

*America's
Christian
History*



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Cover: *The Departure of the Pilgrim Fathers from Delftshaven [Holland], 22nd July 1620.* (From the *Fresco* by C.W. Cope, R.A., in the House of Lords). Scene depicts prayerful travelers with their Bibles at the shore before embarking and a flag that reads "FREEDOM OF WORSHIP."

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*America's
Christian
History:*

**THE
UNTOLD
STORY**

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Atlanta, Georgia

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INTRODUCTION

America's Christian History: Fact or Fiction?

I believe no one can read the history of our country without realizing that the Good Book and the spirit of the Savior have from the beginning been our guiding geniuses.... Whether we look to the first charter of Virginia...or to the Charter of New England...or to the Charter of Massachusetts Bay...or to the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut...the same objective is present: A Christian land governed by Christian principles....

I believe the entire Bill of Rights came into being because of the knowledge our forefathers had of the Bible and their belief in it: freedom of belief, of expression, of assembly, of petition, the dignity of the individual, the sanctity of the home, equal justice under law, and the reservation of powers to the people....

I like to believe we are living today in the spirit of the Christian religion. I like also to believe that as long as we do so, no great harm can come to our country.

—Former Chief Justice Earl Warren,
addressing the annual prayer breakfast
of the International Council of
Christian Leadership, 1954¹

WHEN KIRK FORDICE, GOVERNOR OF MISSISSIPPI, STATED UNRESERVEDLY that “America is a Christian nation,”² the response from those opposed to this self-evident historical truth bordered on the hysterical: “There is a fine line between anti-Semitism and ignorance,” said Rabbi Steven Engel, who leads Mississippi’s largest Jewish congregation. “The governor has no tolerance at all to diversity—religious or racial,” said state Rep. Ed Blackmon. “Unworthy of any governor elected to represent a diverse and pluralistic constituency,” wrote Anti-Defamation League leaders.³

I wonder how atheists would have responded if Gov. Fordice had stated that we are “endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights”? Would they have claimed that the Declaration of Independence

is “intolerant” of atheists and evolutionists?

The governor’s controversial remarks landed him on CNN. His comments are perceptive and irrefutable. He stated simply:

Christianity is the predominant religion in America. We all know that’s an incontrovertible fact. The media always refer to the Jewish state of Israel. They talk about the Muslim country of Saudi Arabia, of Iran, of Iraq. We all talk about the Hindu nation of India. America is not a nothing country. It’s a Christian Country.⁴

Fordice went on to cite “surveys noting that 86 percent of Americans consider themselves Christian, but praised America’s ethnic diversity. ‘It’s the true melting pot of the world,’ he said. ‘That’s the strength of our country, and the strength certainly is not enhanced by denying simple facts that Christianity is the predominate religion.’”⁵

History is on the side of Governor Fordice. “Protestant Christianity has been our established religion in almost every sense of that phrase.... The establishment of Protestant Christianity was one not only of law but also, and far more importantly, of culture. Protestant Christianity supplied the nation with its ‘system of values.’”⁶ This statement of historical fact, inscribed into law by the United States Supreme Court and echoed by presidents and governors for more than two centuries, is being weighed on the scales of modern-day secular presuppositions and the normless ideals of “multiculturalism” and “pluralism.” By these standards, we should expect the claim of America’s Christian heritage to be found wanting. There are, however, other standards which today’s social critics ignore.

In 1931 the U.S. Supreme Court noted that the United States is a Christian nation. In a mid-Atlantic summit with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in the darkest hours of World War II, President Roosevelt—who had described the United States as “the lasting concord between men and nations, founded on the principles of Christianity”—asked the crew of an American warship to join him in a rousing chorus of the hymn “Onward, Christian Soldiers.”

In 1947, writing to Pope Pius XII, President Truman said flatly, “This is a Christian nation.”

Nobody argued with any of them.⁷

Roosevelt and Truman would be forced into a debate if they uttered such statements today in the highly charged atmosphere of Political Cor-

rectness that is sweeping across our nation. So would former presidents Woodrow Wilson and Jimmy Carter. In his famous address, "The Bible and Progress," delivered in Denver on May 7, 1911, Woodrow Wilson told his audience that "America was born a Christian nation. America was born to exemplify that devotion to the elements of righteousness which are derived from the revelations of Holy Scripture."⁸ Presidential candidate Jimmy Carter told reporters in June of 1976 that "We have a responsibility to try to shape government so that it does exemplify the will of God."⁹



Woodrow Wilson stated emphatically that "America was born a Christian nation."

A great deal of the editorial savagery leveled against Governor Fordice could have been alleviated if the historical record had been studied. But even this would not have been enough. Facts are not the problem. There is a decided bias against things Christian. Religion is fine, say the secularists, as long as it remains "Socially irrelevant, even if privately engaging."¹⁰ Mixing religion and politics is the ultimate social *faux pas*.¹¹ But this has not always been the case.

What It Is Not

The proposal that America is a Christian nation does not mean that *every* American is now or ever was a Christian. Moreover, it does not mean that either the Church or the State should force people to profess belief in Christianity or attend religious services. Furthermore, a belief in a Christian America does not mean that non-Christians, and for that matter, dissenting Christians, cannot hold contrary opinions in a climate of a general Christian consensus.

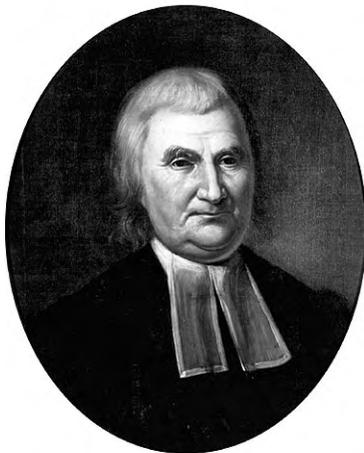
Christianity *presupposes* that there are people who are not Christians. There is no ethnic, ecclesiastical, or national right to the Christian

religion. The Great Commission is a command for Christians to work for the discipleship of nations (Matthew 28:18–20). Even though others of competing religious traditions might be horrified at such a thought, evangelism is a fundamental part of the Christian worldview.

