

# **Lesson 10 Outline - The American Experiment: Stepping Stones**

- I. Introduction – God's design for the state – How close was the American Experiment?**
  - A. Three rules: Won't deify America; won't deify Founders; won't cast stones
  - B. Basis for the three branches - Isaiah 33 – Lawgiver, Judge, and King
  - C. Early educational system – Instilling principles of Biblical Christianity
    - 1. Primer and NEA – Biblical doctrine and prayer were essential to education
    - 2. Founding and original mottos of Harvard, Princeton, and Columbia
- II. Foundations of Religion and Morality – Basis for Freedom and Liberty**
  - A. Dr. Tackett's personal journey – America 101
    - 1. Murals in Capital rotunda
    - 2. Revelation 2:5 - Remember, Repent and Return
    - 3. Washington's Farwell address
  - B. Foundations of this country - Religion and Morality
    - 1. Consistent theme in virtually all of the Founder's writings
    - 2. They saw a strong connection between virtue and liberty
  - C. Purpose of Civil Magistrate - Punish evil and condone good – Romans 13
- III. Foundations of Law**
  - A. Blackstone – Valid human laws must be based upon God's laws
  - B. Influence of Darwin radically changed law in America – Case study methodology
    - 1. Legal Positivism – The state is the authority for determining right and wrong
- IV. The Larger Story**
  - A. Original charters and constitutions – Acknowledgment of God's authority and recognition that the state was subject to and accountable to God
  - B. Pilgrims intent – "preserving and propagating the truth and liberties of the gospel"
  - C. Historical revisionism – Founders depicted as Deists and secularists; stripping God and Christianity from all historical accounts; pursuing a secular basis for law
- V. Conclusion – How has this happened?**
  - A. Men have forgotten God
  - B. Cycle of Nations – Hosea 13:6 – Judgment and destruction upon proud nations
  - C. Jesus removing the lamp stand – Our hope: Light always overtakes darkness

# Lesson Guide for Tour 10



## Introduction

For this tour we will remain in the southwest sector of the compass long enough to examine a special sub-category of our last topic of discussion: the *design of the state*. In particular, we want to take a brief look at the question, "What should *God's minister* on earth (Romans 13:4) look like? What is a proper form for this *agency* that is divinely appointed and commissioned to administer justice, punish evil, and encourage goodness among its citizens or subjects?" We will approach this task by considering the *American Experiment*.

## Themes

From the beginning, Dr. Tackett lays down three ground rules for this study: first, we will not seek to deify America; and second, we will not seek to deify the Founding Fathers (the third ground rule will be dealt with at the end of the lesson). Having established these guidelines, he hastens to point out that there are compelling reasons for giving special attention to the subject of this tour. The American Experiment has the potential to prove unusually conducive to a deeper understanding of God's design for the state precisely because it is *unique* in the history of the world. Here on these shores, and here alone, people with a strong Christian worldview have been afforded an unparalleled opportunity to create from scratch what they considered an ideal system of government – a system designed in careful conformity with the principles outlined in Lesson 9.

We begin by establishing the biblical character of that worldview. *The New England Primer*, the second best-selling book (after the Bible) of the colonial era, provides an intriguing window into the attitudes of early Americans. In particular, it reveals an outlook and a way of life powerfully shaped by the teachings of Scripture. The pervasiveness of this outlook is further demonstrated in statements made by America's early political leaders, legal and social architects, and educational pioneers – people like Benjamin Rush, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Adams, Charles Carroll, Noah Webster, and the founders of Harvard, Princeton, and Columbia Universities. In spite of the fact that not *all* of them were practicing Christians, these luminaries agreed with President John Adams that the success of America's republican form of government would prove directly dependent upon the virtue and morality of her people, and that virtue and morality are necessarily founded upon *religion* – by which all meant the *Christian* religion. All of these early thinkers were convinced that the state *must* be held accountable to the authority of a higher ethical and spiritual standard – the "Natural Law" or the "Law of Nature's God" – if the human rights abuses they had observed in Europe and throughout history were to be hopefully avoided on this continent.

Tragically, however, America is quickly turning away from these principles. It is hard to put a finger on the exact reasons, but one clear element came as Darwinian evolutionary theory made its influence felt in the field of law. In 1869, Harvard Law School Dean Christopher Langdell advanced the view that law is *not* based upon the transcendent standard of "Nature's God," but is rather a fluid and constantly mutating body of "doctrine," a set of purely human ideas that inevitably change "by slow degrees." In other words, law and ethics, like biological species, are continually "evolving." Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes expanded on this theme by declaring that the law is "simply an embodiment of the ends and purposes of a society at a given point in its history," thus effectively granting to the *state* the power to establish society's ethical norms. John Dewey implemented these ideas in the realm of public education. "There is no God," said Dewey (nicknamed "The Architect of Modern Education"), "and there is no soul. Hence, there are no needs for the props of traditional religion."

