

Proverbs 22:28 says, “Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.”

Jeremiah 6:16 says: “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein*.”

Today if we were traveling to Tucumcari, NM, Amarillo, TX, or even Elk City or Erick, OK, we would not take Route 66, the old way. Even though we are celebrating the 100th birthday of the Mother Road, we would not go that way because it's old. It's out of date. It's broken up so it's impossible to travel. Some people think that's true of the Bible and some people think that is true of our nation and its founding as well—that they're old, out of date, broken up. So they reject the Bible. They reject the vision of the Founders. You will notice that I put the two of them together—the Bible and the vision of the Founders. There's a very good reason for that, and the evidence shows it. As we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, I think it's important that we see and remember that evidence, the old ways the Founders believed—the landmark that faith and our national foundation stand or fall together. The Founders believed they belonged together. They believed they were beginning a new creation, a place in the wilderness.

If you look at the history of the settling and founding of the United States, the history is clear, evidenced by countless speeches, events, and writings. In the past decade the term “American Nationalism” has been bandied about

loosely and recklessly to describe any attempt to tie in the Founders' vision of our nation with the Bible. We have often heard or asked, "Is the United States a Christian nation?" That has been discussed and dismissed out of hand with complete disregard for or misinterpretation of the writings of the Founders.

Consider this question: If a nation has for its basis, Sharia law, the law of the Koran, could we rightly consider that nation a Muslim nation? Yes. When Thomas Jefferson was in England in 1786 as ambassador to France, he and John Adams, our English ambassador, asked Tripoli's ambassador to Britain, Abdul Rahman Adja, the reason the Barbary pirates had seized two American ships and put the crewmembers into slavery. His answer was "it was written in the Koran, that all nations who should not have acknowledged their authority were sinners, that it was their right and duty to make war upon whomever they could find and to make slaves of all they could take as prisoners, and that every Musselman [Muslim] who should be slain in battle was sure to go to Paradise." Tripoli was a nation that adhered to Sharia law; thus, it was a Muslim nation.

The United States has for its basis English common law, based on the Bible. Every founder knew and likely had a copy of Sir William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. It was the second-most quoted authority for law they cited, preceded only by (pause) the Bible. In his *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, Blackstone began by analyzing the law of God set forth in the Bible. He wrote that law is "a rule of action which is prescribed by some superior, and which the inferior is bound to obey." He noted that

“man, considered as a creature, must necessarily be subject to the law of his Creator... it is necessary that he should in all points conform to his Maker’s will. This will of his Maker is called the law of Nature... No human laws are of any validity if contrary to this.” When the Declaration of Independence speaks of the “Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God,” it is referring to God’s revealed will in nature (natural revelation) and the Bible and its revealed truth. By that measure, the measure of what law a nation rests on, that would mean the United States is a Christian nation.

Is every person in the US a Christian? Absolutely not. A Christian is a person who has put his or her faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. If every person in the US has to be a Christian for this to be a Christian nation, it’s obviously not true. But that is irrelevant to my point. *The Founders believed they were founding a nation built on principles of the Bible.* Kenyn Cureton noted, “Twelve of the original colonies incorporated the entire Ten Commandments into their civil and criminal codes. Rhode Island did not adopt the first four commandments, but it did include the last six. The fact that the Founders believed they were building a nation based on the principles of the Bible is illustrated plainly in stone and wood in the architecture of our capital. The Supreme Court Building has a figure of Moses on the rear façade. The lower portions of the doors to the court have the Ten Commandments cut into them. Above the heads of the justices as they deliberate on the bench is a marble frieze and between them are the Roman numerals 1 through 5 and 6 through 10, clearly representing the Ten Commandments.

