

# Religion and Morality — Essential to our National Survival?

(Condensed from the book, *Five Lies of the Century: How many do you believe?* by David T. Moore, first published by Tyndale House, 1995.)

"In his farewell address, founding father George Washington stated that religion and morality are at the heart of true patriotism — and essential to our national survival. Ignoring the faith of the founding fathers and erecting a wall of separation between church and state would have been considered unpatriotic and treasonous within the mind of our first president, because he believed that morality could not be maintained apart from religion.

"Washington wasn't alone in this belief. John Adams, our second president, said, 'Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other.' James Madison, fourth president of the United States, agreed: 'the belief in a God All Powerful, wise and good, is essential to the moral order of the world and to the happiness of man.'

"Statesman Daniel Webster warned of potential disaster:

'If we and our posterity neglect religious instruction and authority, violate the rules of eternal justice, trifle with the injunctions of morality ... no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us that shall bury all our glory in profound obscurity.'

"Webster's words are a frighteningly accurate portrait of modern America. Religion is excluded from the public forum, authority is mocked, and morality is on the skids. Author and lexicographer Noah Webster agreed:

'The moral principles and precepts contained in the Scriptures ought to form the basis of all our civil Constitutions and laws... All the miseries and evil which men suffer from vice, crime, ambitions, injustice, oppression, slavery, and war, proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible.'

"Unrestrained by morality and religion, violent individuals threaten our cities. Although the American population has risen 41 percent since 1960, the total crime rate has increased 371 percent. Violent crime has risen 560 percent, even though we spend \$35 billion a year on police. During the early 1960s, one's chances of being murdered were 1 in 20,000; today those chances are roughly 1 in 10,000. According to the Department of Justice, 8 in 10 Americans will be the victims of violent crime at least once during their lifetime. Americans are alarmed, and rightfully so. The concern for national security has collapsed beneath the screaming anxiety over neighborhood security.

"Millions of family units have crumbled under the weight of domestic violence (30 percent of American families experience domestic violence), child abuse (every year 2.7 million children are physically abused), sexual assault (one in three girls and one in five boys are sexually abused before their eighteenth birthday), and poverty (one in five American children live in poverty.) Meanwhile the teenage suicide rate has tripled since 1960. According to Dr. Ed Zigler of Yale, for every suicide there are fifty to one hundred attempts.

"Our once spiritual society has been secularized, and the family has been redefined. The propagation of immorality, the grandstanding of adultery, the indoctrination of alternative lifestyles, and soaring rate of out-of-wedlock births are exacting a horrific toll upon our country. Little else can be expected when the values and moral commitment produced by religion have been extracted from a culture. We simply have no moral compass. Consequently, divorce is up and dedication and personal responsibility are down. The first to feel the pain of this value vacuum was the family. Now society is beginning to pay the price.

"With so much threatening our social and moral well-being, we've got to find our where we went wrong. What cut so deeply into our national fabric? I'm convinced it began with a lie about our nation's roots — and the arrogant assumption that America is great because America is smart. The fact is, America became the greatest nation in the world because it was established by a group of faith-filled men who intentionally set out to establish a nation built upon the principles of the Bible. Their hope was to build a nation that honored God rather than a king. They believed that a Christian land would receive the blessing of God. An honest look at history — and at the myth that the founding fathers were deists and atheists — will show that the founding fathers' moral and spiritual intentions were far more radical than those of a modern-day Pat Robertson or Jerry Falwell. If you find that difficult to believe, read on.

"A litmus test determines the real beliefs of the nation's founders. If the founding fathers were deists

and atheists, then prayer, references to the Bible, and comments to or about a personal God should be nonexistent or hostile. On the other hand, if the founding fathers were men of faith, their statements and writings should contain numerous spiritual statements. Their lives and work should reflect value for the Bible and a commitment to prayer and the wellbeing of others.

"Historically, the words and writings of the founding fathers are filled with biblical references, prayer injunctions, and descriptions of a personal God. Whether through such statements or church membership, fifty-three of the fifty-six signers of the Declaration of Independence indicated some adherence to orthodox Christianity and personal support of biblical teachings.

"John Hancock, president of the Continental Congress, said, 'Let us humbly commit our righteous cause to the great Lord of the Universe.'

"After signing the Declaration of Independence, Samuel Adams affirmed a citizen's duty to God rather than to a king when he said, 'We have this day restored the Sovereign to whom alone men ought to be obedient. From the rising to the setting of the sun may His kingdom come.'

"In his first inaugural address, James Madison said,

'We have all been encouraged to feel in the guardianship and guidance of that Almighty Being whose power regulates the destiny of nations, whose blessings have been so conspicuously dispensed to this rising Republic, and to whom we are bound to address our devout gratitude for the past, as well as our fervent supplications and best hopes for the future.'

"The above words reflect our founding fathers' beliefs about God. The examples have two things in common. They neither reflect the ideas of a deist or an atheist, nor do they remain in any contemporary history book. Something smells a bit rotten, does it not?

"Contemporaries of the founding fathers concur with their godly view. John Witherspoon, signer of the Declaration of Independence and member of Continental Congress said, 'God grant that in America true religion and civil liberty may be inseparable .... He is the best friend to American liberty, who is most sincere and active in promoting true and undefiled religion.'

"Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story (appointed by President James Madison) called America a 'Christian country' and slammed deism: 'Christianity...is not to be maliciously and openly reviled and blasphemed against. It is unnecessary for us...to consider the establishment of a school or college, for the propagation of Deism or any other form of infidelity. Such a case is not presumed to exist in a Christian country.'

"Over a ten-year period, political science professors at the University of Houston collected and catalogued 15,000 writings by the founding fathers. Their goal was to determine the primary source of ideas behind the Constitution by identifying the sources the founding fathers quoted most often. The three most quoted sources were French philosopher Charles Montesquieu, English jurist William Blackstone, and English philosopher John Locke. However, the *primary* source was the Bible. The Bible was quoted four times more often than Montesquieu, six times more often than Locke, and twelve times more often than Blackstone. Ninety-four percent of the founding fathers' quotes were based upon the Bible: 34 percent directly from its pages and 60 percent from men who had used the Bible to arrive at their conclusions. No wonder Noah Webster introduced his book of American history with, 'It is the sincere desire of the writer that our citizens should early understand that the genuine source of correct republican principles is the Bible, particularly the New Testament or the Christian religion.'

"A few biblical quotes might be understandable from a literary standpoint, but such demonstrative quoting of the Bible is absolutely inconsistent with the actions of an atheist or deist. The very idea of three branches of government came directly from the Bible. The concept of separation of powers was based on Jeremiah 17:9 and Isaiah 33:22. The decision to make churches tax-exempt came from Ezra 7:24. These men read the Bible, knew the Bible, quoted and applied the Bible.

"Andrew Jackson, the seventh president of the United States, claimed, 'That book, sir, is the rock on which our republic stands.'

"George Washington prized the Bible and its words: 'It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible.'

"Patrick Henry lavished unqualified praise upon the Bible as 'a book worth more than all the other books that were ever printed.' Those are not the words of a deist. Even Thomas Jefferson, who lost his first bid

for president because he was labeled a deist by his opponents, said, 'I have always said, and always will say, that the studious perusal of the sacred volume will make us better citizens.'

"The founding fathers were men of faith who knew their Bibles.

"The Bible played a central role not only in the development of government but in the establishment of various Bible societies. The same men who signed the 1776 declaration were responsible for founding the American Bible Society (an organization dedicated to the printing and distribution of the Bible), the American Tract Society (an organization devoted to distributing Christian pamphlets), and the Philadelphia Bible Society. Why would deists and atheists establish such organizations? It simply makes no sense.

"The founding fathers also believed in prayer. Benjamin Franklin (often identified as a deist due to his writings as a younger man) delivered his most famous speech on June 28, 1787. At eighty-one, he had learned the priceless value of prayer:

'In the beginning of the contest with Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayers in this room for Divine protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. Have we now forgotten this powerful Friend? Or do we imagine that we no longer need His assistance?'

"Franklin's words are not exceptional. The founding fathers often acknowledged a personal God. During the debate that preceded the Declaration of Independence, Patrick Henry said, 'We shall not fight alone. God presides over the destinies of nations. The battle is not to the strong alone. Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! Give me liberty or give me death!' Henry firmly believed that God could override the national ambitions of England.

"Even Thomas Jefferson, who certainly did not hold to all the traditional doctrines of Christianity, could hardly be classified as a full-fledged deist. Chiseled in the granite of the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C., are the words of Jefferson:

'God gave us life and gave us liberty. Can the liberty of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God?'

"Perhaps Jefferson was right. Maybe the secularization of late twentieth-century America has aroused the justice of God.

"Perhaps Washington was right. Maybe the indispensable supports of religion and morality really *were* indispensable.

"Maybe the founders of the Republic *were not* deists and atheists who established a wall of separation between church and the state, but faith-filled men. Perhaps it *was* God's blessing that established America — and our current problems are due to the withdrawal of divine support.

"If it's true that our current cultural condition is a reflection of the morally bankrupt society produced by the secularization of a once spiritual nation, it's time we return to our roots." •

April 28  
Thursday

## HATERS OF GOD

READ:  
2 Timothy 2:23-26

God gave them over to a debased mind.  
—Romans 1:28

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:  
■ 1 Kings 3-5  
■ Luke 20:1-26

Recently, I listened to an audio-book by a militant advocate for atheism. As the author himself read his own work with spiteful sarcasm and contempt, it made me wonder why he was so angry.

The Bible tells us that a rejection of God can actually lead to a more hateful attitude toward Him: "Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind . . . [to become] haters of God" (Rom. 1:28-30).

Turning one's back on God does not lead to secular neutrality. Indeed, recent militant atheists have shown their desire to remove any reference to a Creator from culture.

When we hear about atheists trying to remove crosses or the Ten Commandments from society, it's easy to respond to their hatred of God with our own hatred. But we're exhorted to defend the truth with an attitude of love, "in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth" (2 Tim. 2:25).

The next time you see the works or hear the words of a hater of God, do an attitude check. Then ask God for a spirit of humility and pray that the offender might come to the knowledge of the truth. —Dennis Fisher

Lord, help us not respond in kind  
To those who hate and turn from You;  
Instead, help us to love and pray  
That someday they'll accept what's true. —Sper

Defend the truth with love.

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