

Seven Leading Ideas of America's Christian History and Government

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Reprinted from *Teaching and Learning: The Principle Approach*

1. The Christian Idea of Man and Government

The Christian History of the Constitution of the United States of America (CHOC I), pages 1-2

See also, *Teaching and Learning: The Principle Approach (T & L)*, pages 306-310

When our Lord, Jesus Christ, appeared among men, women and children, He honored each individual with *the Christian idea of man*. THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF MAN, *CHOC I*, page 2, states:

"Christianity then appeared with its central doctrine, that man was created in the Divine image, and destined for immortality; pronouncing, that, in the eyes of God, all men are equal. This asserted for the individual an independent value. It occasioned the great inference, that man is superior to the State, which ought to be fashioned for his use. This was the advent of a new spirit and a new power in the world."

However it took centuries until there was a form of government established which would honor the individual and make the individual the "fountain of power" in the nation. The chart on page 270C of *CHOC I*, indicates how man, governed by God through His Word, is the source of government in America. Here, too, we find the standard of character for our representatives at all levels of government.

READ FOR YOURSELF: The Palfrey quote under the chart on page 270C of *CHOC I*, gives us a standard of American Christian character.

2. The Chain of Christianity Moves Westward

CHOC I pages 4-9

See also, *T & L*, pages 311-316

Arnold Guyot, Christian Geographer, who taught at Princeton, in the 1850s, identified the northern continents as "the Continents of History." These continents trace the Westward course of the Gospel with the Christian Idea of Man, as it found soil favorable to its development. Guyot discovered that each continent had *an individuality which God had formed to fit it for the purpose of His Story*:

READ FOR YOURSELF: *CHOC I*, pages 3-5

ASIA: the continent of origins (Genesis 2:8)

EUROPE: the continent of development (Acts 16:9-15)

AMERICA: to become the continent of "the most complete expression of Christian civilization." (Psalm 72:8)

The Map on page 6A of *CHOC I*, follows the path of liberty with those "signs following" to which our Lord referred. From the time of Moses and the Law, to Jesus Christ and the Gospel of Grace, the Christian idea of man flowed westward, seeking a land where each individual might be protected in their God-given life, liberty, productivity. This was God's purpose in establishing America and allowing Biblical principles of self- and civil government to flower in the establishment of our Constitutional Republic.

READ FOR YOURSELF: *CHOC I*, page 8, middle paragraph, where we see how God sent men and women from every continent to America to bring "the common contributions of character, energy and activity to the support and enlargement of a common country, and the spread of its influence and enlightenment through all the lands of their origin."

READ in *T & L*, last paragraph page 43 and page 44, how each race and each nation have contributed to America.

3. The Principle of Representation

CHOC I, pages 10-16
See also, *T & L*, pages 317-323

Connecticut's Founder, Reverend Thomas Hooker, preached a sermon on market day, May 31, 1638. Reverend Hooker identified God's Biblical principle of representation and his sermon known as the "Fundamental Orders of Connecticut" became the basis of our first Colonial Constitution.

READ FOR YOURSELF: *CHOC I*, pages 248-257. The Connecticut Republic was an early model for the Constitution of the United States of America.

4. The Republicanism of Christianity

CHOC I, pages 16-28 See also, *T & L*, pages 314-331

The churches of primitive Christianity were "little republics." They were local institutions, each responsible to Christ. But lack of vigilance allowed centralization to gain a foothold, and many centuries passed before the English Pilgrims sought to recover the Primitive Gospel and throw off anti-Christian bondage.

Christian Principles Produce Local Self-Government. Every religion represents a form of government. "Christianity in its essence, its doctrines, and its forms is republican."

5. Christian Rights and English Law

CHOC I, pages 28A-36 See also, *T & L*, pages 332-342

For centuries God's Word was locked up in scholarly languages. In order for the individual man or woman to learn God's Principles of liberty, it was necessary to be able to have the Word available in a language they could learn how to read. In England, John Wyclif, the "morning star of the Reformation," translated the Bible into English. For 200 years the English Bible became a textbook of liberty - and our

English Heritage of law, language, and literature, was an outgrowth of Englishmen becoming "the people of the Book."

In the early 1600s the English Colonists brought the Bible to America where it became our educational and political textbook of God's principles of liberty. God had reserved America for a Bible-reasoning, Bible-writing people who would educate their children and write their documents of government according to Gods Word.

