

In God We Trust, Do We?

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Our founders most definitely prescribed to the motto, “In God We Trust”. They acted upon this belief to establish our country. Yet, today, the majority of Americans only take up the spirit of this motto in times of crisis. I believe at our core, we know that we are obligated to our Creator in whose image we are made.

However, we are rebellious in nature and try to take it upon ourselves to forge our own future. We think we know best how the world and our country should be run, until a crisis forces us back into the arms of our Father. Rather than struggle through the consequences of such a contentious relationship, wouldn't it be better to be in continuous communion with our Creator from the outset, listening to His direction and yielding to wisdom much superior to man's? This would allow us to pass around danger, in many instances, and to be prepared when difficult times test the spirit and resolve of our country.

In this essay, I want us to reflect on our foundational principles, which I believe will guide our journey to once again realizing the American dream. As a country, finding our way back to the guiding light of absolute truth is essential to honoring God, stewarding our unalienable rights, and upholding America as a beacon of hope and freedom in the world.

Our Judeo-Christian Heritage

Many proponents of the humanist perspective would argue that our country is not a Judeo-Christian country or that many of the Founding Fathers were Atheists or Deists. Atheists deny the existence of God. Deists believe God created the world but left it to its own. Put another way, atheists ignore God and deists believe God ignores people. I would assert that they are wrong on each of these points since the written historical evidence is overwhelmingly to the contrary.

We have volumes of their writings and their own words testify to the Judeo-Christian heritage of this country. Thus, we do not need to speculate about what our Founding Fathers thoughts and beliefs were. For example, in George Washington's farewell address, he stated that religion and morality are at the heart of true patriotism an essential to our national survival¹. Washington was not alone. John Adams, co-drafter of the Declaration of Independence and second President, stated, “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other².”

¹ George Washington's Farewell Address. 1796

² Letter to the Officers of the First Brigade of the Third Division of the Militia of Massachusetts. October 11, 1798.

James Madison, our fourth president and the father of our Constitution, was in agreement, stating, “The belief in a God All Powerful, wise and good, is essential to the moral order of the world and to the happiness of man³.”

We can go back and read our Founders own writings and find countless passages that reference a reverence for and submission to Creator God. It’s imperative to educate ourselves with this history because ignoring this foundational truth will lead us to a catastrophic collapse of the American Experiment.

The University of Houston looked at more than 15,000 documents, including French philosopher Charles Montesquieu, William Blackstone, and John Locke. But the primary source was the Bible. Over 94% of the documents were Biblically based, 34% were direct quotes⁴. For example, the concept of the three branches of government came from Jeremiah 17:9 and Isaiah 33:22.

Therefore, in understanding more about the framers of our country, we can better ascertain their intent in its design and construction. Let’s follow the advice of the father of the Constitution, James Madison. “Do not separate text from historical background. If you do, you will have perverted and subverted the Constitution, which can only end in a distorted, bastardized form of illegitimate government.” In another statement, Madison warns, “Knowledge will forever govern ignorance; and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power of that knowledge⁵.”

So, in the context of how the Founding Fathers approached the governance of our country, their statements, prayers, writings, and actions spoke to an unmistakable Judeo-Christian foundation. To further illustrate, Samuel Adams, after signing the Declaration of Independence, affirmed a citizen duty to God, rather than a king, “We have this day restated the Sovereign to whom alone men ought to be obedient...From the rising to the setting of the sun, may His Kingdom come⁶.”

A fellow devout Christian, John Hancock, while he was president of the Continental Congress, declared, “Let us humbly commit our righteous cause to the great Lord of the universe⁷.”

As an interesting side note, King George would have given amnesty to all colonists if they had surrendered before Bunker Hill except two men”. Wonder who? John Hancock and Samuel Adams. Maybe because they were worshipping the true King?

I can go on and on quoting from our Founders. After all, as I stated, the best evidence to support what the Founding Fathers believed is their own testimony. But I will summarize with a quote from George Washington, “It is impossible to govern without God and Bible⁸.”

With this background, we can now have a fuller understanding of what Thomas Jefferson meant when he stated in the Declaration of Independence, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that they are

³ Letter from James Madison to Frederick Beasley. November 20, 1825.

⁴ Donald S. Lutz. **The Origins of American Constitutionalism.** 1988.

⁵ Letter from James Madison to W.T. Barry. August 4, 1822

⁶ Samuel Adams’ *American Independence* speech to State House of Pennsylvania. August 1, 1776.

⁷ John Hancock’s Boston Massacre Oration. March 5, 1774.

⁸ *Biography of Samuel Adams.* **Encyclopedia of World Biography.** 2010. The Gale Group, Inc.

endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” We can conclude without a doubt that our Founders based our government upon Judeo-Christian beliefs.

Natural Law

The next foundation, which may seem separate from Biblical truth, but is a natural extension, is Natural Law. In today’s post modern era, most of us have never studied Natural Law. Thank God our Founders did. We’ve seen that they were well-learned in Biblical studies, but they also studied the classics (ancient Greek and Roman writings). In light of this, can Natural Law be anything other than a natural extension of God’s Law?

Cicero (106 BC to 43 BC), a Roman politician and writer who rose to the highest office of state, Roman Council, was one of the favorites of our Founders. He believed that nature screamed the existence of a supreme Creator and that we are obligated to that evidence.

