

## The Biblical Influence Upon Our National And State Constitutions

In an era when civilizations and civil government appears to be experiencing mayhem, perhaps it would do us all good to reflect back on the beginnings of our nation and individual states. I discovered the following two articles while researching something completely different.

Biblical origins of American Political Philosophy  
A Look at the Philosophical roots of American Constitutional Republicanism  
 by

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In addition, a second part reflects how the framers of our state constitutions viewed God and His Word. Its reference comes from Bible.com.

Lastly, we will see what our old friend Job had to say about such things.

### BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR CIVIL GOVERNMENT

The idea of covenant relationships between people and between God is as old as Genesis. This subject is given depth and perspective in *Covenant and Polity in Biblical Israel*, by Daniel Elazar (Transaction Publishers, 1995). Although a somewhat laborious read, the book details events in the Old Testament that can be seen as theo-political rather than purely theological.

As the roots of the Christian faith trace to Genesis 1:1, so do the roots of Covenant polity. "Politically, a covenant involves a coming together (congregation) of basically equal humans who consent with one another through a morally binding pact supported by a transcendent power, establishing with the partners a new framework or setting them on the road to a new task that can only be dissolved by mutual agreement of all the parties to it." 2.

In legal terms, a contract is an expression by two or more parties of an intention to be bound by the terms of an agreement. It is assumed that the parties to a contract are more or less equal as to their power to negotiate for themselves favorable terms. To avoid future allegations of breach, the contract should be written in unambiguous language so that much later, if a conflict arises, a disinterested third party might examine the language of the document, discern the intent of the parties, and determine whether the parties are acting in conformity with their original intentions. The Founding Fathers viewed the U.S. Constitution as the written declaration of their intent to "form a more perfect Union" in accordance with expressly stated objectives. 3

The Bible teaches that a covenant (constitution) is a tool of God for men to establish and "regularize" (make more regular) their relationships with one another AND with God. This concept is modeled by the Jewish people in the Old Testament and by the teachings of the Torah. Further, if our political institutions follow the biblical pattern, they will emerge as federations of people (tribes) that are instituted and reaffirmed by God's covenant. Accordingly, they will function with a sense of unity and purpose, binding themselves in a common constitution and common laws.

John Locke (1632-1704), an English Philosopher, Physician, Historian and Political Scientist wrote that, in a "state of nature," (without any artificial institutions such as government) men would reasonably acquiesce to the institution of some government in order to avoid self-destruction. In other words, our natural "sinful" state can be avoided if people realize their natural tendencies and trade some of their absolute individual power in exchange for the protection of society. Locke believed that this "reasonable" exchange was not only possible, but

that it was the design of Almighty God. Government, thus deriving its authority from the consent of the governed, is empowered to execute judgment on behalf of the people. (See Romans 13:1-7) In addition, NOTE\* Locke was widely read by the Framers of the U.S. Constitution and is credited with being the philosopher most widely quoted in the 1760's and 1770's. In fact, he was one of the top three political philosophers most often quoted during the half-century from 1760 until 1805.

It should be self-evident that when left to their own devices, absent the restraining influence of external pressure (law, morality, pressure to conform), men will permit their standards of conduct to disintegrate. The founders, although not all Christians, did all seem to embrace the notion that the heart of man was predisposed towards evil and therefore needed the external restraint of government. They uniformly held that the foundations for our liberty, and the constitution which guarantees the same, have been laid by God through a covenant with those who will hearken to Him. English law during this period was not, by and large, codified (written down) but rather, was "proclaimed" by the judiciary. Even absent legislative prohibitions, however, the law was commonly known, and observed. It was "common law."

Sir William Blackstone wrote his best-selling *Commentaries on the Law of England* from the perspective that Biblical principles form the foundation of all legitimate law. No legislative body nor monarch nor judge may usurp the authority of that divine law. Judges were to reach their decisions based upon what Blackstone refers to as "general custom" which he understood to be reflective of Christian tenets. He said that judges were, "the depositories of the laws-the living oracles, who must decide in all cases of doubt, and who are bound by an oath to decide according to the law of the land." The overriding assumptions, and the reason why the "common law" was effective, was that the rules of conduct were generally accepted as true and the authority of the court to decide matters of law was generally unquestioned.<sup>1</sup>

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### Preambles to State Constitutions Based on the Bible's Influence

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**ALABAMA 1901:** We, the people of the State of Alabama, in order to establish justice, insure domestic tranquility and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, invoking the favor and guidance of Almighty God, do ordain and establish the following Constitution and form of government for the State of Alabama.

