The Great Seal of The United States of America

Design Began 1776 – Design Completed 1782

E Pluribus Unum – ‘Out of Many, One’: the union of the thirteen original states

Eagle – Symbol of strength and power and always turned to the olive branch as preferring peace; clutching our national symbol—‘E Pluribus Unum’

Olive Branch – Represents peace; Thirteen leaves and Thirteen olives

Blue – Signifies vigilance, perseverance and justice

White – Signifies purity and Innocence

Red – Signifies hardiness and valor

OBVERSE

The Eye of Providence – Alludes to the many signal interpositions of God in favor of the American cause

Annuit Coeptis – ‘He’ (God) has favored our undertakings

Thirteen layers of an unfinished pyramid representing the thirteen original colonies building a new nation based on new ideas and concepts of self-government never before attempted

CONSTITUTION (Constitution)

Glory – The light of God, the Providence shining on a new nation based on God-given unalienable rights

Pyramid – Symbol of strength and duration

1776 – The year of America’s birth

Novus Ordo Seclorum – ‘New order of the Ages’: symbol of a new nation built on the concept of permanent, unalienable (God-given) rights for all versus vested, man-made and non-permanent rights

REVERSE

(Often referred to as the Spiritual side of the Shield)

Constellation – Denotes a new State taking its place and rank among other sovereign powers (with thirteen stars)

Chief (upper part of shield) – Represents Congress unifying the original thirteen states

Pieces – In alternating colors representing the original thirteen states all joining in one solid compact supporting the Chief

Thirteen Arrows – Power of war prepared to defend Liberty which power is vested in Congress

Escutcheon (shield) – Protecting the American Eagle without any other support to hold the shield; America ought to rely on its own virtue for the preservation of the union through Congress
THE MEANING OF
THE GREAT SEAL OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

“Symbolically, the Seal reflects the beliefs and values that the Founding Fathers attached to the new nation and wished to pass on to their descendants.”

- U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs

CHARLES THOMSON’S “REMARKS AND EXPLANATION,” ADOPTED BY THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS, JUNE 20, 1782.

“The Escutcheon is composed of the chief [upper part of shield] & pale [perpendicular band], the two most honorable ordinaries [figures of heraldry]. The Pieces, paly [alternating pales], represent the several states all joined in one solid compact entire, supporting a Chief, which unites the whole & represents Congress. The Motto alludes to this union. The pales in the arms are kept closely united by the Chief and the Chief depends on that union & the strength resulting from it for its support, to denote the Confederacy of the United States of America & preservation of their union through Congress.

“The colours of the pales are those used in the flag of the United States of America; White signifies purity and innocence, Red, hardiness & valour, and Blue, the colour of the Chief, signifies vigilance, perseverance & justice. The Olive branch and arrows denote the power of peace & war which is exclusively vested in Congress. The Constellation denotes a new State taking its place and rank among other sovereign powers. The Escutcheon is born on the breast of an American Eagle without any other supporters [figures represented as holding up the shield] to denote that the United States of America ought to rely on their own Virtue.

“Reverse. The Pyramid signifies Strength and Duration: The Eye over it & the Motto allude to the many signal interpositions of providence in favour of the American cause. The date underneath is that of the Declaration of Independence and the words under it signify the beginning of the New American Era, which commences from that date.”

USES OF THE GREAT SEAL

The Great Seal is used to guarantee the authenticity of a U. S. document. It is used to seal documents several thousand times a year. Custody of the Seal is assigned to the U. S. Department of State with the master die produced by the U. S. Bureau of Engraving. The Seal can only be affixed to a document by an office of the Secretary of State.

HISTORY OF THE GREAT SEAL

It is extremely significant that the responsibility of the design of the Great Seal was first given in 1776 to Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and John Adams, the primary author and contributors of the writing of the Declaration of American Independence. Artist Pierre Eugene du Simitiere assisted with his knowledge of shields and coats of arms.

A second committee of James Lovell, John Morin Scott and William Churchill Houston worked on the design with consultant Francis Hopkinson.

A third committee of John Rutledge, Arthur Middleton, Elias Boudinot and William Barton worked on the design with Charles Thomson, Secretary of Congress, considering all previous recommendations. Congress adopted the design on June 20, 1782, six years after the design began.
We certainly stand at a critical moment now. It is a moment at which significant voices have called deeply into question principles, both political and moral, that have been foundational to our civilization: marriage and the family, sanctity of human life, Rule of Law, true democratic participation, the market economy, limited government. Those principles have been radically called into question as never before in our country. Now which way are we going to go? Are we going to abandon those principles? To my mind, that would be such a tragedy, such a loss to the dignity of the human being that is supported by those principles. Or will we defend those principles? Will we reaffirm those principles? If we do that, we make the right choice, and this country will be a greater country than it has ever been.

The American experiment in republican liberty is truly a miracle. In her informative and well-written book, Angela Kamrath helps to explain why. I warmly commend it, especially to younger readers who will inherit the noble responsibility for sustaining the miracle of America.

Dr. Robert P. George
McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence
Director, James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions
Princeton University

Until now, there has not been a systematic analysis of the relationship between core American political principles and religious principles. Angela Kamrath’s clearly written work, *The Miracle of America*, links these two sets of principles in a non-denominational presentation. The many references to the Bible are apt, well-explicated, and thorough. References to the scholarly literature are sensible and unusually free of academic jargon. The result is a highly informative analysis that is a page-turner.

