

# *My Father's House*

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## **A Vision for America**

### **Fr. Bill McCarthy, MSA**

*The New York Times* had a front page article right after the recent elections (Nov. '02) that bemoaned the fact that neither the Democrats nor the Republicans had a real vision. In fact, the basic issues that are affecting our nation were hardly addressed by any candidate.

#### **1. WE ARE NO LONGER A NATION UNDER GOD**

The first and most essential problem in America today is that we are politically no longer a nation under God--which was the bedrock of our political system. Our Founding Fathers established this nation upon the laws of nature and the laws of nature's God. George Washington stated in his first inaugural address: "The propitious smiles of heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right that heaven itself has ordained." In his farewell discourse he stated that religion and morality are the twin pillars of our nation.

According to this most preeminent Founding Father, any one who attacks these twin towers could not possibly be considered to be a loyal American patriot. This was true of each of our 243 Founding Fathers. Blackstone's commentary on the law read like the Bible. And the most precedented statement in American law (87 precedents) is the following: "The laws and the institutions of this nation must necessarily be based upon the life and teachings of the redeemer of mankind. It is impossible that it should be otherwise."

#### **Under God**

When the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court wanted to drop "under God" from our pledge of allegiance, our senate voted 99 to 0 to oppose it. And yet, the realization that we in so many ways politically have become a secular state was not a primary issue that any candidate felt compelled to raise. Abraham Lincoln said, "Blessed only are those nations whose God is the Lord." We saw what has happened in Russia, Germany and Italy when they embraced godless political systems (Communism, Nazism, and Fascism). And we see what is happening in our country beginning in 1962 when in contradiction to our constitution, our Supreme Court suppressed religion and the two most vulnerable groups - teachers and students. That was the break in the dam' that allowed a false interpretation of separation of Church and state to become the dominant mindset to the point that most of our leaders now accept it unquestionably. Yet none of our found fathers believed in the separation of Church and state from God. In fact, they universally and repeatedly stated the opposite.

Without the Judaic Christian basis, our constitution has no moral basis. In fact, as founding father after founding father stated clearly, our constitution is only meant for

Godly people in the hands of Godly rulers.

### **Public Education**

One of the arenas in which the Judaic-Christian ethic was most visible was in American public education. Our nation's first schools were in churches, and for more than three centuries, following their inception in the mid-1600s, public schools promoted prayer and regularly used the Bible as a textbook. Traditional Judaic-Christian principles were the firm basis for teaching morals. Students trained in these public schools were well rounded and well equipped in mind, soul, spirit and body. Noah Webster, a Founding Father and leading educator, accurately reflected this when he stated,

“No truth is more evident to my mind than that the Christian religion must be the basis of any government intended to secure the rights and privileges of a few people.”

### **Benjamin Rush**

Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and the first Founder to call for free public schools, similarly explained:

[T]he only foundation for a useful education in a republic is to be laid in religion. Without this there can be no virtue, and without virtue there can be no liberty, and liberty is the object and life of all republican governments... Without religion, I believe learning does much mischief to the morals and principles of mankind.”

### **Benjamin Franklin**

From its inception, our nation had believed in the power and the results of religious teachings and practices and had strongly supported their inclusion in public arenas. Revered national political leaders believed that public prayer could and would change the course of the nation. For example, consider Benjamin Franklin's lengthy speech delivered at the Constitutional Convention. The nation's elder statesman and patriarch (and today considered to be one of the least religious of the Founding Fathers) reminded the other delegates:

In the beginning of the contest with Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayers in this room for Divine protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor... And have we now forgotten this powerful Friend? Or do we imagine we no longer need His assistance? 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 man.” And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, it is 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. I also believe that without His concurring aid, we shall succeed in the political building no better than the builders of Babel; we shall be divided by our little, partial local interests; our projects will be confounded; and we ourselves shall become a reproach and a byword down to future ages. And what is worse,

mankind may hereafter from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing government by human wisdom and leave it to chance, war, or conquest. I therefore beg leave to move that, henceforth, prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven and its blessing on our deliberation be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business.”