**ARIZONA 1912:** We, the people of the State of Arizona, grateful to Almighty God for our liberties, do ordain this Constitution.

**ARKANSAS 1874 :** We, the people of the State of Arkansas, grateful to Almighty God for the privilege of choosing our own forms of government, for our civil and religious liberty, and desiring to perpetuate its blessings and secure the same to ourselves and posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution.

**CALIFORNIA 1879:** 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.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.lawandliberty.org/history1.htm>

**COLORADO 1876:** We, the people of Colorado, with profound reverence for the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, in order to form a more independent and perfect government; establish justice; insure 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 "State of Colorado."

**CONNECTICUT 1818:** The people of Connecticut acknowledging with gratitude, the good providence of God, in having permitted them to enjoy a free government, do, in order more effectual to define, secure, and perpetuate the liberties, rights and privileges which they have derived from their ancestors, hereby, after a careful consideration and revision, ordain and establish the following Constitution and form of civil government.

**DELAWARE 1897:** Through Divine goodness, all men have by nature the rights of worshipping and serving their Creator according to the dictates of their consciences, of enjoying and defending life and liberty, of acquiring and protecting reputation and property, and in general of obtaining objects suitable to their condition, without injury by one to another; and as these rights are essential to their welfare, for the due exercise thereof, power is inherent in them; and therefore all just authority in the institutions of political society is derived from the people, and established with their consent, to advance their happiness; and they may for this end, as circumstances require, from time to time after their Constitution of governments.

**FLORIDA 1887:** We, the people of the State of Florida, grateful to Almighty God for our constitutional liberty, in order to secure its blessings and to form a more perfect government, insuring domestic tranquility, maintaining public order, and guaranteeing equal civil and political rights to all, do ordain and establish this Constitution.

**GEORGIA 1887:** To perpetuate the principles of free government, insure justice to all, preserve peace, promote the interest and happiness of the citizen, 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.

**IDAHO 1890:** We, the people of the State of Idaho, grateful to Almighty God for our freedom, to secure its blessings and promote our common welfare, do establish this Constitution.

**ILLINOIS 1870:** We, the people of the State of Illinois, grateful to Almighty God for the civil, political and religious liberty which He hath so long permitted us to enjoy, and looking to Him for a blessing upon our endeavors to secure and transmit the same unimpaired to succeeding generations in order to form a more perfect government, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessing of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the State of Illinois.

**INDIANA 1851:** To the end that justice be established, public order maintained, and liberty perpetuated: We, the people of the State of Indiana, grateful to Almighty God for the free exercise of the right to choose our own form of government, do ordain this Constitution.

**IOWA 1857:** We, the people of the State of Iowa, grateful to the Supreme Being for the blessings hitherto enjoyed, and feeling our dependence on Him for a continuation of those blessings, do ordain and establish a free and independent government, by the name of the State of Iowa, the boundaries whereof shall be as follows:

**KANSAS 1863:** We, the people of Kansas, grateful to Almighty God for our civil and religious privileges, in order to insure the full enjoyment of our rights as American citizens, do ordain and establish this Constitution of the State of Kansas, with the following boundaries, to wit:

**KENTUCKY 1891:** 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.

**LOUISIANA 1974:** We, the people of Louisiana, grateful to Almighty God for the civil, political, economic, and religious liberties we enjoy, and desiring to protect individual rights to life, liberty, and property; afford opportunity for the fullest development of the individual; assure equality of rights; promote the health, safety, education, and welfare of the people; maintain a representative and orderly government; ensure domestic tranquility; provide for the common defense; and secure the blessings of freedom and justice to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution.