What is the discipleship process? *Proclamation* coupled with *persuasion*. Forcing people to embrace Christ is foreign to the Christian worldview. In addition, there is nothing in the Christian worldview that gives the State authority to coerce non-Christians to profess Christ. Christianity is a religion of the heart. “Our best lead here is David Riesman’s phrase ‘inner directed.’”¹² There can be no change in a person unless the Holy Spirit does His sovereign work of regeneration. Regeneration is not the work of man, the Church, or the State. The Christian’s duty is to proclaim the redemptive message of the cross and to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

Having said this, the State is duty bound to protect Christians and the Church as they carry out their God-ordained mission (Romans 13:1–4; 1 Timothy 2:1–2). This was the view of John Witherspoon (1723–1794), a Presbyterian minister, president of the College of New Jersey (1768–93), a delegate to the Continental Congress (1776–82), the only clergyman to sign the Declaration of Independence, and a member of the New Jersey state legislature (1783, 1789). As the College of New Jersey’s chief lecturer, Witherspoon touched the lives of nearly 500 graduates. Eleven percent of them became presidents of colleges. Nearly one-sixth of the 55 participants in the national Constitutional Convention of 1787 were Princeton graduates.

As both a statesman and a clergyman, Witherspoon had a profound effect on the development of the early colonies.



James Madison, known as the “father of the Constitution,” was his

most notable student. Witherspoon taught a vice president, 21 senators, 29 representatives, 56 state legislators, and 33 judges, three of whom became members of the United States Supreme Court.¹³ Witherspoon called on the civil magistrate to supply “protection and security” for the various Christian sects while it remained neutral to their ecclesiastical constitutions.¹⁴

It would be unreasonable for Christians *not* to work for a legal and civil system that would be more protective of things expressly Christian. This means electing to civil office supporters of the Christian faith. Christians believe that a nation is blessed, blessed for everyone, “whose God is the LORD” (Psalm 33:12).

Witherspoon and most American political thinkers believed that society was antecedent to government; that is, social institutions, rooted in the family, village life, and voluntary associations, existed prior to government and took precedent over it. In practical terms, this meant that the commanding position of Christianity in American *Society* would allow religion to flourish as long as the civil government did nothing to interfere with it. That Americans were a Protestant Christian people was taken for granted by Witherspoon and most of his generation.¹⁵

The early constitutional framers, similar in perspective as Witherspoon, were convinced that there was an intrinsic connection between morality and good government. In practical terms this means that non-Christians are not exempt from God’s moral law. An atheist, for example, cannot appeal to his atheism and freely live as an ethical anarchist. While the State certainly has no jurisdiction over his beliefs, it does have something to say about how he acts. This moral and civil authority remains an irritant for many in our day. All people, however, answer to some standard of behavior. The question is this: In a religiously diverse society, what ethical standard should the civil magistrate use to make moral judgments about civil activity? This question is the essence of the debate about a “Christian America.”

What It Is

It’s one thing to claim that there is no evidence of a Christian America and prove it. It’s another thing to fabricate history to suit one’s entrenched presuppositions. An honest study of America’s past will show that a majority of Americans shared a common religion and ethic. America’s earliest founders were self-professing Christians and their founding

documents expressed a belief in a Christian worldview. John Winthrop's sermon aboard the *Arbella* in 1630 is one piece of evidence supporting this historical truth.

For the persons, we are a Company professing ourselves fellow members of Christ....

For the work we have in hand, it is by a mutual consent through a special overruling providence, and a more than an ordinary approbation of the Churches of Christ to seek out a place of Cohabitation and Consortship under a due form of Government both civil and ecclesiastical....¹⁶



John Winthrop described the group of Puritans who formed Massachusetts Bay Colony as “a Company professing ourselves fellow members of Christ.”

It is important to point out that Winthrop believed that the Christian religion goes beyond its application to the individual in regeneration and personal holy living, and that it is perfectly suited for both civil and ecclesiastical concerns. From Winthrop's perspective, if theft was wrong for the individual and his family, it was equally wrong in business, Church, and State. The same ethical principles applied in all relationships, including the civil sphere.

Freedom and liberty, ideals cherished by all Americans, were rooted in a biblical moral order. Liberty was not license. Freedom was not the right always to do what one pleased.

For Winthrop, success was much more explicitly tied to the creation of a certain kind of ethical community than it is for most Americans today. His idea of freedom differs from ours in a similar way. He decried what he called “natural liberty,” which is the freedom to do whatever

one wants, evil as well as good. True freedom—what he called “moral” freedom, “in reference to the covenant between God and man”—is a liberty “to that only which is good, just and honest.” “This liberty,” he said, “you are to stand for with the hazard of your lives.”¹⁷

Winthrop’s definition of liberty is far from the modern meaning of liberty. As it is usually defined today, liberty is freedom *from* moral restraints. One is not truly free, according to the contemporary use of the term, if one is bound by any moral code.

A Christian Commonwealth

America cannot be rightly understood without first understanding that the early settlers established what can be best described as a “Christian Commonwealth.” Winthrop appealed to God’s “Commandments, Ordinances, and Laws” as the philosophical and moral foundation of this early social experiment. Such a society was to be biblically centered. Of this there is no question. No other choice was possible: “Therefore, let us choose life,” Winthrop declared, “that we, and our Seed, may live; by obeying his voice, and cleaving to him for he is our life, and prosperity [Deuteronomy 30:19b–20a].”

The ethical system adopted by Americans and embedded in their social order rested on the bedrock of a biblical moral order. This is the essence of the Christian America claim. To say it another way, the Bible served as the ethical foundation for the young Republic, even for those who did not profess the Christian religion. “Not all the founders acknowledged a formal faith, but it was significant that their view of man had a deeply religious foundation. Rights were ‘God-given’; man was ‘endowed by his Creator’; there were ‘natural laws’ and ‘natural rights’; freedom was related to the ‘sacredness’ of man. The development of a free man was not divorced from the idea of moral man, any more than religious man could be separated from moral man.”¹⁸ Freedom was not opposed to law.

A Foreigner’s View

In 1831 the French social philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville landed in America to observe the new nation and her institutions. Tocqueville’s work was published in two parts in 1835 and 1840 as *Democracy in America*, “the most comprehensive and penetrating analysis of the relationship between character and society in America that has ever been written.”¹⁹ His observations on the ethical justification of America are revealing and worthy of study.

