and evening prayer themselves by their own example and daily life and duties herein, encouraging others thereunto.<sup>24</sup>

In 1641, **Massachusetts** adopted a law that banned the worship of “any other god but the Lord God.”<sup>25</sup>

## The Second Commandment

Like the First Commandment, the Second Commandment, which forbids making idols and worshipping them, was often written into the civil codes of the colonies. In 1680, the New Hampshire colony enacted a law that stated:



*Idolatry.* It is enacted by [the] Assembly and [the] authority thereof, yet if any person having had the knowledge of the true God openly and manifestly have or worship any other god but the Lord God, he shall be put to death. Ex. 22.20, Deut. 13.6 and 10.<sup>26</sup>

### Third Commandment



The third commandment is: “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain” (Ex. 20:7). The interpretation and application of this commandment prohibited blasphemy and profanity. Noah Webster discussed both of these categories in relation to the third commandment in one of his letters:

When in obedience to the third commandment of the Decalogue you would avoid profane swearing, you are to remember that this alone is not a full compliance with the prohibition which [also] comprehends

all irrelevant words or action and whatever tends to cast contempt on the Supreme Being or on His word and ordinances.<sup>27</sup>

Nearly all of the colonies had anti-blasphemy laws. As Commander-in-Chief, George Washington issued numerous military orders during the American Revolution that prohibited swearing. This is one of his orders issued on July 4, 1775:

The General most earnestly requires and expects a due observance of those articles of war established for the government of the army which forbid profane cursing, swearing, and drunkenness; and in like manner requires and expects of all officers and soldiers not engaged on actual duty, a punctual attendance on Divine Service to implore the blessings of Heaven upon the means used

for our safety and defense.<sup>28</sup>

After the Declaration of Independence, George Washington issued similar orders to his troops during the Revolutionary War. And similar prohibitions against blasphemy and profanity were issued throughout the rest of the Eighteenth century and into the Nineteenth century. Washington began issuing such orders to his troops as early as 1756 during the French and Indian War,<sup>29</sup> and continued the practice throughout the American Revolution, issuing similar orders in 1776, 1777, 1778,<sup>30</sup> etc.

In 1824, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania (in a decision subsequently invoked authoritatively and endorsed by the U. S. Supreme Court 48) reaffirmed that the civil laws against blasphemy were derived from divine law:

The true principles of natural religion are part of the common law; the essential principles of revealed religion are part of the common law; so that a person vilifying, subverting or ridiculing them may be prosecuted at common law.<sup>31</sup>

### The Fourth Commandment



The civil laws enacted to uphold the Fourth Commandment are so common that to list them all would fill many volumes. We don't have to go any further than the United States Constitution in Article I, Sec. 7, par. 2: "If any Bill shall not be returned by the President within ten Days (Sundays excepted) after it shall have been presented to him, the Same shall be a Law in like Manner as if he had signed it, unless Congress by their Adjournment prevent its return, in which Case it shall not be a Law." The President is given ten days to make his decision about a congressionally approved Bill, but not calculated in those ten days is Sunday. The "Sundays excepted" clause had previously appeared in State

constitutions of that day, and still operates with the closing of the post office. The historical understanding of this clause was summarized in 1912 by the Supreme Court of Missouri which, expounding on the meaning of this provision in its own State constitution and in the U. S. Constitution, declared:

It is provided that if the Governor does not return a bill within 10 days (Sundays excepted), it shall become a law without his signature. Although it may be said that this provision leaves it optional with the Governor whether he will consider bills or not on Sunday, yet, regard being had to the circumstances under which it was inserted, can any impartial mind deny that it contains a recognition of the Lord's Day as a day exempted by law from all worldly pursuits? The framers of the Constitution, then, recognized Sunday as a day to be observed, acting themselves under a law which exacted a compulsive observance of it. If a compulsive observance of the Lord's Day as a day of rest had been deemed inconsistent with the principles contained in the Constitution, can anything be clearer than, as the matter was so plainly and palpably before the Convention, a specific condemnation of the Sunday law would have been engrafted upon it? So far from it, Sunday was recognized as a day of rest.<sup>32</sup>

### **The Fifth Commandment**

Commandments five through ten have variously been incorporated into our legal codes. A 1934 Louisiana appeals court cited the fifth commandment as the basis of civil policy between parents and children:

“Honor thy father and thy mother,’ is as much a command of the municipal law as it is a part of the Decalogue, regarded as holy by every Christian people. ‘A child,’ says the



code, 'whatever be his age, owes honor and respect to his father and mother.'"<sup>33</sup>

### The Sixth Commandment



It's hardly necessary to point out that the sixth commandment, "You shall not murder," has been a part of our legal code since the first colonists set foot on the new world. Laws against murder were enacted in Massachusetts. *An Abstract of the Laws of New England, as They Are Now Established* was compiled by **John Cotton** and printed in London in 1641. Notice the references to the Bible:

4. Ex. 21.12, Numb. 35.13, 14, 30, 31. If any person commit any willful murder, which is manslaughter committed upon premeditated malice, hatred, or cruelty,

not in a man's necessary and just defense nor by mere casualty against his will, he shall be put to death.

5. Numb. 25.20, 21. Lev. 24.17. If any person slayeth another suddenly in his anger or cruelty of passion, he shall be put to death.

6. Ex. 21.14. If any person shall slay another through guile, either by poisoning or other such devilish practice, he shall be put to death.

Modern courts have acknowledged that the Ten Commandments have been the source of laws regarding prohibitions against murder. A 1932 Kentucky appeals court declared:

The rights of society as well as those of appellant are involved and are also to be protected, and to that end all forms of governments following the promulgation of Moses at Mt. Sinai has required of each and every

one of its citizens that “Thou shalt not murder.” If that law is violated, the one guilty of it has no right to demand more than a fair trial, and if, as a result thereof, the severest punishment for the crime is visited upon him, he has no one to blame but himself.<sup>34</sup>

Even the “severest punishment for the crime” is traced back to divine laws.

### The Seventh Commandment

Many states passed laws making adultery a criminal offense. In fact, in 1787, nearly a century-and-a-half after the earliest colonial laws, Vermont enacted an adultery law, declaring that it was based on divine law:

Whereas the violation of the marriage covenant is contrary to the command of God and destructive to the peace of families: be it therefore enacted by the general assembly of the State of Vermont that if any man be found in bed with another man’s wife, or woman with another’s husband,...&c.



### The Eighth Commandment

The implications of the eighth commandment, “You shall not steal,” find various applications. For example, here’s one from the state of Georgia that is applicable to property cases and surveys used to delineate boundary markers:

“Iron pins are a common and useful means of identifying property corners and they and other similar

monuments serve a useful purpose. The installation and maintenance of permanent monuments identifying land corners even preserves the good order of society itself. From earliest times the law not only authorized but protected landmarks. Interference with landmarks of another was a violation of the Mosaic law. See Deuteronomy 19:14; 27:17; Job 24:2; Proverbs 22:28; 23:10. (256 Ga. 54, *International Paper Realty Company v. Bethune*. No. 43092. Supreme Court of Georgia, June 10, 1986)."

In Article 1, section 10, the Constitution states that "No State shall ... make any Thing but **gold** and silver Coin a Tender in Payment of Debts..." Further, the founders were so fearful of debasing the currency—a form of theft (Isa. 1:22)—that they passed the Coinage Act in 1792. Section 19 reads:

*And be it further enacted*, That if any of the gold or silver coins which shall be struck or coined at the said mint shall be debased or made worse as to the proportion of fine gold or fine silver therein contained, or shall be of less weight or value than the same ought to be pursuant to the directions of this act, through the default or with the connivance of any of the officers or persons who shall be employed at the said mint, for the purpose of profit or gain, or otherwise with a fraudulent intent, and if any of the said officers or persons shall embezzle any of the metals which shall at any time be committed to their charge for the purpose of being coined, or any of the coins which shall be struck or coined at the said mint, every such officer or person who shall commit any or either of the said offences, shall be deemed guilty of felony, and shall suffer death.<sup>35</sup>



### Ninth Commandment

The ninth commandment prohibits “bearing false witness.” Laws against perjury in America go back to the colonial era and are still enforced today. For example, in 1924 the Oregon Supreme Court declared: “No official is above the law. ‘Thou shalt not bear false witness’ is a command of the Decalogue, and that forbidden act is denounced by statute as a felony.”<sup>36</sup> In 1988, the Supreme Court of Mississippi referenced the Ninth Commandment by reprimanding a prosecutor for introducing accusations during cross-examination of a defendant for which he had no verifiable evidence. The court stated:



When the State or any party states or suggests the existence of certain damaging facts and offers no proof whatever to substantiate the allegations, a golden opportunity is afforded the opposing counsel in closing argument to appeal to the Ninth Commandment. "Thou shalt not bear false witness..." Exodus 20:16.

### The Tenth Commandment



While there are no civil sanctions attached to the Tenth Commandment, you can see how it influences the other nine. John Adams, our nation's second President, said it well:

The moment the idea is admitted into society that property is not as sacred as the laws of God, and that there is not a force of law and public justice to protect it, anarchy and tyranny commence. If "Thou shalt not covet" and "Thou shalt not steal" were not com-

mandments of Heaven, they must be made inviolable precepts in every society before it can be civilized or made free.<sup>37</sup>

People covet, and when they can't attain what they covet by legal means, they steal and sometimes kill. Governments covet power, so they covet the property of others, confiscate it or tax it so they can gain favor with others by paying them off in confiscated tax dollars.