### **God Blessed Us**

As Franklin noted, God had often answered their prayers and manifested Himself throughout the struggle with Great Britain; He blessed their efforts at the Constitutional Convention no less—a fact noted by many of the Founders, including Benjamin Rush:

“I do not believe that the Constitution was the offspring of inspiration, but I am as perfectly satisfied that the Union of the States in its form and adoption is as much the work of a Divine Providence as any of the miracles recorded in the Old and New Testament.”

### **New Godly State Constitution**

Consequently, they returned home from Philadelphia to their own States and began to create new State constitutions. Samuel Adams and John Adams helped write the Massachusetts constitution; Benjamin Rush and James Wilson helped write Pennsylvania’s constitution; George Read and Thomas McKean helped write Delaware’s constitution; the same was true in other States as well. (By the way, the Supreme Court formerly pointed to these State constitutions as precedents to demonstrate the Founders’ intent.<sup>8</sup>)

### **Delaware**

Notice, for example, what Thomas McKean and George Read placed in the Delaware constitution:

Every person, who shall be chosen a member of either house, or appointed to any office or place of trust...shall...make and subscribe the following declaration, to wit: “I do profess faith in God the father, and in Jesus Christ, his only son, and in the Holy Ghost, one God, blessed forever more, and I do acknowledge the Holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration.”<sup>9</sup>

While today we wish this were the requirement for seminary, it was their requirement for politics! Yet notice their emphasis: the focus is on the type of individuals placed into office, not on the type of laws.

### **Pennsylvania**

Notice some other State constitutions. The Pennsylvania constitution authored by Benjamin Rush and James Wilson declared:

And each member [of his legislature], before he takes his seat, shall make and subscribe the following declaration, viz: “I do believe in one God, the Creator and Governor of the universe,

the rewarder of the good and the punisher of the wicked, and I do acknowledge the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by Divine Inspiration.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Massachusetts**

The Massachusetts constitution, authored by Samuel Adams—the Father of the American Revolution—and John Adams, stated:

[All persons elected must] make and subscribe the following declaration, viz. “I do declare that I believe the Christian religion and have firm persuasion of its truth.”<sup>11</sup>

### **North Carolina**

North Carolina’s constitution required that:

No person, who shall deny the being of God, or the truth of the [Christian] religion, or the divine authority either of the Old or New Testaments, or who shall hold religious principles incompatible with the freedom and safety of the State, shall be capable of holding any office, or place of trust or profit in the civil department, within this State.

What a powerful declaration! You had to believe that God’s principles applied to civil government or they wouldn’t let you near public office!

### **Connecticut**

This belief in the importance of God-fearing leaders was so well understood in America that in 1892, the Supreme Court pointed out that of the forty-four States that were then in the Union, each had some type of God-centered declaration in its constitution.

### **Analysis**

Without the Spirit of the living God guiding the minds and hearts of our leaders, we are condemned to be ruled by whim and inflated egos. And we see this in so much of America today. Godlessness in the form of pornography, abortion, divorce, obscenity, child abuse, family breakdown, violence, murders, and crime fill the pages of our newspapers, movies and television. Once again, as Benjamin Rush stated, “Without religion there can be no virtue, and without virtue there can be no liberty, and liberty is the object and life of all republican governments ... without religion, I believe, learning does much mischief to the morals and principles of mankind.” Whatever it takes, we must return to God’s plan for America. Without this vision, His word clearly teaches that we will perish.

Although we do have a president and politicians who pray and acknowledge God, we still have not returned to what we always were - a nation founded upon the laws of nature - the natural law and the laws of nature’s God - the Bible. The Bible and the natural law were always the foundation of American government. They no longer are. And this is our number one problem.

## **2. WE HAVE DENIED THE UNALIENABLE RIGHT TO LIFE.**

America was founded upon this principle: “We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights,” first and foremost, the right to life, then liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The sanctity and dignity of the human person was to be protected right from the first moment of conception to the moment of natural death. Our Founding Fathers realized that these rights were not given by the state or dictator or even the vote of the people. These rights were given from above by God, Himself. This dignity was so engrained in each American citizen that it was also inalienable - in other words, this dignity could not be subverted, denied, or taken away by any force on earth, not even by the president or even by the Supreme Court. This God-given, unalienable dignity was so clearly taught that it was considered “self-evident.”

