

Christian Action Ministry Newsletter

Involving the Christian in Community Action

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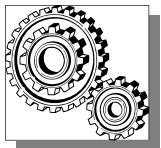
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If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please call 655-0280, email, or contact our website (see back page)



In the Works

Candidate Scorecard for this fall election

Are you interested in becoming involved? CAM is looking for interested and active people to act as liaisons to their church, helping to keep the Christian community informed. Contact CAM at 372-6442.

The Biblical Roots of American Civilization

by
Robert Maynard

This article is based on two premises. The first is that there is a historically defined American Civilization. We are the heirs to Western Civilization, but have a unique civilization of our own. The second premise is that the American Civilization is rooted in the ideal of freedom.

The defense and implementation of this ideal has set the stage for conflict with enemies abroad and political debate and division at home.

In a September 28, 2001 article by Brink Lindsey, Senior Fellow, Cato Institute entitled “**The Last Totalitarians**”, the case is made that totalitarian movements that rose up in the 20th Century, did so partly as a reaction to our notion of freedom. Our understanding of individual liberty is seen by ideological utopians as a threat to their grand vision.

On the home front, much of our political debate is over how we understand the ideal of freedom and how it is to be

implemented. This division was seen in the debate over health care. Some saw the push for an expanded role of government into the health care industry as threat to our liberty. Others saw health care as a human right that the government has a duty to provide. At its heart, this debate is over the meaning of our notion of freedom and rights and how they are to be realized in our society.



As heirs of the Judeo-Christian tradition, we have a biblical mandate to be salt and light in our society. The purpose of this article is to examine the roots of American Civilization in order to get a better understanding of the key issues that arise from the attempt to implement its core ideals.

These ideals directly relate to the human “rights” enshrined in our constitution. However, what is generally not well understood is that the constitutional protection of individual rights represents the legal codification of principles that developed over a period of 180 years.

That was the period of time between the first Pilgrim settlers and the establishment of the U.S. Constitution. During that time the “Puritans” set up Churches, schools, a university system, charitable institutions and pretty much created an American Civilization defined by a distinct worldview regarding human nature and the relationship of the individual to society. This worldview culminated in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.

The word “Puritan” here is used in the broadest sense to include Presbyterian and Congregational Calvinists, as well as Methodists, Baptists, Quakers and some other groups. The unifying theme, be they sepa-



“The American Republic will endure until the day Congress discovers that it can bribe the public with the public’s money.”

Alexis de Tocqueville

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ratists or non-separatists, was a desire to "purify" the Church and enjoy the freedom to worship as they saw fit and to set up communities governed by the principles derived from their religious ideals.

Despite the differences in theological emphasis from one group to another, their views formed a fairly coherent worldview in regards to human nature and the relationship between an individual and society. The early Puritans saw themselves as called by God to set up an experiment in liberty that would be an inspiration to the world. In a 1630 sermon by John Winthrop entitled "City upon a Hill," he reminded his Congregation that:

"...for wee must Consider that wee shall be as a City upon a Hill, the eyes of all people are upon us; soe that if wee shall deale falsely with our God in this worke wee have undertaken and soe cause him to withdrawe his present help from us, wee shall be made a story and a byword through the world, wee shall open the mouthes of enemies to speake evill of the wayes of God and all professours for Gods sake; wee shall shame the faces of many of gods worthy servants..."

As they were predominately Christian, they took most of their ideas from the Bible. The early Pilgrims patterned their "Errand in the Wilderness" after the Jewish people who

escaped tyranny in Egypt for freedom in the "Promised Land." This "prototype" in the struggle for liberty not only inspired the early pilgrims, but the later abolitionist movement with it's "Underground Railroad" and the struggle to end slavery.

One big difference between the early American settlers and the ancient Israelites was that, taken as a whole, America was not nearly as ethnically or religiously homogeneous. This led them to employ the "Natural Law" approach when they expressed the foundational ideas at the heart of their sacred cause in the Declaration of Independence. There were some principles that, while derived from the book of Genesis, applied to all people regardless of religion by virtue of being created in the image of God. This notion was expressed in the Declaration when they asserted that:

"When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect

to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation."

The phrase, "*the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God,*" has often been regarded as a conscious attempt to describe God in deistic terms. However, as Gary Amos & Richard Gardiner pointed out in their book "Never Before in History," this terminology had been part of the Canon Law of the Roman Catholic Church for centuries. From there it was passed to Christians more generally in England and became squarely implanted in English Common Law of the thirteenth century.

One of Jefferson's most influential sources was the Puritan Sir Edward Coke (1552-1634). Coke's writings on the Common Law served as the central textbook for legal studies at the College of William and Mary, where Jefferson received his formal training. In 1610, Coke explained the meaning of the phrase "law of nature" in "The Reports of Sir Edward Coke":

"The law of nature is that which God at the time of creation of the nature of man infused into his heart, for his preservation and direction;

and this is lex aeterna [The Eternal Law], the moral law, called also the law of nature. And by the law, written with the finger of God in the heart of man, were the people of God a long time governed, before the law was written by Moses, who was the first reporter, or writer of law in the world. The Apostle, in the Second Chapter to the Romans saith, Cum enim gentes quae legem non habent naturaliter ea quae legissunt faciunt" [when gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things of the law] ... "This law of nature, which indeed is the eternal law of the Creator, infused into the heart of the creature at the time of his creation, was before any written laws, and before any judicial or municipal laws."

Coke, like medieval Catholic thinkers and most Puritans of his day, grounded the law of nature in the Judeo-Christian doctrine of Creation. Jefferson also drew heavily on Sir William Blackstone, who followed directly in Coke's footsteps in explaining the law of nature.

