

America's Christian Heritage by Doug Hamilton

What in the world is going on in this country today? In an age where technology has made tremendous leaps, the moral fabric of the American civilization has been cut down the middle and reduced to rags. Things which should make us blush a few decades ago have become accepted as normal. The very values which the church are asked to hold to are openly mocked by the media. From personal to societal, we have seen America's Christian heritage eroded away. One would have to be a fool to deny the destruction of the moral fabric in America in the last fifty years. The America of yester-year and the America of today are two different nations. Since before the end of the last millennium, we have lost our way

Every day in America

- 1,406 are arrested for driving under the influence
- 5,479 people are involved in an alcohol related car accident
- 68 people are killed from drunk driving
- 2,854 people are convicted of a felony
- 59 people are murdered
- 1,183 women are raped
- 4,060 people are hospitalized from assault
- 1,446 people will contract HIV
- 1,342 people will be infected with an STD
- 4,109 babies are aborted
- 13 million will use an illegal drug

(US Bureau of Statistics 1999)

If you are less than fifty years of age, you are probably not aware of the drastic change in the Christian heritage of our country. Fifty years ago, it was unimaginable that the government would consider endorsing homosexual marriage as a viable option for the society. Fifty years ago, you could not begin to convince a person there would come the day when a child praying in a school would be a serious offense. If someone told you fifty years ago there would be public funded art completely hostile to Christianity, you would have called him crazy. Fifty years ago, you heard very little about mass murders and nothing about school shootings.

America used to be number one in so many great categories. We are still number one, but in the wrong categories. We are #1 in the world in murder, #1 in abortion, #1 in drugs, #1 in divorce, #1 in violent crime, and #1 in illiteracy among industrialized nations. Something has gone wrong in our society that has reversed the way of life in this country.

Over the course of this series, we will examine the Americas Christian history. We will look at the very source of the original value system which was burned into our foundation.. Hopefully by doing so, we will see our past, know our present, and become better prepared as a church for the future of this nation under the eyes of God.

God judges nations

Did you know that God judges nations? Take a brief look at Amos chapters 1 and 2. In that book, we find the Lord proclaiming judgment upon Damascus (1:3-5), Gaza (1:6-8), Tyre (1:9-10), Edom (1:11-12), Ammon (1:13-15), Moab (2:1-3), Judah (2:4-5) and Israel (2:6-8). Why was God going to judge these nations? Because every nation listed had grievous sin before

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the LORD. We see the same pattern throughout the Bible. When a nation does not follow the path of God, when a government has come out against the core principles of Jesus Christ, the result is the judgment of God.

Yet we also find when a nation chooses to follow the path of God, blessings abound. David writes in *Psalm 33:12*, "*Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance.*" This pattern is proven throughout the Bible. *Deuteronomy 30:19*, "*I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants.*" It has been and always will be the choice of a nation to choose whether or not to serve God and get His blessing.

Let us take a close look at early American history and see how it started. If you listen to the media and the politicians around you, it would appear that this was never a Bible-based nation. They will claim that America was never a nation that was based on the Bible and that the founding fathers were simply a group of people who wanted government free from the religion of Christianity. This is in complete defiance of the historical accounts and quotes of the founding fathers.

Lesson I) The Leaders were Bible-Based

Part A: Following the Early Presidents

George Washington -1st President of the United States, signer of the constitution, General in US Army

Inaugural Day:

It was 1788 when he was elected to the office of President. On Inaugural Day, the church bells rang and all the people went to the churches to pray for the new President. Washington took the oath of office and when he was finished, took the Bible out of the Secretary's hands, and with tears coming down his cheeks, raised the Bible up to his lips, kissed it, and said "So help me God". That is where we get the statement to this day.

"Let it simply be asked where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in Courts of Justice?"

