



Original Intent

By: David Barton

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Book Review

15 Questions with Summary Statement

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What was the prominent characteristic of the emerging government, both before and after the American Revolution?

One of the prevailing characteristics of the up and coming national government during this time, was borne out there concern, that the national government would at some time rise up against states, and revoke or supersede their powers. Thus the states at this time, sought to protect their powers and rights.

What effect did it have on the Constitution?

One of the major safeguards that was established, was the states ability to block any governmental actions, by requiring a $\frac{3}{4}$ state supermajority. This would be necessary if they believed that their rights or powers were to coming under attack.

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As defined by the House Judiciary Committee of 1853-1854, what was an establishment of religion?

The House Judiciary Committee at this time stated that never did an established religion exist that did not mandate; what man must believe, specific rites and ordnances that they must observe, there be qualified ministers to teach doctrine and administer said rites, as well as the establishment of tests for submission as well as penalties for those who choose to disobey. It was by these articles that the Committee defined an established religion.

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Although many religions did exist, and the founders saw potential value in any “major” religion, why did they specifically prefer Christianity?

John Adams, in a letter to Thomas Jefferson, made the statement that the “general principles of Christianity” were the general principles on which the forefathers achieved independence. That is not to say that these were all saved peoples, but that underlying Biblical principles which were respected at the time, were taught and appreciated as morally beneficial, much like one might define the “Jedeo-Christian Ethics” of today.

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What was the intention of the founding fathers to establish a federal Constitution which would support today's religion-free public arena?

As pointed out, time and time again thought-out Mr. Barton's book, it was never the intention of the founding fathers to institute law, implied or otherwise, that would attempt to create a religion-free public arena. One of the most pronounced statements made in this area, was their creation and passage of the North-West Ordinance. Not only did Article III of the Ordinance make no reference to such an arena, but instead stressed that religion should be "encouraged".

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What was the expression that appeared in an exchange of letters between President Thomas Jefferson and the Baptist Association of Danbury, Connecticut, and what was one of the major concerns that the Association had with it at the time?

It was the expressions "Separation of church and state" that appeared in that exchange, and of which, Justice William Rehnquist described as "a misleading metaphor". One of the major concerns of the Baptist Association at that time was that it appeared as if the rights of "free exercise of religion" were being given by the government, rather than God. Their concern was that if so stated as a governmental privilege, it could some day be revoked by them.

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What was the overall religious disposition of the Founding Fathers?

There is nothing new under the sun. As it was in the days of John Adams, George Washington and Thomas Paine, so is it today. As we observe the bashing of today's political parties, we are yet again surprised that the words of the founding fathers would be pulled out of context and used as feathery ammunition. To the ignorant populous many of the statements made by those who claim that the founding fathers were atheist, agnostics and deist, have gone unchallenged as to the truth of such. These men, were men that truly understood the need and benefit of the "Christian religion".

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While the courts ignore the established original intent of the constitution, what are they basing their decisions on?

Someone coined the statement that “it is like allowing the fox to watch the hen house”. Much in the same way, the courts for years have based their decisions on, their decisions, including their own current prejudices. Most of the time, the authority of a decision is based on established case law and not the original intent of the law.

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As it pertains to “Legal positivism”, how does law professor John Eidsmoe characterize the philosophy of relativism?

Professor Eidsmoe characterizes the philosophy of relativism in five major theses. Included in these, are the following; that God-given standards of law are not objective, and if by chance there are, they are irrelevant to today's legal system. Law is law because man has said it to be and is the enforcer of such. Just as man and society evolve, so should the laws of man. And finally, in order to truly study law, we need the original sources of those who made the law and decision thereof.

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With the ideology of “Judicial review” and “legal relativism” running rampant in the court system, what are the foreseeable issues that might arise?

As the basis of any society, it is necessary for the laws of the land to possess some certainty. When that certainty is eroded, and the standard becomes no standard at all, that necessary foundation of society is shaken. Like anything, when strictly left up to man, without Biblical influence, it will deteriorate and become corrupt. One of the current undermining issues produced by the open rejection of that Biblical influence is an indecisive, wavering, bedeviled and decaying society.

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What does David Barton attribute as a major factor which has allowed the courts to ignore their constitutionally designed boundaries?

Mr. Barton attributes the courts unrestricted and unrestrained disregard of their constitutional designed duties to the ignorance of the citizens of these United States of America. It is this ignorance of the roles and functions of each branch of the government, which has allowed those whose duty it is to interpret such laws, to in turn make them.

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Are the courts of American and the ignorance of its citizens solely responsible for reshaping their culture?

There is yet another force at work here, in the influence of those known as the revisionists. As with any negative influence, there lies deception and untruth beneath each unturned fact. Such is also the case with the revisionists who ignore clear American heritage heeding to political correctness, character assassination, as well as historical deceptions. They utilize a vast majority of methods to accomplish their goals, all of which foster an acceptable receiving attitude of the general populous. This also makes way for great strives by the judicial system to undermine the original intent.

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What were the Founders' beliefs on the unity of Religion and Morality?

President George Washington viewed these two, both religion and morality, as "indispensable supports". Mr. Bartons states that the Founders believed these to be supports for a good government, political prosperity, as well as the well-being of the nation. There were many who made the statement that these two were inseparable.

Can a person be moral without “religion”?

The question of whether a culture can be moral without a Biblical influence, is like asking whether one could grow corn without water. The heart of man is desperately wicked, and out of his heart will come his moral actions and decisions. The Founders’ believed that it was “Christianity in particular” that produced “public morality without which civil government would not long survive”. They believed that there would need to be some “religious” influence to produce morality.

According to Jefferson, what was the benefit of Christianity?

Christianity, in the eyes of Jefferson, was much more than a list of rules to intimidate and regulate behavior. He may have even understood the truth of the “new creature”, which seeks to obey God from the heart and then is manifested in action. I believe that he possibly understood that true Christianity changes a man from within, which is something that a law can never do.

Conclusion:

As stated above, as well as in Mr. Barton’s book, there is a great deal of responsibility that has been neglected by ignorant citizens, of which I am one. Having never given this subject much thought at all, I appreciate the insight which Mr. Barton has painstakingly provided. As many seek to rewrite history, it is most helpful, not only to have documented truth, but also the research of the underlying documents, statement and history. It was however, an eye opening experience to recognize how far this country has truly come, or rather declined. There are few men today, politically, that would measure up to those we call our Founders’. Mr. Barton seems to have some tendencies toward a Christian owned and operated society. These tendencies would not only be contrary to Baptist doctrine, but also Biblically, and as times wax worse and worse, would be inconceivable.