

BIG GOVERNMENT: PLAYING WITH FIRE?

In this crucial election year many Americans are awakening from their apathy. As we come to our senses, the biblical and constitutional wisdom of our founders can help us find our way back to freedom and prosperity. George Washington warned: “Government is not reason, it is not eloquence—it is force! Like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master.”

Our wise colonists and founders knew that fallen human nature, as described in Scripture, would lead elected officials to expand their power and wealth whenever possible. Knowing this truth, Thomas Jefferson warned us never to place great trust in our elected leaders: “It would be a dangerous delusion were a confidence in the men of our choice [elected leaders] to silence our fears for the safety of our rights; that confidence is everywhere the parent of despotism...our Constitution has accordingly fixed the limits to which, and no farther, our confidence may go.... In questions of power, then, let no more be said of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution.”

Jefferson’s point above is a paraphrase of Psalm 149 in which God’s people are instructed “to bind their kings [rulers] with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron.” Our Constitution is a document which delegates very few and severely limited powers to our national government. The

Constitution states in the Tenth Amendment that all powers not specifically delegated to the national government are “reserved to the states, respectively, or to the people.”



George Mason, the brilliant author of the Bill of Rights, was a Christian home school father who consistently brought his belief in the fallen nature of the human heart into his writing: “From the nature of man, we may be sure that those who have power in their hands will not give it up while they can

retain it. On the contrary, we know that they will always, when they can, rather increase it.”

Mason’s views are “politically incorrect” today. In fact, most of our biblically trained founders—who agreed with Patrick Henry as he declared, “Give me liberty, or give me death”—would be considered radical, religious extremists by the secularists who dominate today’s pop culture.

When they arrived here in 1620, our Pilgrim forebears brought this biblical, realistic view of government. They knew it was a dangerous fire. They had seen the cruelty of big government as the rulers of Europe had been torturing and beheading their friends and fellow believers all over Europe for centuries. They knew they had to build a limited civil government even before they built their homes, otherwise the fire of government would overtake them. The Pilgrims wrote the

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Mayflower Compact, a covenantal form of government based on the biblical model, while still onboard *The Mayflower* off the coast of Cape Cod. Under this form of government, their dis-

trust of human nature directed them to require that their leaders stand for election every year. Because of the caution and vigilance of the Pilgrims and the other colonists, government in America was kept small and accountable to the people for centuries. The resulting blessings were far greater than any people in history have ever enjoyed.

Yale historian Harry Stout says that the impact of TV today pales by comparison to the impact of the colonial pastors, especially as they expounded on the biblical view of civil government. These pastors were the intellectual leaders of the day and faithfully taught the necessity of limiting civil government to its biblical jurisdiction. From their pulpits they detailed the strategy for the biblically based, decentralized, family-centered society which the Lord taught to Moses 3,400 years ago.

For example, Rev. Charles Chauncy spoke before the House of Representatives in Massachusetts on May 27th, 1747. He said, "The advice which Jethro gave Moses is here proper, 'Thou shalt provide out of all the people, able [competent] men, such as fear God, men of truth hating covetousness.' These are the men, men of understanding, courage and resolution; men of integrity, fidelity and honesty; men of piety and substantial religion [Christianity]; men of noble generosity, setting them above the temptations, which those of narrow minds and selfish views are easily drawn away from and enticed: These, I say, are the proper men to fill the various posts in the state."

In 1774, shortly before the War of Independence, Rev. Samuel Sherwood warned that when rulers make up their own laws "...and take it into their heads to act in an arbitrary, tyrannical manner to

oppress and enslave their subjects; they do the highest injustice and wrong, and the greatest mischief and evil of any men in the world, and are the biggest plagues, and heaviest judgments upon a society that can be sent [from God] among them." Both Chauncy and Sherwood recognized civil government as a consuming fire that could only be held in check by godly leaders.

In 2016 it is urgent that we elect accountable, God-fearing leaders at all levels. But for freedom to last, these leaders must be held accountable at every level of government by godly citizens who first lift these leaders up in prayer and then hold them down with "the chains of the Constitution." As Jefferson wisely said, "I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education. This is the true corrective of abuses of constitutional power."



With a large majority of Americans claiming to be Christians, imagine the positive influence if a good number of these believers became lovingly engaged in restoring this nation that President Ronald Reagan called the "last great bastion of freedom."

— Marshall Foster



JOURNAL

Published monthly by:

The World History Institute
P.O. Box 4673
Thousand Oaks, CA 91359

(805) 523-0072 www.WorldHistoryInstitute.com

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