The sects that exist in the United States are innumerable. They all differ in respect to the worship which is due to the Creator; but they all agree in respect to the duties which are due from man to man. Each sect adores the Deity in its own peculiar manner, *but all sects preach the same moral law* in the name of God.... Moreover, all the sects of the United States are comprised within the great unity of Christianity, and *Christian morality is everywhere the same.*

It may fairly be believed that a certain number of Americans pursue a peculiar form of worship from habit more than from conviction. In the United States the sovereign authority is religious, and consequently hypocrisy must be common; *but there is no country in the world where the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America.*²⁰

Two-hundred years after John Winthrop's sermon aboard the *Ara-bella*, Tocqueville continued to find in America "an ostensible respect for Christian morality and virtue."²¹ This is the substance of a working definition of "Christian America"—the sharing of common moral values that have been shaped with reference to the Bible. "The biblical model of a 'city on a hill,'" to use Winthrop's phrase, "was the relevant goal for political action. Puritan divines called for the establishment of a 'Holy Community,' governed according to standards derived from Christian principles of morality and justice."²²



Alexis de Tocqueville: "All the sects of the United States are comprised within the great unity of Christianity, and Christian morality is everywhere the same."

The Great Reversal

One only has to look at what laws have been overturned in recent years to prove that Americans once shared a Christian ethic. Consider the

legalization of abortion and sodomy. One of the arguments used to push for legalization of these moral evils is that laws prohibiting the practices “have their roots in religious doctrines—fundamentalist Protestant, Mormon, Roman Catholic.”²³ The support of anti-abortion legislation because the Bible forbids abortion would mean enacting “laws that impose such doctrines on the people as a whole.”²⁴ It is because the prohibition against abortion is found in the Bible, so the reasoning seems to go, that abortion *must be legalized*. The same would be true of homosexuality, adultery, and bestiality.

Citing another example, school sex-education programs supporting abstinence as *the way* of guaranteeing protection against pregnancy and the deadly AIDS virus are criticized and often opposed because abstinence rests on religious presuppositions.²⁵ The Bible is also against rape, incest, and assault. Should these deeds be legalized because they are prohibited by laws found in the Bible? Are all laws suspect because they are based on religious presuppositions? Our nation is paying a high price for such perverse logic. “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isaiah 5:20).

Still in Search of Christian America

A number of scholars discount the historical evidence of a Christian America by defining the concept out of existence. Here is a representative example of this methodology: “Some commendable examples of Christian principles and practices can be found in America’s origins. But since such principles and practices seldom appeared in anything like pure forms, claims about America’s Christian origins should be carefully qualified. If the colonial or revolutionary past is to be used as a model, it must be done selectively.”²⁶ This argument erects an impossible standard. It is like saying that a Church is not Christian because there are hypocrites among its members. No one is maintaining that America was heaven on earth. Christian Americans were as “pure” as their biblical counterparts in their personal, social, and civil behavior. In a word, they were sinners.

The historical record is available for all to see. America’s Christian history is a fact. It is not honest to redefine history or tamper with the historical record just so that people of differing opinions are not offended. It was America’s moral choice that made this nation the envy of the world and a haven for the oppressed.

The Supreme Court Has Spoken

In 1892 the United States Supreme Court determined, in the case of *The Church of the Holy Trinity vs. United States*, that America was a Christian nation from its earliest days. After examining a full range of historical documents, Associate Justice David J. Brewer concluded that Americans are “a religious people. This is historically true. From the discovery of this continent to the present hour, there is a single voice making this affirmation.” Beginning with Ferdinand and Isabella’s commission to Christopher Columbus—“by the grace of God” and “by God’s assistance”—to make a voyage “to some of the continents and islands in the oceans” to a survey of then current state constitutions, the court concluded:



David J. Brewer, Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, surveyed the historical evidence of America’s founding and concluded, “This is a Christian nation.”

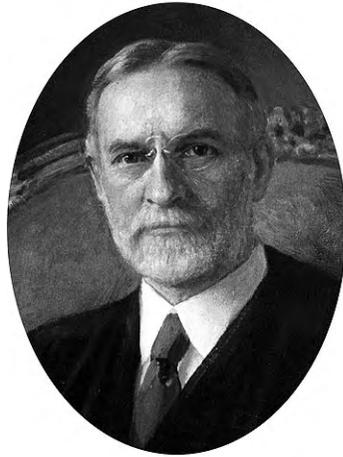
There is no dissonance in these declarations. There is a universal language pervading them all, having one meaning; they affirm and reaffirm that this is a religious nation. These are not individual sayings, declarations of private persons: they are organic utterances; they speak the voice of the entire people.

If we pass beyond these matters to a view of American life as expressed by its laws, its business, its customs and its society, we find everywhere a clear recognition of the same truth. Among other matters note the following: The form of oath universally prevailing, concluding with an appeal to the Almighty; the custom of opening sessions of all deliberative bodies and most conventions with prayer; the prefatory words of all wills, “In the name of God, amen”; the laws respecting the observance of the Sabbath, with the general cessation of all secular business, and the closing of courts, legislatures,

and other similar public assemblies on that day; the churches and church organizations which abound in every city, town and hamlet; the multitude of charitable organizations existing everywhere under Christian auspices; the gigantic missionary associations, with general support, and aiming to establish Christian missions in every quarter of the globe. These, and many other matters which might be noticed, add a volume of unofficial declarations to the mass of organic utterances that this is a Christian nation.²⁷

In 1931, Supreme Court Justice George Sutherland reviewed the 1892 decision and reaffirmed that Americans are a “Christian people.” As late as 1952, even the liberal Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas declared that “we are a religious people and our institutions presuppose a Supreme Being.”

In 1931, Supreme Court Justice George Sutherland reviewed the Supreme Court's 1892 decision and reaffirmed that Americans are a “Christian people.”