Dr. Donald S. Lutz
Professor Emeritus, Political Philosophy
University of Houston

Very original is Angela Kamrath’s linking of political and philosophical concepts to specific Biblical passages. She is to be congratulated on taking on such an ambitious project, reading the enormous body of literature, and coming up with a well-reasoned argument that historians, students, and citizens need to hear.

Dr. Peter H. Gibbon
Senior Research Fellow
Boston University

The idea that we are all created equal with inherent, God-given dignity was a radical idea and came primarily from our Judeo-Christian background, not from the Enlightenment. Angela Kamrath’s incredible work documents basic American ideas and ideals in a way that has not been accomplished before. It is a must-read for people of all faiths or no faith.

Dr. Robert C. Koons
Professor of Philosophy
Founding Director, Program in Western Civilization and American Institutions
The University of Texas at Austin
Angela Kamrath gets the main ideas right. Many prominent scholars think that notions such as the importance of consent, the right to revolt, natural rights, and limited government sprang from the head of a secularized John Locke, with seemingly no recognition that these ideas had long been a part of Christian (particularly Reformed) communities.

Dr. Mark David Hall
Herbert Hoover Distinguished Professor of Politics
George Fox University

Angela Kamrath provides a powerful demonstration of the strength of our republic’s Judeo-Christian roots.

Dr. Stephen H. Balch
Director, Texas Tech Institute for the Study of Western Civilization
Former President, National Association of Scholars

In an age of historical amnesia, spiritual apathy, and political correctness, The Miracle of America is a sigh of relief and a breath of fresh air. It allows students and educators alike to appreciate and to understand America as an idea. It is a profound work, at once a model of intellectual, religious, and political history.

Brian M. Jordan
Doctoral Student of History
Yale University
The Miracle of America

The Influence of the Bible on the Founding History and Principles of the United States of America for a People of Every Belief

Angela E. Kamrath
To my family,
my teachers and mentors,
past, present, and future generations,
and the glory of God
“Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with His wrath?”

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826)
Notes on the State of Virginia
1785

“Almighty God hath created the mind free. All attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burdens, or by civil incapacitations...are a departure from the plan of the Holy Author of our religion.”

Thomas Jefferson
Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom
1786

Primary Author of and Signer of the Declaration of Independence
Third U. S. President
Statesman, Diplomat, and Congressman
Virginia State Legislator and Governor
Lawyer
Author, Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom
Father of the University of Virginia

“I do not believe that the Constitution was the offspring of (divine) inspiration, but I am perfectly satisfied, that the union of the states, in its form and adoption, is as much the work of divine providence, as any of the miracles recorded in the Old and New Testament were the effects of a divine power. ’Tis done! We have become a nation.”

Benjamin Rush (1745-1813)
Observations on the Federal Procession in Philadelphia
July 9, 1788

Signer of the Declaration of Independence
College of New Jersey (Princeton University) Graduate, Age 15
Medical Degree, University of Edinburg
Consultant to Thomas Paine and his writing of Common Sense
Physician, Surgeon General of the Continental Army
Professor of Chemistry, College of Philadelphia (Univ. of Pennsylvania)
Educator/Writer, Published first American textbook on Chemistry
Founder, Dickinson College
Founder, Bible Society of Philadelphia (Pennsylvania Bible Society)
“Father of Public Schools”
Abolitionist
“Let us then search the Scriptures…. The Bible contains the revelation of the will of God; it contains the history of the creation, of the world and of mankind; and afterwards the history of one peculiar nation, certainly the most extraordinary nation that has ever appeared upon the earth.”

John Quincy Adams (1767-1848)
Letter to his son, George Adams
September 1 and 8, 1811
Sixth U. S. President
U. S. Secretary of State, considered one of America’s greatest Secretaries of State
Diplomat and Statesman
U. S. Senator and U. S. Representative
Harvard Professor
Abolitionist

“But if we and our posterity reject religious instruction and authority, violate the rules of eternal justice, trifle with the injunctions of morality, and recklessly destroy the political constitution which holds us together, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us that shall bury all our glory in profound obscurity.”

Daniel Webster (1782-1852)
The Dignity and Importance of History,
An Address Delivered Before the New York Historical Society
February 23, 1852
Constitutional Scholar and Orator, “Great Expounder of the Constitution”
Dartmouth College Graduate, Phi Beta Kappa
Educator, Headmaster, Fryeburg Academy
Attorney at Law and Statesman
U. S. Representative, New Hampshire
U. S. Senator, Massachusetts
U. S. Secretary of State under 3 Presidents
Named 1 of the 5 greatest U. S. Senators by 1957 U. S. Senate
Tributes

The roots of the miracle of America stem firstly from the Pilgrims who came to this land with only the clothes on their back, a few tools, and a belief in God. They believed that if they worked hard and led dignified and biblically inspired lives that they would somehow survive and perhaps even thrive. Their incredible courage, resolve, and sacrifice require that we understand what and how they were thinking when they migrated to this virtually unknown land.

Secondly, the philosophers and early Americans who inspired and contributed to new ideas uplifting the common individual and to the founding of a new nation must be recognized. Such a nation based on Judeo-Christian principles and the equality of all human beings had never before been attempted on a large scale. History tells us that without such philosophical understandings, just and moral nations cannot germinate, grow, and endure. All Americans have a duty to themselves, their families, their communities, their states, and their nation to learn and know America’s founding ideas and ideals.

