



Session 4: The Christian Form of Our Government

Recap of Weeks 1-3

- Week 1-History of Dayspring. The Biblical Mandate for Education, History of education in America, Principle Approach Defined.
- Week 2-Principle Approach Distinctives (Notebook Method, 4R Word Study, Providential History)
- Week 3-America's Christian Heritage

The Christian Form of Our Government

Why so much emphasis on government?

“The Republican form of government depends upon the principles contained in the holy scriptures. The government of the united States is acknowledged the the wise and good of other nations, to be the most free, impartial, and righteous government of the world; but all agree, that for such a government to be sustained many years, the principles of the truth and righteousness, taught in the holy scriptures must be practiced. The rulers must govern in the fear of God and the people obey the laws.” Emma Willard, 1843.

“The highest glory of the American Revolution was this: it connected, in one indissoluble bond, the principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity.”

-John Quincy Adams

- Main ideas of the Christian Form of Our Government:
 - i. The Christian Idea of Man and Government
 - ii. A Government resting on moral principles
 - iii. The pulpit and American Independence
 - iv. Christian ideas found in the U.S. Government.

- What kind of governments do we see in the Bible?
 - Theocracy—God's rule through Torah
 - Monarchy—Many examples of this
 - Democracy —The tower of Babel, The golden calf, Jesus' crucifixion
 - Tyranny—Various empires/emperors
 - Anarchy—Judges 6
 - Hebrew republic—Exodus 18:21

Early Christian churches:

- ☐ Were local self-governing republics
- ☐ Functioned outside the dominion of Roman rule
- ☐ Functioned autonomously, yet connected in spirit
- ☐ Were Scattered abroad; the destruction of one did not affect the others

Characteristics of Early Christianity

Only bits and pieces of information available

Majority of Christians belonged to lower classes of society

Sometimes given to fantasy and legends

Often held to a purer grasp of the character and nature of God and the work of Christ than those of the nobler, learned classes

Most converts were made by anonymous Christians in “kitchens, shops, and markets,” not by professional evangelists or missionaries.

Characteristics of Early Christianity

Christian Worship

- Common to Christians of all social classes
 - First day of the week in commemoration of the Resurrection—the main object of the assemblage
 - Joyous occasion (Acts 2:46-47)
 - Communion the highest act of worship
 - From 2nd century, readings of Scripture, prayer, and hymns
 - Only those who were baptized could attend

Characteristics of Early Christianity

Christian Worship

- Typically occurred in private homes
- Earliest excavated “church”: c 235 AD in Dura-Europos (Syria)
- Sometimes occurred in catacombs (Saints’ and Martyrs’ days)
- Baptism was the other main event of Christian worship
- Originally took place immediately upon conversion
- Usually by immersion

Government of Early Churches

- In every place, the society of believers was a little republic. We see this in the selection of Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot, the appointing of deacons and elders.
- The churches instituted by the apostles were local institutions. Each church was complete in itself and responsible to Christ. There did become a network of churches, but they were each constituent portions of the Universal Church.

Government of Early Churches

- As the church age grew in the first few centuries, there grew episcopal form of church government, the separation of lay people from the clergy. The church became institutional, which gave it strength, but also mixed it unduly with the governmental systems and led to corruption.
- When in the middle ages, the Protestant Reformation took place, the presbyterian form of church government took over the episcopalian.

“Let us turn once more to the republican features of the churches organized by the Apostles. These churches had officers, which were to be regarded and observed in their proper sphere, as much as the officers of any other republic. But the manner of their ruling was not to be as ‘lords over God’s heritage;’ ‘Whosoever will be chief among you,’ said the Savior, ‘let him be your servant.’”

Edwin Hall, *The Puritans and their Principles.*, 2nd ed. New York: Baker and Scribner, 1846.

Colonial Churches

“The Constitutional Convention and the written Constitution were children of the pulpit.”

Historian Alice Baldwin (1879-1960)

- People were taught biblical ideas of man and government
 - All are created equal and in the image of the Divine Creator
 - Man - inherently sinful, needs salvation and needs to have power checked
 - Government - instituted by God to be our earthly authority with its own set of limits
- Pastors sermons were printed, widely distributed and are now a great source of our historical knowledge

- For generations, American clergy had been inserting themselves and their Bible teachings into all realms of colonial life—including politics
- Served as:
 - Chaplains
 - Penmen for Committees of Correspondence
 - Members of Congress or state legislatures
 - Soldiers

“There is not a right asserted in the Declaration of Independence which had not been discussed by the New England clergy before 1763” (David Barton).