These statements, says Dr. Tackett, bring us to the present moment. Today, America has largely forgotten God and denied the validity of her biblically based Christian roots. As a result, we see the power of the state expanding in our time. This, too, is a manifestation of the perennial *Cosmic Battle*, which is always fought most fiercely in the *social* realm. Ultimately, we must face the fact that the American Experiment is likely to fail altogether if we do not take intentional and deliberate steps to salvage it. This is a task which falls primarily on the shoulders of Christian people. As believers, we need to remember God's call to prayer and repentance in 2 Chronicles 7:13-14. There is nothing to be gained, says Dr. Tackett, by casting blame on non-Christians (this is the third ground rule for our study).

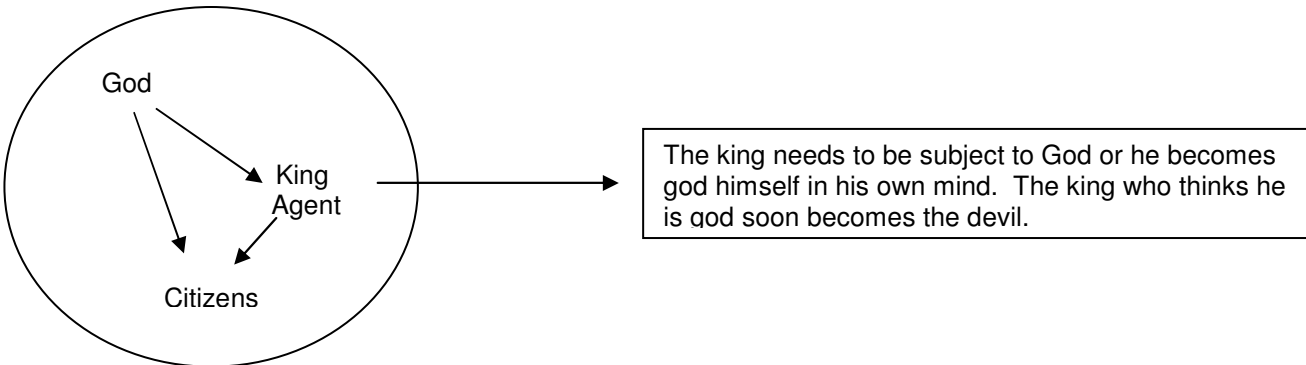
## Points to Watch for

This last point should be kept in mind throughout the entire discussion. From beginning to end, Dr. Tackett seeks to communicate the thought that the American Experiment makes sense *only* when understood as the brainchild of Christians who operated on the basis of a biblical worldview. Just as the experiment was *instigated* by believers, so it must be *carried on* by believers – believers who care deeply and passionately about their country – if it is to survive and continue to succeed.

# The Truth Project – Lesson 10: American Experiment

## Ground Rules

1. We will not deify America
2. We will not deify the Founding Fathers
3. We will not cast stones at the unbeliever.
  - We are not to point fingers at outsiders and say it's all their fault.
  - God's people need to be praying, need to be the salt and light...without that the nation will slip into darkness naturally



What should the “agent” look like?

The lesson looks at the American Experiment:

- Founders (Pilgrims and Puritans) came with a mature Biblical worldview
- Wanted to establish the Agent/civil authority using the Biblical model. What they had left in Europe had not worked.

## Isaiah 33:22

<sup>122</sup>For the LORD is our **judge**, the LORD is our **lawgiver**, the LORD is our **king**; it is he who will save us.”

Judge, lawgiver, king

- The 3 essential parts of a civil magistrate
- It's why we have 3 branches of government

## American Experiment – Then & Now

What was the second best-selling book in the American colonies?

- The Bible was number one – Five million copies existed in America (there were only four million people in America in 1776).
- The New England Primer
  - A window into what society was like
  - Used as a tool to teach how to read and write

## National Education Association (NEA)

“...if the study of the Bible is to be excluded from all state schools; if the inculcation of the study of Christianity is to have no place in the daily program; if the worship of God is to form no part of the general exercises of these public elementary schools; then the good of the state would be better served by restoring all schools to church control.”

- 1892 - Beginning to see a change in the culture – a warning

## John Dewey – The Architect of Modern Education

“...faith in the prayer-hearing God is an unproved and outmoded faith. There is no God and there is no soul. Hence, there are no needs for the props of traditional religion. With dogma and creed excluded, then immutable is also dead and buried. There is no room for fixed, natural law or moral absolutes.”

## Founding of Harvard

1<sup>st</sup> university founded in America – by the Puritans

## Harvard's Rules & Precepts – 1636

“Let every student be plainly instructed, and earnestly pressed to consider well, the main end of his life and studies is, to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John 17:3) and therefore lay Christ at the bottom, as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning.”

## Harvard's Original Motto

“*Veritas Christo et Ecclesiae*” – **Truth For Christ and the Church**

- This motto has been abandoned for the shorter: “*Veritas*” - **Truth**

## Princeton – Founding Statement, 1746

“Cursed is all learning that is contrary to the Cross of Christ.”

## Columbia University Seal

Above her head: Yahweh (*in Hebrew*)

At the top: Psalm 130 (*in Latin*)

- “In thy light we see light.”

