

Why America's Founders Had the Answer for Anarchy

I would be open to discussions about defunding the police if the leaders of Antifa, Black Lives Matter and the mayors of America's major cities made a public statement that Jesus Christ is the greatest moral teacher who ever lived and that we should all seek to order our lives according to His example and teachings.

That may sound radical to modern ears, but it was the view of America's founding generation. Colonial American society was so transformed by the Great Awakening that a British-appointed governor wrote to his superiors in England, "If you ask an American who is his master, he will tell you he has none, nor any governor but Jesus Christ" (Hyatt, *1726: The Year That Defined America*, p. 81).

George Washington Wanted Jesus to Be America's Guide

America's founders believed that only the life and teachings of Jesus provided the moral underpinnings that would bring peace and stability to the new nation. George Washington clearly expressed this in a letter, dated June 14, 1783, to the governors of the various states. In this letter, he expressed his "earnest prayer" for them and his desire that they would make Jesus Christ their model and seek to imitate His example. He wrote:

"I now make it my earnest prayer that God would have you, and the State over which you preside, in his holy protection; that he would incline the hearts of the citizens ... to entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another ... and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility and pacific temper of mind, which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion, and without a humble imitation of His

example in these things, we can never hope to be a happy nation" (Hyatt, *1726: The Year That Defined America*, p. 120).

The Founding Fathers knew that the liberties guaranteed in the nation's founding documents would lead to anarchy and chaos if applied to a people without this transcendent moral guide. John Adams made this clear in a 1798 speech to the officers of the Massachusetts militia. He said, "We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious [Christian] people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other (Hyatt, *1726: The Year That Defined America*, p. 168).

Jesus Was Their Model and Guide

Even those founders who at times questioned the deity of Jesus agreed that His teachings were the greatest moral guide the world has known. That is why Thomas Jefferson took money from the federal treasury to pay for a Christian missionary to the Kaskaskia American Indian tribe with whom he had negotiated a treaty. It is why he said, "I am a real Christian, that is to say, a disciple of the doctrines of Jesus" (Hyatt, *1726: The Year that Defined America*, 149).

Jefferson's high regard for Jesus is why he closed all presidential documents with the phrase, "In the year of our Lord Christ." It is why he said, "Of all the systems of morality that have come under my observations, none appear to me so pure as that of Jesus." Like Washington, Jefferson believed that only the teachings of Jesus provided the moral foundation for a stable and happy society.

For the same reason, Benjamin Franklin responded vehemently to a manuscript Thomas Paine sent him in which he challenged the idea of a prayer-answering God, the inspiration of Scripture and other aspects of orthodox Christianity. Franklin refused to print the book and in strong language urged Paine not even

to allow anyone else to see it. He wrote:

"I would advise you, therefore ... to burn this piece before it is seen by any other person; whereby you will save yourself a great deal of mortification by the enemies it may raise against you, and perhaps a good deal of regret and repentance. If men are so wicked with religion [Christianity], what would they be if without it?"

By Whom Will We Be Governed?

The founders believed in the biblical view of the fall of humanity—that human nature is flawed by sin. People, therefore, must either govern themselves from within according to moral principles or they must be controlled by force from without. This is what William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania, was referring to when he said, "Those who will not be governed by God must be ruled by tyrants."

Until the 1960s, it was common for school days, school activities, sporting events, city council meetings and other public events to open with prayer. Displays of Bible verses, crosses and the Ten Commandments were common in public buildings, including courtrooms. It was normal for a baccalaureate sermon by a local pastor to be part of public school graduation exercises. Christian influence was seen everywhere in the public life of the nation.

When, however, the nation's highest court banned school-sponsored prayer and Bible reading in 1962-63, it opened the floodgates of anti-Christian activism. Ten Commandment displays, crosses and other Christian symbols have now been forcibly removed from schools, courtrooms and other public venues. This has produced destructive consequences, as explained by a recent sociological study.

Several years ago, I heard Charlie Rose interview a sociologist who had just led an extensive study on the power of symbols, including religious symbols. This sociologist said

they discovered that a person in a room where a Bible is visible is less likely to lie than if they are in a room where there is no Bible. In other words, the very presence of the Bible exudes a positive moral influence.

The removal of prayer and positive moral symbols from schools and public buildings has had disturbing ramifications. When I attended high school in the 1960s, the major infractions were things like chewing gum in class, talking without permission and being out of your seat without permission. School shootings and attacking teachers were unheard of! Security guards and metal detectors never crossed our minds.

'Defund the Police' Advocates Are Learning This Lesson

Those of the 'defund the police' movement are learning this lesson the hard way. Cities such as Minneapolis that have made moves to defund the police have seen crime skyrocket. Being moral relativists, they are not offering a transcendent moral guide for their city and so are now wanting the police back to control the crime.

They could have taken a lesson from Charles Finney, who described in his *Memoirs* the dramatic drop in crime as the result of a powerful Christian revival in the city of Rochester, New York, in 1830.

Finney told of a lawyer who was converted during this Christ-centered revival and later became the district attorney for the city. This district attorney shared with Finney how the influence of the awakening had dramatically impacted the morals of the city leading to a remarkable reduction in crime. He said,

"I have been examining the records of the criminal courts and I find this striking fact, that whereas our city has increased since that revival three-fold, there is not one-third as many prosecutions for crime as had been up to that time. Thus crime has decreased two-thirds and population has increased two-

thirds. This is the wonderful influence that the revival has had upon the community.”

Finney did not say, “but we can see that a discussion on reducing the police force in Rochester at that time would be understandable.”

A ‘Back to Jesus’ Movement

The answer for the anarchy, chaos and political hatred in America today will not be found in another costly government program in which we “reimagine” policing. Neither will it be found in religious pluralism and everyone just trying to get along. Neither will it be found in the next election, as important as it is.

The ultimate answer will be found in a return to America’s founding principles and the founders’ belief that only the example and teachings of Jesus provide the moral underpinnings for a stable and prosperous society. In summary, America needs a “Back to Jesus” movement. {eoa}

*This article is derived primarily from **Dr. Eddie Hyatt’s** book (Hyatt, 1726: The Year That Defined America), available from Amazon and his website at . This book offers an alternative to the “1619 Project” by documenting how it was the Great Awakening that brought about the end of slavery and gave birth to this nation.*