Pastors and Political sermons.

“It is hoped that but few will think the subject of it an improper one to be discoursed on in the pulpit, under a notion that this is *preaching politics*, instead of Christ. However, to remove all prejudices of this sort, I beg it may be remembered that ‘All Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.’ Why then should not those parts of Scripture which relate to *civil government* be examined and explained from the desk, as well as others? Civil tyranny is usually small in its beginning, like ‘the drop of a bucket’ till at length, like a mighty torrent, or the raging waves of the sea, it bears down all before it and deluges whole countries and empires.

Mayhew’s discourse: “A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to the Higher Powers.”

Sermon:

“Our system of dominion and civil polity would be imperfect without the true religion; or that from the diffusion of virtue among the people of any community would arise their greatest secular happiness: which will terminate in this conclusion, that holiness ought to be the end of all civil government. ‘That thou mayest be a wholly people unto the Lord thy God.’”

The United States elevated to glory and honor; a sermon, preached before his excellency Jonathan Trumbull, Esq. Governor and Commander in Chief, and the honorable The General Assembly of the state of Connecticut. May 8, 1783.

- “Here is seen...the grand maxim on which civil and political society in the United States rests is, that providence has given to every human being the degree of reason necessary to direct himself in the affairs which interest him exclusively.” Richard Frothingham, *The Rise of the Republic of the United States*, 1910
- After the people had been trained for a century and a half in the exercise of these powers in local spheres, the product was public virtue.

De Tocqueville: “Religion in America takes no direct part in the government of society, but it must nevertheless be regarded as the foremost of the political institutions of that country; for if it does not impart a taste for freedom, it facilitates the use of free institutions.

Indeed, it is in this same point of view that the inhabitants of the United States themselves look upon religious belief...I am certain that they hold it to be indispensable to the maintenance of republican institutions. This opinion is not peculiar to a class of citizens or to a party, but it belongs to the whole of the nation.”

New England has the proud distinction of tracing her origin to the causes purely moral and intellectual, a fact which fixes the character of her founders and planters as elevated and refined, not the destroyers of cities, provinces, and empires, but the founders of a civilization in America.

“As near the law of God as they can be” was the instruction of the general court to their committee of laity and ministry, appointed to frame laws for the Commonwealth. Their first written code under the charter of 1629, was drawn by a minister. Thus the church polity of New England begat like principles of government. They were accustomed “to consider.” John Wingate Thornton. *The Pulpit of the American Revolution*, 1860

The Great Awakening (c. 1730-1750)

- A revival that spread across the 13 Colonies
- Most likely effected by Anglican George Whitefield
 - Also contributed to by Jonathan Edwards
- Ben Franklin was an enthusiastic supporter by printing many of Whitefield's sermons in his *Gazette*
 - “...all the world was growing religious.”
- Franklin was an enthusiastic supporter and printing many of Whitefield's sermons in his *Gazette*

The Enlightenment

- The enlightenment combined confidence in human reason with skepticism toward beliefs not founded on scientific or strict logic
- In religion, the Enlightenment opened up the idea of “rational” or “reasonable” religion
- The emphasis was on Natural Law and Individual Rights.

This Great Awakening and the Enlightenment played a key role in the development of the democratic mindset of colonial Americans

- Taught that the Bible espouses that all men are created equal
- True value of man lies in his moral behavior rather than class
- All men can be saved
- Liberty of Conscience is an inalienable right of every reasoning creature
- No one religious sect could unify the 13 colonies against Britain, but... the shared Christian convictions regarding the nature of sin, virtue, and divine Providence did!
- The language of **natural law**, of **inherent or inalienable freedoms**, of self-determination mixed with all these colonial religions was the crux of the American Enlightenment

Jewish Influence?

- During ancient times, people living in the Black Sea region were known as the Scythians (later, Saxons)
- The Northern Ten Tribes of Israel, dispersed by their Assyrian conquerors (see OT) to regions north of the Black Sea had much of their culture adopted by the Scythians (natives)
- The Scythians later migrated to Northern Europe and took their laws with them; however religiously, they become pagan
- Another group known as “Yinglings” (translates into Engel, Angle or Anglo), also moved into the region and intermingled, thus creating the culture of the Anglo-Saxons