On the ribbon: Psalm 27:1

- “God is my light” (*in Hebrew*)

Under her feet” 1 Peter 2:1-2

- (admonishment to desire the pure milk of God's Word)



## Gouverneur Morris – *Life of Gouverneur Morris, Vol III*

“Religion is the only solid basis of good morals; therefore education should teach the precepts of religion, and the duties of man towards God.”

Prominent at the Constitutional Convention

- Chairman of Committee of Styles
- No politician would disagree with the use of the New England Primer

## Samuel Adams – *Letter to John Adams, October 4, 1790*

“Let divines and philosophers, statesmen and patriots, unite their endeavors to renovate the age, by impressing the minds of men with the importance of educating their little boys and girls, of inculcating in the minds of the youth the fear and love of the Deity...in short of leading them in the study and practice of the exalted virtues of the Christian system.”

- Gov. of Massachusetts

## Benjamin Rush – “A Defense of the Use of the Bible as a School Book”, 1728

“In contemplating the political institutions of the United States, I lament that we waste so much time and money in punishing crimes, and take so little pains to prevent them. We profess to be republicans and yet we neglect the only means of establishing and perpetuating our republican forms of government. That is, the universal education of our youth in the principles of Christianity by the means of the Bible.”

## Northwest Ordinance

- laid down requirements for a territory to meet before statehood considered
  - must have schools that teach religion, morality, and knowledge
  - Article III – July 13, 1787
- “Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.

## Noah Webster – Reply to David McClure, October 25, 1836

“In my view, the Christian Religion is the most important and one of the first things in which all children, under a free government, ought to be instructed...no truth is more evident to my mind that that the Christian Religion must be the basis of any government intended to secure the rights and privileges of a free people.”

## Foundations of the American State

### Revelations 2:5

<sup>5</sup>Remember the height from which you have fallen! **Repent** and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.”

- Remember
- Repent
- Return

### George Washington – Farewell Address, September 17, 1796

“Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality and 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...”

- Foundations: Religion & Morality

### John Adams

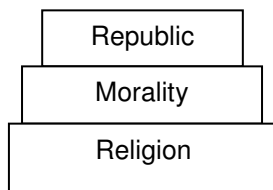
“Statesmen, my dear Sir, may plan and speculate for liberty, but it is **Religion** and **Morality** alone, which can establish the Principles upon which Freedom can securely stand.”

### Benjamin Rush – Essays, Literary, Moral and Philosophical, 1798

“the only foundation for...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.”

- Signer of the Declaration of Independence
- 1<sup>st</sup> Surgeon General

## Foundations of the American State



### George Washington – Farewell Address, September 17, 1796

“...And let us with caution indulge the supposition that the morality can be maintained without religion...reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.”

### Benjamin Rush – A Defense of the Use of the Bible as a School Book, 1728

“...Christianity is the only true and perfect religion; and that in proportion as mankind adopt its principles and obey its precepts they will be wise and happy.”

### Charles Carroll – Letter to James Henry, November 4, 1800

“Without morals, a republic cannot subsist any length of time; they therefore who are decrying the Christian religion...are undermining the solid foundation of morals, the best security for the duration of free governments.”

- Signer of the Declaration of Independence

### Samuel Adams – Letter to John Trumbell, October 16, 1778

“Religion and good morals are the only solid foundation of public liberty and happiness.”

### Patrick Henry – 1736-1799

“The great pillars of all government and of social life [are] virtue, morality, and religion. This is the armor...and this alone, that renders us invincible.”

- Not our Planes, tanks, ships, armies that render us invincible

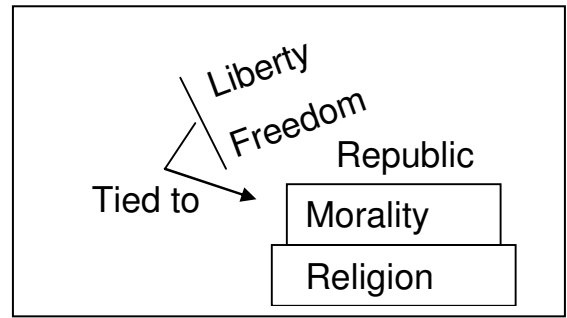
### Alexis De Tocqueville – Democracy In America

“The Americans combine the notions of Christianity and liberty so intimately in their minds that it is impossible to make them conceive one without the other.”

“The religious atmosphere of the country was the first thing that struck me upon my arrival in the U.S. In France, I had seen the spirits of religion and freedom almost always marching in opposite directions, in America, I found them intimately linked together and joined and reigned over the same land. Religion should therefore be considered as the first of their political institutions. **From the start, politics and religion have agreed and have not since ceased to do so.**”

### Benjamin Franklin

“...only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters.”



### Noah Webster – History of the United States, 1833

“...the moral principles and precepts contained in the Scriptures ought to form the basis of all our civil constitutions and laws... All the miseries and evils which men suffer from vice, crime, ambition, injustice, oppression, slavery, and war, proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible.”

