



PREPARE THE WAY

The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth.

LUKE 3:5

The Christian Heritage of the United States

(An overview using primary source quotations)

Why should we care about our heritage:

“History, by apprising them [the citizens], of the past will enable them to judge of the future; it will avail them of the experience of other times and other nations; it will qualify them as judges of the actions and designs of men;”

- Thomas Jefferson, 1784

The Puritans passed a law which set the standard for public education for all people:

“It being one chief project of that old deluder, Satan, to keep men [all mankind] from the knowledge of the Scriptures, as in former time... It is therefore ordered...[that] after the Lord hath increased [the settlement] to the number of fifty households, [they] shall then forthwith appoint one within their town, to teach all such children as shall resort to him, to write and read...where any town shall increase to the number of one hundred families or households, they shall set up a grammar school...”

- The “Old Deluder Satan Law”, 1642

The Foundation for a Useful Education...

“The only foundation for a useful education in a republic is to be laid in religion [Christianity]. 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[Christianity], I believe that learning does real mischief to the morals and principles of mankind.”

- Benjamin Rush, Signer of the Declaration

President Washington to some Delaware Indians who wanted their youth educated in America’s schools:

“You do well to wish to learn our arts and ways of life, and above all, the religion of Jesus Christ... Congress will do every thing they can to assist you in this wise intention.”

- George Washington, 1779

Our Rights Come from God:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

- Declaration of Independence

Our Constitution Was Made for a Religious People:

"We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion ... Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

- John Adams, Presidential Address, 1798

“We are a religious people whose institutions all presuppose a Supreme Being ...”

- Supreme Court, 1952, *Zorach v. Clauson*

Christianity As Our Moral Foundation:

“The practice of morality being necessary for the well-being of society, He [God] has taken care to impress its precepts so indelibly on our hearts that they shall not be effaced by the subtleties of our brain. We all agree in the obligation of the moral precepts of Jesus and nowhere will they be found delivered in greater purity than in His discourses.”

- Thomas Jefferson, 1809

The Legislative branch of government did a report on the role that Christianity was to have in our society: “At the time of the adoption of the Constitution and the amendments, the universal sentiment was that Christianity should be encouraged, not any one sect [denomination]. Any attempt to level and discard all religion would have been viewed with universal indignation.... It [Christianity] must be considered as the foundation on which the whole structure rests.... In this age there can be no substitute for Christianity; that, in its general principles, is the great conservative element on which we must rely for the purity and permanence of free institutions. That was the religion of the founders of the republic, and they expected it to remain the religion of their descendents.”

- House and Senate Judiciary Committee Reports (1853-1854)

Joseph Story is considered the father of our American jurisprudence system and said:

“The promulgation of the great doctrines of religion; the being and attributes and providence of one Almighty God; the responsibility to Him for all our actions... these never can be a matter of indifference in a well-ordered community... it is the especial duty of government to foster and encourage it[Christianity] among all the citizens and subjects.”

-Joseph Story (1838), U.S. Supreme Court Justice

During the Constitutional convention when they were getting nowhere in their deliberations:

“In the beginning of the contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for the Divine protection. Our prayers, sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered... 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; and I also believe that without His concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel... I therefore beg leave to move- that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that service.”

- Benjamin Franklin, 1787

Prayer was an integral part of this nations existence:

“Whereas 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; and Whereas both Houses of Congress have, by their joint committee, requested me to recommend to the people of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness.”

- George Washington, 1798

Abraham Lincoln on Prayer:

“Whereas, the Senate of the United States, devoutly recognizing the Supreme Authority and just Government of Almighty God, in all the affairs of men and of nations, has, by a resolution, requested the President to designate and set apart a day for National prayer and humiliation... and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.”

- Abraham Lincoln, 1863 Proclamation

National Day of Prayer:

“Since our Nation's founding, Americans have turned to prayer for inspiration, strength, and guidance. In times of trial, we ask God for wisdom, courage, direction, and comfort. We offer thanks for the countless blessings God has provided... On this National Day of Prayer, I encourage Americans to remember the words of St. Paul: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." The Congress... has called on our citizens to reaffirm the role of prayer in our society.”

- George Bush, Presidential Proclamation, 2002