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Our Nation's Greatest Treasure

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic 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 United States of America” (Grafton, 11). This was the Founding Fathers’ purpose in establishing a new form of government. What made our Constitution so superior and successful? While there are many factors, I believe there are two underlying eternal principles that make the U.S. Constitution extraordinary; first, the idea that people cannot be trusted with power, and second, the idea that rights come from a higher Authority than government.

Our Founding Fathers knew people could not be trusted. Thomas Jefferson said, “In question of power, then, let no more be heard of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution” (qtd. Skousen, 164). They acknowledged the sinful nature of man and devised a system of government that took that into account. As James Madison said in the Federalist Papers, “But what is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature?... If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. [But lacking these,] in framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this; you must first enable the government to control the governed, and in the next place oblige it to control itself (qtd. Skousen, 165,6). They knew that power could corrupt even good men, so they divided the power among

many people so that no one person could start a tyranny.

Our Founding Fathers also believed in a higher Power than government, a Power that gives rights that not even government has the right to take away. “The Founders did not believe that the basic rights of mankind originated from any social compact, king, emperor, or governmental authority. Those rights, they believed came directly and exclusively from God. Therefore, they were to be maintained sacred and inviolate” (Skousen, 123). We can see this view clearly displayed in the Declaration of Independence, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are *endowed by their Creator* with certain *unalienable Rights*, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. – That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men” (Grafton, 6 emphasis added). The drafters of the Constitution clearly believed these things to be ‘self-evident’. The Bill of Rights, especially the Tenth Amendment, clearly reflects this belief. The Founders believed that God gave man freedom, and it is the government’s duty to protect that freedom.

The Founders did their best to ensure that America would not descend into a tyranny like so many of the European nations. When the Founders wrote our Constitution they took into account the fact that people have a natural tendency toward evil, especially when power is involved, and they acknowledged that basic rights are given by God and God alone. I believe they gave us the best form of government ever to be tried among men. The Constitution is more than just a historical document, it is a safeguard to our freedom. The Constitution is based on timeless principles, and it itself is timeless. It should never be reinterpreted. There is no better way to “promote the general Welfare and secure the Blessing of Liberty” in any century. If you ask what the Constitution means to me; I would say, the Constitution is our nation’s greatest

treasure.

Works Cited

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