



## Focus on Religious Freedom

*"Of all the dispositions and habits that lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports." George Washington, Farewell Address*

### **Why Religious Freedom, the Right of Free Conscience, was the First Liberty Protected in the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution**

"Like the Founders themselves, many Americans in the early years of the Republic truly regarded the Constitution as a miracle. ... (Americans) declared that the formation and adoption of our new system of federal government represented a political achievement unprecedented in human history. They looked upon it, moreover, as an event that was actually 'influenced, guided and governed' by the hand of God.' ... Our Founding Fathers believed the Constitution was destined to bless all mankind - and that it is 'incumbent on their successors' to preserve and defend our national charter of liberty." <sup>(1)</sup>

The Founding Fathers attached supreme importance to "the role of religion in the structure of the unique civilization which they hoped would emerge as the first free people in modern times." <sup>(2)</sup>

### **The True Meaning of "Separation of Church and State"**

In recent weeks, some commentators in media and Congress have declared the phrase "Separation of Church and State" is found in the U.S. Constitution and therefore any reference to or mention of God is not permitted in America. This assertion is FALSE and has been identified as "Huge Lie #1" by Catholics for Freedom of Religion. <sup>(3)</sup> In fact, the phrase is not in the Constitution at all but is from a letter Thomas Jefferson wrote to the Danbury, Connecticut Baptist Church in support of individual freedom of conscience and religion and the open practice of faith without government interference as, Jefferson reiterated, was intended in the First Amendment.

Our Founders fought for a nation where, in the words of Pastor John Leland, all would be "equally free - Jews, Turks, Pagans, and Christians." <sup>(4)</sup> They knew from history that an attack on anyone's religious liberty would be destructive to everyone's religious liberty because where government, through power, can dictate, there is no liberty.

*(The 5,000 Year Leap, W. Cleon Slousen,(1) (2, pg.76); "It's OK for Students to Pray" pamphlet from Catholics For Freedom of Religion(3); ciis.edu; KrisAnneHall. 6/26/13(4)*

*"The strength of the Constitution lies entirely in the determination of each citizen to defend it." - Albert Einstein*