### John Adams – Address to the Offices of the Massachusetts Militia, 1798

“We gave no government armed in power capable of contending in human passions unbridled by morality and religion...Our Constitution was made only for moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

- Founding fathers concerned about this sphere (State) becoming a monster
- Wanted to build an Agency consistent with God’s design.
- Constitution not adequate to deal with a people who are not governed internally

### Daniel Webster

“To preserve the government we must also preserve morals. Morality rests on religion; if you destroy the foundation, the superstructure must fail. When the public mind becomes vitiated and corrupt, laws are a nullity and constitutions are waste paper.”

- When we throw God out, our laws and constitutions become wastepaper...we can make them say whatever we want.

### The American Experiment

Built upon a deep foundation...deeper than the law, deeper than the Constitution.

- The foundation of this country is not the constitution.

### Revisit Romans 13 – Purpose of the Civil Magistrate?

1. Punish **evil**
  2. Condone **good**
- The Civil Authority **must** know the basis for calling something *good* or *evil*.

### Declaration of Independence

“...We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights...”

- Rights of man do not come from the state but from the Creator
- “...and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the **Laws of Nature** and of **Nature’s God** entitles them...”

### Sir Edward Coke (1552-1634) - Law of Nature Written on the Heart of Man

“The **law of nature** is that which God at the time of creation of the nature of man infused into his heart, for his preservation and direction...the **moral law**, called also the **law of nature**.”

### Natural Law/Law of Nature/Moral Law

Theory that laws exist independently of political legislation, a society or a nation-state because they are fundamental to human behavior. Natural law is opposed to positive law, which is human-made, conditioned by history, and subject to continuous change. The phrase “all men are created equal and endowed by their creator with certain rights” expresses a natural law philosophy.

### William Blackstone (1723-1780) – Commentaries on the Law

“...as man depends absolutely upon his Maker for everything, it is necessary that he should, in all points, conform to his Maker’s will. This will of his Maker is called the **law of nature**...This law of nature...dictated by God himself, is of course superior in obligation to any other. It is binding over all the globe, in all countries, and at times: no human laws are of any validity if contrary to this; and such of them as are valid derive all their force, and all their authority...from this original.”

:Upon these **two foundations**, the **law of nature** and the **law of revelation**, depend all human laws; that is to say, no human laws should be suffered to contradict these.”

- “*Commentaries on the Law*” - Textbook used by many law students
- Charles Finey came to Christ reading Blackstone

### James Wilson – Of the General Principles of Law and Obligation

:Human law must rest its authority ultimately upon the authority of that law which is Divine...Far from being rivals or enemies, **religion and law** are twin sisters, friends, and mutual assistants.”

- U.S. Supreme Court Justice
- Signed U.S. Constitution

### Evolution in America

1859 – Darwin publishes Origin of the Species

1869 – Eliot arrives as President of Harvard

1870 – Langdell becomes head of Harvard Law School

Why Langdell?

- Many felt unqualified
- But he did agree with Eliot that evolution was true

### Langdell’s Case Method – Cases on Contracts, 1879

“Law, considered as a science, consists of certain principles or doctrines...Each of these doctrines has arrived at its present state by slow degrees; in others words, it is a growth, extending in many cases through centuries. This growth is to be traced in the main through a series of cases;...”

- Blackstone out – new case study method in.
- “We approach law as we would evolution in biology”

### John Chipman Gray

“The law is a living thing, with a continuous history sloughing off the old, taking on the new.”

- Gray was one of Langdell’s colleagues in changing the view of Law in America
- No longer is a law a good law if in conformance with God’s nature, the law of nature, law of revelation...now tied to the idea that it is evolving.

### Rise of Legal Positivism

“Langdell did not merely introduce a new method of teaching law, he introduced a new faith concerning law. He believed that man, led by the ablest scholars and judges, could discover and determine the laws governing human affairs.

Because he believed that man did not need the aid of God and of the Holy Scripture...Langdell sought to eliminate both from legal education – not by default, but by design. He, along with president Eliot, had embraced the new faith that swept the academic world in the latter 1800’s – that Darwin’s theory of evolution was the key to all of life, including the law.”

### Legal Positivism:

The claim that the state is the ultimate authority for creating, interpreting and enforcing law. All legal truth is based in the decision of the state.

- The State is now in position to determine what is right and what is wrong

### Oliver Wendell Holmes – Supreme Court Justice (1902-1932)

“The life of the law has not been logic; it has been experience...In order to know what it is, we must know what it has been, and what it tends to become.”

“[Law is] simply an embodiment of the ends and purposes of a society at a given point in its history...beliefs that have triumphed and nothing more.”

- Holmes applied “survivor of the fittest” to the area of law

### Noah Webster – Value of the Bible, 1834

“It is alleged by men of loose principles, or defective views of the subject, that religion and morality are not necessary or important qualifications for political stations. But the Scriptures teach a different doctrine. They direct that rulers should be men who rule in the fear of God, able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness...”

