

# The “Ancient Landmarks” of American Culture

## Why Some Things Should Never be Moved

By K.G. Powderly Jr.

From the sermon notes of Robert Hall, Senior Pastor of Calvary Chapel of Rio Rancho

Do not remove the old landmark which your fathers have set.

Proverbs 22:28 (MKJV)<sup>30</sup>

The Founding Fathers of our nation set up for us a series of moral and legal landmarks that would define and preserve a form of liberty that leads to national stability, instead of chaos and social breakdown—where hard work and sound moral behavior would be rewarded and encouraged. They expressed these landmarks in the ideas contained in their writings—for example:

***“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; that, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men...” The Declaration of Independence***

Human beings function best—as individuals and communities—when their societies recognize that certain underlying truths and moral principles cannot be redefined or dismantled without doing severe damage. We live in an age, however, where many—including those most powerful in education, media, and the courts—assume that moral and cultural relativism is the truth that reflects reality. This is the belief that there are no moral absolutes—things that are right or wrong regardless of situation. This describes the worldview of those today who are “moving the ancient landmarks.” Their motives make an emotional appeal to what they feel is “reason,” “fairness,” or both. Nevertheless, they fool themselves. For their premise is based on a huge logical fallacy: To insist that there are no moral absolutes *is to arbitrarily establish a moral absolute*—for moral and cultural relativism, like any other worldview assumption, is based not on evidence but on *faith in a desired outcome*.

Those who promote “moving the old landmarks” do so because they want certain things to be true about the real world—things *they think* will make life easier for them, and that *they hope* will lessen human conflict. *They tend to assume that strongly-held religious and moral convictions create fanaticism, without considering that their own strongly-held ideological convictions have also produced fanaticism and bloodshed at least as bad, or worse—and will do so again.* For example, the French Revolution’s “Terror,” Stalin’s purges, Pol Pot’s killing fields, Hitler’s death camps, and Mao’s bloody “Cultural Revolution” all resulted from fanatically *secular morally-relativistic ideologies* that portrayed Christian and other religious influences as “evils” to be destroyed, or “delusions” to be marginalized by any “responsible” society wanting to “free its people from oppression.”

Although these tyrants behaved in “absolutist” authoritarian ways, the morality they had in common was relativistic—driven by shifting concerns of getting and keeping power. They moved the landmarks. They saw themselves (or “the party”) as absolute, but morality as relative. For instance, many communist women in the early Revolution (according to Lenin contemporary, Clara Zetkin) originally tried to dissolve marriage and the family as “upper class institutions” in favor of *communal* living and “free love.” Lenin sympathized with them, but the rise of venereal diseases and other resulting social chaos made this system unworkable, so Lenin’s new Communist state arbitrarily re-enacted marriage laws—not because of a belief in moral absolutes, but for social and administrative convenience.<sup>1</sup> It was “situational ethics” with a vengeance!

Contrast this with the American revolutionaries, who accepted moral absolutes but saw themselves as relative and fallible. Thus our Founding Fathers created a balance of power in the three branches of government. *The American Founding Fathers understood that even they could not be trusted with too much power.*

This is not to excuse religious, or even Christian fanaticism, which has also shed innocent blood inconsistently to the New Testament’s clear teachings. Yet that is just the point—a Christian tyranny is *inconsistent* with the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles. We merely point out that *fanaticism is a human problem, not a uniquely religious—and certainly not a uniquely “Fundamentalist” Christian—one.*

We need to defuse another popular misconception before we go on. Contrary to a dishonest impression

promoted by many in the media and academics today, and some in the “blog-sphere,” extremely few Evangelical Christians today want a “Christian Theocracy.” No historically-literate Evangelical wants one (and there are far more well-informed Evangelicals than many media and academic elites would have us all believe). Of course, *as in every other large cross-section of people*, there are also plenty of Evangelicals with poor communication skills, who are not careful about defining their terms to prevent themselves from being easily misunderstood. We do not want a “theocracy” because church history has several examples of miserably-failed, unjust theocracies (and partial theocracies) in Eastern, Roman, and Reformed varieties, and no examples of lasting successful ones.

This does not in any way deny the positive civilizing impact that uniquely Christian *ideas* from each of these church systems have had on the world. We only point out that whenever church systems have obtained free use of state swords, the results have always been disastrous—for the churches as much as for the nations.<sup>2</sup> Is this because the major ideas of the Bible lead to tyranny, or because human beings—even those with good intentions—tend to be corrupted by too much power? A realistic survey of historic religions and secular ideologies (both of which appeal to different, but dogmatically-held, assumptions) reveals a general *human* trend toward power abuse whenever there is no accountability. *This oft-observed tendency is fully consistent with what the Bible reveals about sin’s effect on the human condition—even in the church.*<sup>3</sup>

This begs some disturbing questions, however. If believers are led by the Holy Spirit, and believers make up the church, then should that not mean that having a special “power seat” in government for the church is a good thing? Isn’t God’s kingdom within the church? To answer *yes* to the first question assumes that the church was designed by God to be a governmental power-broker in *this* world. *But Jesus said that we are not of this world. (John 17:12-17)* As to the second question; though the Holy Spirit indwells and empowers believers, and churches are *ideally* the community of believers, Jesus Himself said that there would be “wheat and tares”—genuine believers, and what Paul would later call “false brethren” in churches.

One could fairly say that every Christian church consists of different ratios of the following three types of people; mature Spirit-led believers who are usually sensible, immature yet sincere believers that may not have developed good sense yet, and false people who are not truly converted but who prowl the church community for selfish or mere cultural reasons. A careful reading of the warnings against false teachers in the New Testament, and of the severe problems in five out of the seven churches addressed in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, will reveal that there is no magic guarantee for churches promising them protection throughout history against immature or false leadership if they neglect the word of God, walking in God’s love, or any other thing the Scriptures warn us to maintain as a community. Church history is full of examples where large churches fell to false or half-baked leaders, who created havoc.

Given the warnings, and our own history, we would suggest that God designed the church to be the community of believers—period. Why? Because despite all the bad history, Christ also promised that the “counsels of hell” would not prevail against the church. There is also considerable evidence that churches have had a mostly positive historic influence, if people will bother to check the record.<sup>2</sup> Thus churches, as institutions, when they stick to the biblical design God revealed for them, will not fail—and, by grace, can learn from the mistakes in their own history to regain their proper place in God’s redemptive plan. This much, at least is certain; the church, as originally established and described in the New Testament, *was not designed to be* the State, nor a mere creature of the State, nor an overbearing parent to a brood of states that are only political pawns. A careful study of both the New Testament and church history bears this out because whenever churches have tried to play these roles it always led to disaster.

Nevertheless, Christians believe that the God of the Bible is the God of the real world, *and the real world includes the realm of politics*. As we shall soon discover, history has repeatedly shown that the *free expression* of generic Bible-based ideas in the political realm has had great value for creating and sustaining free governments in a general non-sectarian way. For example, some of the earliest and most universally applicable legal ideas about the nature and use of private property rights come, at least indirectly, from the first five books of the Old Testament. This is by far what most Christian conservatives mean when they speak of America as having a “Christian foundation”—that our nation arose historically within a culture that was generally, *though not exclusively*, informed by a Christian ethic and worldview. It is not a statement that Christian churches, as institutions, should have a legally favored status beyond an honest recognition of historic social reality.

Put simply, it is a bad idea to allow freedom of religion to become freedom *from* religion. This is not just

about ethics—it includes the academic freedom to follow evidence where it leads, and to let the results stand or fall in a marketplace of ideas that is not ideologically rigged. It also validates a re-evaluation of the *status quo* whenever relevant new information comes in. Therefore, most Evangelicals today advocate a *secular* republic. A majority of us believe that God is not currently doing theocracies, and will not do one again until Jesus Christ Himself returns *visibly in a self-evident way* to directly govern the earth. Of course, current trends make it wise that we all distinguish between what is *legitimately secular* and ideologies that unjustly force-march an unnatural *radical hyper-secularization* of all aspects of American culture.