**MAINE 1820 and 1876:** We, the people of Maine, in order to establish justice, insure tranquility, provide for our mutual defense, promote our common welfare, and secure to ourselves and our posterity the blessings of liberty, acknowledging with grateful hearts the goodness of the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe in affording us an opportunity, so favorable to the design; and imploring His aid and direction in its accomplishment, do agree to form ourselves into a free and independent State, by the style and title of the State of Maine, and do ordain and establish the following Constitution for the government of the same.

**MARYLAND 1867:** We, the people of Maryland, grateful to Almighty God for our civil and religious liberty, and taking into our serious consideration best means of establishing a good Constitution in this State for the sure foundation and more permanent security thereof, declare:

**MASSACHUSETTS 1790:** We, therefore, the people of Massachusetts, acknowledging, with grateful hearts, the goodness of the great Legislator of the universe, in affording us, in the course of His providence, an opportunity, deliberately and peaceably, without fraud, violence, or surprise, of entering into an original, explicit and solemn compact with each other; and for forming a new Constitution of civil government, for ourselves and posterity; and devoutly imploring His direction in so interesting a design, do agree upon, ordain, and establish the following Declaration of Rights, and Frame of Government, as the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

**MICHIGAN 1909:** We, the people of the State of Michigan, grateful to Almighty God for the blessings of freedom, and earnestly desiring to secure these blessings undiminished to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution.

**MINNESOTA 1857:** We, the people of the State of Minnesota, grateful to God for our civil and religious liberty and desiring to perpetuate its blessings and secure the same to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution.

**MISSISSIPPI 1890:** We, the people of Mississippi in convention assembled, grateful to Almighty God, and invoking his blessing on our work, do ordain and establish this Constitution.

**MISSOURI 1945:** We, the people of Missouri, with profound reverence for the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, and grateful for His goodness, do establish this Constitution for the better government of the State.

**MONTANA 1889:** We, the people of Montana, grateful to Almighty God for the blessings of liberty, in order to secure the advantages of a State government, do in accordance with the provisions of the enabling act of Congress, approve the twenty second of February AD 1889, ordain and establish this Constitution.

**NEBRASKA 1875:** We, the people, grateful to Almighty God for our freedom, do ordain and establish the following declaration of rights and frame of government, as the Constitution of the State of Nebraska.

**NEVADA 1864:** We, the people of the State of Nevada, grateful to Almighty God for our freedom, in order to secure its blessings, insure domestic tranquility, and form a more perfect government, do establish this Constitution.

**NEW HAMPSHIRE 1784:** Every individual has a natural and unalienable right to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, and reason, morality and piety, rightly grounded on evangelical principles, will give the best and greatest security to government, and will lay, in the hearts of men, the strongest obligations to due subjection; and the knowledge of these is most likely to be propagated through society by the institutions of the public worship of the Deity.

**NEW JERSEY 1947:** We, the people of the State of New Jersey, grateful to Almighty God for the civil and religious liberty which He hat so long permitted us to enjoy, and looking to Him for a blessing upon our endeavors to secure and transmit the same unimpaired to succeeding generations, do ordain and establish this Constitution.

**NEW MEXICO 1912:** We, the people of New Mexico, grateful to Almighty God for the blessings of liberty, in order to secure the advantages of a State government, do ordain and establish this Constitution.

**NEW YORK 1895:** 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.

**NORTH CAROLINA 1876:** We, the people of the State of North Carolina, grateful to Almighty God, the Sovereign Ruler of Nations, for the preservation of the American Union and the existence of our civil, political and religious liberties, and acknowledging our dependence upon Him for the continuance of these blessings to us and our posterity, do, for the more certain

security thereof and for the better government of this State, ordain and establish this Constitution.

**NORTH DAKOTA 1889:** We, the people of North Dakota, grateful to Almighty God for the blessings of civil and religious liberty, do ordain and establish this Constitution.

**OHIO 1851:** We, the people of the State of Ohio, grateful to Almighty God for our freedom, to secure its blessings and promote our common welfare, do establish this Constitution.

**OKLAHOMA 1907:** Invoking the guidance of Almighty God, in order to secure and perpetuate the blessings of liberty; to secure just and rightful government; to promote our mutual welfare and happiness, we the people of the State of Oklahoma, do ordain and establish this Constitution.

