



Exploring Government

Ray Notgrass

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Ray Notgrass

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Inside the North Carolina State Capitol Senate Chamber

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Columbia County Courthouse in St. Helens, Oregon

Introduction

*We must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill,
the eyes of all people are upon us.*

—John Winthrop,
from his sermon “A Model of Christian Charity,” given in 1630
to those who were about to establish the Massachusetts Bay colony

When Governor John Winthrop led his small band of settlers to the shores of America, he understood that the entire world would be watching the outcome of this experiment in the wilderness. As it has turned out, it was not just the people of that generation who watched. For almost four hundred years, the world has studied the American experiment in governing. In many ways the experiment has been a source of inspiration for learning how humans can live together in a civil society in peace and harmony.

The purpose of *Exploring Government* is to educate and inspire you concerning the government of the United States as well as the governments of the individual states and our local communities. We place special emphasis on the Biblical basis for government and on helping you appreciate the U.S. Constitution. We hope that you will come to understand the background, purpose, and operation of American government on all levels. We also hope that you will remain prayerful, thoughtful,

informed, and involved with regard to government throughout your life. We pray that you will be a better Christian and a better citizen as a result of studying this material.

The curriculum has three parts: *Exploring Government*, a 75-lesson text; *We Hold These Truths*, a volume of historic documents, essays, and speeches that you should read in conjunction with the lessons; and an optional Student Review Pack that has review questions over the lessons and readings, quizzes, and exams. By working through the entire curriculum, we believe that you will gain a good understanding of the purpose and function of government.

For this edition we have added the option of a half-credit for English/composition as well. A student can read four books related to government, read the literary analysis in the *Student Review*, and answer questions about the books. A student should also write an essay or complete another creative project every week.

We include historical information on government before the founding of the United States in 1776 and the formulation of the Constitution in 1787. Our purpose in doing this is to help you understand not only what government does but why our government came to be the way it is and why it does what it does. Ideas and events have causes. The American system did not just appear, nor was it inevitable. We have to understand the *why* in order to understand *what* and *how*. When you understand why things happen (1) you learn something about how events and ideas influence each other; (2) you are better able to discuss the subject with others, some of whom may not share your assumptions; and (3) you will be better able to bring about changes that need to take place.

Government is not the same as politics. Politics involve power: getting and maintaining power in government (which includes the election process), and influencing the actions and policies of government. Politics form governments, and people in government can be and often are political (concerned about power) in their actions. Government officials often make decisions based on the political impact that those decisions will have; namely, how popular those decisions will be with voters, which can affect their power. Government officials do not always make decisions by determining what is the best thing to do.

Government, on the other hand, involves defending the nation, building roads, operating schools, collecting taxes, and other practical activities. Since politics and government are two different functions, this explains why sometimes politicians who win elections and acquire power aren't good at actually governing and why the best government workers are not necessarily concerned about politics.

We need to understand the difference between what is and what should be. The Bible sets forth what government should be. The U.S. Constitution, state constitutions, and local laws have established how things should operate in our country. However, centuries of history show us that people in government do not always do what they should.

For example, for many years African Americans did not have the equal protection under the law that the Constitution guarantees. What existed was not what should have existed. Also, the federal government has in recent decades taken oversight of areas that were originally reserved to the states. It is not what should be, but nonetheless it is what is happening. When we describe what government does today, we do not mean to say that everything it does is right and what it should be doing. We try to point out the differences we see between what the founding documents say and what government actually does today.

God, the Creator of government, has given us a wonderful system of government in our country. The American system of government has provided the most personal freedom and the greatest economic opportunity for the most people of any government in history. The government that God gave to Israel in the Law of Moses was a wonderful system, but the Israelites did not carry it out well nor did it affect as many people as the American system has. Our government deserves our respect, our involvement, and our prayers.

At the same time, our governments (local, state, and national) have not always been the bright and shining city upon a hill that they should have been. Sometimes the people involved in government have done things that were embarrassing and wrong. When people in government commit wrongs, Americans and people in other countries can see it. We should help our country to be an example of truth, love, righteousness, and compassion.

I want to express my thanks to my wife, Charlene, who was the project manager for revising the curriculum; to our daughter Mary Evelyn, for her excellent graphic design of the covers and for her layout work with the text; to our daughter Bethany, for her editing work and for choosing the literature; to our son John, who developed (with Bethany's help) the new edition of *We Hold These Truths*; and to our son-in-law Nate, for his work on the *Student Review* material. I appreciate my family's support, encouragement, and assistance for this project.

Those of us who follow the Lord are citizens of the kingdom of God even as we live as citizens of the country in which He has placed us. God has already assured us that His kingdom will win in the end, regardless of the form that human governments take. May God bless us in doing good for His glory.

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June 2016
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Dedication

I dedicate this curriculum to my sweet wife and life companion, Charlene.

God brought us together when we were both work-study students in the Political Science Department at college.

Your study and work in Urban Planning gave us both a sense of what government is and what it should be.

Your heart for God has helped us both see what people should be able to expect from leaders in government and from governmental policies.

We have seen people and events in government that have inspired us and that have discouraged us. We have learned not to put our trust in princes.

You have selflessly served our family and others as we have worked on this curriculum. I especially appreciate your work in laying out the documents for the original edition of *We Hold These Truths*, your editing and improving the lessons in this edition, and working with Nate on the *Student Review*, the *Quiz and Exam Book*, and the *Answer Key*. I could not have done this without you. This is a much better publication because of your involvement. You are as much a part of it as I am.

*Many daughters have done nobly,
but you excel them all.
Proverbs 31:29*



Inside the Cochise County Courthouse in Tombstone, Arizona

How to Use This Curriculum

Exploring Government is a one-semester high school course that provides a half-year credit in government. Many states consider that to be one-half credit, but in states that assign two credits for each full-year of high school work, the course counts for one credit. With 75 lessons, you can complete the material in one semester even with field trips, testing days, and other activities.

Assignments. The curriculum clearly outlines what you are to do for each unit and for each daily lesson. We have put each day's assignments at the end of each lesson.

English Credit. The curriculum offers a half-credit in English as well, if you read the books and literary analyses in the *Student Review*, answer the questions on each book, and complete a project assignment for each unit. The curriculum will tell you when to begin a book and when you should finish it. It will also give you a choice of projects for each unit.

Readings in the Bible and in *We Hold These Truths*. The assignments at the end of lessons include the readings in *We Hold These Truths*. During Unit 1, you will be assigned readings from the Bible which

you can read from any translation. During Unit 4 through 9, while you are studying the Constitution, you will be assigned sections of the Constitution to read at certain times while you are reading an individual lesson. The Constitution begins on page 58 in *We Hold These Truths*.

Reading Your State Constitution. Unit 10 teaches about state government. During this unit, you will read all or portions of your own state Constitution. You can find a copy of it at www.notgrass.com/egov.

Student Review Pack. The optional *Student Review Pack* provides review questions over the lessons; a quiz at the end of each unit; and three government exams, each of which covers five units. It also includes literary analysis of each of the four titles we suggest that students read along with this course and questions over the books. The pack includes an answer key to all of these exercises.

You should allow one hour per day to read a lesson and any relevant documents and answer the review questions. You will need more time to complete the writing assignment, read the literature, and take the unit quizzes and the three exams.



President Calvin Coolidge with Native Americans Outside the White House, 1927

Assigned Literature

Units 1-4	<i>Mornings on Horseback</i>	David McCullough
Units 5-6	<i>The Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge</i>	Calvin Coolidge
Unit 7-11	<i>Born Again</i>	Charles Colson
Units 12-15	<i>God and Ronald Reagan</i>	Paul Kengor



Part 1: Backgrounds to American Government

1

The Biblical Basis of Government

- Lesson 1 - God Is the Author of Government
- Lesson 2 - Biblical Principles of Government
- Lesson 3 - The Influence of the Law of Moses
- Lesson 4 - The Bible on Leadership
- Lesson 5 - Government in the Bible

Image of Moses in the Wisconsin State Capitol in Madison

Introduction

God gave the institution of government to mankind, and He rules over it. The Scriptures teach us a great deal about what government should do and what kind of people the leaders of government should be. The influence of the Ten Commandments and the rest of the Bible on government and law in Western Civilization has been profound. The Bible frequently describes the practices of governments in Biblical times.

Books Used

The Bible

We Hold These Truths

Mornings on Horseback by David McCullough

Project (choose one)

1. Write 300 to 500 words on one of the following topics:
 - What characteristics should a leader in government possess? You might want to give Biblical examples and cite verses to support your ideas.
 - Explain the meaning of one of the Bible passages on leadership discussed in Lesson 4. Give examples of how that passage applies to life situations, real or hypothetical.
2. Create a photo slide show creatively illustrating the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17).
3. Memorize Romans 13:1-7.

Literature

Mornings on Horseback is David McCullough's highly-acclaimed account of Theodore Roosevelt's youth and early adult life. It tells the story of the fascinating and close-knit family into which he was born and the influences that shaped him as a man and as president. This book explores the making of a pivotal character in American history through the able hands of McCullough, an excellent writer, historian, and storyteller.

See page 11 in the *Student Review* for a note about the author.

Special Assignment

You will read several Bible passages while you study the five lessons in this unit. They will be assigned at appropriate times. You may read them in any translation you choose.



Ruins of the Forum in Rome, Italy

Lesson 1

God Is the Author of Government

Any man who has been placed in the White House can not feel that it is the result of his own exertions or his own merit. Some power outside and beyond him becomes manifest through him. As he contemplates the workings of his office, he comes to realize with an increasing sense of humility that he is but an instrument in the hands of God.

—Calvin Coolidge, Autobiography

From community elders sitting in the city gate settling disputes to nations of the world working together to prevent war under the aegis of the United Nations, government has been a part of man's existence from early in the story of Genesis to the present time. Government has taken many forms through the centuries, including absolute monarchs, participatory town meetings, rule by a powerful elite, and representative republics.

Despite its many forms and the various functions that governments perform, the idea or institution of government has a single, clear beginning. Human government originated with God. It was His idea. He intended it to serve His purposes in the human realm.

Romans 13 contains the most direct and extensive teaching in Scripture about the purpose of human government and the Christian's relationship to it.

Paul wrote Romans to try to settle problems that had arisen in the fellowship of believers in Rome. To understand Romans 13 in context, we need to

understand the historical setting and the message of the letter as a whole. This setting involves many aspects of the working of the Roman government. Read Romans 13 now in your Bible.

Historical Background of Romans 13

We don't know for sure how the church began in Rome. Many people believe the tradition that Peter founded the church there, but we have no solid evidence supporting this idea. The "visitors from Rome" who were in Jerusalem on Pentecost (Acts 2:10) might well have become Christians and taken the gospel back to the capital of the empire.

The city of Rome had a Jewish section, where most Jews in the city lived because of Roman prejudice against them and because of the Jews' own desire for self-preservation. No doubt these new believers began telling their Jewish friends about the good news of Christ that they had come to believe.

When this happened, some people accepted the proclamation of the gospel and believed but others



Statue of Emperor Claudius in Vatican City

violently opposed it. The Roman historian Suetonius tells us that the emperor Claudius ordered all Jews to leave the city in 49 AD because of disturbances in the Jewish section related to “one called Chrestus.” Chrestus was probably Suetonius’ misunderstanding of the name “Christus” or Christ. Claudius probably issued his edict because of disturbances over the teaching of Christ. Acts 18:2 mentions the edict of Claudius as the reason why Paul met Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth.

When Claudius died in 54 AD, his decree died with him; so many of the Jews who had formerly lived in Rome returned to their homes. These returnees included Jewish Christians such as Aquila and Priscilla. When the disciples returned to Rome after a five-year absence, they found a church that was ethnically Gentile. Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians often did not get along well in the

early church. This conflict mirrored the clashes and suspicions that Jews and Gentiles had about each other in society at large. Paul addressed the same issue in Ephesians 2:11-22.

Paul’s central purpose in writing to the Christians in Rome around 55 AD was to encourage these Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians to get along with each other (Romans 15:5-13). In that context, one issue he addresses in the letter is the Christian’s relationship to the government. This was apparently a major issue for the Christians in Rome.

We can understand why the Jewish Christians in Rome might not have had much respect for the Roman government. These Christians had, after all, given allegiance to the true Ruler of the universe. They might not have felt any necessity to obey a mere pagan emperor. Besides, the Roman government had executed their Lord and had ordered the Jews to leave Rome. How could Christians respect such a government?

Gentile Christians might not have respected the pagan government either, now that they worshiped the one true God. However, Gentile believers might not have seen allegiance to a temporal ruler as competing with loyalty to God. Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians might have used their different perspectives on government as another excuse to be in conflict with each other.

Whatever the situation among Christians in Rome might have been, Paul felt a need to address the issue.

The Message of Romans 13: God Is Sovereign Over Government

In Romans 13, Paul says that God created governmental authority (Romans 13:1). He goes on to say that government “is a minister of God to you for good” (Romans 13:4) and that “rulers are servants of God” (verse 6).

This is in harmony with what the Bible says in many places about God’s sovereignty over human government. In other words, God is sovereign. He rules the rulers.

Since God rules over the whole world, He “removes kings and establishes kings” (Daniel 2:21). In His working with Israel, God at various times raised up Moses, Joshua, the judges, and eventually King Saul, followed by the dynasty of David. In addition, Isaiah described the pagan Persian emperor Cyrus as God’s “anointed”; in other words, Cyrus was the leader whom God raised up to bring about His purposes in the world and especially for Judah (Isaiah 45:1). In her song of rejoicing, Mary said that God “has brought down rulers from their thrones” (Luke 1:52). Jesus told Roman governor Pontius Pilate that he would have no authority at all if God had not given it to him (John 19:10-11).

God is sovereign over all the governments of the world. However, not every government leader or official always obeys God. Governmental authority is from God, but the people who serve in government are human sinners who sometimes abuse the authority that they have.

One important lesson for us in this is our need to realize that when someone comes to power with whom we do not agree, it is not the end of the world. Christians can still be faithful and can still advance the kingdom of God even under an unfriendly government. Christians have lived with this situation in many times and places, and some continue to do so today. Moreover, we can have reassurance knowing that the day will come when that antagonistic government leader will no longer be in power; but Jesus will still be Lord.

Paul goes on to say that God instituted government to carry out two important functions: to preserve order and to provide physical security for those living under it. Government carries out these functions by encouraging the doing of good and punishing those who do wrong (Romans 13:3-4).

What’s a Christian to Do?

Since government authority is from God, Paul tells the Christians in Rome that God’s people are to be in subjection to government (Romans 13:1). Whoever resists government is doing wrong because he or she is resisting God (Romans 13:2). Christians should do what is right, pay their taxes, and give honor to whom honor is due (Romans 13:3, 7).

Paul’s teaching in this passage is part of the emphasis in the New Testament which says that Christians are to respect and obey the government under which they live. Jesus taught His disciples that they should pay their taxes to Caesar (Matthew 22:15-22). Peter told his readers to submit to kings and governors (1 Peter 2:13-17). Paul urged believers to pray for “kings and all who are in authority” (1 Timothy 2:2).

Scripture commands Christians to have this attitude of submission even though the government

During times of persecution, early Christians used a fish symbol to mark meeting places and tombs. Christians carved the symbol below on the wall of a cave chapel in Pittenweem, Fife, Scotland in the 600s.



of first century Israel decided to do away with the innocent Son of God, and even though the Roman government endorsed and carried out His execution. Government authorities arrested Peter and John and put them in prison (Acts 4:1-3). Paul suffered repeatedly at the hands of government officials (Acts 13:50, 14:5-7, 16:22-24, 18:12-17, 23:1-2; 2 Corinthians 11:23-25). Taxes that Christians paid funded governments that were officially pagan and that engaged in ungodly activities. In spite of all this, the basic teaching of Scripture is for Christians to respect and obey their government.

This is the Christian's responsibility, even though our chief loyalty is to Another. Jesus—not Caesar, not the president, not the state, not any political party—is our Lord. A Christian's most important citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20), regardless of the nation in which a Christian lives and regardless of its form of government. As Jesus put it, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Jesus' primary interest is not material or political but spiritual, the arena of the most important truths and the arena of eternal realities.

Christians live in this world as aliens and strangers (1 Peter 2:11). In other words, we live here but we don't belong here. Christians live in a constant state of tension, being in the world but trying not to be part of the world. We have a responsibility to the civil government because our obedience to it says something about who we are in Christ (1 Peter 3:13-16). We respect government because it is God's agent for maintaining order and because in doing so we demonstrate an attitude of trust in God regardless of our physical circumstances.

What About an Ungodly Government?

Christians have no guarantee from God regarding the kind of government under which they will live or that only good people will hold government office. Nevertheless, a Christian can be faithful to God regardless of the form of government under which he lives.

To be sure, in one sense it is easier to be a faithful Christian in the United States with its freedoms than in Communist China with its restrictions and oppressions. However, it is also true that the threat of government persecution, such as that which exists in China, can produce Christians who are truly committed to following God faithfully, while the freedoms of the United States can result in lukewarm or cultural Christians who become lax in following Jesus.

Whatever the political situation might be, God is in charge. He knows each person's heart, and He also knows how each person is utilizing or abusing the freedoms and opportunities that he has.

"We Must Obey God Rather Than Men."

Generally speaking, then, the Bible says that Christians should obey the government; but there is one exception. The exception that the Bible addresses is a situation in which the governmental authority commands believers to do something that is a direct violation of what God commands. In such a situation, as Peter and the other apostles told the Jewish authorities, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

When Christians do not stand firm in the face of ungodly government directives, we cave in to the world and compromise our faith. Peter and the other apostles stood firm before the Jewish authorities and won a great victory (Acts 5:41). Stephen also stood firm before the governing authorities when they arrested him. He paid with his life, but his stand for what was true and right won a victory in the Lord's eyes (Acts 7:54-60).

Even though Christians must put obeying God above obeying men, believers must be careful when assuming a stance of defiance against the government. We cannot disobey simply because we don't like a particular law or a particular head of state. In general, Christians will usually further the cause of Christ more by being obedient to governmental authority than by being disobedient and rebellious against it.



Stoning of Stephen, Church of St. Matthew in Stitar, Croatia

Paul's point in Romans was that the Christians in Rome needed to be subject to the government and not let their different perspectives about the government become a source of division among themselves or a reason for the pagan government to persecute them as troublemakers. Government has its proper role, Paul says, and Christians need to respect this.

Obedience in a Representative Government

The Christian's relationship to the government is an issue that we continue to face today. Christians

still have to deal with governments that follow ungodly policies and with government leaders who do not seek to do God's will.

The most direct application of Paul's teachings about government is in a monarchy or an empire, since that was the form of government under which Paul wrote his letter. The Bible does not directly address how a Christian should be involved in government if he lives in a democracy or in a country that has some form of representative government. In these cases we have to draw inferences from Scripture and make applications of its principles.

God is the author of government, so He is the author of republics and democracies just as much as He is the author of monarchies. Americans live under a government that officially guarantees freedom of speech. We choose our leaders by free elections that follow political campaigns. Christians can respect those who hold positions in government even while speaking and campaigning (respectfully) against them and their policies. We can respect government authority even while working to make things better by campaigning for one candidate over others. This respectful but committed and prayerful dedication to what is good can bring about positive change in a society. Christians are to be zealous for good deeds (Titus 2:14) and are to be salt and light to bring people to Jesus (Matthew 5:13-16).

Our Need to Study Government

Government is from God. Scripture commands Christians to be obedient to government and respectful of governmental authority as God's agent. However, in some circumstances Christians must choose between obeying God and obeying men. The moral and spiritual tension of being in the world but not of the world, of trying to live for God in societies run by men, creates our need to explore the nature of government and to understand a Christian's relationship to and involvement with that government.

Nebuchadnezzar, the pagan king of Babylon, recognized that God is the ruler of all mankind.

*[Nebuchadnezzar] was given grass to eat like cattle,
and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven
until he recognized that the Most High God is ruler
over the realm of mankind
and that He sets over it whomever He wishes.
Daniel 5:21b*

Assignments for Lesson 1

We Hold These Truths

Read the "Preamble of the Frame of Government in Pennsylvania" by William Penn, pages 1-3.

Literature

Begin reading *Mornings on Horseback* by David McCullough. Plan to be finished with it by the end of Unit 4.

Project

Choose your project for Unit 1 and start working on it.

Student Review

If you are using this resource, answer the questions for Lesson 1.



Rotunda Ceiling of the Pennsylvania State Capitol in Harrisburg

Lesson 2

Biblical Principles of Government

Our Constitution was designed only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other . . . Free government rests upon public and private morality.

—John Adams

Although the Bible is not a textbook on government, it is the Textbook on life; and human government is part of life. We can learn a great deal in the pages of Scripture about what government should be and what a citizen's attitude toward the government should be.

Personal Government

*He who is slow to anger
is better than the mighty,
And he who rules his spirit,
than he who captures a city.
Proverbs 16:32*

One definition of the verb to govern is “to control, direct, or strongly influence the actions and conduct of” (*Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1965, s.v. “govern,” page 361). Before people began to use the word almost exclusively in relation to the sovereign authority of a country or political subdivision, people used the word in several

different contexts. A person sometimes spoke of governing one’s emotions, for example.

Using the word in this personal sense, the most important human government is that which takes place within a person’s own heart and mind. If a person chooses not to live by self-control and submission to the rule of God, his life will be a failure regardless of the form of political government under which he lives. He will not be a free man under God because he will be a slave to his passions and sins. Jesus asked, “For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?” (Luke 9:25). Ruling the entire world is not worth as much in God’s eyes as being under the rule of God.

Because people do not always govern themselves well, society needs the institution of government for the common good. Even so, the external controls of government cannot accomplish what a person can do within himself. For the institutions of government to work, individuals must practice self-government. This means that individuals must first respect God, then themselves and other people. With that

attitude, they will respect government, even if they differ with government officials over specific issues and policies (see Exodus 22:28).

The Worth of the Individual

One principle which runs through both the Old and New Testaments and which has influenced our law and government is the worth of the individual. God made humans in His image, a fact which gives persons immense worth (see Psalm 139:13-16). Persons are so worthwhile, in fact, that Jesus became one of us and died for us on the cross (John 3:16).