In short, even if you had not read the Bible or even heard a sermon, you would know it intuitively. And yet today, we Americans have murdered more than 100 million of our fellow citizens - babies in the womb. That is more than the whole population of Canada. Statistically, 12 million have been Jewish babies. That’s twice as many as the holocaust. 20 million have been black babies - that is twice as many as the slave trade. And 50 million have been women in a country that boasts of women’s rights. What rights were given to those 50 million slaughtered female babies? It was the oppression of the weakest by the strongest.

## **3. WE NO LONGER HAVE ORDERED FREEDOM.**

On the 221<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, 40 prominent United States religious leaders stated that disordered liberty represents the great threat to the American experiment today. “That disorder is increasingly expressed in a denial of the very concept of moral truth.” They went on to say, “Invoking the laws of nature and of nature’s God, the founders declared, ‘we hold these truths to be self-evident.’ This fourth of July, Americans must ask themselves whether they hold them still. We for our part, answer emphatically in the affirmative. We affirm that before God and the law, all are equal, ‘endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.’ In recent years it has become increasingly manifest that these truths cannot be taken for granted. Indeed, there is ominous evidence of their rejection in our public life and law.

“As leaders of diverse churches and Christian communities, we address our fellow citizens with no partisan political purpose. Our purpose is to help repair a contract too often broken and a covenant too often betrayed. We recall and embrace the wisdom of our first president who declared in his farewell address: ‘Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens.’ Religion and morality are not an alien intrusion upon our public life but the source and foundation of our pursuit of the common good.

“It is in the nature of experiments that they can succeed, and they can fail. President

Washington said in his first inaugural address: ‘The preservation of the sacred fire of liberty and the destiny of the republican model of government are justly considered as deeply, perhaps as finally staked, on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people.’ We urge the Christians of America to join us in a candid acknowledgement that we have not been as faithful as we ought to that great trust.

“Nations are ultimately judged not by their military might or economic wealth but by their fidelity to the ‘laws of nature and nature’s God.’ In the view of the founders, just government is self-evident government. Liberty is not license but is ‘ordered liberty’ - liberty in response to moral truth. The great threat to the American experiment today is not from enemies abroad but from disordered liberty. That disorder is increasingly expressed in a denial of the very concept of moral truth. The cynical question of Pontius Pilate, ‘What is truth?’ is today frequently taken to be a mark of sophistication also in our political discourse and even in the jurisprudence of our courts.

“The bitter consequences of disordered liberty resulting from the denial of moral truth are by now painfully familiar. Abortion, crime, consumerism, drug abuse, family disintegration, teen-age suicide, neglect of the poor, pornography, racial prejudice, ethnic separatism and suspicion -- all are rampant in our society. In politics, the public interest is too often sacrificed to private advantage; in economic and foreign policy, the lust for profits overrides concern for the well-being of families at home and the protection of human rights abroad. The powerful forget their obligation to the powerless, and the politics of the common good is abandoned in the interminable contention of special interests. We cannot boast of what we have made of the experiment entrusted to our hands.

“The effort of ‘we the people’ to exercise the right and responsibility of self-government has been made even more difficult by subsequent decisions of the court. In its stated effort to end the national debate over abortion, the Supreme Court in *Planned Parenthood vs. Casey* (1992) transferred the legal ground for the abortion license from the implied right of privacy to an explicit liberty right under the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment. The court there proposed a sweeping redefinition of liberty: ‘At the heart of liberty is the right to define one’s own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe and of the mystery of human life.’ The doctrine declared by the court would seem to mean that liberty is nothing more nor less than what is chosen by the autonomous, unencumbered self.

“This is the very antithesis of the ordered liberty affirmed by the founders. Liberty in this debased sense is utterly disengaged from the concepts of responsibility and community, and is pitted against the ‘laws of nature and of nature’s God.’ Such liberty degenerates into license for the oppression of the vulnerable while the government looks the other way and throws into question the very possibility of the rule of law itself. *Casey* raises the serious question as to whether any law can be enacted in pursuit of the common good, for virtually any law can offend some individuals’ definition of selfhood, existence and the meaning of life. Under the doctrine declared by the court, it would seem that individual choice can always take precedence over the common good.”

