

For America's continuing survival and world leadership, we must recapture the founders' vision of the importance of God's Word and His gospel for this nation. America must again embrace the wisdom articulated so well by President **John Adams**:

*"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>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Origins of American Constitutionalism, 1987; <sup>2</sup> Letter to Thomas Jefferson, June 28, 1813; <sup>3</sup> History of the United States, 1832; <sup>4</sup> From Henry's handwritten notes on the back of his copy of the Stamp Act resolutions, made public after his death; <sup>5</sup> Notes on the State of Virginia, 1781; <sup>6</sup> A Memorial and Remonstrance, 1785; <sup>7</sup> Presidential Proclamation, 1815; <sup>8</sup> A Plan for Free Schools, 1787; <sup>9</sup> "A Defense of the Use of the Bible in Schools," 1791; <sup>10</sup> "Lectures on Law, Delivered in the College of Philadelphia," 1790-1791; <sup>11</sup> "Inaugural Address," April 30, 1789; <sup>12</sup> Letter of October 13, 1789.

This tract is taken from an early collection of tracts published by the American Tract Society around 1830.

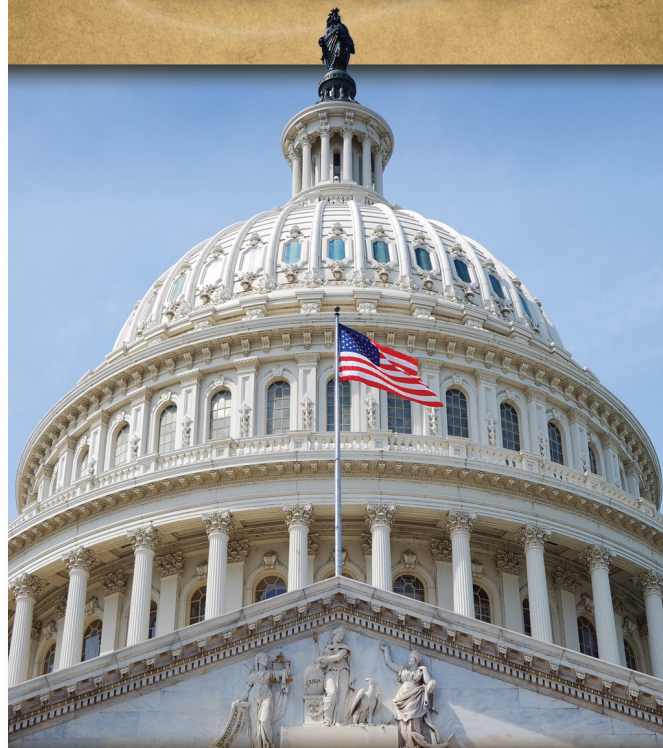


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# AMERICA

*God Shed His Grace on Thee*



BY DAVID BARTON

**AMERICA** is not only one of the greatest nations in the history of the world, it has also become its longest ongoing constitutional republic. Its original government has now endured well over two centuries. However, America's longevity is only as stable and secure as its foundation, so what is the foundation of American government?

Political scientists now know that the greatest source of political inspiration for our founding fathers was the Bible, which was cited in 34% of the quotations from the founding era (1760-1805).<sup>1</sup>

This discovery, while it might surprise many today, would have come as no surprise to the founders. It was **John Adams** who explained:



*"The general principles on which the fathers achieved independence were.... the general principles of Christianity."*<sup>2</sup>

Founding father **Noah Webster** echoed the same message:

*"The religion which has introduced civil liberty is the religion of Christ and His Apostles.... This is genuine Christianity and to this we owe our free constitutions of government."*<sup>3</sup>

Founder after founder declared the same belief:

*"Whether this [new government] will prove a blessing or a curse will depend upon the use our people make of the blessings which a gracious God hath bestowed on us. If they are wise, they will be great and happy. If they are of a contrary character, they will be miserable. Righteousness alone can exalt them as a nation [Proverbs 14:34]. Reader! Whoever thou art, remember this, and in thy sphere practice virtue thyself and encourage it in others."*<sup>4</sup>

**Patrick Henry**

*"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 the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with His wrath? Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever."*<sup>5</sup>

**Thomas Jefferson**

Contrary to what is often asserted today, the founders never intended that God's Word or His principles be separated from public life. They knew these principles were vital to the success of our new government. **James Madison** explained:



*"Before any man can be considered as a member of civil society, he must be considered as a subject of the Governor of the Universe.<sup>6</sup> –And to the same Divine Author of every good and perfect gift [James 1:17] we are indebted for all those privileges and advantages, religious as well as civil, which are so richly enjoyed in this favored land."<sup>7</sup>*

Furthermore, the founders saw the Bible as inseparable from public education. **Benjamin Rush**, the first founder to call for free national public schools, explained:

*"Let the children...be carefully instructed in the principles and obligations of the Christian religion. This*

*is the most essential part of education.<sup>8</sup> The great enemy of the salvation of man, in my opinion, never invented a more effectual means of extirpating [removing] Christianity from the world than by persuading mankind that it was improper to read the Bible at schools."<sup>9</sup>*

The founders even viewed the principles of the Bible as inseparable from civil law. **James Wilson**, a signer of the Constitution and an original Justice on the U.S. Supreme Court, explained:

*"Human law must rest its authority ultimately upon the authority of that law which is divine....Far from being rivals or enemies, religion and law are twin sisters, friends, and mutual assistants. Indeed, these two sciences run into each other."<sup>10</sup>*

These statements, despite the prominence of those who made them, are virtually unknown today. Instead, for the last four decades we have been taught that our founders were irreligious, desiring a complete separation between religious principles and public policy. However, the facts dispute the contention.

First, consider the actions of the founding fathers. The overwhelming majority of these men were so firmly committed to the principles of God's Word

that they went to great lengths to propagate those principles. For example, do you realize that many founders helped organize and lead several of the Christian societies which today are still spreading the gospel? Those men helped found the American Tract Society; the American Sunday School Union; over one hundred city, county, and state Bible societies, including the American Bible Society; the American Board of Foreign Missions; the Christian Constitutional Society; the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; the American Society for Educating Pious Youth for the Gospel Ministry; and many other similar groups. Are such organizations likely to be started by supposedly irreligious men who wanted God's principles separate from society?

Second, consider their words—or their lack thereof. Today's well-known phrase "separation of church and state" appears in no part of the Constitution. Furthermore, the discussions of the ninety founding fathers who framed the First Amendment (which the Courts now tell us means "separation of church and state") are recorded in the Congressional Journal from June 7 to September 25, 1789. Interestingly, not once in those months of discussions did one of the founders ever mention that phrase. Doesn't it seem logical that if they

had intended today's doctrine of "separation of church and state" that at least one of those ninety would have mentioned it? Ironically, today we no longer learn about what our founders did say in the Constitution; instead, we learn about something that they didn't say!

The Bible reminds us that the most important part of any structure is its foundation: "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3). It is time to remember our foundations, and to listen again to the words of those who were instrumental in making this country one of the world's most powerful and respected nations. As **George Washington** reminded us:



*"No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United State....We ought to be no less persuaded that the propitious [favorable] smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation which disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself ordained."<sup>11</sup>*