

ONE NATION UNDER GOD

Exploring America's Identity

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Morality and Religion DO have a place in Politics and Government

by Daniel Watrous

The topic of separation of church and state has long been a point of some confusion for me. I will endeavor to show throughout this article that morality and religion are not in conflict with politics and government. Furthermore, government in its various capacities has the distinct responsibility to uphold moral behavior and ensure that morality is supported as a standard throughout the society over which it is empowered to govern. Finally government without morality will diminish in its influence until those who should rightly subject themselves to it will ultimately ignore it.

All that I have read about the history of America as a nation and the words and lives of those whom we call Founding Fathers would lead me to believe that America has more of God in it than perhaps any other single influence. I suppose for me the difference between church and God is the key to my understanding. That is, a church represents one organized approach to worship of God and carries with it an ideology and theology somewhat distinct from other churches. God, however, is universal to all churches and is the object to which we as individuals, communities and as a nation look for moral guidance. There is no apparent disharmony between morality and religion and the operation of the state. The possible conflict is specific to the influence of a single dominant ideology over a government institution.

From this perspective the wording of our national documents and constitution are better understood and not at variance with current political policy. The Declaration of Independence mentions the "Laws of Nature and of Nature's God." It further states that the truths which we hold to be self-evident about equality and rights are "endowed by [our] Creator." These references to God in one of the charter documents of our great country indicate that despite differences in religious affiliation, all the signers of those significant documents agreed that the rights they stood up for were indeed God given, and in some measure, God protected. It further declares that "whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these ends it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness." In the closing of the Declaration of Independence Thomas Jefferson again calls on the protection of "divine Providence."

In the very act of declaring our independence we established our belief in and reliance upon a Higher Power. This shows that the

Founding Fathers not only believed in God, but considered him to be the surest foundation and hope for success in the enterprise of building a new nation. It is worth noting that in the Declaration of Independence there is no wording that reads, "We the Catholics," or "We the Jews." While these religious groups existed and members of them were influential in the drafting of these documents, they all rallied behind the common and powerful influence of God, not church. The separation of church and state was established at the same time that God was woven into our national character.

Already we have heard some insinuation of the role of government in upholding morality,

of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked: Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar struc-

"Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports... reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."

—George Washington

to the end that it can insure Happiness to its constituents. This idea requires a more careful consideration, seeing that in the enforcement of morality some citizens will find conflict. To address this point I first look to George Washington, the first President of this nation. In his first inaugural address delivered in 1789 he states that "there is no truth more thoroughly established, than that there exists in the economy and course of nature, an indissoluble union between virtue and happiness, between duty and advantage, between the genuine maxims of an honest and magnanimous policy, and the solid rewards of public prosperity and felicity: Since we ought to be no less persuaded that the propitious smiles of Heaven, can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right, which Heaven itself has ordained..." This bold statement makes clear that he sought knowledge from God in establishing public policy that would ensure Heaven's blessings on the American people. He cites honesty, duty and virtue as being connected with public wellness.

Seven years later in 1796 he delivered his farewell address, which I recommend to the entire nation to read in full. I will reproduce one paragraph in full here: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are 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. In vain would we expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."

It should be noted that the further from God that a government is, to that same degree it is weakened in its influence over the members of its society. The ability of a government to influence its citizens is proportional to the moral foundation, and hence perceived moral security, which that government affords to them.

Belief in God and adherence to its associated morality are not in conflict with government, but rather represent its greatest support. In vain would we hope to strengthen a community, state or nation without a belief in a higher power and a basis for morality. Government has its rightful place in upholding those morals and policies that the voice of the people have caused it to establish. Public policy that finds its roots in "duty," "honesty" and "virtue" will do more to insure public security and happiness than any other single thing. Without a firm moral base, government will diminish in its influence over its constituents. This lessening influence is the result of an eroding foundation and a loss of confidence in the ability of government to secure the inalienable rights extended to each individual under its jurisdiction. While church and state must necessarily remain separate, God, morality and government must necessarily remain joined.

Why should I vote? Will my vote matter? by Rachel Watrous

It is important to vote. My vote matters, and your vote matters. In 1873, Susan B. Anthony, fighting for women's rights, cited the preamble to the Federal Constitution beginning with "We, the people," and said:

"It was we, the people; not we, the white male citizens; nor yet we, the male citizens; but we, the whole people, who formed the Union. And we formed it, not to give the blessings of liberty, but to secure them; not to the half of ourselves and the half of our posterity, but to

the whole people—women as well as men. And it is a downright mockery to talk to women of their enjoyment of the blessings of liberty while they are denied the use of the only means of securing them provided by this democratic-republican government—the ballot."

Today, no woman is denied the right to the vote, but any person who does not go to the polls on November 2, forfeits the opportunity to participate in our national dialogue. "We, the people" includes me and you and every citizen

of the United States. Every voice is important. Each vote is a tool in forming the union of the United States of America as it is today.

As I anticipate Election Day, I feel excited to exercise my right to vote, to participate in the national dialogue, to prove my resolve to defend my position on today's issues. As you and I and every citizen of this country meet at the polls on November 2, we can again say that "We, the people" will work to form a more perfect union!