### Original Delaware Constitution

Article 22 – 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 for evermore; And I do acknowledge the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by Divine Inspiration."*

- Why did they do that?

If they were going to give the power of the sword to a civil magistrate they wanted to make sure he bore the sword under the authority of God...accountable to God.

### The Mayflower Compact - November 11, 1620

"In the name of God, Amen.

We whose names are underwritten...  
having undertaken,

for the glorie of God, and  
advancemente of the Christian faith...

a voyage to plant the first colony..."

### Constitution of the New England Confederation – May 19, 1643

"Whereas we all came to these parts of America with the same end and aim, namely, to advance the kingdome of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to enjoy the liberties of the Gospell thereof with purities and peace, and for preserving and propagating the truth and liberties of the gospel..."

### William Bradford – Stepping Stones

"As one candle may light a thousand, so the light kindled here has shown unto many, yea in some sort to our whole nation...We have noted these things so that you might see their worth and **not negligently lose** what your fathers have obtained with so much hardship."

### Rev. Robert Sirico

"I am of the conviction that Judaism and Christianity invented western civilization, that is my basic belief. How is it we have lost control of this whole thing? And do we have the capacity to rein sinuate ourselves into this? It troubles me deeply to think that we are the inheritors of such an incredible civilization that was made possible over time through wisdom, and inheritance, and tradition, and commitment, and blood, and sweat, and tears. And its' legacy is taken for granted...that we don't understand it very often and we dismiss its importance. You can only live off this legacy so long before you wake up one day and find it is no longer there. There is no guarantee that I am aware of in the Bible or anywhere else that this civilization which has produced so much good for so many people will continue to exist. There is no guarantee of that. If it is going to continue to exist it is going to continue to exist because people have reflected on our roots, have rediscovered them, have taught those principles to their children, and have worked energetically for the preservation of that civilization."

### Bishop Paul O'Brien – Universal Life Church

"The United States was started by men we today would call pagans. They wrote a constitution without one word about God or Jesus in it. And in the amendments they said there should be no laws respecting the establishments of religion. This too is excluding God...Jefferson, Madison, Washington, John Adams, John Quincy Adams, Paine, Patrick Henry and most of our Founding Fathers were deists,"

### Benjamin Franklin – Constitutional Convention, June 28, 1787

"...how has it happened, Sir, that was have not hitherto once thought of humbly appealing to the Father of lights to illuminate our understandings? In the beginning of the contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible to danger, we had daily prayers in this room for Divine protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard and they were graciously answered... And have we now forgotten that powerful friend? Or do we imagine that 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 men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it 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; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better, that 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 bye word down to future ages...I therefore beg leave to move – that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business..."



## What has happened?

### Alexander Solzhenitsyn – Templeton Address, 1983

“More than half a century ago, while I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of older people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: **‘Men have forgotten God; that’s why all this has happened.**’ Since then I have spent well-nigh fifty years working on the history of our Revolution; in the process I have read hundreds of books, collected hundreds of personal testimonies, and have already contributed eight volumes of my own toward the effort of clearing away the rubble left by that upheaval. But if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous Revolution that swallowed up some sixty million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: **Men have forgotten God; that’s why all this has happened.**”

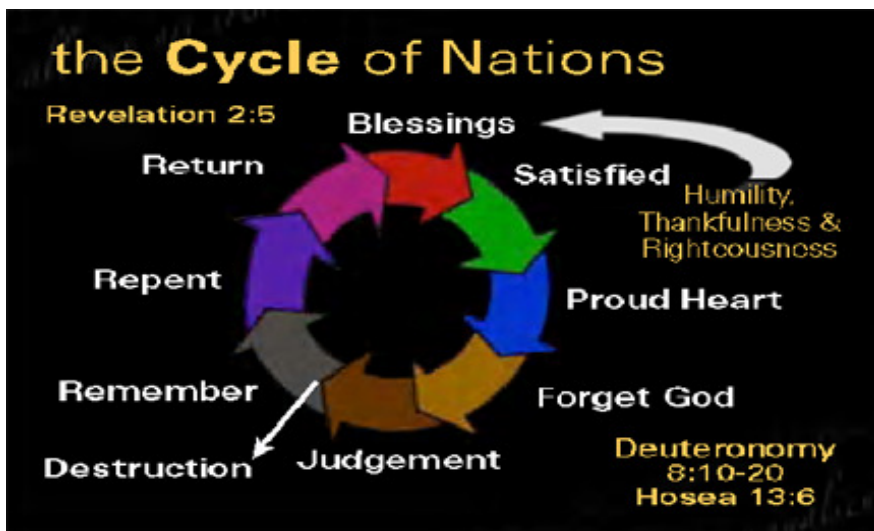
### Hosea 13:6

“<sup>6</sup>When I fed them, they were **satisfied**; when they were satisfied, they became **proud**; then they **forgot me.**”

### **Cycle of Nations**

Biblical outline of attitudes and resulting events that a nation commonly experiences during its existence. God blesses a nation, that nation becomes satisfied and develops pride, the nation begins to forget God, and God brings judgment upon the nation in order that they might remember, repent and return to God. If they do not remember God, He will bring destruction.

