

The Concept of Freedom by the Founding Fathers: Introduction: Cicero on the Decline of the Roman Republic; Why Study History?: The Founders' Consulted the Cultures of Jerusalem, Athens, Rome, & London when Debating the Declaration & Constitution; American Culture's Christian Foundation

The Concept of Freedom by the Founding Fathers

Thanksgiving Special - 2009

Introduction

The reason republics fail is because they get away from the concept of religion. In America, Christians are inculcated with the idea of home, family, and self-sufficiency – at least those who have biblical wisdom. No mature Christian believes it is noble to depend on the government or fellow citizens for assistance in times of personal crisis.

The mature Christian believes that, first of all, family members should help each other:

1 Timothy 5:8 - If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Following this, the body of the local church is to lend assistance to those truly in need. Members with the gift of helps that are led by the Holy Spirit assist people both inside and outside the church.

When government actively seeks to suppress Judeo-Christian principles in the nation's culture, a vacuum occurs which sucks in humanitarian ethics in order to deal with ever-present human problems. This aberration can only occur after the people have drifted away from the utilization of biblical problem-solving devices. Over time, as families deteriorate, people without doctrine seek nonbiblical problem-solving devices.

This deficiency is brought about due to the decline of orthodoxy in the churches where problem-solving devices are not taught. Those in the churches are no longer inclined to assist those who are legitimately in need, much less those who refuse to help themselves.

Consequently, the indigent, the ill, the lame, the blind, the handicapped, the disabled, and the vagrant must turn to government for aid.

Since government, by nature is antagonistic to the obvious Judeo-Christian solutions, it seeks to fill the void with what are called "social programs," or better put, the welfare state.

PRINCIPLE: The farther a society drifts away from biblical problem-solving devices, the more involved in socialism their government becomes.

Ultimately there will appear the master problem-solver around whom the people will rally for protection and security. Somewhere in the murky recesses of our nation's future history, lurks a person who will step out into the clear light of day. His name will be called Tyrant and he will insist on helping everyone.

Yet, there must always be those who love freedom more than life itself in order to hold Tyrant at bay. Such a person is called Patriot. Pacifist will, as is his trend, join in league with Tyrant in hopes of attaining security at any price. But in order for Pacifist to attain his prodigious dream, Patriot must prevail against Tyrant.

The major difference between Pacifist and Patriot is that the latter has the courage to fight for freedom while Pacifist cowardly opts for false security.

Peace is the by-product of courage under pressure. Freedom only comes to those who aggressively seek it; it only remains to those who diligently defend it.

U. S. Air Force General James Kellim has very succinctly stated the issue:

It is grace that we are born free; it is a privilege that we live free; it is a responsibility that we die free.

In order that we might have a more perfect understanding of the freedom we are privileged to enjoy, we are going to undertake an examination of the development of the mind-set that led to the colonials' decision to seek independence from England.

In the fading years of the Roman republic, Marcus Cicero observed the decline of public thought:

**The commonwealth of Rome is founded firm
On ancient customs and on men of might.**

—Ennius' \en'-ē-as\ *Annales*

Before our own time, the customs of our ancestors produced excellent men, and eminent men preserved our ancient customs and the institutions of their forefathers.

But though the republic, when it came to us, was like a beautiful painting, whose colours, however, were already fading with age, our own time not only has neglected to freshen it by renewing the original colours, but has not even taken the trouble to preserve its configuration and, so to speak, its general outlines. For what is now left of the “ancient customs” on which he said, “the commonwealth of Rome” was “founded firm”? They have been, as we see, so completely buried in oblivion that they are not only no longer practiced, but are already unknown. And what shall I say of the men? For the loss of our customs is due to our lack of men, and for this great evil we must not only give an account, but must even defend ourselves in every way possible, as if we were accused of capital crime. For it is through our own faults, not by any accident, that we retain only the form of the commonwealth, but have long since lost its substance.¹

The colors of our national picture are quickly fading from view. We need to take a detour — albeit unfortunately a brief one — into the archives of world history. We will seek to understand what concepts, principles, doctrines, and ideologies made up the inventory of ideas of our Founding Fathers. And once understood, hopefully energize a more thorough understanding of the uniqueness of this republic called the United States of America, thus brightening the colors of the national picture. We will chart the course of their thinking drawn from four major cultures that combined to form a tapestry in the souls of these men.

These cultures are represented by the four cities of Jerusalem, Athens, Rome, and London. The thinking of these four was amalgamated into the minds of the Colonials resulting in the birth of a fifth culture in Philadelphia.

¹ Marcus Cicero, *De Re Publica – De Legibus*, ed. G. P. Goold, trans. Clinton Walker Keyes, Loeb Classical Library 213 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 245, 247.

Why Study History?

You could not have made it here this morning were it not for history. Conceded it is a personal history, but history nonetheless. It was more than just knowing how to get here; there had to be motivation. And that motivation has its own unique history. The first day you went positive to doctrine was the first step on the road to this church this morning.

Many Bible classes have transpired and much has been learned, all working together to construct that motivation in your souls to be here at this moment. Erase that history from your souls and you are somewhere else today.