Societies and cultures have often failed to respect this principle. Many times those in power have viewed people as little more than objects for them to use for their pleasure or convenience. Those of the ruling or upper classes have often seen themselves as worth more than those of the lower or slave classes. Some in the lower classes have agreed with this appraisal. But the true value of the individual as taught in the Bible has influenced American government from the days of the colonies. Our country's founders said that the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness were unalienable, that is, something that no government could deny a person because of the innate identity and worth that God bestows on persons.

Although America's leaders and our founding documents have espoused this principle, our government has not always practiced it. For instance,

Statues of nine African American students who led the way in desegregating Little Rock Central High School in 1957. The statues stand on the grounds of the Arkansas State Capitol in Little Rock.



in the early days of our nation, which began on the principle that all men are created equal, only free white males who owned property could vote in elections. Over time the government has extended the right to vote to include all males, then blacks, and then women, as American society recognized and applied more completely the Biblical principle of the value of all individuals.

One principle of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s was that government on all levels in the United States should protect the innate value of the individual human being regardless of his race. Even though government has not always defended this principle consistently, it has been a motivation for justice in American society whenever Americans have been willing to lay aside their prejudices and follow God's intention for all people, whom God made in His image.

The Purpose of Government: To Do Justice

According to the Bible, leaders have a responsibility to see that government does what is right and just. Government should provide justice for all and especially for those who do not have the money or social position to get their way. Isaiah proclaimed to both the rulers and the people of Israel:

*Cease to do evil,
Learn to do good;
Seek justice,
Reprove the ruthless,
Defend the orphan,
Plead for the widow. Isaiah 1:16b-17*

Later, Isaiah said,

*Woe to those who enact evil statutes
And to those who constantly record
unjust decisions,
So as to deprive the needy of justice
And rob the poor of My people
of their rights. Isaiah 10:1-2a*

The prophet Amos told the people of Israel, “Hate evil, love good, and establish justice in the gate” (Amos 5:15a). This is probably a reference to the gate as the place where the elders sat and settled disputes. Amos went on to say, “Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24).

These passages teach us that (1) justice is something above the whims and personal preferences of those in power, (2) the people of Israel had rights that their government was to protect, and (3) those who held power in government were to use their positions for good and not for evil.

Israel and Judah fell because of the sin and idolatry that were rampant in their cultures. The kings of Israel and Judah should have followed the Lord and stood against the moral and spiritual failings that were taking place. Instead, with very few exceptions, the kings were the leaders in these failings. As a result, they did not ensure justice for the people, and especially for the poor. This uncaring attitude toward the poor spread throughout their

society. This demonstrates the truth of the idea that as the leaders go, so goes the nation.

A Ruler's Limitations

The concept of the divine right of kings developed in Europe in the late Middle Ages. This doctrine held that the powers of a king were absolute and thus no one should challenge his decisions. The theory held that, since God had put this person in his position, no one should question his actions or authority.

As we have indicated, the Bible teaches that God raises up leaders and it teaches Christians to obey government. However, the Bible does not teach that a ruler is infallible. On many occasions the Bible describes the failings of those who ruled. The Scriptures mince no words in describing the failures of Saul, David, Solomon, Ahab, Manasseh, and other kings of Israel.

Statue of Lady Justice in Frankfurt, Germany



A dynasty is not permanent. Proverbs 27:24 says, “For riches are not forever, nor does a crown endure to all generations.” The testimony of Scripture endorses this truth. Solomon, the author of most of the book of Proverbs, was the second king of the house of David. David’s family held the throne only because the first dynasty, that of Saul, ended after one generation. David’s son Solomon became king after him. After Solomon’s death, his son lost control over most of Israel when his harsh policies drove the Northern Kingdom into rebellion. Over a period of about two hundred years, the Northern Kingdom saw much political instability and several different royal families.

The ruler of a nation might appear to be invincible, but his life will end one day and he can have no guarantees that his descendants or his hand-picked successors will always rule. The lesson of history is that nations experience many changes of government over the years. Indeed, a crown does not endure to all generations.

Thus Psalm 146:3 warns, “Do not trust in princes, in mortal man, in whom there is no

salvation.” Rulers are fallible. People cannot trust poor rulers, and even good rulers can disappoint people from time to time. Rulers are also mortal and will not always be around. We should not look to rulers for our salvation. For that precious gift we must look only to God.

Biblical Principles

From the Bible we learn the importance of personal government. The Bible’s emphasis on the worth of the individual underlies the principles and practices of American society and government. Also from the Bible we see that government should be devoted to doing justice and not to satisfying the desires of those who hold power. We also learn that rulers are fallible and mortal and thus we should not look to human beings as our ultimate guide. Knowing and applying these Biblical principles will strengthen our American system of government and the American people.

Leaders of government should set the example in following this principle from Proverbs:

*Righteousness exalts a nation,
but sin is a disgrace to any people.
Proverbs 14:34*

Assignments for Lesson 2

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| We Hold These Truths | Read “Can We Be Good Without God?” by Charles Colson, pages 4-10. |
| Literature | Continue reading <i>Mornings on Horseback</i> by David McCullough. |
| Project | Continue working on your project for Unit 1. |
| Student Review | If you are using this resource, answer the questions for Lesson 2. |



Monument in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

Lesson 3

The Influence of the Law of Moses

Men must be governed by God or they will be ruled by tyrants.

—William Penn

An important foundation for American government, especially its practice of law, is the law code God gave through Moses as recorded in the Old Testament. The Bible has profoundly influenced our culture. For the most part, the founders of our system of government believed in God and in the inspiration and authority of the Bible.

The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments are the basic principles of the Law which God gave to Moses for the nation of Israel to observe. In these commandments we see the principles for life as God would have people live it. The following is a discussion of these principles as the Ten Commandments illustrate them. Read Exodus 20:1-17 now in your Bible, and consult this passage as you read the following paragraphs.

God is the basis for life. The Bible teaches that God is real, that He created everything, and that all people will give an account to Him for how they live. The existence of God and our dependence on Him are basic assumptions of American government

(for further discussion of this topic, see Lesson 14). Any foundation for government and society other than these truths constitutes a faulty foundation because any government built on a lie is ultimately unreliable.

Some things are holy. For instance, people should treat the name of God as holy; that is, special and set apart. In addition, God commanded the Israelites to keep the Sabbath day holy. Exodus 35:1-3 gives further detail on how God wanted the Israelites to observe the Sabbath as a day of rest. God declared some things to have special value. The point is that the Creator, not public opinion, determines the true worth of something.

God extended the identity of holiness to people. Humans, whom God made in His image, are a special part of God's creation (Genesis 1:26-27). God commanded the people of Israel to be holy because He is holy (Leviticus 11:44, 19:1-4). The New Testament teaches Christians to be holy in their lives because God considers them to be holy (1 Peter 1:15-16, 2:9). This distinctive worth and identity of humans is why government has always held taking a human life to be more serious than taking the life

of a dog or a tree. Troubles arise in government and society when those who hold power no longer see persons as being created in the image of God.

Honor family relationships. God told the people of Israel to respect their parents and to honor the marriage relationship. Other provisions in the Law of Moses support these aspects of the Ten Commandments (for example, Exodus 21:15, 17 and 22:16). God sees the family as extremely important in human relationships and in the life of a nation. American law and government have traditionally supported marriage and family relationships, but recent laws and court rulings have undermined the family. These changes include making a divorce easier to obtain, the trend toward giving schools the authority for training and educating children, and the acceptance of same-sex marriage. Any weakening of the family, either by accepted practice or by law, will weaken a society and its government.

Truthfulness is essential. Honesty is a crucial element of family and societal living. People must be able to trust one another if society is to operate well.

Monument Outside the Missouri State Capitol in Jefferson City



This is especially true regarding testimony that a person gives in a legal proceeding (see Deuteronomy 19:16-20). People must also be able to trust the truthfulness of their government officials.

Life is sacred. God is the giver of life, so it is not within man's rights to take another person's life in the act of murder. God gave the nation of Israel the authority to put to death those who committed capital crimes, and on occasion the armies of Israel took the lives of its political and spiritual enemies with God's approval. However, these were divinely-ordained situations for the good of the community. Personal hatred resulting in murder violates the sanctity that God gives to human life.

People must respect the property of others. It is not only wrong to steal; it is also wrong to covet (that is, to desire greatly) what belongs to another. The attitude of coveting leads to stealing. Coveting is the result of a person failing to appreciate and be thankful for what God has given him and instead focusing on and being jealous of what God has given to another. Everything ultimately belongs to God. However, the Law of Moses recognized personal property. Note the provision in Deuteronomy 19:14 against moving boundary stones. The Law provided procedures to follow if someone damaged or stole another person's property (see, for instance, Exodus 22:14).

The protection of private property is essential for a free and productive society. A farmer would have no incentive to work his fields if he knew that the government could seize his property at any time. A businessman would not want to invest in building a factory if the government could take it over without warning. An inventor would not develop a new product if he could not be sure of the protection of patent laws. The guarantee provided by the protection of private property encourages peace and economic prosperity in a nation.

Imagine a situation in which the government does not honor the truths of the Ten Commandments. Instead the society exalts their violation. People reject and ridicule God; public

opinion determines the worth of persons; people in general see life as cheap and as the result of mere materialistic forces; society downplays the family as unimportant; lies and deception are the rule of the day; the government can take property at the whim of an official, or a criminal can steal it with impunity. The result of such a society would be breakdown and chaos. A stable society cannot ignore the truths of the Ten Commandments.

Other Aspects of the Law of Moses

The goal of the Israelite court system was justice. Deuteronomy 16:20 begins literally, “Justice, justice, you shall pursue.” The Law of Moses commanded the Israelites to apply justice fairly, regardless of the accused person’s wealth or social status (Leviticus 19:15, Deuteronomy 24:17). The Lord did not allow bribes because bribes pervert justice (Exodus 23:8). The Law considered an accused person to be innocent until proven guilty (Numbers 5:11-28, Deuteronomy 13:12-15). God commanded that trials be fair (Exodus 22:7-9, Numbers 35:12). A conviction required the testimony of more than one witness (Numbers 35:30, Deuteronomy 17:6 and 19:15). The judges who enforced the laws and ruled on a person’s guilt or innocence had to be above reproach for the system to work (Deuteronomy 16:18-20). The Mosaic Law included other elements that were precedents for our system of justice, such as:

- Making a distinction between murder and manslaughter (Exodus 21:12-14);
- Prohibiting kidnapping (Exodus 21:16);
- Requiring justice and fairness for workers (Leviticus 19:13);
- Regulating business (Leviticus 19:35-36).

One aspect of the Law that was different from our practice involved the method of punishing



The words of the Ten Commandments adorn the outside of the chapel of New Harmony Inn in New Harmony, Indiana.

those who were guilty of crimes. Under the Law, wrongdoers paid fines (Exodus 21:33-34 and 22:1, 4, and 7), received beatings (Deuteronomy 25:1-3), and in some cases were put to death (Exodus 21:12 and Deuteronomy 24:7). Punishment was to be swift and sure. The Old Testament Law did not call for long prison terms that the American justice system practices today.

By contrast, a main feature of contemporary American justice is the handing out of prison terms to those convicted of crimes. Prison systems often do little to train inmates in a better way of living. As a result, the rate of recidivism (repeat offenders) under our system is quite high. In addition, the American justice system sees lengthy delays before trials, the practice of routinely shortening prison sentences handed down by judges and juries, and the inconsistent application of the death penalty. Many people believe that the American justice system is not doing a good job of punishing the



Ten Commandments Window in San Juan, Puerto Rico

guilty, rehabilitating those who want to change, or discouraging the spread of crime.

The specific laws and general principles of the Law that we have emphasized in this lesson have been significant influences on our American legal

system because they teach God's perspective on human life and human interaction.

When God prepared to offer a covenant to the Israelites, He stated this basic truth:

*Speak to all the congregation
of the sons of Israel and say to them,
“You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.”
Leviticus 19:2*

Assignments for Lesson 3

Literature Continue reading *Mornings on Horseback* by David McCullough.

Project Continue working on your project for Unit 1.

Student Review If you are using this resource, answer the questions for Lesson 3.



Interior of the Massachusetts State Capitol in Boston

Lesson 4

The Bible on Leadership

All persons possessing any portion of power ought to be strongly and awfully impressed with an idea that they act in trust, and that they are to account for their conduct in that trust to the one great Master, Author, and Founder of society.

—Edmund Burke

Those who hold positions of leadership carry a great responsibility. In many passages of Scripture, God teaches the importance of leaders being people of godliness.

The Character of a Leader

A leader should be a person of godly character. After God had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, but before He had given them the Law from Mount Sinai, Moses' father-in-law suggested a system by which people other than Moses could settle the lesser disputes among the Israelites. This would relieve Moses of some of the burdens of leadership. It also would enable him to concentrate on being the people's representative before God, teaching the Law to the people, and focusing on the more difficult cases (Exodus 18:17-27).

Moses was to choose judges who were "able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain" (Exodus 18:21). These characteristics

were essential so that the men selected would put God first, judge fairly, and not let bribes influence them. The men whom Moses appointed to these positions needed to possess these characteristics so that their judgments would be just and so that the people would respect their judgments.

In this incident God set the pattern for leadership that honors Him. God's main qualification for a leader is not his intelligence, eloquence, or appearance, but his character. A leader must above all else be trustworthy. He must possess a godly character.

If a leader has the right kind of character, he will deal with the situations that confront him in the best way possible. A leader does not know what decisions he will have to face as he fulfills the role of a leader. Many times, for instance, the key issues in a presidential campaign bear little resemblance to the crises that the winner of that election eventually faces in office. This is why the character of a leader is so important.



1571 Fresco of King David by Paolo Cespides in Rome, Italy

Relying on God and His Word

A leader should devote himself to God and His Word. In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses taught the people what they needed to remember after he was gone. In the last part of chapter 17, he told them what should happen when in days to come the people clamored for a king—which is exactly what they did (see 1 Samuel 8). Moses said that they should never place a foreigner over them and that the king should not multiply for himself horses, wives, or wealth. This kind of greed would corrupt a leader and turn him away from following God. The king was to write for himself a copy of the Law. He was to read from it every day. This exercise would force him to become familiar with the Law, and it would humble him and remind him of his dependence on God (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). Think about how different the history of Israel could have been if her kings had followed these directions and ruled according to God's wisdom instead of their own.

God's message through Samuel after the disobedience of Saul teaches us another important characteristic God wants in a leader. Samuel said that the Lord had sought out "a man after His own heart" to be ruler over Israel instead of Saul (1 Samuel 13:14). From that time forward, David has been known as a man after God's own heart. We know that David was far from perfect, but he was devoted to worshiping God and was contrite when the Lord convicted him of his sins. Because of the influence that leaders have and the example they set, people in positions of leadership and authority need to be persons after God's own heart.

Proverbs About the King

As Solomon compiled his collection of proverbs, he had a special interest in the characteristics that a king should possess and the failings that a king should avoid. The book of Proverbs is the wisdom that a father is passing on to his son, so the wisdom that it includes about a king had special significance for the heir to the throne of Israel.

In keeping with the central theme of wisdom in the book of Proverbs, personified wisdom here says that wisdom is so important that she is the key to how kings should rule. “By me [that is, wisdom] kings reign, and rulers decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, all who judge rightly” (Proverbs 8:15-16).

“A divine decision is in the lips of the king; his mouth should not err in judgment” (Proverbs 16:10). A ruler bears a weighty responsibility. Because God places a person in a position of authority, he should strive to speak the truth and to avoid playing favorites. The judgment of a ruler affects millions of people, but even when a ruler addresses one person he should speak the truth.

“It is an abomination for kings to commit wicked acts, for a throne is established on righteousness” (Proverbs 16:12). A position of governmental authority is a position of trust. God has entrusted that person with responsibility, and many people depend on him to do what is right and to set a good example. It is a sad betrayal of that trust when one in authority acts wickedly. The only way for an individual ruler or a dynasty to establish their rule firmly is by a commitment to righteousness.

“Excellent speech is not fitting for a fool, much less are lying lips to a prince” (Proverbs 17:7). This proverb is a comparison. One would not expect a moral fool to have much good to say. Even more inappropriate are lying lips that belong to a prince. A leader should be someone whom people can trust to tell the truth.

“A king who sits on the throne of justice disperses all evil with his eyes. . . . Loyalty and truth preserve the king, and he upholds his throne by righteousness” (Proverbs 20:8, 28). Here are four traits that help a king to have a secure and successful reign: justice, loyalty, truth, and righteousness. The Hebrew word for loyalty is *chesedh*, sometimes translated mercy. It is the closest equivalent in the Old Testament to the idea of agape love in the New Testament.



“Take away the wicked before the king, and his throne will be established in righteousness. . . . If a ruler pays attention to falsehood, all his ministers become wicked” (Proverbs 25:5, 29:12). These verses address the power and influence of a king’s advisers. The leader of a nation has many helpers and advisers. A modern U.S. president has literally thousands of people on his staff. If the king surrounds himself with good people, then his reign will more likely be one of righteousness. On the other hand, if a ruler establishes a pattern of doing wrong, he creates a culture of wrong that affects his entire administration. We have seen the wrong kind of aides weaken the effectiveness of a leader, and we have also seen leaders who set a tone of evil that negatively affected all those around them.

“A leader who is a great oppressor lacks understanding, but he who hates unjust gain will prolong his days” (Proverbs 28:16). A common failure of those in power is to use that power to crush all who differ with them. This might appear to be the

A shepherd leads his sheep in Ukraine.

way to ensure greater control over a realm, but it is actually a foolish policy that weakens a leader’s rule. The ruler who uses his office to help others instead of as a way to line his own pockets and eliminate any opposition will have a more effective and longer-lasting tenure in office.

“It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to desire strong drink. For they will drink and forget what is decreed, and pervert the rights of all the afflicted” (Proverbs 31:4-5). A ruler must be free of personal weaknesses that would compromise his ability to lead with justice and consistency and cause people to lose respect for him.

A Rebuke to the Shepherds of Israel

Ezekiel 34 offers a stinging rebuke to those described in the passage as the shepherds of Israel, that is, those in positions of leadership (kings, elders, priests, and others). These leaders should have taught and exemplified God’s way but they did not. This negative example is another instance



when the Bible teaches us how leaders should be and what they should do. Read Ezekiel 34 in your Bible now.

The shepherds of Israel should have been feeding the flock, but instead they had been feeding themselves (Ezekiel 34:1-2). They had taken the best of everything for themselves and had ignored the needs of those over whom God had placed them (verses 3-4). The shepherds had abused the sheep in their care, and the sheep had been scattered as a result of this lack of effective leadership (verses 5-6). As a result, the sheep (that is, the people) of Israel had become victims of attackers (verses 7-8).

The Lord declared Himself to be against the shepherds. He said that He would remove them from positions of oversight over His flock (verses 9-10). God Himself would seek out and care for His sheep. He would provide for them, and He would bring the failed shepherds to judgment (verses 11-22). Then the Lord would raise up a descendant of David to shepherd the sheep and to provide security for the sheep (verses 23-31).

It is not wise to cause God to be against you. Whoever gets into a conflict with God will always lose. The shepherds of Israel had failed the sheep that the Lord had placed in their care, and as a result the shepherds had failed God. God notices when His innocent sheep suffer, and He will not let the unrepentant guilty go unpunished.

Government leaders today hold positions in which they can do good in the name of the Lord. When they fail to serve the people and instead serve themselves, they betray the people but they also betray God; and God will not ignore their sins. When government fails to act as it should, it is not just a political or policy failure; it is a betrayal of the stewardship that God has placed in the hands of one group of people to serve others, especially those who do not have the power and influence to help themselves.

Leadership in the Church

The teachings on leadership in the New Testament deal mostly with leaders in the church; however, we can apply the principles of that setting to governmental leadership, too.

Jesus taught His disciples that the world's model of leadership would not work in the church. In the world, rulers lord it over their people and great men throw their weight around. In the church, by contrast, greatness comes by serving; and those who want to be first must be last of all. This was the model of leadership that Jesus Himself set (Mark 10:41-45). Many government leaders are true servants. Others in government claim to be the servants of the people, but their actions say otherwise. We need elected officials who see themselves first as servants, not as masters.

In two separate passages, Paul gives instructions about the characteristics which elders should possess. The terms pastor and bishop refer to the same position (1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9). The key attribute in both passages is that elders must be blameless or above reproach. This does not mean that they have to be sinless, but it does mean that there must be no outstanding negative characteristic that people associate with that person. Each list gives other characteristics that an elder must possess, such as not quick tempered, not given to much wine, not belligerent, not driven by greed, and so forth. These traits simply explain what Paul means by being above reproach,

In addition, each list reveals the importance of the leader's family life. He must be devoted to his wife and must have children who are faithful and respectful. As Paul notes, "If a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?" (1 Timothy 3:5). We can ask the same question about a potential leader in government. If he has not governed his own family well, how can we expect him to govern a city or a nation well?

Peter instructs church elders on how they should lead: not because they feel forced to do so but because they want to; not to see what they can get out of leadership but because they want to serve; not lording it over the flock but being an example to the flock (1 Peter 5:1-4). The “Do as I say, not as I do” style of leadership does not work in either a family, a church, or a society. This was one of the many failings of the scribes and Pharisees which Jesus pointed out in Matthew 23 (see verses 1-3). Like Ezekiel 34, Matthew 23 is a good lesson on how people in leadership positions are not to be.

Paul instructed Timothy not to let his youthfulness be a hindrance to his effectiveness as an evangelist. Instead, Paul told the young man to set the believers an example “in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity” (1 Timothy 4:12). How desperately we need leaders who will set a good example in these ways! A leader should be a positive

example; he should not simply make excuses for his poor behavior.

The characteristics of spiritual leadership are traits which all Christians should seek to possess. Every Christian *should* possess these characteristics, but a leader *must* possess them. If leaders do not have these traits, negative consequences will follow for those they lead.

Everyone has the responsibility to live well for God. Those who fill positions of public trust have the responsibility to serve others in the name of the One who is the Creator of government. Anyone who aspires to a position of leadership should understand the great opportunity and the great responsibility that such a position carries. God expects leaders to influence others for good and not to use their positions to serve themselves.

A person in a position of leadership should remember who his Ruler is:

*The king's heart is like channels of water
in the hand of the Lord;
He turns it wherever He wishes.
Proverbs 21:1*

Assignments for Lesson 4

Literature	Continue reading <i>Mornings on Horseback</i> by David McCullough.
Project	Continue working on your project for Unit 1.
Student Review	If you are using this resource, answer the questions for Lesson 4.



