



Is Teaching American History Unconstitutional?

According to Baptist Professor Derek Davis and his cronies, apparently the answer is "Yes!"

Occasionally, the Secular and Religious Left go beyond their normal anti-religious bigotry to make claims that are just too outrageous to be ignored. This week provided such an example. (While this email is longer than normal, I think you'll find it filled with useful and interesting information.)



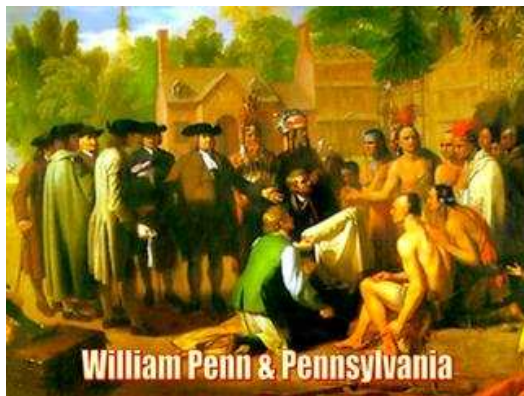
Several months ago, I was one of six expert reviewers appointed by the 15-member elected Texas State Board of Education to give input into the drafting of the 2010 history and social studies standards for textbooks. (This is a task I have previously performed in other states.) Although these standards we formulate will initially apply to Texas students, they will soon become the standards used in textbooks across the nation.

Last year, writing teams of Texas teachers drafted the 2010 proposed standards. We, the expert reviewers, were asked to point out where we thought changes should be made; the State Board of Education would then make their decision about which (if any) of our hundreds of proposed suggestions to adopt.



When I reviewed the proposed standards, I found many reasons for concern. The writing teams had recommended the removal of Nathan Hale, Daniel Boone, and General George Patton; they eradicated Columbus Day, Martin Luther King Day, and Christmas (but they did add Diwali as a holiday). They also declared that to say there was "an American love of individualism, inventiveness, and freedom" was to express inappropriate "value language," and they also rejected the concept of identifying specific beliefs that contributed to our "national identity." In fact, they declared that students needed to be shaped "for responsible citizenship in a global society," but not citizenship in American society. And instead of an emphasis on the positive things about America (i.e., American Exceptionalism), America was often shown as fault-ridden – as a global villain.

I made known my opposition to these and other positions in my official reviews and offered suggestions for positive change. My [first review](#) (from July, 2009) is posted on the state website, as is my [second review](#) (from September 2009).



Those two official reviews were 43,538 words in length, and contained three mentions of Christianity. In the first review, I pointed out how early colonial Christian leaders such as William Penn and Roger Williams insisted on having written constitutions to limit the government; I also showed how American Christians and Jews cooperated together in the American Revolution. In the second review, I noted the current polling on religious affiliation in America to demonstrate that the mention of Christmas should be reinstated in the standards. Those three simple mentions of Christianity caused the Left to explode.

Groups such as the Texas Freedom Network (the state arm of the radical People for the American Way) joined with other radicals in the Religious Left to denounce my mentions of Christianity. They nationally distributed a press release of outrageously false claims that were soon parroted by ABC, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, etc.



On Wednesday, January 13, the Texas State Board of Education met to begin the process of voting on the final recommendations for social studies textbooks; many of the board members know me very well and are very familiar with the lies of the Left (having themselves been subjected to them on many occasions). Hopefully, they will reinstate traditional American heroes and patriotic values, focus on the teaching of history rather than modern pop culture, and include coverage of good characteristics about America. Not surprisingly, however, the anti-religious secularist bigots made known their presence (and their ridiculous claims) at the meeting.

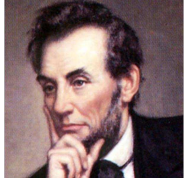
One of those in the Religious Left is Christian secularist, Dr. Derek Davis, Dean of Humanities at Mary Hardin Baylor (a Baptist University) and director of the school's Center for Religious Liberty. Although he heads a department at a major Christian university, he is a national evangelist for a completely secular public square; and based on his previous statements, he apparently wants to see all mentions of Christianity confined, like pornography, to the privacy of one's own personal life.

Dr. Davis amazingly asserts in the *Houston Chronicle* that a mention of Christianity in American history standards will "violate the Constitution" because it will portray "the United States as a Christian nation in some legal sense."



