

Magna Carta: Cornerstone of Modern Freedom

"But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do." James 1:25

What does secular humanism offer us? "You came from nothing! You are going nowhere! Life is meaningless!" From goo to the zoo to you, from mud to monkeys to man. No ultimate standards of right and wrong. Those who reject God and His Law have no objective basis for justice. If one rejects Creation and the Law of the Creator then social and moral chaos is inevitable. Situation ethics and relativism have led to lawlessness, tearing families and communities apart. We need to return to God's Law of perfect Liberty.

This year marks the 800th anniversary of the proclamation of Magna Carta. Magna Carta was the first Statute, the first written restriction on the powers of government. It was signed by King John at Runnymede, June 15, 1215, and recognized foundational Scriptural principles: Justice must not be sold, delayed, or denied; no taxes may be levied without the consent of representatives of those being taxed; no one may be imprisoned without a fair trial by



a jury of their peers; property must not be taken from any owner without just compensation. Religious freedom is foundational and must remain inviolable, with all "its rights undiminished and its liberties unimpaired." Magna Carta is recognized as the grandfather of all Bills of Rights. It was the

inspiration for the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the model for the English Bill of Rights of 1689; and for the Bill of Rights of the United States of America. Lord Denning described Magna Carta as "the greatest Constitutional document of all

times – the foundation of the freedom of the individual against the arbitrary authority of the despot."

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton, wrote Magna Carta, which declares: "John, by the grace of God, King of England... know ye, that we, in the presence of God and for the salvation of our soul, and the souls of all our ancestors and heirs, and unto the honor of God, and the advancement of the Holy Church, and amendment of our realm... by this our present

charter confirmed, for us and our heirs, forever; that the Church of England shall be free, and have her whole rights and her liberties inviolable..." The Bible was clearly recognized as the foundational authority for Magna Carta. *"You shall do no injustice in judgement. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor."* Lev. 19:15

Magna Carta established the right of Trial by Jury to protect the accused from capricious condemnation by authorities. The high value that Christianity, from its inception, has placed on the individual is in stark contrast to the ancient Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian, Chinese, Greek and Roman cultures, in which the individual was always subordinate to



Magna Carta grasped in his left hand, a sword in his right, the American colonist stands prepared to fight in defense of his liberties. The seal of Massachusetts in 1775 is shown here in one of the windows of the State House in Boston.

the state. True liberty, individual rights and respect for human personality found no place in the ancient world. It was the Christian emphasis on the individual that established the freedoms and rights enshrined in Magna Carta of 1215, and the later English Petition of Rights of 1628, the English Bill of Rights of 1689 and in the American Bill of Rights of 1791.

Sir Edward Coke, Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, challenged King James I, that Magna Carta gave the Courts of Common Law the right to provide justice "from the highest to the lowest" because the king was "under God and the Law." *"You could have no power at all against me unless it had been given you from above..."* John 19:11. All civil authority is delegated by God and answerable to God.

Archbishop Stephen Langton strongly sympathized with the Northern barons who openly rebelled against King John. The Archbishop declared that if John refused to negotiate, then he would excommunicate every man in the Royal Army. The Barons advanced on London, where they were warmly welcomed. By the time they had pursued the king to Staines, Magna Carta included 63 demands. On Monday, 15 June 1215, the Barons met the king in a meadow named Runnymede, on the South bank of the Thames River, halfway between Staines and Windsor. John agreed to the demands, but another four days were spent in hammering out the details of the wording and in making copies of the document. On Friday, 19 June, John fixed the royal seal to Magna Carta. Despite attempts by King John to violate his commitment, and the hostility of Pope Innocent III to Magna Carta, the regency of John's younger son, Henry III, reissued Magna Carta in 1216, and his son, Edward I, reissued Magna Carta in 1297, confirming it as part of England's Statute Law.

During the time of the Reformation in the 16th century, there was an upsurge of interest in Magna Carta as lawyers and historians traced the principles of freedom in the Great Charter, to

Biblically-based laws enacted during the times of the Anglo Saxons, such as The [Laws] of King Alfred the Great at the end of the 9th century, which begin with The Ten Commandments, The Case Laws of Exodus and Christ's Sermon on the Mount. Both James I, and his son, Charles I, attempted to suppress the discussion of Magna Carta and this led to the English Civil War of the 1640s and the execution of Charles for high treason. The violation of the Rights of Englishmen as outlined in Magna Carta led to the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which ousted the Catholic James II, welcoming Protestant William and Mary to the throne and the signing of the English Bill of Rights in 1689. "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." Prov. 14:34

