

What Does Our Flag Stand For?

The Foundations of American Government

by Fr. Bill McCarthy, MSA

Day of Infamy

Since September 11, 2001 – a day of infamy – shock waves have been reverberating through our nation. The cause? Terrorism. And the reaction has been a nation at prayer, a nation united, a nation singing "God Bless America," and a nation waving flags. What all this has done is shake America to our roots.

Our Roots

But what are our roots? What is it that makes us the land of the free and the home of the brave? What does it mean that we are a nation "under God?" What does it mean "that we hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights," first of all, to life, and then to liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Laws of Nature and Laws of Natures God

Let us together look at our roots. We say that we are a nation under God because our 243 Founding Fathers established us that way. Ninety four percent of all existing quotations of our Founding Fathers came from the Bible. Our government was based upon "the laws of "nature's God," words that we find in the Bill of Rights.

Blackstone's Law Commentary

Blackstone's Commentary on Law, which was the official commentary on American law from the time of our fathers all the way into the middle of the 20th century, read like the Bible. The first 108 colleges of this land were all Christian schools, including Harvard, Yale, Princeton, William and Mary, and so forth. Each student was required to read the Bible, attend chapel service, and live by the standards of Christian morality.

New England Primer

The New England Primer, which read like a catechism, was the official textbook in all schools, from that time to the 20th century. In the 19th century, people were arrested for blaspheming the name of Jesus. And both the lower court and the Supreme Court called it treason.

A Curriculum Without Christ?

Also in the 19th century, a certain school wanted to have a curriculum without religious content. Both the House of Representatives and the Senate rejected it, questioning, "How could you teach students wisdom without God as the source of wisdom? How could you teach them to be holy without the Spirit of God that we call holy?"

Our Religious Heritage

Our heritage is undeniably religious. Beginning with the first primarily Catholic explorers – Marquette, Vasco de Gama, Isaac Joques, Junipero Sierra, Ponce de Leon, Christopher Columbus – and moving on to the pilgrims, the American Revolution, the Civil War and long after, religion had the strongest positive influence on the successful development of this nation.

Compton's Encyclopedia

Compton's Encyclopedia states, "The most powerful, single influence in all history has been Christianity. This influence has shown itself not only in religious beliefs and spiritual ideals of the human race, but in the march of political events and institutions as well" (Vol. 3, pg. 301). We are surrounded with recognitions of our Judaic-Christian roots. Our national anthem reflects our reliance on God: "Blessed with victory and peace, May this heaven-rescued land praise the God who has made and preserved us a nation. Then conquer we must when our cause is just, and this be our motto, in God be our trust. And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave, o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave." Even our money declares our faith in God, for our national motto is,

"In God we trust." Our pledge of Allegiance heralds our testimony to God's importance: "And to the republic for which it stands one nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all."

Supreme Court

In 1892 the Supreme Court stated in its most precedented statement: "The laws and institutions of this nation must be necessarily based upon and embodied in the life and teachings of the Redeemer of Mankind. It is impossible that it should be otherwise." After reviewing hundreds of volumes historical documents this court has asserted: "These references... add a volume of unofficial declarations to the mass of organic ordinances that this is a religious people... a Christian nation." Likewise in 1931, Supreme Court Justice George Sutherland reviewed the 1892 decision in another case and reiterated that Americans are a "Christian people." And in 1952 Justice William O. Douglas affirmed that "We are a religious people and our institutions presuppose a Supreme Being."

Public Education

One of the arenas in which the Judaic-Christian ethic was most visible was in American public education. Our nations first schools were in churches, and for more than three centuries, following their inception in the mid 1600's, public schools promoted prayer and regularly used the Bible as a text book. Traditional Judaic-Christian principles were the firm basis for teaching morals. Students trained in these public schools were well rounded and well equipped in mind, soul, spirit and body. Noah Webster, a founding father and leading educator, accurately reflected this when he stated: "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 few people."