Thirdly, during and after the American founding, the men and women who have defended American ideas and self-government of, by, and for the people—sacrificing their lives and limbs—are due the highest honor. They bring to mind an inscription on a World War II Memorial: “When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow we gave our today.” Are the people of this nation today willing and able to make such sacrifices for their countrymen both physically and intellectually?

Fourthly, the teachers and professors who teach accurate, insightful American history and principles of Western Civilization to our nation’s young students deserve a very special tribute. Amid growing ignorance, apathy, neglect, and misinformation regarding America’s founding history and ideas, these patriot educators are priceless. Without their learned instruction in the true origins and history of our nation in the face of destructive criticisms and underminings against our country, America cannot survive as a bastion of Freedom, Unity, Progress, and Responsibility (FUPR™).

Finally, tribute is offered to the average American individual and family who take the time and effort to learn, understand, and promote the origins and meanings of our nation’s great founding philosophy, principles, and values. In the face of ever-increasing demands on time and energy, the average American who understands the critical importance of the American idea for themselves, their friends, and their families is to be highly commended. Such citizens are the fiber of America, without whom the nation cannot endure as it was originally designed.
Acknowledgements

Special thanks go to my step-grandfather, Dr. Richard J. Gonzalez, and my grandmother, Eugenie S. K. Gonzalez, co-founders of the American Heritage Education Foundation, Inc. (AHEF), who stirred in me a love of country and an awareness of America’s unique idea and ideals.

Dr. Gonzalez was the youngest son of a modest San Antonio, Texas, family of Rafael and Catarina Gonzalez. Rafael stressed the importance of education to his six children and took them to public libraries to read books. As a barber, he put all of his children through college. All graduated, some with advanced degrees. Five became teachers.

In 1931, at the age of 18, Dr. Gonzalez graduated with highest honors from The University of Texas at Austin with a B.A. in Mathematics. A year later, at 19, he received his M.A. in Economics. In 1934, at the age of 21, he completed his doctorate in Economics (Finance), Economic Theory, and Pure Mathematics. It is believed that he remains the youngest student to ever earn a Ph.D. at UT. He was recognized for outstanding achievement at his doctoral graduation ceremony by the graduate school dean, Dr. Henry W. Harper, who remarked as quoted in the Austin American-Statesman, “There is one among us (of 64 graduate students) whose record is most unusual. If the university were to name a graduate valedictorian, the honor would most likely have gone to Mr. Gonzalez.”

In 1937, at the age of 25, Dr. Gonzalez was hired as chief economist by Humble Oil and Refining Company of Houston (now Exxon Mobil) to apply sound economic principles to the oil business and to plan future economic decisions for the company. During the Cold War following World War II, he wrote numerous articles and papers on the advantages of the American free-market, capitalist, incentive-based socio-economic system. He compared this system to other state-controlled, less incentivized economies and observed how the United States consistently out-produced countries like the USSR while having fewer natural resources. He defined the American system as Freedom, Unity, Progress, and Responsibility (FUPR™) and often referred to it as the “miracle of America,” for its limited government and free-market principles that produce more socio-economic advances for more citizens than any other system ever designed.
Dr. Gonzalez believed that America’s socio-economic advances were supported by the traditional American view that “with the help of God” an individual could achieve unlimited socio-economic advancement. He compared this incentive philosophy in America to other countries’ governments and philosophies which, as he observed from his world-wide experience, often encouraged their citizens to accept their rung on life’s ladder, no matter how low, as “the will of God.”

Richard married my grandmother, Eugenie S. K. Gonzalez, in 1976. Richard and “Grandma Jean,” a former member of the Houston School Board, became alarmed in the early 1980s at the lack of teaching of America’s heritage and founding principles in Texas schools. They also noted the well-documented decline of patriotic, pro-American textbooks and the prevalence of anti-American perspectives in school texts. In response, the two of them and my father, Jack Kamrath, began the American Heritage Education Foundation, Inc. (AHEF) in 1994 to write, produce, and distribute free K-12 patriotic educational resources for teachers, students, and families nationwide and worldwide. AHEF has become one of the largest producers and distributors of free, K-12 patriotic social studies lesson plans in America, having distributed nearly 150,000 free lesson plan resources to teachers, schools, and families throughout America.

I have AHEF and its faithful supporters to thank for providing me with the opportunity to research and write about America’s philosophical origins. In particular, I wish to thank my father, AHEF co-founder and president Jack Kamrath, who made this project possible. I thank all of my family for their support. Many thanks also to all of the reviewers who contributed time and knowledge to provide valuable feedback and intellectual support for this book. Finally, I offer thanks to God in Christ for the honor and privilege of studying America’s Bible-based heritage and to you, dear reader, for endeavoring to preserve and strengthen America’s incomparable heritage—history’s first and greatest experiment in large-scale self-government among a diverse people that has endured for over 200 years.
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“Do not remove the ancient landmark which your fathers have set.” –Proverbs 22:28

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.” –Proverbs 29:18 KJV

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” –Hosea 4:6

“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 I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

–2 Chronicles 7:14

“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people He has chosen as His own inheritance.”