Where Bible-based social ideas have taken root best is in political systems that recognize the legitimacy of both religious and secular authorities as separate—but *not mutually hostile*—institutions. This might be called “separation of church and state” as the Founders originally conceived it (though that term does not appear in the Constitution). The Founding Fathers wanted a nation with no state-established religious denomination, where people would be free to worship God and express their beliefs in their own way, without government hindrance. They wanted a nation where hard work and diligence would bring rewards and prosperity to the individual. They therefore tried to create a system of government that would ensure these liberties could continue. They even inscribed the spiritual root of this desire on the Liberty Bell, albeit in a co-opted form:

**...Proclaim liberty throughout the land and unto the inhabitants thereof: —Leviticus 25:10b (KJV)<sup>30</sup>**

The “foundation stones” they laid for future generations were expressed in defining documents like the *Declaration of Independence*, the *Constitution*, and the *Bill of Rights*, as well as in their own personal letters, sayings, and legal reasoning. It is clear from these documents that most of our Founders were at least culturally Christian, and that many were even more intensely devoted to the Bible as God’s word, whose faith in Jesus Christ motivated their ideas, decisions, and lifestyles. Even those Founders who openly denied that the Bible was the supernatural word of God—like Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine—believed that moral principles consistent with those proclaimed in the “duties to other people” part of Ten Commandments (commandments 5-10) provided the best philosophical basis for a government and legal system where people could have freedom without chaos. *They understood that fundamental moral truths did not shift with the popular tides.*

**“Our Fathers were brought up by their veneration for the Christian religion. They journeyed by its light, and labored in its hope. They sought to incorporate its principles within the elements of their society, and to diffuse its influence through all their institutions – civil, political, or literary.” Daniel Webster<sup>4</sup>** (Not to be confused with *Noah Webster*, who was also contemporary with the Founders, and involved primarily in early public education.)

The Bible-influenced worldview of Western civilization is often called Europe and America’s *Judeo-Christian* foundation—meaning that generalized principles from both the Old Testament Law of Moses and the New Testament Gospel of Jesus Christ have been applied in Western social institutions to varying degrees. The Founding Fathers often commented on this, but for brevity’s sake we’ll look at only a few:

**“The highest glory of the American Revolution was this: it connected in one indissoluble bond, the principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity.” John Quincy Adams (1767-1848), 6<sup>th</sup> US President, in a speech addressed to the House of Representatives, July 4th, 1821<sup>5</sup>**

**“It is religion and morality alone which can establish the principles upon which freedom can securely stand. The only foundation of a free constitution is pure virtue.” John Adams<sup>6</sup>**

**“Our liberty depends on our education, our laws, and habits... it is founded on morals and religion, whose authority reigns in the heart, and on the influence all these produce on public opinion before that opinion governs rulers.” Fisher Ames (Framer of the First Amendment “Establishment Clause”)<sup>7</sup>**

**“The primary objects of government are the peace, order, and prosperity of society. ...To the promotion of these objects, particularly in a republican government, good morals are essential. Institutions for the promotion of good morals are therefore objects of legislative provision and support: and among these ...religious institutions are eminently useful and important. ...The legislature, charged with the great interests of the community, may, and ought to countenance, aid and protect religious institutions— institutions wisely calculated to direct men to the performance of all the duties arising from their connection with each other, and to prevent or repress those evils which flow from unrestrained passion.”**

**Oliver Ellsworth (an early Supreme Court Justice on why churches were made tax-exempt)<sup>8</sup>**

Most of the Founders understood the distinction between *sectarian religious systems* and the *underlying principles* taught in the New Testament and proclaimed by the people as sound morality (often using the Bible). The first are **religious organizations** with no valid governmental authority, *while the second are cultural ideas that our Constitution guarantees the free expression of* in public discussion and display.

This distinction is real, and must be recognized by any fair understanding of the relationship between church and state. While the state must not establish a particular church, it does have an interest in seeing that the varied religious institutions in America are, in general, free to express themselves in the public realm, inasmuch as religion has been repeatedly shown to have a mostly positive function in a free society. *Encouraging a generally religious society, where people are free to choose their own worship modes and to express their views in public venues like politics and education, is not the same as “establishing a state religion.”* Nor does it put undue stress on those who, *by faith in unprovable assumptions*, reject religions that worship a personal God, since they too are free to persuade.

We are discovering after fifty years of recent history, however, that the same cannot be said of encouraging the reverse. The prevalent argument of the past fifty years that agnostics will feel “harassed” to conform by merely allowing the public expression of faith is pretentious and foolish, since the only way to grant the “right” to never feel any presence of a majority opinion is to strip everybody else of their genuine rights to free speech, free association, and freedom of religion in public. You can’t have it both ways.

A generally Judeo-Christian cultural framework is uniquely suitable to fostering an atmosphere of genuine (albeit humanly imperfect) tolerance, because the documents of the New Testament in themselves reject any form of coerced conversion and coerced religious membership. This is unlike what was practiced by Roman, Medieval, and early Reformation Era *government-established* Christian sects, and Islamic governments today.

Because the New Testament sanctions only prayer and proclamation (intellectual and moral reasoning) as legitimate tools for evangelism, Christians need no state churches. We have here a basis for real tolerance of people who adhere to non-Christian religions in the society outside the church—even those who actively reject the gospel. Of course the near-mandated redefinition of *tolerance* to mean *affirmation* is itself an instrument of social and political tyranny. Tolerance does not demand that we *advocate* bad social policy that is based on poor reasoning and immorality. Nevertheless, while Evangelicals want to give folks the biblical information needed to make informed spiritual decisions, we can also respect their right to choose for themselves.

Neither does having a secular government mean that generic Bible-inspired *ideas* must be suppressed from the public discourse of forming law and social policies—any more than the ideas of any other belief system from any other segment of the population. The Founders clearly found biblical ideas of great practical value.

***“The Law given from Sinai (The Ten Commandments) was a civil and municipal as well as a moral and religious code.”*** (He clearly implies that it is a useful moral foundation for law.) **John Quincy Adams**<sup>9</sup>

***“Indeed, the right of a society or government to [participate] in matters of religion will hardly be contested by any persons who believe that piety, religion, and morality are intimately connected with the well being of the state and indispensable to the administrations of civil justice. 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, founded upon moral accountability; a future state of rewards and punishments; the cultivation of all the personal, social, and benevolent virtues—these never can be a matter of indifference in any well-ordered community. It is, indeed, difficult to conceive how any civilized society can well exist without them.”*** **Joseph Story** (An early Supreme Court Justice—a Unitarian—explaining that the Establishment Clause did not amount to governmental indifference to religion’s role in society.)<sup>10</sup>

These are not isolated quote examples. Many of the Founding Fathers’ Bible-influenced ideas became a major part of the foundation of our nation. This created the potential for the moral sanity of Judeo-Christian ethics to be a guiding principle for civil government *without making any one Christian denomination into the State Church, and without making those of a completely non-Christian, or even an atheistic faith into legally-mandated second-class citizens*. That does not mean this potential was always realized consistently historically and socially. Still, for something to be a social reality, it must first be seen as a social possibility. People must first see such ideals as thinkable and do-able. Likewise, selectively eliminating Bible-based ethics from the discussion and development of our legal foundations also eliminates whatever good social possibilities they

enabled—even the freedoms we have historically enjoyed—sooner or later.

There is no question that a majority of the Founding Fathers saw the Ten Commandments as the indirect moral underpinning of their main legal codes. Jesus summarized the intent of the Law of Moses in **Matthew 22:36**; “**Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law? Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.’**” (MKJV)<sup>30</sup>

*“The duties of men are summarily comprised in the Ten Commandments, consisting of two tables; one comprehending the duties which we owe immediately to God—the other, the duties we owe to our fellow men.” Noah Webster (1758-1843), Preface to his American Dictionary of the English Language, 1828*

Why did the Founders think Judeo-Christian morality and ideas should generally be encouraged in the life of our nation? *Because they knew that without moral restraint in the hearts of the people a government that guaranteed the rights our Constitution describes could not effectively govern.* It would be like expecting an automobile engine to run forever with dirty oil that was slowly burning away. The engine might be well-built and fully fueled, but it still needs proper lubrication or it will eventually seize up. It’s simple “idea mechanics.”