## NOTES

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2. Noah Webster, *Letters to a Young Gentleman Commencing His Education: To Which is Subjoined A Brief History of the United States* (New Haven: S. Converse, 1823), p. 7; see also Noah Webster, *A Collection of Papers on Political, Literary, and Moral Subjects* (New York: Webster & Clark, 1843), p. 296.
3. Webster, *The History of the United States*,
4. *The Ten Commandments* Souvenir Book, Paramount Pictures Corporation (1956, 1957), was published by The Greenstone Company, New York, N.Y.
5. Gary DeMar, *Thinking Straight in a Crooked World: A Christian Defense Manual* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 2001).
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8. Joseph R. Biden, Jr., “Law and Natural Law: Questions for Judge Thomas,” *The Washington Post* (September 8, 1991), C-1.
9. Archie P. Jones, “Christianity and the First Amendment: The Truth about the Religion Clauses of the Constitution,” (unpublished manuscript), 3.
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11. Ted Koppel, *The Last Word*, Commencement Address at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina (May 10, 1987). Quoted in Robert H. Bork, *The Tempting of America: The Political Seduction of the Law* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 164.
12. John Henry Wigmore, *A Panorama of the World’s Legal Systems*, 3 vols. (Saint Paul, MN: West Publishing Company, 1928), 1:105.
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15. John Witherspoon, *The Works of Rev. John Witherspoon*, 4 vols., 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (Philadelphia: William W. Woodward, 1802), 4:117–118.
16. John Jay, *The Life of John Jay with Selections from His Correspondence and*

*Miscellaneous Papers*, 2 vols. (New York: J & J. Harper, 1833), 2:385.

17. Quoted in Clark, *Biblical Law*, 8, note.

18. *Moore v. Strickling* (1899) 46 W. Va. 515, 33 SE 274, 50 LRA 279, 282. Quoted in Clark, *Biblical Law*, 8.

19. 4 China LR (1931) 362 (Lobingier). Quoted in Clark, *Biblical Law*, 43.

20. Quoted in J. Nelson Happy and Samuel Pyeatt Menefee, "Genesis!: Scriptural Citation and the *Lawyer's Bible* Project," 9 *Regent University Law Review* 89 (1997).

21. William Galbraith Miller, *The Data of Jurisprudence* (Edinburgh and London: William Green and Sons, 1903), 416.

22. The Preamble to *The Fundamental Orders* (1639) reads: "For as much as it hath pleased Almighty God by the wise disposition of his divine providence . . . [A] people are gathered together the word of God requires that to maintain the peace and union of such a people there should be an orderly and decent Government established according to God, to order and dispose of the affairs of the people at all seasons as occasion shall require; do therefore associate and conjoin ourselves to be as one Public State or Commonwealth; and do for ourselves and our successors and such as shall be adjoined to us at any time hereafter, enter into Combination and Confederation together, to maintain and preserve the liberty and purity of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus which we now profess, as also, the discipline of the Churches, which according to the truth of the said Gospel is now practiced amongst us; as also in our civil affairs to be guided and governed according to such Laws, Rules, Orders and Decrees as shall be made, ordered, and decreed as followeth:" [http://www.constitution.org/bcp/fo\\_1639.htm](http://www.constitution.org/bcp/fo_1639.htm)

23. Clark, *Biblical Law*, 44.

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35. <http://www.runtogold.com/2008/01/1792-coinage-act/>

36. *Watts v. Gerking*, 228 P. 135, 141 (Or. 1924).

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# 9

## “RENDER UNTO GOD THE THINGS THAT ARE GOD’S”

### *The Bible and Separation of Church and State*

A person who owns a piece of property has legitimate *jurisdiction* over it, but he does not have jurisdiction over someone else’s property. A property owner can only “speak the law” (*juris* = law + *diction* = speak) within the boundary lines of his own property. In this way a property owner’s jurisdiction is legally limited. He cannot encroach on the property of others because his jurisdiction does not extend beyond what he owns. Permission must be secured from the original property owner to use his property. To use someone’s property without the owner’s permission is a violation of the eighth commandment: “You shall not steal” (Ex. 20:15). Elsewhere we read: “Cursed is he who moves his neighbor’s boundary mark” (Deut. 27:17). It’s no more legitimate when civil officials do it (1 Kings 21; Hosea 5:10).

The concept of jurisdictional boundaries and limitations is not new to our time. God established property and moral boundaries when He instructed Adam and Eve not to eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17). From beginning to end the law is a code of boundary limitations. The law tells us what is permissible and what is not as it applies to individuals in self-government, parents and children in family government, elders, deacons, and members in church government, and citizens and elected officials and their agents in civil government, and every other area of life.

What’s true of individuals and their relationship to the law is especially true of civil governments, since the State has the power of the sword (Rom. 13:4). Does the fact that the State has the sword lessen



If the boundary markers of civil government are not expressly set forth, then it's possible and likely that the civil sphere of government will be used to trample the boundary markers (jurisdictions) of individuals, families, churches, businesses, lesser magistrates, and nations for personal and national aggrandizement. The story of Ahab and his desire to get Naboth's vineyard by hook or by crook is an obvious example (1 Kings 21).

the legitimate restrictions on personal and property rights? Possession of deadly force does not overturn legitimate jurisdictional rights. If the boundary markers of civil government are not expressly set forth, then it's possible and likely that the civil sphere of government will be used to trample the boundary markers (jurisdictions) of individuals, families, churches, businesses, lesser magistrates, and nations for personal and national aggrandizement. The story of Ahab and his desire to get Naboth's vineyard by hook or by crook is an obvious example (1 Kings 21).

Our founders understood these principles. That's why the form of civil government they developed was decentralized and specifically designed to limit political power. As Thomas Jefferson stated in the Kentucky Resolutions of 1798, "In questions of power, let no more be heard of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution." Russell Kirk (1918–1994) confirms Jefferson's sentiment:

The constitutions of the American commonwealth are intended—and have successfully operated—to restrain political power: to prevent any person or clique or party from dominating permanently the government of the country.

\* \* \*

It is one of the great premises of American political theory that all just authority comes from the people, under God: not from a monarch or a governing class, but from the innumerable individuals who make up the public. The people delegate to government only so much power as they think is prudent for government to exercise; they reserve to themselves all the powers and rights that are not expressly granted to the federal or state or local governments. Government is the creation of the people, not their master. Thus the American political system, first of all, is a system of limited, delegated powers, entrusted to political officers and representatives and leaders for certain well-defined public purposes. Only through the recognition of this theory of popular sovereignty, and only through this explicit delegation of powers, the founders of the American Republic believed, could the American nation keep clear of tyranny or anarchy. The theory and the system have succeeded: America never has endured a dictator or tolerated violent social disorder.<sup>1</sup>

*In questions of power, let no more be heard of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution.*

—Thomas Jefferson  
in **THE KENTUCKY RESOLUTIONS OF 1798**



State governments and their courts have jurisdictional authority to “speak the law” to those who reside within the boundaries of their respective states. Their jurisdictional freedom is no different from that of the federal government. That’s why each state has its own constitution, courts, and elected officials. An elected official in one state has no jurisdictional authority in or over another state.



**THE BILL OF RIGHTS** as it was originally drafted listed twelve amendments to the Constitution. What are now the Ninth and Tenth Amendments are listed here as “Article the Eleventh” and “Article the Twelfth.”

In the same way, the Federal government’s jurisdiction is limited by the Constitution, although such limitations are not always acknowledged by the courts, the President, or Congress. These delegated agencies often test the limits of their specified boundary markers. Voters will often use the power of civil government to overstep its constitutionally set jurisdictional limits when they believe they can use the power of the State for a particular benefit. They will elect representatives and senators who will “bring home the bacon” to their congressional district and state at the expense of other states. Where are the Federal dollars coming from to pay for these projects? They are collected from individuals from throughout

the United States in the form of taxes and fees, sent to Washington, and then redistributed back to the states. This type of political dealing violates the jurisdictional limitations set forth in the Constitution.

Powers not specified (enumerated) in the Constitution are retained by the individual states or the people generally. These Federal jurisdictional limitations are described in the Ninth and Tenth Amendments to the Constitution:

**Ninth:** “The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.”

**Tenth:** “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”

What’s true of the taxing power of civil government and its jurisdictional limitations is equally true of civil government’s relationship with religion, including church government and its courts, preaching, and the administration of the Sacraments. While many people believe the Bible merges church and state, the opposite is actually the case. As the following will show, the Bible extends jurisdictional and boundary limitations to church and state without ever suggesting that the church and state have different sources of authority for their spheres.