When the Colonists came to America in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they found they were vastly superior to the Indians they discovered here. The American Indian was easily defeated by the Europeans and what greatly contributed to that ease of conquest was the white man's knowledge of history.

The Indians had only a vague sense of history. They possessed no archive and had developed no written language. Some hieroglyphics have been discovered but not one tribe had advanced even so far as developing an alphabet.

The insurgent Europeans owned a precise history of their own and understood the writings of the ancients going back thousands of years. They conceptualized ideas such as the creation, Israel, the Incarnation, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Diaspora of A.D. 70, and anticipated the Lord's return.

This knowledge of the culture of Jerusalem was interwoven with an understanding of the cultures of Athens and Rome. And these three had merged to produce a forth culture based in London. This concept of history, and a confidence about their place in it, gave the English superiority over the Indians.

The Colonials had an awareness of their place in the divine decree; they knew they had a special purpose in life as individuals and a special destiny as a group. They built their houses with stone and brick were possible, a sign of permanence and stability.

On the other hand, the Indians had no sense of destiny; they had no attachment to the past and thus no sense of history. They therefore were nomads; their homes able to survive only a few seasons. After they had sapped the environment dry in one settlement area, they would pull up stakes and move on to another. They had no goal, no meaning, no purpose in life.

The Indians were a society but the English were a civilization. A society is a voluntary association of individuals having common traditions, institutions, interests, beliefs, and activities. But a civilization speaks of a high level of cultural and technological development in which writing and the keeping of written records is attained and includes the refinement of thought, manners, and social graces.

A civilization can be understood by observing the conditions which make such an advanced state possible. Peace and order must be established over a considerable area. All the peoples within a civilization do not have to be under a single government, but they must have a common and agreed upon means of settling disputes and interacting peacefully with one another.

Classical culture took shape in Greece between the sixth and second centuries B.C. and merged into the civilization of the Roman Empire between the first century B.C. and the fourth century A.D. Our Founding Fathers borrowed heavily from the government developed by the Romans. Their knowledge of democracy as observed by the Greeks and of the republic as practiced by the Romans was instrumental in their choosing the latter for America.

Athens was the leading city during the Golden Age of Greece. It was there that Greek architecture developed with its classical ideas of balance, proportion, and harmony, i.e., the Golden Mean.

One of the most important concepts to emerge from Athens was the idea that there is an order underlying all things in this world and that order is not made by man but for man. Greeks did not originate that thought. The Jews had done it earlier. But the Gentile world best understood the concept after the Greeks had expounded upon it, perceiving that this order was a natural order. This perception caused them to develop abstract thought on the essences of order which are not seen, felt, or heard, but which gives its character to all things.

The most important contribution of Rome to civilization was law. The Romans discovered a method of simultaneously governing a multiplicity of cultures at once. And the way they did it was by emphasizing above all else a basic system of justice.

The Romans called this the “law of nations,” or *ius natural*: “the natural law.” Of this natural law, Cicero said:

Law is the highest reason implanted in nature which prescribes those things that ought to be done and forbids the contrary. When this same reason is confirmed and established in men’s minds, it is then law.”

It is within this culture that Christianity began and later flourished. It is from this historical background that the Founding Fathers cobbled together our Declaration of Independence and Constitution.

The American Culture’s Christian Foundation

Christianity is a faith based on a written law and thus learning that information takes on special importance to the believer. Careful understanding of the meaning of words in their contexts is important to the Bible student. This emphasis is carried over into all aspects of life: books, documents, contracts, even declarations and constitutions. This was especially true of Reformation Protestants and they were the ones who settled and established the United States.

But the achievements of the Classical period were all but forgotten during the Middle Ages – that period of history between the fall of the Roman Empire in A.D. 476 and the Protestant Reformation in 1517.

This millennium was dominated by the Roman Catholic Church. Art, architecture, literature, music, and government took on religious motifs. But in the thirteen and fourteen hundreds, a series of poor popes signaled the decline of Catholicism.

The Black Plague ravaged Europe during the thirteen hundreds and severely disrupted the stable order of the Middle Ages. A decayed church offered no meaningful guidance. Stability was further threatened by the Hundred Years’ War between France and England.

Three things occurred almost simultaneously which turned the tide of human history: (1) Johannes Gutenberg \gü'-tan-berk\ invented the printing press with movable type circa 1450, (2) the Renaissance which was in its incipient stages at about the same time, and (3) the Reformation, begun in 1517 by Martin Luther.

The Reformers were opposed to the humanism of the Renaissance. However, there were two concepts they shared with this movement: (1) A dislike of medieval culture, and (2) the revival of classical literature.

The Protestants were motivated to research the old manuscripts of the Scripture in order to verify truth. The idea of going back to the original was one of the tenets of the Reformation. This is the attitude the early citizens of this country held toward the Constitution: loyalty toward the "original manuscript."

Thus the Renaissance and Reformation occurred simultaneously. But the former was idealistic and emphasized human attributes; the latter was theistic and emphasized divine attributes.

Where the Renaissance resulted in the French Revolution and chaos, the Reformation resulted in the establishment of the United States of America as a client nation.