Scythian-Israelite

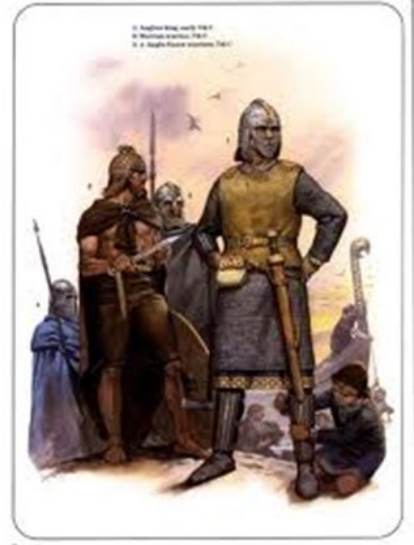
- Proclaimed to be a nation of freemen
- Claimed law was of Divine origin
- Divided their peoples into tens, fifties, hundreds, and thousands
- Democratically elected officials to head these divisions
- Similar justice systems
- Operated society as a social covenant
- Decisions regarding officials or new laws required consent of the people
- Based laws on inalienable rights of men
- Elected officials had specific enumerated powers



- Significance: the Anglo-Saxons developed governmental statutes designed for a free people
- This was brought primarily by the Scythians (Saxons) from the Black Sea Region
- These governmental statutes mirror those of the Ancient Israelites

A Brief History of the English

- The native inhabitants of Britain were the Celts
- When the Romans moved out of Northern France and England in 400, the Scythians, or “Saxons” (from the Black Sea region) migrated over and the Celts fled to Wales, Ireland, and Scotland



The Anglo-Saxon Conquest

- Britain was ruled by tribes of Celtic peoples that fought among themselves
- The King of Kent saw the fighting skill of the Engels and Saxons across the channel, and invited two Saxon brothers Hengist and Horsa to help him fight off his enemies
- Hengist and Horsa defeated the enemies of Kent and stayed in Britain, renaming it Anglo-land, or Engel-land, →England



The Anglo-Saxon Conquest

- The Anglo-Saxons killed many Celts, but the Celts (who had been Christianized by St. Patrick and others) were able to live among them, and the Anglo-Saxons adopted Christianity (Leavening Principle)
- The Anglo-Saxons brought their law and government with them, the law and government of ancient Israel
- It was for this reason that Thomas Jefferson proposed the Seal of the United States to be the children of Israel in the wilderness on one side, and Hengist and Horsa on the other



- Jefferson and Adams also wrote about the American Revolution being nothing but the reclamation of the Anglo-Saxon birthright of which the colonists had been deprived by a “long trend of abuses”



Original Seal Proposal by
Jefferson

Alfred the Great

- King of Wessex (the only region not conquered by the Danish Vikings)
- Through defeat of Vikings, became the first king to rule a united England
- Taught to read by a Celtic priest, he learned Greek and Latin to be able to study the Bible
- Studied Patrick's *Liber* and based English law on Moses' law



- Governing body of elected representatives called the Witten
- King was elected (No Divine Right of Kings)
- The clergy served as judges and based law on the Bible



The Norman Conquest

- Normandy, the region of northern France was ruled by Prince William
- He invaded England and defeated King Harold II at the Battle of Hastings in 1066
- **Significance:** the Normans brought with them a pagan view of government



- Ruler's Law replaced People's Law as William the Conqueror established the **Divine Right of Kings**
- Also, Norman princes replaced English barons as the nobility—making nobility hereditary rather than an elected position



William the Conqueror

- With this pagan view of government, the rights of the individual diminished for the sake of a strong central government
- From 1066—1300's, Norman kings ruled England
- When English Kings regained control with Henry IV, they kept the pagan views of their Norman predecessors



Magna Charta

- Fast forward from the Norman Invasion about 200 years, we have...
 - Feudal system in place in England
 - People were either very poor or very wealthy
 - King Henry II had 4 sons, and over time, his youngest would take the throne



- Oldest son Henry died as a boy
- 2nd son, Richard became Richard I (The Lionheart) who fought in the Crusades
- 3rd son was Geoffrey, who also died as a young adult during Richard's reign
- Richard was killed in a battle during his return from the Crusades
- The youngest, and poorest in character, John became King



The English Petition of Right, 1628

- King Charles I—Strong believer in “The Divine Right of Kings.” Famously said, "Kings are not bound to give an account of their actions but to God alone”
 - Dissolved Parliament in 1628—led to the **Petition of Right** (Written by leaders of Parliament)
 - Reiterated “No taxes without consent of Parliament”
 - Reiterated Habeas Corpus
 - Reminded King he may not quarter troops or declare Martial Law in times of peace
 - He ignored Parliament’s petition. This led to the English Civil War and Charles’ beheading.