One might object that a person does not need to be a Christian to be morally sane. *We are not saying that they do.* We are saying that whatever large-scale moral sanity was found in American culture was mainly rooted historically in the *public expression* of active Judeo-Christian faiths within that culture. This moral sanity did not arise spontaneously in a spiritual vacuum, nor was it the result of a generally agnostic humanistic society, nor were the Founders working from Muslim, Buddhist, Confucian, Animistic, or Hindu backgrounds. Some of them were Deists and Unitarians, but nowhere near the majority.<sup>11</sup> That is simple historic cause-and-effect reality.

Individuals, regardless of religion or ideology, are sometimes wise enough to choose good behaviors that they think will work for them in terms of practical private morality, business, and public conduct. We often call this “common sense.” Large masses of people, however, need institutions born of living spiritual influences—something that has enough intellectual, spiritual, and moral cohesion to be culturally contagious in a positive way, despite the human imperfections of those who follow it. There will always be some fools and fanatics even in good institutions because that is simply the human condition—get used to it. No worldview can guarantee universal common sense. A wise person learns to look past such people to the fundamental ideas that undergird the institutions in question. The wise person asks, *in which cultural soil is common sense more likely to grow?*

We can’t reasonably conclude from a careful study of history and comparative religious *ideas* that all worldviews lead to equal potential for justice and moral sanity. Ask any of the “Untouchable” Dalit caste in India, or a woman living under Muslim Shar’ia law. One can raise specters of witch hunts and the Inquisition, but they would be just that—specters. Every ancient religion has skeletons in its closet. The real question is, *do those skeletons reflect the central teachings of that religion’s founders, or the centuries of later distortion that came by human political power play?*

It’s silly to claim that all religious ideals lead to the same place. While there are some things in common, and notable individuals in all religious traditions, who show personal moral sanity, the differences are at least as significant as the similarities. To pretend otherwise by repeating the ideological mantra that “all religions teach the same basic things” is unrealistic. So is saying that religion and faith are irrelevant to the social discussion. Even radical secularists, who reject formal religion, ultimately do so by faith. Is their dogma any less dogmatic?

Nor can we honestly look at the last two hundred years, when secular governments and ideologies have held sway in the West, and claim that fanaticism and foolishness has decreased on their watch. The 20<sup>th</sup> century was humanity’s bloodiest century in terms of genocide—most of which was spawned by varied radical secularist ideologies. It comes down to balance—having diverse cultural institutions, both religious and secular—and to the recognition that the boundaries of these institutions will always overlap to some degree in the real world.

Even “smart” individuals need spiritual and other institutional reinforcements if they hope to pass their values on to their children in any real and lasting way. Put simply, social institutions must *reinforce the good* in people and *discourage the bad*. People need good churches (and other institutions of faith), elected governments, courts, schools, and media outlets because life throws things at the individual that are often too big for any one person to handle. Families, our most basic institutional unit, need education systems that work with them rather

than against them to give their children a moral compass. Schools cannot give kids a moral compass if their parents won't. Likewise, the schools can't be in the business of ideologically indoctrinating kids to subvert the morality of parents who diligently model a sound moral compass.

Individuals are important, but so is the community. Communities need political, religious, and other institutions in order to function. Those institutions mechanically require internal leadership and education systems that are firm, just, and sound, but also somewhat flexible, to maintain some semblance of order.

When a civilization lets its institutions—for whatever reason—reinforce evil and stigmatize good, it is already in a state of social decay. It starts with popular rejection of spiritual truths by one or more consecutive generations, which corrodes public morality in the following few. This finally corrupts and politically prostitutes the civilization's religious, artistic, academic, and even scientific establishments; leaving subsequent generations increasingly *less able to associate cause with effect in their personal relationships, and reasoning skills*. The ability to apply common sense on a large scale is thus crippled.

Breakdown of respect for spiritual *truths* (even—especially—after spiritual leaders have misrepresented them) produces a popular moral decline, bleeding away confidence that “truth worth knowing” even exists. This eventually destroys the foundation in future generations for both honest academic inquiry and individual *common sense*. It ends in nothing less than institutional insanity, which fosters insanity and despair in individuals—even when social institutions still try dysfunctionally to help the individual's despair and insanity. Historian Will Durant once said of the fall of the Roman Empire; “*A great civilization is not conquered from without until it has first destroyed itself from within.*” The same is true for us.

You know you live in an institutionally insane culture when many educated senior judges can't tell what pornography is, and even get away with sentencing repeat pedophile predators to mere probation. You know your culture's educational institutions are insane when school administrators have Timmy the Second Grader charged with “sexual harassment” for kissing little Suzi on the cheek, while they systematically strip teachers of the basic tools of authority they need to maintain discipline (and even safety) in the classroom. You also know your educational institutions are insane when radical homosexual activist groups are given free reign across the country to indoctrinate middle and high schoolers already struggling with adolescence. This is happening right here in “conservative” Rio Rancho schools without the consent (or knowledge) of parents. You know that your culture needs a straitjacket when public librarians are fired on “violation of First Amendment rights” grounds for reporting somebody to the police for using a library computer to view illegal child pornography.

The above examples are real incidents, the likes of which happen regularly today as a result of public policies that represent the institutionalized rejection of a formerly-held Judeo-Christian morality and spirituality in America. It does not seem that a strictly secular “common sense” has been able to compensate by providing a set of ethics that actually works realistically for the human condition. It has had *many* generations to try.

John Adams would have understood this situation for what it is:

***“We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”*** John Adams<sup>12</sup>

The Founding Fathers knew that the documents they wrote, and the government they forged, *could not* solve the spiritual problems of sinful humanity. They knew that if the people became godless and unrestrained that their form of government would ultimately fail. *It only stands to reason that a relativistic morality will shift with the tides of human passions rather than restrain them from evil.* Not only that, but the general biblical literacy of even the least-devout of the Founders gave them a chilling specter of what that would mean—a specter that for us is no longer a shadow but the substance in today's American popular culture:

**But know this, that in *the last days* grievous times will be *upon us*. For men will be lovers of themselves, money-lovers, braggarts, arrogant, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural feeling, unyielding, slanderers, without self-control, savage, haters of good, betrayers, reckless, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power of it; even turn away from these.** 2 Timothy 3:1-5 (LitV)<sup>30</sup>

It would be no exaggeration to say, based on their own words at least, that some of the Founding Fathers were

more afraid of a godless amorality in the American people than they were of being attacked by a foreign nation:

***“While the people are virtuous they cannot be subdued; but when once they lose their virtue then they will be ready to surrender their liberties to the first external or internal invader.” Samuel Adams (1722-1803)*** <sup>13</sup>

For three generations the American public has been sold on the idea that “you can’t legislate morality.” It’s been repeated by so many “talking heads” so many times, in so many ways that most of us naively take it as truth. But let’s dissect this little taboo, just to see if it actually fits reality. *Most law, by definition, is legislated morality!* For example, our laws condemn murder as a crime, reflecting the commandment to “do no murder.” Marriage and family laws are indirectly based on the moral principle of “do not commit adultery”—an absolute that says it’s wrong to hit on your neighbor’s spouse no matter how much of a jerk their spouse, or yours, is.

Granted, some morality-based laws are almost, or even completely unenforcible; but that does not mean they serve no purpose. Sometimes just having a legal statement that says “society disapproves of X behavior” places an important moral and cultural landmark in view, even if it’s impossible to actually enforce X. Most criminal and civil law is codified morality of some sort. The real question isn’t whether or not we can “legislate morality,” but *what kind of morality will our nation legislate?*

The legislation of morality is unavoidable. It’s happening all the time. Do we want to legally reinforce a weak relativistic morality that shifts with the tide of human passions, and uses politically prostituted academic institutions to redefine good into evil and evil into good? This costs us billions of dollars in bigger insurance premiums, and to build the inevitable prisons and hospitals to deal with the predictable (and recorded) increases in crime and sickness (particularly Sexually Transmitted Diseases). *That is what we are doing now.* Worse, we are in great danger of a legislated or judicially imposed *amorality*. This is also why a mere “fiscal conservatism” must eventually destroy its own foundations unless accompanied by a spiritually alive “social conservatism.” *The mechanics of erasing social limits in law has huge and costly consequences in the real world.* Isn’t it better for law to reflect moral absolutes that restrain human passions—even if it can never be perfectly applied, or free from the potential of corruption? Where will corruption grow *more easily*—in societies that reject fixed moral boundaries (boundaries that equip people to identify corruption for what it is), or from systems anchored in such boundaries? *We can never eradicate all corruption, but we can enact systems that restrain its growth.*

Fixed moral boundaries can be appealed to by any person when corruption rears its head. Movable moral boundaries cannot, simply because those with the media, academic, or political power can move those perceived boundaries at will. Everyone is left wringing their hands, knowing something is wrong, but uneasily convinced that the best solutions are “out of bounds” because they are just “unthinkable to sensible people everywhere.”

