

Preamble

Although the United States was not founded to advance Christianity, the countries laws and principles were heavily influenced by both the Old and the New Testament. Patrick Henry declared “America was not founded by religionists but by Christians. It was not founded upon religions but upon the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

From the colonists who braved the unknown to the men and women who risked everything in order to gain freedom in the revolution, America allowed Scripture to guide its path.

Given the many quotes in this lesson concerning America being a Christian nation, how could President Barak Obama have asserted so often: “America is not a Christian nation.”

The Settler’s Creed

Christianity was seen in the actions and words of America’s settlers from the very beginning of our colonization. Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement, included in their charter, the “providence of the almighty God” and “the glory of His Divine Majesty: is to deliver the Christian religion to those ... as yet live in darkness and miserable ignorance of the true knowledge and worship of God.”

Another evidence of the colonist’s Christian influence was found in the Mayflower Compact. “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 ... having undertaken for the glory of God the advancement of the Christian faith, and the honor of our king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia.”

By the late 1600’s most of the colonies had established either an official or unofficial church, supported through state levied tithes. Though most denominations today would be at best chagrined to hear of state levies to churches, the 1600’s were a different time and a different place. There was no 1st Amendment to preclude such encroachment on mankind’s personage. What is clear is the intent of the early settlers to establish a secure place to worship Jesus Christ.

The Puritan John Winthrop helped establish and later govern the Massachusetts Bay Colony. While on his voyage to New England with his fellow companions, he said of their mission, “Hayle holy-land, wherein our holy Lord hath planted His most true and Holy Word ... me thinks I hear the Lamb of God thus speak. Come my deare little flocke, who for my sake have left your Country...” Massachusetts Bay Colony was strengthened by the unity of purpose and common bond of Christianity.

Winthrop cautioned the colonists: “We must consider that we shall be as a city on a Hill, the eyes of all people are upon us; so that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken and so cause him to withdraw his present help from us, we shall be made a story and by-word throughout the world ...”

As was not uncommon for the leaders of our infant nation, John Winthrop was drawing from the words of Scripture. His reference to “a city on a hill” came from Matthew 5:14-16.

Mat 5:14 You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.

Mat 5:15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand and it gives light to everyone in the house.

Mat 5:16 In the same way let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

Not long after John Winthrop had finished penning these telling words, several other colonies expressed their Christian heritage through their charters and laws. For example, in The Fundamental Orders of Connecticut in 1639 we find, “There shall be an orderly and decent government established according to God ... To maintain and preserve the liberty and purity of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The New England Confederation of 1643 also expressed devotion to God by stating, “whereas we all came into these parts of America with one and the same end and aim, namely, to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and to enjoy the liberties of the Gospel in purity with peace; and whereas in our settling (by a wise providence of God) we are further dispersed upon the sea coasts and rivers than was at first intended.”

Although united in Christianity, each colony had its own specific religious requirements.

For example: The Massachusetts charter of 1691 exhorted, “There shall be a liberty of conscience allowed to worship of God to all Christians except Papist.”

Not everyone in these early settlements were Christians but everyone was made subject to the established law in their colony which was almost entirely based on Biblical principles. The majority of America’s early leaders were openly Christians.

In 1776, America’s population of professing Christians was an astounding 99.8 percent. Almost 150 years since the Pilgrims came to the New World on the Mayflower, America was almost entirely a Christian nation. During the time of the American revolution, an estimated 900,000, individuals were of Scotch or Scotch-Irish, origin, 600,000 were Puritan English and 400,000 were of German or Dutch origin.

The most influential theologian affecting America’s founding fathers was John Calvin. This would indicate some 2/3 of Americans had been schooled in Calvinism. John Calvin was both the founder of Calvinism and indirectly the founder of the United States system of government. Calvinist’s believed in a government ordained by God with limited delegated power.

John Eidsmoe was a follower of Calvin and an attorney. He was also a professor of constitutional law and related subjects. He had previously taught at the Thomas Goode Jones School of Law, Faulkner University, the O. W. Coburn School of Law at Oral Roberts University, and Oak Brook College of Law and Government Policy. Mr. Eidsmoe has written, “the declaration of independence appears to have been adapted at least in part from a Calvinistic predecessor, the Mecklinburg declaration.”

Calvinist believed in an autonomous local church owing no homage to any central ecclesiastical body. Each local church was to be ruled by democratic principles. Calvinist’s congregational church governments prepared America for what would later be known as federalism; a decentralized form of government. These congregational churches can be credited with the representative and decentralized form of government enjoyed in the United States today. Additionally, the sacredness of hard work taught in both the Old and New Testaments was also a principle shared by both Calvinists and Puritans. This precept was certainly a significant influence if not the basis of America’s financial success and the free enterprise system.