Benjamin Rush

Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and the first founder to call for free public schools, similarly explained: "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 virtue there can be no liberty, and liberty is the object and life of all republican governments... Without religion I believe learning does much mischief to the morals and principals of mankind."

Benjamin Franklin

From its inception our nation had believed in the power and results of religious teachings and practices and had strongly supported their inclusion in public arenas. Revered national political leaders believed that public prayer could and would change the course of the nation. For example consider Benjamin Franklin's lengthy speech delivered at the Constitutional Convention. The nation's elder statesman and patriarch (and today considered to be one of the least religious of the Founding Fathers) reminded the other delegates:

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. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor... And have we now forgotten this powerful Friend? Or do we imagine 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 man." 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, Sir, in the Sacred Writings that except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. I firmly believe this.

I also believe without His concurring aid we shall succeed in the 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 a byword down to future ages. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter from this unfortunate instance despair of establishing government by human wisdom and leave it to chance, war, or conquest. I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of heaven and its blessing on our deliberation be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business.

God Bless Us

As Franklin noted God had often answered their prayers and manifested Himself throughout the struggle with Great Britain; He blessed their efforts at the Constitutional Convention no less a fact noted by many of the Founders including Benjamin Rush: "I do not believe that the Constitution was the offspring of inspiration, but I am as

perfectly satisfied that the union of the states in its form and adoption is as much the work of a divine Providence as any of the miracles recorded in the Old and New Testament."

New Godly State Constitutions

Consequently, they returned home from Philadelphia to their own states and began to create new state constitutions. Samuel Adams and John Adams helped write the Massachusetts constitution. Benjamin Rush and James Wilson helped write Pennsylvania's constitution. George Read and Thomas McKean helped write Delaware's constitution. The same in other states as well. (By the way, the Supreme Court formerly pointed to these state constitutions as precedents to demonstrate the founder's intent).

Delaware

Notice, for example, what Thomas McKean and George Read placed in the Delaware constitution: "Every person who shall be chosen a member of either house or appointed to any office or place of trust... shall... 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 forever more. And I do acknowledge the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by Divine inspiration.'" While today we wish this were the requirement for seminary, it was their requirement for politics! Yet notice their emphasis: the focus is on the type of individuals placed into office not on the type of laws.

Pennsylvania

Notice some other state constitutions. The Pennsylvania constitution authored by Benjamin Rush and James Wilson declared: "And each member [of this legislature] before he takes his seat shall make and subscribe the following declaration: '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 do acknowledge the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by Divine inspiration.'"

Massachusetts

The Massachusetts constitution authored by Samuel Adams – the Father of the American Revolution – and John Adams stated: [All persons elected must] make and subscribe the following declaration, viz. "I do declare that I believe the Christian religion and have firm persuasion of its truth."

North Carolina

North Carolina's constitution required that: "No person who shall deny the being of God or the truth of the Christian religion, or the Divine authority either of the Old or the New Testaments, or who shall hold religious principals 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." What a powerful declaration! You had to believe that God's principles applied to civil government or they wouldn't let you near public office!

From Government to Education

This belief in the importance of God – fearing leaders was so well understood in America that in 1892 the Supreme Court pointed out that of the forty four states that were then in the union, each had some type of God centered declaration in its constitution. Our Founding Fathers went to great lengths to insure that we never forgot the principles of sound government. As many of them grew older they realized that when they died America would die with them – unless they were able to transmit to subsequent generations the principles upon which they had built America's government. For this reason many Founding Fathers became intimately involved with education. In fact, so important was education to the Founding Fathers that in the ten years following the American Revolution more colleges were established in America than in the 150 years preceding the Revolution!

Noah Webster

Noah Webster was one of the many Founding Fathers who became an educator. Webster served not only as a soldier during the American Revolution but also as a legislator in two states after the Revolution. Additionally, he was one of the first Founding Fathers to call for a Constitutional Convention and he was personally responsible for

Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution. As an educator Noah Webster helped establish Amherst College and became one of the most prolific textbook writers of any of the Founding Fathers.