Many of the writings of our Founding Fathers suggest a strong desire that the American people be Bible-literate—knowing and living by the principles expressed in the Ten Commandments—if only for the reason of fixed moral limits. There is much evidence that some of the Founders even wished that citizens would become believers in Jesus in the “personal conversion” sense, because a *consistent* Christian is the best citizen of all. However, they would have *never* advocated trying to force the issue, because they knew from Scripture, experience, and history that it was impossible to force genuine conversions. This wish would not have conflicted with their desire that every person be free to worship God after the dictates of their own conscience. It merely reflects that they saw God and His Law as *real entities* that had enough *knowable objective content* to transcend any contrasting interpretations that could reasonably arise from an honest approach to the texts.

Put simply, they still believed words had meaning. They saw a difference between “worshiping God after the dictates of ones own conscience,” and “creating a god in ones own image to cater to ones own selfish rejection of moral absolutes.” They saw the first as *liberty*, and the second as *licentious idolatry*.

While this distinction is mostly an unenforcible one because none of us are mind-readers; *keeping it clear that there is such a distinction has real value.* It is abundantly clear from their writings and speeches that the Founders wanted children trained in biblical truth at least in a general way—*just not indoctrinated into any particular sect except those of their parents.* Many of the Founders, like Benjamin Rush, Samuel Hopkins, and John Witherspoon, were themselves active Bible teachers with missionary connections. A strong case can be made that even the more secular-minded of them wanted the moral truths of the Bible taught and understood within the general culture, and even that they saw the ultimate source of these truths as being Divine.

***“Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are***

***indispensable supports... It is substantially true that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule indeed extends with more or less force to every species of free government. Who that is a sincere friend to it can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?"***  
**George Washington, Farewell Address, 1796**

What has been the long-term result of biblical idea foundations in our nation's character? Freedom without chaos! The presence of the Bible by itself may not guarantee liberty, but the consistent application of its truths contributes to the growth and preservation of a powerful form of freedom that promotes responsibility and vigilance instead of selfishness and disorder. We have been, since the mid-1800s, the most prosperous nation *per capita*. Lower-middle class Americans are wealthier than most of the rest of the world. We give more global disaster relief than any other nation. We have fought to free more people than any other country. We even habitually rebuild the nations of our defeated foes, spending vast sums to help them prosper again. We are the main financial support of Christian missionaries to the world. There's no other country on Earth where most of the world's population would rather live. We know this because so many people are desperate to come here any way they can, even illegally, and at great personal cost paid to ruthless smugglers. Nobody except wanted criminals try to leave the US illegally! What civilization has enjoyed greater prosperity and influence than ours?

**Proverbs 14:34 *Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a shame to any people. (LitV)***<sup>30</sup>

Yet, honestly, which attribute from the above Proverbs quote better describes us today? Enough of the Founding Fathers were faithful believers that they wrote basically God-honoring founding documents. Their ideas produced predominantly noble social institutions, and worked generally toward over-throwing already present institutions that lacked nobility—like slavery—even though it took time and blood. While other historic forces contributed, and it has never been perfect, the biblical influence (not always felt through the church as should be, by the way) has been decisive in a way that is dishonestly, and for some, conveniently forgotten today.

This begs an important question: *What have we collectively done with this benefit in our lifetimes?*

If we look around honestly, we must sadly conclude that all too often we have used our freedom to move our father's "boundary stones"—lately even so we can lead sinful lifestyles, destructive to self and to others, as though we were entitled to do so. We have too often confused *political liberty* with *moral license*.

Early jurist and Senator Daniel Webster understood the danger of losing awareness of this distinction:

***"If we and our posterity reject religious instruction and authority, violate the rules of eternal justice, trifle with the injunctions of morality, and recklessly destroy the political constitution which holds us together, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us that shall bury all our glory in profound obscurity."*** Daniel Webster<sup>14</sup>

How did we lose such an essential awareness?

It began in the academic world, and penetrated middle 20<sup>th</sup> century America mostly through public education.<sup>15</sup> John Dewey was the main early 20<sup>th</sup> century architect of today's public education system; a man religiously committed to the materialistic worldview of Secular Humanism.<sup>16</sup> For many decades prior to Dewey, European and American universities had promoted elements of this worldview without much success in penetrating the general population or American legal institutions. Dewey followed Friedrich Engels' (Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto* collaborator) argument that if you can remove people from their historic, spiritual, and cultural roots, they can be easily swayed to your point of view.

This has been a tactic of Communism and other forms of Socialism—or of any other modern "ism" trying to set up an ideological "utopia" doomed by its own assumptions to become a tyranny. Dewey helped popularize the teaching of molecule-to-man evolution because its description of unguided and limitless biological change reinforced his own view that Christian belief in the God of the Bible, who is absolute and unchanging, had to be changed to accommodate new ideologies.<sup>17</sup>

The beliefs of John Dewey, and others like him, further infiltrated universities, law schools, and our court system, to produce what has come to be called the "*Living Document*" approach to constitutional law. Many of the changes to our public school system from the late 1940s on (especially after the 60s) were advanced by the often unconscious academic acceptance of the faith-assumptions that the universe (matter, space-time, and energy) is eternal, and that time-plus-chance molecule-to-man evolution is a historic fact.

Cosmologists now know that the universe had to have had a beginning because it is observed to be expanding, and we know many of its limits—all of which rule out an eternal universe. The presence of the DNA *language code* inside our cells, along with a plethora of other complex factors, is revealing the absurdity of unguided molecule-to-man evolution, and even “guided” M-t-M evolution as an unlikely source for genetic *information*.<sup>18</sup> Sure, the implications of what we now observe in science are being ignored and down-played—often by political means—because anyone can see that *information requires an intelligent origin*. One does not look at an old book of Shakespeare and conclude that the paper and words assembled themselves by random processes. The genome of the simplest bacteria contains far more coded information than all the works of Shakespeare. No established orthodoxy goes down simply because the facts no longer support it—not even, it seems, in science education. Sadly, much of the academic world has *ideologically* done away with the God of the Bible as a real-world factor long ago, and few are open to reconsidering the obvious implications of what many new discoveries are now showing us. This has especially bad implications for law.

Dewey’s camp imposed a theory of education and democracy based on Darwinian Evolution. They developed ideas of evolutionary democracy, evolutionary economics, evolutionary education, and evolutionary law not because biological evolution was actually shown to be a proven universal principle that actually applied to these other things, but because *it fit their faith-assumptions about the social reality they wanted to create*.

Ironically, their views had already penetrated many churches in the form of Liberal and then Neo-Orthodox theology. All these ideas had at their foundation the faith-assumptions that *absolutely* nothing is constant, and *absolutely* nothing supernatural could ever happen in the real world. They insisted that there could be no absolutes—forgetting that their *absolute demand* that there be no absolutes *was itself an unprovable absolute*, not to mention a logical fallacy. *By faith*, they effectively ruled out the God of the Bible as a real-world factor before any study of evidence in whatever subject under discussion could even be taught. This was the basic mindset under which everyone who ever attended a public school was educated under since at least the early 1960s, and probably considerably earlier in a softer form.

It is now *dogma* that no theory of cosmic or biological origins can allow intelligent design as a cause, *no matter what the evidence actually says, and how absurdly improbable mathematically the odds of naturalistic time-plus-chance causes are repeatedly shown to be*. The logical consequences of this view also rule out moral absolutes and the idea of an objective truth that is true even if nobody wants to believe it.

