

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S ANGLICAN CHURCH IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA, NY
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<i>“ DEFENDING THE FAITH” (Apologetics - 6)</i>
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VI. What Has the Bible Produced?

So far in our study we've looked at the questions *What does the Bible claim? Is the Bible relevant and reliable?* In this study we will seek to answer the question, *What has the Bible produced?* In other words, how has it changed lives, how has it affected human history, and how has it impacted our world?

The Bible calls on us to test the spirits ***“Test all things, hold fast to what is good.”*** (1 Thess. 5:21). Jesus said we can know whether or not someone or something is from God like we can know whether or tree is good or bad, by the fruit it produces!

Mt. 7:15-20: *“Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16“You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? 17“So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18“A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19“Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20“So then, you will know them by their fruits.”*

Lk. 6:43-45: *“For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. 44“For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. 45“The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.”*

We will see how the Bible has positively impacted our world for good in eight key areas:

- 1) Morality**
- 2) Law**
- 3) Politics and the Founding of America** *(this study will end at #3; 4-8 will be next study)*
- 4) Science**
- 5) Literature**
- 6) Missions**
- 7) Exploration**
- 8) Society**

- A. Morality** – involves what a person, a family, and/or community views as right and wrong. Many secularists and even some Christians will argue that you can’t legislate morality. The problem is that any law is a regulation of morality because it is the result of what a group determines is right and wrong. In our society, speeding is immoral. The real question is what makes something moral – man or God. If man is the sole determining factor then morality can change according to the “times” or the ones in charge. However, if morality is something that transcends time and space then it means that there are universal moral principles that are always right and always wrong. The only One who could establish and reveal those principles would be an all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-present God. This is exactly what the Bible proclaims and Jesus Christ, the Son of God reveals. Recall in His Sermon on the Mount Jesus taught what it truly means to be moral. It means to be “perfect” like our heavenly Father. However, none of us are perfect physically or morally. But

Jesus is the perfect moral being. Note that He never confessed to any sin for He never sinned! He was tempted in every way that we are but did not sin. And yet, His whole ministry showed us the path to moral perfection – through an abiding relationship with God! As we saw in our earlier studies, Jesus came to confirm the validity of God's Word in the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) and to fulfill them. He revealed what is right and wrong and how we are to live through His teachings and by His example. In essence He not only revealed the moral code of the Bible, God's Word, but He embodied it! The true test to know what is good and what is bad is does it affirm, create, protect, sustain, and promote life. There is a reason why God said to the people of Israel AFTER He had given them His Law in **Dt. 30:15-20**: **"See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; 16in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it. 17"But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, 18I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You will not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it. 19"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, 20by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."**

Note what Jesus said in **Jn. 15:1-11** concerning living life either with or without Him: **"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. 3"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 5"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. 6"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. 7"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. 9"Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. 10"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. 11"These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.**

Abraham Lincoln had it right when he said after a delegation of black Americans gave him a bible September 7, 1864: *"In regard to this great book, I have but to say, it is the best gift God has given to men. All the good the Savior gave to the world was communicated through this book. But for it we could not know right from wrong."*

Morality leads to the establishment of laws. So how has the Bible impacted Law in human history?

- B. Law** - many years ago, the Saturday Evening Post ran a cartoon showing Moses on the mount, holding the tablet of the Ten Commandments in his hands. He looks up to heaven and says, "Maybe there's only ten of them now, but just wait till the bureaucrats get to work!" The old saying, "of the making of laws there is no end" is definitely true! Law like government always expands. In our own nation, we not only establish hundreds of new laws every year but thousands of new rules and regulations concerning every conceivable thing. And yet, it is the fifty-six words of the Ten Commandments revealed by God to Moses and the people of Israel that truly encapsulate the heart of God's Law to mankind! In fact, the Ten Commandments and the laws found in the Bible became the moral and legal foundation for all of Western Civilization. The Decalogue or "Ten Words" from God are unique in all of human history. The way these laws were set forth are not only not found

anywhere else but have had more of an impact on human history than any other. One could make the case that the Torah – God’s Law – is prime evidence for the reality of a Loving All Powerful God.

1. The Decalogue was so important to God and His people that it is mentioned twice (**Ex. 20:1-19 and Deut. 5:1-21** – the word *Deuteronomy* literally means giving the law a second time) in the Old Testament and referred to several times by Jesus and the Apostles in the New Testament. This served the basis for the Mosaic code which included 613 more laws dealing more specifically with how the faith community was to live in relation to God and to one another.

Ex. 20:1-20: Then God spoke all these words, saying, 2“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3“You shall have no other gods before Me.

