

## **Defining a Christian Nation**

Contemporary post-modern critics (including President Obama) who assert that America is not a Christian nation always refrain from offering any definition of what the term “Christian nation” means. So what is an accurate definition of that term as demonstrated by the American experience?

Contrary to what critics imply, a Christian nation is not one in which all citizens are Christians, or the laws require everyone to adhere to Christian theology, or all leaders are Christians, or any other such superficial measurement. As

Supreme Court Justice David Brewer (1837-1910) explained:

[I]n what sense can [America] be called a Christian nation? Not in the sense that Christianity is the established religion or that the people are in any manner compelled to support it. On the contrary, the Constitution specifically provides that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Neither is it Christian in the sense that all its citizens are either in fact or name Christians. On the contrary, all religions have free scope within our borders. Numbers of our people profess other religions and many reject all. Nor is it Christian in the sense that a profession of Christianity is a condition of holding office or otherwise engaging in public service, or essential to recognition either politically or socially. In fact, the government as a legal organization is independent of all religions. Nevertheless, we constantly speak of this republic as a Christian nation – in fact, as the leading Christian nation of the world. <sup>8</sup>

So, if being a Christian nation is not based on any of the above criterion, then what makes America a Christian nation? According to Justice Brewer, America was “of all the nations in the world . . . most justly called a Christian nation” because Christianity “has so largely shaped and molded it.” <sup>9</sup>

Constitutional law professor Edward Mansfield (1801-1880) similarly acknowledged:

In every country, the morals of a people – whatever they may be – take their form and spirit from their religion. For example, the marriage of brothers and sisters was permitted among the Egyptians because such had been the precedent set by their gods, Isis and Osiris. So, too, the classic nations celebrated the drunken rites of Bacchus. Thus, too, the Turk has become lazy and inert because dependent upon Fate, as taught by the Koran. And when in recent times there arose a nation [i.e., France] whose philosophers [e.g. Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, Helvetius, etc.] discovered there was no God and no religion, the nation was thrown into that dismal case in which there was no law and no morals. . . . In the United States, Christianity is the original, spontaneous, and national religion. <sup>10</sup>

Founding Father and U. S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall agreed:

[W]ith us, Christianity and religion are identified. It would be strange, indeed, if with such a people our institutions did not presuppose Christianity and did not often refer to it and exhibit relations with it. <sup>11</sup>

Christianity is the religion that shaped America and made her what she is today. In fact, historically speaking, it can be irrefutably demonstrated that Biblical Christianity in America produced many of the cherished traditions still enjoyed today, including:

- A republican rather than a theocratic form of government;
- The institutional separation of church and state (as opposed to today’s enforced institutional secularization of church and state);
- Protection for religious toleration and the rights of conscience;
- A distinction between theology and behavior, thus allowing the incorporation into public policy of religious principles that promote good behavior but which do not enforce theological tenets (examples of this would include religious teachings such as the Good Samaritan, The Golden Rule, the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, etc., all of which promote positive civil behavior but do not impose ecclesiastical rites); and
- A free-market approach to religion, thus ensuring religious diversity.

Consequently, a Christian nation as demonstrated by the American experience is a nation founded upon Christian and Biblical principles, whose values, society, and institutions have largely been shaped by those principles. This definition was reaffirmed by American legal scholars and historians for generations <sup>12</sup> but is widely ignored by today’s revisionists.

## DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

July 4, 1776

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitles them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

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. Those to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer while evils are sufferable than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former systems of governments. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these States. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his assent to laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other laws for the accommodation of large districts of people unless those people would relinquish the right of representation in the legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved representative Houses repeatedly for opposing with manly firmness his invasion on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the legislative powers, incapable of annihilation, have returned to the people at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the meantime exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without and convulsions within.

He has endeavored to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the laws for naturalization of foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new appropriations of lands.

He has obstructed the administration of justice by refusing his assent to laws for establishing judiciary powers.

He has made judges dependent on his will alone for the tenure of their offices and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of new offices and sent hither swarms of officers to harass our people and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, standing armies without the consent of our legislature.

He has affected to render the military independent of and superior to the civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his assent to their acts of pretended legislation:

For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock trial, from punishment for any murders which they should commit on the inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing taxes on us without our consent:

For depriving us in many cases of the benefits of trial by jury:

For transporting us beyond seas to be tried for pretended offenses:

For abolishing the free system of English laws in a neighboring province, establishing therein an arbitrary government, and enlarging its boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

For taking away our charters, abolishing our most valuable laws, and altering fundamentally the forms of our governments:

For suspending our own legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated government here, by declaring us out of his protection and waging war against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large armies of foreign mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of cruelty and perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow citizens taken captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their country, to become the executioners of their friends and brethren, or to fall themselves by their hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these oppressions we have petitioned for redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have we been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations which would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They, too, have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity which denounces our separation and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, enemies in war, in peace friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in general Congress assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name and by the authority of the good people of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as free and independent States, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliance, establish commerce, and do all other acts and things which independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

