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THAT CHRISTIAN NATION NONSENSE

BY RICHARD CARRIER

Carrier begins with two quotes from ex-presidential candidate, John McCain:

“I just have to say in all candor that this nation was founded primarily on Christian principles.”

“The constitution established the United States as a Christian nation.”

Now Carrier responds to McCain's quotes.

The Constitution does not even mention Christianity, and even explicitly denies that it is founded on any religious principles at all. Not only does the 1st Amendment prohibit the abolition or establishment of any religion, not only does the Preamble conspicuously omit “preserving Christianity” from all the aims and goals of the Constitution, not only does the President’s oath of office spelled out word-for-word in Article 1, Section 2, not even mention God, much less Christ, but Article 6 goes out of its way to explicitly state, “no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.” In other words, the Constitution not only doesn’t require anyone to be a Christian, it explicitly prohibits requiring it.

The Treaty of Tripoli, the English text of which was written at the behest of George Washington and signed by John Adams in 1797, said, “the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion.” This English text was read on the Senate floor and passed unanimously among all the Senators present (23 Senators of the then 32).

Several times Christians have tried to get the Constitution amended to declare this nation as founded on Christian principles. Such Christian Nation amendments were formally proposed in Congress in 1864, 1874, 1896, 1910, and 1954. Not once did these amendments even reach a floor vote. They were rejected out of hand. But it’s worth noting what these amendments proposed, so we can see what kind of American government Congress repeatedly rejected.

The first quite simply asked that the Preamble be changed to read:

"We, the people of the United States, humbly acknowledging Almighty God as the source of all authority and power in civil government, the Lord Jesus Christ as the Ruler among the nations, His revealed will as the supreme law of the land, in order to constitute a Christian government, and in order to form a more perfect union…."

This is of course exactly what the Preamble would have said if the Founding Fathers wanted this to be a Christian nation, to establish Christianity in the Constitution, or demonstrate that it was founded on distinctly Christian principles. Thus, the fact that this is not what the Preamble said, and still does not say after many repeated attempts to get it to say that, pretty much proves this nation was not, and is not, founded on Christianity.

It’s worth looking at what John Adams himself said in his own book on the historical foundations of the Constitution. I mean honestly, if there is any place you should check first, it would be a book he explicitly wrote on the very subject you want to know his thoughts on. Adams wrote A History of the Principal Republics in the World: A Defense of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America. It was published in 1794, in 3 volumes, just a few years before he signed the Treaty of Tripoli. Needless to say, Christianity gets virtually no mention in these three volumes, and not once does he identify it as having inspired the Constitution.

What is often claimed today is that the Ten Commandments are the basis for the Constitution. Never mind that the Ten Commandments are Jewish, and thus not distinctly Christian. Christians who don’t squirm at the notion of owing anything to the Jews will skate around this conundrum by saying instead that this nation and its constitution were based on Judeo-Christian principles.

But even if we hypothesized that the United States Constitution establishes, and was founded on, Reform Judaism, we still have to ask if that is even true. It essentially amounts to saying that the principles of law and government established by Moses are the very principles of law and government that undergird and inspired our Constitution.

So when we look at Adams’ three volume treatise on this question, how much does Moses get mentioned, or the Ten Commandments? Essentially nil. Same for Jesus. Adams was certainly a god-loving Christian (albeit a heretical Unitarian). And he offers much praise in various of his writings for Christian religion (in the Unitarian sense). But that has no bearing on whether Adams conceived or intended the United States to be a Christian nation, much less founded on the Ten Commandments.

To the contrary, he held to exactly the opposite principle.

Now Carrier quotes from Adams' book:

"The United States of America have exhibited, perhaps, the first example of governments erected on the simple principles of nature, and if men are now sufficiently enlightened to disabuse themselves of artifice, imposture, hypocrisy, and superstition, they will consider this event as an era in their history. … It will never be pretended that any persons employed in that service had any interviews with the gods, or were in any degree under the inspiration of heaven, any more than those at work upon ships or houses, or laboring in merchandise or agriculture. It will forever be acknowledged that these governments were contrived merely by the use of reason and the senses."

Now Carrier continues.

That’s a direct denouncement of the Law of Moses, which derived from an interview with God and the inspiration of heaven. Adams is saying they heeded no such things, but discarded them all, and derived American government directly from their own reason and observation, from the natural world alone. That’s not a foundation on Christian principles. That’s a foundation on atheistic naturalism.