### **The Biblical Model of Church and State**

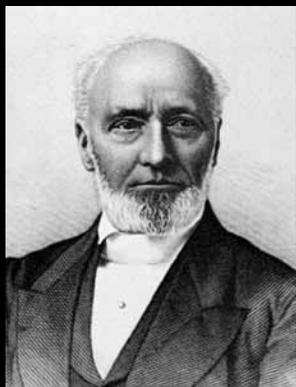
One way to keep Christians out of the public arena, especially in the realm of politics, is to claim that there is a separation between Church and State which when interpreted and applied by courts and organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union and Americans United for Separation of Church and State means a radical separation of religion and civil government. The argument is based on the assumption that in biblical times Church and State were merged, and in modern times the First Amendment separates the

two institutions. Supposedly, under biblical law, priests ruled over elders, judges, and kings. If this is the case, so the argument goes, the Bible cannot be used in our modern pluralistic society where the Constitution forbids the State to be ruled by ecclesiastical officers. Of course, as we will see, Church and State were not merged in the Bible, and the Constitution does not mention a Church-State separation because the institutions were already jurisdictionally separate in the colonial era. Max I. Dimont, writing in *Jews, God, and History*, offers a helpful summary of the biblical position on jurisdictional separation:

In the Mosaic Code the civil authority was independent of the priesthood. Though it is true that the priesthood had the right to settle cases not specifically covered by Mosaic law (Deuteronomy 17:8–12), that did not place it above the civil government. The priesthood was charged with the responsibility of keeping this government within the framework of Mosaic law, just as the United States Supreme Court is not above the federal government but is, nevertheless, charged with the responsibility of keeping it within the framework of the Constitution.<sup>2</sup>

In Israel, the Torah (law) was viewed as the authority for all three governments: family, church, and state. While the standard of law was the same, not all laws could be applied in the same way under each jurisdiction. For example, a father could discipline his own child for an infraction, but he could not discipline another family's child, excommunicate a church member, or impose and carry out the death penalty on a criminal who committed a capital crime. While the State has the authority to try and execute convicted murderers and impose other civil penalties, individuals, families, and churches do not.

An elder in a church, in conjunction with other elders in his church, has ecclesiastical jurisdiction within his own ecclesiastical body to discipline any member according to the guidelines laid down in Matthew 18 and to participate in proceedings to reconcile



**PHILIP SCHAFF**, a nineteenth-century church historian, wrote:

*In recognizing and requiring an official oath [for both state and federal officeholders], the Constitution recognizes the Supreme Being, to whom the oath is a solemn appeal.*

to another church, however, and exercise discipline there, although he may be asked to sit in a judicial capacity, but only under the direction of the government of the church where the proceedings are administered. Neither can he enter the jurisdiction of civil government as a representative of the church and use the power of the State to impose ecclesiastical laws upon the general citizenry.

None of this means that an individual church member cannot use the Bible to determine whether a candidate running for political office is fit for that office. The Constitution does state that no religious test can be given to someone seeking public office at the Federal level (Art. 6, sec. 3). This article refers to *governments* supplying the test, most probably designed to keep denominational distinctions from being imposed uniformly by the national government.<sup>3</sup>

Some scholars claim that since the Constitution requires an “oath or affirmation,” and “an oath imposes a sacred obligation,” therefore “an oath requirement could be characterized as a ‘religious test.’” Nineteenth-century church historian Philip Schaff wrote, ‘in recognizing and requiring an official oath’ for both state and federal officeholders, ‘the Constitution recognizes the Supreme Being, to whom the oath is a solemn appeal.’”<sup>4</sup> It seems that George Washington, a constitutional participant and our nation’s first president, understood the oath in this way since he took it with his hand on the Bible and stated “so help me God.” Some of the constitutional delegates pointed out the religious nature of an oath.<sup>5</sup> The Consti-



It seems that **GEORGE WASHINGTON**, a constitutional participant and our nation's first president, understood his official oath to be fundamentally religious in nature since he took it with his hand on the Bible and added "so help me God."

tution does not prohibit individual voters from developing *their own* private test for those running for political office. Our founders infused the Constitution with the Christian religion, either because they directly referenced and personally revered the Bible and its moral requirements (boundaries), or because they borrowed ("smuggled") these moral principles into their secular worldview in order to make it work. They knew that without Christian boundaries and principles, there was no way to account for morality and thus no way to build a political system that would outlast them.

### Is There Secular Justification for Morality?

Stanley Fish, writing in the *New York Times*,<sup>6</sup> describes the way various philosophical traditions understand the "role of religion and public life." He begins by pointing out that under "Classical Liberalism," not to be confused with a leftist political philosophy, "policy

decisions should be made on the basis of secular reasons, reasons that, because they do not reflect the commitments or agendas of any religion, morality or ideology, can be accepted as reasons by all citizens no matter what their individual beliefs and affiliations.” Their reasoning goes like this:

“It’s okay to argue that a proposed piece of legislation will benefit the economy, or improve the nation’s health, or strengthen national security; but it’s not okay to argue that a proposed piece of legislation should be passed because it comports with a verse from the book of Genesis or corresponds to the will of God.”

So what is the basis for law? What constitutes “all citizens”? There is no way that “all citizens” are ever going to agree on anything. Ultimately, where does morality find its justification, its jurisdictional legitimacy? Every person approaches an ethical norm with a prior commitment to some fundamental interpretive principle. No one is commitmentless. No one approaches *anything* in a neutral way. There is no agreed upon definition of reason or what’s reasonable. Even the Enlightenment skeptics acknowledged that “reason is incompetent to answer any fundamental question about God, morality, or the meaning of life.”<sup>7</sup> Fish offers what he describes as a “more severe version of the argument”:

On the other hand, you are not supposed even to have religious thoughts when reflecting on the wisdom or folly of a piece of policy. Not only should you act secularly when you enter the public sphere; you should also think secularly.

So if a person believes that abortion is wrong because God has created us in His image, and killing a human being at any stage of life is an affront to His character, then just to have these thoughts disqualifies that person from entering the debate. Such a position would have disqualified those who signed the Declaration of Independence because they believed that God is the “Judge of the World” and the Creator who endowed us with “life.” What is the

basis for morality given material-only assumptions about reality? This approach is a dead-end. R.C. Sproul writes, “God’s existence is the chief element in constructing any worldview. To deny this chief premise is to set one’s sails for the island of nihilism. This is the darkest continent of the darkened mind—the ultimate paradise of the fool.”<sup>8</sup>

A third “somewhat less stringent version of the argument permits religious reasons to be voiced in contexts of public decision-making so long as they have a secular counterpart: thus, citing the prohibition against stealing in the Ten Commandments is all right because there is a secular version of the prohibition rooted in the law of property rights rather than in a biblical command.” But what is the source of this “secular counterpart”? Where is “the law of property rights” found? Political systems like Communism don’t recognize a “law of property rights.” Even Classical Liberals, many of whom are atheists, can’t account for the ultimate legitimacy for property rights.<sup>9</sup>

The more honest secularists are coming to realize that their reason-only, matter oriented worldview cannot account for what they claim is natural and reasonable. Steven Smith attempts to offer a solution in his book *The Disenchantment of Secular Discourse*: “It is not, Smith tells us, that secular reason can’t do the job (of identifying ultimate meanings and values) we need religion to do; it’s worse; secular reason can’t do its own self-assigned job—of describing the world in ways that allow us to move forward in our projects—without importing, but not acknowledging, the very perspectives it pushes away in disdain.” Smith’s solution is “by smuggling in notions that are formally inadmissible, and hence that cannot be openly acknowledged or adverted to.” What are some of these notions? “Notions about a purposive cosmos, or a teleological nature stocked with Aristotelian ‘final causes’ or a providential design.” The reason these principles must be smuggled in is because they have been “banished from secular discourse because they stipulate truth and value in advance rather than waiting for them to be revealed by the outcomes of rational calculation.”

Fish’s conclusion is fitting: “Insofar as modern liberal discourse rests on a distinction between reasons that emerge in the course of

disinterested observation—secular reasons—and reasons that flow from a prior metaphysical commitment, it hasn't got a leg to stand on." The late Legal scholar Arthur Allen Leff (1935–1981) argued in a similar way when he concluded his article "Unspeakable Ethics, Unnatural Law" with these words: "All I can say is this: it looks as if we are all we have.... As things now stand, everything is up for grabs.... There is in the world such a thing as evil. [All together now:] Sez who? God help us."<sup>10</sup>

The materialist has no way of accounting for a moral worldview. This means that there is no way to account for jurisdictional separation. The Bible explains why morality has a source and why human governments must be jurisdictionally limited. This is true of both Church and State.



There was both a jurisdictional separation of Church and State in the Old Testament, as well as an internal separation of powers and duties within the ecclesiastical and civil governments. Aaron, Moses' brother, became the chief ecclesiastical officer as High Priest,

assisted by numerous lesser priests (Ex. 29:1–9; Lev. 8). Moses did not carry out the duties of a priest, and Aaron did not perform civil tasks.

### Examples of Biblical Jurisdictional Separation

These principles have a long history, going back to the Old Testament. Moses became the chief judicial officer in Israel, assisted by numerous lesser *civil* magistrates (Ex. 18:17–26). Aaron, Moses' brother, became the chief *ecclesiastical* officer as **High Priest**, assisted by numerous lesser priests (29:1–9; Lev. 8). Moses did not carry out the duties of a priest, and Aaron did not perform civil tasks.



In the days of the Judges, **GIDEON** served in an exclusively *civil* capacity (Judges 1–13) while others served in ecclesiastical capacities.