4“You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5“You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

7“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. 8“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9“Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. 11“For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

12“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. 13“You shall not murder. 14“You shall not commit adultery. 15“You shall not steal. 16“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 17“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

18All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood at a distance. 19Then they said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die.” 20Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin.”

Note what Moses said after the second giving of the law in **Dt. 5:22-24: “These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly at the mountain from the midst of the fire, of the cloud and of the thick gloom, with a great voice, and He added no more. He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me. 23“And when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders. 24“You said, ‘Behold, the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire; we have seen today that God speaks with man, yet he lives.**

The Mosaic Law was unique in not only its affirmation that there is only One God, but in its protection of the immediate family, its concerns for the rights and health of individuals, its passion for justice,

and even its democratic principles in the establishment of a government and society for people of Israel. It also promoted literacy among the people from young to old.

2. The Jewish Diaspora and the Christian Faith: One reason for the influence of the Mosaic Law upon our world is first due to the spread of the Jewish faith as a result of numerous dispersions and exiles. Due to the Babylonian invasion and captivity and later Roman rule, the Jewish faith became well known throughout Europe, the Near East and even parts of the Far East. This influence would explode due to a second reason - the global spread of the Christian faith. Once Constantine became a Christian, and ensuing Emperors like Theodosius, biblical principles were introduced into Roman law. Later Justinian I (482-565 AD) established a further biblically and Christian based rule of law with what became known as the Justinian Code.

3. Alfred the Great (King of Wessex) who lived from 849-899 AD in England made the Ten Commandments, like St. Patrick, the law of the land. Following the chaos of the Viking invasions and under threat from Norman conquest Alfred made adherence to the laws of Bible as the guide for all other law. Philip Schaff, in his book *History of the Christian Church*, describes Alfred's approach this way: *"His code is introduced with the Ten Commandments and other laws taken from the Bible. It protects the strange in memory of Israel's sojourn in Egypt; it gives the Christian slave freedom in the seventh year, as the Mosaic law gave to the Jewish bondman; it protects the laboring man in his Sunday rest; it restrains bloodthirsty passions of revenge by establishing bots or fines for offenses; it enjoins the golden rule (in the negative form) not to do to any man what we would not have done to us."* Significantly, he was the first British king to base the law of that country solidly on the Bible. It set the foundation for the future British legal system which in turn formed the basis for our own legal system.

4. The Magna Carta (the Great Charter) – 1215 – in order to curb the abuses of King John's tyrannical rule the Archbishop of Canterbury, Steven Lanton, suggested a *written* agreement between the king and his subjects. The Magna Carta sought to prevent the king from exploiting his power and established law as a power in itself, limiting royal authority.

a. Key Provisions:

1) Limited Royal Power: The document stated that the King or Queen was subject to the law and could not rule as they wished.

2) Individual Rights: It asserted that individuals had specific rights, including protection from arbitrary imprisonment and the right to due process, including a trial by a jury.

3) Specific Clauses: The Magna Carta included clauses on taxes, the rights of widows, the seizing of corn and horses, and the standardization of measures for wine and cloth.

4) Foundation of English Law: The Magna Carta became a foundation of English law, establishing the idea that people possess certain unalienable rights.

b. Influence on Modern Legal Systems: The Magna Carta's principles, such as due process and freedom from arbitrary imprisonment, have influenced legal systems worldwide, including the United States.

c. Founding Fathers: The Founding Fathers of the United States drew inspiration from the Magna Carta when writing the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

5. William Blackstone – (1723 – 1780) wrote a multivolume work called ***Commentaries on the Laws of England***. It was required reading for law students in England and the United States for over a century. He was a devout Christian jurist who argued that all law is derived natural law or the "Law of Nature" which is *"coequal with mankind and dictated by God Himself."* He wrote: *"This will of his Maker is called the law of nature. For as God, when He created matter, and endued it with a principle of mobility, established certain rules for the perpetual direction of that motion; so,*

when he created man, and endued him with free will to conduct himself in all parts of life, He laid down certain immutable laws of human nature, whereby that free will is in some degree regulated and restrained, and gave him also the faculty of reason to discover the purport of those laws...Such, among others, are these principles: that we should live honestly, should hurt nobody, and should render to everyone his due; to which three general precepts Justinian has reduced the whole doctrine of law."

