

## Then and Now

The great nineteenth century statesman and politician, Daniel Webster once said, "If we and our posterity shall be true to the Christian religion, if we and they shall live always in the fear of God and shall respect His commandments. We may have the highest hopes of the future fortunes of our country. But if we and our posterity neglect religious instruction and authority, violate the rules of eternal justice, trifle with the injunctions of morality, and recklessly destroy the political constitution which holds us together, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us that shall bury all our glory in profound obscurity."

These words have now approached the point of their fulfillment. Today our nation has journeyed to a place that is far removed from the one on which it was founded. No longer does America respect the values of its fathers. Today it mocks their faith, their morality and their reliance on God to preserve them. The gauntlet has been laid down. The challenge has been extended. However, before the final chapter plays out, consider how much our nation has changed and what that change says about our national character.

### Taxes

Few would deny that Americans enjoy more personal freedom than any other people in the world today. And that's why millions have sought and found refuge and liberty within this country. And yet, we see signs of that liberty decaying all around us. A decay that becomes all the more obvious when we compare our nation today to the America of our founding fathers. For example, the total tax rate today for the average U.S. citizen is over forty-five percent of their income. The tax rate that helped provoked the colonists to fight for their independence from Great Britain was less than twenty percent.

### Size of Government

Beyond the rate of taxation our founding fathers realized that the larger the civil government the less personal freedoms its citizens would enjoy. In 1816 one in approximately eighteen-hundred Americans were employed by the federal government. Today that number has swollen to approximately one in seventy-five—a twenty-four-hundred percent increase.

### Presidential Security

Many years ago, when the United States was still a modest republic, American presidents were available to almost anyone who wanted to see them. Thomas Jefferson went for a walk down Pennsylvania Avenue, alone, and spoke to anyone who came up to him. John Adams used to swim naked in the Potomac. A woman reporter got him to talk to her by sitting on his clothes and refusing to budge.

But now anyone who wants to see the president must have a background check and pass through a metal detector. The White House staff must approve reporters before they are allowed into press conferences. And when the U.S. head of state travels, he does so in imperial style; he moves around protected by hundreds of praetorian guards, sharpshooters on rooftops, and thousands of local centurions.

When President Clinton went to China in 1998, he took with him his family, plus "5 Cabinet secretaries, 6 members of Congress, 86 senior aides, 150 civilian staff (doctors, lawyers, secretaries, valets, hairdressers, and so on), 150 military staff (drivers, baggage handlers,

snipers, and so on), 150 security personnel, several bomb-sniffing dogs, and many tons of equipment, including 10 armored limousines and the 'blue goose,' President Clinton's bulletproof lectern."

Getting the presidential entourage and its armada of equipment to China and back, the Air Force flew 36 airlift missions on Boeing 747, C-141, and C-5 aircraft. The Pentagon's cost of the China trip was \$14 million. Operating Air Force One alone costs over \$34,000 an hour.

## Crime

Over three crimes against property occur every second in the United States today. In 1983 taxpayers spent over ten billion dollars for jails and prisons -- an average of over sixteen thousand dollars per inmate. It is estimated that one out of every three hundred and fifty Americans is behind bars today—the world's highest per-capita ratio. Compare this with historian James Adams' findings: "I have found only one case of a Colonial traveler being robbed in the whole century preceding the Revolution."

## Education

In 1985 two hundred and sixty-one billion dollars was spent on education. That was more than twice what was spent in 1980 and over ten times the amount spent in 1970. The cost per student jumped from two hundred and ninety-four dollars in 1956 to two thousand nine hundred dollars in 1982 and '83. Even allowing for inflation that's a jump of almost one thousand percent. While expenditures and personnel have increased dramatically, the quality of education has declined. S.A.T. scores dropped consistently from 1963 to 1980. And since then even the standard for the S.A.T. itself has been lowered. As a nation we are producing an increasing number of functionally illiterate adults.... This is in great contrast to early America. At the time of our independence John Adams wrote, "To find an American who could not read was as rare as a comet."

## Abortion

Since Row v Wade over forty million unborn children have been killed by abortion (1 out of 3 babies conceived). Furthermore, decades of misinformation has convinced many people that a woman has a "right" to snuff out the life inside her, despite the fact that medical science has proven conclusively that human life begins at the moment of conception, just as the Bible says.

## Traditional Values and Morality

The breakdown of the American family through divorce and other social maladies has so escalated that today only seven out of one-hundred Americans are living in a traditional family where there is a father, mother and children.

Additionally, the sexual revolution with its numerous casualties includes one in four sexually active adults suffering from some form of venereal disease. Furthermore, the proliferation of homosexuality and its increasing acceptance as non-deviant behavior has totally redefined our national values. Add to that a national obsession with pleasure has made America the land of the base and the home of the decadent. And what has this gotten us? Are we more fulfilled? Is there more purpose to our lives? Today, suicide is the second leading killer of teenagers and the eighth largest killer over-all.