David Brewer and the *Holy Trinity* Case

It seems, however, that not even a decision from the Supreme Court is enough to convince some people of the Christian nation thesis. Representatives of Americans United for Separation of Church and State dispute the significance of the Supreme Court's 1892 *Holy Trinity v. United States* decision authored by Justice David Brewer (1837–1910). They claim that the *Trinity* decision is a “legal anomaly that has been cited by the court only once since then.” They further dismiss its significance by asserting that “the opinion of one obscure Supreme Court justice does not amount to an official decree that the United States is a Christian nation.” Americans United claims that five years later, in an unrelated case, Brewer seemed to “step away from” his 1892 decision.²⁸

While Americans United believes that two Supreme Court acknowledgments (1892 and 1931) are not enough to substantiate the claim that America was founded as a Christian nation, supposedly a single statement in the 1797 Treaty of Tripoli which declares that “[T]he Government of the United States is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion...,” is enough to debunk the Christian nation claim.²⁹ Why is a single obscure treaty enough evidence to *disprove* the notion that America is a Christian nation but two Supreme Court rulings are not enough evidence to *prove* America was founded as a Christian nation?

Americans United does not tell people that the 1797 Treaty with a Muslim nation was written to assure its rulers that the United States would not force the people of Tripoli to embrace Christianity. In addition, in 1805 the treaty was revised and did not include the language stating that “the Government of the United States is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion.” (See chapter 8 of *America's Christian History* for a detailed study of the historical background and significance of the Treaty of Tripoli.)

As was stated, Americans United claims that David Brewer “seemed to step away” from the 1892 *Trinity* case when he ruled in favor of a New Orleans city ordinance allowing prostitution in one zone in the city. Supposedly a group of Methodist ministers argued that the ordinance encouraged prostitution, and cited the *Trinity* decision as evidence that such activity is inconsistent with Christianity “which the Supreme Court of the United States says is the foundation of our government and the civilization which it has produced....” Americans United claims that “Brewer completely ignored the church’s religious argument and upheld the New Orleans law.”³⁰ Americans United offers no documentation for its claim (see Appendix D).

In addition, how does Americans United explain Brewer’s *The United States: A Christian Nation*, a series of lectures that was published in book form in 1905 while he was still a member of our nation’s highest court?³¹ In it, Brewer reiterates the history behind the 1892 *Trinity* case and states clearly that America was founded as a Christian nation, as the following citations indicate:

- “This republic is classified among the Christian nations of the world” (11).
- “In the case of Holy Trinity Church *vs.* United States, 143 U.S. 471, that court, after mentioning various circumstances, add, ‘these and many other matters which might be noticed, add a

volume of unofficial declarations to the mass of organic utterances that this is a Christian nation” (11).

- “[W]e constantly speak of this republic as a Christian nation—in fact, as the leading Christian nation in the world. This popular use of the term certainly has significance. It is not a mere creation of the imagination. It is not a term of derision but has a substantial basis—one which justifies its use” (12). Brewer then spends twenty-six pages convincingly supporting his claim with historical evidence.
- “In no charter or constitution is there anything to even suggest that any other than the Christian is the religion of this country. In none of them is Mohammed or Confucius or Buddha in any manner noticed. In none of them is Judaism recognized other than by way of toleration of its special creed. While the separation of church and state is often affirmed, there is nowhere a repudiation of Christianity as one of the institutions as well as benedictions of society. In short, there is no charter or constitution that is either infidel, agnostic, or anti-Christian. Wherever there is a declaration in favor of any religion it is of the Christian” (31–32).
- “You will have noticed that I have presented no doubtful facts. Nothing has been stated which is debatable. The quotations from charters are in the archives of the several States; the laws are on the statute books; judicial opinions are taken from the official reports; statistics from the census publications. In short, no evidence has been presented which is open to question” (39).
- “I could show how largely our laws and customs are based upon the laws of Moses and the teachings of Christ; how constantly the Bible is appealed to as the guide of life and the authority in questions of morals” (39).
- “This is a Christian nation...” (40).

A study of Brewer’s judicial career could hardly lead anyone to conclude that he was an “obscure Supreme Court justice.” He is “obscure” only to those who reject “his Puritan sense of character and obligation.”³²

What About Now?

Can America now be called a Christian nation? While the majority of Americans tenuously hold on to the remnants of a biblical moral order, there is no doubt that the memory is fading quickly. The shift in America's moral foundation has taken place. Just as there is overwhelming evidence that America was founded as a Christian nation, there is ample evidence that there is a conscious effort to abandon that heritage in our education and legal systems.

The Bible, already banned in some schools, legislatures and graduation ceremonies, is becoming increasingly unwelcome in the nation's courtrooms.

In the past 13 months [of 1991–1992], two state supreme courts ruled that it is no longer acceptable for prosecutors to attempt to obtain death-penalty sentences by reading biblical-scriptures to jurors.³³

Soon after the defeat of George Bush in the 1992 election, a group of “centrist” Republicans met to outline a strategy to bring the party back to what they considered to be the “mainstream.” How would they accomplish this? “Our purpose,” Representative Tom Campbell of California said, “is to exclude issues of morality and conscience as litmus tests of being a Republican.”³⁴ Of course, no one is saying that a person cannot be a Republican if he or she does not agree with the platform of the party. The same is true of Democrats. The issue is values. What does the party stand for? Morality is essential in developing social policy. Certain causes, for example protection of the unborn, are rooted in the conviction that those who cannot defend themselves should expect protection from those who are able to fight for them. Here is one Republican's evaluation of the new centrist Republican Party:

Representative Tom Campbell of California announced the formation of the Republican Majority Coalition by declaring, “We are inclusive, not exclusive.” He and his co-founders want to build a party that steers clear of controversies about “values.” They vow to avoid vexing moral quandaries, from abortion to the teaching of ethics in schools.

These make-nice Republicans have taken up the mantle of the Laodiceans, whom the Book of Revelation says were “neither cold nor hot... [but] lukewarm.” Yet like the Laodiceans, they invite contempt. Having given up the chance to define themselves by

EMANCIPATOR—EXTRA.

NEW-YORK, SEPTEMBER 2, 1839.

American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1840.

The seven cuts following, are selected from thirteen, which may be found in the Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1840. They represent well-authenticated facts, and illustrate in various ways, the cruelties daily inflicted upon three millions of native born Americans, by their fellow-countrymen! A brief explanation follows each cut.



The peculiar "Domestic Institutions of our Southern brethren."



Selling a Mother from her Child.



Mothers with their Children at work in the field.



A Woman chained to a Tree, and a Man in irons at work in the field.



"They can't take care of themselves"; explained in an interesting article.



Scourged with clubs and guns. A Slave dragged!



Scourged in the Northern States in imitation of the South.