Our sixth president, **John Quincy Adams**, declared, “the law given from Sinai was a civil and municipal as well as a moral and religious code; it contained many statutes . . . of universal application—laws essential to the existence of men in society, and most of which have been enacted by every nation which ever professed any code of laws.” In 1607, when the first English colony on this continent was settled at Jamestown, VA, the first community building was a church inside the fort. It was an awning attached to trees. They held church services fourteen times a week, with sermons preached on Sunday and on either Wednesday or Thursday. Two prayer services were held daily, one in the morning and one in the evening Monday through Saturday. When the Mayflower landed on Plymouth Rock in 1620, those brave venturers into the wilderness had already signed the Mayflower Compact on shipboard. It begins this way: “In the name of God, Amen... Having undertaken, for the Glory of God, and the advancement of the Christian faith... do solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God,... covenant and combine ourselves together... For the advancement of the Christian faith.” Their first act upon setting foot on land was to kneel to God in prayer and praise and dedicate their new colony.

In 1643, the colonies in New England formed the New England Confederation and signed a treaty that began with these words, “Whereas we all come into these parts with one

and the same end and aim... namely to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to enjoy the liberties of the Gospel in purity and peace."

What of the writings of the Founders themselves? What do those writings tell us?

James Otis, a Massachusetts lawyer who coined the phrase, "No taxation without representation," was an early advocate for liberty, though not a signer. He wrote, "There can be no prescriptions old enough to supersede the law of Nature, and the grant of Almighty God, who has given all men a right to be free. Government springs from the necessities of our nature, and has an everlasting foundation in the will of God." "The right of every man to his life, his liberty, no created being can rightfully contest. They are rights derived from the Author of nature — inherent, inalienable, and indefeasible by any law, compacts, contracts, covenants or stipulations, which man can devise. God made all men naturally equal."

John Adams, our second president, wrote, "The Christian religion is, above all the religions that ever prevailed or existed in ancient or modern times, the religion of wisdom, virtue, equity and humanity. I have examined all [religions], and the result is that the Bible is the best book in the world." "The general principles on which the fathers achieved independence were.... the general principles of Christianity.... I will avow that I then believed, and now believe, that those general principles of Christianity are as eternal and immutable as the existence and attributes of God." "Without religion, this world would be something not fit to be mentioned in polite company: I mean hell."

John Adam's cousin, Samuel Adams, wrote that the rights of the colonists "may be best understood by reading and carefully studying the institutes of the great Law Giver and Head of the Christian Church, which are to be found clearly written and promulgated in the New Testament."

Benjamin Franklin during the debate on the Declaration of Independence in the Continental Congress is recorded as saying this: "I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the Sacred Writings, that 'except the Lord build the House, they labor in vain that build it.' I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without His concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the Builders of Babel."

Another signer, Dr. Benjamin Rush, first vice president of the Philadelphia Bible Society, the first Bible society in America, wrote, "By renouncing the Bible, philosophers swing from their moorings upon all moral subjects.... It is the only correct map of the human heart that ever has been published." "The Bible, when not read in schools, is seldom read in any subsequent period of life.... It should be read in our schools in preference to all other books [because] it contains the greatest portion of that kind of knowledge which is calculated to produce private and public happiness."

"In contemplating the political institutions of the United States, I lament that we waste so much time and money in punishing crimes and take so little pains to prevent them.

We profess to be republicans, and yet we neglect the only means of establishing and perpetuating our republican forms of government, that is, the universal education of our youth in the principles of Christianity by means of the Bible. For this Divine Book, above all others, favors that equality among mankind, that respect for just laws, and those sober and frugal virtues which constitute the soul of republicanism.

“The great enemy of the salvation of man, in my opinion, never invented a more effective means of limiting Christianity from the world than by persuading mankind that it was improper to read the Bible at schools.”

George Washington said, “It is impossible to govern the world without God and the Bible.”

It was prohibited to print the Bible in the colonies. Only the Oxford and Cambridge Presses in England were allowed to print the Bible, supposedly to insure accuracy. In 1777 Congress ordered the importation of 20,000 Bibles to address the short supply in the colonies. The first American Bible was the Aitken Bible. In September 1782, Congress approved the Aitken Bible to be printed and recommended it “to the inhabitants of the United States.” It was the only Bible ever authorized by Congress.

Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe were lifetime members of the Virginia Bible Society. Elias Boudinot (first president of the Continental Congress) John

Jay (first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court), Charles Cotesworth Pinckney (military general and later ambassador to France), Bushrod Washington (George Washington's nephew and a Justice of the Supreme Court) and William Wirt (Attorney General of the US under Monroe, Madison, and John Quincy Adams) were officers of the American Bible Society. Our seventh president, President Andrew Jackson, said of the Bible, "That Book, sir, is the Rock upon which our Republic rests." Abraham Lincoln said of the Bible, "I have this to say: it is the best gift God has given to man. All the good Savior gave to the world was communicated through this book."

I could go on reading statements from more of the signers of the Declaration of Independence like this one from **James Wilson, one of the first Justices on the Supreme Court**, but you might get bored. "Human law must rest its authority ultimately upon the authority of that law which is Divine.... Far from being rivals or enemies, religion and law are twin sisters, friends, and mutual assistants. Indeed, these two sciences run into each other.... Our all-gracious Creator, Preserver, and Ruler has been pleased to discover and enforce His laws by a revelation given to us immediately and directly from Himself. This revelation is contained in the Holy Scriptures." Wilson was only one of six people to sign both the Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution.

Some people may think, "But I've heard a lot of the Founders were Deists, whatever that is, instead of Christians. Is that true, and what does it mean?" I have been reading George McKenna's *The Puritan Origins of American Patriotism*, and he discussed this. Deism is the belief that

God created the world like a cosmic watchmaker and set it spinning and then went off and left it alone, having nothing else to do with it. It has been alleged that many of the Founders were Deists. That is simply not true, McKenna said. At least 60 percent of the adult population attended church regularly between 1700 and 1776. (A recent Pew Research Survey revealed only between 39-42 percent of Oklahoma attend regularly.) McKenna said, Jefferson was not much of a Deist because in his second inaugural address, Jefferson professed the need for “the favor of that Being in whose hands we are, who led our fathers, as Israel of old, from their native land and planted them in a country flowing with all the necessary and comforts of life, who has covered our infancy with His providence and our riper years with his wisdom and power.” This shows belief in a God who intervenes in human history, not the Deist God who created the world, set it spinning, and abandoned it.

McKenna wrote, “Jefferson’s God was not a detached watchmaker but a God who actively intervenes in history.”

As for Franklin, another supposed Deist, McKenna wrote, Franklin recalled “he may have toyed with it [Deism] in his youth but ultimately rejected it because it was not ‘useful.’”

McKenna concluded, “The men who led the American Revolution and drafted the Constitution may not have been punctilious about specific tenets of Christian orthodoxy, but virtually to a man they were convinced that God had a hand in this ‘new order of the ages’ called America and hopes that they were doing it according to his will. *Annuity Coeptis*, put into the Great Seal of the United States in 1782, was an

expression of that hope. “He [God] has favored our undertakings.”

John Jay, the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, declared that America’s early settlers came here “under the auspices and direction of Divine Providence.” **John Dickinson** told Americans, “You are assigned by divine providence... the protectors of unborn ages, whose fate depends on your virtue.” **Patrick Henry** said the American Revolution “was the grand operation, which seemed to be assigned by the Deity to the men of this age in our country.”

McKenna wrote that the average American knew and respected Scots-Irish Presbyterian preacher George Whitfield much more widely than Benjamin Franklin.

That brings another issue into focus. While many of the Founders shared New England Puritan roots, another stream of settlers shared Scots-Irish Presbyterian roots. Prior to the American Revolution, thousands upon thousands of Scots-Irish, predominantly Presbyterians, migrated from places like Ulster to the Middle Colonies and then down the Great Wagon Road to North and South Carolina, where authorities deemed their hardy spirits helpful on the western borders with the hostile Native Americans. They left Ireland because the British government had declared the Presbyterian Church to be illegal. Pastors were forbidden to legally marry people and those married previously by them were deemed to be fornicators. Presbyterians could no longer hold military or civil office. The majority of the city officials in Ulster were Presbyterian. This was deemed an act of betrayal because these same people had defended Parliament and the English government during the civil wars in England. The Solemn

