

GIFT GIVERS

Agape International Ministries

October 1999

The Role of Faith in Public Life

by Ralph Reed, Executive Director, the Christian Coalition

A Unique Nation

America is a nation unique in the history of the world. It is not the product of an accident or evolution. Its founders were free to decide its future, and they decided, with conscious purpose to invent a nation the like of which had never been seen. Thus America is a nation with no kings, no royalty, and no privileged classes. It is not blood or marriage that counts but a vision — a vision of a society based on two fundamental beliefs. The first belief is that all men, created equal in the eyes of God with certain unalienable rights, are free to pursue the longings of their hearts. The second belief is that the sole purpose of government is to protect those rights.

The first Americans shared this deeply spiritual vision. Most Americans still do. According to public opinion surveys, 92 percent of all Americans believe in God; 83 percent believe that the Bible is the infallible word of God; and 57 percent pray daily. Nearly 130 million attend church every Sunday.

The Faith of Our Founders

The American Revolution, which established a new nation, was not merely a revolution inspired by political or economic oppression but was a revolution of faith, rising from a great spiritual awakening that was sweeping the world in the 18th century. It should be of little surprise to us, then, to find the affirmation in the Declaration of Independence that there are certain truths that are “self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.” The founding fathers were certain that these rights are granted by God, are

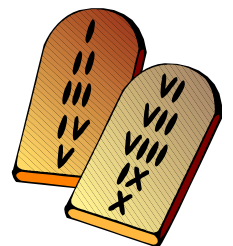
afforded His protection, and are not to be infringed upon by government.



The “father of our country,” George Washington, wrote, “I am sure there never was a people who had more reason to acknowledge a divine interposition in their affairs, than those of the United States. I should be pained to believe... that they failed to consider the omnipotence of God, who is alone able to protect them.”

Our nation’s second president, John Adams, added, “Our Constitution was designed for a moral and religious people only. It is wholly inadequate for any other.” By this, President Adams did not mean that the Constitution was meant for people of any specific faith. He opposed religious tests for public office, as do I and all Americans. The point Adams made was far more profound. He meant that to create a nation where government was small, limited, and confined to enumerated functions, one must have a virtuous citizenry animated by faith in God and moral values.

Our Founders possessed a view of the world and government that necessarily presupposed a people obedient to an internalized code of conduct — based upon that first, and best, code of law found in the books of Moses — that made a large central government superfluous. It was this view that the great French observer, Alexis de Tocqueville, wrote about the early 19th century: “Americans combine the notions



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Phone: 512-AMERICA
FAX: 512-263-1962

E-mail: aim@aim4jesus.org
URL: www.aim4jesus.org

P.O. Box 90248
Austin, TX 78709-0248
USA

P.O. Box 1896, Belize City
BELIZE, Central America

PUBLICATION STAFF

Dave Austin
Executive Editor

Wade David
Editor-in-Chief

Glenn Haecker
Graphics / Production

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EDITORIAL: We Confess...

Recently, when Joe Wright, minister of the Central Christian Church, was asked to open the new session of the Kansas Senate, instead of the trite politically correct generalities which are usually given at such occasions, the following prayer was passionately delivered by Brother Wright.

“Heavenly Father, we come before You to ask Your forgiveness and to seek Your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, ‘Woe on those who call evil good,’ [Isaiah 5:20a NIV] but that’s exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and reversed our values. We confess that we have:

- Ridiculed the absolute truth of Your Word and called it pluralism;
- Worshipped other gods and called it multiculturalism;
- Endorsed perversion and called it an alternative lifestyle;
- Exploited the poor and called it the lottery;
- Neglected the needy and called it self-preservation;
- Rewarded laziness and called it welfare;
- Killed our unborn children and called it choice;
- Shot abortionists and called it justifiable;
- Neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem;
- Abused power and called it political savvy;
- Coveted our neighbor’s possessions and called it ambition;
- Polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it

freedom of expression; and

- Ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment.

Search us, O God, and know our hearts today; cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Guide and bless these men and women who have been sent to direct us to the center of Your will. I ask it in the name of Your Son, the Living Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.”

We’ve been told that the response to this stirring appeal was immediate, with a number of legislators walking out in protest during the prayer. It’s said that Brother Wright’s church logged more than 5,000 phone calls about the prayer, and only 47 of those were negative. We’ve also been told that when Paul Harvey aired the prayer on his radio program, he received a larger response than any other in the show’s history.