History of the United States

One of his texts, used in American public school classrooms for generations was his "History of the United States." In it he told students: "When you become entitled to exercise the right of voting for public officers, 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. The preservation of [our] government depends on the faithful discharge of this duty; if the citizens neglect their duty and place unprincipled men in office the government will soon be corrupted. Laws will be made not for the public good so much as for selfish or local purposes. Corrupt or incompetent men will be appointed to execute the laws. The public revenues will be squandered on unworthy men. And the rights of the citizens will be violated or disregarded."

While his description of the ills of government sounds like an excerpt from yesterday's newspaper, this was not occurring in their day but was simply a warning of what would happen if ungodly men were placed into office. Webster then concluded: "If our 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." Although Noah Webster taught students that our form of government could not survive unless we kept Godly, God fearing people of faith in office, doesn't our form of government really depend upon the people rather than upon their representatives? After all, in a democracy aren't the people the most important element?

A Republic Under God

This is part of our problem today; we think we are a democracy; we are not. Recall: when we pledge allegiance to the flag we pledge allegiance to the Re[public of the United States not the democracy of the United States. While few today can define the difference between the two there is a difference – a major difference. In a democracy, whatever the majority of the people desire becomes public policy. If the majority of people decide that murder, abortion, pornography, adultery, and divorce are allowable, such ills would become public policy. Not so in a Republic under God. The aforementioned ills are always against "the laws of nature and the laws of nature's God."

George Washington

George Washington was another of the many Founding Fathers who avidly believed in the importance of prayer. Numerous paintings show "The Father of our Country" in prayer, including the stained glass window in the US Congressional Chapel and the monument at Valley Forge. Even his first speech after his election as president was marked by his call for prayer: "It would be peculiarly improper to omit in this first official act my fervent supplication to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe, who presides in the council of nations, and whose providential aids can supply every human defect... 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 States."

He then warned: "The propitious smiles of heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which heaven itself has ordained." For eight years Washington wisely and skillfully guided this nation to a position from which its continued strength and development would be assured. In his farewell address he warned: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness... The mere political, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them."

Franklin warned that "forgetting God" and imagining that we no longer needed His "concurring aid" would result in internal disputes, the decay of the nation's prestige and reputation, and a diminished national success. Washington had warned that if religious principals were excluded, the nation's morality and political prosperity would suffer. Yet despite such clear words in cases beginning in 1962, the Supreme Court offered rulings which eventually divorced the nation, its schools, and its public affairs from more than three centuries of its heritage. America is now learning experientially what both Washington and Franklin knew to be true – we are suffering in the very areas they predicted.

1962 – A New Direction

In decisions rendered on June 25, 1962 in *Engle v. Vitale*, and on June 17, 1963, in *Murray v. Curlett* and *Abington v. Schempp*, the Supreme Court forbade the inclusion of religious activities in major activities of daily student life by striking down school prayer and Bible reading. Never before in the history of our nation had any branch of our government taken such a stand.

Millions Affected

Through those decisions, 39 million students and over 2 million teachers were barred from participating in what had been available to students since our nation's founding. Even today millions of Americans personally recall when prayers, Bible reading and religious principles were as much a part of their public school activities as was the study of math or the pursuit of athletics. Activities once considered an integral part of education are now totally censored.

Separation of God from State

This sudden and dramatic restructuring of educational policies was precipitated by the Court's reinterpretation of the phrase "separation of church and state." The First Amendment does not contain that phrase. It simply states: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibit the free exercise thereof." This had always meant that Congress was prohibited from establishing a national religious denomination – that Congress could not pass a law requiring Americans to become Catholics, Anglicans or members of any other denomination.