However, Blackstone recognized the sinfulness of man and believed that our understanding of law was full of ignorance and error. As a result, the only way to know the true natural law is for God to reveal it to us. According to Blackstone, God did so in the Bible where we find the divine revealed law of God. He wrote, *"The doctrines thus delivered we call the revealed or the divine law, and they are to be found only in the Holy Scriptures."* Thus, there is the law of nature and the law only known by revelation. Blackstone writes, *"Upon these two foundations, the law of nature and the law of revelation, depend all human laws; that is to say, no human laws should be suffered to contradict these."* **Thus, Blackstone states that human laws are not to contradict God's laws!**

Our Founding Fathers were all familiar with Blackstone's Commentaries and his understanding of the rights all people have to life, liberty, and the ownership of private property. According to Blackstone life was the *"immediate gift of God, a right inherent by nature and every individual, and it begins in contemplation of law as soon as an infant is able to stir in the mother's womb...Liberty consists properly in a power of acting as one thinks fit without any restraint or control, unless by the Law of Nature; being a right inherent in us by birth, and one of the gifts of God to man at His creation, when He endued him with the faculty of free will."* Furthermore, Blackstone shows how the right to private property can be found in the beginning of Creation when God gave Adam and Eve the right to have dominion over the earth and to fill it with their progeny.

It can be argued that it was Blackstone who did more to influence English and American Law and the founding of the United States than any other one person. In fact, since 1793 the United States Supreme Court has referred to Sir William Blackstone nearly 300 times for direction in the law.

C. Politics and the Founding of America

1. **The Protestant Reformation** – the key issue at the heart of the reformation is where does authority and power derive and how is it best used. These are the fundamental issues for governing society (politics). Martin Luther and other reformers like John Calvin and Anglican Thomas Cranmer contended the God and His Word are the sole basis for all authority and power and therefore the Church and State should be under this authority. However, both the Church (Roman Catholic) and State (Monarchy – Divine Right of Kings) operated as if they were "God" with complete control over their subjects. As a result, oppression and corruption were the norm rather than the exception. The Reformers sought to bring the state, the church, indeed the entire society under the authority of God's Word. This meant that the state has limited power for the authority of the state comes from God first. Therefore, the king and the pope are under God not "equal" to God. John Calvin articulated this position as the clearest of any of the reformers. Unlike Catholic theologians John Calvin believed that the state's authority to rule came from God directly and not from the Church. This led to the idea of the separation of Church and State. Many Protestant sects including the Pilgrims, the Puritans, the Baptists, the Quakers, and others came to America to worship freely without interference by the State or the State Church.
2. **The Approach of Jesus** - while Israel was to be a Theocracy first with Judges and then with Kings (recall God warned Israel of the downside of choosing a king), Jesus presented a new approach when He told Pilate in **Jn. 18:36: "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed**

over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.” Some may think that we as disciples of Christ are not to get involved in politics but this is counter to Jesus words that we are the **“salt of the earth”** and we are to be **“His witnesses”** of His word and love, and we are go **“into all the world.”** While some individuals and groups may feel compelled not to be involved in government or politics, there is no prohibition against such things. In fact, we will see that the affairs of men have been positively affected when believers have in fact pursued political leadership. One only has to reflect on men like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, or William Wilberforce. Jesus set the stage for the idea of the separation of Church and State when He said in response to the question of taxation by Caesar, **“Render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.”** We will see that while the Founding Fathers believed and promoted the establishment of no state church, they never believed in separating the God of the Bible from the government. In other words, the Founding Fathers and the framers of the Constitution all believed that God existed, was over government, and should be freely honored as such. While one could refuse to believe, it did not mean that everyone else has to ignore God for the sake of those who want to!

3. Views of the Founding Fathers – set the stage for the establishment of our republic – the greatest nation in the history of the world!

- a. their education and faith** – all the men who wrote the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights – the founding documents of our nation – had received a solid biblical Christian education. In the lower grades the primary textbook would have been the Bible. The classroom was the home and/or the church. Schools and universities were established with the firm conviction that literacy and education was essential so that one could understand the truths of the Bible and be a good citizen. John Adams, our second president, famously said, *“Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”* At least fifty of the fifty-six men who signed the Declaration of Independence were Trinitarian Christians and members in good standing of a local church. William Federer (who has spoken at St. Bartholomew’s) writes in his book, *“America’s God and Country”* 29 were Anglican, 16-18 Calvinist, 2 Methodist, 2 Lutheran, 2 Roman Catholic, 1 a lapsed Quaker and sometimes Anglican, and 1 an open Deist – Ben Franklin who attended and contributed to many different churches and called for public prayer. Most were trained in the leading colleges of the day which were Christian.
- b. sinfulness of man** – due to their knowledge of the Bible, they understood that man is by nature sinful and evil. James Madison, our fourth president and the chief architect of the Constitution had been greatly influenced by Presbyterian minister, John Witherspoon who also was president of the College of New Jersey (later known as Princeton). Madison contended that since men are not angels, government itself needs to be held in check. He wrote, *“But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. 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.”*
- c. God-given authority** – the state (government) was created by God and its authority is given by God (**Rom. 13:1-4**) and it is therefore accountable to God and the citizens it represents. Civil disobedience is permissible when appropriate (**Acts 5:29**)
- d. the seeds of the US Constitution** – the Pilgrims’ *Mayflower Compact* provided for the first example of self-government under the rule of God and for the furtherment of the Gospel. The “first written constitution in the history of nations” was the Puritans’ *the Fundamental*