We feel that with the Lord’s help, this prayer can be a positive influence in the bringing back of the spiritual vision that shaped this nation in the first place. As Ralph Reed states in this issue’s lead article, “The Role of Faith in Public Life,” we must recognize the limits of politics. We agree that civic involvement alone “cannot legislate what can only spring from the heart and soul.” What is needed is a nationwide spiritual renewal, and Brother Wright’s prayer can be a powerful instrument in this process. We therefore ask that you prayerfully consider sending a copy of his prayer to your Christian friends and asking them to do likewise. As in all things, let the Holy Spirit be your Guide in this matter.

— WADE DAVID

(...continued from front page)

of [religion] and liberty so intimately in their minds, that it is impossible to make them conceive of one without the other.”

The Fruits of Our National Faith

From the Quakers in Pennsylvania to the Congregationalists in New England and the Catholics in Maryland and the Baptists in Virginia, America is a nation undergirded by faith, built by faith, and enlivened by faith. And it is not a faith in word alone — it is an active, transforming faith. Look around today and what you will see are the fruits of our national faith. Throughout our history, America’s faithful millions have founded orphanages, hospitals, lending libraries, and charities. America’s first public schools were founded by clergymen. Her first colleges were divinity schools.

Children learned to read by using the Bible as a textbook. McGuffey’s Readers, which sold 120 million copies during the 19th century, contained lessons drawn directly from Scripture. Historian David Herbert Donald points out that Abraham Lincoln, one of the most well-read presidents in our history, enjoyed only a single year of formal schooling. On the dirt floor of a log cabin, young Lincoln learned how to read by poring over the pages of his mother’s Bible. The first lesson in his first spelling book read as follows: “No man can put off the law of God.”

When Noah Webster published the first American dictionary in 1828, he used Bible verses as definitions. There was no false wall dividing private faith and public service in Webster’s day. He was an author, teacher, and preacher who founded a college and served in Congress.

Lincoln and Webster understood what too many today have forgotten: the importance of faith to the public institutions in a democratic republic.

Religious Bigotry

Since the mid-1960’s, mainline church membership has declined by one-fourth. That decline, however, is not indicative of a general decline in American faith. And it has been more than made up for by the skyrocketing popularity of conservative and evangelical churches in which membership has more than doubled. Pentecostals and fundamentalist revivals have converted millions of people. Nesting baby boomers are

returning in droves to the churches and synagogues of their youth.

The result is a complete transformation of America’s churchgoing population. Today, the typical American churchgoer is orthodox in faith, traditionalist in outlook, and conservative on cultural and political issues. Yet as active religious believers move beyond the pews and into public life, a strange and disturbing hostility greets them. Instead of being welcomed into the political arena and into a culture generally acknowledged to be in crisis, they are confronted by an intolerance that frequently curdles into religious bigotry.



In a speech to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association in 1960, then-Senator John F. Kennedy, in fending off charges that his Roman Catholicism disqualified him from seeking the office of President of the United States, said, “The issue in this campaign should be not what kind of church I believe in, for that should matter only to me. It should be what kind of America I believe in.”

What Kind of America?

What kind of America do religious conservatives believe in? It is an America in which we would all like to live, a nation of safe streets, strong families, schools that work, marriages that stay together, with a smaller government, lower taxes, and civil rights for all. Religious conservatives do not countenance discrimination — or special rights — for anyone. Our faith is simple, and our agenda is direct.

For either political party to attack persons holding these views as “fanatics,” “extremists,” or worse, violates a basic American spirit of fairness. More than that, it runs counter to all we are as a nation and all we aspire to be as a people. For 200 years, America has pursued its vision, maintained its firm foundation, and achieved greatness because it honors God and welcomes people of faith into its public life. But in the 35 years since John F. Kennedy uttered his eloquent warning, we have lost our way. People of faith have become victims of the worst forms of stereotyping, marginalization, and demonology.

In the words of Yale law professor, Stephen I. Carter, “a culture of disbelief” threatens our society.

In the place of core beliefs and time-honored values, many of our elites in the academy, the media, and government have promoted a different sort of value system — a system that presupposes the inability of Americans to care for themselves through a culture of compassion. This system is based, not on the relevance and benevolence of God, but on the ability of government to meet every need and provide every solution.