6. The Bible in English

CHOC I, pages 37-50 See also, *T & L*, pages 343-352

Our Lord taught us "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Liberty begins internally, but it must have its external expression. Freedom from sin—salvation—also includes governmental liberty. Christianity brings self and civil liberty. Because the Bible had always influenced England, even before it appeared in the language of the people, the Christian idea of man was evident in the early days of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman England. So, it is not surprising that England's most important piece of paper, the Magna Charta, or Great Charter, the first governmental expression of the rights of Englishmen, appeared in 1215 a.d. It would take centuries before this declaration became the basis of our American Bill of Rights.

Religion played a role in government, too. But the Puritan Politics of the seventeenth century was unsuccessful in endeavoring to "regulate" the behavior of men by law. The Pilgrim took reformation upon himself and separated from the state church to form the independent self-governing church, in England, in Holland, and finally in America.

7. Principles of Christianity and Government

CHOC I, pages 372-3900; 50A-125 See also, *T & L*, pages 353-362, "A Biblical-Political Index to John Locke"

CHOC I, pages 372-390, show how America connected "the principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity." The Bible became "the great political textbook of the patriots," page 375.

American Christians were a reading-reasoning-writing people. They studied the philosophers of liberty—researched Biblically the principles of liberty. John Locke was called the Philosopher of the American Revolution. Our American pastors loved to study his writings on life, liberty, and the protection of individual property and productivity.

In the "Biblical-Political Index to John Locke" you will see how we came to some of our most important ideals for American government, and you will discover their Biblical source:

"A state of liberty is not a state of license." Virtue is a condition of liberty.

Man is God's Property.

Conscience is the most sacred of all property.

By consent were all men equal, till by that same consent, men set rulers over themselves. So that political societies all began by voluntary union.

The great and chief end and purpose of men uniting themselves into Commonwealths, and putting themselves under government, is the preservation of their property.

Learning to Reason with the Biblical Principles of Government

These SEVEN BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES first identified the Biblical Principles which were the foundation of our American Christian Constitutional Republic. They are also the Biblical principles by which God governs the individual to produce the Christian character which will support a Republic. These principles can be taught to the youngest child. Defined Biblically and historically in *T & L*, they key into the documentary *CHOC I*. This material is found in the "KEY" to each Principle.

The Seven Principles of America's Christian History from which we reason governmentally, are found on pages 63 and 111 of *T & L*. The first principle—GOD'S PRINCIPLE OF INDIVIDUALITY—is written large, for from it flow all the other principles. This is in essence the Christian Idea of Man being identified in the life and government of the individual. It is the goal which God has for all nations.

1. God's Principle of Individuality

T & L, pages 65-68, 113-117
KEY: Pages 141-183

We state this principle Biblically and then follow it historically. On page 154 of the KEY we find how this principle is illustrated in God's Word and the individuality of the writers He chose to bring His message to mankind. On page 155 we teach each individual the verse, *Starting With Me*:

Starting With Me
God made me special -
Like no one else you see.
God made me a witness
To His diversity.

What follows are points which illustrate the distinctions which God gives each individual He creates.

T & L, pages 156-183 provide an overview of the historical appearing of God's Principle of Individuality. It begins with the remarkable work of Arnold Guyot, Christian Geographer, who identified the Continents which God created for His Story to be Geographic Individuals. What a wonderful way to glorify our Creator as we teach geography from His Story of men and nations!

2. The Christian Principle of Self-Government

Pages 69-72 and pages 119-121 in *T & L* give the Biblical statement of the Principle and its Overview in *CHOC I*. Turn to the KEY of this principle on pages 184-209

Here you will find teaching information as this principle appears in America's *CHOC I*. On page 188 are two charts which begin to describe the action of a self-governing student at home or in school.

On page 189 we find those Pilgrim qualities of self-government which became to important to our nation:

Thrift - Economy
Industry & Initiative
Self-Reliance & Confidence

As we survey our Colonial History we can see how important Christian self-government became as God gave us 150 years of preparation in all the Colonies to become *one nation under God*, able to be self-governing.

3. America's Heritage of Christian Character

Pages 73-75 and 123-124 in *T & L*.
KEY: Pages 210-224

The Pilgrims of England who came to America, looked to the first century Christians for their model of character. From these early Christians they learned to practice the following qualities:

Faith & Steadfastness
Brotherly Love & Christian Care
Diligence & Industry
Liberty of Conscience

William Bradford wrote our first American Christian Classic in his account of the Pilgrims. Since he was a teenager himself and took part in so many of the Pilgrim adventures, his book is a moving Christian testimony to that character which became a model for our nation. You can read an excerpt from History 'Of Plimoth Plantation' in *CHOC*, beginning on page 182, with a contrast between Pilgrims and Puritans.