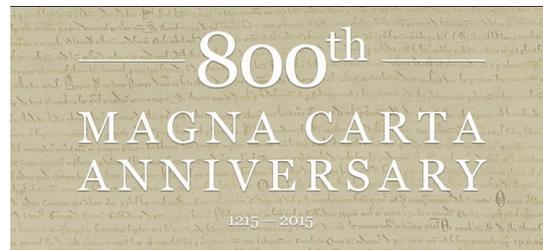
The colonists in the 13 colonies of North America protested the violation of their chartered rights as outlined in Magna Carta when Parliament failed to provide redress for their grievances. In 1687, William Penn published The Excellent Privilege of Liberty and Property: Being the Birthright of the Free-born Subjects of England, which contained the first copy of Magna Carta printed on American soil. Penn's comments reflected those of Coke's, that Magna Carta was fundamental Law. The American colonists quoted extensively from Magna Carta concerning their rights to Trial by Jury and Habeas Corpus. The American founding fathers declared that their Constitution was to preserve their rights and liberties as enshrined in Magna Carta. The American founding fathers claimed Magna Carta as foundational for their American Constitution of 1789, which became the supreme law of the land in the USA.



Four exemplifications of the original 1215 Magna Carta remain in existence and are held by the British Library and the cathedrals of Lincoln and Salisbury. At least 13 original copies of the 1215 Magna Carta were issued by the Royal Chancery

at the time. These were sent to county sheriffs and bishops who made more copies and ensured that the provisions were understood by the population. The original Charters were written on vellum sheets, using quill pens, in abbreviated Latin. Each was sealed with the royal great seal using beeswax and resin, most of which have not survived. The 63 numbered clauses of Magna Carta were introduced by Sir William Blackstone in 1759 as the original Charters formed a single, long unbroken text. The four original 1215 Charters will be on joint display at the British Library this year, to mark the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta.

Lincoln Cathedral's original copy of the 1215 Magna Carta was being displayed at the World Fair in New York when the Second World War broke out and spent the war years in Fort Knox. Prime Minister Winston Churchill attempted to gift the Charter to the American government, hoping that this would encourage the USA, then neutral, to enter the war, but Lincoln Cathedral refused to hand over the rights to such a precious heritage. Only one exemplification of the 1216 Charter survived and is held in Durham Cathedral. Four copies of the 1217 Charter exist, three of these are held in the Bodleian Library in Oxford and one at Hereford Cathedral. The Australian government has a 1297 Charter on display in the Members Hall of Parliament House, Canberra.



The National Archives in Washington DC has a copy of the 1297 Charter. (In 2007, a 1297 Magna Carta was sold at an auction for US\$21.3 Million, the most ever paid for a single page of text.)

Dr. Alvin Schmidt, in *How Christianity Changed the World*, documents that the freedoms and liberties expressed in the Bill of Rights and Declaration of Independence, are extensions of Magna Carta, which is thoroughly Christian. Civic freedoms and liberties could not have occurred had it not been for the Christian values that prompted and shaped the formation of these documents, all of which are extensions of Magna Carta. Magna Carta is revered throughout the world as the cornerstone of modern freedom.

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"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage... For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."
Gal. 5:1, 13

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Dear Friend,

I am writing you this week from Washington DC. I have been teaching hundreds of students from Christian schools as we have walked together through the U.S. Capitol, Lincoln Memorial, Arlington Cemetery and the National War Memorials.



As I was speaking in the rain at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier dozens of Marines walked by. I asked the students to acknowledge them for their service and sacrifice. A group of Marines stayed behind to hear me speak on the Christian roots of freedom. I said that although our brave soldiers can help us maintain our freedoms, God Almighty is the only author and source of freedom. The Marines raised their hands and pointed to heaven saying "Amen!"

In Virginia I spoke at a pastors' luncheon and gave a county wide seminar on the Christian foundations of liberty to many spiritual and political leaders. Today I am at the Watchmen on the Wall Conference with the Family Research Council. Six hundred fifty of the leading pastors of America are gathered for three days. It is a privilege to minister to these spiritual leaders of America and encourage many of them to join us in our **Global Prayer Strategy**.



Teaching Christian Students in D.C.

June 18-20 is the Christian Home Educators of Colorado Rocky Mountain Super Conference. Please pray as I will be the keynote speaker addressing over 6,000 students and families. I believe that homeschoolers are becoming the rock of our republic.

This is perhaps the most critical moment in our nation's history when we must stand for God's truth. Please join me in fervent prayer for a spiritual awakening of believers.

An awakening of God's people is the major hope for our beloved country. Pray for the hundreds of thousands of churches who will be receiving the **World Prayer Atlas** this coming week.

Your prayers and financial support are critically needed to forward our efforts to inspire and teach the leaders of America. Please return the enclosed reply card if you can help us through your prayers and contributions. If you have not received your copy of **GPS 30 World Prayer Atlas**, let us know so we can send one to you!

Yours for a restored America under God,



Marshall Foster