

Erosion of Exceptionalism

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For Discussion: Empire At 250: Can The Principles Of 1776 Survive The American Police State?

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What made the USA exceptional from its founding?

It is very clearly the Christian world view of our founders. Among the Christian principles that governed the founding of this nation were two that stand out:

- Separation of powers: state, federal; executive, congress, judicial...
Jeremiah 17:9 – The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?
- Limited government (bill of rights)... Freedom is what makes this country great...
John 8:36 – If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

How is freedom a quintessential Christian concept?

Freedom is central to Christianity because the gospel is essentially the story of deliverance: God rescuing sinners from bondage to live a new, liberated life in Christ.

- Deliverance from bondage: The Christian message describes people as enslaved — to sin, fear (including the fear of death), guilt, and religious performance.
- Jesus' death and resurrection freed us from that slavery. Our union with Christ liberates us from trying and failing to earn righteousness by keeping the law.

Do Americans value their liberty?

Way too many people in this country today don't appreciate the value of freedom because they have not experienced the alternative.

- I recently had a conversation at the Farmer's Market with some visitors from Canada where we compared our experiences as landlords. In Toronto, landlords are prohibited from doing any repairs on their properties themselves... they must use government licensed contractors. I told them that there were some places in the U.S. like that but here in Texas we understand the value of freedom.

What has caused the American culture to reject our Christian beginnings?

Despite the Christian influence that was instrumental in establishing this country, there is an anti-Christian spirit today that would have us to believe that our founding fathers were mostly secular as deists and skeptics.

- However, of the 55 men who worked on the Constitution, one count reveals that 52 of them were God-fearing, men who believed that the Bible is the inerrant word of God.

What evidence is there that the USA was established by Christians?

One of the inspirations of the American Revolution who became the first post-colonial governor of Virginia was Patrick Henry. Most Americans have heard his famous "Give me liberty or give me death" speech, but he made another statement which we don't hear so much about:

"It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded not by religionists, but by Christians ... not on religions but on the gospel of Jesus Christ."

What efforts have there been in trying to restore our Christian heritage?

There is controversy today over the Texas Legislature bringing the reading of Scripture back into public schools... which would not actually happen until 2030.

- Of course, I would expect that to be challenged in the courts because the spirit of the Age is the separation of Church and State.

When did it become the law of the land to restrict prayer and Bible reading in public schools?

The separation of church and state became the rationale for a Supreme Court ruling in the 1960's to restrict Bible reading and prayer in public schools. This was quite the departure from the perspective of the founders of this country... John Jay, the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and one of the three men most responsible for writing the constitution said:

"Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers and it is the duty as well as the privilege and interest of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers."

What is the problem with the perspective that there must be a separation of church and state?

The modern concept of the separation of Church and State is a misinterpretation of the First Amendment to the Constitution which actually says two things:

- that Congress is not to establish a state religion (in other words, the state was not to not recognize one Christian denomination above another)
- and that Congress is not to hinder the practice of religion.

What was reason for the 1st Amendment to the Constitution?

It was written to keep the United States from following England's practice of setting up a national church (such as the Church of England) and to keep the government from interfering with the church.

- If the 1st Amendment was written to remove Christianity from all government institutions, isn't it odd that it took the government nearly two hundred years to figure that out?
- Strange, isn't it, that it wasn't until the 1960's that we finally figured out what the first amendment really meant?

Why has the United States been so blessed by God?

Because our founding honored Him. And the world has benefited from our being a place where freedom rings. However, there are clouds on the horizon as a consequence for Americans turning from God.

What parallels are there between what led to the American revolution and today?

- America's founders rejected concentrated power. They denounced standing armies. They distrusted government secrecy. They risked their lives to escape a ruler who could tax without consent, wage war without accountability, and govern without meaningful restraint.

Twenty-five years ago, after the attacks of September 11, 2001, America embarked on a very different journey.

- The federal government claimed extraordinary emergency powers. Surveillance expanded. Wars multiplied. Executive authority grew. Constitutional safeguards were weakened in the name of security.

The American Revolution was a revolt against empire; what we see today is a normalization of imperial power.

- the republic born in rebellion against empire has become an empire in everything but name.

How are we seeing our government departing from constitutional checks and balances?

Our government is increasingly governing by executive order and emergency decree.

- taxpayer money is wasted with impunity
- political loyalty is rewarded over constitutional fidelity
- loyalists are installed in positions meant to serve the public
- safeguards against corruption are dismantled
- accountability is treated as an inconvenience.

How has privacy been eroded in our modern culture?