“Church” for the “uneducated masses” was fine, as long as ideas informed by religious faith didn’t enter the public domain to influence decisions being made for the “real” world—realms like law, business, education, child rearing, politics, and scientific inquiry. *What they failed to consider was that the idea of an objective reality outside of our own minds was based on the concept of an objective truth that is partly discoverable, and worth discovering*. The largest, but by no means exclusive, vehicle in Western history for propagating the idea of “objective truth” was the Judeo-Christian concept of an objectively real God who had spoken truth into history in the form of His word. People may not think about this consciously, but one concept mechanically led to the other in the history of ideas. The idea of discoverable objective truth also continues to indirectly hold up the idea of an objective reality. Eastern worldviews have no such consistent mechanism. *Everything from “common sense” to a technologically-applicable science is built at least indirectly on top of a belief in objective truth*.

By the 1960s, this redefinition of “Nature”—and its mechanical consequences—produced a generation that often had a radically different worldview from their parents. The radical student activists of one generation become the elite professors of the next four. Interestingly enough, the radicals of the 60s and 70s generation, that shouted so loudly to be heard, are today often in the business of shutting down the free marketplace of ideas on the university campuses they now have a stranglehold on. They are driving the hyper-secularization of all aspects of American culture, and will tolerate Judeo-Christian thinkers *only if they compliantly stay inside their intellectual ghetto and behave as though the faith of the Bible has no relevance to the “real” world*.

This would have been intolerable to the Founding Fathers, and *should be intolerable* not only to vocal Christians, *but to all who believe that a free marketplace of ideas is what made America great*.

Our founders believed that the Bible was the basic text book of education, and that our rights are “unalienable” because they were given to us by God. If that sounds wrong, just let them speak for themselves:

***“The Bible was America’s basic textbook in all fields...” (and) “Education is useless without the Bible.”***

Noah Webster, *Our Christian Heritage*, p.5

***“As Constitution signer John Dickinson explained, an inalienable right was a right “which God gave to you and which no inferior power has a right to take away.”<sup>[148]</sup> John Adams similarly attested that the inalienable rights of man were rights “antecedent to all earthly government; rights that cannot be repealed or restrained by human laws; rights derived from the great Legislator of the universe.”<sup>[149]</sup> It was from among such inalienable—or natural—rights that the framers specifically identified the right to life, liberty, property, self-protection, pursuit of happiness, etc.” David Barton, *Evolution and the Law: “A Death Struggle Between Two Civilizations”*<sup>19</sup>***

If you still think that sounds wrong, consider this: If rights come from government—even a democratically elected one—then government can eventually take those rights away because there is no higher moral authority.

Until the 1930s the main law textbook used since before the Declaration of Independence was written by William Blackstone. Blackstone taught that certain rights and wrongs did not change—especially those related to fundamental human social behavior. It was generally held that human government (and hence law) was indirectly delegated to man by God. This traditional view of law had been held true and unchangeable since the *Magna Carta*.<sup>20</sup> The *Magna Carta* (Latin for *Great Charter* or *Great Paper*), is an English legal code, originally issued in 1215, that formed the basis for subsequent legal development throughout the English-speaking world and beyond. The *Magna Carta* influenced the development of English Common Law and many constitutional documents, including the *United States Constitution* and its *Bill of Rights*. It is still considered one of the cornerstone legal foundations in the history of Western Civilization.<sup>21</sup>

Late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century American political writer and educator Noah Webster had much to say on this subject, as it fell to him to organize much of the original public education in the new United States:

***“The moral principles and precepts contained in the Scripture ought to form the basis of all our civil constitutions and laws. All the miseries and evil men suffer from vice, crime, ambition, injustice, oppression, slavery, and war, proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible.” Noah Webster*<sup>22</sup>**

As early 20<sup>th</sup> century American law schools and courts began to adopt Dewey’s philosophy, which had already found traction at the turn of the century through the writings of jurists like Oliver Wendell Holmes and Louis Brandeis, the foundations of legal thinking began to shift. In 1916 Louis Brandeis (1856-1941) urged the Court to be bold in leading society to change. This could mean many things, both good and bad. Holmes was even bolder in his desire for the current ideology of men to be seen as the ultimate foundation for law, rather than the law of God, or even the ideas of the Founding Fathers:

***“When twenty years ago a vague terror went over the earth and the word socialism began to be heard, I thought and still think that fear was translated into doctrines that had no proper place in the Constitution or the common law. Judges are apt to be naïf (naive), simple-minded men, and they need something of Mephistopheles (the name of Satan in the classic novel *Faust*). We too need education in the obvious—to learn to transcend our own convictions and to leave room for much that we hold dear to be done away with short of revolution by the orderly change of law.” Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.*<sup>23</sup>**

To be fair, these men did not intend for self-indulgence, sexual perversion, and lawlessness to rule society. There were gaping holes of injustice in how society was ordered at that time—“Jim Crow” laws, robber baron monopolies, Native American relocations, KKK lynchings—all of which had a slimy pretext of “legal respectability,” and some of which were even arrogant enough to make false appeals to Scripture. Men like Holmes and Dewey lived in an age when most Christians had allowed biblical intellectual foundations to be all but destroyed, while imagining their Christian ethics would always survive because they were so sensible. As legal and education leaders, Holmes and Dewey had lost faith in biblical guidance—if they had ever had any. This does not excuse them, however, for they also forgot the Law of Unintended Consequences. They also lived in a time still greatly benefited by the stability of a generally Judeo-Christian “cultural inertia”—when it seemed that “common sense” would always be common enough in the population to keep things from getting too crazy.

Their assumptions here were flawed on at least two points: *One*, that secular education by itself, more than the general ethics of the then-dominant Judeo-Christian culture, produced a more fertile soil for moral common sense in individuals; and *two*, that men are not sinful by nature and could simply be “educated” into

moral sanity. While a culture of Judeo-Christian ethics cannot guarantee universal common sense (no ethic can), it at least fits the human condition, and holds people accountable for their actions. This makes individual common sense much more likely to grow and mature than in a society governed by moral relativism; which we can now see retards people's ability to associate cause with effect in morality and personal relationships.

By the 1930s Blackstone's Commentaries on law were discarded because they held to moral absolutes rather than moral relativism. Moral relativism, and its resulting legal relativism, allowed the shift of not only the superficial cultural and legal forms that normally change over time, *but the redefinition of the deeper substance underlying the very ideas of morality and law themselves*. Relativism became the "intellectual" chic for pushing the "positive changes" needed for the "evolution" of law and society. A new "naturalistic" view of law began to take precedence by way of an accumulation of legal decisions based on this new *guiding assumption*.

In this view the very definition of "Nature" effectively changed. Prior to this shift, it had been commonly understood that Nature, like humanity, had been impacted by a historic Genesis Curse. It was understood that Nature no longer perfectly reflected the moral character of "Nature's God," though the existence of such a God was deducible by observing Nature. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Darwinian assumptions had mechanically force-marched the idea that "Nature as we see it now, is as it has always been." If created by a god who used molecule-to-man evolution, then Nature is a moral reflection of that god; if Nature is the product of time-plus-chance natural forces with no guiding hand, then Nature is simply a gigantic cosmic accident.

The problem with using this new definition of "Nature" as a legal foundation, even indirectly, is that Nature as it exists today is both kind and cruel, just and unjust—and that attribute eventually leaks through into legal thinking. Dewey never anticipated that students who were being told that they were evolved animals, with certain immutable animal drives, would eventually "go Columbine" on a regular basis, or that videos of girls beating each other up would ever become a regular staple for high schoolers using the most advanced global communications network ever produced by science. Nor did he anticipate that teachers and administrators would ever live in fear of organized, lavishly-funded Gay activist legal groups just waiting to fire off community-crippling lawsuits at the least perception of "discrimination," nor the consequences this would have in the classroom. (Assuming said administrators are not in full support of such activism.) If school officials are afraid to discipline Gay students for disruptive and distracting sexual exhibitionism on campus, they cannot discipline the equally disruptive (and more common) sexual excesses of "straight" kids either. Ideas can have terrible consequences in the real world.

Nevertheless, ideas also develop and grow in law just like anywhere else. Not all change is bad.

