Volume I: Issue 2

The BEACON *Lite*

A Condensed Curriculum of Constitutional Study

Clause Discussed:

• Preamble

Concepts Discussed:

• Ordain and Establish this Constitution

The **Preamble** of the Constitution announces:

> "We the People of the United States…do *ordain* and *establish* this Constitution."

Establish means to firmly set up in permanent fashion. The verb *ordain* is derived from ecclesiastical origins (as in *ordained* minister) and means to proclaim approval and to order something be done.

If the Framers had no desire to intone the Constitution with religious sentiment, they could have easily replaced *ordain* with another word without religious connotation in both the Preamble and in Article III (Article III, Section 1 discusses Courts inferior to the supreme Court being ordained and established by Congress).

In Thomas Jefferson's 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist association, Jefferson writes of "a wall of separation between Church and State". This wording is referenced today by people who mandate that all reference to God be excised from all government-related activities.

Conclusions given in a political letter would not normally add much to such a discussion, but given the stature of the author of the Danbury letter, should here at least be considered.

The **Declaration of Independence**, also written by Jefferson, pronounces:

> "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."

The Republic which is the United States stands upon the cornerstone that men are *created* by their *Creator* who *endows* themwith *unalienable Rights*.

The fundamental organic document of our country declares that God (literally; *Nature's* God) bestows and bequeaths man with man's fundamental rights.

With profound thought and careful effort, Jefferson wrote the Declaration in 1776 to a world-wide audience ("let Facts be Submitted to a candid *world*…appealing to the Supreme Judge of the *world* for the rectitude of our intentions"). Jefferson expected the Declaration to be a highly venerated document consulted and examined through the ages.

The fact that it remained one of Jefferson's personal highlights unto his death is evident from Jefferson's directive as to content of the inscription on his tombstone which reads:

> "Here was buried
> THOMAS JEFFERSON,
> Author of the Declaration of American Independence, of
> The Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom,
> and Father of the University of Virginia."

Jefferson's many other political accomplishments, including Governor of Virginia, (first) Secretary of State, (second) Vice-President of the United States, and (third) President of the United States were not even there mentioned.

That Jefferson meant to a contradict the words of the Declaration 25 years after it was written by a one-page political letter to a select audience is an absurdity few propose.

The Constitution provides the form and framework for a structure of government capable of better securing our inalienable rights endowed by God.

To propose that the very government originated to secure man's God-given rights must remove all reference to God in its activities (if not to deny God's very existence) contradicts the very purpose of government.

If our rights do not originate from an entity superior to government — God — then by default, the

government becomes the sole guardian of such rights. As guardian, it will eventually assume the role to define those rights. Rights *defined* by government amount in time to mere *privileges*.

In opposition, man's government is always subservient to God and His authority. Any law passed by government would always stand inferior to rights endowed by God — no amount of cunning and artifice (but one) by the government could hope to transgress rights which the government could not touch.

Jefferson's rough draft of the Danbury letter referred to the Church of England and the British King "as the legal head of its church".

The single route of overcoming the obstacle of government not being able to reach God's Law was taken by England in the 16th century to combine government with the concept of the *Divine Right of Kings*. This notion gave the government the moral authority to act not only as the government, but also as God's spokesman on earth.

Harsh and unjust laws were passed by the British Monarch under his dual authority as King and as the Head of the Church. It became increasingly difficult for the British Subjects to offer defense against such laws, for they could appeal to neither law nor morality because the King commanded both. It was not simply unlawful to break one of the King's commands, it was heresy.

The First Amendment's admonition that Congress "shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion" and the doctrine of separation of church and State are written against this proposal of a State-established church.

The Constitution shows further evidence of its religious roots in discussing *Oaths*. An sworn *oath* represents a spoken pledge bearing responsibility to God, held to be the strongest tie on one's honor.

In mandating proper authority to act, all Legislative Members and Executive & Judicial Officers are called upon in Article VI of the Constitution to be "bound by *oath* or *affirmation* to support this Constitution".

Oaths and affirmations fulfill contractual purposes. The Constitution sets up a structure for a collective government of the States.

The oath and affirmation are verbally-binding promises made by the agents agreeing to the terms and the conditions of the constitutional contract, completing the proper delegation of authority.

The significance of the mandate that all government officials and legislative members "shall be *bound*…to support this Constitution" must be understood.

A look elsewhere in the Constitution to where the term *bound* was used is helpful to understand the implications of that term.

With indentured servants (those *bound* to *service*) and slaves (those who were *bound* to *labour*) being *bound* (see Article I, Secion 2, Clause 3) gives understanding of the significance and to the degree that the Legislators, Congressmen, and executive and judicial officers are *bound* to support the Constitution.

Government officials being *bound* to support the Constitution shows that in America, legislative members and government officers are really meant to be government *servants*.

The final example of the Constitution's evidence of religious sentiment shows the deepest embedding of such thought into our culture. **Article VII, Clause 2** of the Constitution reads:

> "Done in Convention by the Unanimous Consent of the States present the Seventeenth Day of September *in the Year of our Lord* one thousand seven hundred and Eighty seven."

One Thousand seven hundred and Eighty seven Years gives the best evidence of how very long Christ's influence has been felt, not only America, but the world over. That we are currently (when this issue is being finalized) *in the Year of our Lord* two thousand and five shows His continued influence yet today.

Those years referred to more than twenty centuries ago use the postscript *B.C.* to denote *Before Christ*; those after the birth of Christ use *A.D.*, standing for *anno Domini* (Latin for *in the Year of our Lord*).

Using yearly dates for reckoning of time directly acknowledges Jesus as our Lord and Savior because He is the ultimate reference point for all such dates. That our government can reference a calendar year in any document concedes its acceptance of the existence of God by way of His Son, Jesus.

Putting up a calendar with the Year (of our Lord) written across it is no less a sign of faith than putting up a copy of the Ten Commandments.

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