

## Was the United States Constitution a Good Idea?

by Ronald W. Kirk

The Constitution is under constant erosive attack by the Left, and has suffered so for many decades. As R.J. Rushdoony often stated, it is a war between two kingdoms: The kingdom of man versus the kingdom of God. The kingdom of man will allow no limits over it. The State is god. The kingdom of God requires liberty within limits—justice against criminal sin. In light of man’s sinfulness, true liberty can only succeed when the Savior generally governs men’s hearts. Liberty exists when men voluntarily limit their personal freedom. Liberty requires that men do not licentiously presume upon their neighbors in the name of freedom. The Constitution was godly-minded man’s attempt to maximize freedom, while limiting the incursions of evil either externally by other nations, or internally through the ambitions of men. The Founders intended the United States Constitution function as a governor on man’s sinful conduct in high places, while permitting the authority necessary for the national defense and justice.

What did the original United States Constitution mean to accomplish? It intended to form national government strong enough to deal with matters which the individual states could not effectively handle. These were essentially two things. The first was a united and singular defense against attack by other nations. Union counters the tactic of divide and conquer. The Constitution gave means to wield the collected resources of the states to wage war when necessary. The second purpose provided peaceful means to resolve differences between states without warfare. To be a safe nation, we must get along with each other internally. In a Christian sense, warfare is an appeal to heaven to decide between thee and me. Laws mutually agreed upon, with resort to legal courts when things go wrong, offer a better alternative to war. When misunderstanding or malice occurs between parties, the justice system provides a correction. With only a few exceptions, such as measurement standards and ensuring honest money—means to help establish good relationship among Americans—all other matters of government under the Constitution remained with the states or the people.

The beneficial heritage left by the original United States Constitution ought to be obvious to believing Christians. No nation has been more free in history, or more prosperous. No nation fielded more missions or planted more churches. No nation has committed more resources to philanthropy.

As solidly positive a life under the Constitution we have known, some sincere, Biblically minded Christians still oppose it. Indeed, there were always Christians who opposed it, including the great Patrick Henry of the “Give me Liberty or give me Death” speech. The reason? The Constitution potentially collected power to would be demagogues and tyrants. We must admit that the anti-federalists from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and since then were correct in some ways, but arguably not for the reasons they cite. Was the Constitution a bad idea?

Certainly, constitutionally protected liberty has all but vanished. Justice is often a joke. The demagogues regulate our conduct to the hilt, and Congress spends our money as if in

inexhaustible supply. Our current president barely goes through the formerly requisite motions for executive action, virtually bypassing the Constitution at will. Still, I argue the problem is not with the document, however imperfect its original implementation, and imperfect its present form.

What is missing? The true problem with the decline of the Constitution lies with its *constituents*. The problem is simple. Sinful men, if they can, will find ways around laws—God’s laws, man’s laws—it doesn’t matter. By definition, a sinful man is above law. His is the original sin, thinking he can be as God. Thus, as god, sinful man will not, and in his fallen condition, cannot accept limits to his sinful ways, except as his personal enculturation or external constraints bind him. It is a gift of God that enculturation slows down even ambitious sinners. The *common grace* of Christian theology inhibits evil. Child education is particularly useful in this sense. The bad guys cannot entirely overcome their early good training. However, over time evil expression builds upon evil expression, bad example upon bad example. The Constitutional usurpers have worked at its undermining for over two hundred years. Cleverly, their strategy effectively co-opts America’s educational system. The would-be tyrants use the political system to advantage wherever they can. They believe in what they do. Sinners do what sinners do. Sinful political leaders do what sinful political leaders do. After acculturated self-restraint, the only effective limit on the sinner is whatever effective adversity the good guys can muster against them. The original U.S. Constitution with its many limits on power served to pose just such adversity to such intended evil. America’s system of civil government is complex and difficult to change on purpose. Complexity hinders usurpation. The problem is that no governing document or agreement can hinder evil if no one administers it, if no one keeps it.

Over time, American education became increasingly secular, translated humanistic. Horace Mann introduced the concept into mainstream schooling in the early 1800s, that the schools did not need religion but could inculcate good democratic ways in young minds and hearts upon merely scientific grounds. The secularizing and debilitating effects of the French Revolution took its toll. Darwinism gained a foothold. Marxism gained a successful strategy. The socialists managed to hijack higher education almost entirely, and through the teachers they produced, child education. Even Christian teacher education programs continue in the great mainstream to teach Darwinism as the foundations for their educational theories, however indirectly, in the form of behavioral psychology. A pagan America leaves no America.

Yet none of this could have happened if well-educated, trained, and wise American Christians had generally maintained vigilant involvement in civil affairs, in education, in culture. Can Satan overtake God? Or is it true that of the increase of Christ’s government there is no end (Isaiah 9:7)? The sad fact is that a new variety of the Christian faith replaced the old Calvinism that kept its eye on eternity and the hand on the plow and rifle, as it were. Christians simply abandoned their stewardship of Christian liberty which is the best foundation for the Gospel work of the Great Commission. We Christians left the great experiment in Christian liberty without leadership, without vision, and thus without a future—unless we wake up now.

This is no judgment or condemnation to Christians in this matter, for according to Scriptures, there is none in Christ Jesus. Yet before we allow the complete and utter looting of our Christian liberty and resources for the Gospel, Christians must stand up and get involved. The kingdom comes without observation. That is, God Himself brings all to fulfillment, not men. Politics are not the whole solution. However, God expects us to walk by faith, enter the fray, and wait for Him to bring the fruit of righteousness. This is exactly the case of early America. It can and should be the case once more for America, as for every nation, until the kingdom of Daniel Chapter Two, built without hands and filling the whole earth, comes to fruition. Imagine a Christian, constitutional world.

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