**OREGON 1859:** We, the people of the State of Oregon, to the end that justice be established, order maintained, and liberty perpetuated, do ordain this Constitution.

**PENNSYLVANIA 1874:** W, the people of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, grateful to Almighty God for the blessings of civil and religious liberty, and humbly invoking His guidance, do ordain and establish this Constitution.

**RHODE ISLAND 1843:** We, the people of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, grateful to Almighty God for the civil and religious liberty which He hath so long permitted us to enjoy, and looking to Him for a blessing upon our endeavors to secure and to transmit the same unimpaired to succeeding generations do ordain and establish this Constitution of Governments.

**SOUTH CAROLINA 1895:** We, the people of the State of South Carolina, in convention assembled, grateful to God for our liberties, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the preservation and perpetuation of the same.

**SOUTH DAKOTA 1889:** We, the people of South Dakota, grateful to Almighty God for our civil and religious liberties, in order to form a more perfect and independent government, establish justice, insure tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and preserve to ourselves and to our posterity the blessings of liberty, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the State of South Dakota.

**TENNESSEE 1870:** That all men have a natural and indefeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own conscience...

**TEXAS 1876:** Humbly invoking the blessings of Almighty God, the people of the State of Texas, do ordain and establish this Constitution.

**UTAH 1895:** Grateful to Almighty God for life and liberty, we the people of Utah, in order to secure and perpetuate the principles of free government, do ordain and establish this Constitution.

**VERMONT 1793:** That all men have a natural and unalienable right, to worship Almighty God, according to the dictates of their own consciences and understandings as in their opinion shall be regulated by the word of God; and that no man ought to or of right can be compelled to attend any religious worship, or erect or support any place of worship, or maintain any minister, contrary to the dictates of his conscience, nor can any man be justly deprived or abridged of any civil right as a citizen, on account of his religious sentiments, or peculiar mode of religious worship; and that no authority can or ought to be vested in, or assumed by, any power whatever, that shall in any case interfere with, or in any manner control the rights of conscience, in the free exercise of religious worship. Nevertheless, every sect or denomination of Christians ought to observe the Sabbath or Lord's day, and keep up some sort of religious worship, which to them shall seem most agreeable to the revealed will of God.

**VIRGINIA 1902:** That religion or the duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence; and, therefore, all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; and that it is the mutual duty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love and charity towards each other.

**WASHINGTON 1889** We, the people of the State of Washington, grateful to the Supreme Ruler of the Universe for our liberties, do ordain this Constitution.

**WEST VIRGINIA ( ):** Since through Divine Providence we enjoy the blessings of civil, political and religious liberty, we, the people of west Virginia, in and through the provisions of this Constitution, reaffirm our faith in and constant reliance upon God and seek diligently to promote, preserve and perpetuate good government in the State of West Virginia for the common welfare, freedom and security of ourselves and our posterity.

**WISCONSIN 1848:** We, the people of Wisconsin, grateful to Almighty God for our freedom, in order to secure its blessings, forms a more perfect government, insure domestic tranquility and promote the general welfare, do establish this Constitution.

**WYOMING 1889:** We, the people of the State of Wyoming, grateful to God for our civil, political and religious liberties, and desiring to secure them to ourselves and perpetuate them to our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution.

This preamble does not include Alaska or Hawaii.[Editor's note: This preamble was proposed by House Joint Resolution No. 8, Acts, Regular Session, 1959 p 659: submitted by Acts, Regular Session, 1960, c. 4: and ratified November 8, 1950.]<sup>2</sup>

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Our old friend Job said, “[*Some*] **remove the landmarks; they violently take away flocks, and feed [thereof]. (24:2)**” Job was quite aware when boundaries are removed thieves arrive and take what they want. Perhaps we pilgrims need to reaffirm our real personal boundaries and then we will know what to look for in leaders – be they in church or government! Remember, thieves have no boundaries!

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<sup>2</sup> [http://bible.com/bibleanswers\\_result.php?id=109](http://bible.com/bibleanswers_result.php?id=109)