Ancient Statues of Egyptian Royalty at the Temple of Hathor

Lesson 5

Government in the Bible

History is in a manner a sacred thing, so far as it contains truth; for where truth is, the supreme Father of it may also be said to be.

—Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*

God accomplished His purposes for mankind through people who lived real lives in the real world. As a result, the Bible describes several kinds of human government in many different times and places.

Kings, Elders, and Judges

The first reference to a community is in Genesis 4:17, which describes Cain as building a city. The verse says nothing about the form of government the city had, but Cain was quite possibly its king because the earliest examples of government we know from history are city-states. In these a king ruled a city and its immediate environs as a small domain.

Archaeological evidence indicates that when the Lord called Abram to leave his country and family (Genesis 12:1-3), Chaldea and Egypt had fairly complex governmental systems in place, complete with monarchs and extensive bureaucracies. The first monarch that the Bible mentions is the pharaoh or king of Egypt (Genesis 12:15). A short time later, an alliance of local kings made war against another alliance of local kings (Genesis 14:1-10). Thus

we see that early in human history, the pattern of government was that of local monarchs.

Two elements of government developed in Israel before the scene at Mount Sinai where God declared Himself to be the Leader of Israel. First, Genesis 50:7 mentions the practice of having elders in a community and in a nation, both in the family of Israel and in Egypt. God told Moses to gather the elders of Israel and tell them that He had appeared to him (Exodus 3:16). Numerous references to elders occur in the Bible after this point. Elders in a community were

King David and Young Solomon Statue on the Temple of Christ the Savior in Moscow, Russia



not an elected body of representatives. Instead, the community recognized and looked to these men for wisdom and good judgment. Often these men were fairly wealthy. In their role as elders they gave advice, settled disputes, and guided the community in times of decision.

In Lesson 4 we discussed Israel's system of lesser judges. Apparently the judges themselves determined which cases they thought they could handle and which ones Moses needed to decide.

Mosaics of Moses and Samuel, Church of the Beatitudes, Israel



God as King of Israel

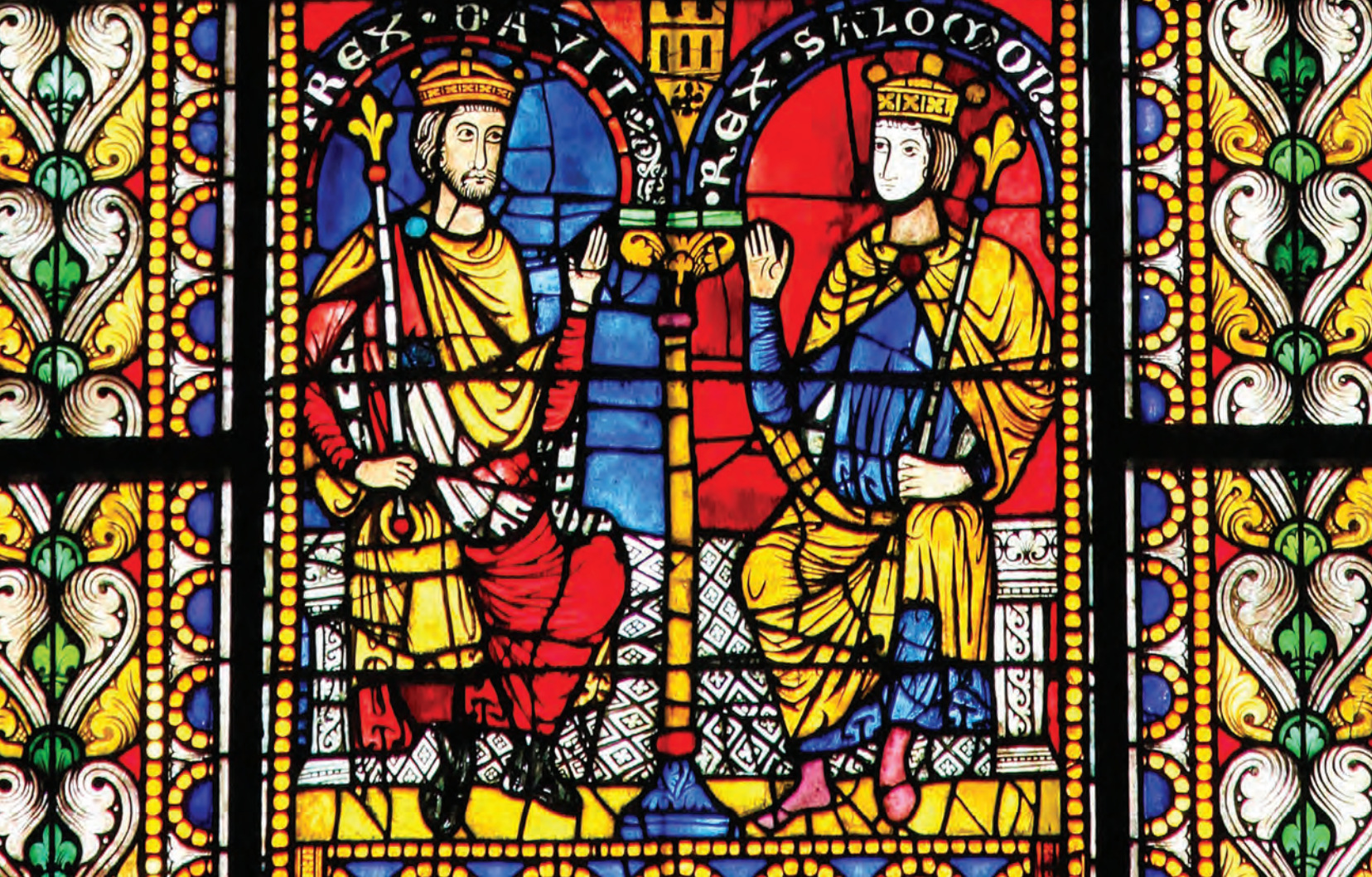
The people of ancient nations believed that they were under the oversight and protection of their own national god or gods. Kings claimed to be the servants (and in some cases the sons) of the gods. God's rule over Israel, however, was exceptional: God Himself was Israel's king.

God provided the foundation for Israel's government. When God called Israel to Himself to be His people, God initiated the covenant relationship He wanted with Israel (Exodus 19:1-6). No committee of Israelites drafted the covenant agreement. The people did have to agree to abide by it (Exodus 19:8), and they could have rejected it; but the initiative for it and the content of it were completely from God.

Moreover, God gave to Israel all of the laws which the nation was to obey as a result of this covenant. He created the system of justice which settled disputes (Deuteronomy 16:18-20, 21:5). He declared the punishments that the Israelites were to administer to those who violated the law (see, for example, Exodus 21:12-22:15).

God also chose the leaders for Israel. The Lord chose Moses to be the first human leader over all of Israel (Exodus 3:10). When some of the people rebelled against Moses' leadership, God saw their actions as rebellion against Him (Numbers 14, 16). Before Moses died, God appointed Joshua to be the next leader of Israel, the one who would lead the people into the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 31:23).

God guided the nation through its conquest of Canaan (Judges 1:1-2). From time to time, God raised up judges to lead armies that delivered Israel from foreign oppressors (Judges 2:16). The Bible indicates that the Israelites respected one judge, Deborah, so much that she settled legal disputes between Israelites (Judges 4:4-5). Eventually God raised up Samuel to lead Israel (1 Samuel 3:19-21). God's leadership of Israel is the true example of a theocracy, which means government by God.



The Israelites Demand a King

When the people demanded that Samuel give them a king, the Lord said that they were actually rejecting Him as king over them (1 Samuel 8:7). The people wanted a king—in other words, a dynasty—to rule them so that they would be like the nations around them (1 Samuel 8:5, 20).

However, the real problem was not with the system God had been using. The judges whom God raised up generally followed the Lord, and they usually defeated their enemies. The problem was that the people were not willing to submit themselves to God and to His way of providing leadership.

Ironically, by asking for a king, Israel gave up the real stability that comes as a result of God's direct leadership. They made themselves suffer all of the instabilities that come with human kings. Samuel warned them what would happen when a king began to rule them. Samuel told the people that the ruler would take their sons to serve as soldiers in his battles. Power and wealth would flow away from the

Stained Glass Window Depicting David and Solomon in a Cathedral in Strasbourg, France

people and to the king. They would eventually cry out to the Lord because of their folly, but the Lord would not answer (1 Samuel 8:10-18).

Having a king did bring changes to Israel, but stability was not one of them. Saul's tempestuous tenure gave way to the house of David, whose military exploits caused many sons of Israel to die in battle. David's son, Solomon, created a bureaucracy that involved placing deputies over all of Israel. This system supplanted the traditional tribal divisions (1 Kings 4:7-19). The people had to support Solomon's lavish lifestyle (1 Kings 4:22-28).

Then Jeroboam rebelled against the rule of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, and set up the separate Northern Kingdom. The Northern Kingdom saw constant idolatry, several royal assassinations, and a succession of dynasties. Even in the dynasty of David in the Southern Kingdom, most kings were unfaithful to God; and it experienced its share of

palace intrigues as well. God allowed Israel to have what it wanted—a king—but He also let them experience all of the problems that came with this form of human government.

Israel from the Captivities to the Roman Invasion

When the Assyrians invaded the Northern Kingdom in 721 BC and Babylon invaded the Southern Kingdom in 586 BC, the invaders removed the ruling kings from power. For centuries foreigners governed the area that God had given to Israel: first Assyria, then Babylon, and then Persia. The story of the Old Testament ends with Persia in control of Palestine.

During the period between the Old and New Testaments, Greece under Alexander the Great conquered Persia and assumed control of Palestine. When Alexander died, four of his generals divided up his kingdom among themselves. Of these, Ptolemy ruled Egypt and Seleucid ruled Babylonia and Syria. Israel became a buffer state between these two dynasties. Ptolemy and his successors ruled Israel first, and then the Seleucid dynasty did so.

In 168 BC, Jews in Palestine rebelled against the oppressive pagan rule of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes. This began the Maccabean Rebellion, led by the priest Mattathias and his sons, the most prominent of whom was Judas, called Maccabeus (the Hammer). Judas and his brothers threw off Seleucid rule. Judas died in conflict in 161 BC, but the family continued to rule the area for about a century. In 143 BC, Judas' brother Simon assumed the position of a king. Simon's son, John Hyrcanus,

Statue of Alexander the Great in Thessaloniki, Greece



succeeded him on the throne. The period after John Hyrcanus was a time of political infighting within the family and less effective rule by the dynasty. Seizing the opportunity, the Roman general Pompey invaded Palestine in 63 BC and claimed the land for Rome.

The Sanhedrin and the Government of Israel in the First Century AD

The most prominent governing body in first-century Israel was the Sanhedrin, which Jewish writers sometimes called the Great Sanhedrin. This ruling council had seventy members and met in Jerusalem. Lesser sanhedrins or councils met in other towns. According to Jewish tradition, the Sanhedrin had its origin in the seventy elders whom God told Moses to appoint in Numbers 11:16-17 to assist him in his work of leadership. A later tradition held that Ezra reorganized the council following the Jews' return from exile in Babylon.

It is important to remember two facts concerning the nature of the Sanhedrin's work and authority. First, the Jews were not concerned about separation of powers in government. The Sanhedrin filled legislative, judicial, and executive roles for Israel. Second, the Jews would not have understood a separation between religion and government. To them, their religion guided their government and their government was part of their religion.

In the first century, the members of the Sanhedrin came from prominent families. These men roughly corresponded to traditional elders. Another key presence on the council were the high priest (who apparently presided over meetings) and those who had formerly served as high priest. The Sanhedrin also included several scribes, whom Jewish leaders recognized as experts in the Law.

The Law of Moses required that the high priest be a descendant of Aaron. In Jesus' day the high priesthood was a political appointment that the Roman authorities made. The high priest was still a descendant of Aaron, but by the first century AD the Romans had plenty of Aaron's descendants to choose



Statue of a Jewish High Priest in Brussels, Belgium

from in order to find someone who was willing to support their rule. The high priest was usually a member of a politically powerful family, typically one of the families represented in the Sanhedrin.

Because of how the Romans controlled the high priesthood, several men were former high priests at the same time; and all of them wielded political influence. Annas had been high priest before Jesus began His ministry, and he saw five sons and a son-in-law hold the high priesthood after him (see John 18:13-14 and Acts 4:6). We can see the influence of Annas by the fact that, when the Jewish officials arrested Jesus, they took him first to appear before

Annas, and only then did they take Him before the then-current ruling high priest, Caiaphas.

The kinds of legal cases that the Sanhedrin heard indicate the council's role in Jewish society and religion. They heard the charge of blasphemy against Jesus (Matthew 26:57-66) and considered whether Peter and John had taught false doctrine (Acts 4). They conducted an inquiry into Paul's alleged violations of the Law (Acts 22-24). These were major charges that went to the heart of the identity of Israel and the authority of the Law, which the Sanhedrin claimed to uphold.

Ancient Jewish writings tell of the standard procedures that the Sanhedrin followed. The men sat in a semicircle. One clerk recorded the votes for acquittal while another recorded those voting for condemnation. In a capital case, members arguing for acquittal always went first. If a member of the council spoke for acquittal, he could not change his position; but if he spoke for condemnation of the accused, he could later reverse his stand. The benefit of the doubt always lay with the accused. Voting began with the youngest member and proceeded to the oldest, to avoid any undue influence by older members on younger ones.

Governmental power in first century Israel was a complicated, multi-layered maze. All local authorities served at the pleasure of the Roman Empire. Julius Caesar appointed Antipater, who was actually from Idumea, as procurator of Judea in 47 BC. Idumea was the area formerly known as Edom. The Roman Senate gave Antipater's son Herod the title "king of the Jews" in 40 BC. Thus Herod ruled

as a king; but he was only a petty, local king under the authority of Rome.

Herod's will provided for his three sons to divide his kingdom: Archelaus ruled Judea, Herod Antipas reigned over Galilee, and Philip received the territories to the northeast of Galilee. Archelaus was a terrible ruler, and Rome removed him in response to Jewish protests. The Roman government made Judea a province ruled by a governor. Pontius Pilate served as governor of Judea for ten years, 26 to 36 AD.

Rome had the final say on all actions that the Sanhedrin voted to take. For example, the Jews could not carry out a death sentence without Rome's approval; thus even though the Sanhedrin decided to put Jesus to death, Roman authorities had to give final approval and carry out the execution.

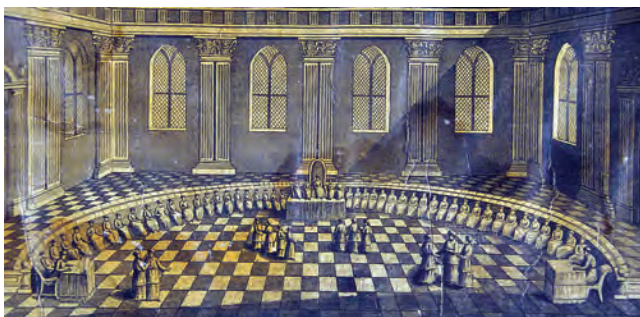
The Church and the Government

The early church came into conflict with governmental authorities almost from the start. We noted earlier the apostles' hearings before the Sanhedrin. The book of Acts portrays pagan government officials as usually having little interest in or concern about what the Christians were doing (see Acts 17:6-9, 18:12-17, 19:35-41). The leading officials in Philippi were even deferential to Paul and Silas since they were Roman citizens (Acts 16:35-39).

Paul used his Roman citizenship to defend himself from abusive treatment in both Philippi and Jerusalem (Acts 16:35-39, 22:25-29). In the United States today, everyone who is born in this country is automatically a citizen; but not everyone born in the Roman Empire was a Roman citizen. Citizenship was a special privilege that Roman law granted only to certain people under certain conditions.

Paul was born a Roman citizen (Acts 22:28), which meant that his father had been a Roman citizen before him. Citizenship was unusual for a Jew in the Roman provinces. Paul's father might have purchased his citizenship or he might have

18th Century Illustration of the Sanhedrin



received it for meritorious service to the empire. Paul's citizenship guaranteed him due legal process and a fair public trial, as well as exemption from certain forms of punishment (including beatings and crucifixion).

The Sanhedrin bitterly opposed Paul (Acts 23:1-10). Rather than appear before it again, Paul used his Roman citizenship before governor Festus to appeal to Caesar to hear his case (Acts 25:6-12). Neither Festus nor King Herod Agrippa (Herod's great-grandson) could understand what Paul had done wrong (Acts 26:30-32).

During Paul's ministry, Roman officials did not actively oppose the spread of the Way. By the end of the first century, the situation had changed. The Christian movement was successful enough and different enough to arouse official suspicion and opposition in Rome and in several other places in the Empire. Nero made Christians the scapegoat for the great fire that destroyed much of the city of Rome in 64 AD. He began active persecution of the church. According to tradition, Peter and Paul both lost their lives during this persecution under Nero. The emperor Domitian initiated another round of persecution in the 90s AD.

Believers Serving in Pagan Governments

In the Biblical record, believers sometimes served in pagan governments. Joseph rose to be second only to Pharaoh in his authority in Egypt (Genesis 41:40-44). Later, Moses grew up as the adopted grandson of the Pharaoh and thus people saw him as part of the royal family (Exodus 2:10). The king of Babylon and his chief official chose Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego "for serving in the king's court" in Babylon (Daniel 1:4). After the period set aside for their training, they "entered the king's personal service" (Daniel 1:19). Daniel was an important adviser to the Babylonian king.

Statue of Paul in Martina Franca, Italy



Nehemiah was “the cupbearer to the king” of Persia (Nehemiah 1:11). This was officially a role of personal service, but it was an important one. The cupbearer had the responsibility of making sure that an enemy had not poisoned the king’s food. Because this was a position of great trust, the cupbearer was often a close adviser to the king.

Esther became queen of Persia (Esther 2:17), and in that role she played a vital part in saving the lives of her fellow Jews. Her cousin Mordecai eventually became the king’s second in command (Esther 10:3).

The New Testament sometimes describes Roman centurions as men of faith (see Matthew 8:5-13 and 27:54, and the description of Cornelius in Acts 10). Sergius Paulus, a proconsul on the island of Cyprus, became a believer (Acts 13:4-12). Paul sent greetings to the Christians in Rome from “Erastus, the city treasurer” of Corinth (Romans 16:23). Archaeologists have discovered an inscription among the ruins of ancient Corinth which said that one Erastus, the “*aedile*” (a position which included the

responsibilities of city treasurer) laid the pavement of a road at his own expense. We have no way of knowing for sure, but it could be that the Erastus of this inscription was the Christian whom Paul mentioned in the book of Romans.

The Bible shows how God guides, works with, and sometimes intervenes against the works of men, including the work of human government. In Old Testament Israel, God established the government He wanted them to follow. They rebelled against His rule and created their own system, but God continued to accomplish His purposes through them. In the life of Jesus and in the story of the early church, we see the way of God standing in opposition to the powers of human government. Although those worldly powers seemed victorious in the short term, God promised that His way will be victorious in the end.

Jesus told His disciples beforehand that they would have to endure hearings before governing officials, but He assured them that those encounters would be a testimony to unbelievers.

*And you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake,
as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.
Matthew 10:18*

Assignments for Lesson 5

Literature Continue reading *Mornings on Horseback* by David McCullough.

Project Finish your project for Unit 1.

Student Review If you are using this resource, answer the questions for Lesson 5 and take the quiz for Unit 1.



2

The Idea of Government and Its Various Forms

Lesson 6 - Ways of Governing

Lesson 7 - Ancient and Medieval Monarchies

Lesson 8 - Athenian Democracy and the Roman Republic

Lesson 9 - Our English Roots

Lesson 10 - Birth of Enlightenment Philosophy

Segovia Castle in Spain, Residence of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella

Introduction

This unit focuses on the history of government. We consider what governments have generally done, the pattern of ancient and medieval monarchies, democracy in ancient Athens, the Republic of ancient Rome, British backgrounds to our American system, and the influence of Enlightenment thinking.

Books Used

We Hold These Truths

Mornings on Horseback by David McCullough

Project (choose one)

1. Write 300 to 500 words on one of the following topics:
 - Do all people have the right to be free? In his “City on a Hill” sermon, John Winthrop said, “God almighty in His most holy and wise providence, hath so disposed of the condition of mankind, as in all times some must be rich, some poor, some high and eminent in power and dignity; others mean and in submission.” On the other hand, one of the motivations stated by President George W. Bush for the war on terror was what he called the God-given right of every person to enjoy personal and political freedom. Is this freedom a Biblical right or is it drawn from popular modern thinking?
 - Describe the government you would establish if you were starting a country.
2. Make a poster illustrating and explaining the basic elements of the forms of government explained on pages 34-35.
3. Make a short video (one to five minutes) that creatively explains the forms of government explained on pages 34-35.



City Hall in Cardiff, Wales

Lesson 6

Ways of Governing

That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed . . .

—Declaration of Independence

What is government? What is the relationship between a nation (or a country or state) and government?

In terms of the nations of the world, a *state* is a sovereign country which has people living within a defined territory and which has the power to make and enforce laws. The United Kingdom is

an example of a modern state (we usually call such an entity a nation or a country, but state is another correct term). Northern Ireland and Wales, on the other hand, even though they have limited powers of local control, are parts of the United Kingdom and are not independent states.

A *government* is the institutions and laws, along with the people who make up the institutions and who enforce the laws, which have authority to direct

City Hall in Belfast, Northern Ireland



and control a state. Government is the agent through which a state exerts its will. For example, Congress, the Department of the Treasury, and the United States law code are all parts of the government of the United States.

Sovereignty

The critical question in determining the source of governmental power for a state is to determine who has *sovereignty* or supreme authority in that state's government. Sovereignty can reside in one person, such as a dictator or a monarch. In the United States, we believe that the people are sovereign; that is, we believe that the people have the ultimate authority in and for our government.

The Tower of the Juche Idea was completed in Pyongyang, North Korea, in 1972 to mark the seventieth birthday of the country's first president. Juche is the official state ideology of North Korea. According to the ideology, man is the master of everything and decides everything.



One way to determine where sovereignty lies is to ask this question: Does the government function by consent of the people, or do the people function by the consent of the government?

Forms of Government

A nation will have one of several forms of government.

In a **dictatorship**, one person leads the government, and his word is final. Since the end of World War II, North Koreans have lived under a dictatorship.