It is not a workable system. Witness the welfare state, once measured by the height of its aspirations and now measured by the depth of its failures. We read about them every morning in newspapers and see them every evening on television.

Not too long ago, the novelist John Updike wrote, “The fact that we live better than our counterparts in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union cannot ease the pain that we no longer live nobly.” Our culture is testimony to the awful truth of his words. We may erect skyscrapers of silver that rise from streets paved with gold, but if our inner cities resemble Beirut, our children pass through metal detectors into schools that are war zones, and one out of every four high school graduates cannot read his diploma, then we will have failed ourselves, failed our nation, and failed our God. We cannot and must not fail. There is too much at stake.

Reaffirming the Role of Faith

What is the answer? We must begin by reaffirming the role of faith in our public life.

Let me be clear: I support the separation of church and state. I believe in a nation that is not officially Christian, Jewish, or Muslim. But I also believe in the right under the First Amendment to freedom of speech, including speech with religious content.

If we are to reaffirm the role of religion in public life, we must also encourage those with strong spiritual values to re-enter politics after too many years of self-imposed retreat. Religious believers must become full citizens, with a place at the table and a voice in the conversation we call democracy. Their involvement should be a source of celebration, not fear. Their participation is not a threat to democracy, but is essential to it. And as they enter the political arena, people of faith should not be asked to leave their moral convictions at

the door. On issues such as strengthening the family and protecting human life, they are a voice for the voiceless, a defender of the defenseless, and a protector of the innocent.

I freely acknowledge that not all share this view or the faith that inspires it. That is one of the great privileges of a democracy; I am confident that our views will be tested and our proposals improved by vigorous and open debate. But what must be acknowledged is the affirming and healing role that faith plays in society. Just as we acknowledge that at times in the past, religion has been twisted to evil ends — such as when the Nazis trumpeted their horrific belief in the superiority of the Aryan race and when Muslim terrorists committed unspeakable acts of terrorism against innocent civilians while invoking the name of God—we must acknowledge the good ends and the enormous blessing of religion. If we can look without prejudice at the real historical record, then together we can bridge the differences that separate us and heal our land.

Recognizing the Limits of Politics

We must also recognize the limits of politics. As important as civic involvement is to a restoration of values, it cannot legislate what can only spring from the heart and soul. Politics alone cannot restore a land of loving parents, of strong marriages, of lullabies sung to sleeping babies, and bedtime stories read to wide-eyed children. That work is too important to be left to the government. It is best done by mothers and fathers, churches and synagogues, home and hearth.

It is my hope that in the days and weeks and months and years to come that this will be an agenda and a vision shared by all Americans. We are a people of many faiths and many races. That is the genius of America. Our motto translated means, “Out of many, one.” May it be so in our time. ■

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The Will of God

For anyone going through a hard time — financially, in your marriage, relationship-wise, emotionally, with family, whatever...

The will of God will never take you
Where the grace of God cannot keep you,
Where the arms of God cannot support you,
Where the riches of God cannot supply your needs,
Where the power of God cannot endow you.

The will of God will never take you
Where the Spirit of God cannot work through you,
Where the wisdom of God cannot teach you,
Where the army of God cannot protect you,
Where the hands of God cannot mold you.

The will of God will never take you
Where the love of God cannot enfold you,
Where the mercies of God cannot sustain you,
Where the peace of God cannot calm your fears,
Where the authority of God cannot overrule for you.

The will of God will never take you
Where the comfort of God cannot dry your tears,
Where the Word of God cannot feed you,
Where the miracles of God cannot be done for you,
Where the omnipresence of God cannot find you.

Everything happens for a purpose. We may not see the wisdom of it all, now, but trust and believe in the Lord that everything is for the best. The way to be anxious about nothing is to be prayerful about everything.

— Author Unknown



Formula for a Happy Home

It's like living in California;
When you find a fault,
Don't dwell on it!

In Loving Memory

Bro. Dave's mother, Ruth Marie Hackman, went to be with the Lord Jesus Sunday, October 3, 1999, at the age of 85. Mrs. Hackman had been ill and residing in a convalescent home for a couple of years. She will be greatly missed, but the family rejoices that her suffering has ended. Please be in prayer for Bro. Dave and his family as they adjust to their loved one's "homegoing." Because of Mrs. Hackman's acceptance of Jesus' supreme sacrifice, they know that they will be reunited one day.