Washington was saying that without a national obligation to religion, without accountability to God, without accepting appreciation concerning the truth, what good is the justice system? If a justice system is to be based on truth and there is no obligation to tell the truth, what good is the system? Washington could not have explained any better the problem of the legal system today. We have people from the lowest of society to the highest office who will get in front of the court system and lie through their teeth. This is because a people, who do not believe in God, do not think they are accountable to God. Truth comes from God. Jesus tells us in John 17:17 that the word of God is truth. Titus 1:3 tells us that God cannot lie. Our God is truth. Washington knew if there was no religious obligation from the people, the justice system will fail.



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Inaugural Address: Washington Quotes

“The smiles of heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which heaven itself ordain.”

“It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible.”
(Halley's Bible Handbook, Zondervan, Grand Rapids MI, 1962, pg 18-19)

Washington acknowledged that it is impossible to have government apart from the Bible. He recognized that a nation cannot expect to receive the blessings of God if they disregard the “eternal rules of order and right” that come out of heaven. Is this not what the Bible has been teaching since the beginning? Is there a nation on the planet that can receive the blessings of God yet ignore God? *Psalm 9:17, The wicked will return to Sheol, even all the nations who forget God.*

Letter from Commander-in-Chief George Washington to General Thomas Nelson, 1778

“The hand of providence (the hand of God) has been so conspicuous in all this (the forming of America) that he must be worse than an infidel that lacks faith, and more than wicked, that has not gratitude enough to acknowledge his obligations.”(to God and country) (David Barton, Original Intent, 1996, pg 105)

Washington was saying that a person who would look at this country, and not acknowledge God's working, is worse than an infidel. By the way, Washington is borrowing language from *1 Timothy 5:8*, “*But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*”

Farewell Address: 1797

“Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are inseparable supports, indispensable. Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in the exclusion of religious principle.”

If we did not know this was President Washington who was saying this, we would call it a prophetic statement of the America we have today. He was warning us as he was leaving office after 45 years of public service that a nation cannot have national morality apart from religious principle. When we as a nation try to have morality, try to have standards, try to have values apart from religious instruction of the Bible, it is an exercise in futility. The President was saying this because he knew if the Bible was not the standard of absolute morality, then that would leave only relative values and standards as the foundation. We either trust in the rules of God or we fall in the rule of man. *Proverbs 28:26, He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but he who walks wisely will be delivered.*

John Adams -2nd President of the United States

“It is religion and morality alone which can establish upon which freedom can securely stand. A patriot must be a religious man.”



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Adams was saying that religion and morality is the only thing that can serve as a base for true freedom. How can a nation expect to be free if they do not go to the source of all freedom that comes from God? These founding fathers knew that apart from God there is no freedom. Adams also would say "Our constitution was made for a moral and religious people" (Federer page 10). They knew that America was a free nation to worship and serve the Creator. Jesus said in *John 8:31-32*, "*If you abide in My word, {then} you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" He said in *John 8:36* "*If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.*" This is the only stand a man or nation can take. If we do not have our anchor in a solid foundation, we will be tossed to and fro in the waves of tyranny. This is exactly what we see occurring in this country today.

Thomas Jefferson - 3rd President of the United States, writer of the Declaration of Independence

"Christianity is best friend to government because it is the only religion in the world that deals with the heart."



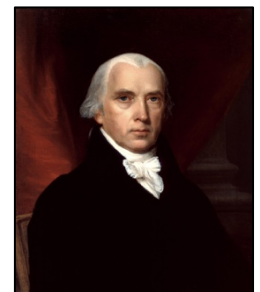
Jefferson knew what was taught in the Bible concerning Christianity was something that deals with the heart of man. It was and is the best friend of government because it is what holds it in place through transcendent values which make freedom possible.

