

“Independence Hall: Independent from God?”

By Chaplain Todd DuBord, M.Div.



*From the desk of:
Todd A. DuBord
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Mrs. Cindy McLeod
Superintendent of Independence National Historical Park
143 S. Third Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Dear Mrs. McLeod:

My name is Todd DuBord and I am the chaplain for the Chuck Norris enterprises. I was a part of a tour group of roughly 50 people who were on a north-eastern American heritage tour in July 2010 (“The Next Great Awakening tour”¹), which took us from Boston to Washington, D.C. And Independence Hall in Philadelphia was on our visitation list.



Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Before the trip, seeing Independence Hall, where both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were debated and adopted by our founders, was going to be one of the greatest highlights for me. As a lover of early American history and our republic, how could it not be? Unfortunately, it ended being the low point of the trip, because of the historical and particularly religious revisionism our group heard from a National Park Service (NPS) tour guide there. With over 2 million visitors alone in 2009,² it is my great concern that a plethora of people and students have already heard these same distortions and half-truths about our founders’ religious views and practices.

Just for the record, let me say that I’m not some extremist, but a concerned citizen who sincerely wishes to help rectify these religious historical revisions and omissions that 100 or so of us visitors heard in the

Independence Hall tour, so that the tours can be the best they can be and Americans can learn accurate views of America's history, especially as it pertains to the founders and framers of the Declaration of Independence and our Constitution. It is with that heart and mind that I write to you: to sincerely help.

By the way, though I possess our NPS tour guide's name, I'm hesitating to give it here, as I wish him no public humiliation (and can give it to you in private). I do wish an overall correction in the NPS guide training that is respectfully and obviously deficient (evidenced by his presentation). And while an administrative overseer might be tempted to say that what we experienced was an "isolated circumstance," the gap of religious knowledge was so large that, as a trainer of others for twenty plus years, I know it is symptomatic of a greater systemic deficiency in either your training materials and/or the training of the guides themselves.



Independence Hall

Let me explain what actually occurred during the initial part of our tour of Independence Hall—something which I should mention that 25 other witnesses in our group, all of whom were shocked and upset by what they heard, were and are willing to sign an affidavit that they too experienced.

Our tour group of roughly 50 people from various parts of the country was split up into two groups, which were, in turn, combined with other visitors from all over the country too (including students and children) for the tour of Independence Hall. I was with the first half of our group going in as guests, including Dr. Jim Garlow (a well-known national figure who is also Senior Pastor of the large Skyline Wesleyan Church in San Diego and the Chairman of Renewing American Leadership--<http://www.torenewamerica.com/jim-garlow-bio>). Garlow was one of our tour guides along with David Barton, an early American historian from www.wallbuilders.com and a holder of one of the largest personal collections of pre-1812 artifacts from the Revolutionary period (though Barton was not a part of our first group going into Independence Hall).

As we were ushered into Independence Hall for a teaching about our founders (before seeing the actual rooms in which the two critical American documents were drafted), we were seated in a room with several rows of inclined seating facing each other on each side of the room, with a long center area for the NPS guide to walk up and down. As we entered, our NPS tour guide stood waiting for us to be seated.

During his welcome, one small point that flowered somewhat later in the presentation was when he said, “We are going to talk about history, history, history and absolutely no discussion of religion or politics.” It took a moment for us visitors to get that he was being somewhat sarcastic, as we were obviously in a place of great political history. Some slowly snickered, while others looked a little confused (as I was) about the statement, because it sounded somewhat serious too. His quip that we would not discuss religion would later become obvious to be almost somewhat of a wish.

There was little question from the outset that he was very well versed in the history and presentation of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence. As a teacher and lover of history myself, I knew that he was no rookie to this tour. He told us quite an elaborate history on the building, the founders and the documents produced therein. And then he referred to the central wall on which was a large copy of John Trumbull’s painting, “The Declaration of Independence,” which you know depicts (most of) the signers of that founding document and the presentation of the draft to Congress (an event that actually took place on June 28, 1776, but not the signing of the document—which took place later).

The NPS guide began to ask visitors in the audience to name the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence (and point them out in the portrait—an exercise somewhat in futility, knowing most couldn’t get past the obvious signers like Jefferson, Franklin and others, etc.).