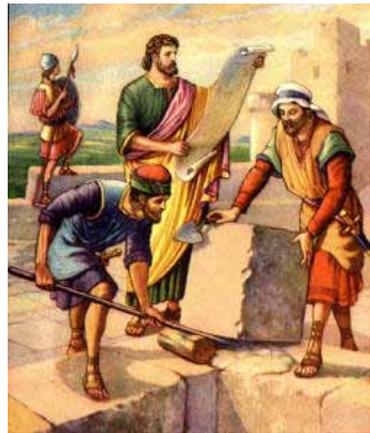
In the days of the Judges, Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, **Gideon** and Samson served as civil officers (Judges 1–13), while the son of Micah, Phineas, Eli, and the Levites served in an ecclesiastical capacity (Judges 17; 20:28; 1 Sam. 1–8).

During the period of the monarchy, King Saul served as a civil official while Ahimelech ministered as the chief ecclesiastical leader in the nation (1 Sam. 10 and 21). David was king while Abiathar carried out the duties of a priest (1 Chron. 15:11). David's son Solomon ruled as a civil officer while Zadok pursued ecclesiastical obligations (1 Kings 1:45). King Joash and Jehoiada the

priest (2 Kings 11) and King Josiah and the priest Hilkiah (2 Kings 22:4) maintained jurisdictional separation. Even after the return from exile, Church and State operated as parallel institutions with Governor Nehemiah (Neh. 7) and Priest Ezra (Neh. 8).

### Jurisdictional Cooperation

In biblical terms, there was never such a separation between Church and State that the State was free from following the guidelines of Scripture for its civil duties (Deut. 17:15–20). Both priest and king were required to sit before the law to be instructed. The priest was to follow guidelines pertaining to ecclesiastical affairs, while the king would glean from Scripture those directives designed for his civil office. If a case was too difficult for the civil ruler



Even after the return from exile, Church and State operated as parallel institutions with **GOVERNOR NEHEMIAH** (Neh. 7) and Priest Ezra (Neh. 8).



**KING DAVID** did not dismiss the exhortation of **THE PROPHET NATHAN** after being confronted for his sins of adultery and murder. He did not tell Nathan that there is a “separation between Church and State.” Instead, he accepted Nathan’s rebuke: “Then David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the LORD’” (2 Sam. 12:13).

to decide, the Bible gives the following instruction: “You shall come to the Levitical priest or the judge who is in office in those days, and you shall inquire of them, and they will declare to you the verdict in the case” (17:9). Notice the use of “the Levitical priest or the judge.” Both were required to be experts in the law. The judges did not follow a different standard in adjudicating legal issues. The Levites were to assist the civil ruler as much as the judges, but the Levites were not called on to rule in place of the king.

King David did not dismiss the exhortation of the prophet Nathan after being confronted for his sins of adultery and murder. Although David at first did not know that the rebuke was leveled against him, he did not act as if it was unusual for someone in Nathan's position to seek the counsel of the king and even to offer the king advice. David accepted Nathan's rebuke. He did not tell Nathan that there is a "separation between Church and State": "Then David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD'" (2 Sam. 12:13). Modern-day separationists think more like Herod whose response to John the Baptist's rebuke of his adultery (Mark 6:14–29) was, in so many words, "What a ruler does privately is none of your business."

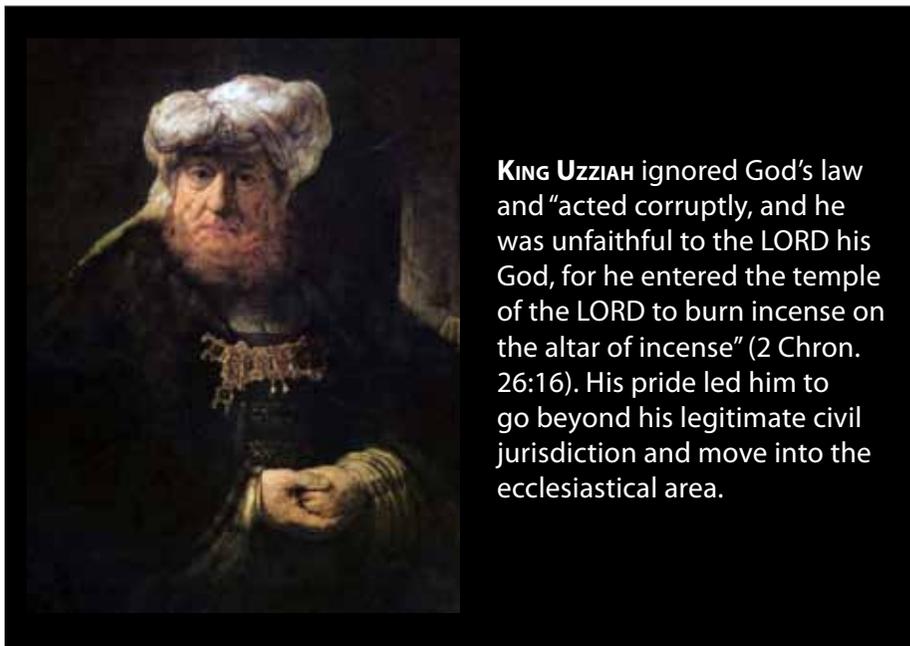


*David said to Ahimelech, "Now is there not a spear or a sword on hand? For I brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's matter was urgent." Then the priest said, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah, behold, it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod; if you would take it for yourself, take it. For there is no other except it here." And David said, "There is none like it; give it to me."*

–1 Samuel 21:8-9

## Crossing the Boundaries

There is always the danger of jurisdictional usurpation, when, say, civil government removes the jurisdictional boundaries and enters the domain of the Church. The Bible cites a number of examples of how the king sought to overrule the authority and jurisdiction of the Church. King Saul assumed the duties of the priests when he offered sacrifices. He stepped out of bounds from his kingly duties (1 Sam. 15:9–15, 22). In another place, Saul killed the godly priest Ahimelech because he would not fulfill the king's *political* goals (1 Sam. 22:6–23). King Jeroboam established his State religion in Bethel and Dan. Non-Levites of the worst character were appointed to serve as priests (1 Kings 12:26–31).



Then there's the incident of King Uzziah who crossed the boundary in a very minor way but was judged harshly. God is serious about jurisdictional church-state separation. The king is said to have been "proud" (2 Chron. 26:16). His pride led him to go beyond his legitimate civil jurisdiction and move into the ecclesiastical area. While he was "chief of State," being the king in Judah, he was not a priest.

King Uzziah could not assume the role of a priest and perform in the most basic ecclesiastical duties. He had no jurisdictional authority to serve in the Temple, the Old Testament equivalent of the New Testament Church. Uzziah ignored God's law and "acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the LORD his God, for he entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense" (2 Chron. 26:16).

The king was struck with the most feared disease in all Israel: leprosy! "And king Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death; and he lived in a separate house, being a leper, for he was cut off from the house of the LORD" (v. 21). He lost access to the Temple, was isolated from the general population, and lost his kingdom to his son, Jotham, who "was over the king's house judging the people of the land" (v. 21). Azariah the priest was not passive in this incident. He knew the limitations of the king's power. He, along with "eighty priests of the LORD" (v. 17), took action against the king. They "opposed Uzziah the king" (v. 18), making it clear that "it is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron who are consecrated to burn incense" (v. 18). The priests commanded Uzziah to "get out of the sanctuary" (v. 18).

These "ecclesiastical officials" are called "valiant men" (v. 17) because they acted with great risk. While there were eighty of them, the king still commanded an army. He could have put them to death. There was a precedent for this when Ahimelech the priest helped David against King Saul (1 Sam. 21–22). Saul called on Doeg the Edomite to attack the priests after the king's own servants refused: "And Doeg the Edomite turned around and attacked the priests, and he killed that day eighty-five who wore the linen ephod" (1 Sam. 22:18). Doeg the Edomite had no qualms about killing the priests. King Uzziah had Saul's hate in his eye: "Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged" (2 Chron. 26:19).

There have been times when the Church has forgotten its God-ordained jurisdictional role. The Church can deny its prophetic ministry when it is seduced by politics, that is, to see politics as the sole way to advance God's kingdom. Isn't this what happened when the people wanted to crown Jesus as King, to make Him their political ruler? (John 6:15). They showed their true allegiance when Jesus

refused to accept their view of what they thought God's kingdom should be like. "The distribution of bread moved the crowd to acclaim Jesus as the New Moses, the provider, the Welfare King whom they had been waiting for."<sup>11</sup> When Jesus did not satisfy their false conception of salvation, they turned elsewhere and cried out: "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15). They denied the transforming work of the Holy Spirit to regenerate the dead heart of man. For them and for many today, man's salvation comes through political power. Jesus, however, is not a political savior, but His saving work should impact politics, because civil government is ordained by God.