In an **oligarchy**, a small group of people leads the government. In the former Soviet Union, the Executive Committee of the Communist Party was a small oligarchy that held sovereignty. An oligarchy continues to rule China today. When a small group of military officers takes over a country and forms an oligarchy, it is called a junta.

In a **monarchy**, a king or queen leads the government. The monarch (from the Greek words meaning one ruler) is a member of a royal family who holds his or her position by recognized hereditary rights. In an *absolute monarchy*, the monarch holds absolute power. He is like a dictator but a dictator is not royalty. A *constitutional monarchy* is a government that has a monarch, but the law or constitution has sovereignty over the monarch and the state. Political revolutions destroyed much of the power of monarchs. Many countries established constitutional monarchies in their place. The United Kingdom (UK) is a constitutional monarchy. It has a monarch, but UK law gives the real authority of government to Parliament, which permits the continued existence of the monarchy. Throughout most of history, most governments have been absolute monarchies. Today, however, few countries in the world have a monarch who holds absolute power.

The most common form of government in the world today is the **republic**. In a republic, those who are able to vote have sovereignty. Elected representatives govern a republic. Republics have



Youth activists and children run with party flags to attend a political rally in Nampula, Mozambique, 2014.

either a *presidential* or a *parliamentary* government. In a presidential republic, voters choose the president directly (or, in the case of the United States, through the electoral college). In this form of government the president is both chief of state and chief executive. This chief executive carries out the practical responsibilities of government. He is not part of the elected national assembly and may or may not be of the same party as the majority party in the national assembly of elected representatives. In a parliamentary government, on the other hand, the chief executive is the prime minister, who is a member of the national assembly or parliament. When a party wins a majority of seats in an election for the assembly, the party leader becomes prime minister and chief executive of the government. Sometimes a coalition of several different political parties that together form a majority in the parliament choose the prime minister. Other members of the majority party in parliament become ministers or heads of the executive departments of government. Great Britain has a parliamentary form of government.

In the strict, classical definition, a **democracy** is a government of all the people (or at least of all the voters), all of whom take part in passing laws and in performing other aspects of government. The New England town meeting is an example of democracy. The residents of a town gather on a specified date

to consider passing, repealing, or amending its laws; and the vote taken at the meeting determines the outcome. The cantons of Switzerland practice a high degree of democracy. Citizens there vote in many referendums on whether to enact, amend, or repeal laws. The cantons have elected officials, but they usually do not serve for long periods of time. No country today is a pure democracy. Many countries in the world call themselves democracies when in fact they are republics. People use the word democracy today to mean “government by the people.” This term describes countries where people vote to elect representatives to their national assembly. The United States is sometimes called a democratic republic. The form of our government is republican, but we choose our representatives in elections which have a high degree of democracy. All adult citizens eighteen or older who have not lost their right to vote can participate in elections in the United States.

Words Versus Reality

Of course, things are not always what people claim regarding government. Some governments claim to be republics but the group in power controls elections so that their candidates always win. Communist China calls itself a “People’s

Republic,” but the people have no say regarding who serves in their government or what the government does. China has elections, but only one candidate is on the ballot for each office.

Mexico also has elections, but until recently the candidates of one powerful and wealthy party dominated the country, always winning both the presidency and a majority of the national assembly.

In some times and places within the United States, political bosses dictated who ran for office, who won, and what those elected officials did. Thus, the labels of republic and democracy do not always accurately describe the real-life practices within a given state.

Power, Influence, and Authority

Power, influence, and authority are three key terms that describe the operation of government. They are not the same thing and often the same people do not hold them.

Authority is an official position. Power is the ability to get things done. Influence is an informal role which someone uses to have an impact on what government does. For instance, a newspaper editor, a lobbyist, a special interest group, or an adviser might have influence on government policy, even though none of those persons holds an official elected position. On the other hand, in many small towns the mayor has a position of authority—that

The National Palace in Mexico City, Mexico, is the president's official seat of power.



Unit 2 - The Idea of Government and Its Various Forms

is, he or she has to sign a document for something to happen—but the mayor might not have much power to make things happen. The city council or the chief of police might have the real, practical power in such a situation.

It is a fascinating and often revealing study to determine where power, influence, and authority reside in a given government.

Government and Morality

God said that the purpose of government is to protect and encourage good and to penalize and prevent evil (Romans 13:3-4). God's Word defines good and evil from God's point of view, but governments declare certain activities to be good and acceptable and forbid certain other activities as unacceptable for the people whom they govern.

The basic functions of government include maintaining domestic order (matters within the state) and conducting foreign relations (relations with other states). A government may do whatever its source of sovereignty says it may do. In the United States, the people have set forth the functions of its national government in the Constitution. The fifty state constitutions set forth the functions of state governments.

An old saying claims that “You can't legislate morality.” This reflects the belief that government should not try to regulate personal behavior by passing laws. According to this view, government will not be able to outlaw effectively certain activities that people want to do, such as selling alcoholic beverages and participating in gambling.

In practical terms, however, all legislation is a statement of morality. The passing of a law declares that the people in a government see certain behavior (such as setting up a business, organizing a religious body, or homeschooling) as acceptable and thus good, and that other activities (such as cockfighting, burglary, and embezzlement) are not acceptable and are thus bad. For many years, federal and state governments discriminated against

African Americans, which sent the message that such discrimination was not wrong. A major appeal of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s was the idea that such discrimination is morally wrong and that government ought to outlaw it.

Some state governments in the U.S. have declared that gambling casinos are acceptable and only need to be licensed and regulated. These states see casinos as an acceptable form of entertainment and source of tax revenue. The United States Supreme Court has declared that states may not forbid same-sex marriage. This was a declaration by the majority of the Court that outlawing same-sex marriage is bad. However, what governments declare to be good or bad does not supplant what Scripture says. The declarations of government merely reveal to what extent the government agrees with the Word of God.

Governments declare what people are free to do and what they may not do without penalty. This gives order to society. Government also encourages or discourages certain actions. For instance, a government will influence business activity through its monetary policy, the way it regulates business and labor, and the taxes it imposes. Governments pass laws that help or protect certain interests or groups, such as business, the environment, workers, the wealthy, and the poor and disabled.

State Religion

Some countries continue to have a state religion. When that is the case, that religion receives certain privileges, such as tax revenues. Clergy from that group perform religious functions at official government events. Having an official religion does not necessarily mean that the government outlaws other religious groups—although in some Islamic countries it is illegal to practice Christianity—but other groups usually do not have the same privileges and freedoms that the state religion does. Those other groups might have to register with the government and file regular reports on their activities.



The Stortinget in Oslo is the seat of the Norwegian National Assembly.

The purpose of establishing a state religion is to encourage or promote that religion, but the practical result has often been that the official religion becomes simply a part of the culture with little personal meaning for the people. In the Scandinavian countries, for instance, most people are Lutheran and get married in a Lutheran church because the official state religion in those countries is or was Lutheranism; but only a tiny percentage of the population actually attends services and actively practices their faith.

Relations Between Governments

A national government carries on official relations with the other countries of the world. Two governments might agree to help each other if one of them is attacked by a third country. A government might conclude a trade treaty with another country that sets forth guidelines on how businesses in each of the countries can sell their goods in the other country. A government might decide to impose a tariff or tax on products that a person or company imports from another country. The purpose of such a tariff could be to raise revenue, to limit competition with domestic industries, or to penalize a foreign country for its policies (such as human rights



This 1973 French stamp commemorates a treaty between France and West Germany.

violations or aggression toward another country). A government might encourage cultural exchanges with other countries, such as allowing an exhibit of archaeological artifacts held by one country to enter and tour another.

Sometimes relations between countries become strained. A country might break off diplomatic relations with another country. In some cases, the strained relationship can even result in war.

Limited Government

The United States has a tradition of limited government. This means that the national and state governments may only exercise a defined, limited list of powers. According to the Tenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the powers that the Constitution does not assign to the national government remain in the hands of the states or the people.

This is our tradition, but since the New Deal of the 1930s and the Great Society programs of the 1960s, the national government has exercised an increasing number of powers, many of which the fifty states had previously held. If the Supreme Court does not strike down such assumptions of power as unconstitutional, they become part of what the national (often called federal) government does, regardless of whether such actions actually violate the Constitution.

The trend in the U.S. has been for people to look to the federal government for programs, protection, and funding. Even a large part of many state government budgets consists of grants from the federal government for specific programs. Public health care is one example. Many people look to government, especially to the federal government, to fund various programs in which they have an interest. This trend has increased the size of the federal government and the involvement of the federal government in our lives. The concept of a limited federal government is becoming a thing of the past. This trend will likely continue unless a major change in the thinking of the public takes place.

What Should Government Do?

The real-life, everyday operation of government is a complex matter. Modern government is involved in such areas as the economy, immigration, and health care—subjects that we will consider more fully later in this curriculum. But *should* government be involved in these areas, and if so to what extent? Simple definitions and black-and-white alternatives do not address the realities of the world as it is. For instance:

What should happen when state governments do not protect the rights of citizens that the U.S. Constitution guarantees to all Americans?

How do we balance the public need for preserving natural areas with the public need to produce energy?

What is the proper amount of government regulation of business in a free economy?

Sometimes government tries to protect us from ourselves. The purpose of laws

that require people to use seat belts and motorcycle helmets, for instance, is to force people to be responsible. Such laws help to reduce medical expenses that taxpayers might otherwise have to pay, but they take away some individual freedom. Is this a legitimate exercise of government power?

How can and should a government protect the rights of minorities from the sometimes erroneous will of the majority?

What would be the short-term and long-term effect in the lives of real people if government scaled back or eliminated certain government programs?

Well-meaning people have different answers to these and other questions that relate to what government can and should do. In the United States, we must seek answers that recognize the authority of the Constitution and that enable the government to accomplish its God-given responsibility to do good. As Paul wrote:

*For it [the government] is a minister of God to you for good.
But if you do what is evil, be afraid;
for it does not bear the sword for nothing;
for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath
on the one who practices evil.
Romans 13:4*

Assignments for Lesson 6

We Hold These Truths	Read “Thoughts on Government” by John Adams, pages 11-16.
Literature	Continue reading <i>Mornings on Horseback</i> by David McCullough. Plan to be finished with it by the end of Unit 4.
Project	Choose your project for Unit 2 and start working on it.
Student Review	If you are using this resource, answer the questions for Lesson 6.



Fürstenzug (Procession of Princes) Mural in Dresden, Germany

Lesson 7

Ancient and Medieval Monarchies

L'état c'est moi. (The state, it is me.)

—Attributed to Louis XIV of France, 1651

For most of human history, in almost every culture and ethnic group, kings have headed governments. In this lesson we will look at patterns that have been true about many monarchies in history. We will see that, although we usually think of kings as absolute rulers who answer to no one, powerful individuals and groups influence even what kings do within their realms.

to him. During the Middle Ages, the pattern in some European tribes was for the leaders of several tribes to meet and choose one of their number to be the king of their nation.

King Stefan Prvovencani became the first king of Serbia in 1217.

The Origin and Work of Monarchies

Throughout history, individuals or families have assumed rule over other people. Sometimes a man acquired great wealth and those around him deferred to him as their leader. In other situations, one individual might have inspired resistance against an invading horde. When the people defeated the horde, the victors recognized this individual as their king. At times, a wealthy person has bought the services of lesser lords, who declared that person to be king. These lords agreed to fight for the king in exchange for the king guaranteeing the security of the lesser lords' households and property. Sometimes an individual has seized power at the point of a sword or gun and has forced others to give their allegiance



Kings faced the same issues that confront any government: the people's desire for peace and prosperity at home and the need to defend against potential foreign invasion. At home, most kings have been primarily concerned with the well-being of their own family and the lords on whom they most directly depended. Rarely did a king take any action to help the common people in his realm. Kings have usually defended the traditional order, which placed them at the top of the social pyramid.

In foreign relations, kings have formed alliances with some kings and fought wars against other kings. A common view was that the amount of land a king controlled demonstrated his power. This meant that a king had to lead armies to conquer other lands if he wanted to achieve greatness as the world defined it. Kings have used many pretexts to go to war. At times a king has justified aggression against other lands by saying it was necessary to acquire additional food supplies or natural resources for his own people. His people saw themselves as superior to other people, and so they believed that this justified taking lands belonging to others. Sometimes one king perceived an insult from another monarch and felt a need to attack the offending monarch's realm in order to defend his own honor.

Influences on the Monarch

Kings have usually had many influences on their thinking and actions. Most kings have gathered around themselves councils of advisers. These councils consisted of people whom the king considered wise or influential and whom the king trusted to give him advice about the policies he should pursue. The king hoped that these advisers were honest, just, and loyal. Sometimes, however, the advisers schemed about building their own power or pursued other ulterior motives. Some

Charlemagne was king of the Franks in Western Europe from 768 to 814.



kings depended heavily on their advisers, while others ignored them altogether.

One measure of the success of a king's reign was the loyalty of the people under his rule. If the lords and barons trusted the king, they gave him financial assistance and military aid. If they did not trust him, they withheld their support in order to get what they wanted. This encouraged a king not to rule arrogantly but to seek policies that the lords under him supported.

This stained glass window in Brussels, Belgium, depicts Pope Stephen II consecrating King Pepin the Younger of the Franks in 754.

A major influence on many kings in Europe during the Middle Ages was the Roman Catholic pope. Sometimes a pope was primarily interested in making sure that kings supported his own agenda for wealth and power. Since the pope had control of the great wealth that belonged to the Catholic Church, he could supply financial assistance to kings who earned his approval. If a king wanted to go to war, the pope could influence other kings to provide soldiers.

Most importantly, many kings and their citizens saw the pope as Christ's representative on earth. When all else failed, the pope could use the threat of excommunication from the Church against a king who did not do what the pope wanted. If the pope



thus denied a king (and in some cases all the people he ruled) the right to participate in communion, the king and people believed that they were cut off from God's grace. Because the pope held this power, kings were usually reluctant to pursue policies that the pope did not favor or that risked the disapproval of his subjects.

Threats to a King's Power

Even an absolute monarch sometimes had to deal with challenges to his authority. Bad kings almost always engendered opposition; and even a good king could have opponents who were jealous, or evil, or who thought they could do a better job. Rivals for the throne might emerge from within the royal family itself or from another family.

The lords of the realm working together could exert the greatest counterbalance to a king's

power. Sometimes wealthy lords joined together to oppose the king. These lords eventually formed representative bodies such as the British Parliament.

A king always had to guard against attacks by traitorous advisers within his circle or pretenders to the throne from without. If a dynasty gave rise to an incompetent ruler, strong lords would often want to wrest the monarchy out of his hands. A king's heir was usually his eldest son. However, if a king did not have an heir, competition could erupt among the lords over who would be the next king and the leader of a new dynasty.

Thus we see that the government of an unelected monarch could be subject to a great deal of uncertainty and political pressure. Even an absolute monarch faced ongoing challenges that kept his rule less than definite.

Proverbs teaches how someone could win the king's favor.

*He who loves purity of heart
and whose speech is gracious,
the king is his friend.
Proverbs 22:11*

Assignments for Lesson 7

We Hold These Truths	Read "On the Divine Right of Kings" by James I of England, page 17.
Literature	Continue reading <i>Mornings on Horseback</i> by David McCullough.
Project	Continue working on your project for Unit 2.
Student Review	If you are using this resource, answer the questions for Lesson 7.



Lesson 8

Athenian Democracy and the Roman Republic

The condition upon which God hath given liberty to man is eternal vigilance.

—John Philpot Curran (1790)

For periods of time, two societies in the ancient world, Athens and Rome, were exceptions to the pattern of monarchies. This lesson describes how these governments worked and how they were different from the government of modern America.

Democracy in Athens

In ancient times, the people on the rugged peninsula of Greece lived in several relatively small city-states. One of these was Athens and its environs. A coalition of Athenians and other Greeks defeated the invading Persian army at Marathon in 490 BC. The victory gave the people of Athens great pride in themselves and their abilities. Around this time the city developed the form of government we call democracy, from the Greek words *demos* meaning people and *kratein* meaning to rule or judge.

Athenian Democracy

The main feature of Athenian democracy was the Assembly, which met every seven to ten days. All free male citizens of Athens could participate. This meant that out of a population of about 300,000,

some 45,000 men were eligible and expected to take part. The Greek word *idiotes* was used for someone who kept to himself and did not participate in civil and political life. It is the origin of our word idiot.

Usually around 5,000 men actually came to any given meeting of the Assembly. Participants in the Assembly discussed proposals that the Council of 500 put forward. This encouraged the development of speaking skills, since a persuasive argument could win over a large number of people. It also required strong lungs! Voting took place by a show of hands or other straightforward means, and a simple majority put a proposal into effect.

Fifty men from each of the ten districts that made up Athens and its surrounding area composed the membership of the Council of 500. A candidate for the Council had to be at least thirty years old. A casting of lots identified fifty men from each district to serve on the Council for one year. No one could serve two years in a row, and a person could serve only twice in his lifetime. The Council prepared an agenda for each meeting of the Assembly. Council members from each district formed a subcommittee that chaired the Assembly for a tenth of the year. Some members of the subcommittee had to be

in the Council chambers at all times in case of an emergency.

A casting of lots also selected officials in the city of Athens for a term of one year. At first this method also created the Board of Ten Generals, but later voters selected this body. The Board became the real authority in Athenian government. Pericles, who served on the Board for many years in the mid-400s BC, became the most important figure in Athenian life and politics. He led the development of extensive public works that increased the citizens' pride in their city. Pericles saw to it that those on the Council of 500 received pay, which enabled Athenians from all walks to life to serve.

The democratic spirit extended into other areas of Athenian life. For instance, juries of from two hundred to as many as five hundred men heard legal cases. The parties in a trial spoke for themselves and did not have attorneys representing them.

In general, individual rights in Athens had less value than the public good. For instance, the Council attached the name of the person who proposed a law to that proposal. If at a later time a court determined that the law violated Athenian principles, the proponent had to pay a huge fine

which could bankrupt him. This policy prevented the Assembly from enacting frivolous laws.

If a citizen was supposed to participate in the Assembly for whatever reason (such as it being his district's turn to chair a meeting) and he did not attend, the Assembly sent a slave to find that person and smear his clothes with red paint. From this practice we get the idea of smearing someone's reputation—the original smear tactic! This let everyone know who had failed to do his civic duty.

Another tradition that exalted the public will over the rights and freedom of the individual was ostracism. On a given day, people could write the name of the person they disliked most on a piece of pottery (*ostraca*). If a majority of these ballots named the same person, he had to leave the city for ten years. Sometimes the majority ostracized good men who got on the wrong side of the populace. This practice tended to enforce conformity to the perceived public will.

A plague devastated Athens in 430 BC, and then the city-state lost the 27-year Peloponnesian War to its bitter rival Sparta in 404 BC. These blows greatly weakened the city's power. Its democratic government continued for a while and even spread

The Pnyx (from the Greek word meaning tightly packed together) was the official meeting place of the Assembly.



to other cities, but democracy eventually fell when Philip of Macedon united most of Greece under his authority in 337 BC. Philip's son was Alexander the Great.

Why Athenian Democracy Worked

Democracy worked as well as it did in Athens for several reasons.

- The Athenian people believed that they possessed greater ability and worth than people of other city-states. This gave them pride in their city and their attainments, which was a strong motive for participating in government.
- Most Athenians made sure that they stayed informed on issues that came before the Assembly.
- The practice of selection by lot kept the same people from holding power for a long period of time.
- The Athenian ideal known as the *golden mean* encouraged democracy. The golden mean was the belief that what people should pursue was not what defined personal interest but what brought about the greatest common good. By contrast, what we call democracy today often involves various interest groups seeking what is best for themselves, regardless of how their priorities might affect the entire community.

Why Athenian Democracy Failed

However, Athenian democracy also had its limitations and failings.

- Women and slaves, who made up a large part of the population, had no right to participate.
- Citizenship was strictly limited. Under a law that the Athenian government passed in the time of Pericles, a citizen was someone whose parents were both citizens. Having one parent as a citizen was not good enough, even though Athens extended special dispensation at times to some people, including Pericles' own son.
- Athenians, who held a high opinion of themselves, justified imperialistic domination of other peoples. Athenians believed that they themselves deserved freedom and democracy, but others did not. This belief system will not maintain a free society based on equality.
- The Athenians gave special deference to those with wealth and influence. They often did not judge ideas on their merits impartially. Pericles could appeal to the crowd effectively because of his wealth and his policies of lavish government spending.
- The will of the majority had no restraints, regardless of whether that will was truly good. One strength of modern democracies is the protection of the rights of the minority.
- Pericles did not train successors to carry on after his death; so Athenians lacked the skills of leadership in the long term.
- Finally, Athenian life was pagan, blatantly immoral, and dependent on slave labor. These wrongs negatively affected the good of the Athenian democratic system.

The Roman Republic

Tribes from central Europe probably invaded the Italian peninsula centuries before Christ. Around 750 BC, some of these people founded the city-state of Rome in the region called Latium. They came to be called the Latins. Another group of invaders, the Etruscans, took control of the area around 600 BC. About a century later, the Latins who lived on the seven hills along the Tiber River threw off Etruscan rule and became the most powerful people of the area. In reaction to the authoritarian Etruscan kings, the Latins (or Romans) established a form of government they called the Republic (from the Latin words *res* and *publica* meaning the affairs of the people). The Roman Republic lasted for almost five hundred years.

Patricians and Plebeians

The *patricians* were the wealthy landowners in Rome and its environs. The ruling body of the Republic was the Senate, composed of about three hundred representatives of patrician families. These senators served for life. Every year, the Senate chose two consuls, who served as military leaders and chief executives of the state. The consuls had equal powers, and each had a *veto* (Latin for “I forbid”) over the actions of the other. After his year of service, a consul became a member of the Senate. Consuls usually deferred to the Senate on most matters.

In a time of national crisis, the Senate could name a dictator for up to six months. Other high officials of government included *quaestors* (financial officers) and *praetors* (judges). The Senate created the office of *censor* to classify citizens by wealth and tax status, a job that the consuls previously performed. The censor eventually acquired great power, including the authority to dismiss members from the Senate. Patricians filled all of these appointed positions.

The other main social class were the *plebeians*. Plebeians were farmers, artisans, small merchants, traders, and other working people. Plebeians were



The Senate met in a building in the Roman Forum, ruins of which still stand.

citizens, but they were not eligible to serve in the Senate or as consuls. Roman law forbade a plebeian from marrying a patrician. Plebeians elected representatives who served in a body called the Assembly, but the Assembly had little real power. No action by the Assembly could take effect without the approval of the Senate. Hundreds of thousands of slaves lived in the city of Rome, but they had no legal standing or rights, nor did women.

