



Focus on Religious Freedom

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Freedom of Religious Expression in the Founding of America

In November, Americans prepare for the holidays and think about how our country came to be and why it is unique among all the nations of the world.

Freedom of religious expression is a key to understanding early American history and the founding of our nation. The British colonies that eventually formed the United States of America were settled in the 17th century by men & women who, in the face of European persecution, refused to compromise passionately held religious convictions and fled Europe. Although some settlers came for secular motives, the great majority left Europe to worship God in the way they believed to be correct. They enthusiastically supported the efforts of their leaders to create "a city on a hill" or a "holy experiment."

In the founding documents, our founders quoted thousands of Bible scriptures, opened and closed sessions with prayer to God, and openly stated that they used the Ten Commandments in writing the laws. "There are more than 4,500 recorded, public quotes by our Founding Fathers about the Bible, God, and the importance of ethics based on Christian principles," wrote author Randall Niles.(1)"History is clear: Judeo-Christian ethics are at the foundation of the United States of America. Morality was never seen as relative - it was always based on Natural Law and the authority of Scripture."(2)

(libraryofcongress.gov; biola.edu, 7/2/20; drivethruhistory.com, 5/5/17 (1)(2))

Happening Now: 1776 Commission Established to Restore Patriotic Education

On Nov. 2, 2020, Pres. Trump signed an Executive Order to form the 1776 Commission with the goal "to better enable a rising generation to understand the history and principles of the founding of the United States in 1776, and, through this, form a more perfect Union..." The order further states: "The formation of a republic around these principles (Laws of Nature & Nature's God) marked a clear departure from previous forms of government, securing rights through a form of government that derives its legitimate power from the consent of the governed. Throughout its national life, our Republic's exploration of the full meaning of these principles has led it through the ratification of a Constitution, civil war, abolition of slavery, Reconstruction, and a series of domestic crises and world conflicts. Those events establish a clear historical record of an exceptional Nation dedicated to the ideas and ideals of its founding."

"Against this history, in recent years a series of polemics grounded in poor scholarship has vilified our Founders and our founding. Despite the virtues and accomplishments of this Nation, many students are now taught in school to hate our own country, and to believe that the men and women who built it were not heroes, but rather villains. This radicalized view of American history lacks perspective, obscures virtues, twists motives, ignores or distorts facts, and magnifies flaws, resulting in the truth being concealed and history disfigured."

(whitehouse.gov; msn.com, 11/2/20; dailycaller.com, 11/02/20; nypost.com, 9/17/20)

"The history of our nation's protection of religious freedom makes clear that preserving America's liberties depends on understanding God-given rights." B. Samuells, Pres.; Catholics for Freedom of Religion