Volume 1 is entirely about the example and influence of Greece and Rome (in other words, the advances in government produced by pagans); volume 2 is about that of the secular Italian republics of the Renaissance (in other words, advances in government produced without Christian creeds or dogmas); and volume 3 surveys more of the same, and concludes with the precedent of the British Commonwealth.

In the words of his reviewer in the August issue of the year 1795 American Monthly Review, the authors Adams considers as most influential in his survey are these:

“Among the ancients: Plato, Aristotle, Polybius, Dionysius Halicarnassus, Cicero, and Tacitus. Among the moderns: Machiavelli, Sydney, Montesquieu, Harrington, Locke, Milton, Swift, Hume, Franklin, Price and Nedham.”

From this list, Moses is conspicuous for his absence. So is Jesus. By contrast, an extensive section in volume 1 is devoted to the Athenian constitution established by the pagan statesman Solon of Athens. Adams in fact credits the first invention of representative government to yet another pagan, Lycurgus of Sparta, and then credits Solon with its improvement. No mention of Moses or Jesus.

Indeed this was the pervading sentiment among the Founding Fathers.

When we look to the pagan Classics, it is there, and not the Bible, where we find the language, concepts, and ideals that characterize the political theory manifest in the Constitution.

For example, that protection of private property is a principal function of government is explicitly stated by the pagan Cicero (in his treatise On Duties, book 2, paragraph 73). You won’t find this anywhere in the Bible. Cicero lived half a century before Christ.

Likewise, the notion that “all men are created equal” is originally, and most influentially, a pagan idea, derived from the ancient philosophy of Stoicism, developed centuries before Christ. It was the Stoic belief that all men and women are brothers and sisters of a common family and that all were citizens of the world who share the same natural rights.

The Stoics claimed this could be demonstrated directly from observation and reason, the very method Adams declares the Founders employed. By contrast, “searching the scriptures” gets nary a mention as a method ever resorted to, either by Stoic philosophers or John Adams. The Stoics likewise developed the philosophical concepts of ‘liberty’ and ‘human rights’ and ‘freedom of speech’ and ‘equality under the law’, all words and phrases that feature prominently in their discourses on morality, law and government.

The link from Stoicism to the founding of our nation is demonstrated by the Declaration of Independence, which says “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,” which plainly tells us the idea of unalienable rights is the foundational concept behind this sentiment. Yet no such concept appears anywhere in the Bible.

Rather, the idea of “unalienable rights” derives from the Stoics and their subsequent influence on pagan Roman legal theory. So the Founding Fathers did not find this idea in the Bible. They saw the equality of man in the context of Cicero’s “rights of man.”

Even the Apostle Paul’s alleged declaration of equality (in Galatians 3:27-28) does not relate to this, despite Christians claiming otherwise.

There Paul says:

“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. So there can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female. For you all are one man in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to the promise.”

With this declaration Paul was not asserting a political concept, but a very prejudicial theology, where only those who “have been baptized into Christ” are equals. And not only that, but they are equals only in the sense that they all share the same “promise” in the afterlife, not in the sense that they share the same legal rights.

The New Testament in fact denies equal rights: Paul himself is made to say (in 1 Corinthians 14:33-35) that women, even baptized Christian women, do not have rights equal to men, and again (in 1 Timothy 2:11-15) he is made to be even more explicit:

"Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided she continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty."

Not only do we see here a denial of equal rights, but we see here scriptural reasoning, rather than reasoning from natural facts. This is therefore the very kind of reasoning that Adams explicitly condemns: basing anything on scriptures or interviews with gods. Adams says the Constitution was written by men who repudiated that kind of reasoning, and used instead human reason in light of empirical evidence. And Adams praises this as the very feature that makes America unique and great. Not Christianity. But human reason and empiricism, absent any divine inspiration.

Likewise, slavery is uniformly supported even in Paul’s letter to Philemon, and everywhere else in the New Testament. Neither Paul nor Jesus, and certainly not Moses, ever condemned slavery or asked that all slaves be freed. But of course, even the Constitution failed to do that. So perhaps there is indeed one explicit Christian principle enshrined in the American Constitution: the endorsement and perpetuation of human slavery.

That all peoples, of all faiths, ought to share the same legal rights is a pagan concept, not a Christian one. Like our Founding Fathers, the pagans never fully realized this ideal in practice, but many pagans advocated it.

John Locke’s idea of rights and government as a social contract derives from another pagan, Epicurus. Locke did not find this anywhere in the Bible, and certainly not in the words of Moses, Jesus or Paul. He got it from pagans.