Rome engaged in almost constant warfare during the Republic. An Assembly of Centuries formed to represent the army. This body began to elect the consuls. The army was all-patrician at first, but the need for fighting men led to the government calling plebeians into service. The patricians tried to hold on to their power; but because the patricians needed the plebeians to fight their wars, raise their food, and carry on their profitable trade, the patricians gave in to the plebeians' demand for a greater share in government power.

Statue of Augustus in Rome, Italy



The plebeian Assembly took the name of the Assembly of Tribes. This body chose ten tribunes each year to be the spokesmen for the plebeian class. The power of the plebeians grew over time. In 451 BC, the Assembly of Tribes formulated and published the Twelve Tables of Roman Law. Power still lay with the patricians; but the Tables of Law helped ensure that officials applied laws fairly, even to the plebeians.

Eventually tribunes received the veto power, and the Assembly of Tribes obtained the right to pass laws without Senate approval. In 367 BC, a plebeian was elected consul. Eventually, plebeians gained the right to marry patricians; and some plebeians won election to the Senate.

The End of the Roman Republic and the Beginning of the Roman Empire

Senators and wealthy families became more concerned with protecting their power and wealth than with doing what was best for the Republic as a whole. Serious conflicts arose in Rome in the two centuries before Christ between powerful leaders commanding warring factions. Political assassination became commonplace. A series of conflicts between ambitious generals resulted in one general, Sulla, gaining the upper hand. In 82 BC, the Senate declared Sulla to be dictator. He immediately abolished the six-month limit on his office. After Sulla, generals continued to compete for control of Rome until Julius Caesar defied an order by the Senate to disband his army and defeated a force led by his competitor, Pompey. In 44 BC, the Senate appointed Caesar dictator for life. A group of senators who feared and opposed Caesar's power assassinated him on March 15, 44 BC. Following a period of civil war, Caesar's adopted son Octavian and his forces won out. In 27 BC, the Senate, weary of conflict and turmoil, declared Octavian to be Augustus ("Exalted One") and hoped that his rule would establish calm. The age of the Republic was over, and the age of the Roman Empire, led by a succession of emperors, began.

The Roman Senate did not exist to ensure popular control of government. Instead, its purpose was to protect the interests of the wealthy and to make sure that the patrician class maintained control of government. The self-interest of senators only became more intense over the years. Sharp class distinctions supported by law characterized the government and the civil life of the Roman Republic. Roman government had no plan for handling changes in society or for smooth transition of leadership (the latter was a failing of the Empire also). It also placed no effective limit on the power that one person could hold. Like Athenian democracy, the Roman Republic fell when a single authoritarian leader challenged it.

Greek democracy and the Roman Republic lasted for many years. The basic structure of each form of government was fairly constant; but changes took place in each government over the course of time.

We might think that democracy in Athens functioned like the American democratic republic of today and that the Roman Senate was an early form

of the United States Senate. While these two forms of government were exceptions to the pattern of typical monarchies, each had important differences from what we know in America. Studying these forms of government helps us to know what our government today can and should be. We use some of the same terms but our system of government is very different.

No plan of government can guarantee that a society will have peace and prosperity. Athenian democracy and the Roman Republic had some elements that remind us that representative government can accomplish good. They were not perfect governments, however; and they did not stop people from doing evil that eventually destroyed the foundations of their governments and societies. We must have discernment to recognize and support what is good and to avoid what is evil both in governments and in the hearts of men.

The writer of Proverbs knew the impact of righteous and wicked leaders on the lives of the people:

*When the righteous increase, the people rejoice,
but when a wicked man rules, people groan.
Proverbs 29:2*

Assignments for Lesson 8

We Hold These Truths

Read Twelve Tables of Roman Law, pages 18-19.

Literature

Continue reading *Mornings on Horseback* by David McCullough.

Project

Continue working on your project for Unit 2.

Student Review

If you are using this resource, answer the questions for Lesson 8.



Lesson 9

Our English Roots

I conclude then this point touching the power of kings, with this axiom of divinity, that as to dispute what God may do is blasphemy . . . so is it sedition in subjects, to dispute what a king may do in the height of his power. But just kings will ever be willing to declare what they will do, if they will not incur the curse of God. I will not be content that my power be disputed upon; but I shall ever be willing to make the reason appear of all my doings, and rule my actions according to my laws.

—King James I of England

We can see many of the dynamics of how monarchies worked by reviewing the history of England. If we changed the names and dates, we could tell similar stories about kings in many other parts of the world.

Developments in English government during the centuries leading up to the founding of English colonies in America had a major impact on government in America. The government that Americans created in the eighteenth century was in some ways a reaction to what had occurred in England.

Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms

The Celtic people who lived on the island of Great Britain had local kings when a Roman army conquered England in 43 AD. The Romans declared the island and its people to be subject to Rome. Centuries later, when the Romans withdrew, Anglo-Saxon invaders from Europe gained control of England and pushed the Celtic people living

there into what is now Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. The Anglo-Saxons organized themselves into seven kingdoms, including Wessex (West Saxons), Sussex (South Saxons), and Kent (southeastern England).

The Anglo-Saxon king in each region typically met with a council of nobles and church leaders called a *witenagemot*. Few records exist of these councils' duties and powers, although they probably gave their endorsement to a new king. There is not a direct line from these Anglo-Saxon councils to later representative bodies, but they do provide another example of kings having councils of nobles.

The leaders of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms often were rivals of each other. However, in 829 the rulers of the Saxon regions recognized Egbert of Wessex as king of all Angle-land (England).

Norsemen in England

The Saxons, in turn, had to try to defend their land from Danish and Viking invaders, who

gained control of much of eastern England. These Scandinavians from the North (or Norsemen) also invaded Europe. Some of them settled in what is now northern France, and that region became known as Normandy (North-men-land). In 1066, William of Normandy asserted his claim to the throne of England by invading the island and defeating the English King Harold at the Battle of Hastings. The Normans imposed their form of government on England, even though much of the English language and culture remained.

When the Norman King Henry I of England died in 1135, Stephen of France tried to usurp the English throne from Henry's daughter, Matilda. Rival factions that supported Stephen and Matilda fought a civil war in England until 1153, when Matilda's son, Henry II, gained the backing of enough barons to gain the status of king. When Stephen died the next year, the rule of Henry II was secure. This began the dynasty of the Plantagenet family. A later Plantagenet king, John, was an arrogant ruler and poor military leader. In 1215 the English barons forced John to sign the Great Charter (Magna Carta) that guaranteed certain rights to the barons. True to form, John broke his promise the following year. He died shortly thereafter.

The Provisions of Oxford

While John's son, Henry III, was on the throne, his sister married a French immigrant, Simon de Montfort. Simon proved to be an ambitious and disloyal brother-in-law when he led the barons against Henry's rule. Henry agreed to some limits on royal power in a document called the Provisions of Oxford, but he repudiated those limitations a few years later. When this happened, de Montfort in 1265 called for the formation of a council, to be composed of spokesmen from English towns and shires (two burgesses from each borough and four knights from each shire or county), to meet alongside the barons. This meeting came to be called a parliament (from the French word *parole*, meaning to talk). It was the first step toward the modern British Parliament. Notice that its purpose was to oppose the king and his baronial allies.

No complete record of the Provisions of Oxford exists, but apparently they called for regular meetings of an elected council of nobles as well as the election of local officials. The Magna Carta and the Provisions

This 1895 poster advertised the theatrical production "Runnymede." Runnymede is the name of the meadow where King John signed the Magna Carta.



of Oxford were attempts to establish what we know as the rule of law. If the whims of the monarch determine what a country does, and if the strength of the government depends on the personality and skills of the king or on the unity of the barons, that country will experience continuous instability. However, if laws state what even kings and barons as well as all the people can and can not do, this puts the government on a more stable footing, regardless of who the kings and barons are. This unchanging foundation gives all of the people standards outside of themselves to follow. A government of laws and not of men is a principle that America continues to follow today.

The Stuarts in England and Settlers in America

In 1295 King Edward I called for a parliament consisting of barons, officials of the Roman Catholic Church, and town and shire representatives. This was an attempt to consolidate his power and unify his realm. Historians call this meeting the Model Parliament because it set the pattern for an assembly with two groups—lords and commons—that came

King James I



together to meet with, advise, and sometimes oppose the king. The membership and meetings of Parliament became more regular as time went on.

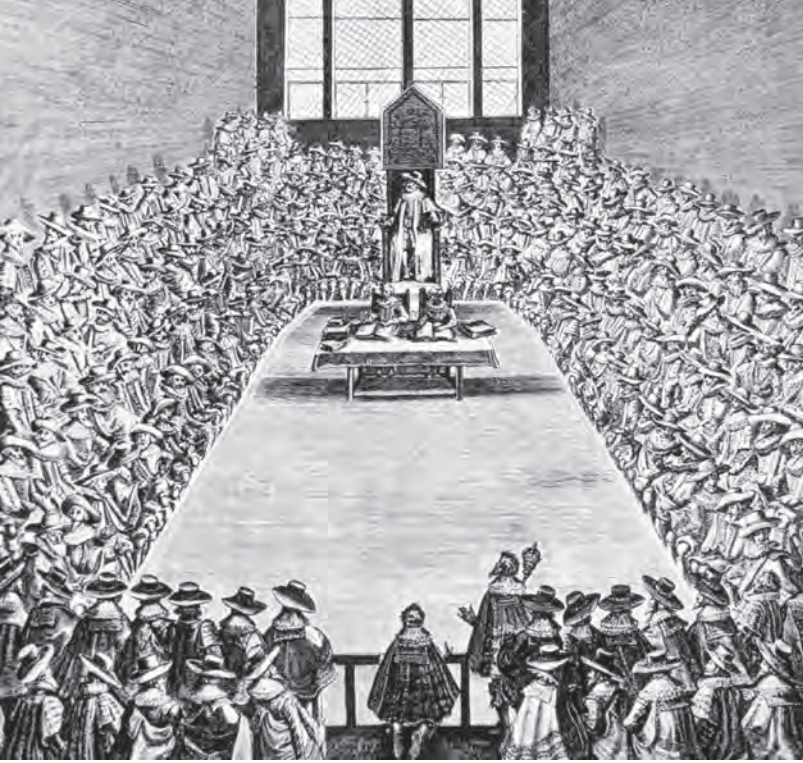
The political relationship between a king and Parliament was sometimes conciliatory and sometimes adversarial. The kings wanted revenue to support their lifestyle and to carry on foreign wars. The nobles only agreed to pay these taxes if they had a voice in government. Thus each side gave a little to the other side in order to get more of what it wanted.

Two families within the Plantagenet house, the Lancasters and the Yorks, became rivals for the throne. The Lancasters won out for a time, but later the Yorks gained control and ruled the country. The last York king, Richard III, lost a battle to Henry of the house of Tudor, who had challenged Richard's rule. It was this Henry who began the Tudor dynasty, which included his son Henry VIII and the children of Henry VIII, son Edward VI, Catholic daughter Mary, and Protestant daughter Elizabeth I.

Elizabeth I never married and had no heir. Her Catholic cousin, Mary Queen of Scots (not the same person as Henry's daughter Mary), was in line after Elizabeth to inherit the throne of the country, even though England had become officially Protestant under Henry VIII. To prevent Mary from being able to assume the throne, Elizabeth had her imprisoned and later executed. When Elizabeth died, the English throne fell to James VI of Scotland, the Protestant son of Mary Queen of Scots. He became James I of England, who began his rule in 1603 as the first Stuart king. During James' reign the British planted their first successful colonies in North America.

The Setting in 1603

When James I became king of England in 1603, his government officially endorsed and assisted explorers and merchants who were beginning to develop the country's overseas empire. The king's wealth grew as trade and tax revenue increased. As trade grew, the merchant or middle class grew. This



King James I (center) During a Session of Parliament

changed the traditional social structure that had always included royalty, nobility, and commoners. The middle class wanted a greater voice in government, especially since taxes on their profits contributed an increasing share of the royal budget.

One historian estimated that in the 1630s England only had about 2,000 paid public officials. About half of these were aides and personal servants of the royal family. Most government functions that affected most of the people took place at the county or shire level. The county bureaucracy oversaw such activities as collecting taxes, conducting trials, and training the local militia, since England had no standing army. Many in the county bureaucracy were unpaid volunteers. In general, the county governments and the common people operated in their little world; and the king operated in his. The main overlap involved the taxes that the crown collected to support the king's lifestyle and foreign wars.

The March of the Monarchs

James I ruled by what he called the divine right of kings. He believed that God had given him his throne and his power and that it was not only wrong but blasphemous to question a king's actions and

authority. Nevertheless, James felt constrained to respect and obey the laws of the realm. In addition, James had to deal with Parliament to obtain the revenues he wanted, and the members of Parliament were not always willing to accept James' ideas as divinely directed. However, the king had the power to call and dismiss Parliament, so their separate powers served as checks on each other.

James' son and successor, Charles I, kept an even tighter rein on his power than his father had. Since Charles did not want to deal with Parliament, he simply did not call it into session. This angered the lords who believed that they were a rightful part of government. The lords did not want to bow to the king's arbitrary decisions. The political standoff between crown and Parliament worsened as a result of religious differences. Charles I was a high Anglican bordering on Catholicism, and he looked to Catholic monarchs in Ireland and Spain for support of his power and actions. Most members of Parliament, however, were Puritans, Anglicans who opposed both Catholic and high Anglican practices. In 1642, civil war erupted between supporters of the king and supporters of Parliament. Both the king and Parliament levied taxes on their supporters to finance the war.

King James I was born in this castle in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1566.





Oliver Cromwell and William and Mary

The Puritan Parliamentarians won. They captured Charles I, tried him, and convicted him of crimes against the state. The government of the Lord Protector of the Puritan English Commonwealth, Oliver Cromwell, executed Charles in 1649. Cromwell abolished the monarchy (after all, who needs the divine right of kings when you have your own mission from God?), the House of Lords, and the traditional form of the Church of England. Cromwell's government also limited civil liberties and denied religious freedom. The Puritan expression of the Christian faith became the state religion of England.

When the English people had had enough of Cromwell and his son (a much less able ruler), a newly elected Parliament re-opened the doors of traditional Anglican churches and called Charles II, son of the executed king, home from Europe in 1660 to assume the throne. Charles II agreed to grant more religious freedoms, and he worked more harmoniously with Parliament than his father had. However, Charles II leaned toward Catholicism, a fact which concerned the Protestant majority in Parliament. While he had been in exile in Europe, Charles II had made secret agreements with Catholic monarchs. In these agreements they promised Charles financial support to regain the throne and he promised to restore the Catholic Church as the state religion of England and to become Catholic himself. In 1685 on his deathbed, Charles II was received into the Roman Catholic Church. Charles' successor, his brother James II, was even more openly sympathetic to Catholicism. When James' Catholic wife gave birth to a son (and heir to the throne) who was given infant baptism as a Catholic, Anglican political leaders believed that they had to act.

The leaders of Parliament approached William of Orange in the Netherlands and asked him and

his wife, Mary (Protestant sister of Charles II), to become king and queen of England. William led a small force into England in 1688, whereupon James II fled to Catholic France. The next year, Parliament drew up documents detailing James' wrongs and declaring William and Mary to be the legitimate monarchs of England. James II went to Catholic Ireland to gather supporters in an attempt to regain the throne, but William's army defeated James' force at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. Parliament passed a law stating that the monarch of England had to be Anglican, thus insuring that the crown would remain in Anglican hands. In addition, the powers of Parliament, even with the continued presence of a monarchy, greatly increased. Now the Parliament did not sit at the king's pleasure, but instead the king reigned at Parliament's pleasure.

The United Kingdom

In 1707 England (which already included Wales) joined with Scotland to become the Kingdom of Great Britain. When Queen Anne died without an heir in 1714, the throne reverted to George I of Hanover in Germany, a great-grandson of James I. The new ruler was able enough, but he spoke no English and knew little about Britain. Nevertheless, George I and his successors worked hard to adapt to Britain; and they oversaw an aggressive expansion of its empire. In Parliament, supporters of the king came to be called Tories and opponents were known as Whigs; but not even the king's harshest critics proposed doing away with the monarchy. King and Parliament began to govern together instead of against each other. In 1721, Robert Walpole, a member of Parliament, began to oversee the operation of the king's government and served in effect as the first prime minister.

In a period of less than fifty years, England had witnessed major political upheavals that included a civil war; the execution of a king; the abolition, restoration, and replacement of the monarchy; and a major shift in power from the king to Parliament.

The British Parliament meets in the Houses of Parliament in London, England.



Coat of Arms on the Gate of Buckingham Palace, the Royal Residence in London, England

During this time, English settlers founded colonies in America. Colonists and the colonial governments had to be careful about expressing loyalty to the English government, since the government to which they expressed allegiance might be gone in less time than it took to get a message across the Atlantic.

Over this period, Americans saw the instability of royalty, the harmful role that religion could play in political conflicts, and how everyday people got caught in the middle of factional disputes. The Americans wanted none of it in their new land. This history helped to shape the ideals of government that Americans pursued.

For many years the British crown did not pay much attention to colonial government, but in the mid-1700s the crown moved to exert more control over its American colonies. This move prompted a reaction among many colonists in America who chafed under British rule and who wanted to control their own destiny.

Often the hidden motives and complicated activities of kings were beyond the understanding of the people whom the kings looked to for support.

*As the heavens for height and the earth for depth,
so the heart of kings is unsearchable.
Proverbs 25:3*

Assignments for Lesson 9

We Hold These Truths

Read excerpts from the Magna Carta, pages 20-24, and from the English Bill of Rights, pages 25-26.

Literature

Continue reading *Mornings on Horseback* by David McCullough.

Project

Continue working on your project for Unit 2.

Student Review

If you are using this resource, answer the questions for Lesson 9.



NASA Image of Two Spiral Galaxies

Lesson 10

Birth of Enlightenment Philosophy

It is not without reason, that [man] seeks out, and is willing to join in society with others, who are already united, or have a mind to unite, for the mutual preservation of their lives, liberties and estates, which I call by the general name, property.

—John Locke

While American colonists reacted to upheavals in the English government, the ideas that provided the foundation for a new kind of government in America developed in the philosophical movement known as the Enlightenment. This movement helped to mold the thinking of the men who shaped our American system.

Enlightenment Thinking

The Enlightenment was a movement that exalted human reason as the best basis for understanding life and the world. Scholars see the period of the Enlightenment as beginning with the publication of Isaac Newton's *Mathematical Principles* in 1687 and ending with the French Revolution in 1789. This Age of Reason built upon the Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution, both of which immediately preceded it. The term Enlightenment suggests that its adherents saw themselves as enlightened on what is true, in contrast to previous generations that (in their view) were not enlightened.

In the Middle Ages, most intellectuals, church leaders, political leaders, and everyday people accepted many long-held ideas as truth. They saw the earth as the center of the universe. They believed the scientific understanding of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle was the final truth. In religion, most people in Europe accepted the pope as the earthly head of the church. They saw monarchs as the proper rulers of nations.

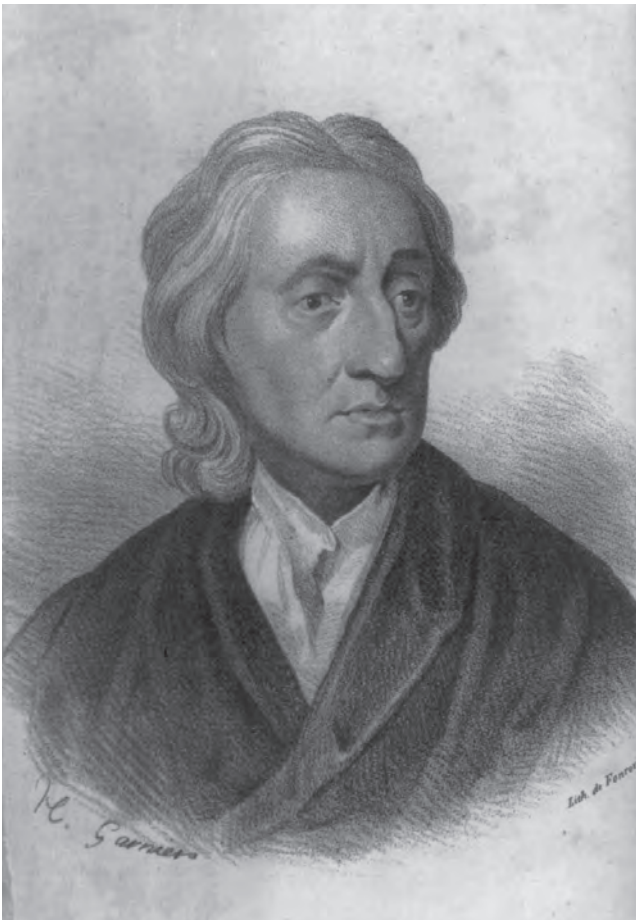
Some thinkers, however, began to question long-unquestioned assumptions by appealing to reason and to scientific investigation. Copernicus and Galileo put forth the revolutionary idea, based on their calculations and observations, that the earth revolved around the sun. Scientific investigation began raising questions about Aristotle's ideas about the nature of the world. Martin Luther challenged the authority and practices of the pope. In the area of government, some writers started questioning whether kings really had a divine and unquestioned right to rule. It was not in keeping with reason, they said, that one man and his descendants should automatically be the best people to rule a country.

Plenty of evidence emerged in seventeenth-century England to show that royal families did not always produce good leaders.

Like most schools of philosophy, the Enlightenment had both good and bad points. It is good not to accept blindly what people have generally accepted to be the truth. Traditions are not always right. It does not honor God simply to accept religious teachings and traditions without consulting Scripture and knowing His truth for oneself. Many Enlightenment thinkers saw this new use of man's reason as a way to honor God and to have a firmer grasp on the wonders of His creation.

On the other hand, the man-centered thinking of the Enlightenment sometimes caused people to push God out of the picture altogether. It was not rational, said some, to think that an unseen God controlled the universe and guided our lives. Critics pointed out erroneous traditions and the history of

John Locke



religious wars in an attempt to prove that religious faith was a shaky foundation on which to build a life or a society. Better to trust in the solid findings of science, they said, than in the religious opinions of fallible men.

