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Biblical Principles for America's Laws

June 22, 2009

Listen to Rep. Randy Forbes on the U.S. House of Representatives floor as he addresses the answer to these two questions:



"Did America ever consider itself a Judeo-Christian nation?" AND "If America was once a Judeo-Christian nation, when did it cease to be?" Listen [here](#). [Hat Tip and thanks to the Reeds]]

And for more information on the famous 1892 Supreme Court case where Justice Brewer declared the U.S. to be a Christian nation, click this [link](#).

Many people today reject the notion that the Bible should be used as a basis for law. "Narrow minded and outdated!" they say. Ideas have consequences. Let's examine the implications if the Bible is or is not the standard for society and its legal system.

Here is a link for a table listing 21 Principles and the Legal Documents using those principles along with the biblical texts. Use this [link](#).

Without an objective standard of truth upon which to base society, the result is that whoever gains the most political power will dominate. Christians believe that the Bible offers ultimate, objective, and absolute truth—as opposed to relative "truth" (i.e., arbitrary "absolutes"). There was a general consensus on this point in America from the earliest settlers until only very recently.

Founding Father and educator Noah Webster (1758-1843) had this to say: "The moral principles and precepts contained in the scriptures ought to form the basis of all our civil constitutions and laws. All the miseries and evils which men suffer from vice, crime, ambition, injustice, oppression, slavery, and war, proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible.

So it was natural for the early Americans to turn to the Bible for guidance as to how to make civil law. This was the standard for law beginning with the Mayflower Compact all the way through the constitutions of all 50 states. By the way,



what was the stated purpose of the Pilgrims as expressed in the Mayflower Compact? Contrary to revisionist history, their purpose was not to find religious freedom—they already had found religious freedom in Holland. Their purpose is clearly stated as being for the "Glory of God and advancement of the Christian Faith." The Pilgrims were missionaries.



For example, the first state constitution was the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut (1639). You may read this document at <http://www.law.ou.edu/hist/orders.html>. The framers of this document desired that every aspect of it be based on the Bible (See DeMar's book listed below, America's Christian History, pgs. 57-58). This document was a model for other constitutions, including the U.S. Constitution, which followed. The above table outlines the widespread influence of biblical thought on America's legal system.

Biblical absolutes enshrined into law offered a consensus that meant freedom without chaos. One aspect of this is that, as stated in the Declaration of Independence, there exists "unalienable rights" of men. Rights were unalienable because they were given by God. This is very significant because in most societies up until that time (and indeed even today), rights are only conferred by whoever is in power at the time.

Because the American consensus was that the Bible was TRUTH, the tyranny of a few or even the tyranny of the majority could be overcome by one person standing up and appealing to the Bible. The freedom of expression in general in America is a result of our biblical system. Those people who feel free today to condemn the Bible are, ironically, among those who benefit most by the freedoms inherent in our biblical system!

Another aspect of our system of government is that it is based on the Rule of Law. This concept is a direct descendant of Hebrew law and the Ten Commandments. Together with the concept of unalienable rights from God, these concepts helped ensure a way of life that respected the dignity of every individual.

It is helpful to compare and contrast the American Revolution of 1776 with the French Revolution of 1789. While the American revolution began with an appeal to the sovereignty of God, the French Revolution was founded on the sovereignty of man. The French movement was a product of Voltaire's philosophy which specifically attempted to replace biblical Christianity with man's reason as the ultimate standard.

But the French revolution was a disaster. Anarchy and tyranny reigned with 40,000 people being murdered, the favorite method being the guillotine. Their new constitution only lasted 2 years. Indeed, France has had 7 constitutions during the time that America has only had one.

Another important aspect of America's constitution is that it has as its basis the distinctly Christian idea that man is basically sinful. Every one of our founding fathers understood this truth. It has been said that the 16th century Protestant reformer John Calvin, who is the theologian most associated with the

biblical doctrine of man's "depravity," was the single most influential person to our Constitution. The result was that the founders built into the Constitution an elaborate system of checks and balances. This is evident in the horizontal plane of executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. It is also evident in the vertical plane of federalism-states' powers versus federal powers.

Again, let's look at the evidence by contrasting the American system with other systems. Other systems are based on the idea that man is basically good, or at least perfectible by law and education. This is the basis for communism as well as the religious states of Islam. But states based on these utopian ideas are always failures and particularly repressive to their citizens. These governments end up as a police state and take away rights of the citizens.

It has been said that America has never been a Christian nation, or that our founders were a bunch of atheists, agnostics, and deists. But consider the facts. At least 50 of the 55 framers of the U. S. Constitution were Christians (see M. E. Bradford's book listed below). Every single American president has referenced God in his inaugural address. Every one of the 50 state constitutions calls on God for support. The Supreme Court, in 1892 after an exhaustive 10-year study of the matter, said: "This is a religious people. This is a Christian nation." Even today, the Supreme Court opens each session with the verbal declaration, "God save the United States of America."

There are, however, two areas in which the American system failed- (1) racial slavery and (2) compassionateless wealth. But both of these flaws are failures to implement biblical Christianity, rather than being caused by it.

