

## Foreword by Delegate Mike Azinger

In the spring of 2015 at the invitation of my pastor, Jon Lands, I co-hosted our church's "Godly Heritage Tour" to Washington, D.C. With 60 other history lovers and thrill seekers, we loaded onto a bus in Vienna, West Virginia and headed to our nation's capital. We were anxious to discover the abundant treasures of Godly landmarks etched in stone on copious buildings and standing tall in stoic statues of bronze, stone, marble and steel.

On the first day of the tour we were to have a guest tour guide whose name was unfamiliar to me, but who would, before the day was over, have me awe-struck by his seemingly infinite knowledge of our American history. His name is Stephen McDowell, and he is the long-time president of Providence Foundation in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Stephen didn't just teach us our history per se that Friday; he taught us our *real* history — our *Christian* history. He taught us the history of what God did in our beginnings during the days of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, the first permanent colony of Jamestown, the original 13 colonies, and the tough and tenuous days of the American Revolution...and much more. Stephen answered many questions for me on that tour of D.C., some of which I have had for many years. Questions such as, What was the foundation of our forefathers' belief system? What was the source of the laws of the original 13 colonies? How did the forefathers educate their children? What was the source of that education, and who actually taught their children? Did America become the greatest nation in history by accident or was there a causal effect that began before our nation was even founded?

As I listened to Stephen McDowell (and subsequently read his books), I couldn't help but ask myself another question: How could America have so thoroughly forgotten and forsaken what it should have fought with all its might to preserve—its Christian history? How did it happen that we quit telling the stories to our children and grandchildren of our miraculous Biblical foundations? How did we quit teaching it in our schools and in our history books?

In the book of Joshua chapter 4, verses 3-9, when the Israelites crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land, God said to Joshua,

"Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, **twelve stones**, and ye shall carry them over with you"...That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, "What mean ye by these stones?" Then ye shall answer them, "That the waters of Jordan were cut off [divided] before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off:" and these stones shall be for a **memorial** unto the children of Israel for ever...**And Joshua set up twelve stones** in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood: and they are there unto this day. [emphases mine]

When God did something of significance in the lives of the Israelites, He wanted them to remember. So God would have them create a memorial; in this instance He had them build a memorial of 12 stones. The Israelites, like Americans today, were quite adept at forgetting.

As with Israel, even the most important of lessons, lectures, and life-changing events can fade from our memory in no time at all, can't they? "Don't forget!" is a common refrain from parent to child, from teacher to student, and from pastor to congregation. We can forget the most important of things—the most essential of things—even the things that are vital to the survival of our civilization—like our history.

And that is what this book is—it is a memorial; it is a reminder; it is a “Don’t forget!” It is a dusting off of the long-forgotten history of how God raised America from a mere babe to become the greatest nation on earth. This book is 12 stones.

This is not a comprehensive work. It is not meant to be. It is rather short—only about 200 pages—and is designed as a congealed briefing of irrefutable, documented facts short enough to be a primer of sorts for us as legislators (as well as all citizens) to get a taste of what happened in the shaping of America in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

I am not lecturing you to learn our history as a teacher might lecture. I am just one fellow legislator anxious to share with my colleagues some long-forgotten American history, most of which I have just recently learned myself. And sadly, what you are about to learn in this enlightening book is no longer in our history books or text books—but it once was.

It is essential that we resurrect our true American history. It is essential that we teach our Christian heritage again. It is essential to our survival, essential to our identity, essential to how we create our laws. It is essential for us to learn it for ourselves, to teach it to our children, and to the generations following. If a nation does not know its past—its origins—it cannot know its own identity. It cannot have a common purpose, a common destiny.

With no historical perspective—with no historical identity, a nation has no direction. The great British pastor Charles Haddon Spurgeon used to say that if you shine a light on the past, it—like a mirror—reflects light on the future. One of the main reasons there is so much confusion, balkanization, and division in America today is because we no longer know our common Christian history. We don’t know who we are, and thus, we don’t know how we’re supposed to behave. We quit shining a light on the past, so we have no light to guide us into the future.