Same gender unions: an issue of moral principle

by Daniel Watrous

There is presently a great deal of turmoil throughout our nation over the issue of same gender unions. However, the reason for so much turmoil is not always clear. Some say that the issue is on the order of inalienable human rights, while others argue that it is simply a matter of personal preference. Regardless of where each individual stands there are tender feelings in the hearts of many over the outcome of this momentous decision. Who has the right to decide and on what grounds should the decision be made? To be clear, the decision affects the legally enforceable privileges extended to persons of

certain unalienable Rights...” It is important to note that if Human Rights are given from God, and not man, that God cannot be separated from those Rights. It should also be understood that persons that subscribe to such a preference are not excluded from receiving basic Human Rights protection under the law. The question then is whether or not Marriage is included in the scope of Human Rights. I answer this question with a question, if someone is not allowed to enter into a publicly acknowledged union of his/her preference is he/she robbed of Life, Liberty, or the pursuit of Happiness? I

nation. One of the most disturbing comments I have heard on this topic was from a university student. He said that the people at large would be subjected to a “tyrannical majority”. The idea that a minority voice should overrule the voice of the people, for any reason whatsoever, is not and can never become a tenet of our political process. It is the voice of the people that moves this nation. Since it is by our voice that the laws are made and representatives elected, we find ourselves compelled to adhere to the standards set forth by them. Without that assurance that the voice of the people will rule, our nation will crumble out from underneath us.

How to decide on the issue of same gender unions must be guided by moral principle...Marriage is defined by religion and God to be set forth for a particular purpose...the legal protections afforded to marriage have their historical and practical base in...rearing families.

the same gender that seek a publicly acknowledged union. This decision is one of morality and must be approved by the people and executed by the government of the land. I appeal to the arguments of the article *Morality and Religion DO have a place in Politics and Government* to show that government, by the voice of the people, must be responsible for ensuring a solid foundation of public morality.

There has been much scientific debate over whether same gender attraction is some verifiable condition of human physiology and thus those subject to it are incapable of choosing otherwise. Regardless of the varied findings, the issue of same gender attraction is one of preference. Despite contentions to the contrary, “sexual orientation” is not comparable to race, religion and ethnicity [ref 2]. The decision is one of morality, and ought to be addressed as such.

Similarly, the argument that to grant or deny same gender unions is a matter of human rights is not correct. The Declaration of Independence establishes the first formal position of this government on the issue of Human Rights: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with

suppose that the pursuit of Happiness will be the most argued, to which I would ask, How does public acknowledgment of his/her preferred union make him/her more able to pursue happiness?

Perhaps there is some merit in reviewing the history of marriage. The first recorded definition of marriage is found in the Bible, carefully set in what believers in the Bible call the Creation. The record of the Creation not only records the first marriage, but defines one of its primary purposes to be procreation. For all people, believers and non-believers alike, there is merit in this association of the marriage union and procreation. They are intertwined and inseparable. Procreation cannot occur without the physical union of a man and a woman. This notion of marriage and its purpose of procreation dates back to biblical times, during which history there have been few societies that have questioned its truth or application.

Being a moral decision, the voice of the people must make the choice. Government will then be empowered to execute the law and the judicial process will be guided in its interpretation of the constitutional decree. The concept of government by the voice of the people has long been accepted in our

How to decide on the issue of same gender unions must be guided by moral principle. Similarly it is inappropriate to consider it a matter of Human Rights, or to let such considerations determine its outcome.

Marriage is defined by religion and God to be set forth for a particular purpose and historically has enjoyed special legal protections. These religious principles are supported by nearly 90% of Americans today [ref 1]. Many of the legal protections afforded to marriage have their historical and practical base in one of the primary purposes of marriage, namely the process of rearing families. This historical perspective must not be abandoned to a supposed new enlightenment, but rather must guide us as a sustainable model for protecting family in our society.

Regardless of the outcome, some will take offense. To the degree possible we as a society must use great care in securing Human Rights, while at the same time securing Family Rights. We owe it to our families and our God to vote in favor of morality; in favor of Family; in favor of measures calculated to define marriage as a union between a Man and a Woman.

Sources:

- 1 February and March Pew Research Council survey of 2,002 adults found that 89% of Americans believed in God.
- 2 Given in a rebuttal to an argument against Utah Constitutional Amendment number 3 by Lavar Christensen, D. Chris Buttars and Margaret Dayton, and published in the 2004 Utah Voter Information Pamphlet.

Dear Reader,

This election year brings with it some very important issues. Voters from 11 states including Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Michigan, Ohio, North Dakota, Montana, Oregon, Oklahoma and Utah will decide on the issue of whether to allow same gender unions or to ban them altogether. Each citizen has the right and responsibility to vote on these issues.

This volume of *One Nation Under God* has the purpose of reminding Americans of the rich heritage of God and the influence of morality in our nation. The words of our Founding Fathers and other influential voices throughout American history remind us that we do have a moral foundation. This moral foundation can steady us in times of uncertainty. As we remember the past, we are better prepared to make decisions about our future. We encourage all citizens to register to vote and participate in the 2004 general elections.

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