–Psalm 33:12

“The advancement and diffusion of knowledge is the only guardian of true liberty.” –James Madison

“If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be.” –Thomas Jefferson

America is a country founded on ideas. With the well-documented and ongoing failure of our educational institutions to teach those ideas over the last thirty years, along with today’s social and cultural challenges, America’s heritage and philosophical origins are at risk of demise in our society, culture, institutions, and education today.

Research shows that Americans have become increasingly uneducated and uninformed about our country’s founding heritage and philosophical roots. Numerous studies indicate that the American idea is eroding in an environment of ignorance, apathy, neglect, divisiveness, lack of patriotism, opposition, and unbalanced and destructive negativity toward America.

The Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) recently found in its 2006 study, The Coming Crisis of Citizenship, and its 2007 study, Failing Our Students, Failing America, that most graduating college students failed a basic civic literacy exam on America’s history and institutions. Most students were ignorant of America’s founding documents. Less than half of college seniors knew that the phrase “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal” comes from the Declaration of Independence. The studies found that “America’s colleges and universities failed to increase knowledge of America’s history and institutions.” This failure is due, in part, to “inadequate college curriculum.” ISI found in its 2008 study, Our Fading Heritage, that 71% of Americans of all backgrounds, incomes, and education failed a basic civic literacy test. Many elected officials also performed poorly. Less than half of all Americans could name the three branches of government. This ignorance is due, in part, to growing social and cultural challenges.

A 2008 report by the Bradley Foundation, E Pluribus Unum, found that while most Americans believe we share an important and unique national identity, more than half believe this identity is weakening. It states, “America is facing an identity crisis. The next generation of Americans will know less than their parents know about our history and our founding ideals. Many Americans are more aware of what divides us than of what unites us. We are in danger of becoming not ‘from many, one’—E Pluribus Unum—but its opposite, ‘from one, many.’”
In 2011, the National Association of Scholars (NAS) conducted a study called The Vanishing West: 1964-2010: The Disappearance of Western Civilization From the American Undergraduate Curriculum. The study traces “the decline and near extinction of the Western Civilization history survey course in America's top colleges and universities from 1964 to 2010.” The study found that Western Civilization and American history survey courses have “virtually disappeared” from general education requirements and are rarely required even for history majors. In 2012, NAS conducted a second study, Recasting History: Are Race, Class, and Gender Dominating American History? A Study of U. S. History Courses at the University of Texas and Texas A&M University, which examined assigned readings in lower-division American history courses at two universities in Texas where students are required to take two American history courses. The study found that college course readings gave such a strong emphasis to race, class, and gender social history that it “diminished the attention given to other subjects in American history (such as military, diplomatic, religious, intellectual history).” As a result, history departments excluded key concepts and documents of American history and “frequently offered students a less-than-comprehensive picture of U. S. history.” These trends are shared by history departments around the United States.10

In 2012, the Educational Testing Service (ETS), conducted a study called Fault Lines in our Democracy that confirmed a lack of civic knowledge among K-12 students. This lack of knowledge, it states, “provides ample concern for our future because civic knowledge has effects on voting and civic participation” and because solutions to national problems require an educated, skilled citizenry. The study quotes Robert Maynard Hutchins: “The death of democracy is not likely to be an assassination from ambush. It will be a slow extinction from apathy, indifference, and undernourishment.” It also quotes William Damon, “The most serious danger Americans now face—greater than terrorism—is that our country’s future may not end up in the hands of a citizenry capable of sustaining the liberty that has been America’s most precious legacy. If trends continue, many young Americans will grow up without an understanding of the benefits, privileges, and duties of citizens in a free society, and without acquiring the habits of character needed to live responsibly in one.”11

Americans today are largely ignorant about the principles and ideas that have shaped our nation. As a result, we have become more fragmented as a nation and unclear and divided about what our nation stands for and where it is headed—or where it should be heading. Without citizens’ learning of America’s positive founding principles and values, the American idea is rapidly weakening.

Even fewer Americans understand or agree that the United States is founded on principles largely rooted in Bible-based or Judeo-Christian thought. Americans today lack awareness and understanding about the essential moral influence of the Bible and the Judeo-Christian ethic on America’s foundational ethic, order, purpose, and freedoms. Yet history tells us that we are a nation and people distinctly shaped by the Bible’s teachings. Our government, society, and values all reflect this influence. The American principles of self-government, equality, and unalienable rights are strongly influenced by Bible-based or Judeo-Christian ideas. At the same time, America is not a theocracy. It separates church and civil government and embraces free thought, free speech, debate, and religious freedom for all. Some call ours a Christian nation, yet we have no national religion. Others call it a secular society, yet we pledge “one nation under God.” This seeming contradiction is often misunderstood and misrepresented.

What is the American ethic? Where does it come from? How does the Bible relate to this ethic, if at all? How would we describe or present America and its ideals to a foreigner? The author and the American Heritage Education Foundation, Inc. have endeavored to objectively and independently research and answer these questions to further the advancement of America’s civilization. The findings allow every American free thought and choice to contemplate and decipher America’s influences for themselves and to arrive at their own conclusions. Such critical evaluation is in the best historical tradition of America.
Two of the most important ideas of the American ethic are God-given freedom and equality. From the settlement of America to the founding of an independent nation to the present day, Americans of many different beliefs have held that freedom and equality are unalterable states of human existence granted to every human being—not just in America but in the entire world—by a higher source of Moral Truth or a Creator God. Without such a God-oriented worldview, human rights could be granted or taken away by whoever had the most power. Early Americans came to understand that they were not free because a king declared them so or because they held positions of high rank in society—most were commoners—but because a Creator God endowed all men with certain unremovable or unalienable rights. Freedom was a gift from God, not a privilege granted by a ruler or government. Armed with this belief, Americans ultimately made the controversial decision to fight for independence from Britain when their only seeming options were freedom or subjection. The idea of a Creator God can be found in America’s public square—in the U. S. Pledge of Allegiance, in the display of the Ten Commandments in public buildings, in the motto “In God We Trust” on U. S. currency. Though Americans are free to believe or not believe in God, such public displays are reminders of America’s God-oriented basis of American rights and freedoms.