So with that in mind, I quote one of our Founding Fathers whom Christians would prefer we forget:

Thomas Paine, was the political activist who authored The Rights of Man and The American Crisis, thus playing a crucial role in rallying Americans to the Revolution, and keeping up morale and unity during the war. Paine knew where our constitutional ideals came from, just as he declares in The Rights of Man where he wrote:

“What Athens was in miniature, America will be in magnitude.”

Paine didn't say, "Not what ancient Israel was in miniature." He said, "Athens."

In other words, the Constitution was inspired by Solon, not Moses—nor Jesus.

Solon’s constitution for Athens was credited by Adams and Paine and many other Founding Fathers as what most inspired the American Constitution, with the equally pagan constitution of the Roman Republic a close second.

Solon gave us elections, and trials by a jury of our peers, two concepts never found in the Bible. Then it was from this and the Roman system of government that the Founding Fathers learned and enshrined the principle of a division of powers and the concept of checks and balances, including such ideas as the presidential veto. You won’t find any of that in the Bible.

But more conspicuous as inspiration is that neither the Roman nor the Athenian constitutions declared themselves as having come from a divine author or inspiration, unlike the laws of Moses and Jesus. They also did not prohibit religious freedom, nor require anyone adhere to any religious doctrine. They were, in other words, the original secular constitutions.

They were not wholly secular, though, in that they did not explicitly prohibit the establishment of religious laws or tests for office. And yet, our Constitution does explicitly prohibit the establishment of religious laws and tests for office; which means the Founding Fathers made our Constitution even more secular than these pagan constitutions; which sets our Constitution even further away from having any plausible basis in biblical religion.

Thus, while those pagan constitutions could permit outlawing the teaching atheism, even enact the death penalty for it, as happened to Socrates, our Constitution forbids that. This is exactly contrary to the legal principles credited to Moses.

Deuteronomy 12 states, when speaking of the laws handed to Moses by God, which included the Ten Commandments (quote):

"If your brother, your mother’s son, or your son or daughter, or the wife you cherish, or your friend who is as your own soul, entice you secretly, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods’ ... you shall not yield to him or listen to him; and your eye shall not pity him, nor shall you spare or conceal him. But you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. So you shall stone him to death because he has sought to seduce you from the Lord your God …."

Just read passages like this, and let it never be said again that our Constitution was based on the Bible.

What I just read is simply an enactment of the first of the Ten Commandments, that it shall be illegal to have or worship other gods or their idols. What does “illegal” mean? That you shall be brutally executed by the state for it.

How can anyone think this is the basis of our constitution?

The Bible also condemns not just freedom of religion, but freedom of speech. In Leviticus 24 we read that:

"The son of [an] Israelite woman blasphemed the Name [of God] and cursed. So they brought him to Moses. … They put him in custody so that the command of the Lord might be made clear to them. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Bring the one who has cursed outside the camp, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head; then let all the congregation stone him. [Then] you shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘If anyone curses his God, then he will bear his sin. Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The alien as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death."

So much for the first amendment. And yet this just enacts the third of the Ten Commandments, that it shall be illegal to use the Lord’s name in vain, in other words, illegal to speak blasphemy. What does “illegal” mean? That you shall be brutally executed by the state for it.

Again, how can anyone think this is the basis of our constitution?

Yet I keep hearing the chant, variously phrased, that “the Ten Commandments are the foundation of Western morality and the American Constitution and government.” In saying this, people are essentially crediting Moses with the invention of ethics, democracy and civil rights, a claim that is of course absurd. But its absurdity is eclipsed by its injustice, for as we just saw, Solon of Athens is the lawmaker who is far more important to us, whose ideas and actions lie far more at the foundation of American government, and, as it happens, whose own Ten Commandments (he would sooner have called them “guidelines”) were distributed at large and influencing the greatest civilizations of the West—Greece and Rome—for well over half a millennium before the laws of Moses were anything near a universal social influence.

The ideals of our true hero, Solon the Athenian (the man to whom we owe all reverence), were implemented in what we now call “modern democratic principles.”

Solon is said to have been born around 638 B.C. and lived until the year 558. But the date in his life of greatest importance to us is the year he was elected to draft a constitution for Athens, around 594 B.C.

How important is this man? Let’s examine what we owe to him, in comparison with the legendary author of the so-called Judeo-Christian Ten Commandments.

Solon is the founder of Western democracy and the first man in history to articulate ideas of equal rights for all citizens, and though he did not go nearly as far in that direction as we have come today, Moses can claim no connection to either.