While there is no such recommendation in the standards, consider the stupidity of what he purports. According to Dr. Davis, it would "violate the Constitution" if the history texts were to include information from the more than 300 court rulings over the past two centuries that have declared America to be a Christian nation. Imagine! He believes it would be unconstitutional to let students know what courts have affirmed for 200 years!

He similarly believes that it would be unconstitutional for students to see the public declarations of American presidents on the same subject – declarations such as:



Intelligence, patriotism, Christianity, and a firm reliance on that God Who has never yet forsaken this favored land are still competent to adjust in the best way all our present difficulty [i.e., the Civil War].¹ **PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN**

No candid observer will deny that whatever of good there may be in our American civilization is the product of Christianity.² The teachings of the Bible are so interwoven and entwined with our whole civic and social life that it would be literally impossible for us to figure to ourselves what that life would be if these teachings were removed.³ **PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT**



America was born a Christian nation – America was born to exemplify that devotion to the elements of righteousness which are derived from the revelations of Holy Scripture.⁴ **PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON**

American life is builded, and can alone survive, upon . . . the fundamental philosophy announced by the Savior nineteen centuries ago.⁵ **PRESIDENT HERBERT HOOVER**



If the spirit of God is not in us and if we will not prepare to give all that we have and all that we are to preserve Christian civilization in our land, we shall go to destruction.⁶ We cannot read the history of our rise and development as a Nation without reckoning with the place the Bible has occupied in shaping the advances of the Republic.⁷ **PRESIDENT FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT**

This is a Christian Nation. More than a half century ago that declaration was written into the decrees of the highest court in this land.⁸ In this great country of ours has been demonstrated the fundamental unity of Christianity and democracy.⁹ **PRESIDENT HARRY TRUMAN**

We are Christian nations, deeply conscious that the foundation of all liberty is religious faith.¹⁰ **PRESIDENT DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER**



In these last 200 years, we have guided the building of our Nation and our society by those principles and precepts brought to earth nearly 2,000 years ago on that first Christmas.¹¹
PRESIDENT LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON

Let us remember that as a Christian nation . . . that we have a charge and a destiny.¹²
PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON



Of the many influences that have shaped the United States of America into a distinctive Nation and people, none may be said to be more fundamental and enduring than the Bible.¹³
PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN

According to Dr. Davis, it would "violate the Constitution" to present these, or the hundreds of similar statements by our elected presidents, or to tell students what our federal and state courts have repeatedly declared! Amazing!

Apparently, Dr. Davis (and the others among the growing group of militant so-called "Christian" secularists) has not read the Constitution – or even the decisions by modern liberal Supreme Courts that have held that history cannot be censored simply because it is Christian. Nevertheless, Dr. Davis and his cohorts have found it a useful tactic to claim that something with which they disagree is "unconstitutional."

We need to stop the use of this ridiculous tactic. How?

FIRST, begin with the wise recommendation of Founding Father John Jay:

Every member of the State ought diligently to read and to study the constitution of his country. . . . By knowing their rights, they will sooner perceive when they are violated and be the better prepared to defend and assert them.¹⁴

SECOND, the next time the Left claims something is "unconstitutional," insist that they prove it by citing the relevant part of the Constitution.



FINALLY, when the intolerant anti-religious bigots try to intimidate Americans from presenting an accurate view of American history, let's make our voices heard on talk shows and in letters to the editors, denouncing their attempt to rewrite American history and censor expressions of religious faith.

It's time for some new voices to be heard in the debate – the voices of common sense, well-informed citizens who have no agenda but to see the best for our great country. It's time for your voice to be heard!

God Bless!

David Barton

[1] Abraham Lincoln, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Roy P. Basler, editor (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), Vol. IV, p. 271, First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1861.

[2] "Our Nation, A Product of Christianity," *Springfield Republican*, 1884.

[3] *Theodore Roosevelt: The Man as I Knew Him*, Ferdinand Cowle Iglehart, D. D. (New York: The Christian Herald, 1919), pp. 307-311.

[4] Woodrow Wilson, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Arthur S. Link, editor (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977), Vol. 23, p. 20; "An Address in Denver on the Bible, May 7, 1911."