John Trumbull’s painting, “The Declaration of Independence”

Actually, the NPS tour guide used a bit of sarcasm but also smacked a bit arrogant in his back-and-forth questioning, respectively chiding visitors who guessed wrong regarding the identity of the signers—by name or by placement in the portrait. When a guest incorrectly identified a signer, but nevertheless named some founder from the era, the NPS guide would tell where and what that person was doing during the Revolutionary period (despite that he was not a signer). So it was clear that he was obviously very well educated on the founders. This back and forth questioning and instruction went on for quite some time.

Near the end of the presentation, before actually going into the rooms where the founding documents were debated and adopted, he asked if there were any further questions. Being a religious teacher, and not hearing anything about the religious affiliation of all these signers, I simply raised my hand and asked the question, “I know that we’re not supposed to discuss religion and politics [to which several chuckled because of the NPS guides opening statement], but can you tell me about these men’s religious affiliation?” (As I asked the question, I pointed back to the founders’ portraits in Trumbull’s painting).

I must confess to you that, in the 25 years I’ve attended a myriad of classes and presentations from my professional degrees to annual seminars, I have not seen such a quick personal transition in demeanor and presentation. The NPS guide went from being an expert on the founders to someone who was fumbling to formulate his words and get even a coherent and accurate sentence about our founder’s religion. It struck me from his initial utterances on their religious views that he knew very little if anything about the real issues at all—and that made me wonder how many presentations he had done over the years to school children and guests from all over the country and world without ever discussing the founders’ religious nature with any accuracy. And, lastly, it instantly made me think that there must be very little actual training on the issue—or at least it made me wonder.

The response that proceeded from the NPS guide in answering my question was often the typical rhetoric and sound bites that I’ve heard through the years from any uninformed skeptical antagonist.

Let me give you five examples of what the NPS guide said (from notes I was taking as he spoke and that I verified from witnesses afterward). I will later reiterate each and explain from history why they are incorrect.

- (1) “George Washington didn’t even attend church!”
- (2) While the NPS guide physically hunched over, mimicked and mocked one carrying and swinging an oversized bible in his hand, he said to the crowd: “Even if I said the founders were Christians, how could we really know? Just because people carry a big ol’ Bible in their hand, they can still be atheists!”
- (3) “Most of these men owned slaves. How could good Christians do that?”
- (4) “We know that Benjamin Franklin was a deist.”
- (5) “We don’t really know for sure about their religion. It’s open for interpretation. You’ll have to do your own study on that.”

It was bad enough he retorted with only, and I mean only, negative comments on the founders’ religious views and practice, but that they were also jaded lies or half-truths used to attack and undermine their faiths. In the very house in which they adopted a Creator-filled Declaration of Independence, not one positive comment was made about any one of the founders’ Christian faiths.

The audience reaction was instantaneous shock--many were upset and even gasped that he was speaking so derogatorily about these founders and the/their Christian faith. You could see it on everyone's faces. Dr. Jim Garlow was so disgusted by the presentation that he immediately defended the founders' faiths by starting with the words, "Now, wait just a minute, that book on the table there in the portrait is a bible and most of these men were devout sincere Christians. We have proof of that!"....

To read the exciting ending to this revisionist experience at Independence Hall, and receive 25 more pages of original-source research material Todd used in his case to National Park Service executives to refute each of the NPS guide's claims about America's founding fathers' religious beliefs and practices, [go to this website's online store to acquire the whole story and research with colored photos for only \\$2.95](#) or you can [download all six revisionist stories contained on this website with Todd's analysis, corrections and colored photos for ½ price at only \\$9.95](#) (titled collectively, "[Uncovering Christian Revisionism in America](#)," which includes [190 pages of documentation](#) on the revisions at the Washington Monument, the Jamestown Settlement, Monticello (Thomas Jefferson's estate), the U.S. Supreme Court, plus bonus materials on how the famous urban legend debunking website, www.snopes.com, made biased liberal changes against Todd's research in their article on the U.S. Supreme Court-Ten Amendment/Commandment debate).

Endnotes

¹ <http://www.skylinechurch.org/images/NGAtourBrochure.pdf>

² <http://www.nps.gov/inde/parkmgmt/statistics.htm>