- Deuteronomy 8:10-20
- Hosea 13:6
- Revelation 2:5



### 2 Chronicles 7:13-14

<sup>13</sup>“When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, <sup>14</sup>if my people, who are called by my name, will

- **Humble themselves** and
- **Pray** and
- **Seek my face** and
- **Turn from their wicked ways,**  
*then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*”

### Abraham Lincoln - Proclamation for a National Day of Fasting, Humiliation & Prayer, April 30, 1863

“We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. **But we have forgotten God.** We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us! It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.”

Why has all of this happened?

“If the enemy can destroy the Christian’s passion for America, then he has won the major battle for the soul of this nation.”

- Darkness does not overtake light – Light overtakes darkness.
- If darkness is spreading across the land it is because someone is hiding the light

Revelation 2:5

*<sup>5</sup>Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.*

- Do we have a heart and passion for this country?

# Key Terms Lesson 10

**Affront:** An open insult or offense to somebody.

**Agent/Agency:** Dr. Tackett uses this term to describe the authority position within the Sphere of the State. This lesson examines the biblical design of that agency, and how the Founding Fathers attempted to base the American experiment on biblical foundations.

**Alexis de Tocqueville** (1805-59): French political thinker who wrote *Democracy in America*. He was a major observer and philosopher of democracy, which he saw as an equation that balanced liberty and equality.

**Benjamin Franklin** (1706-90): Drafter and signer of the Declaration of Independence, Postmaster General of the Continental Congress, newspaper editor and publisher of *Poor Richard's Almanac*. He formed the first library and first fire department. His interest in science and technology made him famous for his electricity experiments and invention of the lightning rod, Franklin stove and bifocals.

**Benjamin Rush** (1745-1813): Signer of the Declaration of Independence, attendee of the Continental Congress, physician and first Surgeon General, he had a major influence on the development of American governmental structure. (Rush believed that Americans should have the right to medical freedom in their Constitution, much as the right to freedom of religion is expressly guaranteed in that document).

**Bill of Rights:** Term that refers to the first ten amendments to the United States Constitution ratified in 1791 and drafted by James Madison. These amendments explicitly limit the Federal government's powers, protecting the [rights](#) of the people by preventing [Congress](#) from abridging [freedom of speech](#), [freedom of the press](#), [freedom of assembly](#), [freedom of religious worship](#), and the [right to bear arms](#), preventing unreasonable [search and seizure](#), [cruel and unusual punishment](#), and [self-incrimination](#), and guaranteeing [due process](#) of law and a speedy public trial with an impartial [jury](#).

**Case Study Method:** Method of studying law first proposed by Langdell, "Law, considered a science, consists of certain principles or doctrines...Each of these doctrines has arrived at its present state by slow degrees; in other words, it is a growth, extending in many cases through centuries." This reflected Langdell's belief that law was not based on absolutes but must be viewed as an evolutionary process in which one looks at how law has evolved and what it must next become.

**Charles Carroll** (1737-1832): A lawyer, member of the Continental Congress, member of the first United States Senate, and signer of the Declaration of Independence.

**Charles Eliot** (1834-1926): American educator selected as the President of Harvard in 1869. Under Eliot's 40-year administration, Harvard developed from a small college into a modern university. Consequently Eliot was a proponent of Darwin's evolutionary theories and began to implement the teaching of them throughout his school. He hired Christopher Columbus Langdell to introduce this new understanding of law into the Harvard Law School.

**Christopher Columbus Langdell** (1826-1906): American jurist who taught at Harvard and introduced the new case study method of instruction. His curriculum was first adopted at Harvard, then Columbia law school, and remains today as the standard first-year curriculum at nearly all American law schools. Based on an evolutionary view of life.

**Cycle of Nations:** Biblical outline of attitudes and resulting events that a nation commonly experiences during its existence. God blesses a nation, that nation becomes satisfied and develops pride, the nation begins to forget God, and God brings judgment upon the nation in order that they might remember, repent and return to God. If they do not remember God, He will bring destruction.

**Daniel Webster** (1782-1852): United States Senator and Secretary of State. Notable lawyer and one of the greatest orators of his time. His passionate patriotic devotion to preserving the Union led him to find compromises between the northern and southern factions of the country.

**Declaration of Independence:** The document in which the Thirteen Colonies in North America declared themselves independent of the Kingdom of Great Britain and explained their justifications for doing so. It was ratified by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776.

**Federalist Papers:** Series of 85 political essays written 1787-88 with the intention of persuading New York to approve the Federalist Constitution. Primary writers were Alexander Hamilton (51 essays) and James Madison (14 essays). The essays are still considered a classic work of political theory.

**George Washington** (1732-99): Often labeled "The Father of America." Commander and Chief of the Continental Army in the American Revolutionary War, overseer of the Constitutional Convention, and first President of the United States.