A few comments about slavery are important because so many people throw it in the face of Christians. Racial slavery is not a biblical ethic. Yes, a form of slavery—indentured servitude—is condoned in the Bible. But this was a method in which people could pay off debts and was not what we think of as racial slavery. In fact, the Bible specifically condemns the slave trade ([1 Timothy 1:10](#)). The Bible offers a unique framework for people as being equals: We were all made in the image of God ([Genesis 1:27](#)) and we are all equal in God's sight ([1 Corinthians 12:13](#), [Galatians 3:28](#)). Race, interestingly, is never even mentioned in the Bible.

Professing Christians who held slaves prostituted the Bible by letting culture influence their faith. Yet, the abolition movement was primarily a Christian movement. Slavery was stopped in England largely as a result of the tireless efforts of an evangelical Christian by the name of William Wilburforce. Through his work in Parliament, England stopped the slave trade in 1807 and abolished slavery totally in 1833. Unfortunately, there was no such early dynamic abolitionist leader in America.

The other problem in western culture has been unredistributed wealth. Neither the Bible ([Mark 14:7](#)) nor the American system seeks to have all people have equal outcomes. We are all created equal and we all have an equal opportunity to pursue our dreams, but we are not expected to all achieve equally.

Yet, the industrialization of the West brought great wealth to a few, while some were victimized. The working class was victimized to a degree in the early days of the industrial revolution. Fortunately, laws are now in place that protect the worker. And we have child labor laws, for example.

The issue is unrestrained capitalism. Later in our history, America instituted anti-trust laws. These laws can be seen as consistent with *biblical* capitalism as opposed to *darwinian* capitalism. Instead of capitalism based solely on the survival of the fittest, modern American capitalism uses law to make the playing field more equal while still encouraging entrepreneurship.

But again, the flaws are not in biblical Christianity, rather in the failure to implement it. If the compassion of Christ were to dominate society, poverty, while it would never disappear, it would be lessened. The workplace would offer dignity for all.

In summary, let's refer to our nation's creed—The Pledge of Allegiance—which sums up our way of life. It is based on a three-legged stool of God, liberty, and justice. All three must be there. If God is not there, ethics and rights are defined by whoever has the most power. And in order to have liberty, we must have justice. The first role of government is to prevent evil ([Romans 13:1-5](#), [1 Peter 2:13-17](#)) so that the rest of society can live in peace. Evil is only meaningful within a biblical context.

Liberty also demands ethical obligation. We must have a common understanding of moral absolutes, or as John Adams said, "We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."



America is grounded in the idea of "self government." What does this mean? To say that self-government is only the ability of citizens to vote and to elect their representatives is to have an incomplete notion of self-government. Government in biblical thought is not just civil government. In fact, civil government is the least important aspect of government. Government is first that of the individual to govern himself. This is why religion must be encouraged, as John Adams noted. The founding fathers of America clearly understood this. The second most important level of government is the family. The third is the church. Last is civil government.

And within civil government, our Founding Fathers understood that local and state government was more important than federal government. Our Constitution specifically limits the powers of the federal government, even though this precept has been continually usurped.

Liberals and secularists have it backwards. They think that the federal government is the most important. This is consistent with totalitarianism, but not with the American concept of self-government.

What is the purpose of civil government, according to the Bible? The purpose of civil government is very simply to be God's servant to restrain evil and reward good ([Romans 13:1-7](#); [1 Peter 2:13-14](#)). Christians are (a) to pray for and obey governmental authority ([1 Timothy 2:1-4](#)), (b) unless it forbids what God requires or requires what God forbids, in which case Christians cannot submit, and some form

of civil disobedience becomes inescapable ([Acts 4:18-31](#), [5:17-29](#)), (c) to influence government because all of life is under God's authority ([Psalm 24:1](#); [Psalm 83:18](#); [Isaiah 42:8](#); [Matthew 28:18-20](#); [2 Corinthians 10:5](#)). In a participatory democracy, Christians are under obligation to participate in civil government ([Matthew 22:21](#)).

As put by Dinesh D'Souza in his book *What's So Great about Christianity*, "Christianity enhanced the notion of political and social accountability by providing a new model: that of servant leadership. In ancient Greece and Rome no one would have dreamed of considering political leaders anyone's servants. The job of the leader was to lead. But Christ invented the notion that the way to lead is by serving the needs of others, especially those who are the most needy. [Mark 10:43](#) quotes Christ: 'Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant...for even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve.' And in [Luke 22:27](#) we hear Jesus say, 'Who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.' In the new Christian framework, leaders are judged by how well they respond to the concerns and welfare of the people. Over time, people once known as 'followers' or 'subjects' become 'customers' and 'constituents'."

The warning for Americans is that there is no longer a consensus that biblical ethics are truly absolute. Our liberties are eroding as big government tries to take over where our biblical consensus left off. Tyranny is the logical result unless we reverse this trend.

Bibliography and Resources for study:

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Dave C. **Biblical Principles for America's Laws**

Posts: 5

Reply #2 on : Thu August 27, 2009, 11:52:10



This is so true and so easy! Its funny that the only ones who seem to understand this are the Christians. All others seem to have scales on their eyes. We must pray without ceasing for our country's leaders as the Bible instructs so some may be saved before Christ returns. Feels like the last days are near. PRAY!!!

Guillermo **Truth**

Posts: 5

Reply #1 on : Thu July 02, 2009, 19:42:09



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This is well put! The whole principles of this topic was well worth the writing. I'll pray for the writer, this was inspiring.

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