Even though abolitionist newspapers such as the *Emancipator* used propaganda to further their cause, both sides of the slavery debate formed their arguments upon ethical grounds.

principles, they can define themselves only by dollars-and-cents promises. At best, they can create cover for libertarians in the Republican fold.³⁵

I wonder how Representative Campbell's desire to "exclude issues of morality and conscience" would have gone over with slaves in the 1860s or blacks in the 1960s. The slavery issue in Kansas was an ethical issue that called the Republican Party into existence in 1854. "The pronouncement that slavery was a moral, social and political evil was coupled with denunciation of the Kansas-Nebraska legislation and the Fugitive Slave law."³⁶ The Republican Party came to power in 1861 with Abraham Lincoln as president. Those who started the Republican Party did so in terms of "morality and conscience."

Not to be outdone, after the 1994 mid-term election, Jesse Jackson equated the efforts of the Christian Coalition with Nazi Germany. In comments reported in the December 3, 1994, issue of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, Jackson alleged that "the Christian Coalition was a strong force in Germany.... It laid down a suitable scientific, theological rationale for the tragedy in Germany." Contrary to Jackson's revisionism, Christianity was an enemy of Nazism.

According to the late William L. Shirer, author of *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, "the Nazi regime intended eventually to destroy Christianity in Germany...and substitute the old paganism of the early tribal Germanic gods and the new paganism of the Nazi extremists."³⁷ Martin Bormann, "one of the men closest to Hitler, said publicly in 1941, 'National Socialism and Christianity are irreconcilable.'"³⁸ George L. Mosse, author of *Nazi Culture*, quotes from Bormann's "National Socialist and Christian Concepts Incompatible" speech where Bormann states, "We can do without Christianity." He went on to say:

The Christian Churches build upon the ignorance of men and strive to keep large portions of the people in ignorance because only in this way can the Christian Churches maintain their power. On the other hand, National Socialism [Nazism] is based on scientific foundations. Christianity's immutable principles, which were laid down almost two thousand years ago, have increasingly stiffened into life-alien dogmas. National Socialism [Nazism], however, if it wants to fulfill its task further, must always guide itself according to the newest data of scientific searches.³⁹

This is why Shirer could write in *The Nightmare Years*, “We know now what Hitler envisioned for the German Christians: the utter suppression of their religion.”⁴⁰ With this historical context in mind, Jackson’s rhetoric sounds frighteningly familiar and sinister.

Even with the steady secularization of law in America, remnants of the Christian moral order remain. It is this remnant that maintains societal stability. Biblical law of the Old and New Testaments is essential for the development and maintenance of a free and just society. The survival and stability of our nation depends on how faithful Americans will be in retaining what is left of these ethical absolutes.

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CHAPTER 1

Censoring the Past

THERE IS A LOT OF TALK TODAY ABOUT CENSORSHIP. RECENT ART EXHIBITS, funded by tax dollars and promoted by the National Endowment for the Arts, have come under severe attack. Many Americans rightly criticize these exhibits as inappropriate, certainly for viewing, but most assuredly for government support and funding. Museums, government-funded artists, Hollywood activists, homosexual groups, and the government-funded NEA (National Endowment for the Arts)¹ are crying “censorship” over such protests.

Another battle is raging over the selling of pornography in popularly trafficked bookstores. Rev. Donald Wildmon and his American Family Association have targeted Waldenbooks, a subsidiary of K-Mart, for selling pornography. Harry Hoffman, president of Waldenbooks, says that Wildmon and others like him “want to censor and stop the sales of constitutionally protected publications they deem objectionable.”²

Protests against pornography and government-funded art are not acts of censorship. Censorship is a mandate by the civil government which prohibits the publication, sale, or distribution of material it deems to be politically harmful. As civil libertarian Nat Hentoff describes it, “Legally, censorship in violation of the First Amendment can only take place when an agent or agency of the state—a public school principal, a congressman, a President—suppresses speech.”³

It is not censorship for a government to refuse to pay for objectionable material. In the case of pornographic “art,” the protestors are only asking that their tax money not be used to fund the offensive material. Rev. Wildmon is not asking the government to prohibit Waldenbooks from selling *Playboy* and *Penthouse*; he is only calling on concerned citizens to stop doing business with K-Mart and its subsidiaries.⁴ He wants the same freedoms that the pornographers are claiming belong only to them. Wildmon writes: “We don’t want K-Mart, *Playboy* and *Penthouse* drawing the line for the rest of us. The First Amendment belongs to all Americans, not just to pornographers.”⁵

The Censor Band Wagon

Literature of all types has been scrutinized by numerous groups from different ends of the political and religious spectrum. Those on the political left have denounced classic works like Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* as being "anti-semitic." William Shakespeare's *King Lear* has been condemned as "sexist." *Tom Sawyer*, Mark Twain's coming-of-age classic, has suffered a double blow with denunciations of "racism" and "sexism." Beatrix Potter's *Peter Rabbit* and *Benjamin Bunny* have been criticized "because they are about 'middle-class rabbits.'"⁶

In 1988 librarians in Cobb County, Georgia, removed *Nancy Drew* and the *Hardy Boys* from the library shelves. The librarians cited lack of shelf space as the reason for the exclusion of the popular mystery series. Mary Louis Rheay, director of the Cobb County Library System, tells a different story, saying that "series books are poorly written and do not meet library standards for book selection."⁷ In 1994 the library board in Wellesley, Massachusetts, voted 5 to 1 to keep *Playboy* on the shelves. The board said the magazine, like all its material, is protected by free speech provisions. "There is something in the library to offend everyone," librarian Anne Reynolds said. "We cannot be in the position of censoring everything. Those days are gone." Trustee Carol Gleason, who voted to remove the magazine, said, "If minors cannot buy the magazine in a store, why should they be able to obtain it in the library?"⁸

Who Draws the Line?

An *ad hoc* public school committee supported the removal of books by Dr. James Dobson, a Christian psychologist, from the library of the Early Childhood Family Education Program of the Mankato, Minnesota, school system. They were removed because the staff "disagreed with Dobson's views on child discipline, which includes an endorsement of spanking, and because of the religious nature of his philosophy."⁹

Donated books are often refused by libraries because of religious content. *The Closing of the American Heart*, written by Dr. Ronald H. Nash, was donated to the Haggard Library in Plano, Texas, by a group of concerned citizens. Nash is a former professor of religion and philosophy at Western Kentucky University who presently teaches at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida. He has also served as an advisor to the United States Civil Rights Commission. Why was his book refused? Certainly not because of his academic and professional credentials. Book donations had to pass the library's evaluation criteria.¹⁰ *Closing of the American Heart* did not pass because of its Christian perspective.