[5] American Presidency Project, "Herbert Hoover: Radio Address to the Nation on Unemployment Relief, October 18, 1931" (at <http://rm.resultsmail.com/route.cfm?mid=c7f8fd19-e269-4d73-85a7-a6d9440d1ad7&uid=13eeecae-25bb-4cdf-8a94-0bbf913aa0ba&route=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Eepresidency%2Eucsb%2Eedu%2Fws%2F%3Fpid%3D22855>).

[6] American Presidency Project, "Franklin D. Roosevelt: Address at Dedication of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, September 2nd, 1940" (at <http://rm.resultsmail.com/route.cfm?mid=c7f8fd19-e269-4d73-85a7-a6d9440d1ad7&uid=13eeecae-25bb-4cdf-8a94-0bbf913aa0ba&route=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Eepresidency%2Eucsb%2Eedu%2Fws%2F%3Fpid%3D16002>).

[7] American Presidency Project, "Franklin D. Roosevelt: Statement on the Four Hundredth Anniversary of the Printing of the English Bible, October 6th, 1935" (at <http://rm.resultsmail.com/route.cfm?mid=c7f8fd19-e269-4d73-85a7-a6d9440d1ad7&uid=13eeecae-25bb-4cdf-8a94-0bbf913aa0ba&route=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Eepresidency%2Eucsb%2Eedu%2Fws%2F%3Fpid%3D14960>).

[8] American Presidency Project, "Harry S. Truman: Exchange of Messages With Pope Pius XII, August 28, 1947" (at <http://rm.resultsmail.com/route.cfm?mid=c7f8fd19-e269-4d73-85a7-a6d9440d1ad7&uid=13eeecae-25bb-4cdf-8a94-0bbf913aa0ba&route=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Eepresidency%2Eucsb%2Eedu%2Fws%2F%3Fpid%3D12746>).

[9] American Presidency Project, "Harry S. Truman: Address at the Lighting of the National Community Christmas Tree on the White House Grounds," December 24, 1946" (at <http://rm.resultsmail.com/route.cfm?mid=c7f8fd19-e269-4d73-85a7-a6d9440d1ad7&uid=13eeecae-25bb-4cdf-8a94-0bbf913aa0ba&route=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Eepresidency%2Eucsb%2Eedu%2Fws%2F%3Fpid%3D12569>).

[10] American Presidency Project, "Dwight D. Eisenhower: Address Before the Council of the Organization of American States, April 12th, 1953" (at <http://rm.resultsmail.com/route.cfm?mid=c7f8fd19-e269-4d73-85a7-a6d9440d1ad7&uid=13eeecae-25bb-4cdf-8a94-0bbf913aa0ba&route=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Eepresidency%2Eucsb%2Eedu%2Fws%2F%3Fpid%3D12569>).

0bbf913aa0ba&route=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Epresidency%2Eucsb%2Eedu%2Fws%2F%3Fpid%3D9816).

[11] Presidency Project, "Lyndon B. Johnson: Remarks at the Lighting of the Nation's Christmas Tree. December 22, 1963." (<http://rm.resultsmail.com/route.cfm?mid=c7f8fd19-e269-4d73-85a7-a6d9440d1ad7&uid=13eeecae-25bb-4cdf-8a94->

0bbf913aa0ba&route=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Epresidency%2Eucsb%2Eedu%2Fws%2F%3Fpid%3D26587).

[12] American Presidency Project, "Richard Nixon: Remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast, February 1st, 1972" (at <http://rm.resultsmail.com/route.cfm?mid=c7f8fd19-e269-4d73-85a7-a6d9440d1ad7&uid=13eeecae-25bb-4cdf-8a94->

0bbf913aa0ba&route=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Epresidency%2Eucsb%2Eedu%2Fws%2F%3Fpid%3D3597).

[13] American Presidency Project, "Ronald Reagan: Proclamation 5018 – Year of the Bible, 1983, February 3rd, 1983" (<http://rm.resultsmail.com/route.cfm?mid=c7f8fd19-e269-4d73-85a7-a6d9440d1ad7&uid=13eeecae-25bb-4cdf-8a94->

0bbf913aa0ba&route=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Epresidency%2Eucsb%2Eedu%2Fws%2F%3Fpid%3D40728).

[14] John Jay, *The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay*, Henry P. Johnston, editor (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1890), Vol. I, pp. 163-164, from his Charge to the Grand Jury of Ulster County, September 9, 1777.



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