Several months after returning from our “Godly Heritage Tour” to Washington, D.C., I was asked by Eric Ross, an old friend who pastors in Arizona, to come and speak in his church. “On Sunday night,” he asked, “can you speak on ‘How the Bible influenced the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence?’”

“Sure”, I replied. “As soon as I find out how the Bible influenced the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence!”

Turning to my new friend, Stephen McDowell, was the obvious next step. He recommended a book he had written, and that book revealed to me the truth on how America—her founding documents, her laws, and her educational framework—was truly founded. It was founded on the Bible! This book, *Building Godly Nations*, coupled with another of Stephen’s works, the study guide to the documentary he did with Kirk Cameron called *Monumental*—opened my eyes so profoundly that as I was reading I kept thinking, I must get a copy of this material to my fellow legislators. I was determined to get it into the hands of my colleagues in the West Virginia House and Senate.

I called Stephen McDowell and asked what he thought about putting several of the most profound chapters from these two books of his together to make a brand new book for all Americans—but especially designed for the lawmaker. Then the next step would be to get a copy to every legislator in the West Virginia House and Senate (and we are planning beyond the West Virginia borders to as many statehouses as possible!). Stephen loved the idea, and that is what we have done. What you hold in your hands is the fruit of our efforts—and our donors’ sacrifice!—and it is our gift to you. The material in this book is composed 100% by Stephen McDowell; my only role was a small one—facilitator of the idea and “co-expediter” of the dream.

And to God be the glory!

Memorials are an intrinsic force. They are God’s tools to remind us of people and events of great importance—of Providential moments of consequence. And that’s what this book is—a reminder, a

memorial—12 stones in paperback to stand in our way and say, “Hey. This is very, very important. This is our heritage; this is our history. We must learn it and teach it to our children and to our children’s children. And we must never forget.”

It is Stephen’s and my prayer that you will read this book and be reminded, as I was just a short time ago, of Whom it was that raised America to the apotheosis of nations, and Who it is that, if America returns to Him, will preserve her in generations to come.

Mike Azinger  
Vienna, West Virginia  
Member, West Virginia House of Delegates



**“The Bible is the rock upon  
which our Republic rests.”**

**President Andrew Jackson**

June 8, 1845

## Introduction

# American Exceptionalism

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By Stephen McDowell

America is different than any nation in history. She is special. When America began in the late eighteenth century she was insignificant on the world stage, although her unique form of government and unmatched liberty would become examples to the world. Her great personal, religious, economic, and civil liberty produced advancement and growth unlike any nation before.

By the beginning of the twentieth century America had become the leading nation in the world and held that place for generations. She led the way in new inventions, discoveries, and advances that benefited all men. She became the most productive nation in the world and a leader in education, medicine, technology, and science. By 1960 she produced 39% of the world's output, with only 6% of the population.<sup>1</sup> America, even with her faults and shortcomings, became the most free and prosperous nation to have ever existed. America became an exceptional nation. This had nothing to do with any inherent value of the American people, but had to do with the valuable ideas upon which she was founded.

A few of the ideas incorporated into American society making it exceptional include: valuing the individual; freedom of worship; opportunity for all to labor and of their labor; freedom to elect have a voice in government; and expression of ideas; freedom freedom to obtain ideas, start wealth; limited jurisdiction of equal standing before the law for distinctions; the central role of part of the American Dream.

These ideas produced great prosperity, charity, virtue, and made America a success and made power and wealth were used, not

good — for furthering liberty in the world. America has been a great blessing to the nations. Blessings have come from the private sector by giving aid, starting hospitals and schools, sending forth missionaries, and much more. The American government has also been a great blessing in assisting many nations who have fought against tyrants seeking to oppress them, and by sending large sums of money to nations encountering natural disasters and other threats.