To be sure, America is imperfect. It took 100-200 years after 1776, for example, for black Americans to achieve full equality and freedom. However, Thomas Jefferson and George Washington, two Founders who owned slaves because they were born into a pre-existing system of slave labor, helped to design and implement a new governing system that ultimately led to freedom for every American including all slaves. It is also important to remember that it took 1776 years from Jesus’ birth (and thousands of years before that) for the common white man to achieve full freedom with America’s first large-scale experiment in self-government.

*The Miracle of America* is a comprehensive study of America’s philosophical origins or founding ethic and its relation to the Bible. Our research examines and presents documents, thinkers, and events in history, specific Bible references and scriptures as cited historically, and relevant scholarship. In doing so, it uncovers and articulates much of our nation’s philosophy, values, and founding principles as they are rooted in Bible-based or Judeo-Christian thought. Ultimately, it shows how the Bible and Judeo-Christian thought are arguably the nation’s most significant foundational root and its enduring source of strength.

*The Miracle of America* is recommended reading for all citizens, teachers, and students to whom the American Founders have entrusted our self-governing republic. It is vital that Americans learn, understand, discuss, share, teach, apply, and preserve the American idea—the great principles and values of our country—so that it may endure. This book is for people of all nations who would endeavor to preserve and promote Freedom, Unity, Progress, and Responsibility (FUPR™) in America and the world.

American Heritage Education Foundation, Inc.
Houston, TX
The Need and Legal Right to Teach Religious History in Public Schools

Liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the people, who have a right, from the frame of their nature, to knowledge, as their great Creator, who does nothing in vain, has given them understandings, and a desire to know….12

John Adams
Declaration signer and 2nd U. S. President

Knowing as we do that the moral foundations of national greatness can be laid only in the industry, the integrity, and the spiritual elevation of the people, are we equally sure that our schools are forming the character of the rising generation upon the everlasting principles of duty and humanity? … Are they [children] so educated, that, when they grow up, they will make better philanthropists and Christians, or only grander savages? For, however loftily the intellect of man may have been gifted, however skilfully [sic] it may have been trained, if it be not guided by a sense of justice, a love of mankind and a devotion to duty, its possessor is only a more splendid, as he is a more dangerous, barbarian.13

Horace Mann
Massachusetts Secretary of Education (1837-1848) and “father of American public education”

Schools do more than train children’s minds. They also help to nurture their souls by reinforcing the values they learn at home and in their communities. I believe that one of the best ways we can help out schools to do this is by supporting students’ rights to voluntarily practice their religious beliefs, including prayer in schools…. For more than 200 years, the First Amendment has protected our religious freedom and allowed many faiths to flourish in our homes, in our work place and in our schools. Clearly understood and sensibly applied, it works.14

William Clinton, 42nd U. S. President (1993-2001)
Excerpt in Introductory Letter of U. S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley,

U. S. Department of Education:

Teaching about religion: Public schools may not provide religious instruction, but they may teach about religion, including the Bible or other scripture: the history of religion, comparative religion, the Bible (or other scripture)-as-literature, and the role of religion in the history of the United States and other countries all are permissible public school subjects. Similarly, it is permissible to consider religious influences on art, music, literature, and social studies.15


Teaching values: Though schools must be neutral with respect to religion, they may play an active role with respect to teaching civic values and virtue, and the moral code that holds us together as a community. The fact that some of these values are also held by religions does not make it unlawful to teach them in school.16
The Miracle of America


**Student Assignments:** Students may express their beliefs about religion in the form of homework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments free of discrimination based on the religious content of their submissions. Such home and classroom work should be judged by ordinary academic standards of substance and relevance, and against other legitimate pedagogical concerns identified by the school.17


**U. S. Supreme Court Decision:**

It might well be said that one’s education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment.18

U. S. Supreme Court Justice Tom Clark, in *Abington v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203, 255 (1963), in the opinion of the court that public school education may include teaching about religion

The holding of the Court today plainly does not foreclose teaching about the Holy Scriptures or about the differences between religious sects in classes in literature or history. Indeed, whether or not the Bible is involved, it would be impossible to teach meaningfully many subjects in the social sciences or the humanities without some mention of religion.19

U. S. Supreme Court Justice William Brennan, in *Abington v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203, 255 (1963), in a concurring opinion of the court that public school education may include teaching about religion

**National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS):**

Omitting study about religions gives students the impression that religions have not been, and are not now, part of the human experience. Religions have influenced the behavior of both individuals and nations, and have inspired some of the world’s most beautiful art, architecture, literature, and music. History, our own nation’s religious pluralism, and contemporary world events are testimony that religion has been and continues to be an important cultural influence.

