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The Coop Report...

The 1st Amendment — The Pledge of Allegiance, God & Grits

The 1st Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America has been wrongly interpreted by the legal system of our country for the last several decades. There are many in America who truly believe that the authors of our Constitution never intended to establish and nurture America as a Christian nation. Yet, the historical backdrop for the settlement of America as a Christian nation is self-evident to those who choose to engage in even a brief review of the blessed events surrounding our beginnings.

As Christians, we can no longer afford to linger on the fence while America continues its spiritual and moral slide into darkness. For the past several decades, the spiritual and moral fiber of our great nation has gradually become unraveled...thread by thread. Like the recipe for cooking a frog — keeping it in a cooking pot without it getting nervous and jumping out…

> *Simply put the frog in a pot of water and gradually turn the temperature up one degree at a time. With each additional degree, the frog acclimates to the condition. Before he realizes it, he's been cooked.*

Well, I think we've been cooked or nearly so. Regardless, it's time to restore America to its Christian roots. The symptoms announcing the effects of our silence continue to emerge almost daily, each one a degree higher than the last.

I am reminded of the old saying, "those who fail to understand their history are doomed to repeat it."

What can we do as Christians to help America restore its Christian roots?

- Understand the reasons why the Pilgrims founded this land
- Understand the mindset of those who authored and signed the Constitution
- Review how our legal system once regarded the importance of having a Christ-centered educational system

The people of Israel lost their spiritual compass and their moral values declined as well, after they settled into the land of Canaan. Without Joshua and the elders to keep them focused on God, "... Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit." (Judges 21:25)

In like fashion, America has also lost its spiritual compass beginning with the misinterpretation of the 1st Amendment, which in turn, has caused the loss of its moral compass as well. Civil decay is not far behind. By removing ***Christ*** from our nation's governing bodies, we have removed the very armor our creator gave us when he founded this once great nation. Like the people of Israel during the years following their exile in Egypt, for many Americans, *there is no God in America, and everyone does as they please*. We have opened the floodgates of a host of ills which continue to weaken our moral fiber and threatens our civil order.

Although God doesn't necessarily expect us to be another Paul for His Kingdom's sake...another quarterback of the *team,* He does, however, expect us to get off of the bench and get *into* the game. We must be willing, able, and equipped to do our share. As such, we need to understand the correct interpretation of our Constitution so we may help effect the changes needed in our country to orchestrate its return to its Christian roots...before it's too late.

So, what does the Constitution of the United States of America really say about the relationship between religion and government?

Take a look at the facts….let's look at the Constitution itself. Shown below, is a copy of **Amendment I**, written into law in 1791 which addresses the very issue of the relationship between church and state.

> *"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."*

On the surface, it would appear that this law may, indeed, be in agreement with those who want our Government to evict *Jesus Christ* (i.e., Christianity) from its public domain.

This couldn't be farther from the truth, however. To fully understand historical events of any age, one must be able to put into context the historical climate...the backdrop...the environmental, social, and political *personality* of each age which directed its footsteps. I'm sure you've witnessed occasions where you or someone you knew had said something that for which they were later criticized. They may have been precisely quoted as having said something that was coming back to "haunt" them only because what was quoted as having been said was taken completely "out-of-context." This is exactly what has happened with our Constitution and its "interpretation."

The full intent of this and all elements of our Constitution must be carefully aligned with the backdrop in which it was written, if you wish to properly interpret its intention. You must understand the mindset of its authors. Surely you know your best friend so well that if someone says they this or that you would automatically know whether or not this could be true...because you know your friend's mind, heart, and soul. Such is the case of this great document we call the *Constitution.*

Dating back to the years before William Bradford (the leader of the original Pilgrims who settled America in 1621) set sail for America, he and a small troupe of Christians departed England to be free to contemplate how they could worship Christ as they wanted, not just the way the Anglican Church of England wanted to have everyone worship the Godhead.

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In 1647, wrote of this colony,

> "Last and not least, they cherished a great hope and inward zeal of laying good foundations, or at least making some ways toward it, for the propagation and advance of the gospel of the kingdom of Christ in the remote parts of the world, even though they should be but stepping stones to others in the performance of so great a work."
>
> *(William J. Federer, America's God and Country Encyclopedia of Quotations, Fame Publishing,, 1994)*

Two hundred years later, Christianity remained a focal point or our forefathers, many of whom openly declared the benefactor and Sovereign leader of our country as none other than Jesus Christ Himself. Just a few of these names we all recognize include Samuel Adams, Ethan Allen, and Thomas Jefferson.

Our forefathers never intended for anyone to interpret this element of our constitution as a license to evict the one and only God Almighty from our governing bodies and buildings. Rather, they were trying to insure that they would escape from the dominion of the Anglican Church (of England) which limited the Christian to adhere to only one theological interpretation of the Word of our God.

Again, in William J. Federer's book, "America's God and Country Encyclopedia of Quotations, you may be surprised to about read some interesting US Supreme Court Decisions you would never expect to see happening today. Here's just one to get you started...

United States Supreme Court 1844, in the case of Vidal V. Girard's Executors, 43 U.S. ~26, 132, Justice Joseph Story delivered the court's opinion. The case concerned one Stephen Girard, a deist from France, who had moved to Philadelphia, died, and left his estate ($7M) to establish an orphanage and school, with the stipulation that no religious influence be allowed. The city rejected the proposal, as their lawyers declared:

> 'The plan of education proposed is anti-Christian, and therefore repugnant to the law....The purest principles of morality are to be taught. Where are they found? Whoever searches for them must go to the source from which a Christian man derives his faith -the Bible....There is an obligation to teach what the Bible alone can teach, viz. a pure system of morality.
>
> Both in the Old and New Testaments [religious instruction's] importance is recognized. In the Old it is said, "Thou shalt diligently teach them to thy children," and the New, "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not...." No fault can be found with Girard for wishing a marble college to bear his name for ever, but it is not valuable unless is has a fragrance of Christianity about it.'

The United States Supreme Court rendered its unanimous opinion, stating:

> 'Christianity...is not to he maliciously and openly reviled and blasphemed against, to the annoyance of believers or the injury of the public... It is unnecessary for us, however, to consider the establishment of a school or college, for the propagation of Deism, or any other form of infidelity.
>
> Such a case is not to be presumed to exist in a Christian country... ..Why may not laymen instruct in the general principles of Christianity as well as ecclesiastics.…

So, what can you do? For starters, strike up some conversation with your next door neighbor and your acquaintances at work and check out where they stand on their knowledge of the intent of the 1st Amendment. Educate yourself on this vital matter and those who need educating. Enlist those who already are educated and continue to spread the word.

Write to your congressman or congresswoman...your duly appointed elected officials...and tell them you want to restore the original intent of our Constitution. *Educate them!*

To locate your US Congressperson, go to the internet and access http://www.house.gov. To locate your US Senator, go to http://www.senate.gov.

Never assume others with your same agenda will take care of this business for you. We have too much to lose if YOU don't get involved...your voice must be heard.

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