Secular Enlightenment thinkers failed to see that scientific understanding could be wrong or incomplete as well. A better foundation than either religious tradition or scientific tradition is the unchanging and unshakable Word of God. Human reason is good, but it is not ultimate. The mind of God is ultimate, and it is to His truth that all mankind must ultimately bow.

Locke's Two Treatises of Government

Many Enlightenment writers, including the English philosopher John Locke, put forth their ideas about government and society. In 1690, Locke published *Two Treatises of Government*. Appearing when it did, Locke's work attempted to explain and justify the Glorious or Bloodless Revolution that brought William and Mary to the throne of England. Locke's work became an important basis for later political thinking and for the events that took place in the American colonies in the mid-1700s.

Locke tried to dig back to the very foundations of human society. He said that man in his natural state is sovereign and good. Men decide to associate with each other in what he called a social contract to preserve their God-given rights, freedoms, and possessions (what he called life, liberty, and property). This association is necessary and logical because some people emerge from time to time who threaten those rights, freedoms, and possessions. When people live and associate in this pursuit of individual happiness, it leads to the common good. Thus a limited government, with checks and balances on its powers, produces the most freedom and the greatest fulfillment of our rights. When a government threatens these rights and these goals, Locke wrote, it is reasonable and necessary for people to change their government, as the English



Montesquieu was born in this castle La Brède, France, in 1689. He returned here often throughout his life.

did when Parliament invited William and Mary to be their monarchs.

The assumptions that formed the basis of this philosophy of government differed from the ideas that many people had held for a long time. First, Locke believed that liberty and rights were gifts from God, not from the king. Second, he held that the people are sovereign. The state only functions with the consent and approval of the people; the people do not function with the state's approval. Third, he believed that government exists for the protection of the people and their property, whereas the traditional view held that the purpose of the people and the government was to protect the life, liberty, and property of the king. To Locke this approach was more rational and enlightened than the traditional thinking about monarchical government. As we will see in the next unit, Locke's ideas had a profound influence on the government that America's Founding Fathers created in 1776.

Baron de Montesquieu

Baron de Montesquieu was a French philosopher whose writing influenced James Madison and other American Founding Fathers. Montesquieu published *The Spirit of the Laws* in 1748. He described three kinds of government: monarchies, which are based on honor; republics, which are based on virtue; and despotisms, which are founded on fear. He said that the functions of government can and should be divided into three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial. Montesquieu recognized three classes of society: the monarchy, the aristocracy, and the commoners (he purposefully did not include the clergy as a separate class). He favored hereditary aristocracy but opposed slavery. Montesquieu also proposed the unusual idea that climate is a major influence on man and society. He believed that a society in a cold climate like that found in northern Europe is different from a society located in the warm

climate of the Mediterranean. His ideal climate, not surprisingly, was that of France. Madison and the other founders accepted some of Montesquieu's ideas and rejected others.

Basic Questions

A basic question related to government involves the nature of man. Do you believe that man is basically good and that he just needs to be set free and left alone, or do you believe that man is basically evil and that he needs to be controlled? Ecclesiastes 7:29 provides the best answer to this question: "Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices." Man is capable of doing great good, but he is also capable of committing terrible evil. The purpose of any human oversight or control over another person, whether by secular government or church leaders, should be to prevent the evil of which people are capable and to bring out the God-given potential for good in every person, not to control people in order to accomplish the desires of the leader.

We must consider other significant questions regarding man when we consider the issue of government:

What are "self-evident truths," as the Declaration of Independence put it? King James I had one idea about such truths while John Locke had another.

Do all people have a God-given right to be free politically? If one person has a right to be free, do not all people have this right?

What is the best way to bring about personal and political freedom?

Do women, minorities, and the poor (those who do not own property) have the same rights as property-owning males? How people answer these and other questions about the nature of man and society influences the kind of government they create and what government does in relation to and on behalf of the people.

The Bible teaches a distinctly different idea about the source of true enlightenment:

*There was the true Light which, coming into the world,
enlightens every man.
John 1:9*

Assignments for Lesson 10

We Hold These Truths

Read the excerpt from *Two Treatises of Government* by John Locke, pages 27-29.

Literature

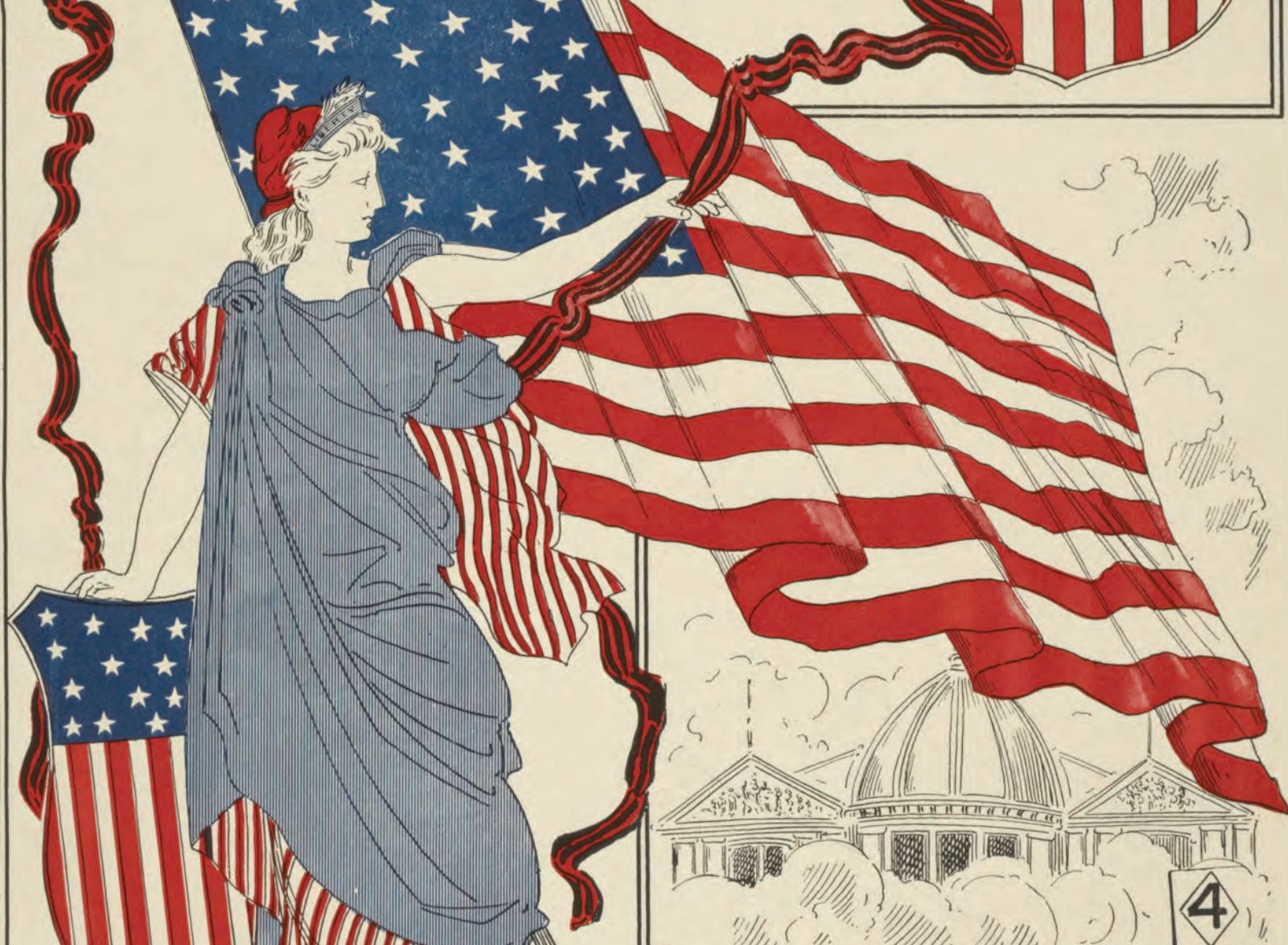
Continue reading *Mornings on Horseback* by David McCullough.

Project

Finish your project for Unit 2.

Student Review

If you are using this resource, answer the questions for Lesson 10 and take the quiz for Unit 2.



3

The United States: An Exercise in Government-Building

Lesson 11—Assuming a “Separate and Equal Station”

Lesson 12—America as a Confederation

Lesson 13—A Rising and Not a Setting Sun

Lesson 14—America’s Foundation of Faith

Lesson 15—We the People of the United States

Sheet Music Cover for “America,” 1898

Introduction

Americans should know how their system of government developed. We should not think that our republic flowed naturally from the British monarchy and grew out of the American Revolution without significant controversy. To the contrary, the Declaration of Independence was a bold and risky move. The Articles of Confederation were a first step toward a national government, but they were not a perfect step. The process of writing our Constitution involved brilliant minds making shrewd political compromises. The ultimate form that our national government would take was not clear even after the framers had completed the Constitution. What was clear, however, was the Founders' recognition of and dependence on God. This unit ends with a survey of the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution, which begins our detailed analysis of our founding document which extends through Unit 9.

Books Used

We Hold These Truths

Mornings on Horseback by David McCullough

Project (choose one)

1. Write 300 to 500 words on one of the following topics:

- If you were present in 1776, how do you think you would feel about the American colonies declaring independence from Great Britain?
- What do you think are the strengths of the United States Constitution and our system of government?

2. Use calligraphy or other elaborate lettering to write out the Preamble to the United States Constitution on a large piece of poster board. Embellish with other art forms if you wish (see page 86).

3. Create a bust sculpture of one of the Founding Fathers out of clay. You can find images of some of these men in this unit.



Replica of the Mayflower

Lesson 11

Assuming a “Separate and Equal Station”

We have not raised armies with ambitious designs of separating from Great Britain and establishing independent states.

—“Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms,”
adopted by the Second Continental Congress, July 6, 1775

The hardy settlers who came to these shores in 1607, 1620, and the years that followed could hardly have imagined that they were laying the first stones of a foundation for a new nation. Even as late as 1775, as indicated by the quotation above, most political leaders in the colonies wanted only to defend their rights as Englishmen and were not pursuing the status of an independent country.

In the century and a half between the first English settlements and the birth of the new nation, the situation of the colonists changed drastically and so did their thinking. The leadership of a few men finally seized the moment and brought about the creation of a new nation in a form and manner that were previously unknown in world history.

The government of the United States under the Constitution didn’t just happen. It was not a sure thing or a foregone conclusion. It was not even the first attempt at a national government. Our nation’s government was the result of a process of political compromises and trial and error. Not everyone was pleased with it. But it worked.

Colonial Government

The English founded colonies in North America for various purposes. Some provided religious freedom for people in England and Europe whose religious beliefs did not coincide with the beliefs of those in power. Other colonies began primarily as profit-making enterprises, in keeping with the economic philosophy of the times which held that overseas colonies were essential to building national wealth. William Penn had a vision for an entirely new kind of community, one that featured toleration and mutual respect for all men based on God’s principles as he understood them.

The settlers in each colony saw themselves as British citizens, subjects of the king. In many respects their ties to England were stronger than their ties to the other colonies in America. Each colony had a governor, who was the direct representative of the king. The governor usually surrounded himself with a small council of advisers. Each colony had an elected assembly, chosen by property-owning males, that gave input to the governor and that

recommended laws; but the king in England had to approve all decisions.

The reality of life in the colonies, as well as missteps by the British government, led to a growing division between the American colonies and the central government in London. The colonies were building dynamic economies of their own. Colonists developed a way of life that was different from that known by most people in England. Political leaders in the colonies increasingly wanted freedom from control by the government in England, but the king and Parliament increasingly wanted to exert greater control over colonial life and business. Since the governors represented the king and the colonial assemblies represented the colonists, the governors and assemblies often had conflict with each other.

The colonists thought that the British victory in the French and Indian War (1754-1763), for which the colonists themselves were largely responsible, would lead to greater freedoms and a greater ability to chart their own course. The English king, however, responded to the war with more taxes and a more oppressive presence in the colonies. Colonial leaders believed that the government in London was denying them their rights as Englishmen.

Steps Toward a National Government

Over time, the colonies took a few tenuous steps toward combining themselves into a confederation with a united purpose. The Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, Connecticut, and New Haven colonies formed the New England Confederation in 1643 to defend themselves against Indian attacks. When that danger died out, so did the confederation. It ceased to function by 1684.

In 1754, because of the threat France posed to the British colonies, the British government ordered representatives from several colonies to meet in Albany in New York to discuss greater unity among themselves. Britain's purpose for the meeting was to ensure that the colonies would fight together under the king's leadership in any war. The Albany Congress accomplished little; but a committee there, headed by Benjamin Franklin, proposed a Plan of Union which the delegates adopted. The proposal called for a chief executive appointed by the crown and a body of representatives chosen by the colonial legislatures. The proposed government would be able to raise taxes, oversee defense of the colonies, and govern trade and settlement in the area west of

During the French and Indian War, the British laid siege to Fort Niagara on the mouth of the Niagara River.



the Appalachian mountains. The colonial assemblies thought the plan gave too much power to the king, and the king thought it gave too much power to the colonies. The king rejected it, and the colonial governments either rejected it or ignored it.

The British Parliament passed the Stamp Act in February 1765, to go into effect the following November. After Parliament approved the Stamp Act, the Massachusetts House of Representatives called on the other colonial assemblies to send delegates to a meeting in New York to consider making appeals to the king and Parliament for relief from the mounting burden of new taxes. Twenty-seven delegates from nine colonies met in October and protested what they saw as unjust taxation since they had no representation in Parliament, although they accepted Parliament's power to oversee colonial trade. Because of opposition in the colonies, the British government never effectively enforced the Stamp Act; and Parliament repealed it the following year. Although Parliament insisted that it had the right to lay taxes on the colonies, events gave colonial leaders a growing sense of their own power.

As part of colonial protests over Parliament's granting the East India Company a monopoly on the tea market in the colonies, a small group of colonists staged the Boston Tea Party in December of 1773. Parliament responded by passing the Coercive Acts of 1774. These laws restricted trade in and out of Boston and tightened control over other aspects of colonial life. The colonies responded by calling the first Continental Congress, which met in Philadelphia in September of 1774. When the delegates chosen by twelve colonial legislatures met (Georgia declined to participate), they passed resolutions against the Coercive Acts and in favor of boycotting British goods. Before the delegates departed, they resolved to hold another such Congress in May of 1775.

By the time that the Second Continental Congress met (with all thirteen colonies represented), British troops and American colonists had clashed in



Boston citizens burn a copy of the Stamp Act, 1765.

the Massachusetts towns of Lexington and Concord. The Congress began functioning as a revolutionary national government, even though neither the British king nor the colonies had authorized it to do so. The assembly named George Washington to lead an army that as yet Congress had not formed. Congress pleaded with Britain's King George III to end his hostile actions, and the delegates insisted on the right of the colonists to take up arms to defend their rights as British citizens. The Continental Congress met off and on over the next several months.

A growing sentiment among colonial political leaders, as well as among the general population in the colonies, was for breaking with Great Britain and becoming an independent nation. In June of 1776, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia proposed a resolution in Congress stating that "these united colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states." The delegates debated the resolution and named a committee to write a declaration of independence. Thomas Jefferson of Virginia did most of the writing. Congress debated and edited his draft. On July 2, 1776, Congress adopted Lee's resolution; and two days later the delegates approved the Declaration of Independence.

The Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence is the product of Enlightenment ideas driven by political realities. John Locke's thinking from 1690 had a profound influence on Jefferson and the other delegates. It had become "necessary," Jefferson said, for English subjects in the American colonies to create a new nation. This identity was what the laws of Nature and Nature's God "entitled" them to have.

Jefferson's document declared that certain truths were self-evident; that is, obviously true without requiring proof. All men are created equal. They have rights that government should not take away, and the purpose of government is to secure these rights. Government obtains its power from the consent of the governed; and when a government fails to secure these rights, the people have a right to alter or abolish the government and to create a new government that will secure them. People should not undertake this kind of change lightly, the Declaration noted; but the actions of the British king threatened the American people with the

shadow of despotism. Thus Congress as the people's representatives decided that it was their right and duty to reject the king's rule over them.

The bulk of the Declaration is a long list of wrongs and abuses that the king had committed. He had denied them their right to republican government and had interfered in their proper and legitimate trade, society, freedom, and security. In addition, Parliament had attempted to exert "an unwarrantable jurisdiction" over the colonies. The Declaration stated that the colonies were now free and independent states, united in their stand and free from any political connection to the British Crown.

The Declaration reflected two significant changes in the thinking of the colonists. First, they now saw themselves as Americans and no longer as British. Second, they began seeing themselves as a united country and not as thirteen autonomous entities. They would work out the form of their government over the next several years, but the Declaration provided the basic principles that would serve as the foundation for that government:

Signers of the Declaration of Independence leave Independence Hall and make an announcement to a waiting crowd, 1776.



- All men are created equal.
- Individuals have rights, including the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
- The purpose of government is to protect these rights.
- Government derives its power from the consent of the governed.
- God made men, He made them equal, and He endowed them with rights.

- God entitles a people to be a nation; all people answer to God for the rectitude of their intentions and actions; and it is right to appeal to God officially as a nation.

The stating and accepting of these principles was truly revolutionary in the history of human government.

The goal of the American Revolution was merely political freedom. The goal of Christ’s work was to bring about spiritual freedom for all people.

*It was for freedom that Christ set us free;
therefore keep standing firm
and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.
Galatians 5:1*

Assignments for Lesson 11

We Hold These Truths

Read the Declaration of Independence, pages 30-33.

Literature

Continue reading *Mornings on Horseback* by David McCullough. Plan to be finished with it by the end of Unit 4.

Project

Choose your project for Unit 3 and start working on it.

Student Review

If you are using this resource, answer the questions for Lesson 11.



Drafting the Articles of Confederation, 1777

Lesson 12

America as a Confederation

The best government is that which governs least.

—John L. O'Sullivan, 1837

From 1776 until 1789, the United States of America operated as a confederation or league of independent, sovereign states. The events of this period powerfully influenced the shape of the new national government that came into being under the Constitution.

New State Governments

With the Declaration of Independence, the thirteen colonial governments ceased to exist. The former colonies became independent states, so the states had to create new governments. All of the states developed written constitutions, and most of them did so by convening a new institution: the constitutional convention. Voters elected convention delegates, and the conventions submitted their finished work to the voters for their approval.

The new state constitutions reflected the thinking of the times. They generally included a bill or list of individual rights, such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and guarantees against unreasonable search and seizure. People generally recognized these rights as inviolable and deserving the state's protection. In reaction to problems that

colonies had encountered with colonial governors appointed by the king, the new state constitutions gave state governors few powers. Most governing authority in each state rested with an elected assembly. The courts that the states established were independent of domination by either the legislature or the governor.

Under these new state constitutions, only adult white males owning a certain amount of property or having enough money to pay taxes were able to vote. Elected representatives also had to own property. This property requirement reflected the belief that only those who owned property had enough of an interest in and investment in society and government to vote and to serve in government responsibly.

In Massachusetts, the home town of future President John Adams, who had been a member of the Continental Congress, elected him to be a delegate to a constitutional convention which would establish a Constitution for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The convention appointed a committee to draft a Constitution, and the committee gave Adams the responsibility of developing a document almost single-handedly. The resulting document, which the convention altered in

some ways, received approval by the voters in 1780 and is still in use. Since it predates the American Constitution by several years, the state Constitution of Massachusetts is the world's oldest founding document of government that is still in use.

The Articles of Confederation

The delegates to the Second Continental Congress began discussing a formal plan of union in June of 1776. It was not until November of 1777, however, that they finalized the Articles of Confederation and submitted them to the states. Congress operated as best it could while the state legislatures considered the Articles. The process of approval dragged on until the thirteenth and final state, Maryland, ratified the Articles in February of 1781. This officially put the Articles into effect.

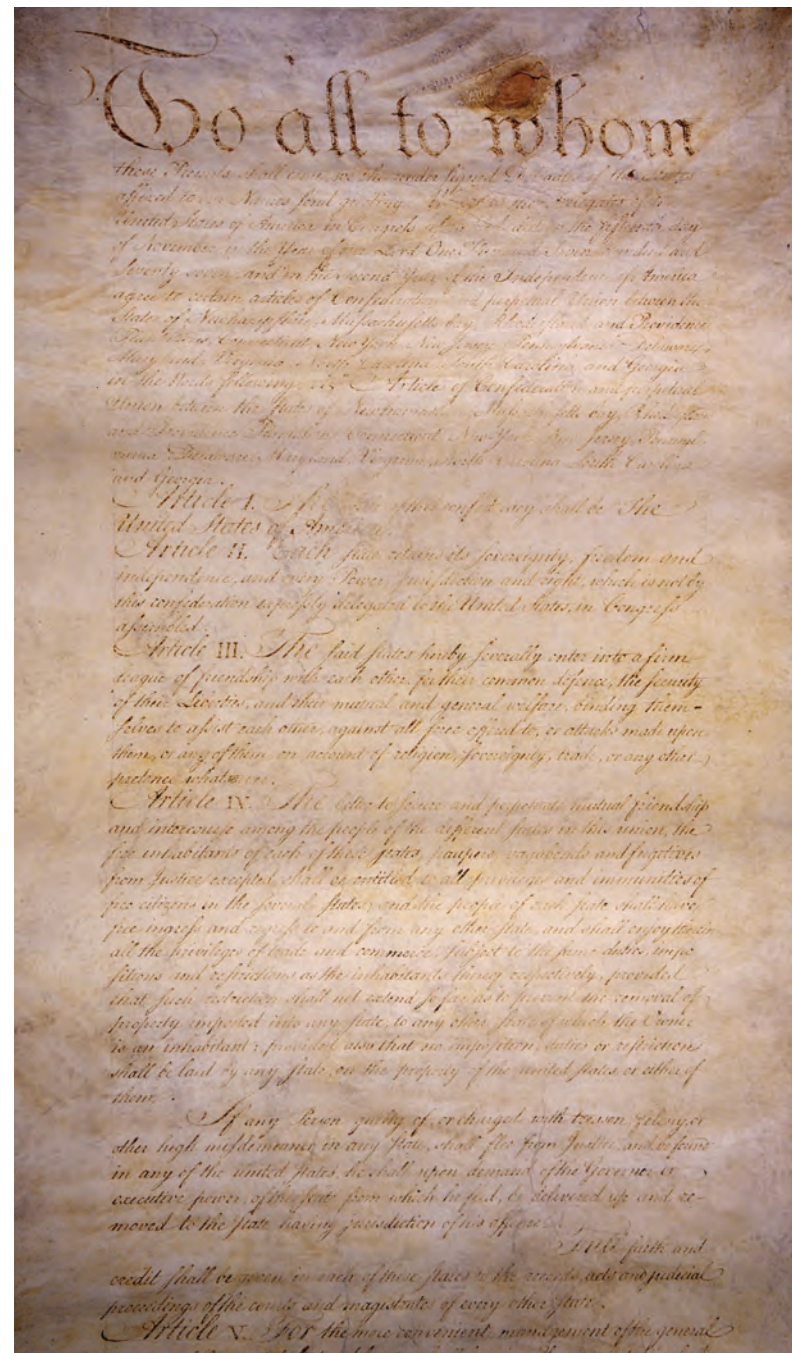
Some observers have criticized Congress for accomplishing little during this period, but that was exactly the purpose of the Articles. The main goal of the Articles was to create as limited a central government as possible. The Articles declared, "Each state retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every power, jurisdiction, and right, which is not by this Confederation expressly delegated to the United States, in Congress assembled." The purpose of the league of friendship among the states that the Articles formed was to provide for "their common defense, the security of their liberties, and their mutual and general welfare," needs that were especially acute in the context of the war against Great Britain.