## **Synthesis**

Our history was one of freedom, but of ordered freedom. Our sounding cry was liberty and justice for all. We could not be forced to accept religious, political or economic oppression. Even slavery was considered un-American. So important was this to the American people that we fought the Civil War to ensure that every American citizen had a right to freedom. The opposite to ordered freedom is anarchy - that is the license of each person to do their own thing. "I did it my way" is not the essence of the American dream. The essence of our dream is "My fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."

### **4. THE BREAKDOWN OF THE TRADITIONAL FAMILY**

Because America was founded upon the Judaic-Christian ethic, as a nation we were pro-family and even more so for the traditional monogamous family. As a nation we believe that marriage is between one man and one woman fully entered into for the procreation and education of children for life. As a nation, we respected the awesome dignity of marriage, womanhood and sexuality. Today we see the widespread breakdown of the American family. 65 percent of all marriages of people under age 30 are ending in divorce within the first five years. Because of widespread promiscuity, millions of young Americans are not even entering into marriage. Divorces are widely granted for the flimsiest of reasons. Children in these families suffer tremendously. Since the family is the unit of society as cells are the unit of the body, when families disintegrated enmass, the nation is on a precipitous decline. We need men and women in political office who will fight for the preservation of strong and loving families. In the last election, this issue also, as vital as it is, was not raised at all.

### **5. THE LOSS OF COMMON DECENCY**

Flowing from the previous principle of respect for the traditional family is respect for common decency. Not only was pornography outlawed in this land, but vulgarity in any form was outlawed as well. Proper dress had to be modest. Today, however, pornography is mainstream America. Although we still have laws against pornography, they are not enforced. None of the 8,000 complaints against pornographers have even been taken up by our judiciary. Worse still is teenage pornography, which has become a multi-billion dollar industry. And far, far worse than that is "tween" pornography (children between the ages of 8 and 12). In this the year of 2002, teen and tween pornography will reap for these perverse moguls over \$100 billion. Much of this will come through the Internet. When this horrific sociological evil was presented to our Supreme Court, our highest officials in the judiciary gave it their blessings, provided that live models were not used but only digitally produced images. Once again, not one candidate fought for the decency of our country.

### **6. WE NO LONGER HAVE A SOLID WORK ETHIC**

As a people right from our inception, we were a hard-working nation. America was founded upon the dignity of hard work. Our free enterprise system encourage ambition, incentive and competition as well as blood, sweat and tears. Because of severe flaws in our welfare system and the allowance of gambling in many states, many Americans no longer feel that they must work. Alcoholism is a serious plague among non-working

people, even native Americans. There is something about hard work that builds up a person's pride not only in themselves but in their accomplishments. Our welfare system is badly in need of revision to award hardworking people and to discipline lazy people. Gambling is a serious plague in our land. Countless millions are addicted to it. Depression, family breakup, and even suicides have resulted. Since this is the 'golden goose' that helps the civic coffers, no candidate opposed it.

#### **7. WE NO LONGER HAVE GOD-CENTERED EDUCATION**

According to our Founding Fathers, the Bible and the New England primer were the official textbooks throughout our land. All education in America was God-centered. The first colleges of this country were all religious. Most of them were Christian. Every student had to do at least these three things: to attend chapel service on Sunday, to read the Bible and say their prayers every day and to practice the Judaic-Christian moral code. Failure to do so meant disciplinary action and eventually expulsion.

Now, today drug addiction, alcoholism, promiscuity and pornography plague our school children. College president after college president has compromised the virtues of American youth by allowing co-ed dorms. In some colleges today, you can get credit for courses in pornography - as unthinkable as that is. Once again, no candidate raised his or her voice to protect the virtue of our children. From the time that they are born to the time that they are 18, over 90 percent of our youngsters have been sexually abused in one way or another. Almost none of them are being taught within our colleges, our media and our public forum that virginity and chastity are still the desired virtues and the very foundation of a person's inner integrity.

