

# Conservation, Politics, and Prayer

by [Larry Glotfelty](#) (June 2021)



*Lee as President of Washington College*

## Conserving History

**The ongoing demands for changes** at two universities known for their Southern identity deserve attention because these demands are closely aligned to the entire movement of not just

the reexamination, but also the rewriting of our history. And beyond that, what is involved with these universities is “part and parcel” of what is involved with the drift of the entire country.

The schools in question are Washington and Lee University, and the Virginia Military Institute, which are both in Lexington in the beautiful western part of Virginia. To have two such prominent schools in a town of 7,000 residents is probably the one characteristic that saves it from being described as “sleepy.”

A fair description of Lexington is woke. For instance, a decade ago a decision was reached to disallow flags of the Confederacy to be displayed there under certain conditions. A few years after that the White House Press Secretary was refused service at a town restaurant because her political affiliation offended wokeness.

The drift continues. The burial sites of the two greatest generals of the Confederacy are in Lexington, and they have been subject to leftist correction. Revisions at Lee’s burial site include the closing of large doors to obscure the statue marking his grave during many of the gatherings in the university chapel. Last year the cemetery named for Jackson and containing his grave was given a new name by a unanimous vote of the town council. Additionally, the military institute has removed a statue of Jackson and his name from campus buildings. The school’s first black superintendent has said that he wants a more diverse and inclusive environment.

Both the universities are under constant reexamination. Virginia Military Institute suffers under the burden of being identified by past generations as integral to Southern heritage. Washington and Lee is doubly damned by its name honoring two slaveholders. A very partial list of what that school has pledged to do to make amends includes:

- Renaming of buildings
- Replacing any portraits of Washington and Lee in which they were wearing their uniforms
- Creating a house for “students of the African diaspora and their allies”
- Creating special benefits for other approved minorities
- Developing several days annually for Diversity and Inclusion Visiting Experiences
- Adding numerous minority-oriented classes
- Founding the Professionals of Color network with annual sponsored events.

In summary, to erase the qualities with which it has been identified the college’s administration is doing anything any other American university has used in their apologies. Two of the more extreme are offering need-based scholarships for underserved communities (expressly mentioning three specific locations for three different minorities in various parts of the country) and offering courses for prison inmates.

These reexaminations have increased Washington and Lee’s black enrollment over the past few years to nearly six percent, and black enrollment at the neighboring military academy is roughly the same. The protests for diversity, inclusion, and equity at the two schools, of course, continue despite the attempts at appeasement.

The few lines above strongly suggest that one very visible cause of the redirection of education has been the attack on anything memorializing figures such as Lee and Jackson. In the larger picture, many other historic figures have been or likely will be included. If the name of Lee is to be removed for accepting slavery, why should the name of Washington be tolerated? What of Jefferson, whose behavior and writings made abundantly clear his belief in group inequality? Should the hundreds of American places named for Washington or Jefferson be overhauled? How should the already raised issue of monuments to the two be resolved?

Protests about memorials and race also extend back to Britain and the countries formed by the British. Statues and place names of some of the most prominent historic figures tied to the accomplishments of the British Empire have been under attack. Canada, for instance, has followed this pattern to a degree. "Systemic racism" is a phrase used in Britain as well as Canada, where it is applied even by Trudeau.

But, of course, the issue is not just memorials and group treatment in a small town disproportionately influenced by the education establishment, or in the United States as a whole, or in any of the other countries that are so permanently divided. What is at issue is that our history is being distorted or destroyed: courage is no longer courage; faith is no longer faith; heroes are no longer heroes; victories are no longer victories.

When we see clearly, we see the struggle is, in fact, existential. The existence of Americans who identify with their European inheritance is in the balance. Not only the role of this group in governing is in the balance, their well-being in various ways is also seriously threatened. The opening movements of this dispossession are comparatively easily seen. Even the loss of honest and responsible elections has been seen now by many Americans, but other rights are being taken slowly and with such deceit that patriots have been unable to fully respond.

The promoted conservatives are of no use because they refuse to conserve the highest worth—the people and their culture. The country now has several distinct cultures; that is the obvious meaning of the description multicultural, and it must be emphasized that they are competing cultures. The promoted conservatives refuse to defend the concepts of the country's founding or the individuals and groups responsible for those concepts. These are the foundations of our success, and they are being allowed to decay.

Conserve what must endure. Demand fairness and respect. Extend fairness and respect to others.

A new history will help lead to a new people, then to a new culture for the country, and that is precisely the intention and what in large part has already occurred. To say the very least, in its final form this new culture will not be committed to the concepts of our original American republic.

The traditionalist response to this replacement must be either to secure a reborn America in its entirety or take some part of America for that rebirth. This can be done only by struggling against an amoral, corrupt, splintered democracy.

## **Religion and Race**

The content of the recent presidential speech marking the National Day of Prayer provoked disapproval among many Christians but it can also shed light on who supports the present Democratic regime.

In this case, disapproval focused on the complete absence of any referral to God in a speech on the subject of prayer. Criticism included that until this year the many presidents involved had always made mention of God, and to avoid doing so was awkward or even insulting.