The problems we have today in America are not a money problems, not counseling problems, not social problems, but heart problems. Christianity teaches rights with reflection, actions with accountability, and rewards for responsibility. It cuts right to the heart of man and convicts the evil that desires control over him. Freedom is at the core of Christianity and without Christ there is no freedom or hope. *Galatians 5:1*, "*It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.*"

Try preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ in a communist country. A communist government does not want you to preach the Bible to the people. They want to keep the Bible out of those countries because freedom to read the Bible leads to freedom in Jesus Christ, inevitably leading to freedom in the hearts of men and women. Communism and freedom is an oxymoronic connection. The Bible causes chaos against the very principles of communism or any other government that is oppressive. The Founding Fathers knew what oppression was in the days before when they came from Europe and did not want it to happen again in this country. This is further backed up by Jefferson's statement "*When the government fears the People, that is Liberty. When the People fear the government, that is tyranny.*" They did not want the government messing with their religious rights or obligations. Jefferson made it clear in the Declaration of Independence that our rights come from God, not man.

James Madison -4th President of the United States, considered the Father of the Constitution"

"We have staked the whole future of our American civilization, not on the power of government, but far from that, but on the capacity of each and every one of us to govern ourselves by the Ten Commandments."



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Madison knew the ability of each and every one of us to digest the word of God was the core of the government and the strength of the young nation. We do not get our greatness and power from big government, "*far from that*", but we obtain it from God and His word. In the European countries, the founding fathers and their ancestors were oppressed with the big government and kingdoms. That system did not and does not work. Madison knew only by individual capacity of governing ones self, could government be successful. The farther we step away from God, the worse the government becomes to the people, bringing with it spiritual and physical damage.

The cycle of the entire book of Judges reveals this very fact. First they were right with God and were being blessed. Then they would forget God while enjoying the blessings and Jehovah would raise up an enemy to bring them into bondage. They would cry out for deliverance through repentance and God would deliver them. God would send a deliverer and the people would be restored spiritually. Then it would start all over again until the end of the book. The last verse in the book of Judges says, "*In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes*" (Judges 21:25). This is exactly where we have arrived in America today.

James Monroe -5th President of the United States, a delegate to the Constitutional Congress

"The liberty, prosperity, and the happiness of our country will always be the object of my most fervent prayers to the Supreme Author of All Good."

Monroe informed us that the primary *focus of his prayers to God are the* "liberty, prosperity, and the happiness of the country". He was there when the government was being formed when making this statement. Can you imagine what would happen to a Presidential candidate today if they uttered these word? The press would tear them apart, would they not?

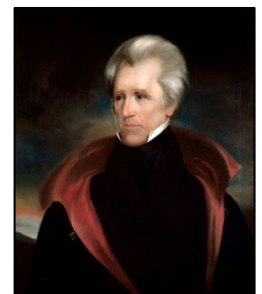
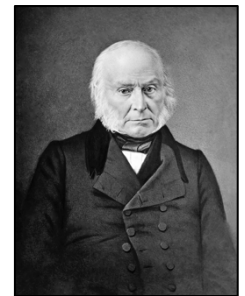
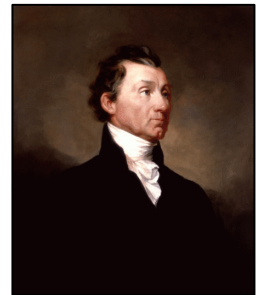
JOHN QUINCY ADAMS -6th President of the United States, son of John Adams

"The highest glory of the American Revolution was this: it connected, in one indissoluble bond the principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity."

John Quincy Adams is telling us that "highest glory" of the Revolution is the connection of Christianity to the government. He later stated in reflection of the constitution "The United States of America were no longer colonies. They were an independent nation of Christians."

(<http://www.christianparents.com/jdewey.htm>). Is there any doubt that John Quincy Adams thought this nation was based on anything but the Bible?

Andrew Jackson -7th President of the United States



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"That book [the Bible], sir, is the rock on which our republic rests."

Jackson, better-known as "Old Hickory", had no doubt as to the true founding document of the United States of America. He gave the credit to the Bible. When a nation does not keep its foundation in the teachings of the Lord, it is doomed to fail. *Matthew 7:24-25, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and {yet} it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock."* Jackson recognized our national foundation contained the truth found in the Bible.