4. "Conscience Is the Most Sacred of All Property"

Pages 77-78 and 125-127 in *T & L*.
KEY: Pages 225-239

This statement by James Madison, Father of our Constitution, reflects our Biblical conviction that "we are the Workmanship" of God. We must have a "conscience void of offence" to God and man. And, as John Locke wrote, "consent is our title to conscience."

We can teach this principle to our youngest child in these words, found on page 230 of the KEY to this principle of Property:

*I am God's Property
God made me for His Purpose
He fashioned me to be
An image for His glory,
Almighty Father He.*

Our property is represented in our God-given talents and our use of them for the service of the Lord. We are also given the responsibility of stewardship - the care of all that God created. Property needs to be protected and preserved, and that is the "end and purpose of government." Only a Christian Constitutional Republic can properly preserve our rights of conscience as well as the external property which we have produced.

In our American History a turning point came when our Colonists took a firm stand for NO TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION."

5. The Christian Form of Our Government

Pages 79-81 and 129-130 in *T & L*.
KEY: Pages 240-249

Both the Law and the Gospel are foundational to America's Christian Constitutional form of government. Our Founding Generations looked to Deuteronomy 1:13,15 for the principle of representation:

"Take you wise men, and understanding and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you . . . captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes."

READ FOR YOURSELF in *CHOC I*, pages 248-251, how Pastor Thomas Hooker preached a sermon on these verses and this produced America's first Constitution, known as the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut.

The Separation of Powers, or the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial aspect of our governmental action, is found in Isaiah 33:22, "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king . . ."

How do we teach these principles of government to our youngest children?
Government begins with individual action. When the individual child or adult Christian plans some action—perhaps it is as simple as coming home from school or taking a vacation—he or she is in effect legislating.

Putting a plan into action is the executive function. And when we review our action, from both our internal conscience, or from the external law of the land, we are performing a judicial function. (*T & L*, page 244).

Determining what area of government is the supreme law of the land, we consider the State and the Nation which operate over the same territory. If we consider the two commandments of our Lord, we shall recognize that the supreme law of the land is the nation first, then the state. Thus when we travel outside our country, we are

not protected as citizens because we are Virginians, Californians, Arizonians, but because we are Americans.

The Pastors of America preached in churches, in the halls of government in their election sermons, for the artillery companies, on fast days and days of Thanksgiving. They taught Biblical principles of self- and civil government. Oh that we had such pastoral leadership today to clearly identify the force and power of government to be Christ in the life of the individual American.

6. How the Seed of Local Self-Government Is Planted

Pages 83-84 and 131-133 in *T & L*.

KEY: Pages 250-261

America's Samuel was Samuel Adams of Boston, who gave an example of uniting the American Colonies "not by external bonds, but by the vital force of distinctive ideas and principles." (*T & L*, page 257) His Committees of Correspondence prepared the Colonies to clearly understand Biblical principles of government so that they could take the proper action when these principles were threatened.

Samuel Adams taught the principles of Liberty under Law, once again beginning in the Christian character of each American. He wrote:

While the People are virtuous they cannot be subdued; but when once they lose their Virtue they will be ready to surrender their Liberties to the first external or internal Invader . . . If Virtue and Knowledge are diffused among the People, they will never be enslaved. This will be their great Security. (*T & L*, page 251)

7. The Christian Principle of American Political Union

Pages 85-87 and 135-136 in *T & L*.

KEY: Pages 262-268

Consistent with the Biblical principle that purpose and action begin within, our nation came together internally, two years before we declared our Independence as a separate nation under God. The occasion was the punitive action which England took against Boston, because the tea was dumped into the harbor in December of 1773—the well-known Boston Tea Party.

England discounted the Biblical education of our American Colonies. She expected that when she closed the Port of Boston on June 3, 1774, that the other colonies would take advantage of Boston's economic distress and grasp her trade. But instead, they began with a Day of Fasting and Prayer throughout the colonies. After that each of the other colonies sent aid to Boston. They gave not only prayer support, but sent food and other assistance, so that Boston could endure her economic blockade. The outpouring of loving help emphasized the internal unity. Externally, each colony appointed delegates to a First Continental Congress so that they might together determine their united action.

AMERICAN UNITY IS CHRISTIAN UNITY.