The NCSS Curriculum Standards for Social Studies state that “Students in social studies programs must study the development of social phenomena and concepts over time; must have a sense of place and interrelationships...; must understand institutions and processes that define our democratic republic....” The study about religions, then, has “a rightful place in the public school curriculum because of the pervasive nature of religious beliefs, practices, institutions, and sensitivities.”

Knowledge about religions is not only a characteristic of an educated person but is absolutely necessary for understanding and living in a world of diversity. Knowledge of religious differences and the role of religion in
the contemporary world can help promote understanding and alleviate prejudice. Since the purpose of the social studies is to provide students with a knowledge of the world that has been, the world that is, and the world of the future, studying about religions should be an essential part of the social studies curriculum.20


**Religion in the Public School Curriculum Guidelines:**

1. The school’s approach to religion is *academic*, not *devotional*.
2. The school may strive for student *awareness* of religions, but should not press for student *acceptance* of any one religion.
3. The school may sponsor *study* about religion, but may not sponsor the *practice* of religion.
4. The school may *expose* students to a diversity of religious views, but may not *impose* any particular view.
5. The school may *educate* about all religions, but may not *promote* or *denigrate* any religion.
6. The school may *inform* the student about various beliefs, but should not seek to *conform* him or her to any particular belief.21


**Bible and Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide Guidelines:**

To adopt any particular Bible—or translation—is likely to suggest to students that it is normative, the best Bible. One solution is to use a biblical sourcebook that includes the key texts of each of the major Bibles or an anthology of various translations.

At the outset, and at crucial points in the course, teachers should remind students about the differences between the various Bibles and discuss some of the major views concerning authorship and compilation of the books of the Bible. Students should also understand the differences in translations, read from several translations, and reflect on the significance of these differences for various traditions.22

Bible Literacy Project and First Amendment Center, *Bible & Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide*, guide to teaching the Bible in public schools (1999)
Goals and Objectives
for Course or Group Study (if applicable)

General Goals and Objectives:

The student will…

- define and explain the inspired, noble, and virtuous ideals of our constitutional republic that is founded on certain unalienable rights and the equality and freedom of all persons.
- practice more patriotic, informed, responsible, active, enthusiastic, and united citizenship.
- associate ideas from the Bible with the principles we value as citizens in the United States of America.
- distinguish the role of the Bible and Bible-based philosophers in American political thought.
- detect and assess the relevance of the Bible to the founding documents in America including the Mayflower Compact, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.
- illustrate America’s political, social, cultural, and economic advances resulting from freedom and unity among citizens of the nation.
- sketch a personal plan of action in his/her daily civic life to demonstrate basic principles from the Bible and to promote the American idea.

Chapter 1 Objectives: The Roots of Popular Sovereignty

The student will…

- recognize the main events, issues, and effects or outcomes of the Protestant Reformation.
- distinguish the main tenets of Protestants and Catholics.
- examine important writings that came out of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation that influenced Western and American political thought.
- define and explain the principle of popular sovereignty.
- identify the sources of and scriptures used to support popular sovereignty.
- compare/contrast the principle of popular sovereignty and the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings.
- examine how the principle of popular sovereignty affected Western views of church and government.
- identify and explain the Bible-based or Judeo-Christian principles evident and important in this part of America’s heritage.

Chapter 2 Objectives: The Pilgrims, the Mayflower Compact, and the First Thanksgiving of America

The student will…

- identify the purposes of the Pilgrims in coming to America—for religious freedom, to create a godly, Bible-centered society, to advance the Christian faith, and to glorify God.
- specify and analyze the Bible-based influences on the Pilgrims and in the Mayflower Compact.
- explain the significance of the creation of a self-governing contract and document, the first of its kind in the world.
- describe compacts or covenants and their significance, purpose, benefits, and commitments as found in the Mayflower Compact.
- discuss the historical, religious, and socio-cultural significance of the first Thanksgiving in America.
- identify and explain the Bible-based or Judeo-Christian principles evident and important in this part of America’s heritage.

Chapter 3 Objectives: The Puritans Create Bible Commonwealths in Early America

The student will…
• examine the Judeo-Christian religious/spiritual and civic/political views of the Puritans.
• analyze the relation between the Puritans’ Judeo-Christian beliefs and their civic state, society, and political ideas.
• express the Puritans’ views on individual rights, with consideration for how individual rights are addressed in today’s laws in the United States government.
• examine the Puritans’ Bible-centered self-government and society.
• analyze the influence of the Puritans’ Judeo-Christian beliefs and principles on the United States and modern American life.
• identify and explain the Bible-based or Judeo-Christian principles evident and important in this part of America’s heritage.

Chapter 4 Objectives: Freedom of Conscience and Religious Tolerance in Early America

The student will…
• indicate the reasons why religious dissidents and non-conformists came to America.
• analyze the Bible-based arguments of Roger Williams, William Penn, and John Locke against religious intolerance and coercion and in support of freedom of conscience.
• summarize the views of Williams and Locke on the use of state power to enforce religious laws, the purpose and principle of separation of church and civil government, and the distinction between civil government and church roles and representatives.
• explain how the beliefs, ideas, arguments, and/or actions of Williams, Penn, and Cecil Calvert contributed to the development and support of individual rights, limited government, religious tolerance, and freedom of conscience and religion in America.
• analyze the influence of early Americans’ Bible-based or Judeo-Christian beliefs and principles on the United States and modern American life.
• identify and explain the Bible-based or Judeo-Christian principles evident and important in this part of America’s heritage.