The colonist recognized maximum freedom for the individual is God's optimum. In their way of thinking the right of private property and protection of property rights was paramount. They based their emphasis on Scripture.

Exo 20:15 "You shall not steal.

Exo 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Exo 22:2 "If a thief is caught breaking in and is struck so that he dies, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed.

A capitalistic system thought our forefathers would produce excess and make for maximum resources for charity. Scripture provides insight into what causes poverty. In Scripture we find numerous uses of the English word "sluggard" or "slothful;" these are translations of **Atsel** in the Hebrew and mean idle, habitually lazy, lethargic, lean or indolent. Scripture indicates a failure to work results in a failure to provide for one's future.

Pro 6:6 Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise!

Pro 6:7 It has no commander, no overseer or ruler,

Pro 6:8 yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.

Pro 6:9 How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep?

Pro 6:10 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest--

Pro 6:11 and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.

Pro 10:4 Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth.

Pro 10:5 He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son.

Pro 13:4 The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.

The colonist in the main believed being industrious was a means of avoiding poverty.

2Co 9:6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

The Puritans believed government was a potential problem which might limit the successful function of a free enterprise system. They recognized that too much power in an individual's hands may lead to corruption.

John Cotton was a clergyman in England and later in the American colonies. He was considered the preeminent minister and theologian of the [Massachusetts Bay Colony](#). He had quite a reputation as a scholar and outstanding preacher when he accepted the position of minister in 1612 at [St. Botolph's Church, in Boston](#).

As a Puritan, he wanted to do away with the ceremony and vestments associated with the established Church of England. He also was a protagonist of simple teaching which could be easily understood by the common man.

Cotton thrived at St. Botolph's for nearly 20 years because of supportive aldermen and lenient bishops as well as his conciliatory and gentle demeanor. By 1632, however, the church authorities had greatly increased pressure on non-conforming clergy, and Cotton was forced into hiding.

Early in his Boston tenure, he became involved in the colony's [Antinomian Controversy](#) when several adherents of his "free grace" theology (most notably [Anne Hutchinson](#)) began criticizing other ministers in the colony.

Following the controversy, Cotton was able to mend fences with his fellow ministers, and he continued to preach in the Boston church until his death. The Reverend John Cotton said "it is necessary ... that all power that is on earth be limited, church power or other ..." His concept of limited government stemmed from his interpretation of Scripture.

Most of the men revered as founding fathers were also quite openly Christian. For example, George Washington, the Commander of the Continental Army as well as, the first President of the United States, said in a speech to the Delaware Chiefs in 1797, "You would do well to wish to learn ... above all, the religion of Jesus Christ ... It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the Providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor."

Washington also said in a proclamation in 1789, "We may then unite in humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the Great Lord and Ruler of nations and beseech Him to pardon our national and other transgressions."

George Washington's farewell address expressed not only Washington's sentiments, but also the views of James Madison and Alexander Hamilton who assisted in the writing of Washington's address.

A line from Washington's address published in the Philadelphia Daily American Advertiser in 1796 reads:

"Do not let anyone claim to be a true American if they ever attempt to remove religion from politics. It is impossible to govern rightly without God and the Bible."

Washington, it would seem wanted subsequent generations to understand the importance of Christianity in the heritage of America.

Benjamin Franklin wrote of the importance of God and religion to society in general. In his book *The Art of Virtue* Franklin strongly emphasized three points:

"That there is one God who named all things. That he governs the world by his providence. That he ought to be worshipped by adoration, prayer and thanksgiving."

Again, at the constitutional convention Benjamin Franklin gave one of the finest speeches of his lifetime. While rallying support for the newly drafted document, Franklin said,

"I have lived a longtime, and the longer I live the more convincing proof of this truth – 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 cannot 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.'"

After Franklin finished his speech, he lobbied for the idea that the Constitutional Convention be daily led in prayer by a Philadelphia clergyman. Benjamin Franklin is generally considered one of America's most influential statesman.

Recognition of the need for Divine guidance in the formation of a nation's laws is replete in the writings of both John and Quincy Adams. For example, future president John Adams said: "the general principles on which the fathers achieved independence were the principles of Christianity."

I will avow that I then believed, and now believe, that those general principles of Christianity are as eternal and immutable as the existence and attributes of God.”