Frequent Questions

How does CAMEM multiply the Harvest Fund?

Regrettably, we live in a predatory world, where there are powerful enemies of Christ. For protection of the ministry and of its ability to continue serving the worldwide Christian community, CAMEM does not disclose the specific means by which assets are multiplied. In general, the Harvest Fund participates in global financial markets, avoiding national markets (e.g., trading on stock exchanges) that would tie its stability to the economy of any one nation. "Besides," says Bro. Dave Austin, "if we start talking tools, means of multiplication, etc., then we are talking investments and not a donation unto God through this ministry."

Where is the Harvest Fund located and is it safe?

CHF is a private fund, owned and operated solely by CAMEM. As such, neither its size, nor its location are made public. CAMEM does not have accounts in banks domiciled in any of the major welfare-state countries (e.g., Canada, United States, Great Britain, Germany, France). Even CAMEM's bank account in Belize is only a transfer account; it is not the location of the Harvest Fund. CHF is diversified. It's holdings are under the safekeeping of sound international financial institutions.

Will Y2K affect CAMEM?

CAMEM's computer data and computer systems are ready for the turn of the century, as are the principle banks with which the ministry has dealings. Our tracking software has been developed and is maintained in-house by the ministry's own programmer. Therefore, even unexpected computer-related challenges could be resolved quickly.

Special Provision for New FC's in Effect Now

As an encouragement to small and medium-sized churches, a special provision is in effect through the end of 1999. New CAMEM Founding Church positions with an initial donation of \$3000 or less, will be given full Harvest Unit credit for the initial donation. The usual \$1500 expansion donation will be waived under this special arrangement. In effect, this will quadruple the monthly Direct Harvest (projected at \$200, instead of \$50) that would normally be available to a Founding Church starting with a \$3000 donation!

NOTE: All expansion donations will apply if the Founding Church elects to give additional donations. This special arrangement only applies to churches that have been meeting regularly for at least three months. It does not apply to other organizations, missionaries, or groups within a local church.

The effects Y2K will have on the world is quite another matter. Only the Lord knows, with any certainty, the duration or the magnitude with which Y2K may affect global financial markets. Please pray with us that God will continue to give His wisdom to those He has entrusted to preserve that which belongs to Him.

Will CAMEM provide a list of recipients, so that I can verify they actually receive Love-gifts?

No. CAMEM goes to great lengths to protect the privacy of all Seekers. We encourage you to seek confidence and direction regarding CAMEM directly from God: He will never lie to you, nor will He ever misdirect you. If your peace and confidence come from Him, you'll have little need for the testimonies of men. If you don't receive positive direction from the Lord, then you should definitely not donate to CAMEM.

Can I send my CAMEM donation to Agape International Ministries in Austin, Texas?

AIM does not deposit CAMEM donations into its bank account. When AIM receives a CAMEM donation it must turn around and mail it to Belize, delaying its processing. Please follow the Bank Wire Transfer Instructions (supplied with the CAMEM booklet), or send your donation directly to CAMEM's office in Belize.

Are husband and wife allowed to initiate separate CAMEM matrix positions?

Yes. CAMEM does not consider this practice a violation of its policy against multiple positions.

**CAMEM Harvest Fund
Performance**

September, 1999

23.8%

**AGAIN, OUR GOD REVEALS
HIS GRACE TO US!**



Once again, I want to share with you something that came across the Internet that really means a lot to me. Its subject matter is the choices that we all must make on the road of life. Hopefully, it will be as meaningful to you as it was for me.

Choices

Michael is the kind of guy you love to hate. He is always in a good mood and always has something positive to say. When someone would ask him how he was doing, he would reply, "If I were any better, I would be twins!"

Michael was a natural motivator. If an employee at our workplace at Towe Industry was having a bad day, Michael was there telling the employee how to look on the positive side of the situation. Seeing this style really made me curious, so one day, I went up to Michael and asked him, "I don't get it! You can't be a positive person all of the time. How do you do it?"

Michael replied, "Each morning I wake up and say to myself, 'Mike, you have two choices today. You can choose to be in a good mood or you can choose to be in a bad mood. I choose to be in a good mood.' Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim or I can choose to learn from it. I choose to learn from it. Everytime someone comes to me complaining, I can choose to accept their complaining or I can point out the positive side of life. I choose the positive side of life."