A Different and New Interpretation

This meaning for "separation of church and state" had been explained clearly during the time of the Founders and was applied by the courts for 170 years afterwards. But in 1962 the Supreme Court decided that "church" would no longer mean a "federal denomination." Instead, it would now mean a "religious activity in public." Consequently, "separation of church and state" was no longer a prohibition against establishing a national denomination; it was now a prohibition against including religious activities in public affairs.

Contradicts Our Constitution

This new interpretation of "church" immediately invited hundreds of lawsuits challenging any presence of religion in public life. While skyrocketing numbers of lawsuits are still awaiting disposition, courts have already delivered far-reaching decisions to:

1. Remove student prayer:

"Prayer in its public school system breaches the constitution's wall of separation between Church and State." *ENGLE V. VITALE*, 1962

2. Remove school Bible readings:

"No state law or school board may require that passages from the Bible be read or that the Lord's Prayer be recited in the public schools of a state at the beginning of each school day." *ABINGTON V. SCHEMPP*, 1963

3. Remove the Ten Commandments from view:

"If the posted copies of the Ten Commandments are to have any effect at all, it will be to induce the school children to read, meditate upon, perhaps to venerate and obey the Commandments... this... is not a permissible state objective under the establishment clause." *STONE V. GRAHAM*, 1980

4. Remove benedictions and invocations from school activities:

"Religious invocation... in high school commencement exercises conveyed the message that district had given its endorsement to prayer and religion, so that school district was properly [prohibited] from including invocation in commencement exercise." *GRAHAM V. CENTRAL*, 1985; *KAY V. DOUGLAS*, 1986; *JAGER V. DOUGLAS*, 1989; *LEE V. WEISMAN*, 1992

Lower Court Rulings

Lower court rulings have gone even further than those of the Supreme Court, chipping away at the original intent until a religion-hostile attitude is now the norm in many courts. Today, there is such an anti-religious prejudice in education that some courts have forbidden the following activities within their jurisdictions:

1. Freedom of speech and press is guaranteed to students unless the topic is religious, at which time such speech becomes unconstitutional. *STEIN V. OSHINSKY*, 1965
2. If a student prays over his lunch, it is unconstitutional for him to pray aloud. *REED V. VAN HOVEN*, 1965
3. It is unconstitutional for a board of education to use or refer to the word "God" in any of its official writings. *OHIO V. WHISNER*, 1976

Many state and local officials have gone even further than these courts. For example:

1. Public schools were barred from showing a film about the settlement of Jamestown because the film depicted the erection of a cross at the settlement despite the historical fact that a cross was erected at the Jamestown settlement.
2. In Alaska's public schools, students were told they could not use the word "Christmas" in school because it had the word "Christ" in it, nor could they have the word in their notebooks, nor exchange Christmas cards or presents, nor display anything with the word "Christmas" on it.
3. In Colorado a music teacher was stopped from singing traditional Christmas carols in her classes.

From Classroom to Government

These rulings are not without consequence. What occurs in the classroom eventually affects the rest of the nation. As explained by President Abraham Lincoln: "The philosophy of the classroom in one generation will be the philosophy of the government in the next." The current anti-religious bias in education is new, having been implemented only after the redefinition of the First Amendment in 1962. Only eight years later the Court acknowledged that it had begun a legal revolution even admitting that: "It was... not until 1962 that... prayers were held to violate the [First Amendment]. The Court further conceded that the decision to remove prayer had been made without any previous precedent, either legal or historical. However, the Court argued that it needed no precedent: "Finally in *Engle V. Vitale*, only last year this principle [the separation of prayer from the classroom] was so universally recognized that the court, without the citation of a single case... reaffirmed it."

The Court attempted to invoke peer pressure to justify its lack of precedent: i.e. "everyone" understands the removal of prayer was necessary. However, the so-called "universally recognized" principles calling for the separation of religious principles from public education were so foreign that many commented on the new and dramatic change. For example, the 1963 *World Book Encyclopedia Year Book* stated: "The significance of the decision regarding this [school] prayer was enormous, for the whole thorny problem of religion in public education was thus inevitably raised."