As this nation continues its descent into moral oblivion it is clear that no governmental institution can correct our course. Perhaps we require a greater change—one that will be driven by the Architect of all true morality. A dedicated minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ put it this way.

"The result of idolatry in our culture has been immorality on a scale unparalleled in the history of the United States. This will never change until the values, the system of morality that people use to determine right from wrong, change. This change will not occur until a governmental change of such magnitude sweeps aside all existing institutions and standards. We have seen in our lifetimes that the mere replacing of political affiliation, names, and faces of those in positions of

leadership really changes nothing. It may temporarily moderate immorality, but it does not change the fundamental reasons for it." John Ritenbaugh

## Virtue and Courage

True freedom is a gift of God Himself. Without Him as our guiding Moral Voice we only have the illusion of liberty. Tragically, that is where America finds itself today. The home of the brave to a large extent has become the abode of weakness and moral cowardice. Samuel Adams, the father of the American Revolution said,

"A general dissolution of principles and manners will more surely over-throw the liberties of America than the whole force of the common enemy. While the people are virtuous they can not be subdued. But once they loose their virtue they will be ready to surrender their liberties to the first external or internal invader. If virtue and knowledge are diffused among the people, they will never be enslaved. This will be their great security."

## Faith

Thomas Jefferson once stated that "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." To secure our liberties we must first understand what produced them. How were the men and women who founded our country able to give birth to the freest nation the world has ever seen? What produced the seeds of liberty in their lives? What motivated and inspired them? Where did their ideas originate?

Even a casual examination of American history will reveal that the most common theme shared by the founding fathers was a firm belief that God was the giver of life, of liberty and of man's right to pursue happiness. These champions of freedom recognized that only where the Spirit of the Lord is, is there any real liberty. Furthermore, they understood that the degree to which a nation applies Biblical truths to all of life, is the degree to which that nation secures its freedom.

Tragically, today the real story faith on which this nation was built has been extinguished by those who reject the Bible's enduring moral principles. There has been a systematic deletion of religious references from history texts used to teach our children. In 1985 New York University professor Paul C. Vitz did a study for the U.S. Department of Education. After reviewing scores of books from primary readers to high school history texts he found "It may be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a religious figure or for an individual's Christian beliefs to get into the pages of the history books." For example one book states that "Pilgrims are people who make long trips." Vitz's final assessment: "When it came to the treatment of history, I can assure you that a bias against Christianity existed."

Consider those words in the context of those God spoke through the great prophet Isaiah.

O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths. (Isaiah 3:12)

The expulsion of God from our public schools is even more amazing when one understands that the primary purpose for establishing schools in America was to teach everyone to be able to read and understand the Bible. Our first college, Harvard, in its original rules charged "every student to lay Christ as the only foundation of sound knowledge and learning." In fact, of the first one-hundred and eight colleges in America one-hundred and six were founded by and for the Christian faith.

Patrick Henry, known as the "Orator of Liberty", said, "It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ!"

## Prayer and Supplication

This nations founding father's belief in and firm reliance on God's protection proved invaluable throughout the Revolutionary war. This protection of God was certainly upon the father of our

nation, George Washington. Washington, in a letter to his brother reported, "But by the all powerful dispensations of Providence, I have been protected beyond all human expectation."

God was preserving and preparing General Washington through this and many other events for a special end. When the war for independence began Washington was selected as General of the Army of the United States. The day after he took charge he issued orders requiring, "All Officers and soldiers not engaged in actual duty to attend divine services; to implore the blessings of heaven upon the means used for their safety and defense."

The colonists continued to pray and rely on God throughout the war. During the harsh winter of 1777 and '78 when the American troops were suffering at Valley Forge, Washington could often be found on his knees within the woods, laying the cause of his bleeding country at the throne of God Almighty and His grace. In the prayer room of the Capital one can see in the stained glass window the kneeling figure of George Washington. Behind him a prayer from the first verse of Psalms sixteen is etched, "Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust."

Washington was observed by his troops, his Officers and various civilians to regularly pray in his tent as well as in secluded groves. On May sixth 1982, President Reagan remarked on this in his national day of prayer proclamation: "I've said before that the most sublime picture in American history is of George Washington on his knees in the snow at Valley Forge. That image personifies a people who know that it is not enough to depend on our own courage and goodness, we must also seek help from God, our Father and preserver."

In this most difficult of times General Washington constantly relied upon God and trusted in Him for success. God was faithful to answer his prayers, and through Washington He eventually established our independence and secured the beginning of the most free and prosperous nation the world has ever seen. Following these events George Washington said, "The hand of Providence has been so conspicuous in all this, that he must be worse than an infidel and more than wicked that has not gratitude enough to acknowledge his obligation."

#### **A Final Thought:**

As this once great nation continues to defy the faith on which it was founded it will one day pay for its arrogance. Consider the sobering warning from the Great God of Heaven.

At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it?

If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.

And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it?

If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them. (Jeremiah 18:7-10)

The nations of Israel and Judah stand as living proof that God is not bluffing when He warns of the consequences of national sin. He will punish it.

**He did it then and He will do it now.**