"Yeah, right, it's not that easy," I protested.

"Yes, it is," Michael said. "Life is all about choices. When you cut away all the junk, every situation is a choice. You choose how you react to situations. You choose how people affect your mood. You choose to be in a good mood or bad mood. The bottom line: It's your choice how you live life."

I reflected on what Michael said. Soon thereafter, I left Towe Industry to start my own business. We lost touch, but I often thought about him when I made a choice about life instead of reacting to it. Several years later, I heard that Michael was involved in a serious accident, falling some 60 feet from a communications tower. After 18 hours of surgery and weeks of intensive care, Michael was released from the hospital with rods placed in his back.

I saw Michael about six months after the accident.

When I asked him how he was, he replied, "If I were any better, I'd be twins. Wanna see my scars?" I declined to see his wounds, but did ask him what had gone through his mind as the accident took place.

"The first thing that went through my mind was the well-being of my soon-to-be-born daughter," Michael replied. "Then, as I lay on the ground, I remembered that I had two choices: I could choose to live or I could choose to die. I chose to live."

"Weren't you scared?" I asked. "Did you lose consciousness?"

"The paramedics were great," Michael continued. "They kept telling me I was going to be fine. But when they wheeled me into the ER, and I saw the expressions on the faces of the doctors and nurses, I got really scared. In their eyes, I read, 'He's a dead man.' I knew I needed to take action."

"What did you do?" I asked.

"Well, there was a big burly nurse shouting questions at me," said Michael. "She asked if I was allergic to anything. 'Yes,' I replied. The doctors and nurses stopped working as they waited for my reply. I took a deep breath and yelled, 'Gravity!' Over their laughter, I told them, 'I am choosing to live. Operate on me as if I am alive, not dead.'"

Michael lived, thanks to the mercy of God, the skill of his doctors, and to his amazing attitude. I learned from him that every day we have the choice to live fully. Attitude, after all, is everything.

Isn't that a beautiful story? I believe that all of us should adopt Michael's attitude. If we do, then we'll be right in line with the Word which states in Matthew 6:34: "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." [NIV] With that kind of assurance, need we ever choose to worry again?

Each day, in every way, I pray that you will choose to live and to give thanks to the Lord for He is good. It is also my prayer that every day will be filled with sunshine, laughter, and the knowledge that you are loved. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 [NIV]



-Bonnie

Funny, Isn't It?

It's hard to believe that autumn is already here and that the holiday season is rapidly approaching. We've been quite busy doing the Lord's work all summer, but I'll reserve specific comments about this for the time being, and instead share with you some interesting and insightful observations about the day-to-day life of Christians in general. If you enjoy these, perhaps you'd like to share them with others.

It's funny how a \$20 bill looks so big when you take it to church, but so small when you take it to the market!

It's funny how long it takes to serve God for an hour, but how quickly a team plays sixty minutes of basketball!

It's funny how long a couple of hours spent at church are, but how short they are when watching a movie!

It's funny how we can't think of anything to say when we pray, but don't have difficulty thinking of things to talk about to a friend!

It's funny how we get thrilled when a baseball game goes into extra innings, but we complain when a sermon is longer than the regular time!

It's funny how hard it is to read a chapter in the Bible, but how easy it is to read 100 pages of a best-selling novel!

It's funny how people want to get a front seat at any game or concert, but scramble to get a back seat at church services!

It's funny how we need two or three weeks advance notice to fit a church event into our schedule, but can adjust our schedule for other events at the last moment!

It's funny how hard it is for people to learn a simple gospel well enough to tell others, but how simple it is for the same people to understand and repeat gossip!

It's funny how everyone wants to go to heaven provided they do not have to believe, or think, or say, or do anything!

It's funny how you can send a thousand jokes through E-mail and they spread like wildfire, but when you start sending messages about the Lord, people think twice about sharing!

Funny, isn't it? Are you laughing? Are you thinking?

Spread the Word and give thanks to the Lord for He is good!

Keep JESUS in Your Heart.

May God Bless You and Yours,

- *Brother Dave*



AGAPE INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES
P.O. Box 90248
AUSTIN, TX 78709-0248
USA

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