Notice that prior to this case the legal issue of separating prayer and religious principles from education had not been "raised." Legal observers also commented on the Court's departure from precedent: "The Court has broken new ground in a number of fields... Few Supreme Court decisions of recent years have created greater furor than *Engle V. Vitale*." Few professions agreed with the Court that its decisions were based on "universally recognized" principles. In fact, in *Zorach V. Clausen*, only ten short years before, the Court was still embracing the philosophy it had maintained for over a century-and-a-half declaring: "The First Amendment, however, does not say that in every and all respects there shall be a separation of Church and State... Otherwise the state and religion would be aliens to each other – hostile, suspicious, and even unfriendly."

How could the 1962 Supreme Court Justices so quickly repudiate nearly two centuries of Supreme Court rulings? How could they have ignored the Court's lengthy history of protecting Christian principles and religious activities in public education? Perhaps the answer rests in the fact that eight of the nine justices on the 1962-63 Supreme Court had been appointed to the Court following an extended history of political rather than judicial experience. For example, Chief Justice Earl Warren had been the Governor of California for ten years prior to his appointment; Justice Hugo Black had been a US Senator for ten years; Justice Felix Frankfurter had been an assistant to the Secretary of Labor and a founding member of the ACLU; Justice Arthur Goldberg had been the Secretary of Labor;

Justice William Douglas was chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission prior to his appointment. All of the justices except one had similar political backgrounds.

Justice Potter Stewart, a federal judge for four years prior to his appointment, was the only member of the Court with extended federal Constitutional experience prior to his appointment. Interestingly, he was also the only Justice who objected to the removal of prayer and Bible reading. He alone acted as a judge. The rest acted as politicians, determined to develop new policies rather than to uphold previous precedents. Those activist justices not only initiated the Christian hostile policy, they firmly guided and strengthened it during their tenure. However, their anti-religious rulings were by no means limited solely to education. They also caused the reversal of long standing social policies for children, families and the nation. In fact, each of these arenas had preserved an extended legal history during which the Court had not only refused to exclude religious principles, but had relied upon them when rendering its decisions. The following statements are representative of those which appeared in scores of cases:

Christianity has referenced to the principles of right and wrong... it is the foundation of those morals and manners upon which our society is formed, it is their basis. Remove this and they would fall...

[Morality] has grown upon the basis of Christianity... The day of moral virtue in which we live would, in an instant, if that standard were abolished, lapse into the dark and murky night of pagan immorality, CHARLESTON V. BENJAMIN.

The morality of the country is deeply engrafted upon Christianity... [We are] people whose manners... and whose morals have been elevated and inspired... by means of the Christian religion, PEOPLE V. RUGGLES.

The Constitution

Our constitution was written under the direct blessing of Almighty God, after Franklin called for three days of fasting and prayer, stating the Biblical principle, "Unless the Lord builds the house they labor in vain that build it." Like God Himself, our Constitution does not force religion but promotes it and in no way oppresses it. The First Amendment clearly states: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Our Founding Fathers didn't want one denomination ruling over another. Therefore, they were for the separation of church and state, but never of state from God. In fact, in 1779, the Court declared: "By our form of government, the Christian religion is the established religion; and all sects and denominations of Christians are placed on the same equal footing" RUNKLE V. WINEMILLER, Supreme Court, Maryland, 1799.

George Washington's Warning

In his farewell address, once again, our first president warned that religion and morality were the twin towers of our country. And anyone who would attack these could not be considered a loyal American. For they are our roots. We, unlike most nations, are a "nation under God." Our motto will always be, "In God We Trust."

God Bless America

Yes God Bless America, land that I love, stand beside her and guide her through the night with a light from above.

Father Bill McCarthy M.S.A. is the author of "Mary in the Church Today" and "God Bless America, God's Vision or Ours?" He is the director of My Fathers House in Moodus CT

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