

The 'Wilderness Years' in American History

Like growing fruits and vegetables, producing sustainable freedom takes more work than simply throwing seeds in the ground and watering. Planning and preparing a site for a new orchard begins two to three years ahead of planting.

M. Stanton Evans observed in *The Theme Is Freedom*, "If we want to grow orchids instead of weeds, it is well to know what kind of climate, soil and nurture are congenial to orchids; ignorance of or indifference to these matters will predictably result in failure. Ignorance of or indifference to the safeguards needed for the growth of liberty will issue in a like result, but with effects more baleful to consider."

America's Founders won freedom. But after the final Revolutionary War cannon fired, the Founders needed to order and preserve the liberty, recognizing that freedom is rare and cannot be taken for granted. In his acclaimed book *A Free People's Suicide*, Os Guinness explains, "If the hundred-centuries clock of civilization is compressed to a single hour, today's interest in freedom and democracy appears only in the last minute or so before midnight, so to take it as norm is folly."

The Founders embedded the Bible in the foundations of America; it served as the fixed point in order to structure and judge society. They recognized that honesty and integrity lay at the bedrock of a godly culture, and that "the glory of a nation lies in its righteousness" (Prov. 14:34), not its military power or Gross Domestic Product.

America's Founders recognized that self-government requires virtue, plus restraint. George Washington concluded that a free people must have a spiritual governor, stating that

“religion and morality are indispensable supports for political prosperity.”

Why is this so? Because freedom requires virtue, and virtue requires the Judeo-Christian ethic. Fraud and deceit are “an abomination to the Lord” (Prov. 20:10), crippling freedom and liberty.

Os Guinness calls this process of ordering liberty, “The golden triangle of freedom-the cultivation and transmission of the conviction that freedom requires virtue, which requires faith, which requires freedom, which in turn requires virtue, which requires faith, which requires freedom and so on, like the recycling triangle, ad infinitum.”

We can find the conundrum of 21st-century America in that infamous 1963 Supreme Court ruling, where nine justices established secularism as the official religion of America. This has produced the very opposite of what America’s Founders designed American culture to be at its conception.

Now it’s the secularists who are “heedlessly pursuing a vision of freedom that is short-lived and suicidal. Once again, freedom without virtue, leadership without character, business without trust, law without customs, education without meaning and medicine, science and technology without human considerations can only end in disaster.”

Cannot secularists recognize what Secularism has done to America? Freedom is endangered. Secularists have imported destruction on America.

Thankfully, God is not content to leave us here. This wonder of the faithfulness of God and His grace is that though we deserve judgment, He offers mercy for the crushed and lowly. Even now, if we are willing to turn to Him, He will reverse our situation and cause a resurrection. “When a man’s ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Prov. 16:7)

What do we do? Prayer must be re-established in our churches. We must beseech King Jesus to return to public education, higher learning and the public square in America.

Secularism has, as John N. Oswalt put it in his *Isaiah Commentary*, “turned His beauty to ugliness, His order into chaos, His power to oppression and His truth to lies. Will He abandon us to our well-deserved fate? No, He will not. God is not only the Creator—He is the Savior.”

This may be a long, hard slog; historians may define this period as “The Wilderness Years in America.” Christians have abandoned the playing field for nearly a century, forfeiting to secularism the governing of contemporary America. Secularists control public education, higher learning, the mainstream media, big business and Hollywood.

Nevertheless, in God’s economy, the Wilderness produces fruit: “Psalm 63—A Psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah.”

Anglican Bishop Christopher Wordsworth (1807-1885) found solace in the wilderness. He wrote: “Hagar saw God in the wilderness, and called a well by the name derived from that vision, Beerlahairoi (Gen. 16:13-14). Moses saw God in the wilderness (Ex. 3:1-4). Elijah saw God in the wilderness (1 Kings 19:4-18). David saw God in the wilderness. The Christian church will see God in the wilderness (Rev. 12:6-14). Every devout soul which has loved to see God in His house will be refreshed by visions of God in the wilderness of solitude, sorrow, sickness and death.”

Will a Gideon or Rahab make a stand?