Surveillance programs track where we go, what we buy, who we know, what we say and what we believe. Fusion centers, facial recognition, license plate readers, AI-assisted monitoring, financial tracking, intelligence-sharing agreements and a sprawling security apparatus that treats privacy as a loophole and dissent as a threat.

How have potential domestic terrorist threats grown?

The "extremist" classifications have expanded to increasingly encompass lawful speech, political dissent and ideological opposition rather than criminal conduct.

- It is interesting to note that when leftists are in power, the threat is from extreme right wingers; when conservatives are in power, the threat is from leftists.

Which political party is behind the erosion of constitutional rights in this country?

Both... Republican and Democratic presidents alike helped build the machinery of permanent emergency.

- They expanded the surveillance state, normalized undeclared wars, empowered the military-industrial complex, deferred to intelligence agencies, and taught Americans to accept secrecy, suspicion and fear as the price of safety.
- Presidents of both parties have inherited extraordinary powers and expanded them further. Congress has repeatedly surrendered responsibilities it was meant to exercise. Courts have increasingly deferred to executive claims involving national security, immigration and emergency authority.

How has constitutional rights eroded?

There have been growing efforts to sideline due process protections, weaken the ancient safeguard of habeas corpus, and expand detention powers.

- It has become normalized that constitutional rights can be suspended whenever government officials invoke national security, immigration enforcement or some other emergency necessity.

How did September 11, 2001 significantly expand executive power?

In the aftermath, Congress passed the USA Patriot Act, vastly expanding government surveillance powers.

- The Department of Homeland Security was created.
- Military tribunals were revived.
- Warrantless surveillance became commonplace.
- Watchlists multiplied.
- Fusion centers spread across the country.
- Indefinite detention became normalized.

What began as a response to a terrorist attack gradually became a governing philosophy.

Why did Americans accept the Patriot Act's erosion of constitutional protections?

For decades, Americans were told not to worry...

- We were told surveillance powers would only be used against terrorists.
- We were told emergency powers would only be invoked during genuine crises.
- We were told national security authorities would remain subject to constitutional limits.
- We were told the Constitution's checks and balances would hold.
- We were told no president would ever be allowed to exercise such powers without meaningful restraint.

They were wrong.

- And we were wrong to trust power to restrain itself.

What led to the 4th Amendment to the Constitution?

Preceding the Revolutionary War, colonists were outraged by general warrants that allowed British agents to search homes, businesses and personal property without meaningful justification.

How have our modern conveniences contributed to the loss of constitutional protections?

Today, government agents no longer need to kick down your door to invade your privacy.

- Your cell phone tracks your movements.
 - Your vehicle reports your location.
 - Your purchases reveal your habits.
 - Your social media activity exposes your associations
- Our digital footprints create a detailed record of our lives.
- Government agencies can access location data, financial records, license plate readers, facial recognition databases and vast stores of personal information, with little transparency and oversight.

Americans are increasingly monitored not because they are suspected of wrongdoing, but because technology has made mass surveillance possible and government has found it useful.

How has technological surveillance become a double-edged sword?

What begins as a tool to identify dangerous actors inevitably expands into a mechanism for monitoring unpopular viewpoints.

- Intelligence systems built to monitor foreign threats are repurposed to watch domestic populations.

King George's agents needed boots and battering rams to search your home. Today's government can search your life without ever leaving its desk.

What is the prophetic significance of the loss of constitutional protections in this country?

It is consistent with the spirit of the age further setting the stage for the tyranny of the Antichrist...

Daniel 7:23 – *The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, trample it and break it in pieces.*

The loss of constitutional protections and privacy are a key aspect of the Mark of the Beast...

Revelation 13:17 – *no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark*

Why must the exceptionalism of the USA decline?

In order for there to be a global government, all nations must yield their sovereignty to the worldwide community of nations...

Revelation 17:13 – *These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast.*

Just as the coming global government cannot tolerate a national superpower, there can be no nation that stands out as beacon of freedom.

What should Christians do about the disturbing trend of eroding American exceptionalism?

This disturbing trend should cause each of us to personally draw closer to the Lord. The more of us who do that, the better life will be here in the USA.

- We cannot stop the trend but our faithfulness to the Lord can serve to delay the decline.

What applications do we see from our discussion today?

- The USA was founded as a Christian nation resulting in God's blessing, but our collective turning from God has consequences.
- The USA has been exceptional due to honoring God and putting His principles into practice.
- The erosion of constitutional protections is a consequence for collectively turning away from God.
- The decline of the USA sets the stage for the global government of the Antichrist.