League and Covenant of 1643 had guaranteed freedom of religion for the Scots and Irish. England had betrayed them. As much as 1/3 of the population left Ireland for the colonies between 1731 and 1768. Between 1771 and 1773, 30,000 fled to America, all of them opposed to the English. On the eve of the Revolution, estimates are up to ½ million Scots-Irish were living in the colonies. Most were lukewarm to the Revolution. The motto of Mecklenburg County (Charlotte) North Carolina (70% Scots-Irish), was three words: "Leave us alone." But that was not to be. The problem was these Presbyterians (many of whom later became Baptists) rejected British authority because of their understanding from the Bible of freedom, church government, and liberty. An Anglican bishop sent to reform them referred to them as "ignorant, mean, worthless, beggarly Irish Presbyterians, the Scum of the earth, and refuse of Mankind." The feeling was mutual. He said, They believe "that they are a free people." A hired Hessian mercenary in 1778 said, "Call this war by whatever name you may, only call it not an American Rebellion; it is nothing more or less than a Scotch-Irish Presbyterian Rebellion." King George III of England and other high officials called this "A Presbyterian War." British Secretary of State Lord Dartmouth said, "Presbyterianism is as the bottom" of that war. Even John Adams knew that, writing "The revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people a change in their religious sentiments." Scots-Irish churches became gathering points for patriots. British Colonel Tarleton burned these churches and said, "All Presbyterian churches are shops of sedition." He said the Scots-Irish were "the most averse of all other settlers to the

British government in America.” When Washington was camped with his meager starving army that brutal winter at Valley Forge, he declared, "If defeated everywhere else, I will make my last stand for liberty among the Scotch-Irish.” The reason was their faith.

In **George Washington's Farewell Address**, given when he left office after a second term, he said, “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim tribute to patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness - these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens . . . reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principles.”

In the battle for New York City in 1776, British commander George Howe moved 30,000 veteran British troops into position to capture and destroy the Continental army under General Washington. He had only 18,000, largely inexperienced troops. He had lost two top generals and 1,000 men. The British had outflanked Washington and he was in danger of losing the whole war. For no reason, the British troops stopped advancing. Washington was trapped on Long Island and the only escape was crossing the East River. The weather was horrible. The river was treacherous. Washington called for a prayer meeting to ask for God's help and guidance. Suddenly at 11 PM, the wind and rain stopped, and the East River was as smooth as glass. Even with that miracle, it would be almost impossible to get the whole army across to Manhattan Island. Just before

dawn, a fog descended, covering the army and hiding them from the British. When the fog lifted, Howe was shocked to see the Americans were all gone.

Let me tell you one other story about George Washington I found on the Mount Vernon website. I had never heard this story. It took place when Washington was serving as a major in the Virginia Provincials during the French and Indian War, which preceded the American Revolution by twenty years. The French had allied themselves with various Native American tribes (primarily the Ottawas) to protect their economic interests and harass the western frontier of the American colonies—lands that French trappers like LaSalle and Joliet had long settled—the French controlled Canada and the area from the Alleghenies to the complete Mississippi River basin to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Washington was in a troop of 1300 (among them was Daniel Boone, who was driving a wagon) ordered to attack the French and Indian forces at modern-day Pittsburgh, Fort Duquesne. Washington was the ripe old age of 23. In the battle, the commanding officer, General Edward Braddock was killed, and though Washington was not in the chain of command, he took charge. In a three-hour battle, July 9, 1755, 456 of Washington's men were killed outright, another 422 were wounded. When the fighting stopped, Washington was the only officer out of 86 left mounted on his horse. The officers were targeted especially, and 26 were killed, 37 wounded.

The remaining troops managed to withdraw and Washington looked down at his vest and there were four bullet holes in it, but he didn't have a scratch. In a letter to

his family about ten days after the battle, he wrote, "By the all-powerful dispensation of Providence, I have been protected beyond all human probability and expectation; for I had four bullets through my coat, and two horses shot out from under me, yet escaped unhurt, altho' death was levelling my companions on every side."