Orders of Connecticut in that it was the first time that the government's authority came from God AND the consent of the people. Thus, this paved the way for the same concept in the US Constitution which begins *"We the People..."*

e. the Declaration of Independence –

1) all men created equal and endowed by their Creator with rights – the rights of man are God-given and therefore cannot be taken away by the state! All are created equal before God because all our made in His image and all therefore are to be treated equally under the law. However, the statement *"We believe these truths to be self-evident..."* highlights the paradox of natural law and revelatory law. If these truths – i.e.. *that all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights* - were really self-evident everyone would agree! However, even though we know in our conscience that such things are good, because of our sinful human nature we need them to be declared as such. Who does so? God in his Holy Word, the Bible. So we are brought back to Blackstone's observations that we need God's revelatory law to know what rights should be upheld and why. The rights of life, freedom, peace, and ownership of private property, among others are all upheld in the Ten Commandments.

2) our inalienable rights – life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Note the order! Life is first. All law must be first uphold, protect, and preserve life. Thou shall not murder is the sixth commandment and affirms this principle. Liberty is responsible freedom. It is the freedom to live as one chooses as long as it does not harm another person, their community or nation. Such liberty is expressed in the Bible. Paul wrote in **2 Cor. 3:17**, ***"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."*** In other words, when we are under the Spirit of Christ which always leads to obedience to the law, we are free to truly live fulfilled and successful lives. The government should promote the well-being of all by maintaining law and order and holding itself accountable. Note the last right is the pursuit of happiness which will be preserved if the first two are upheld!

f. separation of powers – In **Jeremiah 17:9** God reminds us that ***"the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."*** As noted above the Founders understood this important truth. James Madison also wrote, *"there is a degree of depravity in mankind which requires a certain degree of circumspection and distrust."* What would be the basis for such accountability in government? **Is. 33:22: *"For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, and the Lord is our King."*** Here we have the three branches of government: The Courts (Judiciary), the Legislature, and the Chief Executive.

g. economics – **Amos 8:5** warns *"Hear this, you who trample the needy, to do away with the humble of the land, saying, 'When will the new moon be over, so that we may sell grain, and the sabbath, that we may open the wheat market, to make the bushel smaller and the shekel bigger, and to cheat with dishonest scales..."* The Founders understood the danger of the government inflating the value of money and spending the nation's resources frivolously and/or for personal gain. During the Revolution the Continental Congress issued paper currency to finance the war, but the currency quickly lost its value because of a lack of solid backing and the rise of counterfeiting. Hence, the phrase *"not worth a Continental."* Only coins and bank notes redeemable by gold or silver became the norm until 1971 when President Nixon removed gold as the dollar's standard for value.

h. A Christian nation? One of the greatest Supreme Court Justices, John Marshall, who presided over the US Supreme Court from 1801 to 1835 said, *"No person, I believe, questions the importance of religion to the happiness of man even during his existence in this world. It has at all times employed his most serious meditation and had a decided influence on his conduct. The American population is entirely Christian, and with us,*

Christianity and Religion are identified. It would be strange, indeed, if with such a people, our institutions did not presuppose Christianity, and did not often refer to it, and exhibit relations with it. In 1892, the US Supreme Court in its decision concerning the case, the Church of the Holy Trinity vs. the United States, declared "this is a religious people. This is historically true. From the discovery of this continent to this present hour, there is a single voice making this affirmation...We find everywhere a clear recognition of the same truth...this is a Christian nation."

Are we a Christian nation today? In the sense that our government, laws, rights, and freedoms are based on the Bible, yes! In the sense that any church is an established church, or any religion is an established religion, no. However, it is undeniable that the Holy Bible has influenced American society and culture and still does today. It is up to us as believers to make sure our nation does not forget this legacy and more importantly, is further transformed by its practical application!