Under the Articles, the states elected delegates to the national (which they called the Confederation) Congress each year as each state legislature saw fit. A state could have from two to seven representatives, but each state had only one vote in Congress. The states provided financial support for their own delegates. The Articles called for the states to contribute to a national treasury in proportion to the value of land in each state. Congress could not tax the people directly. Congress, not the individual states, had the authority to carry on relations with

other countries and to conduct war. Congress was also to govern relations among the states.

The Articles provided for no national executive. Congress was to elect one member as presiding officer or president every year, and a committee of one representative from each state oversaw operations when Congress was in recess. Any major issue required the approval of nine of the thirteen states, and any change to the Articles required the approval of all thirteen state legislatures before it could go into effect. The Articles made no provision for a national court system.

First Page of the Articles of Confederation



Under the Articles of Confederation, the United States successfully prosecuted the war for independence and concluded a peace treaty with Great Britain. The treaty recognized the Mississippi River as the country's western border and the Great Lakes as its northern border. A series of laws, culminating in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, established the pattern for organizing territories and admitting new states into the Union on an equal footing with the original thirteen. The national government also managed to keep thirteen skeptical, independent, war-weary, and economically uncertain sovereignties together as a nation.

Failings of the Articles

Congress under the Articles of Confederation tried to balance the widespread desire for a limited national government with the need for an effective national government. The Articles definitely provided for a limited government. Many, however, questioned its effectiveness. During the war, Congress had been unable consistently to provide George Washington with the men and material he requested and needed. The Continental dollar paper currency that Congress had authorized was worthless. Unable to raise significant revenue directly, Congress accumulated debt to pay for the War for Independence—debt that the government owed to soldiers, wealthy individual creditors, and foreign countries. The states, which had debts themselves, were reluctant to pay taxes to the central government and often ignored congressional requests for revenue.

During the 1780s, the national economy alternated between boom and bust. America lost significant trade revenue when Great Britain closed the West Indies to American goods. On the other hand, the U.S. developed trade with the Netherlands, Sweden, and other foreign nations. Unstable state and national currencies brought much uncertainty and hardship on the people. Some states began to clash over boundaries and fought small wars with

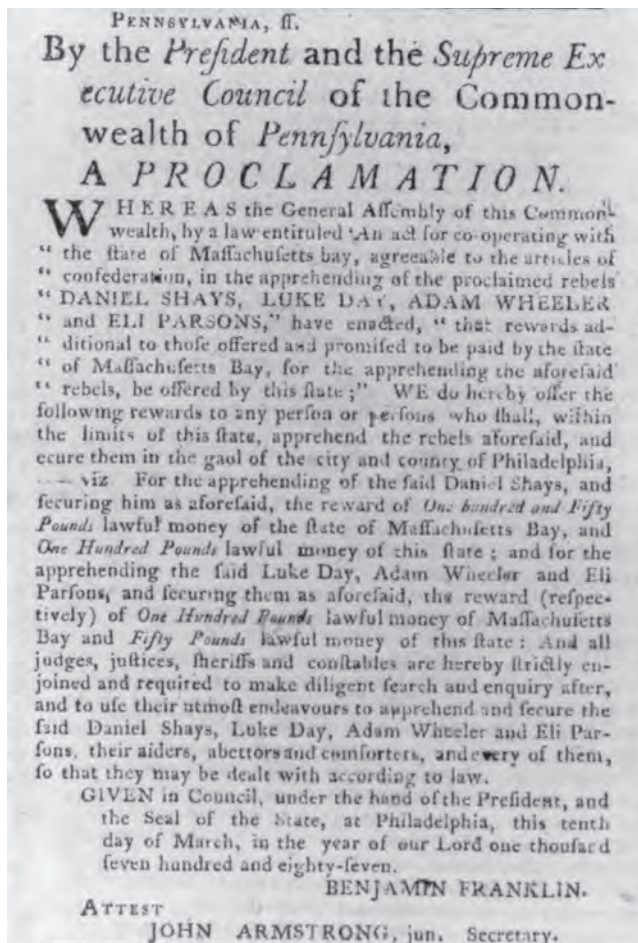
Indian tribes. The provisions in the Articles that required nine votes to pass significant laws and the agreement of all thirteen states to amend the Articles created a political paralysis that prevented almost all meaningful change.

The uncertainty and instability of the situation threatened the rights of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” for which the patriots had fought the Revolution. Political wrangling within the states led to uncertainty about the direction state governments would take. Few questioned the principles of freedom and limited government, but an increasing number doubted that freedom could continue if a strong leader or faction gained power and took control of government on either the state or national level.

In the winter of 1786, struggling farmers in western Massachusetts rebelled against what they felt was unfair treatment by creditors and the high taxes that the state imposed to try to pay its debts. When the state legislature did not provide any relief, Daniel Shays, a Revolutionary War veteran, led a band of armed men that forced courts to close in several towns and that seized a military arsenal in Springfield. The state militia (note: not a federal force) quickly dispersed the group, but leaders in many states sensed the possibility of anarchy. Now Americans were taking up arms against each other.

Many feared foreign threats as well. Great Britain continued to man outposts along the Great Lakes and maintained a strong presence in Canada. Spain owned Florida and controlled Louisiana and occasionally showed interest in extending its influence into what would later become Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Both Britain and Spain occasionally stirred up Indian tribes against the new American nation by describing to the Native Americans the threat that the United States posed to them. It was not at all clear that the United States could successfully defend its borders or the territory it now claimed.

In 1786, before Shays' Rebellion took place, representatives from five states met in Annapolis,



Benjamin Franklin, president of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, offered a reward of one hundred fifty pounds for the apprehension of Daniel Shays.

Maryland, to discuss problems dealing with sea trade and interstate commerce. The Annapolis Convention accomplished little, but the group went on record as favoring a revision of the Articles of Confederation, as the resolution put it, "to render the constitution of the federal government adequate to the exigencies of the Union." Early in 1787, Congress issued a call for a convention "for the sole and express purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation." Congress scheduled the convention to meet in May of 1787 in Philadelphia.

The former colonies had united as states to a sufficient degree to win the war for independence. The question remained, however, whether the states would unify sufficiently to win the peace. Most Americans feared a strong central government and wanted most political power to remain at the state and local levels. A few key leaders could see, however, that the existing system under the Articles might result in the very thing they most feared: anarchy followed by tyranny. The freedom for which Americans had sacrificed and died appeared at risk, and the continuance of republican government in America was by no means assured.

Newly independent Americans longed for the peace and unity in which the psalmist rejoiced:

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
for brothers to dwell together in unity!*

Psalms 133:1

Assignments for Lesson 12

We Hold These Truths

Read the Articles of Confederation, pages 34-40.

Literature

Continue reading *Mornings on Horseback* by David McCullough.

Project

Continue working on your project for Unit 3.

Student Review

If you are using this resource, answer the questions for Lesson 13.



Assembly Room in Independence Hall with Rising Sun Chair, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Lesson 13

A Rising and Not a Setting Sun

Doctr. FRANKLIN looking towards the Presidents Chair, at the back of which a rising sun happened to be painted, observed to a few members near him, that Painters had found it difficult to distinguish in their art a rising from a setting sun. I have, said he, often and often in the course of the Session, and the vicissitudes of my hopes and fears as to its issue, looked at that behind the President without being able to tell whether it was rising or setting: But now at length I have the happiness to know that it is a rising and not a setting Sun.

—James Madison, Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787,
notes on the last day of the Convention, September 17, 1787

The gathering of men that crafted our federal Constitution was a remarkable collection of talent, accomplishment, and political leadership. Thomas Jefferson praised them as a remarkable group of men. In all, the twelve state legislatures (Rhode Island did not participate) chose 73 men to be delegates, but only 55 attended some part of the deliberations. At the close of their efforts, 39 signed the finished Constitution. Most of the delegates were wealthy lawyers, planters, merchants, and the like; and many were well-educated. Seven had served as state governors, eight had signed the Declaration of Independence eleven years earlier, and 21 had fought in the war for independence. Their average age was 42.

The work of crafting a revision to the Articles of Confederation did not go easily. When the convention opened on May 14, 1787, not enough states were represented for the convention to begin

its work. That took until May 25. The delegates agreed to keep their deliberations secret, which meant that they worked in closed rooms through the hot Philadelphia summer.

The men even had conflicts over their basic purpose. They agreed that the Articles of Confederation needed revision, but some wanted as few revisions as possible while others desired to scrap the Articles and write an entirely new document. The decision to go forth with a new document pleased most of the delegates but not all of them. At one point, two of the three delegates from New York went home in frustration. The third, Alexander Hamilton, had to go home also even though he approved of the plan. Hamilton later returned and signed the finished Constitution.

Because the delegates to the convention agreed to work in secret, they kept no record of the proceedings except James Madison's shorthand notes. Madison

transcribed his notes in the evenings. Except for scattered comments by delegates in letters and other writings, Madison's notes are our only record of what happened in the convention. To promote unity in the new nation and to protect the reputations of the participants, Madison prevented the publication of his notes until the death of the last delegate, which turned out to be Madison himself in 1836.

A Series of Compromises

The delegates to the convention had not accomplished all they had in their lives by being passive and silent. The group included many strong personalities, and as a result the debates were often lively and sometimes heated. James Madison was a brilliant, scholarly, and eager thirty-six-year-old. Benjamin Franklin was eighty-one and contributed little except his wisdom and widely-respected presence. George Mason of Virginia was suspicious of all governmental power. Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts found fault with just about every idea that other delegates put forth. Mason and Gerry refused to sign the Constitution when the delegates finished their deliberations.

War hero George Washington was chairman. His presence gave legitimacy to the proceedings, but he participated little in the discussions. Two leading minds of the Revolution were not present. John Adams was serving as the new nation's minister to Great Britain, and Thomas Jefferson was in the same role in France.

Because of their sharply differing points of view, the delegates found that they had to craft a series of compromises to make any progress. Despite these compromises, several delegates and a significant portion of state leaders and the general population had serious reservations about the document.

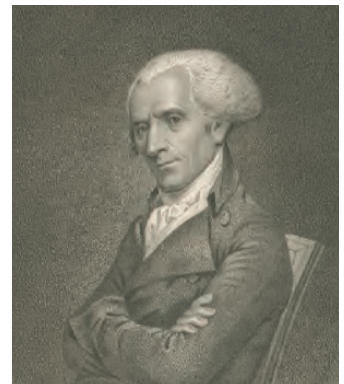
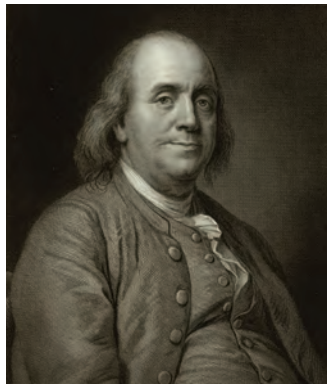
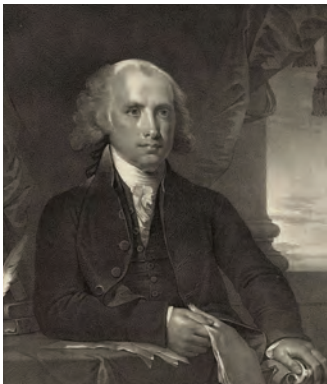
The Composition of Congress

The larger states had the most people and the biggest economies, and they wanted to have the most power in the new government. Smaller states feared that they would become irrelevant if the larger states had most of the power under the new Constitution. Smaller states generally preferred the system under the Articles that gave each state one vote in Congress.

The Virginia delegation put forth a proposal that called for representation in a lower house of Congress based on the states' population, with an upper house chosen by the lower house from nominees submitted by state legislatures. In response, the New Jersey delegates wanted to retain equal representation for the states in a unicameral (one-house) legislature.

Roger Sherman of Connecticut suggested the compromise that resolved this difference. He proposed that the lower house, the House of Representatives, be based on population. This pleased the large states. Meanwhile, each state would have two senators in the Senate (the upper house), and the state legislatures would choose the senators from their respective states. The senators would vote

Four Convention Delegates: James Madison, Benjamin Franklin, George Mason, and Elbridge Gerry



as individuals, but each state would have the same power in the Senate. This pleased the smaller states.

The arrangement for the Senate reflected the importance that state governments had at the time. The state legislatures had named representatives to the Continental Congress, to Congress under the Articles, and to the Constitutional Convention. Now they would name the members of one of the two bodies of Congress. This provision was an attempt at fairness, and it was also an attempt to win the support of state government leaders for the new Constitution, even though the state legislatures would not vote on the document. Many state political leaders served in both the state legislatures and in the state ratifying conventions.

The Presidency

The discussion of a national executive also caused sharp debate. The desire for the executive to have any significant power was a major departure from state practices with their governors and from the experience under the Articles where there was no executive that the people elected. Some delegates feared the power that an individual person might acquire, while others thought that an executive would help bring about a more effective government and better relations with other countries.

The compromise regarding the office of president involved strictly enumerating and limiting his powers, allowing Congress to override his veto, and making him subject to impeachment and removal from office.

A few delegates wanted the country's voters to elect the president, but the majority of delegates were not ready for that. James Wilson of Pennsylvania proposed a system of presidential electors, which has come to be called the electoral college, to select the president. Electors would be chosen by states, in the manner that each state legislature decided.

The purpose of the electoral college was for a few leading men to choose the president. However, over time state legislatures decided to choose electors by popular vote, and the electors almost always voted

for the candidate endorsed by their political party. Thus the electoral college became a semi-democratic method for choosing the chief executive.

Compromises on Slavery

Opinions of the delegates differed on slavery, though not as sharply as opinions differed seventy-five years later. Slavery was concentrated in the southern states. Although some northern delegates considered slavery a moral evil, they generally agreed that slavery was an issue for the states, not the national government, to address. This perspective allowed the Constitutional Convention and Congress to avoid dealing with a potentially explosive subject.

Slave state delegates wanted to count slaves as part of the population that determined representation in the House, even though no state gave slaves the right to vote for those representatives. Northerners thought that this position was hypocritical and insisted that the census include slaves to determine the direct taxes that Congress could impose on the states. A direct tax was revenue that Congress requested from the states based on population. Since slaves helped produce a state's wealth, Northerners thought that the census should include slaves to determine what a state owed to the federal government. Slave state delegates resisted this idea, hoping that they could lessen the burden of federal taxes on their states as a result. The compromise that the convention reached called for three-fifths or sixty percent of the slave population to be counted for both representation and taxation.

Another issue involved whether Americans could continue to import slaves. Slave state delegates wanted to be able to continue importing slaves, while other delegates wanted to stop the inhuman practice nationwide. Some state governments had already outlawed importing slaves. The compromise that the delegates reached called for the slave trade to end no sooner than 1808, twenty years after the expected adoption of the Constitution. Congress reserved the right to tax all slaves that were imported until the slave trade ended. The U.S. government



This painting of the signing of the United States Constitution hangs in the United States Capitol. The U.S. government commissioned it in observance of the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Constitution in 1940.

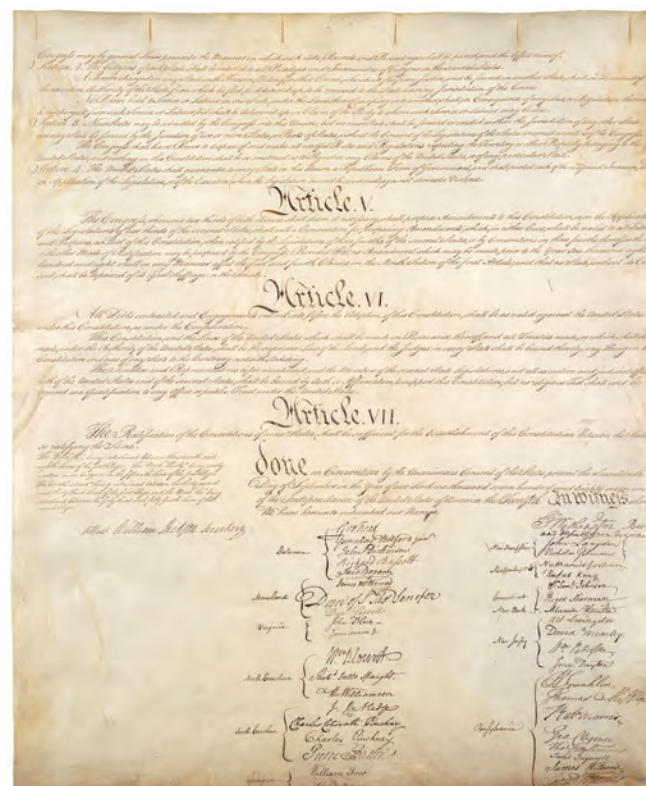
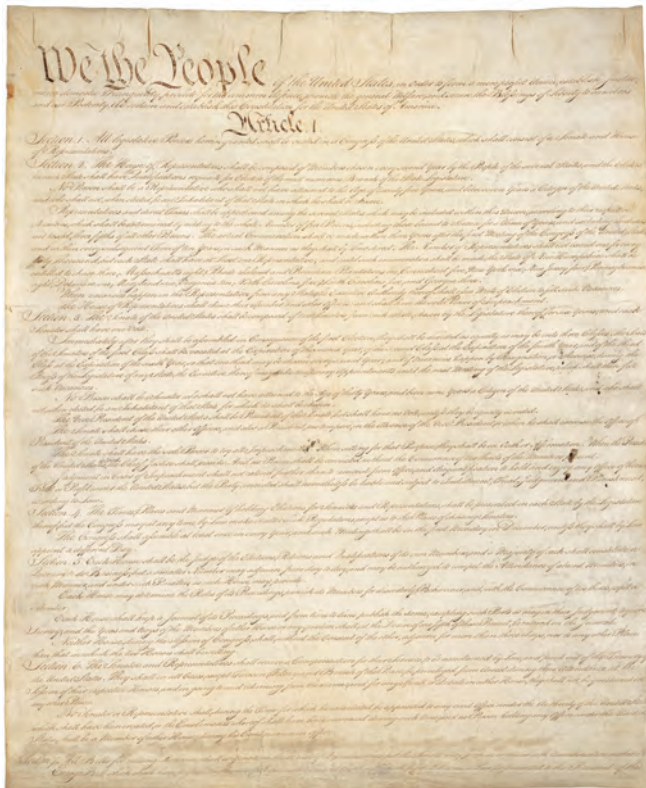
did in fact end the importation of slaves with a law that went into effect in 1808.

The compromises that the delegates reached on the issue of slavery show how compromise does not really satisfy the parties involved. The convention delegates' compromises regarding slavery did not resolve the issue; they only kicked the problem down the road for later leaders to address. The fact that the framers of the Constitution did not use the word slavery demonstrates the sensitivity many felt about the subject. The document merely refers to free persons and other persons. Supporters of slavery thought that the provisions in the Constitution went too far, while opponents of slavery thought that the final document did not go far enough. The Constitution did not include the word slavery until the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, which outlawed slavery.

Strength of the Central Government

The main question delegates had to decide was how strong the central government should be. Most Americans agreed that it ought to be strong enough to do what it needed to do, but not so strong that it threatened the rights and freedoms of the states and of individual Americans. Where that precise balance lay was the subject of debate. Many Americans feared a strong central government because of their experience as colonies of Great Britain. They wanted most political power to remain with the states. Others, however, focused on the weaknesses of the Confederation system (as outlined in the previous lesson) and argued for stronger powers for the central government. Both sides wanted an effective system of government that avoided tyranny and domination by a few, but they differed on the

The Constitution of the United States



A copy of the Constitution written on parchment paper is held by the National Archives and Records Administration and is on display in the National Archives Museum in Washington, DC.

best way to accomplish this goal. The outcome of the convention addressed the issue in several ways.

Delegated Powers. The Constitution gave only specific, enumerated, delegated powers to the national government. The Constitution was not an open invitation for the federal government to take over and do whatever Congress or the president wanted. The federal government was not to go beyond its enumerated powers, and the states retained all powers that the Constitution did not expressly give to the federal government.

A key word in understanding American government is *federalism*. This word describes a form of government which has divided sovereignty but is unified in its purpose. In the United States, the national government is sovereign in some areas of governmental activity while the governments of the fifty individual states are sovereign in other areas.

Separation of Powers. Within the operation of the federal government, the Constitution called for a separation of powers among the three branches of government (legislative, executive, and judicial) and for checks and balances among the branches to keep one branch from dominating the government. One example of the separation of powers is that the president is commander in chief of the armed forces but only Congress has the power to declare war. The separation of powers has often been described in this way: the legislature makes laws, the executive carries out laws, and the judiciary applies and interprets laws. However, the federal government has not always maintained this ideal distinction. For instance, executive orders by the president, administrative rules by government agencies, and rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court are not laws Congress has passed but all carry the force of law in practice.

Checks and Balances. The following examples illustrate the system of checks and balances that the three federal branches have on each other:

- The president negotiates treaties and makes appointments, but the Senate has to approve them before they go into effect.
- Congress passes laws, but the president can veto those laws—but then Congress can override the veto.
- The Supreme Court interprets laws, but the president nominates people to serve on the Court and the Senate must approve those nominations.
- The people and the electoral college choose the president, and federal judges can hold office for life, but Congress has the power to impeach and remove from office the president, the vice president, federal judges, and all civil officers of the United States government.