The Glorious Revolution & English Bill of Rights.

- After a period of “The Commonwealth”, Charles I son was placed on the throne as King Charles II. His brother James II caused conflict with Parliament due to his sympathies towards Catholicism.
- Parliament invited Prince William of Orange and Mary (daughter of James II) to come take the throne. They had to sign the Bill of Rights.

English Bill of Rights

- Right to petition government
- No raising an army in times of peace
- Right to bear arms
- Free elections for citizens
- Freedom of speech
- No excessive bails
- No cruel and/or unusual punishment
- No sentencing without a verdict



Jefferson and Adams wrote about the
American Revolution being nothing but the
reclamation of the Anglo-Saxon birthright of
which the colonists had been deprived by a
“long trend of abuses”

Philosophers of American Government

Noah Webster, 1823

“As men are furnished with powers of reason, it is obviously the design of the creator, that reason should be employed as their guide, in every stage of life. But reason, without cultivation, without experience and without the aids of revelation, is a miserable guide; it often errs from ignorance, and more often from the impulse of passion.”

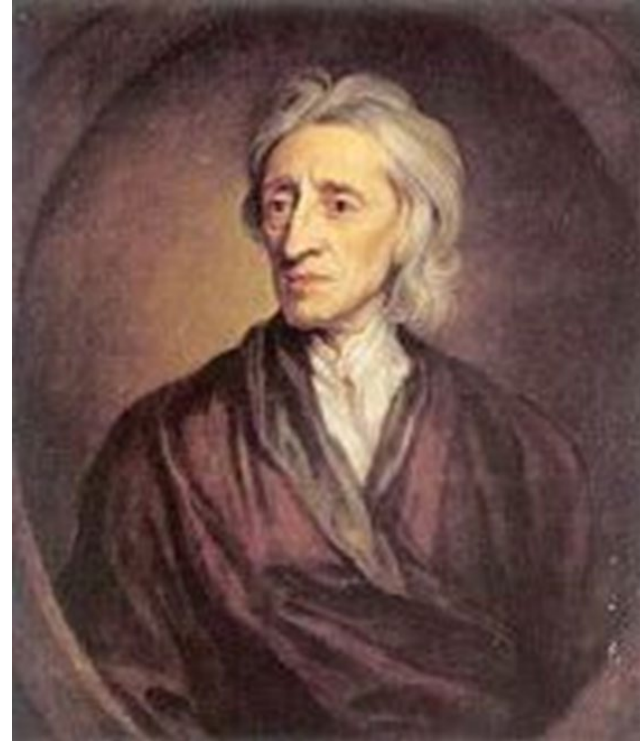
- Slater, R. J., Hall, V. M., & Adams, C. G. (1994). Rudiments of America's Christian history and government : Student handbook (2nd rev. ed.) (9). San Francisco: Foundation for American Christian Education.

Natural Law

- Unalienable Rights
- Unalienable Duties
- The Right of Habeas Corpus
- Limited Government
- Separation of Powers
- Checks and Balances
- The Right to Self-Preservation
- The Right to Contract
- Laws Protecting the Family and Marriage
- Justice by Reparation
- The Right to Bear Arms
- No Taxation Without Representation

John Locke

- Refuting the Divine Right of Kings
- Claims that men had the right to set up their own governments
- Argued against slavery



- In America
 - Locke's philosophies and writings were widely read by the clergy and the founding fathers
 - Therefore, his ideas were found in newspapers, sermons, and educational writings
- Contributions to America...*Of Civil Government*
 - His writings are what spurred our revolution



Idea	Biblical Index	Political Index
<p>1. “On the State of Nature”</p> <p>“We must consider what state all men are naturally in, and that is a state of perfect freedom to order their actions and dispose of their possessions”</p>	<p>Gen. 1:26-31—man’s original state and the Dominion Mandate</p>	<p>Declaration of Independence—“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness...”</p>
<p>The state of nature has a Law of Nature to govern it—No one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions</p>	<p>Luke 6:31—Golden Rule</p>	<p>Samuel Adams “The Rights of Colonists”</p>
<p>All Men are Naturally in the state of nature—That all men are naturally in that state and remain so, till by their own consents they make themselves members of some politick society</p>	<p>Romans 2:14-15—these having not the law, are a law unto themselves...</p>	<p>Declaration of Indep.—“...That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...”</p>

2. “Of the Beginning of Political Societies”

The only way whereby any...puts on the bonds of civil society is by agreeing with other men to join and unite into a community...and make one body politick, wherein the majority have a right to act and conclude the rest...