Because some things do change over time, there is a legitimate legal principle called *stare decisis*, which is Latin for "to stand by things decided." This principle was used in Common Law systems to express the notion that prior court decisions must be recognized as precedents, according to case law. Thus the decisions that court judges have made in our history become the basis for further legal reasoning in similar cases.<sup>24</sup> This can be a good principle, *so long as society and the legal system still recognize moral absolutes and a constitutional standard that sees objective truth in the Constitution*. But *stare decisis* can easily become a dangerous legal corrosive in a culture that has accepted moral relativism as its norm. Court decisions can slowly move away not only from the original intent of the written law, but even from sensible cause-and-effect reasoning that builds logically from constitutional idea-foundations into areas that are beyond the possible scope of historic original intent. (The Founding Fathers were not divine prophets, after all.) Without a culturally understood set of moral and legal absolutes, *stare decisis* allows those legal idea-foundations to dissolve, and mechanically creates an unaccountable judicial elite that effectively legislates from the bench. In this scenario the Constitution can be made to say anything judges want it to say, once enough judges sign off on the "New Order."

There is serious concern today that over-dependence on the doctrine of *stare decisis* in constitutional interpretation is being used as a means of legal subversion to redefine the *meaning* of the Constitution and Bill of Rights. A bad precedent may at first be only slightly at odds with the Constitution. This error in interpretation then spreads, and is built upon by further judicial decisions, until it results in something far outside the original understanding of the Constitution. *Stare decisis* is not mandated by the Constitution, and if it leads to unconstitutional results, then the historical evidence of original understanding can be re-examined. In this view, fidelity to the word-construction in the Constitution trumps fidelity to potentially unconstitutional case precedents. This view of constitutional law is called the *Constructionist* school, and it stands opposed to the

*Living Document* approach that appeals almost solely to *stare decisis*.

The *Constructionist* judicial philosophy is based on the assumption that the Constitution contains enough objective content to reveal a clear set of foundational ideas in the minds of those that wrote it. It is not always about appealing to the Founders' "original intent" however, which was sometimes flawed. It is also about the logical direction their written ideas can reasonably go in, once applied. The Post-Modernist "*Living Document*" judicial philosophy effectively allows judges to redefine the meaning of the Constitution on an "as-desired" basis. Defenders of the *Living Document* view appeal to real problems with "original intent," like the fact that the Founding Fathers did not address the issue of slavery, and therefore did not *intend* for constitutional rights to apply to black slaves. This seems like a powerful argument on the surface, but it ignores the fact that many of the Founders *did* want these rights for slaves too. They simply compromised on the issue to maintain unity of the states, and allowed what was even then seen as an obvious logical inconsistency to stand. *The "Living Document" approach is not the same as allowing ideas that are clearly contained in the Constitution to work out to their logical legal conclusions despite the historic inequities left in place at the forming of our nation—such as what happened in the Abolition of Slavery. It is, in fact, quite the opposite.*

In the case of slavery, the Supreme Court was no help. Its packed pro-slavery justices (7 versus 2) were committed to a politically contrived pro-slavery "litmus test" despite what the Bill of Rights actually said. They ignored the fact that *free black citizens in five states had voted seven decades earlier to ratify the Constitution*. The Supreme Court's illogical attempt to impose an arbitrary pro-slavery ruling in the 1857 *Dred Scott Decision* was based on a selective form of *stare decisis* (it selectively used only pro-slavery precedents). It was seen by thinking people at the time—even those indifferent to slavery—as unjust, and a violation of reason and history. Because the Bill of Rights—the first 10 amendments to the Constitution—had objective meaning, and free blacks had been voting citizens at the dawn of our republic, the mechanics of reason demanded a conclusion other than that of revoking the citizenship of African American free men by judicial fiat just to prevent slaves and former slaves from bringing lawsuits to gain their freedom once their masters moved to non-slavery states.

This "*Dred Scott*-style reasoning" is instead much like that which drives the *Living Document* approach—*which assumes that words do not really have meaningful objective content and historic context, but are rather mere tools for political manipulation to be used according to whatever social-political agenda the judges favor*. A *Living Document* approach to "interpreting" the Constitution allowed the Massachusetts Supreme Court to arbitrarily rule that traditional marriage laws "unjustly violate" the "rights" of homosexuals who want marry, despite the fact that no such meaning was ever intended by the writers of that state's Constitution, nor could ever be logically derived from the text by any reasonable stretch. This also ignored the fact that society has a special stake in favoring monogamous man-woman marriage because it is the socially and biologically-proven best case scenario, under stable conditions. Ironically, the one vote against the Massachusetts decision was made by a Lesbian judge who was intellectually honest enough not to go along with the radical agenda of her peers. Now California's Supreme Court has made an even worse edict, because their law gives licenses to non-residents.

Because *Living Document* ideology ultimately allows the creation of arbitrary edicts by judicial whim, it is therefore destructive to the rule of law, which must assume that laws have stable objective content that can be understood and applied over time. This view of "constitutional law" is the biggest threat to genuine liberty imaginable, and the most insidious. Terrorists can only kill us occasionally. *A redefining of what the Constitution means destroys who we are as a nation*. All it takes is for one small persistent politically active group to convince an already overwhelmingly relativistic media, academia, and judiciary that they have a "right" to never have their behavior criticized by polite intellectual and moral reasoning in the public marketplace of ideas. The only way to enforce such an imaginary "right" is to take away everyone else's genuine rights of free speech, freedom of association, and freedom of religion. You can't have it both ways.

Jesus faced a similar legal situation in His day. The Jewish *Mishnah* codes were nothing more than the accumulated decisions and opinions of Rabbis through the centuries as to what the Law of God meant, and how it should be applied. They were taking precedence over God's Word by the time of the New Testament. Jesus said, "**You have heard it said... but I say...**" on many occasions to reveal the legal distortion.

**Mark 7:6-7 And He (Jesus) said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'this people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me. but in vain do they worship me,**

*teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’” (NASB)<sup>30</sup>*

As in Judea, The courts in our country have often gradually redefined right and wrong in the past hundred years. They’ve moved the “ancient boundary stones” away from the precepts of God’s law, which was a major indirect moral foundation for our legal system. The result is that the the Founding Fathers’ words are now used selectively against the very principles supporting them. The Ten Commandments, biblical social truths, and prayer have effectively been removed from public discourse to the point where now even the symbols of their historic significance are being forbidden. Instead, the courts have imposed a hyper-secular ideological set of faith-assumptions upon the discussion of public issues, and have effectively insisted that we must all pretend this fits reality—no matter how absurd, outrageous, and immoral the system becomes!

**Isaiah 5:20** *Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!* (MKJV)<sup>30</sup>

As our social foundations have been removed, our culture has turned away from God to sin. We now have a society and legal system that often reinforces evil and stigmatizes good—a toxic social environment where it is dangerous to be a child and terrifying to be a parent.

Law and education are not all that has shifted badly from our original social foundations. Arts and Entertainment are not only a mirror for our culture, but a means to manipulate that culture by normalizing ungodly behavior and desensitizing us to evil. Nobody is totally immune to repetitive suggestion. Hollywood has been portraying sin on the silver screen since the beginning, but there used to be some effective standards—put in because the “roaring 20s” and 30s were also a period of cultural decadence. The problem here is not with portrayal of evil in itself, when done with reasonable artistic self-restraint in a storyline that does not depict evil as good or *vice versa*. Good stories always have a moral conflict element that must authentically portray evil.

*The problem is that moral relativism blurs the distinction between authenticity and gratuitousness in the minds of both artist and patron alike.* A novelist or film maker can authentically depict story characters (like David and Bathsheba) engaged in adultery as part of a story plot without zooming in on the sex act itself in a way designed to erotically stimulate the audience. Hollywood (meaning the general morals of actors, directors, and producers) has become a cultural elite with tools to powerfully influence popular cultural norms in an unprecedented way. That influence has become predominantly evil—even at the expense of the movie-makers themselves, who know that movies in the PG-13 and softer range do better financially more often than R and NC-17 rated movies—and yet they still insist on trying to socially engineer the culture as they work the ratings system toward further desensitizing audiences to graphic sex and violence. We, as viewers, are not completely “helpless” however.