Each year People for the American Way (PAW), a liberal political advocacy group, publishes a report on censorship and “book banning.” Most of the books which are brought into question deal with occultic themes, promiscuous sexual content, and advocacy of homosexuality. Most of the protestors are parents who send their children to government controlled (public) schools. PAW considers such parental concern over what children read “attacks on the freedom to learn.”¹¹ What PAW does not tell its unsuspecting audience is that incidents of so-called censorship are negligible compared to the number of schools and libraries in existence. For example, the most challenged book, *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*, “was challenged only 7 times out of 84,000 public schools and never removed.” In fact, Kristi Harrick, press secretary for the Family Research Council, reports that “none of the most challenged books were censored.”¹²

Eric Buehrer, a former public-school teacher and president of Gateways to Better Education in Lake Forest, California, states that “PAW has confused the issues of material selection and censorship. What used to be called discernment is now called censorship.”¹³ Why is it called “censorship” when parents apply standards for book selection but called “meeting library standards” when a librarian evaluates a book?

Judgments are constantly made as to what children should read and what books should appear on library shelves. As we’ve seen, librarians appeal to “library standards” when selecting books. There is nothing wrong with having “standards.”

Unfortunately, these “library standards” are neither applied consistently in libraries and schools nor always reported in the same way by the press.¹⁴ It seems that when concerned Christian parents voice objections to the content of books, they are said to be censors. But when books with Christian themes are refused by libraries or when teachers are denied the right to read a Bible silently during a reading period,¹⁵ we learn that the rejection is based upon the religious nature of the literature. Rarely are such actions by libraries and schools said to be “censorship” by even the strongest opponents of book banning.

Will the Real Censors Please Stand Up

It is instructive how one segment of our society screams “censorship” every time its views are questioned, but when Christians claim “censorship” of the facts of history, they are ignored by the guardians of the First Amendment.

Liberal media coverage of world events is just one example of the anti-Christian bias of mainstream contemporary society. Consider

journalistic coverage of events in Eastern Europe. Rev. Laszlo Tokes, the Hungarian pastor who sparked the Rumanian Revolution, stated that “Eastern Europe is not just in a political revolution but a religious renaissance.” How many people read in their local newspapers or saw on the evening news that Rev. Tokes believed he had been saved from execution through “divine intervention”? Explicitly Christian themes are regularly excluded from news articles: “References to ‘Jesus,’ the ‘Christian spirit,’ and Czechoslovakia’s role as the ‘spiritual crossroads of Europe’ were omitted from excerpts of President Vaclav Havel’s New Year’s Day address. *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *Newsweek* were among the sinful censors.”¹⁶

None of these examples should surprise the informed Christian. The present educational establishment, to cite just one group, has been obscuring the past so that our children have no way of comparing the facts of history with the distorted version promoted by biased secular historians.

Censorship at Work in the Classroom

Public school textbooks are fertile ground for the seeds of willful historical deception. Paul C. Vitz, professor of psychology at New York University, spent months of careful analysis of sixty textbooks used in elementary schools across the country. The study was sponsored by the National Institute on Education. The texts were examined in terms of their references to religion, either directly or indirectly. “In grades 1 through 4 these books introduce the child to U.S. society—to family life, community activities, ordinary economic transactions, and some history. *None of the books covering grades 1 through 4 contain one word referring to any religious activity in contemporary American life.*”¹⁷ Dr. Vitz offers an example of how this translates into the real world of classroom instruction:

Some particular examples of the bias against religion are significant. One social studies book has thirty pages on the Pilgrims, including the first Thanksgiving. But there is not one word (or image) that referred to religion as even a part of the Pilgrims’ life. One mother whose son is in a class using this book wrote me to say that he came home and told her that “Thanksgiving was when the Pilgrims gave thanks to the Indians.” The mother called the principal of this suburban New York City school to point out that Thanksgiving was when the Pilgrims thanked God. The principal responded by saying “that was her opinion”—the schools could only teach what was in the books!¹⁸

In 1986 school children in Seattle, Washington, were given a large dose of revisionist history in the booklet *Teaching about Thanksgiving*. The children were told that “the Pilgrims were narrow-minded bigots who survived initially only with the Indian’s help, but turned on them when their help wasn’t needed anymore.” The Pilgrims “had something up their sleeves other than friendship when they invited the Indians to a Thanksgiving feast, and it was the Indians who ended up bringing most of the food, anyway.”¹⁹ The booklet has obvious biases and is filled with historical inaccuracies. For example, supposedly Increase Mather preached a sermon in 1623 where he reportedly “gave special thanks to God for the plague of smallpox which had wiped out the majority of Wampanoag Indians, praising God for destroying ‘chiefly young men and children, the very seeds of increase, thus clearing the forests for a better growth.’”²⁰ This sermon could not have been preached by Increase Mather, at least not in 1623, because he was not born until 1639.



Secular history texts regularly delete the religious core of the Pilgrims’ lives.

The rewriting of history has even reached the pages of the Sunday comics. A story recently appeared about “Squanto and the First Thanksgiving.” As all children know, Squanto was a great help to the Pilgrims. But was Squanto so much of a help that the first Thanksgiving was given in his honor? According to the author of the Squanto column, we learn that “the Pilgrims so appreciated Squanto’s generosity that they had a great feast to show their thanks.”²¹ William Bradford, governor of Plymouth and the colony’s first historian, continually makes reference to “the Lord Who never fails,” “God’s blessing,” and “the Providence of God,” in times of both plenty and want.²² How uncharacteristic it would have

been for the Plymouth settlers to ignore thanking God during a time of harvest. Edward Winslow, in his important chronicle of the history of Plymouth, reports the following eyewitness account of the colony's thanksgiving celebration:

Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men out fowling, that so we might, after a special manner, rejoice together after we had gathered the fruit of our labors. They four in one day killed as much fowl as, with a little help beside, served the company almost a week. At which time, among other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming among us, and among the rest their greatest king, Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted; and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation, and bestowed on our governor, and upon the captain and others. And although it be not always so plentiful as it was at this time with us, *yet by the goodness of God* we are so far from want, that we often wish you partakers of our plenty.²³



Squanto was an example of God's providential care of the Pilgrims. He taught them how to farm in the New World and led them on trading expeditions.