Ex. 20—The Ten Commandments— Duties of Man to Man

Voluntary Association— individuals join together in church and society

3. “Of the Ends of Political Society and Government”

The end and purpose of government—the great and chief end therefore, of men’s uniting into commonwealths, and putting themselves under government, is the preservation of their property...lives, liberties, and estates

I Peter 2:13-17 – appointed to punish evil-doers and reward those who do good service.
2 Cor. 3:17—Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty

Declaration of Independence—
“that to secure these rights...”

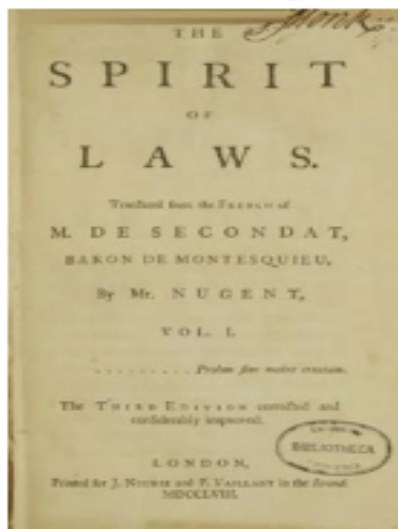
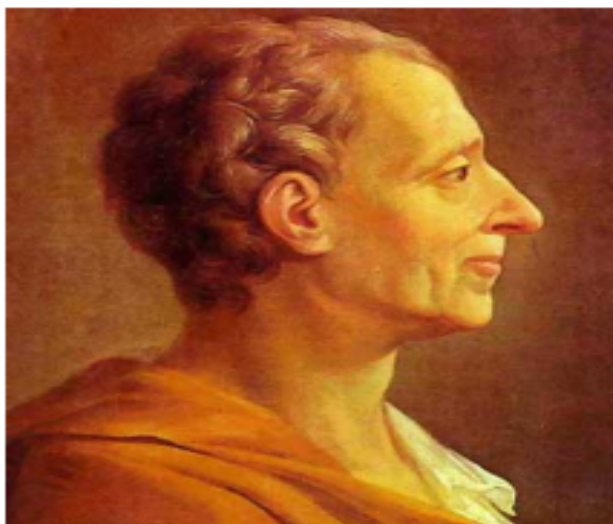
Punishment of Crime is the right of self-preservation—as every man has a power to punish the crime, to prevent its being committed again, by the right he has of preserving all mankind

Genesis 9 – Civil government instituted
Ex 20—the Ten Commandments
Mosaic Law

Magna Charta
English Bill of Rights

Charles de Montesquieu

- Frenchman who studied English Constitutional Law
- Wrote *The Spirit of Laws* in which he became one of the first political philosophers to argue for



- Laws are necessary relations arising from the nature of things
- God as creator of the universe, set it up to be run by laws
- Division of Power into 3 branches of government
(Separation of Powers)

- 3 sorts of power—keeps one man from needing to fear another
 - Legislative
 - Executive
 - Judicial
- This is natural—it can even be seen in the very Trinity
 - Father—Executive
 - Son—Legislative
 - Spirit—Judicial

“For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver,
the LORD is our king; it is he who will save us.” Isa. 33:22

Montesquieu (cont.)

- That each branch of that government is checked by another branch (**Checks and Balances**)
- A republic (representative) form of government is better than a democracy
 - **Representative Government and Local Self Government**
 - » Each man should be his own governor, and the legislative power should reside in the whole body of people
 - » Since it is not realistic for all to be involved in decision-making, people should choose representatives that will conduct the transactions for them (**Representative Government**)
 - » These members should be chosen from the inhabitants of their particular town as they will know best the business of their locality (**Local Self Government**)

William Blackstone

- *Commentaries on Law*

- Studied by every law student in England and America in the 18th Century

- Law as order of universe

- When God created the universe, he created it with laws that govern it

- **Law of Nature** and Laws of Science

- **Revealed Law**

- Laws found in the Holy Scriptures—compliment the Laws of Nature

- Revealed Law will never contradict Law of Nature

- **Law of Nations**

- Since man was meant for society, these laws can be made by men so long as they don't violate the previous 2



Our Christian Documents

The Declaration of Independence

(see handout)