*As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, "If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar." Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement... And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your King!" So they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."*

—John 19:12-15

## NOTES

1. Russell Kirk, *The American Cause* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2002),
2. Max I. Dimont, *Jews, God, and History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962), 47.
3. For an opposing view, see Gary North, *Political Polytheism* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).
4. Daniel Dreisbach, "The Constitution's Forgotten Religion Clause: Reflections on the Article VI Religious Test Ban," *Journal of Church and State* 38:2 (Spring 1996), 289.
5. Dreisbach, "The Constitution's Forgotten Religion Clause," 288–289. The word "affirm" was most likely "added to accommodate the religious sensibilities of Quakers, Moravians, and Mennonites who take literally the Biblical injunction, 'swear not at all.' Matthew 5:33–37" (290, note 157).
6. Stanley Fish, "Are There Secular Reasons?," *The New York Times* (February 22, 2010).
7. Quoted in Aubrey Neal, *How Skeptics do Ethics: A Brief History of the Late Modern Linguistic Turn* (Calgary, Alberta, Canada: University of Calgary Press, 2007), 157
8. R. C. Sproul, *The Consequences of Ideas: Understanding the Concepts That Shaped Our World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 171.
9. See the following articles by Bojidar Marinov: "Classical Liberalism has No Place to Stand" and "The Only Possible Defense of Private Property."
10. Arthur Allen Leff, "Unspeakable Ethics, Unnatural Law," *Duke Law Journal*, 1979:6 (December 1979), 1229–1249. "I will put the current situation as sharply as possible: there is today no way of 'proving' that napping babies is bad except by asserting it (in a louder and louder voice), or by defining it as so, early in one's game, and then later slipping it through, in a whisper, as a conclusion." (Arthur Allen Leff, "Economic Analysis of Law: Some Realism about Nominalism," *Yale Law Review* 60 [1974], 454–455).
11. John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 42.

# 10

## “RENDER UNTO CAESAR THE THINGS THAT ARE CAESAR’S”

### *The Constitution and Separation of Church and State*

*R*ender unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s (Matt. 22:21). Secularists and strict separationists like to point to this verse to show that even Jesus opposed mixing religion and politics. We don’t live under Caesar, and even if we did, Caesar would be bound to follow God’s limitations on his civil office because God’s image is stamped on him. Jesus would have told Caesar, “Render unto God the things that are God’s.”

We have specific constitutional freedoms in the same way that elected office holders have constitutional limitations. Our rulers do not have a “divine right” to rule. They are “ministers of God” (Rom. 13:4). The Constitution is our “Caesar” (Matt. 22:21) since it bears our image—“We the people”—and we have God’s image stamped on us. As citizens we are to render to the Constitution what is due it as specifically stated in the Constitution itself—no more, no less. Civil authorities govern at our discretion but under the watchful eye of God.

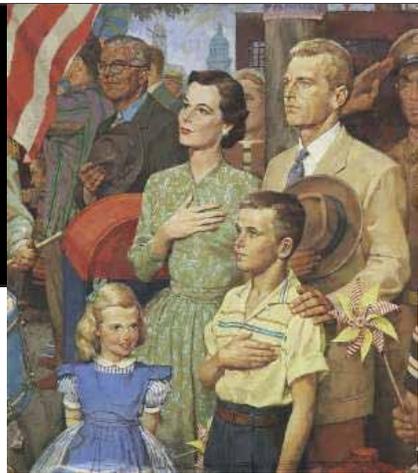
Many modern civil governments contend that they rule at no one’s discretion. Their legitimacy is self-imposed. It’s no wonder that secularists attack any suggestion that might lead to the truth civil government is under God’s sovereign rule and the freedoms of citizens are God-ordained and not a gift from the State. In a 1982 message, Francis Schaeffer made the following point:



The Constitution is our “Caesar” (Matt. 22:21) since it bears our image—“We the people”—and we have God’s image stamped on us.

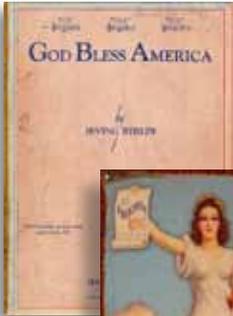
We must understand something very thoroughly. If the state gives the rights, it can take them away—they're not inalienable. If the states give the rights, they can change them and manipulate them. But this was not the view of the founding fathers of this country. They believed, although not all of them were individual Christians, that there was a Creator and that this Creator gave the inalienable rights—this upon which our country was founded and which has given us the freedoms which we still have—even the freedoms which are being used now to destroy the freedoms.<sup>1</sup>

"One Nation under God" is from the Pledge of Allegiance. The phrase "under God" was added to the Pledge of Allegiance on June 14, 1954 by a joint resolution of Congress.



Here's a recent example of what Schaeffer saw in 1982. "Bradley Johnson had banners hanging in his classroom at Westview High School in San Diego, Calif., for more than 17 years with phrases like 'In God We Trust' and 'All Men Are Created Equal, They Are Endowed by Their Creator,' only to have the principal order them torn down during the 2007 school year." Another sign that had been hanging in his classroom for 25 years "contained the words 'In God We Trust,' 'One Nation Under God,' 'God Bless America' and 'God Shed His Grace On Thee.'"<sup>2</sup> Each of these postings is part of America's religious history. "In God We Trust" is our nation's *official* motto and appears prominently in the House of Representatives. That Americans are "endowed by their Creator" is found in the Declaration of Independence. "One Nation under God" is from the Pledge of Allegiance. The phrase "under God" was added to the Pledge of Allegiance on June 14, 1954 by a joint resolution of

Congress. “God Bless America” is a patriotic song originally written by Irving Berlin in 1918 and revised by him in 1938 because of the rise of Adolf Hitler. Here are the words from the stanza that include the words “God Bless America”:



God Bless America,  
Land that I love.  
Stand beside her, and guide her

Through the night<sup>3</sup>  
with a light from above.  
From the mountains, to the prairies,  
To the oceans, white with foam  
God bless America,  
My home sweet home.

“God Shed His Grace on Thee” is a line from the patriotic song “America the Beautiful.” In all these examples, America’s religious heritage is evident. The principal of Westview High School did not see it this way. He considered their posting in a government school to be a violation of the First Amendment’s Establishment Clause: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion....” United States District Court Judge Roger T. Benitez objected using historical, legal, and logical arguments, methods of inquiry that should be taught in all schools:

May a school district censor a high school teacher’s expression because it refers to Judeo-Christian views, while allowing other teachers to express views on a number of controversial subjects, including religion and anti-religion? On undisputed evidence, this court holds that it may not.... It is a matter of historical fact that our institutions and government actors have in past and present times given place to a supreme God.

“We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being.”<sup>4</sup> As the Supreme Court has acknowledged, “there is an unbroken history of official acknowledgment by all three branches of government of the role of religion in American life from at least 1789.”<sup>5</sup>

\* \* \*

Fostering diversity, however, does not mean bleaching out historical religious expression or mainstream morality. By squelching only Johnson's patriotic and religious classroom banners, while permitting other diverse religious and anti-religious classroom displays, the school district does a disservice to the students of Westview High School and the federal and state constitutions do not permit this one-sided censorship.<sup>6</sup>

It was this type of arbitrary edict based on a purging of the historical record that led a number of our nation's Founders to insist on a national government with strict limitations.

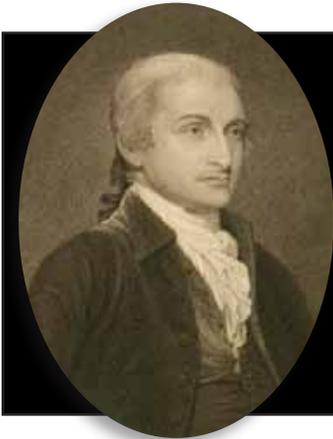
### What Our Founders Feared

When the Constitution was signed on September 17, 1787, and sent to the states for evaluation and eventual ratification, it did not contain a bill of rights. The Federalists supported it while the Anti-Federalists opposed it. The Anti-Federalists wanted a bill of rights. The Federalists argued that a bill of rights was unnecessary since the Constitution created a national government of enumerated powers. With this form of government, unless a power was actually spelled out in the document, it did not exist. Since the Constitution did not give the national government legislative power over religion, Federalists considered a bill of rights unnecessary and even dangerous. To mention a subject was thought to give the Federal government control over it. **John Jay** (1745–1829), one

of the authors of the *Federalist Papers* and the first Chief Justice of the United States, stated it this way:

Silence and blank paper neither grant nor take away anything. Complaints are also made that the proposed Constitution is not accompanied by a bill of rights; and yet they who make the complaints know, and are content, that no bill of rights accompanied the constitution of this State [New York].<sup>7</sup>

Jay's point was that since the Constitution did not mention religion—it was silent on the subject and made no written reference to it—therefore it did not have jurisdiction over it.



**JOHN JAY** (1745–1829), one of the authors of the *Federalist Papers* and the first Chief Justice of the United States, said,

*Silence and blank paper neither grant nor take away anything.*

Since the unamended Constitution did not mention religion—it was silent on the subject and made no written reference to it—therefore it did not have jurisdiction over it.