Chapter 5 Objectives: The Great Awakening, An Evangelical Revival in the American Colonies

The student will…
• discuss the important ideas and beliefs of the Great Awakening.
• recognize important thinkers and leaders during the Great Awakening.
• review and evaluate the religious, social, and political effects and influences of the Great Awakening in America.
• detect and indicate the links between the Great Awakening and America’s path to independence.
• assess how the Great Awakening helped develop America as a democratic nation influenced by Bible-based values.
• analyze the influence of early Americans’ Bible-based or Judeo-Christian beliefs and principles on the United States, its founding as a nation, and modern American life.
• identify and explain the Bible-based or Judeo-Christian principles evident and important in this part of America’s heritage.

Chapter 6 Objectives: The Bible-Centered Debate on Revolution

The student will…
• compare and contrast the arguments of the Bible-centered debate among Americans over the American Revolution.
recognize and evaluate the influence of the Bible on American thought, politics, and culture during the Founding era.

• analyze the influence of the Bible and Bible-based principles—as referenced by America Founders, revolutionaries, clergy, and influential thinkers—on the American Revolution.

• distinguish and examine founding-era Americans’ Bible-influenced views on the issues of submission to authority, freedom, resistance to tyranny, and revolution.

• identify and explain the Bible-based or Judeo-Christian principles evident and important in this part of America’s heritage.

Chapter 7 Objectives: The Rationale of America’s Revolution

The student will…

• describe the American rationale or philosophy for human rights and freedoms.

• determine the influence of the Bible, philosophers, and early Americans on the rationale of the American Revolution.

• explain the significance of the Declaration of Independence as a founding document of the United States of America.

• specify important phrases and principles expressed in the Declaration of Independence.

• define how the Bible and the Law of God and Nature are primary sources of American principles, freedoms, and natural, unalienable rights.

• identify and explain the Bible-based or Judeo-Christian principles evident and important in this part of America’s heritage.

Chapter 8 Objectives: The Making of A Nation Under God

The student will…

• examine and explain the influence of state constitutions on the U. S. Constitution—specifically regarding the relationship between church and civil government and religious freedom as a natural right.

• analyze the influence of the Bible and Judeo-Christian principles on the American Founders and thinkers who developed and/or influenced the forming of the Constitution and nation.

• analyze the influence of the Bible and Judeo-Christian principles on the Constitution and nation as a constitutional republic—including the need for government to restrain sinful man, Law of Nature and Nature’s God as the standard of civil law, Rule of Law, constitutional government, separation of powers, representative self-government, value of the individual, religious freedom as a natural right, consent of the governed, and civil covenants.

• relate and summarize the need for a virtuous citizenry in a republic and the Founders’ view of religion as the best means to achieve this virtuous citizenry.

• recognize and explain the Founders’ support for and encouragement of religion (specifically the Bible and Christianity) and education in society for a virtuous citizenry.

• analyze the meaning, purpose, and limits of the First Amendment’s Religion Clause with regard to separation of church and civil government and the free exercise of religion.

• identify and analyze important, relevant laws and documents that address religious issues—including the Northwest Ordinance and Thomas Jefferson’s “wall of separation” metaphor.

• review the effects of the 14th Amendment’s application of the First Amendment to the states.

• distinguish the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution as a national covenant or compact.

• identify and explain the Bible-based or Judeo-Christian principles evident and important in this part of America’s heritage.
Notes to the Reader and Group Facilitator (if applicable)

Resource Design

A reader or group facilitator (who wishes to guide study of this resource for educational purposes) has flexibility in the reading and/or delivery of the study. The resource may be read and studied in sequence order, but it may also be read and studied in segments or by principle/topic. Please note that the first chapter introduces important historical background and primary source information relevant to the other chapters. Readings in each chapter provide historical content and excerpts, analysis and synthesis of information, and important points. Review/study questions in each chapter provide for review and discussion of content. Activities in each chapter give readers an opportunity to analyze, synthesize, and understand information. The activities may be done during the group meeting or between meetings. Call to action questions in each chapter are designed to encourage reflection, application, and action from readers. Some chapters include handouts with additional information.

Group or Class Discussion Format

This resource may be used in a group and/or class discussion setting. All discussion questions and activities may be completed by participants during or outside group meetings and then discussed and shared in the group meetings. For the subgroup format, a facilitator divides a large group into smaller subgroups to discuss all or assigned questions and activities. These questions and activities may be prepared by participants outside or during subgroup meetings. One person in each subgroup is assigned to take notes and/or share the responses, findings, and insights with the large group. When the large group convenes, subgroup representatives share their subgroup’s insights with the large group. The large group and facilitator may further discuss/respond to questions and responses.

Discussion

Facilitators may encourage participants to freely contribute to group discussions. Discussions benefit from the different backgrounds, experiences, knowledge, references, thoughts, feelings, and ideas of group participants. These differences can enrich discussions and insights. Participants should listen to and encourage one another, not be afraid to ask difficult questions, and/or feel free to share various authentic viewpoints. The facilitator may lead groups to synthesize or bring together participant contributions and form insights and conclusions to further understand a question/issue.
Facilitator Ideas

(Note: If two people co-facilitate, one might agree to do most of the facilitating on a regular basis. Or, the two might decide to alternate weeks to facilitate. Because of the in-depth material, the two might help one another fill in gaps of information or understanding when needed during each session.)