#### **8. WE NO LONGER HAVE A GODLY PUBLIC FORUM.**

The media, including the movies, television, newspapers and magazines, have replaced the churches and the family as the primary informant of young people's souls. By and large, the media has abdicated its God-given role. Most of the media in America is anti-God, anti-Christian, anti-decency and anti-life. This past weekend, a new rap film with an 'R' rating set a record by taking in \$55 million at the box office. What an awful travesty; and yet, few of the voices that can speak out against it do -- and even fewer are the politicians who will stand up and oppose it. Our media are destroying our flag. Bernie Goldberg's book *Bias* was a bestseller. According to John Leo in *U.S. News and World Report*, the media has lost their credibility because of their anti-Christian, anti-Catholic, anti-decency and anti-life propaganda.

#### **9. WE NO LONGER PROMOTE GODLY-RULERS**

As a people, we were taught to respect civil authority and to pray for our leaders. We were also strongly encouraged to elect righteous men and women; and we were strongly warned over and over again that if we did not do so, catastrophe would follow. William Penn, for example, said, quoting Proverbs 29:2, "when the righteous rule, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people roam." Noah Webster stated, "When you become entitled to exercise the right of voting for public officers, let it be impressed on your mind that God commands you to choose for rulers, 'just men who will rule in the fear of God.' The preservation of [our] government depends on the faithful discharge of this duty. If the

citizen neglect their duty and place unprincipled men in office, the government will soon be corrupted; laws will be made, not for the public good so much as for the selfish or local purposes; corrupt or incompetent men will be appointed to execute the laws; the public revenues will be squandered on unworthy men; and the rights of the citizens will be violated or disregarded.”

This is almost a prophecy of what is happening in our times. Our government has become corrupted. We’ve had presidents and vice-presidents who were so perverse that they supported and endorsed partial birth abortion. The private lives of some of them were blatantly immoral and deceptive. In the past, such men would be expelled from office. The moral outcry of America would have been strong. The fact that it was not is a sign of our decline.

#### **10. THE LACK OF FREEDOM OF RELIGION.**

The primary purpose for the establishment of the United States was the freedom of religion. Every American citizen was free to express their own religious convictions, not only at home but in the classroom and the public assembly, as well. In fact, our constitution to this day clearly states, “Congress shall make no law prohibiting the free exercise of religion.” Today, in the public forum, religion is suppressed. In the schools it is outlawed. We do allow our Congressmen to pray, but we do not allow our school children to pray. This is exactly contrary to the vision of our Founding Fathers with regard to education. With blatant paganism on the rise, more and more anti-Christian, anti-Catholic and anti-religious sentiment is thriving, especially among our youth.

#### **EPILOGUE**

The 10 principles that made America great (1) that we were a nation under God (2) that promoted the unalienable right to life, (3) with ordered freedom, (4) the support of the traditional family, (5) common decency, (6) a solid work ethic, (7) God-centered education, (8) a Godly public forum, (9) a divinely-ordained state with strong religious leadership, (10) that allowed for the freedom and encouragement of religion have all been undermined.

Samuel Rutherford said, “Unlike the governments of Europe that assured the divine right of kings, all men in America, even our rulers, were to be under the law of God as revealed through the Scriptures and not above it.”

#### **GOD SAID**

God has promised “if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face I will hear from heaven, I will heal their nation and restore their land.” We Americans are a Godly people. If we follow the injunction given to Moses, Joshua and all the prophets, I hold before you two standards: if you obey my principles and follow my laws you will prosper. If you do not, you will go into decline and be oppressed by nations that will be my instruments of chastisement.

Today we are met on a great Civil War testing whether this nation or any nation so conceived can long endure. The real issues in America are not money, social security,

consumer drugs. The real issues are that we are called to be a nation under God that support the inalienable right to life, especially for the unborn, that we are a religious people, a people of integrity with strong family values and deep love for the decency of our youth with an abiding respect for those in authority; and a people who proudly sing, *God Bless America*. May we all return to our national motto, *In God We Trust*, and may we sing with renewed fervor the second verse of our national anthem,

“Blessed with victory and peace may this heaven rescued land praise the God who has made and preserved us a nation, then conquer we must when our cause it is just, then this be our motto, in God be our trust. And the star spangled banner in triumph shall wave, o’er the land of the free and the home of the brave.”

MFH 11/11/02