Alexander Hamilton, another author of the *Federalist Papers*, made a similar argument: “For why declare that things shall not be done which there is no power to do? Why for instance, should it be said, that the liberty of the press shall not be restrained, when no power is given by which restrictions may be imposed?”<sup>8</sup> Modern-day constitutional scholars follow the reasoning of Jay and Hamilton. Consider these words from James McClellan:

The U.S. Constitution was premised on the seemingly unassailable assumption that the rights and liberties of the people would be protected because the powers of government were limited, and that a separate declara-

tion of rights would therefore be an unnecessary and superfluous statement of an obvious truth. Since the government of the United States was to be one of enumerated powers, it was not thought necessary by the Philadelphia delegates to include a bill of rights among the provisions of the Constitution.<sup>9</sup>



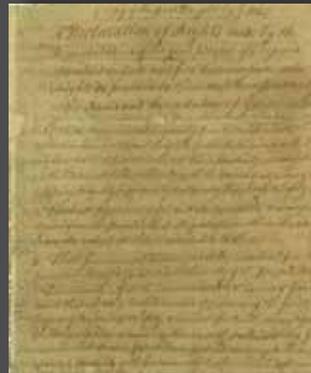
Virginia, New York, Rhode Island, and **NORTH CAROLINA** requested amendments to the Constitution concerning freedom of religion, press, assembly, and speech.

The Anti-Federalists disagreed with the claim that silence made rights undeniable and jurisdictionally untouchable. Most of the founders had an innate and historical suspicion of centralized civil government. Without further restraints on basic individual rights, they feared that the Federal government could exercise powers not granted to it because they were not *prohibited* by the Constitution. Better safe than sorry the Anti-Federalists argued. They reasoned that a formal declaration of rights was essential to secure certain liberties. Virginia, New York, Rhode Island, and North Carolina requested amendments concerning freedom of religion, press, assembly, and speech. The Virginia Convention stated the following regarding religion in Article 16 of the Virginia Declaration of Rights:

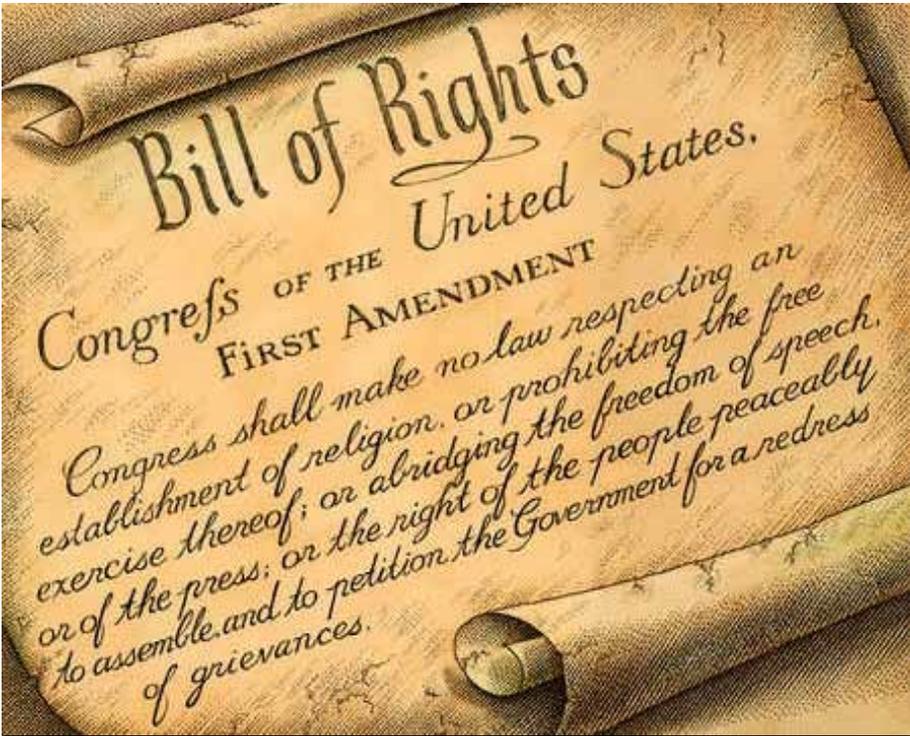


That religion, or the duty which we owe to our Creator and the manner of discharging it, can be directed by reason and conviction, not by force or violence; and therefore, all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; and that it is the mutual duty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love, and charity towards each other.

from Article 16 of  
**THE VIRGINIA DECLARATION OF RIGHTS**



That religion, or the duty which we owe to our Creator and the manner of discharging it, can be directed by reason and conviction, not by force or violence; and therefore, all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; and that it is the mutual duty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love, and charity towards each other.<sup>10</sup>



The prohibition in the First Amendment is addressed exclusively to Congress. Individual states and governmental institutions (e.g., public schools, Capitol building steps of religious displays, National Parks, etc.) are not included in the amendment's prohibition.

Borrowing language from the Declaration of Independence, the Federalists made it clear that rights are not granted by civil governments but are “natural and unalienable.” Notice that the foundation for such personal and civil admonition is based on Christian principles. God is the ultimate source of rights.

The Anti-Federalists won the argument. Their mistrust of government was broad enough that the states insisted on adding amendments over the objections of the Federalists. So why did the Federalists agree to add a bill of rights when they argued so strongly against one? “The principal reason is that the Bill of Rights changed nothing as far as the constitutional structure was concerned. It

neither reduced federal power nor increased state power. It simply declared what was already understood—that the national government had no authority in the general area of civil liberties.”<sup>11</sup>

### **What Does it Say? What Does it Mean?**

Does the First Amendment require a secular government? Is the First Amendment violated when Christians apply biblical principles as they relate to the civil sphere to public policy issues? Too many debates over the meaning of the First Amendment are confused by a failure to cite it accurately or comprehensively: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” An accurate interpretation of the amendment must include the following:

- There is no mention of the words “church,” “state,” or “separation” in the First Amendment.
- Included in the amendment are additional rights which relate to the free exercise of religion: the right to talk about religion (freedom of speech), the right to publish religious works (freedom of the press), the right of people to worship publicly, either individually or in groups (freedom of assembly), and the right to petition the government when it goes beyond its delegated constitutional authority in these areas (the right of political involvement).
- The prohibition in the First Amendment is addressed exclusively to *Congress*. Individual states and governmental institutions (*e.g.*, public schools, Capitol building steps of religious displays, National Parks, etc.) are not included in the amendment’s prohibition. As clear as this is, some try to rewrite the First Amendment in order to fit their misconceptions about its meaning and implementation. One way is to make the amendment apply to the states, as in this example:

“The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is the direct descendant of Jefferson’s Virginia resolution, and its words are quite clear. Congress, *and by extension the states*, ‘shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion.’”<sup>12</sup> If the constitutional framers wanted to include the phrase “and by extension the states,” they would have done so. Since the states insisted on including a Bill of Rights to protect them from Congress, why would they include an amendment that restricted their sovereignty?

- There is no mention of a freedom *from* religion. The First Amendment offers no support of a position that would outlaw religion just because it exists or offends those of a different religion or those who have no religion at all.
- There is a second part to the religion clause of the First Amendment that states that Congress cannot “prohibit the free exercise thereof.”<sup>13</sup>



**JAMES WILSON** (1742–1798), one of only six men who signed both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, said:

*The first and governing maxim in the interpretation of a statute is to discover the meaning of those who made it.*

With so much debate, how does anyone know what the First Amendment really means? An interpreter of any document as important as the Constitution must consider the historical circumstances that led to its formation, the vocabulary of the period, documents of similar construction, the political views of the authors, the prevailing religious worldview, and the intended audience. With these points in mind, it would be wise, therefore, to follow the method suggested by Thomas Jefferson in understanding the *original meaning* of the First Amendment:

On every question of construction, carry ourselves back to the time when the constitution was adopted, recollect the spirit manifested in the debates, and instead of trying what meaning may be squeezed out of the text, or invented against it, conform to the probable one in which it was passed.<sup>14</sup>

James Wilson (1742–1798), one of only six men who signed both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, and who also served on the Supreme Court, offered similar sound advice. “The first and governing maxim in the interpretation of a statute is to discover the meaning of those who made it.”<sup>15</sup> As Oliver Wendell Holmes put it, “A page of history is worth a volume of logic.”<sup>16</sup>

### **The Amendment’s History**

With this brief introduction, let’s look into the history behind this much referred to but often misquoted, misunderstood, and misapplied amendment. When the Constitution was sent to the states for ratification, there was fear that the new national government had too much power. It was then proposed that additional prohibitions should be listed in the Constitution to restrict further the national government’s power and authority.

The area of religion was important enough that a number of the framers were concerned that the federal government would establish a *national* Church (e.g., Anglican, Presbyterian, or Congregational) to be funded by tax dollars and that a national Church would disestablish some of the existing state churches. So then, the

First Amendment was designed to protect the *states* against the national (federal) government. The amendment was not designed to disestablish the Christian religion as it found expression in the state constitutions or anywhere else.

*The real object of the First Amendment was not to countenance, much less to advance Mohammedanism [Islam], or Judaism, or infidelity, by prostrating Christianity, but to exclude all rivalry among Christian sects [denominations] and to prevent any national ecclesiastical establishment which would give to an hierarchy the exclusive patronage of the national government.*

—JUSTICE JOSEPH STORY



Justice Joseph Story, a Supreme Court justice of the nineteenth century, offers the following commentary on the amendment's original meaning:

The real object of the First Amendment was not to countenance, much less to advance Mohammedanism [Islam], or Judaism, or infidelity, by prostrating Christianity, but to exclude all rivalry among Christian sects [denominations] and to prevent any national ecclesiastical establishment which would give to an hierarchy the exclusive patronage of the national government.<sup>17</sup>

Story's comments are important. He makes it clear that the amendment's purpose was "to exclude all rivalry among *Christian* sects." This assessment presupposes that Christianity was the accepted religion of the colonies but that no single sect should be mandated by law. The amendment was to keep Congress from interfering with the business of the states.