**Gouverneur Morris** (1752-1816): As chairman of the committee of style during the Constitutional Convention, he was the author of large sections of the Constitution. He is widely known for his words in the Preamble: "We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union..."

**James Wilson** (1742-98): American jurist, member of the Continental Congress, and signer of the Declaration of Independence. Wilson is most well known for his part (with James Madison) in drafting of the United States Constitution. He also proposed the Three-Fifths Compromise at the convention, which made slaves count as three-fifths of a person for representation in the House and Electoral College. This proposal is greatly misunderstood today. Wilson and the non-slave states wanted to limit slavery and the power of the slave-states. They didn't want the slave-states to count slaves thus gaining more representatives. The slave-states wanted to count slaves fully. The compromise was the non-slave states attempt to limit slave-state power, NOT to indicate slaves were only 3/5 of a person.

**John Adams** (1735-1826) : Member of the Continental Congress, drafter (with Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson) and signer of the Declaration of Independence, considered "Father of the Navy" because of his efforts to establish and strengthen the American Navy, and Second President of the United States.

**Natural Law/Law of Nature/Moral Law:** Theory that laws exist independently of political legislation, a society or a nation-state because they are fundamental to human behavior. Natural law is opposed to positive law, which is human-made, conditioned by history, and subject to continuous change. The phrase "all men are created equal and endowed by their creator with certain rights" expresses a natural law philosophy.

**New England Primer:** Small textbook, first printed in 1690 and used through the 19th century to teach children the alphabet and how to read. It was the intent of the colonists that all children should learn to read because they believed that an inability to read was Satan's attempt to keep people from the Scriptures.

**Noah Webster** (1758-1843): Often called "The Father of American Education". He wrote the *Blue Back Speller* (*Elementary Spelling Book*) which help standardize American spelling and was used by pioneer families and schools to teach children to read. Webster has become a household name since he first published *The American Dictionary of the English Language* in 1828.

**Patrick Henry** (1736-99): First governor of Virginia and member of the Continental Congress. Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams, and Thomas Paine were influential advocates of the American Revolution. He was an eloquent orator and instrumental in the adoption of the Bill of Rights.

**Positive Law/Legal Positivism:** The claim that the state is the ultimate authority for creating, interpreting and enforcing law. The position that believes that all legal truth is based on the decision of the state.

**Samuel Adams** (1722-1803): Governor of Massachusetts, signer of the Declaration of Independence, and organizer of the Boston Tea Party; he was an American Patriot who played a major role in starting the American Revolution.

**Sir Edward Coke** (1552-1634): An English jurist whose writings on the English common law were definitive legal texts for more than 300 years. He was a Member of the Parliament, Speaker of the House of Commons, and England's Attorney General. Every lawyer in early America was trained from Coke's books, and both John Adams and Patrick Henry argued from Coke's treatises to support their revolutionary position against England.

**The American Experiment:** An experiment conducted by the founding forefathers of the United States to establish a nation built on biblical principles reflecting God's design for government.

**Thomas Jefferson** (1743-1826): Governor of Virginia, first Secretary of State, principle author of the Declaration of Independence, and third President of the United States. Jefferson is often attributed for the concept of "Separation of Church and State" because of the phrase "wall of separation between church and state" in a letter he wrote to the Danbury Baptist Association in 1802. Jefferson believed the First Amendment had to be enacted in order to prevent the

federal establishment of a national denomination; he had no intention of limiting, restricting or regulating public religious practices.

**United States Constitution:** The founding political document which detailed the structure, roles and responsibilities of the American republic. It was drafted at the Constitutional Convention in 1787 and ratified by nine states in 1788. It created a federal union of sovereign states, and a federal government to operate that union. The preamble begins, "We the people..."

**William Blackstone** (1723-80): An English jurist and professor who wrote *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. First published in four volumes from 1765-69, this historical treatise on common law still remains the most thorough treatment of the English law ever produced by one man. Every lawyer in early America studied from Blackstone's *Commentaries* and this work served the basis of our legal profession.

# Revisionist History - Bradford and the Pilgrims

In his introduction to *Governor William Bradford's Letter Book*,<sup>1</sup> John C. Kemp, Associate Director of Colonial Interpretation at Plymouth Plantation, rightly contends that this "little treasure trove of documents and letters to and from Plymouth Colony in the 1620s" – a collection of source material that Bradford himself never intended to publish – casts a valuable light on the story of New England's earliest settlement. Unfortunately, he obscures that light by twisting the significance of these documents to serve his own ends.

Kemp's thesis, stated broadly, is that Bradford himself was America's first writer of revisionist history. In the *Letter Book*, he tells us, we see the plain, unadorned facts of Plymouth's early history laid bare in such a way that we can no longer take seriously the "Calvinist vision" and "polemical Predestinarianism" that inform and animate Bradford's account of the same events in *Of Plymouth Plantation*. By studying these letters, he suggests, we may free ourselves at last from the "subtle power of the mythical Pilgrim" whose image has been foisted upon the American consciousness by Bradford and his uncritically patriotic interpreters. It's a remarkable argument – less for its cleverness than for the blatant violence it does to the obvious truth.