John Quincy Adams wore many hats in the early years of the United States. He was a representative, Senator, Secretary of State, and eventually President. One of his most memorable quotes was: “In the chain of human events the birthday of the nation is in the *inherently* linked with the birthday of the Savior. The Declaration of Independence laid the cornerstone of human government upon the first precepts of Christianity.”

A most evident characteristic of the founding fathers was the right to think independently even if it meant arguing among themselves. The most famous on-going of contretemps was between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. I think God showed His superb sense of humor when He called Adams and Jefferson home on the same day: July 4th 1826.

The founding fathers recognized Christianity upon which our government could best be built. The U.S. House Judiciary Committee in 1854 announced; “had the people during the Revolution, had a suspicion of any attempt to war against Christianity, the Revolution would have been strangled in its cradle ... In this age, there can be no substitute for Christianity ... That was the religion of the founders of the Republic and they expected to remain the religion of their descendants.”

Early America was so influenced by Scripture both Old and New Testament that our founding Fathers would today be appalled at the many fatuous attempts to deny the clear and palpable existence of our religious heritage.

As further evidence of this heritage we need only to look at early state governments. Both state citizens and their founding fathers express their belief that Christians should be elected to State and Federal offices.

Maryland was not known for puritanical ideals, but even it, had a declaration of rights which in part read: “that no other test or qualification ought to be required, on admission to any office of ‘trust or profit’ than such an oath of support and fidelity to this state, and such an oath of office, as shall be directed by this Convention, or the Legislature of this state, and a declaration of belief in the Christian religion.”

John Jay, contributor to the Federalist Papers and later Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, wrote in a letter to Jedidiah Morse in 1797, “Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers and it is the duty of, as well as the privilege and interest, of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers.”

Both the founding fathers and the states recognized the value of electing men with Christian principles to rule their Christian nation. Future President John Adams wrote his wife Abigail in 1775:

“Statesmen may plan and speculate for liberty, but it is religion and morality alone which can establish the principles upon which one can securely stand. A patriot must be a religious man.”

Many of our state constitutions included in their preamble’s specific references to not just scripture but to Christianity. The following are a few examples:

Virginia 1776, Bill of Rights, XVI: “Religion, or the duty which we owe our Creator can be directed only by reason and that it is the mutual duty of all to practice Christian Forbearance, Love and Charity toward each other ...”

Pennsylvania, 1776: “we the people of Pennsylvania, grateful to Almighty God for the blessings of civil and religious liberty, and humbly invoking His Guidance ...”

Georgia, 1777: “we the people of Georgia, relying upon the protection and guidance of Almighty God, do ordain and establish this Constitution...”

South Carolina, 1778: “we the people of the state of South Carolina, grateful to God for our liberties, do ordain and establish this Constitution.”

The above preambles are just a few examples taken from the numerous state preambles which acknowledge God.

Clearly, the documents which give life to our nation were based upon both Scripture and men who were in the main influenced by Christianity. Almost all political documents during the era of the United States founding were of Christian origin.

Donald S. Lutz and Charles Hyneman reviewed and estimated 15,000 political writings from 1760-1805. After compiling their work, they found that the Bible was the most cited source, at 34 percent of all citations. The next highest cited source at 8.9 percent was Barron Charles Montesquieu.

Montesquieu said in his book *The Spirit of Laws*, “the Christian religion which orders men to love one another, no doubt wants the best political laws and the best civil laws for each people, because those laws are after it, the greatest good men can give and receive.” In Montesquieu’s *Spirit of the Laws* he made numerous references to Christ and Christianity and even identified himself as Christian.

The next most cited contributor of these founding documents at 7.9 percent was William Blackstone. His most famous work, *Commentaries on the Laws*, covered various legal concepts and explained the Biblical principle from which many of the laws were extracted.

I believe Christian principals are the rock upon which our nation was built. From the colonization of our land to emancipation from the British, Christianity’s ideals were guiding our founder’s paths. Our forefathers were unashamed of their beliefs and with great resolve and determination they chose to fight for their freedom.

The founding fathers believed God had given them certain inalienable rights which were theirs to keep and preserve at all costs. Many of the men cited in this lesson were convinced government did not give them their rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness but rather God Himself in eternity past was the originator who invested them with a special kind of freedom.

If our rights as human beings come from the state, as many believe today, then the state can certainly take away our civil rights, parental rights, first and second amendment rights or any other rights just as King George did in the 18th Century but if these rights were from God, **then even the gates of hell shall not prevail.**

Lets us pray.

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