## The Establishment Clause



If the First Amendment had been constructed entirely to remove religion's impact on civil governmental issues, then it would seem rather strange that on the same day that Congress approved the First Amendment, it called on **PRESIDENT WASHINGTON** to proclaim a national day of prayer and thanksgiving.

The restriction set forth in the First Amendment only applies to Congress: “Congress shall make no law.” Writing the minority opinion in the 1985 *Wallace vs. Jaffree* case, Supreme Court Justice William Rehnquist stated, “The Framers intended the Establishment Clause to prohibit the designation of any church as a ‘national’ one. The clause was also designed to stop the Federal government from asserting a preference for one religious denomination or sect over others.”<sup>18</sup>

If the amendment had been constructed to remove religion from having an impact on civil governmental issues, then it would seem rather strange that on September 24, 1789, the same day that it approved the First Amendment, Congress called on President Washington to proclaim a national day of prayer and thanksgiving which read:

That a joint committee of both Houses be directed to wait upon the President of the United States to request that he would recommend to the people of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, to be observed by acknowledging, with grateful hearts, the many signal favors of Almighty God, especially by af-

fording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a Constitution of government for their safety and happiness.<sup>19</sup>

This proclamation acknowledges “the many signal favors of Almighty God, especially by *affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a Constitution of government for their safety and happiness.*” It’s beyond laughable that a group of men who supposedly just separated religion from government at all levels would then thank God for excluding Him from government. In fact, this resolution uses devoutly religious language to acknowledge that they would not even have a government without God’s blessing.

### Historical Fiction

The origin of the “separation between Church and State” phrase has a long history. “Martin Luther (1483–1546) wrote of a ‘paper wall’ between the ‘spiritual estate’ and the ‘temporal estate.’ In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin (1509–1564) asserted that the ‘spiritual kingdom’ and the ‘political kingdom’ ‘must always be considered separately’ because there is a great ‘difference and unlikeness ... between ecclesiastical and civil power,’ and it would be unwise to ‘mingle these two, which have a completely different nature.’”<sup>20</sup> Anglican divine and theologian Richard Hooker (1554–1600) described “walls of separation between ... the Church and the Commonwealth” in his *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*.



In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, **JOHN CALVIN** (1509–1564) asserted that the “spiritual kingdom” and the “political kingdom” “must always be considered separately” because there is a great ‘difference and unlikeness ... between ecclesiastical and civil power,’ and it would be unwise to “mingle these two, which have a completely different nature.”



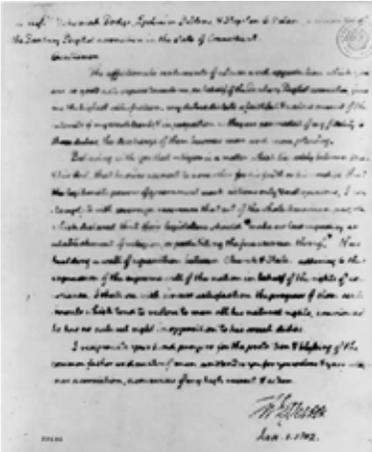
**RICHARD HOOKER** (1554–1600), Anglican divine and theologian, described “walls of separation between ... the Church and the Commonwealth.”

While no one can be sure whether Jefferson borrowed the phrase from Hooker, we do know that Jefferson owned a copy of *Ecclesiastical Polity*, and “it was among the volumes he sold to the Library of Congress.”<sup>21</sup> The phrase was also used by Roger Williams (1603?–1683), the founder of Rhode Island as well as the Scottish schoolmaster James Burgh (1714–1775).<sup>22</sup> The most noted reference, however, is a letter Thomas Jefferson wrote to a group of Baptist pastors in Danbury, Connecticut, in 1802. In that letter he wrote:

Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God, that he owes account to none other for faith or his worship, that the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should “make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” thus building a wall of separation between church and state.<sup>23</sup>

Jefferson had no hand in the drafting of the Constitution or the Bill of Rights. He was in France at the time. While Jefferson’s opinions are instructive, and written more than a decade after the drafting of the First Amendment, they remain opinions. His personal correspondence, even as President, has no legal standing. In addition, Jefferson’s use of the phrase “separation between church and state” is “a mere metaphor too vague to support any theory of the Establishment Clause.”<sup>24</sup> Yet, it is Jefferson’s vague “metaphor” that has been adopted as the standard substitute for the actual language of the First Amendment.

While Jefferson used the phrase in his letter to the Danbury Baptist Association, it was not found in any legal opinion until 1947



In 1802, Thomas Jefferson wrote the following in a letter to a group of Baptist pastors:

*I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should “make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” thus building a wall of separation between church and state.*

when Justice Hugo Black used it to address the problem of parochial school transportation in *Everson v. Board of Education*. While Americans did not want the system of government that was operating in Europe, they also didn’t want a secular government.

When he was governor of Virginia, Jefferson readily issued proclamations declaring days of “public and solemn thanksgiving and prayer to Almighty God.”<sup>25</sup> Jefferson’s Virginia “Bill for Punishing Disturbers of Religious Worship and Sabbath Breakers,” was introduced by James Madison in the Virginia Assembly in 1785 and became law in 1786. The section on Sabbath desecration reads:

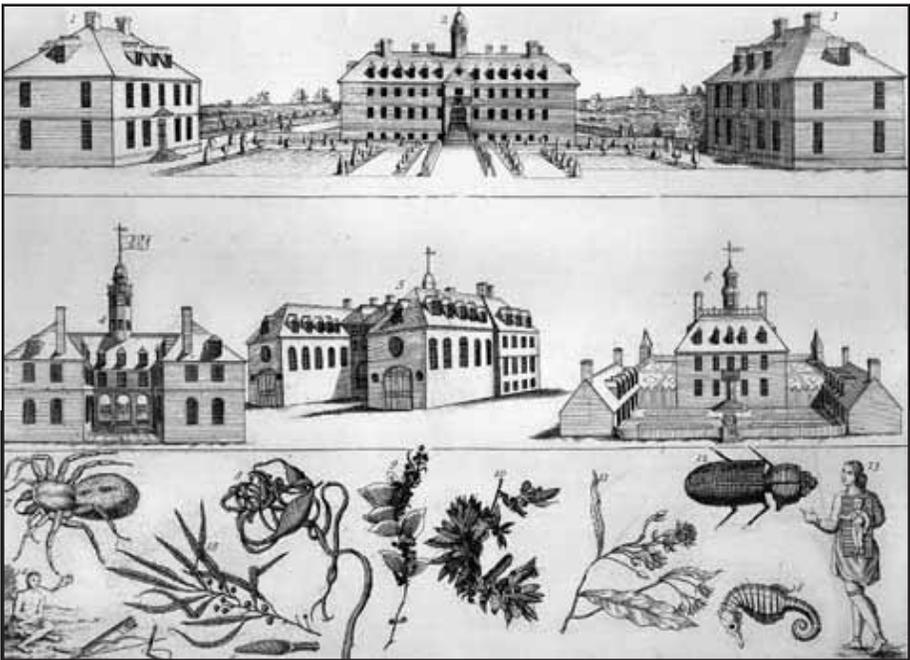


**JAMES MADISON** introduced Jefferson’s “Bill for Punishing Disturbers of Religious Worship and Sabbath Breakers” in the Virginia Assembly in 1785 and it became law in 1786.

If any person on Sunday shall himself be found labouring at his own or any other trade or calling, or shall employ his apprentices, servants or slaves in labour, or other business, except it be in the ordinary house-

hold offices of daily necessity, or other work of necessity or charity, he shall forfeit the sum of ten shillings for every such offence, deeming every apprentice, servant, or slave so employed, and every day he shall be so employed as constituting a distinct offence.<sup>26</sup>

As president, Jefferson included a prayer in each of his two inaugural addresses. He signed bills appropriating money for chaplains in Congress and the armed services, and signed the Articles of War, which not only provided for chaplains but also “earnestly recommended to all officers and soldiers, diligently to attend divine services.”<sup>27</sup>



Thomas Jefferson advocated that the tax-supported college of **WILLIAM AND MARY** maintain “a perpetual mission among the Indian tribes” which included the instruction of “the principles of Christianity.”

Jefferson advocated that the tax-supported college of William and Mary maintain “a perpetual mission among the Indian tribes” which included the instruction of “the principles of Christianity.” Jefferson’s proposed curriculum for the University of Virginia included a provision for a “professor of ethics” who would present “the Proofs of the being of God, the Creator, Preserver, and Supreme Ruler of the universe, the Author of all the relations of morality, and of the laws and obligations these infer.”<sup>28</sup> While Jefferson was against ecclesiastical control of education, he was not against the teaching of religion in state-supported institutions.