1. Take care of administrative tasks.

2. Introduce the topic, book, layout, length, reading schedule, etc. of the study. The study might occur weekly, for example, with the participants reading one or part of a chapter per session. Express the purpose, need, and importance of studying this book or topic, why citizens must learn and know it, and citizen and church responsibility. Maybe a current event or article comes to mind that arouses the interest and curiosity of participants. Indicate, when applicable, how this study may also serve as a training for other teachers/group facilitators who wish to lead/facilitate their own class or group reading of the book at church or elsewhere.

3. Review and explain chapter content at the beginning of or at intervals during each session (as needed). The questions in "Review: Checking Out the History" at the end of each chapter help participants review, discuss, and assess learning of chapter content.

4. Facilitate the discussion, posing questions from the book and some of your own questions if you wish.

5. Guide discussion and questions through the main points or sections of the chapter.

6. Let participants freely talk about the reading and their thoughts and associations from it. Let the discussion be dynamic, but draw the discussion back to a question or topic when needed.

7. Address questions from the reading with the input of others in the group.

8. Direct the group to focus on and analyze some selected excerpt(s) or quote(s) in the chapter, with the group reading and analyzing the excerpt(s) together. Let the group read, decipher, explain, question, answer, discuss, react, respond, make associations, etc. This analysis will help the group to grasp the meaning and force of the material.

9. Direct the group to complete in writing (perhaps before class) and discuss the "Activity" at the end of each chapter to stimulate more thinking about and interaction with the ideas in the reading.

10. Direct the group to complete in writing (perhaps before class) and discuss the "Call to Action" questions at the end of each chapter to have participants think about, reflect on, and apply chapter concepts in their own lives as citizens in society today.

11. For each chapter, consider having the group closely read and analyze one key primary source (a sermon, letter, charter, personal writing, or state constitution, for example).
Chapter 1
The Roots of Popular Sovereignty

Various strands of thought in history play a role in America’s political thought and founding. For example, early American political thought was affected to some degree by the ancient Greeks and Romans. Unlike most early Americans, the Greeks and Romans were polytheists—those who worshipped many Gods. Yet these pagan peoples developed intellectual, moral philosophies that endured for centuries. These peoples also implemented various forms of self-government in their empires. The American Founders admired the Romans’ civic republic—an empire governed by representatives of the people. American political thought was also influenced to some degree by the European Enlightenment of the late 1600s and 1700s. The Enlightenment was a largely secular, intellectual movement that emphasized reason and science.

At the same time, a close examination of America’s formative documents and ideas in history reveal that one of the most significant sources of ideas in America’s political thought and founding was the Judeo-Christian worldview and ethic that comes from the Bible. This strand of thought includes the teachings and practices of the ancient Israelites who formed their own nation, the man Jesus Christ, and the early Christians of the Bible. It consists of Bible-based or Judeo-Christian thought as it developed through history and notably flourished during the Protestant Reformation of the 1500s in Europe. As will be seen, the Judeo-Christian worldview and ethic emerged in the philosophical ideas and writings most influential to American thought, in the deeply-held beliefs and values of early colonial Americans, among many American Founders, and in the founding of the new nation. Even the Enlightenment-era thinkers who most influenced early Americans were those who held a pro-God if not Bible-based worldview. Moreover, many Scottish Enlightenment thinkers who influenced American thought emphasized an innate “moral sense” in mankind that easily aligned with Judeo-Christian thought. It is the thesis of this book that the Bible is one of the most influential sources of ideas and thought in the foundational history, philosophy, values, and principles of the United States of America.

1.1 The Protestant Reformation

When considering the influence of the Bible and Judeo-Christian thought on the founding principles of America, it is important to consider the religious and political backdrop of Europe in the 1500s and 1600s. A brief look at Europe during this time, from which the first Europeans would emigrate to America, reveals that one of the most significant events affecting European religious and political beliefs was the Protestant Reformation that occurred in the 1520s and 1530s. The Reformation greatly impacted the beliefs of many early settlers who came to the American colonies.

Prior to and during this time, the Roman Catholic Church was and had been, for centuries, the dominant organized form of the Christian church in the kingdoms of Europe. The model of power that existed in European kingdoms was based on the medieval Roman Catholic theory of “two powers” or “two swords” of church and civil government. The two-swords theory held that two separate powers ruled the world—pope and emperor. The pope, as the highest person in the hierarchical Catholic church, was considered the representative or vicar of Christ in the world. The emperor was the highest civil magistrate who ruled over the empire. In this model, the pope and other church officials wielded the spiritual sword of the church, and the emperor and kings wielded the earthly or temporal sword of the civil state. To govern the churches of Europe, the Catholic church instituted canon laws. Canon laws were basically church laws to govern Christians in church matters. The civil state, in turn, enforced civil laws in line with the canon law and defended Christendom. The civil magistrates’ power was limited by the church, the law, and the lower nobles. Emperors and kings were often elected and/or subject to a public oath to rule justly. They could be dismissed for unjust rule. Over time, the pope gained more political and legal power, and the official church became the highest political authority in the kingdoms. The emperor and kings were accountable to the church, but the pope was accountable only to God. Since the