Mason Locke Weems in his 1800 biography of Washington says that fifteen years later Washington returned to the site of the battle with his friend and family doctor, James Craik. According to Weems, an old Indian chief who was now an ally of Washington and America sought him out: "I have traveled a long and weary path that I might see the young warrior of the great battle.... I am come to pay homage to the man who is the particular favorite of Heaven, and who can never die in battle." The chief told Washington that he had instructed his braves to aim their muskets at him, and, knowing that if the leader was shot, the troops would retreat, all of the braves fired at Washington, he claimed, and even the chief said that he had shot at Washington seventeen times, yet he remained unharmed. According to what is called the Indian Prophecy, the old chief was often heard to swear that "Washington was never born to be killed by a bullet."

As for the truth of the story, we do know Craik was with Washington at that battle, because he was the regimental surgeon, and records indicate he did, indeed, travel with Washington back to West Virginia, near Pittsburgh in 1770. Craik himself said, "I expected every moment to see him fall. His duty and situation exposed him to every danger. Nothing but the superintending care of

Providence could have saved him from the fate of all around him.”

The only pastor to sign the Declaration of Independence was Scots-Irish Presbyterian John Witherspoon, who was president of Princeton University. Estimates are 1/3 of colonists were loyalists, loyal to the British government. 1/3 were apathetic, and only 1/3 wanted liberty. Witherspoon told his students, “Do not live useless and die contemptible.” Among his students were nine future cabinet officers, 21 senators, 39 congressmen, three Supreme Court justices, 12 governors, a vice president, and a president—James Madison, who was also one of five Witherspoon students at the Constitutional Convention. Witherspoon supported independence, because, as he wrote, “There is not a single instance in history in which civil liberty was lost, and religious liberty preserved entire.” Witherspoon wrote, “He is the best friend to American liberty who is the most sincere and active in promoting true and undefiled religion, and who sets himself with the greatest firmness to bear down profanity and immorality of every kind. Whoever is an avowed enemy of God, I scruple not to call him an enemy to his country.”

We have a faith-based nation. On the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, then-president Calvin Coolidge said this in his address: “A spring will cease to flow if its source be dried up; a tree will wither if its roots be destroyed. In its main features the Declaration of Independence is a great spiritual document. It is a declaration not of material but of spiritual conceptions. Equality, liberty, popular sovereignty, the rights

of man—these are not elements which we can see and touch. They are ideals. They have their source and their roots in the religious convictions. They belong to the unseen world. Unless the faith of the American people in these religious convictions is to endure, the principles of our Declaration will perish. We can not continue to enjoy the result if we neglect and abandon the cause.”

Those are the old ways of which Jeremiah wrote in Jeremiah 6:16, the ways of faith in God. God said we would find rest for our souls in the old ways. These were the ancient landmarks the fathers laid. We do not see rest around us in America today. We see anarchy, chaos, materialism, even America-haters. We see a society in which the newest political party, the Democrat Socialists of America, seeks abolition of the Senate, the Department of War, amnesty for all illegals, and doing away with the Supreme Court and presidency. 52% of under-40 voters said their teachers and professors in school had favored democratic socialism. Cato Institute did a survey that showed 46% of Americans had no idea what America 250 means. 61% of Gen Z—those born between the mid-1990s and 2012 had no clue what it meant.

There is one more Scripture I would like to read for you. It's from Psalm 80:1, 3. “Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock, Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.” **We need the Providence of our loving God for the future of our nation.**

Verse 7 repeats, Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.”

In verse 14, David prayed, “Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine.” Verse 16 says, “It is burned with fire. It is cut down.”

Finally in verse 19 David repeats the cry to God: “Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.”

That should be our cry this morning as Christians and Americans. God blessed our nation. We sang about it. We read about it. We need to pray about it.

If you’re not a believer in Jesus Christ, you ought to be because God has blessed you already with so much in being born into the liberty and freedoms we enjoy as a result of the sacrifices of those who heeded the old ways. God has blessed America because we honored Him. Is America perfect? Far from it, but we have the foundation. As college professor Katherine Lee Bates wrote in 1893 in “America, the Beautiful,” “God mend thine every flaw, confirm thy soul in self-control, thy liberty in law.”

“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.”