Too often we are guilty of wringing our hands helplessly while we glibly watch sin and filth that would have made our grandparents blush! Sure, there is such a thing as an ironic form of humor that laughs at the ridiculousness of certain sin behaviors in a way that does not approve of the sin—even parts of the Bible do that! Our popular entertainment, however, is too often way past hiding behind legitimate irony. It often actively reinforces a sick “politically correct” standard of moral redefinition straight from industry ideologues bent on becoming even more powerful as a defining cultural elite:

1. Adultery is called “having an affair.”
2. Fornication is called “making love” or “the new morality.”
3. Modesty is practically unheard of. Erotica on the level of “soft porn” is blatantly displayed everywhere—on billboards, in magazines (including sales catalogs), in books, TV, movies, and music—to the point where we, as a culture, *are sexually overstimulated to an unnatural and unhealthy degree that often impedes our ability to have realistic sexual expectations in marriage relationships.*
4. Respect for the aged and to legitimate authority is hardly ever taught anymore.
5. The honor of working hard is rarely taught—except as it is perverted by “workaholics” who use their work as an unhealthy compulsion to either escape family or serve their own greed.
6. Honesty is no longer presented as a serious ethical imperative.
7. Setting aside a day of rest is practically unheard of. It wasn’t very long ago when you couldn’t shop on Sundays because the stores were all closed.

8. Murder of old people and tiny babies is called euthanasia and abortion.
9. Obscenities have become an accepted part of most people's vocabulary.
10. Materialism is encouraged. Teaching the idea of being content with what you have, or working hard to save up for something you want, is lost.
11. Pilfering small items, or stealing time by only working when the boss is looking, are "normal."

Where do we start if we are to reverse, or at least arrest, this cultural decay? We can start by restoring reverence for the long-trying and well-established principles of our forefathers, and stop mindlessly tossing them out as "old-fashioned," in order to indulge our appetites for something new and exciting. Often social practices remain around long enough to become "old-fashioned" *because they work really well*. We need to wake up and realize that *progress is not good if we are progressing in a self-destructive direction*. This isn't about "setting back the clocks," but about filtering out the evils of the past without drifting into even worse evils in the present. The sin of our nation will ultimately lead us into slavery—as it did in ancient Israel. We urge you all to seriously consider the following from both sacred and secular wisdom:

**Judges 10:13-14** *Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods; therefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your distress!* (NASB)<sup>30</sup>

*"Neither the wisest constitution, nor the wisest laws will secure the liberty and happiness of a people whose manners (life, morals) are universally corrupt."* Samuel Adams<sup>25</sup>

*"To the kindly influence of Christianity we owe that degree of civil freedom, and political and social happiness which mankind now enjoys... Whenever the pillars of Christianity shall be overthrown, our present republican forms of government, and all blessings which flow from them, must fall with them."* Jedediah Morse (1761-1826)<sup>26</sup>

**Psalm 11:3** *If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?* (NASB)<sup>30</sup>

The "righteous" can still be the "salt and light" in our culture that Jesus meant them to be:

**Matthew 5:13-16** *"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 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. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."* (NIV)<sup>30</sup>

*What does it mean to be salt and light?* Salt, in the time of Jesus, was both a preservative and a flavor enhancer. Light illuminates the darkness and reveals hidden dangers, as well as unexpected hidden treasures that may have redemptive use.

*What can we do as "salt and light" in our culture?*

1. **Live our Christian values in private and in public.** Be men and women of integrity who live what they believe! Of all people in this great nation, we are responsible to serve the Lord, and reflect in our lifestyles His love and truth.

**Ephesians 5:11-16** *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore he says, "Awake, sleeping ones! And arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light."* (MKJV)<sup>30</sup>

2. **Use your time and money in a way that effectively "votes" for your value system.** Be willing to look longer and harder for something when shopping, in order to support a good company that tries to do the right thing. Don't go see movies that promote godless values or obvious immoral or anti-Christian sentiments. Don't buy stock in companies that you know have an agenda to destroy the foundations of our culture. Silly as it sounds, shop at the "Merry Christmas" stores—just because the Culture Wars get annoying and sound trivial at times does not mean they are not for-real and do not have meaning. If there is a decent choice, take it! There's no way to do this all the time, but do it as much as you can. You have a choice where you spend your money. When you spend your money in this culture you effectively cast a vote. Companies eventually hear when you vote by spending or not spending your money with them.

3. **Teach your children your Biblical values.** Join the battle for the next generation, firstly in your own home. Encourage everyone in your family to memorize the Ten Commandments and make them the rules of your home. They truly are the “Ten Secrets for a Successful Family” and much more. As much as possible, train your children for the day when they must function in a hostile culture—be it a university, or a job. Don’t model for them a pretentious “persecution complex” that deliberately chooses the most offensive ways possible to communicate views, just so that you can pat yourself on the back when you evoke predictable anger. Instead, teach them not to be afraid to firmly stand up for truth with a reasoned approach that is not mean-spirited. Teach them to fear God more than men. As much as your spiritual and natural gifts—and theirs—permit, teach them how to reason from a biblical foundation logically, kindly, and realistically toward the issues of the day.

**Deuteronomy. 6:6-7** *“These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.”* (NASB)<sup>30</sup>

4. **Pray for those in public office to do the right things—even when they have a bad track record.** Sometimes God can get a hold of them—if only for the moment—and they can pleasantly surprise us. Either way, prayer works.

**1 Timothy 2:1-4** *I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.* (NIV)<sup>30</sup>

5. **As much as possible, vote for those who hold to your biblical values to represent us.** Nevertheless, even when elections fail to produce candidates who hold to the “light” of clearly stated (and lived) biblical values, it is unwise to grow frustrated, petulant, and refuse to vote “in protest” simply because the political system is so corrupt. The world system is always corrupt to one degree or another! That’s why the Bible summarizes our spiritual enemies as “the world, the flesh, and the devil,” the last being called **“the god of this world”** in 2 Corinthians! *There may not always be a clear choice between a good and a bad candidate, but there will usually be a lesser of two or more evils to choose from.* Being “salt” means that we are to be a preservative of that which is good in culture—or at least of that which is relatively stable. Often that means choosing between someone who may do some damage, and another who will create utter catastrophe. *In history and politics this is much more often the case than having a clear choice between righteous and unrighteous candidates.* We cannot throw in the towel simply because we want things to be simpler than they really are. *Salt preserves meat even in the darkness.* It is always spiritually, morally, and physically less expensive in “blood and treasure” to preserve a relatively stable government system for a day when more light can be expressed than it is to let it crash and burn. (This assumes such preservation can be done without Christians personally denying Christ in their own lifestyles.) It always costs horrendous tribulation and blood to rebuild a whole new system amid the ashes. In the process, the good ideals driving that rebuilding are usually corrupted by political or war-driven expediencies. This was true even in the American Revolution, which—though incorporating many biblical concepts—left in its wake churches that were often demoralized and dead, until the “Second Great Awakening” revival that came a generation later. This is why Paul, in the above 1 Timothy passage, tells us to pray *“for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”* The “light” of God’s word spreads more readily in times of stability. The “saltiness” of His people is often tested and shows its strength in the dark, however. Be wise salty people who can reason through the issues. Look for candidates with sound biblical ethics, but beware of those who pander towards religion simply to gain votes. If no candidate seems to favor biblical values, find something they favor that you would *not* favor, and vote against it. We still face ballot choices between right and wrong, even when candidates wear shades of gray.