Along with Benjamin Franklin, Jefferson proposed that the design for the nation’s seal should include the biblical image of Pharaoh’s army being destroyed as it passed through the Red Sea. The banner “Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God” was to circle the overtly religious image.

In his Second Inaugural Address (1805), Jefferson stated, “In matters of religion I have considered that its free exercise is placed by the Constitution independent of the powers of the General Government. I have therefore undertaken on no occasion to prescribe [stipulate] the religious exercises suited to it, but have left them, as the Constitution found them, under the direction and discipline of the church or state authorities acknowledged by the several religious societies.”<sup>29</sup> According to Jefferson, the federal (“General”) Government

has no jurisdiction over churches or state governments. “Many contemporary writers attempt to read back into the past a ‘wall of separation’ between church and state which in fact never has existed in the United States.”<sup>30</sup>



Jefferson and Franklin proposed a national seal that had “Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God” circling the image of Pharaoh’s army drowning in the Red Sea. **THE STATE SEAL OF VIRGINIA** declares, “Thus [Death] to all Tyrants!”

## The Northwest Ordinance

The meaning of the First Amendment, as history will attest, has nothing to do with separating the moral aspects of the Christian religion from civil affairs. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787, enacted by the Continental Congress and reenacted by the newly formed federal government in 1789 after it had agreed on the final wording of the First Amendment, stated that “good government” must be based on some moral foundation: “Religion, morality and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall be forever encouraged.”

*Religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of learning shall forever be encouraged.*

—from **THE NORTHWEST ORDINANCE OF 1787**



The First Congress did not expect the Bill of Rights to be inconsistent with the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which the Congress reenacted in 1789. One key clause in the Ordinance explained why Congress chose to set aside some of the federal lands in the territory for schools: “Religion, morality, and knowledge,” the clause read, “being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of learning shall forever be encouraged.” This clause clearly implies that schools, which were to be built on federal lands with federal assistance, were expected to promote religion as well as morality. In fact, most schools at this time were church-run sectarian schools.<sup>31</sup>

Constitutional scholar Leo Pfeffer writes, "For all practical purposes Christianity and religion were synonymous."<sup>32</sup> It is clear that our founders never supposed that moral precepts founded on the Christian religion should be excluded from policy making even though they worked diligently to keep the institutions and jurisdictions of Church and State separate.

Strict separationists do not see the Northwest Ordinance as convincing evidence that the constitutional framers regarded religion, politics, and morality as an acceptable mix. Robert Boston, an absolute separationist, asserts that if the founders had wanted to support religion the Northwest Ordinance would have ended, "...schools *and churches* shall forever be encouraged."<sup>33</sup> Boston assumes that since the delegates did not call for the support of churches that this meant they were opposed to mixing religion and politics. The source of Boston's confusion comes from the "tendency to employ the words 'Church' and 'religion' as synonyms. To maintain that there must be a separation between Church and State does not necessarily mean that there must be a separation between religion and State."<sup>34</sup>

I wonder how the ACLU would react to the Northwest Ordinance if its principles were applied to today's public schools. Lawyers would be immediately dispatched to assert that the Ordinance was unconstitutional because it mixes religion and morality with public education. Those in Jefferson's day did not find a problem with this combination, either constitutionally or practically.

## Conclusion

The First Amendment "provides a *legal* separation between Church and State: *not a moral nor a spiritual* separation.... There is no reason, under the Constitution of the United States, why the principles of Christianity cannot pervade the laws and institutions of the United States of America."<sup>35</sup> Today's Christian political activists are not calling on the State to establish churches, to force people to attend church, or to pay for the work of the church. They are simply maintaining that we cannot have good government without a moral foundation and that moral foundation resides in the Christian religion.

## NOTES

1. Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer (in his message entitled “A Christian Manifesto” given in 1982 at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in FL): <http://www.peopleforlife.org/francis.html>
2. “Teacher wins major victory for God in school” (March 1, 2010): <http://www.wnd.com/index.php?fa=PAGE.view&pageId=126621>
3. In the 1918 version, the word was “right.”
4. *Zorach v. Clauson*, 343 U.S. 306, 313 (1952).
5. *Van Orden v. Perry*, 545 U.S. 677, 686 (2005) (quoting *Lynch v. Donnelly*, 465 U.S. 668, 674 [1984]).
6. *Bradley Johnson vs. Poway Unified School District, et al.* (2010), Case No. 07cv783 BEN (NLS). Also see Article 1, Section 2(a) of the California Constitution which reads: “Every person may freely speak, write and publish his or her sentiments on all subjects, being responsible for the abuse of this right. A law may not restrain or abridge liberty of speech or press.”
7. Henry P. Johnston, ed., *The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay: 1782–1793*, 4 Vols. (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1891), 3:305–306. There was some precedent on a list of rights in English and American history: George Mason’s Virginia Declaration of Rights (1776), the English Bill of Rights (1689), and earlier English political documents such as Magna Charta (1215).
8. Alexander Hamilton, Federalist No. 84 (May 28, 1788).
9. James McClellan, “The Constitution from a Conservative Perspective,” Heritage Lecture 157 (May 15, 1988): [www.heritage.org/Research/PoliticalPhilosophy/HL157.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/PoliticalPhilosophy/HL157.cfm)
10. Adopted unanimously June 12, 1776 Virginia Convention of Delegates drafted: [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/virginia.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/virginia.asp)
11. McClellan, “The Constitution from a Conservative Perspective.”
12. Editorial Page, *Atlanta Constitution* (November 15, 1994), A18.
13. In a June 19, 2000 ruling by the Supreme Court, the majority of justices outlawed student-led prayer at high school sporting events. For example, a teacher of political science and constitutional law at Agnes Scott College in Decatur, Georgia, in support of the Court’s decision, never quotes the clause that mandates that there can be *no prohibition* of “the free exercise of religion.” (Gus Cochran, “Court rightfully tosses prayers,” *Atlanta Constitution* [June 20, 2000], A9).
14. Letter to Justice William Johnson, Monticello, June 12, 1823. See Thomas Jefferson, *Thomas Jefferson: Writings (Autobiography, Notes on the State of Virginia, Public and Private Papers, Addresses, Letters)* (New York: The Library of America, 1984), 1475
15. James Wilson, *Of the Study of Law in the United States* (1790).
16. *New York Trust Co. v. Eisner*, 256 U.S. 345, 349 (1921). Quoted in Daniel L. Dreisbach, *Real Threat and Mere Shadow: Religious Liberty and the First Amendment* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1987), xiii.
17. Quoted by Judge Brevard Hand, in *Jaffree vs. Board of School Commissioners*

of *Mobile County*, 544 F. Supp. 1104 (S. D. Ala. 1983) in Russell Kirk, ed., *The Assault on Religion: Commentaries on the Decline of Religious Liberty* (Lanham, NY: University Press of America, 1986), 84.

18. *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S., 113. Jude P. Dougherty, "Separating Church and State," *The World & I* (December 1987), 686.

19. *The Annals of the Congress, The Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States*, Compiled From Authentic Materials by Joseph Gales, Senior (Washington, DC: Gales and Seaton, 1834), 1:949-50.

20. Daniel L. Dreisbach, *Thomas Jefferson and the Wall of Separation Between Church and State* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 72.

21. Dreisbach, *Thomas Jefferson and the Wall of Separation Between Church and State*, 76.

22. Dreisbach, *Thomas Jefferson and the Wall of Separation Between Church and State*, 76-82

23. Quoted in Charles E. Rice, *The Supreme Court and Public Prayer: The Need for Restraint* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1964), 63.

24. Peter J. Ferrara, *Religion and the Constitution: A Reinterpretation* (Washington, DC: Free Congress Foundation, 1983), 34-35.

25. Quoted in Rice, *The Supreme Court and Public Prayer*, 63.

26. "A Bill for Punishing Disturbers of Religious Worship and Sabbath Breakers," in Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), Vol. 2, 1777 to June 18, 1779, Including the Revisal of the Laws, 1776-1786, 555. Robert L. Cord, *Separation of Church and State: Historical Fact and Current Fiction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, [1982] 1988), 217.

27. Act of April 10, 1806, C. 20, 2 Stat. 359, 360. Quoted in Rice, *The Supreme Court and Public Prayer*, 63-64.

28. "Bill for the Establishment of District Colleges and University" (1817). Quoted in Charles Wesley Lowry, *To Pray or Not to Pray!: A Handbook for Study of Recent Supreme Court Decisions and American Church-State Doctrine* (Washington, DC: University Press of Washington D.C., 1963), 38-39.

29. Thomas Jefferson, "Second Inaugural Address," in James D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1902*, 12 vols. (Washington, DC: Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1907), 1:379-80.

30. Franklin Hamlin Littell, *From State Church to Pluralism: A Protestant Interpretation of Religion in American History* (Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Co., 1962), 99.

31. Michael J. Malbin, *Religion and Politics: The Intentions of the Authors of the First Amendment* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1978), 14-15.

32. Leo Pfeffer, *Church, State and Freedom* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1953), 98.

33. Robert Boston, *Why the Religious Right is Wrong about Separation of Church and State* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1993), 80.

34. J. Marcellus Kik, *Church and State: The Story of Two Kingdoms* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1963), 124.

35. Kik, *Church and State*, 116.