Throughout America's history, people have flocked to her shores to experience the fruit of her liberty and prosperity. Those that have come have been greatly blessed. Many have escaped persecution and experienced freedom to worship God and pursue their calling. Other nations, recognizing this



The Founders of America believed she was a chosen nation.

freedom of assembly; benefit from the fruit representatives and freedom of thought to own property; businesses and create civil government; all people; no class the family. These are

liberty, justice, knowledge. They her powerful. This for conquest, but for

exceptionalism, have sought to imitate the principles that made America great, and have, to some degree, benefited as well.

Early Americans recognized the special nature of the nation in history. John Adams said,

I always consider the settlement of America with reverence and wonder, as the opening of a grand scene and design in Providence for the illumination of the ignorant, and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth.<sup>ii</sup>

Historian B.F. Morris said: “God held this vast land in reserve, as the great field on which the experiment was to be made in favor of a civil and religious liberty.”<sup>iii</sup> Historian and leading educator of women, Emma Willard, stated: “In observing the United States, there is much to convince us, that an Almighty, Overruling Providence, designed from the first, to place here a great, united people.”<sup>iv</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville wrote:

In that land the great experiment was to be made by the attempt to construct society upon a new basis; and it first time, that theories hitherto unknown, or deemed were to exhibit a spectacle for which the world had not the history of the past.<sup>v</sup>

Many of the early colonizers of America came with the a unique nation in history. John Winthrop wrote of the “A Model of Christian Charity,”— “as a city upon a hill,” where all the people of the earth would look upon and say of their own nation, “the Lord make it like that of New England.”<sup>vi</sup> William Penn said that God gave him the land that became Pennsylvania so that he could set up a model state — “a holy experiment” — “which should open its doors to every kindred” and be a refuge for men of all creeds.<sup>vii</sup>



civilized man, of was there, for the impracticable, been prepared by

vision of establishing Puritans’ desire to be

## Abandoning Our Unique Founding Principles

America’s founding principles made her unique, free, and powerful, but there are many today who would have her abandon those principles. Many leaders in education and the media have promoted a different ideology, and many governmental leaders have implemented policies contrary to our founding principles which have diminished our greatness.

As we have abandoned that which made us exceptional and embraced socialistic ideas, we have witnessed increasing problems and diminishing liberties. Over the past few generations there has been an increase in crime, a breakdown of the family, an increase of social immorality, growth of taxes, run-away government spending, declining educational skills, attacks on religious liberty, and government intrusion into private, family, and church life.

Consider these statistics reflecting the breakdown of the family and sexual morality. In 1960, 72% of adults were married. Today it is about 50%. In 1980, 18% of children were born outside of marriage; today over 40% are born outside of marriage.<sup>viii</sup> Today, only 32% of people think premarital sex is wrong; 69% thought so in 1969.

In the 1960s America was at the top of the nations for best educated students. But over the years that position has steadily declined while spending has increased. In 2012 America ranked 24<sup>th</sup> in reading, 28<sup>th</sup> in science, and 36<sup>th</sup> in math.<sup>ix</sup>

We have also experienced a decline in our economy with the implementation of policies that do not protect private property rights nor encourage business growth. Currently, America has one of the world’s highest rates of taxation on capital gains,<sup>x</sup> which has led to plummeting productivity, from 32% of the world’s GDP in 2000 to 24% in 2010.<sup>xi</sup> And now, for the first time since the measurement started,

America has fallen out of the top ten most economically free nations, even being surpassed by Chile and Estonia.<sup>xii</sup>

This decline is largely due to the nation rejecting the ideas upon which she was founded and embracing humanistic, immoral ideas. If we continue to throw off the foundational principles that produced the American Dream and embrace man-centered philosophies, we will see America decline even further.

## The Source of America's Founding Principles

America's founding principles made her exceptional, powerful, and free. They produced the American Dream. Where did these principles originate? How were they planted in the nation? These questions are thoroughly and clearly answered in this book.