There is no doubt that these early Christian settlers thanked the "Indians" in general and Squanto in particular for their generosity in supplying venison to supplement the Pilgrims' meager Thanksgiving rations. As the historical record shows, however, thanksgiving was ultimately made to God. "Governor Bradford, with one eye on divine Providence,

proclaimed a day of thanksgiving to God, and with the other eye on the local political situation, extended an invitation to neighboring Indians to share in the harvest feast.... This 'first Thanksgiving' was a feast called to suit the needs of the hour, which were to celebrate the harvest, thank the Lord for His goodness, and regale and impress the Indians."²⁴ (See Appendix A for a historical survey of Thanksgiving.)

The Pilgrim Edward Winslow expressed thanks that, despite their hardships, "by the goodness of God we are so far from want."



Censorship through Creative Editing

Dr. Vitz is not the only person to uncover the way public school texts minimize the role that Christianity played in the founding of our nation. Consider how a teacher's guide for the high school history text *Triumph of the American Nation*, published in 1986, omits material from the Mayflower Compact without informing the teacher that the document has been edited. Students in discussing the document are left with an incomplete understanding of what motivated these early founders *because they do not have all the facts*. The Mayflower Compact is depicted solely as a political document with its more striking religious elements deleted. Here is the document as presented by the textbook company. The **bold face** portions are missing from the textbook version:

In the name of God, Amen. We whose names are underwritten, **the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign lord, King James, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, etc.**, having undertaken **for the glory of God and advancement of the Christian faith and honor of our king and country**, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia, do **by these presents** solemnly and in the presence of God, and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic....²⁵

America's Christian History: THE UNTOLD STORY

These brave men and women had more on their minds than political freedom. Missionary zeal and the advancement of the Christian faith were their primary motivations as they risked life and property to carve out a new home in an uncertain wilderness.



The Mayflower Compact was signed on November 21, 1620, as the *Mayflower* rocked at anchor in Provincetown Harbor, Massachusetts.

The critics of America's early Christian origins have steadily removed such references from textbooks and have created a tense legal environment that frightens many teachers from even raising evidence contradicting the censored texts. Will a member of the ACLU threaten legal action against a teacher who decides to cite original source material to support a view that differs from the historical perspective of the textbook?

Hollywood History

The entertainment industry has entered the field of creative editing in an animated version of the story of Pocahontas, the Native American woman who pleaded with her father to spare the life of John Smith. Pocahontas later became a Christian and married another colonist, John Rolfe. But this episode will all be deleted from an animated retelling of the story. Kendall Hamilton of *Newsweek* offers the following report on the newly designed and politically correct Pocahontas:

The film's P.C. prospects are...helped by the exclusion of Pocahontas's potentially, er, problematic later years, in which she was kidnapped

by settlers and, after converting to Christianity, married one of her captors. Male-domination fantasy! Subversion of morally superior indigenous culture! Well, maybe, but [Producer James] Pentecost says such considerations weren't a factor: "We didn't really sidestep any of it for any reason other than this was the most direct way to tell the story and the clearest." Pass the peace pipe.²⁶

Pocahontas's conversion and baptism was carefully edited from Disney's animated version of her story.



While this might be the *official* explanation from Disney, my guess is that the studio was pressured by Native Americans to hide Pocahontas's "mistake" of rejecting her native religion.

William Holmes McGuffey's Eclectic Readers

A study of the historical record reveals that religion played a major role in the development of the public school curriculum. "Textbooks referred to God without embarrassment, and public schools considered one of their major tasks to be the development of character through the teaching of religion. For example, the *New England Primer* opened with religious admonitions followed by the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the names of the books of the Bible."²⁷

The most widely used textbook series in public schools from 1836 to 1920 were William Holmes McGuffey's *Eclectic Readers*. More than 120 million *Readers* were sold during this period. The *Readers* stressed religion and its relationship to morality and the proper use of knowledge. In an introduction for a reissue of the *Fifth Reader*, historian Henry Steele Commager writes:

What was the nature of the morality that permeated the *Readers*? It was deeply religious, and...religion then meant a Protestant Christianity.... The world of the *McGuffeys* was a world where no one questioned the truths of the Bible or their relevance to everyday contact.... The *Readers*, therefore, are filled with stories from the Bible, and tributes to its truth and beauty.²⁸



William Holmes McGuffey wrote a series of reading textbooks that stressed religion and morality. His books were the most widely used textbooks in public schools from 1836 to 1920.

Competing textbooks of the same era contained varying amounts of biblical material, but *McGuffeys* contained the greatest amount—“more than three times as much as any other text of the period.”²⁹ Subsequent editions of the *Readers*—1857 and 1879—showed a reduction in the amount of material devoted to biblical themes. Even so, the 1879 edition contained the Sermon on the Mount, two selections from the Book of Psalms, the Lord’s Prayer, the story of the death of Absalom (2 Samuel 18), and Paul’s speech on the Areopagus (Acts 17). The Bible was still referred to as “‘the Book of God,’ ‘a source of inspiration,’ ‘an important basis for life,’ and was cited in support of particular moral issues.”³⁰

Antiseptic Texts

Since the nineteenth century, secularists have been gradually chipping away at the historical record, denying the impact Christianity has had on the development of the moral character of the United States. In 1898 Bishop Charles Galloway delivered a series of messages in the Chapel at Emory College in Georgia. In his messages he noted that “books on the making of our nation have been written, and are the texts in our colleges, in which the Christian religion, as a social and civil factor, has only scant or apologetic mention. This is either a fatal oversight or a

deliberate purpose, and both alike to be deplored and condemned. A nation ashamed of its ancestry will be despised by its posterity.”³¹

The 1980s saw an even greater expurgation of the impact the Christian religion has had on our nation. So much so that even People for the American Way had to acknowledge that religion is often overlooked in history textbooks: “Religion is simply not treated as a significant element in American life—it is not portrayed as an integrated part of the American value system or as something that is important to individual Americans.”³² A 1994 study of history textbooks commissioned by the federal government and drafted by the National Center for History in the Schools at UCLA concluded that religion “was foolishly purged from many recent textbooks.”³³ In 1990, Warren A. Nord of the University of North Carolina wrote:

What cannot be doubted is that our ways of thinking about nature, morality, art, and society were once (and for many people still are) fundamentally religious, and still today in our highly secular world it is difficult even for the non-religious to extricate themselves entirely from the webs of influence and meaning provided by our religious past.... To understand history and (historical) literature one must understand a great deal about religion: on this all agree. Consequently, the relative absence of religion from history textbooks is deeply troubling.³⁴

The removal of the topic of religion from textbooks is not always motivated by a desire to slam Christianity. Textbook publishers fear special interest groups that scrutinize the material for any infraction, whether it be religious, racial, sexual, or ethnic. For example, “the 1990 Houghton Mifflin elementary series first made special efforts to include material (and in state hearings received savage criticism from militant Jews, Muslims, and fundamentalist Christians).”³⁵ The easiest way to placate these diverse groups is to remove all discussion of the topic. This deletion of material is either outright censorship or else a reluctance to fight ideological wars, but whatever the case, failure to deal factually with the past distorts a student’s historical perspective. This has happened to such an extent that even when religious themes are covered “their treatments are uniformly antiseptic and abstract.”³⁶

Notes

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2. Harry Hoffman, "Protect the Right to Buy and Sell Books," *USA Today* (April 25, 1990), 10A.
3. Nat Hentoff, *Free Speech for Me—But Not for Thee: How the American Left and Right Relentlessly Censor Each Other* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 2.
4. Those who promote liberal causes are not opposed to boycotts of companies and products they deem objectionable from their perspective. Ultra-liberal leftist groups promote "Working Assets Long Distance Service" as a way of funding radical groups such as Planned Parenthood, Greenpeace, Rainforest Action Network, and over 100 other action groups. One of their tactics is the promotion of "boycotts and buycotts." See Cathy Lynn Grossman, "Boycotting is popular resort for activists," *USA Today* (October 11, 1994), 4D.
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14. David Shaw, "Abortion Bias Seeps Into News," reprinted from *Los Angeles Times* (July 1–4, 1990) and Al Knight, "School races turn nasty," *Denver Post* (October 10, 1993), 1D and 5D. Knight writes: "The term religious right, in the hands of PFAW and other groups, has become one of the most elastic political labels in memory. It is routinely stretched to include nearly anyone who might be motivated either by conservative or by religious or moral concerns" (1D).
15. John W. Whitehead, *The Rights of Religious Persons in Public Education: A Complete Resource for Knowing and Exercising Your Rights in Public Education*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, [1991] 1994), 112–13.
16. Barbara Reynolds, "Religion is Greatest Story Ever Missed," *USA Today* (March 16, 1990), 13A.
17. Paul C. Vitz, *Censorship: Evidence of Bias in Our Children's Textbooks* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1986), 1. Emphasis added.
18. Vitz, *Censorship*, 3.
19. As reported in Carey Quan Gelernter, "The Real Thanksgiving," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* (November 23, 1986), L1.
20. As reported in Gelernter, "The Real Thanksgiving," L2.
21. "Squanto and the First Thanksgiving," Rabbit Ears, *Atlanta Journal/Constitution* (November 27, 1994).
22. William Bradford, *Bradford's History of the Plymouth Settlement: 1608–1650*, original manuscript entitled *Of Plymouth Plantation* rendered into modern English by Harold Paget (Portland, OR: American Heritage Ministries, [1909] 1988)
23. Edward Winslow, *How the Pilgrim Fathers Lived*, 2:116. Emphasis added. *CD Sourcebook of American History* (Mesa, AR: Candlelight Publishing, 1992). Also see *Mourt's Relation: A Journal of the Pilgrims of Plymouth*, ed. Jordan D. Fiore (Plymouth, MA: Plymouth Rock Foundation, [1622] 1985), 67–69.
24. Diana Karter Appelbaum, *Thanksgiving: An American Holiday, An American History* (New York: Facts on File Publications, 1984), 9.
25. This editing was exposed in *Education Update*, Heritage Foundation, 10:3 (Summer 1987). Quoted in Robert P. Dugan, *Winning the New Civil War: Recapturing America's Values* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1991), 149–50.
26. Kendall Hamilton, "No Red Faces, They Hope," *Newsweek* (November 21, 1994), 61.
27. Whitehead, *The Rights of Religious Persons in Public Education*, 41–42.

28. Henry Steele Commager, "Preface," *McGuffey's Fifth Eclectic Reader*. Quoted in Whitehead, *The Rights of Religious Persons in Public Education*, 42.
29. John H. Westerhoff, III, "The Struggle for a Common Culture: Biblical Images in Nineteenth-Century Schoolbooks," *The Bible in American Education*, eds. David L. Barr and Nicholas Piediscalzi (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1982), 32.
30. Westerhoff, "The Struggle for a Common Culture: Biblical Images in Nineteenth-Century Schoolbooks," 28.
31. Charles B. Galloway, *Christianity and the American Commonwealth; or, The Influence of Christianity in Making This Nation* (Nashville, TN: Methodist Episcopal Church, 1898), 15.
32. O. L. Davis, Jr., et al., *Looking at History: A Review of Major U.S. History Textbooks* (1986), 3. Quoted in Joan Delfattore, *What Johnny Shouldn't Read: Textbook Censorship in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 85.
33. This is also the conclusion of the editorial writers of the *Marietta Daily Journal*: "History needing revision" (October 30, 1994), 2D. *The National Standards for United States History* has called for the restoration of the role religion played in the founding of America while pushing a "politically correct" agenda in nearly everything else. See Lynne V. Cheney, "The End of History," *Wall Street Journal* (October 20, 1994), A24.
34. Warren A. Nord, "Taking Religion Seriously," *Social Education*, vol. 54, no. 9 (September 1990), 287. Quoted in *History Textbooks: A Standard and Guide, 1994–95 Edition* (New York: American Textbook Council, 1994), 32.
35. *History Textbooks: A Standard and Guide, 1994–95 Edition*, 32.
36. *History Textbooks: A Standard and Guide, 1994–95 Edition*, 33.