The U.S. Constitution

The Bill of Rights

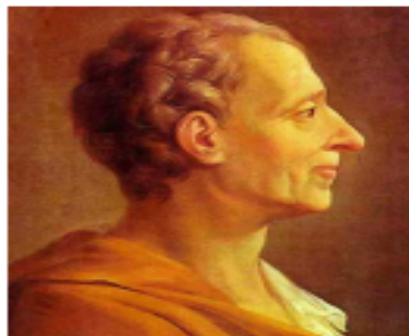
Christian Ideas in the Constitution

(used from David Barton and Wall Builders)

- 15,000 sources from Colonial period were analyzed
- 3,154 quotations were able to be documented
- 34% of the quotes were from the Bible—the most quoted source
 - 2nd, 3rd and 4th were Locke, Montesquieu, and Blackstone



John Locke



Charles de
Montesquieu



William Blackstone

Christian Ideas in the Constitution

(used from David Barton and Wall Builders)

- Jeremiah 17:9—separation of powers (subject of colonial sermons)
- Article 1 Section 8—Uniform immigration laws...compare with Leviticus 19:34
- Article 2 Section 1—President a national born citizen...Deuteronomy 17:15
- Article 3 Section 3—witnesses and capital punishment...Deuteronomy 17:6
- Article 3 Section 3—Attainder...Ezekiel 18:20
- Isaiah 33:22—3 branches of government
- Ezra 7:24—tax exemption for churches

Separation of Church and State

- Jefferson's phrasing

- Letter from the Danbury Baptists to President Jefferson
 - Our sentiments are uniformly on the side of religious liberty: that religion is at all times and places a matter between God and individuals, that no man ought to suffer in name, person, or effects on account of his religious opinions, [and] that the legitimate power of civil government extends no further than to punish the man who works ill to his neighbor. But sir, our constitution of government is not specific. . . . [T]herefore what religious privileges we enjoy (as a minor part of the State) we enjoy as favors granted, and not as inalienable rights. [\[2\]](#)

- Jefferson's response

- Gentlemen, – The affectionate sentiments of esteem and approbation which you are so good as to express towards me on behalf of the Danbury Baptist Association give me the highest satisfaction. . . . Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God; that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship; that the legislative powers of government reach actions only and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," thus building a wall of separation between Church and State. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties. I reciprocate your kind prayers for the protection and blessing of the common Father and Creator of man, and tender you for yourselves and your religious association assurances of my high respect and esteem. [\[9\]](#)

The Supreme Court

- 1st Amendment—"Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, nor prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."
- *Reynolds v. US* (1878)
 - In this polygamy case in 1878, the court placed the entire letter from Jefferson in its opinion, stating that Congress was prohibited from "opinion" of religious regulation but was free to "reach actions which were in violation of social duties or subversive of good order"
 - Therefore, the court upheld the right of Congress to regulate religious activity when it relates to actions that break peace and/or good order
 - » [T]he rightful purposes of civil government are for its officers to interfere when principles break out into overt acts against peace and good order. In th[is] . . . is found the true distinction between what properly belongs to the church and what to the State. [\[13\]](#)
- *Engel v. Vitale* (1947)
 - The Supreme Court used the phrase "Separation of church and state" to strike down prayer in public schools. They argued that public schools (as a branch of the government) allowing prayer would be an endorsement of religion, thus violating the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment

The Supreme Court

- *Abington v. Schempp* (1963)
 - Bible reading in school unconstitutional
- The Lemon Test of *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971)
 - The government's act must have a secular legislative purpose
 - Must not have primary effect of either advancing or inhibiting religion
 - Must not result in "excessive government entanglement" in religion
- *Wallace v. Jaffree* (1985)
 - Moment of silence unconstitutional
- *Lee v. Weisman* (1992)
 - Religious officials may not lead school events in prayer
- *Santa Fe ISD v. Doe* (2000)
 - Student-led, student-initiated prayer at school football game is unconstitutional

“Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, nor prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”

Recap:

- Republicanism in the Hebrew Republic (Exodus 18)
- The evolution of the church—from the New Testament Church to the Catholic/state church, to the Protestant Reformation, to the colonial American Church—shows us many things in the development of human civil government.
- America's English roots, going back to the Anglo-Saxon conquest and the influence of St. Patrick and King Alfred the Great, give us the first glimpse of a government that gave rights to individuals.
- English history shows the evolution of civil government becoming more and more focussed on the rights of individuals, getting its fullest fruition in the U.S. Constitution.
- The Philosophers that the American Founders studied had a biblical worldview.
- There are many Christian ideas in the U.S. Constitution.



Questions?