### **Signers of the Declaration of Independence**

NEW HAMPSHIRE: Josiah Bartlett, William Whipple, Matthew Thornton

MASSACHUSETTS: John Hancock, John Adams, Samuel Adams, Robert Treat Paine

RHODE ISLAND: Elbridge Gerry, Stephen Hopkins, William Ellery

CONNECTICUT: Roger Sherman, Samuel Huntington, William Williams, Oliver Wolcott

NEW YORK: William Floyd, Philip Livingston, Francis Lewis, Lewis Morris

NEW JERSEY: Richard Stockton, John Witherspoon, Francis Hopkinson, John Hart, Abraham Clark

PENNSYLVANIA: Robert Morris, Benjamin Rush, Benjamin Franklin, John Morton, George Clymer, James Smith, George Taylor, James Wilson, George Ross

DELAWARE: Ceasar Rodney, George Read, Thomas McKean

MARYLAND: Samuel Chase, Thomas Stone, William Paca, Charles Carroll of Carrollton

VIRGINIA: George Wythe, Richard Henry Lee, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Harrison, Thomas Nelson, Jr., Francis Lightfoot Lee, Carter Braxton

NORTH CAROLINA: William Hooper, Joseph Hewes, John Penn

SOUTH CAROLINA: Edward Rutledge, Thomas Heyward, Jr., Thomas Lynch, Jr., Authur Middleton

GEORGIA: Button Gwinnett, Lyman Hall, George Walton

A few Declarations' of Founding Fathers and Early Statesmen on Jesus, Christianity, and the Bible; ([www.wallbuilders.com](http://www.wallbuilders.com))

*John Adams*

SIGNER OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE; JUDGE; DIPLOMAT; ONE OF TWO SIGNERS OF THE BILL OF RIGHTS; SECOND PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

"The Holy Ghost carries on the whole Christian system in this earth. Not a baptism, not a marriage, not a sacrament can be administered but by the Holy Ghost. . . . There is no authority, civil or religious – there can be no legitimate government but what is administered by this Holy Ghost. There can be no salvation without it. All without it is rebellion and perdition, or in more orthodox words damnation."<sup>2</sup>

*John Quincy Adams*

SIXTH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES; DIPLOMAT; SECRETARY OF STATE; U. S. SENATOR; U. S. REPRESENTATIVE; "OLD MAN ELOQUENT"; "HELL-HOUND OF ABOLITION"

"The hope of a Christian is inseparable from his faith. Whoever believes in the Divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures must hope that the religion of Jesus shall prevail throughout the earth. Never since the foundation of the world have the prospects of mankind been more encouraging to that hope than they appear to be at the present time. And may the associated distribution of the Bible proceed and prosper till the Lord shall have made "bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" [Isaiah 52:10]."<sup>8</sup>

In the chain of human events, the birthday of the nation is indissolubly linked with the birthday of the Savior. The Declaration of Independence laid the cornerstone of human government upon the first precepts of Christianity.<sup>9</sup>

*Samuel Adams*

SIGNER OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE; "FATHER OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION"; RATIFIER OF THE U. S. CONSTITUTION; GOVERNOR OF MASSACHUSETTS

I . . . [rely] upon the merits of Jesus Christ for a pardon of all my sins.<sup>10</sup>

I conceive we cannot better express ourselves than by humbly supplicating the Supreme Ruler of the world . . . that the confusions that are and have been among the nations may be overruled by the promoting and speedily bringing in the holy and happy period when the kingdoms of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ may be everywhere established, and the people willingly bow to the scepter of Him who is the Prince of Peace.<sup>12</sup>

*Charles Carroll*

SIGNER OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE; SELECTED AS DELEGATE TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION; FRAMER OF THE BILL OF RIGHTS; U. S. SENATOR

Grateful to Almighty God for the blessings which, through Jesus Christ Our Lord, He had conferred on my beloved country in her emancipation and on myself in permitting me, under circumstances of mercy, to live to the age of 89 years, and to survive the fiftieth year of independence, adopted by Congress on the 4th of July 1776, which I originally subscribed on the 2d day of August of the same year and of which I am now the last surviving signer.<sup>23</sup>

*Congress, 1854*

The great, vital, and conservative element in our system is the belief of our people in the pure doctrines and the divine truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>25</sup>

*Congress, U. S. House Judiciary Committee, 1854*

Had the people, during the Revolution, had a suspicion of any attempt to war against Christianity, that Revolution would have been strangled in its cradle... In this age, there can be no substitute for Christianity... That was the religion of the founders of the republic and they expected it to remain the religion of their descendants.<sup>26</sup> [Governments] could not give the rights essential to happiness... We claim them from a higher source: from the King of kings, and Lord of all the earth.<sup>28</sup>

*Benjamin Franklin*

SIGNER OF THE DECLARATION; DIPLOMAT; PRINTER; SCIENTIST; SIGNER OF THE CONSTITUTION; GOVERNOR OF PENNSYLVANIA

As to Jesus of Nazareth, my opinion of whom you particularly desire, I think the system of morals and His religion as He left them to us, the best the world ever saw or is likely to see.<sup>30</sup>