Perhaps surprisingly, all presidents since 1952 have been required by law through a proclamation to observe this day as one "to turn to God in prayer." Under the banner of separation of church and state, what can be fairly defined as an anti-religious court challenge to the observance was made in 2011, but the attempt was dismissed in a federal appellate decision.

Turning to God was omitted in the current speech, but several references to more political issues were included. According to the presidential comments, prayer has benefitted

moral movements against racial injustice, child labor, and discrimination against the handicapped. Also, it was said that prayer can uplift us for our work ahead facing a deadly pandemic, a reckoning on racial justice, or the threat of climate change.

There is one influence, long present in American democracy and the Democratic Party, that can account for the omission of God in the speech in question or in any public recognition. This is secularism, the social movement which is concerned only with our earthly life. In preparing for the 2020 election, the national committee of the Democratic Party added a representative for the secularist voters to their interfaith council (the council advising on the importance of religious beliefs added someone selected on the basis of holding anti-religious opinions).

Following the 2020 election, the Secular Democrats of America submitted a list of recommendations to the incoming administration for reversing what their interest group considered the constantly displayed religious agenda of the past four years. The intent was to weaken any thought of the United States as a Christian nation and the promotion of a secularist country based in "revolutionary democratic ideas." While mention is made of the standard of freedom of religion, the concern of this group is, according to their website, instead freedom from religion. Their positions are very similar to those generally perceived as Democratic. Any laws that allow for religious exemptions are opposed as are any religious influences in education or foreign policy. Any efforts to suppress information about climate crisis is opposed. Using such phrases as "bodily autonomy" and "accessible reproductive healthcare," abortion is endorsed.

Of the various allies of the Secular Democrats, the most important is probably the Congressional Freethought Caucus. Consisting of 14 Democrats in the House of Representatives, the stated goal of the caucus is to promote policy

based on reason and science, the usual bases of secularism. The most well-known among the 14 is likely Rashida Tlaib. The fact that Tlaib professes to be a Muslim suggests to some that the caucus is more an anti-Christian group than something intended to balance all beliefs concerning religion in a larger sense.

The items mentioned above lead to the question: is religion more important to one political grouping than another? True conservatives would claim, without reservation, that virtue supported in large measure by the traditional religious identity of America is one of the most vital foundations of any fair and unified society. Those who take the opposite course insist virtue is found in expanding rights and insuring equity and that any worthwhile religion must place such things in the lead. The first claim would historically draw on many of the founders such as John Adams. Adams's frank statement that the basis of our law was made only for a "moral and religious people" is an illustration of the rootedness of our nation. Putting such overwhelming emphasis on the "wall of separation between Church and State," the obvious source for the opposite course is Thomas Jefferson in his [letter of 1802](#). That letter, however, is certainly open to interpretation, and, in fact, Jefferson as a public figure spoke repeatedly and plainly of the contributing role of religion in government.

While dealing with abstractions makes the measuring of religious importance more difficult, to note voting patterns gives a comparatively easy understanding of its application. The most obvious example of this is the Protestant pattern of strong support for conservative and traditional candidates. In contrast to this is the pattern of atheists who, according to the leading poll, lean Democratic by a 70 to 15 percent over their opponents. As a statement on democracy, a considerable coalition can be formed from atheism which is the most extreme religious position, agnostics, and those who are indifferent

or undecided toward religion.

Another set of voting patterns, that of race, has been so consistent that they are well known. Although there was considerable talk of gains by the incumbent among minorities in the past presidential election, the numbers are far from confirming that. One-third of Hispanics, slightly less of Asian Americans, and probably less than one-tenth of black Americans supported the Republican candidate. On the other hand, Republican presidential candidates have carried white voters for well beyond a generation. It is interesting to note that Barack Obama initially attracted a comparatively higher percentage of whites in 2008 with 44 percent, but that figure decreased in his reelection effort.

Contrasting religious self-identification with race shows race as more important in determining elections. White evangelical Protestants have voted overwhelmingly Republican and more mainline white Protestants voted solidly the same way. In very clear contrast to this, self-identified black Protestants followed the pattern of their race. The white Catholic vote went 52 percent Republican, but the total Catholic vote (including many Hispanics) reversed that and gave the same margin to the (Catholic) Democrat.

The Democratic Party has achieved its goal of being diverse. Building upon the secularists supportive of individual rights that often contradict traditional values, there is a white base. This base is balanced by 40 percent or more of its followers from among the approved minorities.

The Republican Party has failed in its goal of being diverse. A current study reported 85 percent of its voters in the last election were white (or "non-Hispanic white" as the phrase now goes).

Religious differences and racial differences in what is now a modern and evolving democracy are two topics which



are often avoided in passing conversations, but they both would profit by increased honest discussion. There are many reasons to be concerned with the religious values of Americans including how those values play out in the public square—and the demography of America is a valid concern.

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**Larry Glotfelty** is a writer. You can read some of his work [here](#).

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