In short, it is the dignity of the human individual, in whose heart God has written His Law, that entitled them to a separate and equal station.

Robert Maynard is the Director of the Defenders Council of Vermont and attends Trinity Baptist Church

Editors Note:
Mr. Maynard can present this eight part series to your church. For further information go to www.thelibertyfoundation.us or email robmayn@myfairpoint.net



"That frequent recurrence to fundamental principles, and a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, industry, and frugality, are absolutely necessary to preserve the blessings of liberty, and keep government free..."

Vermont Constitution—Article 18

Constitution Corner – Changing the U.S. Constitution : Amendment Process or Con Con for a 28th Amendment?

by
Kay Trudell

There is an email attachment currently circulating among thousands of computer users and their friends. I received this email recently from two different acquaintances. The message had been copied to a total of thirty-five other people, including myself. The subject of the message was proposed language for a 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution as follows:

“Congress shall make no law that applies to the citizens of the United States that does not apply equally to the Senators and/or Representatives; and, Congress shall make no law that applies to the Senators and/or Representatives that does not apply equally to the citizens of the United States.”

Have any of our readers seen this attachment? Sounds like a great proposal, doesn't it? The senders of these two emails then went on to list some laws that Congress has passed that apply to ordinary U.S. citizens but not to themselves: the recent healthcare legislation, sexual harassment laws, and Social Security, for example. We were then asked to consider calling for a modern Constitutional Convention so this proposed language can be added to the U.S. Constitution as the 28th Amendment. My two friends each invited the people to whom they sent this message to respond. I clicked “Reply to All” and wrote the

following response to everyone, which I would like to share with the readers of this newsletter. It has undergone some editing for length and the purposes of this newsletter.

“Here are my thoughts on this matter. While it is certainly constitutional to call for a Constitutional Convention, we should be very leery of doing so. Since the U.S. Constitution was ratified over 200 years ago, there has never been another Constitutional Convention convened, and for good reason. Once you open the U.S. Constitution at such a Convention, you run the EXTREMELY HIGH RISK of some states and their leadership introducing other amendments (such as gun control or restrictions on free speech or religion) that could result in the Constitution being trashed and rewritten. You do NOT want to do that. What guarantees do states have that that will not happen? A governor by himself/herself cannot call a constitutional convention. Two-thirds of the 50 state legislatures must vote to do it. The amendment process is better. Remember that there was another United States “Constitution” before our current one. It was called The Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union. The Constitutional Convention was called to rewrite those Articles because they were not to the Founding Fathers' liking, being

rather weak. What happened when the Constitutional Convention convened in the 1780's? They decided to scrap the entire Articles of Confederation and rewrite them instead. What we got is now our U.S. Constitution, which is a much better document, granted. So that has already happened. But our good fortune to have ended up with our current U.S. Constitution was because of the character and morals of our Founders. Do you think most of our current politicians (even the good ones) can compare to the wisdom and morals and foresight of our Founding Fathers? I say do not risk the best Constitution in the world by opening it. Change our problems at the ballot box and through the regular amendment process. The Founding Fathers made it hard to amend the Constitution because they knew the dangers of “the moment”. They themselves would warn us about opening the document itself. Do we really think our current politicians would make it better? I do not support opening the Constitution. I believe that would be a disaster. Do you really think that we have the power to prevent an opened Constitution from being turned into a totally P.C. (Politically Correct) document based heavily on international law? I don't. And this is not meant in any way to be disrespectful --- I think it is just hard reality, and we'd better

take a very deep breath before we try something like this. The consequences, should such an attempt turn out badly, will be devastating for the entire world. I love the 28th amendment you have proposed, but add it through the regular amendment process, not through calling a Constitutional Convention (Con Con). Our beautiful U.S. Constitution was carefully crafted and balanced by men whose like we have not seen in over a century. We don't have such statesmen now. Amend the Constitution, yes, but don't call a Constitutional Convention to do it unless you have a 100 percent, iron-clad guarantee that nothing else would happen to the document except to add the proposed wording (written above). If you do not, then **DON'T OPEN THE CONSTITUTION.”**

If any of our readers receive that email message, please reply to the sender and explain why opening the U.S. Constitution itself would not be a good idea. I received three replies after I sent the response. Each of the three responders agreed that the U.S. Constitution should not be opened at a Con Con; the danger was too great. The normal amendment process that has always been used since 1789 should be used in this instance as well.

Kay Trudell is a Board Member of the Christian Action Ministry and attends Community Bible Church



“Giving money and power to government is like giving whiskey and car keys to teenage boys.”

P.J. O'Rourke

What can I do?



Faith without works is dead
James 2:17

e-mail : camnet@surfglobal.net

www.christianactionministry.com

Hold the Date

**Thursday, November 11, 2010
7:30 pm**

If you enjoyed the “Night to Honor Israel” held last fall in Burlington, be sure to hold this date for an interesting and lively presentation of American / Israeli solidarity. Our guest speaker will be Rabbi Yossi Jacobson, one of the most sought after Jewish speakers in the USA.

Presented with a touch of Jewish humor!

Cost \$10 / person before October 15th and \$15 at the door. Seating is limited to 300 people and the event will be at the Ira Allen Lecture Hall (behind Ira Allen Chapel).

**Contact 372-6442 or email us.
Visit our website for more information.**

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Next Meetings
*August 24, 7:00 pm
Parkinson's home
Hinesburg Vt.
September 14, 7:00 pm
North Avenue Alliance
Burlington, Vt.*

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in
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