For example: Kemp says that *pilgrims* are conspicuously absent from the documents contained in *Governor William Bradford's Letter Book*. That's because the colonists who came over on the *Mayflower* never really considered themselves to be any such thing: "That part of the story, the idealizing of colonists into Pilgrims (Pilgrims with a capital 'P'), occurred in the late 18 th and 19 th centuries."<sup>2</sup>

Apparently forgetting that he is supposed to be talking about Bradford and his "17 th-century biases," Kemp informs us that America's "Pilgrim heritage" is largely the fabrication of men like John Quincy Adams and Daniel Webster. Webster, we learn, "did much to popularize the Pilgrim Fathers" as "uniformly hard-working, right-minded, freedom-loving proponents of the virtues upheld in Victorian Boston throughout the 19 th century and well into the 20 th." The problem is that "these are not the struggling, precariously disorganized, and contentious people we find in the *Letter Book*."<sup>3</sup>

One has to wonder whether Kemp has actually read Bradford's account of the founding of New England. The settlers described in *Of Plymouth Plantation* are certainly hard-working, right-minded, and pious. But they are not *uniformly* so. What's more, Bradford is brutally honest about portraying his fellow colonists precisely as a "struggling, disorganized, and contentious" lot. That's because he wants us to see "the infinite qualitative difference between the human and the divine." *Of Plymouth Plantation*, says Francis Murphy,

*affirms the possibility of grace without losing sight of the fact that man is fallen, that he is both creature as well as creator, and that he depends utterly on God's help for salvation ... It is part of Bradford's genius to show us dramatically the struggle of Puritan piety to survive in difficult circumstances, often caused by themselves, and to describe the complex motives that underlie all human action.*<sup>4</sup>

That's not to mention that the Mayflower emigrants *did* in fact think of themselves as "pilgrims" in the best biblical sense of the word. As early as their sojourn in Leyden, the Scrooby Separatists were interpreting their difficult circumstances in terms of the language of Hebrews 11:13-16: "They knew they were pilgrims, and looked not much on those things, but lift up their eyes to the heavens, their dearest country, and quieted their spirits."<sup>5</sup>

In similarly skewed fashion, Kemp argues that *Governor William Bradford's Letter Book* makes it clear that the Plymouth colonists had little concern for the welfare of their Native American neighbors. Indians, like Pilgrims, are never mentioned in these documents, says Kemp. Why not?

*It's a bad reason, a very meaningful omission. In fact, after all the lofty words about friendship and Christian love when the colony began, the colonists' lack of concern for their Pokanoket or Wampanoag neighbors just a few years later says a great deal about colonialism. Colonists don't like to think about the people they are colonizing.*<sup>6</sup>

But how are we to reconcile this statement with Bradford's many expressions of indebtedness to Samoset, Hobomok, and Squanto? His heartfelt grief on the occasion of Squanto's death? Or his detailed descriptions of relations with Massasoit, the Wampanoag chief who kept his treaty with the Plymouth settlers for over forty years? Even when compelled to use force against openly *hostile* Native Americans, as in the case of Wituwamat and Pecksuot, Bradford always did so reluctantly, bearing in mind the words of his pastor, John Robinson, who had written from Leyden: "Oh! How happy a thing had it been, if you had converted some, before you had killed any!"<sup>7</sup>

The fact of the matter is that there is another reason – a very simple and straightforward reason – for the glaring "omissions" Kemp has noted. Most of the documents contained in Bradford's *Letter Book* are examples of *business correspondence*. They deal primarily with finances, accounts, inventories, and the profits the London Adventurers hoped to receive from Plymouth colony. It's not surprising that writings of this nature should have little to say about the spiritual idealism of "pilgrims" or the day-to-day challenges of maintaining relations with indigenous tribesmen.

What can have driven a responsible scholar like Mr. Kemp to promote such blatant misrepresentations of the facts? Lacking an explanation from his own pen, we are left to speculate. But given the spirit of the times in which we live, it seems reasonable to suppose that his motives might be similar to those of the school textbook writers who have seen fit to edit phrases like "In the name of God, Amen" out of the Mayflower Compact.

Like them, Kemp understands that the prize to the victors in the battle over history is *power*: power to control the present and shape the course of the future. This is the power of historical revisionism, fiddling with the past to control beliefs in the present.

<sup>1</sup> *Governor William Bradford's Letter Book*, Introduction by John C. Kemp (Bedford, Massachusetts: Applewood Books, 2001), iii-x.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, iii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.

<sup>4</sup> Francis Murphy, Introduction to William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647* (New York: Modern Library College Editions, 1981), xvii, xix.

<sup>5</sup> William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 50. "It was owing to this passage, first printed in 1669, that the Mayflower's company came eventually to be called the Pilgrim Fathers." (Samuel Eliot Morison, footnote 4.)

<sup>6</sup> Kemp, iii.

<sup>7</sup> Cited in Gary D. Schmidt, *William Bradford: Plymouth's Faithful Pilgrim* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 133.