The founding of America is unique. It has no parallel in history. The nation started from scratch, by a people providentially prepared and greatly influenced by the Protestant Reformation. They were a people of the Book. The founding ideas came from the Bible. They were Christian in their origin. Beginning in the sixteenth century these ideas were released to many people through the printing of Bibles in the common languages. The early settlers of America carried these seed ideas with them as they colonized the nation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These ideas were planted, grew, and began to bear great fruit. This seed determined the fruit of the American Christian Republic. It produced America as an exceptional nation, the most free and prosperous in history.

However, in recent decades we have been systematically casting aside the Bible from education, government, and law. We are removing the Ten Commandments from classroom walls, courthouses, and public life in general — and more importantly failing to teach the fundamental principles in these commandments to our children — but then wonder why our jails are being filled with people who steal, murder, and rape people. We teach that men are merely animals and then bemoan the societal result of men acting like animals.

Some people say that America's greatest threat today comes from those who believe the nation should be governed by God-given moral standards. After all, they say, we cannot mix God and government. However, these are the official standards the Founders gave us; truths, according to the Declaration of Independence that are self-evident, "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights." These rights, derived from "the laws of nature and of nature's God," are part of the founding principles that produced the American Dream.

The truths that our Founding Fathers believed and built this nation upon came from the Creator and His Holy Scriptures, the Bible. That book, according to President Jackson, "is the Rock upon which our Republic rests."<sup>xiii</sup> While this fact is not known by most Americans and is not taught in government schools, the evidence is overwhelming and is presented in part in this book. We must understand the source of our great liberty and prosperity, and pass it on to all Americans, in order to return America to her foundational ideas and keep this country a place of liberty, truth, and prosperity.

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## End Notes

<sup>i</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_largest\\_historical\\_GDP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_largest_historical_GDP)

<sup>ii</sup> B.F. Morris, *The Christian Life and Character of the Civil Institutions of the United States*, Philadelphia: George W. Childs, 1864, p. 109.

<sup>iii</sup> Morris, pp.41-42.

<sup>iv</sup> Mark A. Beliles and Stephen K. McDowell, *America's Providential History*, Charlottesville: Providence Foundation, 1989, p. 17.

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<sup>v</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>vi</sup> John Winthrop, *A Modell of Christian Charity*, 1630, Old South Leaflets, No. 207, Boston: The Old South Association.

<sup>vii</sup> William Penn, Letter to James Harrison, August 25, 1681, *Remember William Penn*, compiled by the William Penn Tercentenary committee, Harrisburg: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1945, p. 77.

<sup>viii</sup> CDC: U.S. Fertility Rate Hits Record Low for 2nd Straight Year; 40.7% of Babies Born to Unmarried Women. <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/terence-p-jeffrey/cdc-us-fertility-rate-hits-record-low-2nd-straight-year-407-babies>

<sup>ix</sup> [http://www.geographic.org/country\\_ranks/educational\\_score\\_performance\\_country\\_rankings\\_2014\\_oecd.html](http://www.geographic.org/country_ranks/educational_score_performance_country_rankings_2014_oecd.html)

<sup>x</sup> “Capital Gains Rate by Country, 2011,” *Tax Foundation*, July 6, 2012 (at: <http://taxfoundation.org/article/capital-gains-rate-country-2011-oecd>).

<sup>xi</sup> “Country Rankings,” *The Heritage Foundation* (at: <http://www.heritage.org/index/ranking>) (accessed on March 4, 2014), where America is ranked # 12.

<sup>xii</sup> “Country Rankings,” *The Heritage Foundation* (at: <http://www.heritage.org/index/ranking>) (accessed on March 4, 2014).

<sup>xiii</sup> George Herbert Walker Bush, February 22, 1990, at the request of Congress, Senate Joint Resolution 164, in a Presidential Proclamation declaring 1990 the International Year of Bible Reading.