What is Natural Law? First of all, Cicero defines Natural Law as “true law.” Then he says:

“True law is right reason in agreement with nature; it is of universal application, unchanging and everlasting; it summons to duty by its commands, and averts from wrongdoing by its prohibitions...It is a sin to try to alter this law, nor is it allowable to repeal any part of it, and it is impossible to abolish entirely. We cannot be freed from its obligations by senate or people, and we need not to look outside ourselves for an expounder or interpreter of it. And there will not be different laws at Rome and Athens, or different laws now and in the future, but one eternal and unchangeable law will be valid for all nations and all times and there will be one master and ruler, that is God, over us all, for he is the author of this law, its promulgator, and its enforcing judge. Whoever is disobedient is fleeing from himself and denying his human nature, and by reason of this very fact he will suffer the worst punishment⁹.”

According to Sir William Blackstone, an English judge and author of *Commentaries on the Laws of England* and authority on common law and its principles, Natural Law “dictated by God Himself, is of course superior in obligation to any other...no human laws are of any validity, if contrary to...the divine law...found only in the Holy Scriptures¹⁰.”

In 1764, Massachusetts patriot James Otis defined Natural Law as “the rules of moral conduct implanted by nature in the human mind, forming the proper basis for and being superior to all written laws; the will of God revealed to man through his conscience¹¹.”

These three men, articulated that there is a divine Author of law and order, a Creator of all things, and thusly, all mankind are subject to the laws of this Author. Cicero recognized the Creator even though he was neither Jew nor Christian (pre-dating Christianity by about 100 years). The commentaries of Sir William Blackstone served as the foundational teaching aids in America’s law schools until the mid 1800’s. James Otis was a contemporary patriot with many of the Founding Fathers, with whom the quote “taxation without representation is tyranny” is attributed.

⁹ M.T. Cicero, **De Ra Publica**, book 3, paragraph 22. Translated by Clinton W. Keyes

¹⁰ Sir William Blackstone. **Commentaries of the Laws of England**. Reprint 2010.

¹¹ **The Annals of America**. Vol 2, Chapter 11. Encyclopedia Britannica; 2nd edition. 2007.

The correlation between the principles of Natural Law and Judeo-Christian beliefs are unmistakable (Romans 1:18-20) and without a doubt intentional. Our Founders wanted to build a new civilization, a true Republic, based on the freedom of the individual that came from Natural Law by our Creator God. Therefore, when Thomas Jefferson writes in the Declaration of Independence, “these truths we hold to be self-evident”, they were self-evident. The existence of Creator God was not questioned and did not merit further enumeration.

So how do we get from there to here? The belief in Creator God is pivotal. Simply, we are faced with the question, “Is there a Creator God to whom we are obligated or are we only obligated to ourselves?” If the answer is that we are obligated to a Creator God, then we can trust in a non-changing, ever-enduring law and we are a nation of laws. If we are only obligated to ourselves, then we are a nation of men and our laws shift like the sands at the edge of the tide.

Separation of Church and State

With a belief in a Creator God so intertwined in the fabric of our country’s foundation, how did we arrive at “separation of church and state”? In Thomas Jefferson’s second year as President, he received a letter from the Danbury Baptist Association in the state of Connecticut asking him if the government could infringe upon their beliefs and how they worshipped God. The answer from Jefferson was clear. The first amendment had a high wall that the government could never infringe on the individual’s exercise of religion. That letter written by Jefferson was written on a Friday. On Sunday, two days later, Jefferson went to a Christian church service in the Capitol Rotunda¹². Unhappy with the music, he commissioned the Marine Corps Band to play the worship music¹³. Clearly, it was not Jefferson’s intent for religion to be banned from government. Rather, it was a restriction on government to not infringe upon the free exercise of religion. But in 1947, without citing a single precedent and ignoring 175 years of American Constitutional law, in the case of *Everson v. Board of Education*, Justice Hugo Black wrote, “the wall of separation between church and state must be kept high and impregnable¹⁴.” This landmark divergence from constitutional intent shifted the onus to restrict religious infringement to the individual from the government.

It’s the government who should not infringe on the free exercise of religion.

I want to be extremely clear; we are not talking about a theocracy where the government and the church are one. We are a Constitutional Representative Republic. A Republic is based on an unchanging common law-our unchanging law is God’s Natural Law. Case precedent is based on man’s law which is subjective and ever changing.

Evidence is irrefutable that our Founders believed that religion was one of the pillars that supported freedom in America. This pillar had as its foundation, Creator God’s Natural Law. This unchanging law provided the stability upon which our country could thrive. With a law that shifts, the pillars that support the framework of our country will topple and the freedoms it supports will topple with it. The blessings of Creator God are upon those who subjugate themselves to His authority. The Founding Fathers recognized this and framed for us the greatest nation in the world. But now, for us truly to be

¹² Letter from Rev. Manasseh Cutler to Joseph Torrey. January 4, 1802.

¹³ Dr. D. James Kennedy. **What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?** 2005.

¹⁴ *Everson v. Board of Education*, 330 U.S., 16, 18

able to sing “God Bless America”, we must turn to our Creator as individuals and as a nation. Then we can say, “In God We Trust.”