The result of the Constitutional Convention's deliberations was a national government that was stronger than what it had been under the Articles of Confederation, but not so strong that state governments withered into insignificance or that individuals feared for their personal and political liberties.

Ratification

The framers of the Constitution decided that approval by conventions in nine of the thirteen states would be sufficient for the new government to take effect. This decision addressed two significant issues. First, approval did not have to be unanimous, which eliminated a weakness of the Articles of Confederation. Second, the ratification vote would take place in conventions, not state legislatures. The delegates feared that the legislatures might resist what they saw as giving up a degree of their power to the proposed federal government, so the Constitution called for conventions that the people

chose directly. The framers hoped that a majority of voters would see the need for the Constitution and support its adoption.

The convention submitted its work to the states on September 28, 1787. The approval of at least nine states was not a foregone conclusion. Those favoring adoption, called nationalists or Federalists, were better organized and communicated their vision of government well. Their outstanding effort was a series of newspaper articles published in New York and circulated to other states. The eighty-five articles, all signed “Publius” (or Public Man), were actually written variously by James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay. The thoughtful and literate articles presented the authors’ appeal for a strong national government and tried to calm the fears of those suspicious of the proposed Constitution. Printers eventually collected these articles and published them as *The Federalist* or *The Federalist Papers*. Opponents generally carried the label of Antifederalists. In speeches, articles, and

state conventions, they warned of what they saw as the dangers of the proposed change. Sam Adams of Massachusetts and Patrick Henry of Virginia are the best-known opponents of ratification.

The ratification process moved slowly, extending into the summer of 1788. The conventions of only three states (Delaware, New Jersey, and Georgia) ratified the Constitution unanimously. The ninth state convention, that of New Hampshire, gave its approval by a 57-46 vote on June 21, 1788. However, the New York and Virginia conventions still had not taken a vote; and most people saw their approval as vital to the Constitution’s success. The Virginia convention approved 87-79 later in June, and New York assented 30-27 in July.

The process for creating the new government began. States held elections, and the first Congress met in March of 1789. However, another month passed before a quorum of members of Congress arrived in New York, the first national capital. With congressional approval of the electoral college, George Washington took the oath of office as the first president. Then the North Carolina ratifying convention approved the Constitution 194-77 in November of 1789, and finally defiant Rhode Island (which its critics dubbed “Rogue” Island) gave its approval in the closest ratification vote of any state, 34-32, in late May of 1790. Despite strong opposition and several close convention votes, the Constitution went into effect without further serious opposition.

The Constitutional Convention met in Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



A Lasting Document

The Constitution was a product of its times. It was a response to the Americans’ experience as colonies of Great Britain and to their knowledge of British and world history. It also reflected the Enlightenment view that reasonable men could peaceably form a government that operated responsibly and that respected the rights of individuals. It was not a truly democratic document because the framers mistrusted democracy, which

many called mob rule. The Constitution accepted the practice of slavery and did not provide for women and non-whites in the political process.

Yet the Constitution has lasted well beyond its own time and has guided our country admirably for over two hundred years. It has served as the model for constitutions in many other countries. The Constitution has been successful for a number of reasons. First, the framers tried to look past their own personal and contemporary interests to create a document that would continue to work even in changing circumstances. Second, they tried to make the will of the people (as best they understood it) paramount and to limit the powers of government. Third, the framers based the Constitution on ideals of fairness and equality under the law. They did not single out one group or class as privileged. Fourth, the document has the flexibility that has allowed later Americans to amend it when needed.

Perhaps most importantly, though, the American people have not wanted to change their basic form of government. Small movements for secession

arose in New England during the War of 1812 and again during the Mexican War, but little came of them. The country did suffer a major division with the secession of southern states in 1860-61 and the resultant Civil War. The horror of that period has all but completely eliminated revolution and rebellion as viable options in the American political system. Our differences have been many and sometimes deep, and our failings have been serious; but most people most of the time have been willing to play by the rules set forth in the United States Constitution.

A popular story says that, when the convention adjourned and Benjamin Franklin walked out into the street, a woman asked him what kind of government they had devised. "A republic, madam, if you can keep it," was supposedly his reply. Many people in that day feared the danger of tyranny by a single leader or a small group. The amazing story of America is that we have indeed kept our republic by our commitment to the principles embodied in the Constitution. By the grace of God we will keep it as long as we obey Jesus' command:

*In everything, therefore, treat people
the same way you want them to treat you,
for this is the Law and the Prophets.
Matthew 7:12*

Assignments for Lesson 13

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|-----------------------------|---|
| We Hold These Truths | Read <i>The Federalist</i> Number 2, pages 41-44, and excerpts from Patrick Henry's comments at the Virginia Ratifying Convention, pages 45-49. |
| Literature | Continue reading <i>Mornings on Horseback</i> by David McCullough. |
| Project | Continue working on your project for Unit 3. |
| Student Review | If you are using this resource, answer the questions for Lesson 13. |



Stowe, Vermont

Lesson 14

America's Foundation of Faith

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. . . . [W]ith a firm reliance on the Protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

—Declaration of Independence

We The People of the State of New York, grateful to Almighty God for our Freedom, in order to secure its blessings, do establish this Constitution.

—New York State Constitution

We, the People of the State of California, grateful to Almighty God for our freedom, in order to secure and perpetuate its blessings, do establish this Constitution.

—California State Constitution

We, the people of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, grateful to Almighty God for the civil, political and religious liberties we enjoy, and invoking the continuance of these blessings, do ordain and establish this Constitution.

—Kentucky State Constitution

To perpetuate the principles of free government, insure justice to all, preserve peace, promote the interest and happiness of the citizen and of the family, and transmit to posterity the enjoyment of liberty, we the people of Georgia, relying upon the protection and guidance of Almighty God, do ordain and establish this Constitution.

—Georgia State Constitution

The thought world in which the United States began included faith in God and in His continuing work in the world. The Founding Fathers and the vast majority of Americans at the time believed in God. They wanted

and expected the acknowledgment and worship of God to be a vital part of American life. As we discussed earlier in this curriculum, the Bible was an important building block for the American system of law and government.

At the same time, the founders established the United States as a country that did not have an official, national religion. Every citizen was free to worship or not to worship as his conscience saw fit. Freedom of religion and the guarantee that Congress would not establish an official religion are in the First Amendment to the Constitution.

In understanding the role that religion played in the founding of our country, we need to understand the balance that was present at its founding. Religion, especially the Christian religion, was an essential element in the founding of the colonies. The men who led the national government recognized God in their lives and in the life of the nation. Yet these same men, in keeping with Enlightenment thought, consciously chose not to make the United States an officially Anglican, or Catholic, or Congregational, or Reformed nation. They saw the problems that established religions had caused in Europe. Part of the American experiment was a reliance on God from the heart and not a reliance on the establishment of an official religion.

Religion in the Colonies

The spread of Christianity was a motivation for the founding of several of the colonies in America. The charter issued by James I for the Jamestown colony, founded in 1607, said:

We, greatly commending and graciously accepting of their desires to the furtherance of so noble a work [the desire of the men previously named to found a colony] which may, by the providence of Almighty God, hereafter tend to the glory of His Divine Majesty in propagating of Christian religion to such people as yet live in darkness. . . .

The Mayflower Compact, the founding document of the Plymouth colony signed in 1620, read in part:

In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, . . . having undertaken for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith, and the honor of our king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia; do by these presents, solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic, for our better ordering and preservation, and furtherance of the ends aforesaid. . . .

In the Introduction to *Exploring Government*, we referred to the Massachusetts Bay colony and the mission of its leader, Governor John Winthrop, for that colony to be a city on a hill.

The Fundamental Orders of Connecticut of 1639 said:

For as much as it hath pleased Almighty God by the wise disposition of his divine providence so to order and dispose of things; and well knowing where a people are gathered together the word of God requires that to maintain the peace and union of such people there should be an orderly and decent government established according to God, to maintain and preserve the liberty and purity of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus which we now profess, as also, the discipline of the churches. . . .

One of the reasons that people founded several of the colonies was to provide religious freedom for Europeans who had faced persecution for their faith. Most of the colonies had official established churches.



Painting of the First Prayer in Congress in September of 1774

Religion in the Founding Documents

The Declaration of Independence, which announced the creation of our country, makes several references to God: “Nature’s God”; “all men are created equal” (note: This says that man did not evolve. Equality is the result of God’s having created us); “they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights”; and the reference to Divine Providence quoted at the beginning of this lesson. The existence of God and the significance of His creating man were important elements in the rationale for the origin of our country.

The Articles of Confederation refer to “the Great Governor of the world.” Twice it notes a date by using the phrase “in the year of our Lord.” The Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which established the pattern for territories becoming states, said, “Religion, morality and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall be forever encouraged.” Thus, the Ordinance not only endorsed religion; but it also endorsed the teaching of religion and morality in schools.

Religious Activities in the New Nation

The young nation followed two principles in matters of religion: (1) religious freedom with no established religion, and (2) an official, stated recognition of and dependence on God. The founding generation saw no conflict in holding to both of these principles.

The first meeting of the Continental Congress in 1774 opened with a prayer. The tradition of chaplain-led prayer in Congress continued into the government under the Constitution. Congress authorized chaplains to serve the Continental Army. Many times during the war for independence, Congress called for the people of the country to observe days of prayer. Several of the new states continued to have an established church for a number of years after the Revolution.

Immediately after passing the First Amendment in 1789, Congress called for a day of thanksgiving to God. Presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison attended church services held in the House of Representatives chamber. Church services continued there until after the Civil War.

Religious Beliefs of the Founders

Many of the Founding Fathers openly avowed their faith. We will mention just a few. George Washington was an active Episcopalian and made numerous references to God in his speeches. He confessed his dependence on prayer during the Revolutionary War. Washington took the oath of office for the presidency by holding his hand on a Bible, and on his own initiative he added the phrase “so help me God” when he completed the oath prescribed in the Constitution.

John Adams had an active and vibrant faith that guided his entire life. He once wrote in a letter:

What has preserved this race of Adamses in all their ramifications in such numbers, health, peace, comfort, and mediocrity [meaning evenness]? I believe it is religion, without which they would have been rakes, fops, sots, gamblers, starved with hunger, or frozen with cold, scalped by Indians, etc., etc. etc., been melted away and disappeared. . . .

John Jay, who wrote some of *The Federalist* essays and who served, among other positions, as the first chief justice of the Supreme Court, was a staunch Episcopalian. He served for a time late in his life as president of the American Bible Society. The following two quotes by John Jay appeared in *The Federalist* Number 2:

Providence has in a particular manner blessed [our country] with a variety of soils and productions, and watered it with innumerable streams, for the delight and accommodation of its inhabitants.

Providence has been pleased to give this one connected country to one united people—a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the

same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs. . . .

However . . .

We must recognize, however, that the practices and beliefs of the colonists and Founding Fathers were not exactly the same as those conservative Christians keep today. For example, the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies wanted religious freedom only to a degree. Colonial leaders wanted freedom from the Anglican Church, but they wanted tight control over the religious practices of the colonists. A conflict over teaching and practice in the Massachusetts Bay colony led to Roger

This engraving of George Washington praying during the Revolutionary War adorns the exterior of Federal Hall in New York City.



Williams founding Rhode Island on the basis of more complete religious liberty.

Not all of the Founding Fathers had an orthodox Christian faith. Benjamin Franklin, who at times had positive things to say about God, was a skeptic concerning Christianity and led a sometimes immoral lifestyle. Thomas Jefferson, in classic Enlightenment style, literally cut passages that had to do with miraculous events out of a copy of the Gospels. His strong support of the French Revolution, without condemning the atheistic stance of its leaders, brought him much criticism during his political career. Scholars and researchers today generally agree that Jefferson fathered a child by one of his slaves. Thomas Paine, whose writings helped to stir the fires of revolution, believed in God but was a harsh critic of the practice of Christianity.

Why does the Constitution not mention God when the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation had both mentioned Him? Various people have offered answers to that question. Supposedly Alexander Hamilton, perhaps

in a humorous vein, said, “We forgot.” Some observers have stated that Americans had clearly stated their reliance on God by that time, even with no mention of God in the Constitution. Others suggest that the omission was a deliberate attempt to step away from any religious references whatsoever in the new government. However, the fact that the Constitution does not mention God does not mean that no government activity can mention Him. The founding generation had clearly set the precedent of reliance on God, and the practices of the new government showed that the founders believed that official expressions of faith in God were compatible with the non-establishment of religion.

Few people in Revolutionary America declared themselves to be atheists (few today do either, for that matter). Some Americans, though not the large number that typical secular textbooks suggest, had adopted the religion of Deism. This belief system held that God had created the world but was not directly involved in its ongoing processes. The vast majority of Americans and American political leaders

George Washington, with his hand on the Bible, is sworn in as the first president of the United States, 1789.



believed in God, and by far most people considered themselves Christians. They did not want or expect the national government to declare an established religion or church, but neither did they see the national government expressing Christian faith to be the same thing as establishing a religion.

Freedom to Believe

Most Americans today would not endorse every position of the founders on every issue. For instance, many of the founders accepted slavery, and few of them thought that women should be able to vote.

However, on some matters the founders were more correct than the majority of our generation. Their perception of the proper and important role of religion in public life is one of these issues.

In the early years of our nation, the government of the United States openly avowed faith in and dependence on God. The movement away from that practice in modern times has weakened our nation morally and spiritually. We can pray that Americans will reawaken to the reality of God and the difference He makes in our individual and national lives. We will be a stronger nation if this happens.

*For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the wicked will perish.
Psalm 1:6*

Assignments for Lesson 14

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| We Hold These Truths | Read "The Religious Roots of Freedom" by M. Stanton Evans, pages 50-57. |
| Literature | Continue reading <i>Mornings on Horseback</i> by David McCullough. |
| Project | Continue working on your project for Unit 3. |
| Student Review | If you are using this resource, answer the questions for Lesson 14. |

We the People

of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Article 1

Section 1. All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

Section 2. The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.

First Page of the United States Constitution

Lesson 15

We the People of the United States

In expounding the Constitution of the United States, every word must have its due force and appropriate meaning; for it is evident from the whole instrument, that no word was unnecessarily used, or needlessly added.

—Chief Justice Roger B. Taney in *Holmes v. Jennison* (1840)

The framers of the Constitution included a paragraph at the first of the document that set forth its origin and purpose. The Preamble not only gave the rationale for the Constitution but also sought to win the hearts of the people. In this lesson we will examine the phrases of the Preamble to understand the original intention of the framers as to the scope and meaning of the Constitution.

The Preamble

We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

We the People of the United States

The first phrase tells us the source of the American government: the people. Of course, the delegates to the Constitutional Convention framed the document; but they wanted the Constitution to be the best expression they could devise of the will of the people. The Constitution was the result of a relatively new idea: government by consent of the governed. From the initial call for a Constitutional Convention to the ratification of the Constitution and the election of representatives under the Constitution, the people have delegated specific powers to elected representatives. The union of states and the federal government come from the people, not the states. It is true that the people acted as states in ratifying the Constitution, but the document speaks as the will of the American people. The Constitution is an example of a covenant or contract. The people of America entered into a covenant with each other and with those who serve in government.

The short phrase “We the people” encompasses a large meaning. Even at the birth of the nation, the people came from a wide assortment of ethnic backgrounds. Most were English, but many were Scots-Irish (and they would never let you think of them as English!). Some were Swedish, Dutch, or German. All of those who were involved in writing the Constitution were immigrants or descendants of immigrants.

Because of man’s sins of jealousy, hatred, and discrimination, unity is not always easy to accomplish. We find ways to separate from others and to be suspicious of others. One manifestation of this in our country and in other countries has been sectionalism. Even in the early days of the nation, people in the different sections of the country had different priorities and viewed those from other sections with disdain.

Another attitude that has kept Americans from having complete unity has been racism. It took a long time for black Americans to begin to enter into the American dream. To a great degree, Native Americans never have been invited to the table. These truths tell us that we still have a way to go in fulfilling the noble ideal of “We the people.”

In Order to Form a More Perfect Union

There follows in the Preamble a series of purpose clauses, telling why the people created this Constitution. The first reason was to form a more perfect union. The Articles of Confederation had declared that the Union was perpetual. Of course, people could break the Union apart if they wished; but the intention of the founders was for it to be permanent. However, the Union faced serious problems coming out of the Revolutionary War because of the inadequate form of its national government. The framers saw this moment as the opportunity to establish a better and longer-lasting republic.

It is a compliment to the wisdom and vision of the founders that the Constitution has lasted as long as it has. When the country began, it consisted of thirteen states along the Atlantic coast with territories to the west that stretched to the Mississippi River. Most of the population lived in a narrow band of settlements along the coast. Some of the framers had a dim dream of the nation filling the continent, but it was by no means certain that this would happen. It did happen, however; and the Union formed in

This giant flag was on the baseball field during the national anthem at game two of the World Series in San Francisco, California, 2010.



1776 and made more perfect by the Constitution has continued. In recent times improved travel and electronic communication have brought the citizens of this vast Union closer together.

Establish Justice

The Constitution called for a federal or national system of law and courts. The Articles of Confederation had not provided for this. A civil society requires that individuals and their rights be protected and that wrongdoers be prosecuted. A system of justice implies the recognition that justice exists, that absolute standards of right and wrong prevail, and that the law applies fair punishments to the guilty.

Perhaps we appreciate a system of justice most when we see what happens where one does not exist. In such cases an individual citizen is helpless against the power of those who have money or who exert influence in the courts.

Insure Domestic Tranquility

Just as a civil society needs a system of justice, it also needs domestic order. Many feared that events such as Shays' Rebellion would continue to happen if America did not have a stronger national authority. Indeed, after the adoption of the Constitution other small rebellions did occur; but authorities quickly quelled them. We could not live successfully in a society characterized by frequent turmoil and rebellions.

Provide for the Common Defense

Another basic and essential function of government is the defense of the homeland. The people of the United States had to defend their newly-won freedom. Military activities under

World War II Veteran at the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C.



the Articles had not been as effective or efficient as many had wanted. The defense of the country depended in large part on state militias and on the states responding to requests for funds by Congress. During the war, General Washington often did not know who was under his command, how many troops he had, or when they might leave and go home. States often ignored requests Congress made for funds, and this uncertainty coupled with the resultant dependence on foreign loans spurred the framers to pursue a different course.

Military spending is now one of the largest expenditures of the federal government; and military preparedness is a constant issue before Congress, the president, and the people. World War II was the last time that Congress declared war; but Korea, Vietnam, Operation Desert Storm, the war on terrorism, and other smaller actions have made “the common defense” a major function of government nonetheless.

Of course, defending the country’s interests through diplomacy is preferable to engaging in war. For many years the United States maintained an isolation from the rest of the world and survived quite well. We live in an age, however, where our vital national interests involve areas and issues beyond our shores. It is also an age when hard-to-identify enemies can wage an undeclared war on us, even using domestic American airliners to attack our people and our national sovereignty. The common defense involves much more than simply training and maintaining the armed forces.

Promote the General Welfare

This is a broad phrase that says the federal government helps promote the general well-being of the country. Some have used this clause to justify the federal government’s efforts to ensure the safety of foods and drugs on the American market, the safety of places where Americans work, the safety of cars sold in America and those who travel in them, and other programs.

We should note that the phrase refers to the general welfare and not to the welfare of specific groups. Trying to identify and provide assistance for specific groups opens up the government to an endless stream of demands from all sorts of groups to help their individual welfare, regardless of what such assistance might mean for the population as a whole.

And Secure the Blessings of Liberty to Ourselves and Our Posterity

Liberty offers benefits to those who have it. American patriots fought the Revolution to obtain the blessings of liberty. The framers perceived that the unrest and uncertainty in the country under the Articles threatened liberty’s blessings. The founders believed in the power of liberty as opposed to coercion to accomplish good.

They wanted these blessings of liberty not only for that generation but for their posterity, for generations to come. Just looking out for themselves was too short a view. Our actions will be different if we are concerned about those who will come later, even after we are gone, instead of just our own personal, immediate interests. The framers had this longer view in mind.

Some commentators have applied this concern for posterity to at least two crucial issues today. First, some have used the state’s interest in posterity to argue that government should limit or ban abortion. If the law permits abortion, we will have less posterity to whom we can pass along the blessings of liberty. The Supreme Court considered this “posterity” argument in *Roe v. Wade*, but decided that the compelling interest of posterity extended only to the point of a fetus’ viability (ability to live outside of the womb). Thus the Court decided that a younger fetus did not have protection as part of our posterity.

A second application of the state’s interest in posterity involves environmental policy. If we do not protect our natural resources now, our posterity will not have them to use and enjoy later. If we do not protect our forests, short-sighted developers



concerned only about immediate profits will likely consume them. If we do not protect our air and water, our posterity will live in an unhealthy environment. We have seen enough smog and other pollutants in our own country and in other parts of the world to know that failing to protect the environment causes genuine problems. At the same time, each generation should be able to use its country's natural resources safely and responsibly. Just because a special-interest group says, for example, that an oil pipeline in Alaska is harmful to the environment does not make it true. The development of a careful yet practical environmental policy is one difficult task that the government has in securing the blessings of liberty to our posterity.

Do Ordain and Establish This Constitution for the United States of America

To ordain is to create or to invest officially. The Constitutional Convention created the Constitution and set it in place as the foundational law of the land, subject to ratification by the people of the states through their conventions. The document created a national government and outlined that government's relations to the states.

In the next unit we begin discussing the components of this remarkable document: what the words mean, what the framers intended, how the federal government has applied the provisions of the Constitution, and how the federal government works today. As we study the Constitution, remember that you and your family are part of "We the people." This is your government. You have a responsibility and an obligation to help our government be the best it can be "for ourselves and our posterity." The people of one generation have a responsibility and an opportunity to teach, guide, and bless those who come after them.

*They will come and will declare His righteousness
to a people who will be born, that He has performed it.
Psalm 22:31*

Assignments for Lesson 15

Literature Continue reading *Mornings on Horseback* by David McCullough.

Project Finish your project for Unit 3.

Student Review If you are using this resource, answer the questions for Lesson 15 and take the quiz for Unit 3.



Detail from Rainy Day, Boston, Childe Hassam (American, 1885)

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