**“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 (Exodus 18:21). If the citizens neglect their duty and place unprincipled men in office, the government will soon be corrupted. 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.” Noah Webster<sup>27</sup>*

*“Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty, as well as the privilege and interest of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers.” John Jay (First Chief Justice of the Supreme Court), October 12, 1816<sup>28</sup>*

*“Whether our religion permits Christians to vote for infidel rulers is a question which merits more consideration... It appears to me that what the prophet said to Jehoshaphat about his attachment to Ahab offers us a lesson.” John Jay<sup>29</sup>*

**2 Chronicles 19:1-2** *Then Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned in safety to his house in Jerusalem. Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, “Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD and so bring wrath on yourself from the LORD?” (NASB)<sup>30</sup>*

The context of John Jay’s statement shows that he was not advocating that non-Christians be excluded from public office, nor even that “good Christians” would never vote for a non-Christian that had a morally sane handle on the issues. It was simply a statement that there is some lesson for us to be learned as Americans from the principle behind the warning to Jehoshaphat. Not all belief systems are equally committed to justice and objective truth. Jay lived at a time when he could not imagine an election without at least one morally sane person with at least some church affiliation running. While the electoral playing field is often more complex nowadays, the message that Tony Perkins, President of FRC, has for Christians today is still relevant:

*“On the ballot in some states are critical moral issues dealing with the definition of marriage, abortion, parental notification, embryonic stem-cell research, cloning, gambling and issues with a direct impact upon our religious liberty... It is important that your voice is heard because every single vote, including yours, counts.”*

- 6. Run for public office and/or support others running who share your values as they step forward to serve us as our representatives.**
- 7. Vote for governors and presidents who will name Constructionist judges, and against those who name Living Document ones.** Educate yourselves in the difference. It’s deeper than mere “conservative versus liberal” or even “pro-Life versus pro-Abortion.” Though conservatives are more likely to name Constructionists, who are more likely to be pro-Life, there are enough exceptions that it’s important to look for candidates who make an explicit commitment to name Constructionist judges. Looking at Constructionist versus Living Document judges ensures that a wider range of issues are covered than a simple “abortion litmus test” does. Aim at the foundations, and you will change the superstructure.

**Proverbs 29:2** *When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked man rules, the people groan. (NKJV)<sup>30</sup>*

No words could conclude this booklet any better than those penned by a Founding Father *who was not even a believer in the divine authority of the Bible*. He was a Deist who believed we were intelligently designed, and that we would someday be held accountable in some sense to what he called “Nature’s God,” nonetheless. A Bible-influenced worldview was so foundational to his thinking that despite his rejection of the supernatural, he still seriously said the following near the end of his life:

*“God who gave us life gave us liberty. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are a gift from God? ...That they are not to be violated but with His wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, and that His justice cannot sleep forever.” Thomas Jefferson, excerpts of his writings inscribed on the walls of the Jefferson Memorial in Washington DC.*

## Bibliography

1. Clara Zetkin, from *My Memorandum Book (An Interview with Lenin on the Woman Question)*, as presented in *The Emancipation of Women: From the Writings of V.I. Lenin*; International Publishers
2. A careful documentation of just how profound a civilizing influence the gospel of Jesus Christ has been in the history of Western Civilization is Vincent Carroll & David Shiflett’s book, *Christianity on Trial: Arguments Against Anti-Religious Bigotry* (Encounter Books, © 2002). An excellent documentation of the continuing positive influence of Bible-based faith toward free societies is Tom Terry’s book, *Faith and*

*Freedom: How the Missionary Principle Facilitates Political Freedom* (Xulon © 2005)

3. See Romans 3:1-20, Romans 6:19-23, Proverbs 20:9, 1 John 1:5-10 to list a few examples of the universality of this condition.
4. Daniel Webster (1782-1852), Dec. 22, 1820. *The Works of Daniel Webster* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1853), Vol. I, 48.
5. Cited by John Wingate Thornton, in *The Pulpit of The American Revolution*, 1860
6. *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States*, Charles Francis Adams, editor (Boston: Little, Brown, 1854), Vol. IX, p. 401, Letter to Zabdiel Adams dated June 21, 1776.
7. *An Oration on the Sublime Virtues of General George Washington*, (Boston: Young & Minns, 1800), p. 23.
8. Ellsworth spoke this to the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut, cited in the *Connecticut Courant*, June 7, 1802, p. 3.
9. *Letters of John Quincy Adams, to His Son, on the Bible and Its Teachings* (Auburn: James M. Alden, 1850), p. 61.
10. Joseph Story, *A Familiar Exposition of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1847), p. 260, §442.
11. An excellent, and far from exhaustive compilation of material from a broad sampling of the Founder's own writings, with an impressive citation of mostly primary historic source documents, but some 18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> century secondary sources, can be found at **Wallbuilders.com**, under the article, *Importance of Morality and Religion in Government*, and in David Barton's article, *A Few Declarations of Founding Fathers and Early Statesmen on Jesus, Christianity, and the Bible*.
12. October 11, 1798, in a letter to the officers of the *First Brigade of the Third Division of the Militia of Massachusetts*. Charles Francis Adams, ed., *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States: with a Life of the Author, Notes, and Illustration* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1854), Vol. IX, 228-229.
13. *Personal Letter to James Warren from Samuel Adams*, dated 12 February, 1779; in a collection of source documents called *The Founders Constitution*, put out by the University of Chicago Press and the Liberty Fund.
14. *The Writings and Speeches of Daniel Webster* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Company, 1903), Vol. XIII, p. 492. From "The Dignity and Importance of History," February 23, 1852
15. An excellent exposition of how this happened in both the academic, scientific, and artistic disciplines can be found in Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture*, Chapters 8-12, pp. 144-245, (Fleming H. Revell, 1976)
16. *Humanist Manifesto I*, (1933) on-line text version at [www.americanhumanist.org](http://www.americanhumanist.org) where Dewey is mentioned as prominent signatory.
17. See the "We affirm..." points 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10, and especially 13 of *Humanist Manifesto I*, (1933)
18. See the *Unlocking the Mysteries of Life* and *The Privileged Planet* DVDs, available at <http://www.discovery.org/>
19. David Barton, *Evolution and the Law: "A Death Struggle Between Two Civilizations"* —Barton cites Constitution signer John Dickenson and President John Adams. He cites Dickenson from; John Dickenson, *Letters from a Farmer XLII* (compiled and published in 1903), and John Adams from; *Boston Gazette*, August 12, 1765; 3 *John Adams, the Works of John Adams*; 449 (Charles Francis Adams, ed. Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1851) from his Dissertation, 1765.
20. A translation into modern English of the *Magna Carta* (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/magnacarta.html>) clearly shows the Christian cultural context in its opening statements—remember, the point isn't that America was an exclusively Christian country, but that Christian thought played an important role in its development, and that Christian ideas played a critical, but not exclusive, part in the development of Common Law.
21. Stimson, Frederick Jesup. *The Law of the Federal and State Constitutions of the United States With a Chronological Study of Their Principles, a Chronological Table of English Social Legislation and A Comparative Digest of the Constitutions of the Forty-Six States*, Book I: The Constitution, Chapter 4: Property Rights, pg. 36. (The Boston Book Company, 1908. xix, 386 pp. Reprint available July 2004 by The Lawbook Exchange, Ltd.)
22. Noah Webster, *History of the United States*, "Advice to the Young" (New Haven: Durrie & Peck, 1832), pp. 338-340.
23. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., speech at Harvard Law School Association of New York, New York City, February 15, 1913.—*Speeches by Oliver Wendell Holmes*, p. 101 (1934)
24. Stare decisis; *Britannica Concise Encyclopedia*. Copyright © 1994-2008 *Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.*
25. Samuel Adams, cited by William V. Wells, *The Life and Public Service of Samuel Adams* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1865), Vol. I, p. 22, quoting from a political essay by Samuel Adams published in *The Public Advertiser*, 1749.)
26. Jedediah Morse (1761-1826), *A Sermon, Exhibiting the Present Dangers and Consequent Duties of the Citizens of the United States of America* (Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin, 1799), p. 9
27. Noah Webster, *The History of the United States* (New Haven: Durrie and Peck, 1832), pp. 336-337
28. John Jay, October 12, 1816, *The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay*, Henry P. Johnston, ed., (New York: Burt Franklin, 1970), Vol. IV, p. 393.
29. John Jay, *The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay, 1794-1826*, Henry P. Johnston, editor (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1893), Vol. IV, p.365
30. The following versions of the Bible were used in this booklet, and identified by the following acronyms:
  - (MKJV) *Modern King James Version*, © 1962-1998 by Jay P. Green Sr.
  - (KJV) *King James Version*, 1611, public domain
  - (LitV) *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible*, © 1976-2000 by Jay P. Green Sr.
  - (NASB) *New American Standard Bible*, © 1960 by The Lockman Foundation, and © 1986, & 1995, Moody Bible Institute of Chicago
  - (NIV) *New International Version*, © 1973 by New York Bible Society International and Zondervan Bible Publishers