

# Why One Nation Under God Matters, Part II

by Steve Farrell

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## Higher Law, the Foundation of a Republic

Monarchies tend to tyrannize the people, and strip them of their rights, so do democracies; this is so because pure democracies create rights and give governments power to give or take away civil and personal rights according to majority vote - plain and simple, or often, by way of a noisy minority. If the majority, or noisy minority want to strip away your rights, so be it in a democracy.

We forget it was not the king of England, only, but the freely elected Parliament that deprived the colonists of their rights. Jefferson wrote in the original draft of the Declaration of Independence: "They [the English] have by their free election, reestablished [the disturbers of our harmony] in power." The British commons (the freely elected branch) could have exercised their check, at a key moment, against a measure which pushed the colonists to complete unity and war against their mother country, but they didn't. "The bill passed the commons by a vote of more than four to one," records Bancroft. The reason? "The British government inflamed the passions of the English people against America."

Jefferson rejected a repeat of that possibility with this Declaration:

"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 [especially Religious Liberty], and the Pursuit of Happiness [Private Property]."

Jefferson, therefore, appealed to a Higher Law, pronouncing the Biblical conviction that these rights are the pre-existent gifts of God to all his children; rights that no king, no House of Lords, no House of Commons can abridge, eradicate, or claim to create.

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And so we have reason number two: In order for men's rights to be preserved and protected from Kings or the Democratic Mob, there must be an acknowledgment of a Higher Law which declares these rights Inalienable. The kind of government which does this best, the Founder's proclaim, was a Republic, for a Republic is ruled by law, not merely the whims of the one, the few, or the many. So what's wrong with that?

## **Equality Before the Law**

Yet, recognition of God as Our Father and the only King in the Universe roused another political leap for man - or as Jefferson believed - a political return to "ancient principles" - one of them being the conviction already noted, that "all men are created equal."

This was no inconsequential improvement, and Jefferson did not happen upon it alone. The principle was deeply rooted in the religious theology and history of a very religiously minded group of colonists.

The 1762 election sermon by Boston Reverend Abraham Williams spelled it out: "Men [are] naturally equal, [having] descended from a common parent (who is God)." Or as the apostle Peter put it: "God is no respecter of persons but hath made of one blood all nations under Heaven."

From this perspective, very important principles of law emerged. Children of God, endowed with agency, higher than the beasts, ought to be free, and ought to have an equal right to consent to the laws that govern them. It also meant as all men would one day stand before the bar of Heaven to be judged according to their works, regardless of who they were, rich or poor, president or pauper, so should it be on Earth.

This meant equality before the law, or: no special immunities, no privileged political or religious classes.

And so we have reason number three: "One nation under God" means, we are all equally his children, equally free, and equally accountable - and thus earthly governments ought to honor this equality. So what's wrong with that?

Absolutely Nothing. "One nation under God" is the chief cornerstone of our liberty. If we expect to remain a people without Kings or a State to worship; and a people ruled by fixed laws which protect inalienable rights; and a people who are, each of us, equal before that law - we had better make up our minds that "one nation under God" is not offensive, not unconstitutional, and not unnecessary, but essential for believers and unbelievers alike.