*John Hancock*

SIGNER OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE; PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS; REVOLUTIONARY GENERAL; GOVERNOR OF MASSACHUSETTS

Sensible of the importance of Christian piety and virtue to the order and happiness of a state, I cannot but earnestly commend to you every measure for their support and encouragement.<sup>38</sup> He called on the entire state to pray "that universal happiness may be established in the world [and] that all may bow to the scepter of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the whole earth be filled with His glory."<sup>39</sup>

He also called on the State of Massachusetts to pray . . . that all nations may bow to the scepter of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and that the whole earth may be filled with his glory.<sup>40</sup> hat the spiritual kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ may be continually increasing until the

whole earth shall be filled with His glory.<sup>41</sup> to confess their sins and to implore forgiveness of God through the merits of the Savior of the World.<sup>42</sup> to cause the benign religion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to be known, understood, and practiced among all the inhabitants of the earth.<sup>43</sup>

*Patrick Henry*

REVOLUTIONARY GENERAL; LEGISLATOR; "THE VOICE OF LIBERTY"; RATIFIER OF THE U. S. CONSTITUTION; GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA

Being a Christian... is a character which I prize far above all this world has or can boast.<sup>49</sup> The Bible... is a book worth more than all the other books that were ever printed.<sup>50</sup> Righteousness alone can exalt America as a nation. Whoever thou art, remember this; and in thy sphere practice virtue thyself, and encourage it in others.<sup>51</sup> The great pillars of all government and of social life [are] virtue, morality, and religion. This is the armor, my friend, and this alone, that renders us invincible.<sup>52</sup> This is all the inheritance I can give to my dear family. The religion of Christ can give them one which will make them rich indeed.<sup>53</sup>

*Samuel Huntington*

SIGNER OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE; PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS; JUDGE; GOVERNOR OF CONNECTICUT

It becomes a people publicly to acknowledge the over-ruling hand of Divine Providence and their dependence upon the Supreme Being as their Creator and Merciful Preserver . . . and with becoming humility and sincere repentance to supplicate the pardon that we may obtain forgiveness through the merits and mediation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.<sup>54</sup>

*Thomas Jefferson*

SIGNER OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE; DIPLOMAT; GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA; SECRETARY OF STATE; THIRD PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The doctrines of Jesus are simple, and tend all to the happiness of man.<sup>64</sup> The practice of morality being necessary for the well being of society, He [God] has taken care to impress its precepts so indelibly on our hearts that they shall not be effaced by the subtleties of our brain. We all agree in the obligation of the moral principles of Jesus and nowhere will they be found delivered in greater purity than in His discourses.<sup>65</sup> I am a Christian in the only sense in which He wished anyone to be: sincerely attached to His doctrines in preference to all others.<sup>66</sup> I am a real Christian – that is to say, a disciple of the doctrines of Jesus Christ.<sup>67</sup>

*Robert Treat Paine*

MILITARY CHAPLAIN; SIGNER OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE; ATTORNEY GENERAL OF MASSACHUSETTS; JUDGE

I am constrained to express my adoration of the Supreme Being, the Author of my existence, in full belief of His Providential goodness and His forgiving mercy revealed to the world through Jesus Christ, through whom I hope for never ending happiness in a future state.<sup>88</sup>

*Benjamin Rush*

SIGNER OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE; SURGEON GENERAL OF THE CONTINENTAL ARMY; RATIFIER OF THE U. S. CONSTITUTION; "FATHER OF AMERICAN MEDICINE"; TREASURER OF THE U. S. MINT; "FATHER OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS UNDER THE CONSTITUTION"

The Gospel of Jesus Christ prescribes the wisest rules for just conduct in every situation of life. Happy they who are enabled to obey them in all situations! . . . My only hope of salvation is in the infinite tran-scendent love of God manifested to the world by the death of His Son upon the Cross. Noth-ing but His blood will wash away my sins [Acts 22:16]. I rely exclusively upon it. Come, Lord Jesus! Come quickly![Revelation 22:20]<sup>98</sup> I do not believe that the Constitution was the offspring of inspiration, but I am as satisfied that it is as much the work of a Divine Providence as any of the miracles recorded in the Old and New Testament.<sup>99</sup> 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.<sup>100</sup>

*George Washington*

JUDGE; MEMBER OF THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS; COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE CONTINENTAL ARMY; PRESIDENT OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION; FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES; "FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY"

You do well to wish to learn our arts and ways of life, and above all, the religion of Jesus Christ. These will make you a greater and happier people than you are.<sup>122</sup> While we are zealously performing the duties of good citizens and soldiers, we certainly ought not to be inattentive to the higher duties of religion. To the distinguished character of Patriot, it should be our highest glory to add the more distinguished character of Christian.<sup>123</sup> The blessing and protection of Heaven are at all times necessary but especially so in times of public distress and danger. The General hopes and trusts that every officer and man will endeavor to live and act as becomes a Christian soldier, defending the dearest rights and liberties of his country.<sup>124</sup>