Solon was the first man in Western history to publicly record an actual civil constitution in writing. No one in Hebrew history did anything of the kind, least of all Moses. The very idea of a constitutional government derives from Solon.

Solon advocated not only the right but even the duty of every citizen to bear arms in the defense of the state—to him we owe the 2nd Amendment. Nothing about that is to be found in the Ten Commandments of Moses.

Solon set up laws defending the principles and importance of private property, state encouragement of economic trades and crafts, and a strong middle class—the ideals which lie at the heart of American prosperity (and are codified in the Constitution itself: in Article 1, section 8, and the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Amendments). Yet these, again, cannot be credited at all to Moses.

Solon is the first man in history to eliminate birth-right as a basis for government office, and to create democratic assemblies open to all male citizens, such that no law could be passed without the majority vote of all. The notion of letting women into full political rights would not arise in any culture until that of modern Europe, but just 'democracy' never gets a single word in the Bible. To the contrary, under Moses and his successors, all supreme offices in church and government were hereditary (or appointed by the inheritors), and instituted by God, not the People.

Solon invented the right of appeal, and trial by jury, whereby an assembly of citizens chosen at random, without regard for office or wealth or birth, gave all legal verdicts. Moses can claim nothing as fundamental as these developments, which are essential to modern society.

Solon invented the separation of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, whereas Moses had them all united under a single aristocratic council, yet even they were ruled by fiat from a god-appointed sovereign (Moses, then Joshua, later the Judges, and then Kings like David and his son Solomon).

The concept of taking a government official to court for malfeasance we also owe to Solon. We read nothing of the kind about Moses.

The idea of allowing foreigners who have mastered a useful trade to immigrate and become citizens is also an original invention of Solon—indeed, the modern concept of citizenship itself is largely indebted to him. There is nothing like this in the Bible.

And like our own George Washington, Solon declined the offer to become a king in his country, giving it a Constitution instead—unlike Moses who, in his own legend, gave laws yet continued to reign.

Solon’s selfless creation of the Athenian constitution set the course which led to the rise of the first universal democracy in the United States, and as we saw from the remarks of Adams and Paine, it was to Solon’s Athens, not the Bible, that our Founding Fathers looked for guidance in constructing a new State. Moses can claim no responsibility for this.

If we had Solon and no Moses, we would very likely still be where we are today. But if we had Moses and no Solon, democracy might never have existed at all.

Whether these men were fictional or historical doesn’t matter. Someone created the institutions credited to them, someone weaved these tales to communicate the values their stories embody, so their names still stand as symbols of two differing realities. Only one of them actually lies at the foundation of our Constitution. And he’s not in the Bible.

Let's examine two different lists of Ten Commandments, one offered by each of these men, and compare their worth and significance to Western society.

Neither man’s list was unique to him. Moses was merely borrowing ideas that had already been chiseled in stone centuries before by Hammurabi, King of Babylon (and unlike the supposed tablets of Moses, the Stone of Hammurabi still exists and is on display in the Louvre). Pretty much the only novelties Moses added to the ideas in Hammurabi’s code, were restrictions of religious liberty, exactly the opposite of both the American Constitution and American social morals.

In the same way, Solon’s Ten Ethical Rules were a reflection and refinement of wisdom that was already ancient in his day. And in both cases the association of these men with their moral precepts is as likely legend as fact. But the existence and reverence for their sayings in their respective cultures was still real—which means we can still validly ask:

Which list of Ten Commandments lies more at the heart of modern Western moral ideals?

Which contains concepts that are more responsible for our current social success and humanity?

And which is more profound and more fitting for a free society?

The Ten Commandments of Moses run as follows:

1. Have no other gods before me (the God of the Jews).

2. Make no images of anything in heaven, earth or sea, nor bow to them.

3. Do not vainly use the name of your God (the God of the Jews).

4. Do no work on the seventh day of the week.

5. Honor your parents.

6. Do not kill.

7. Do not commit adultery.

8. Do not steal.

9. Do not give false testimony against another.

10. Do not desire another’s wife or anything that belongs to another.

Now, we can see at once that our society is entirely opposed to the first four of these, as well as the last of them. Think about the fourth commandment: as a capitalist society, we scoff at the idea of closing our shops on a choice market day. And the tenth commandment is as unamerican as it gets: our very goal in life is to desire—desiring is what drives us toward success and prosperity. The phrase “pursuing the American Dream,” which lies at the heart of our social world, has at its heart the very idea of coveting the success of our peers, goading us to match it with our own industry. We owe all our monumental national success to this.

And then there are those first three commandments. Our ideals of religious liberty and free speech, essential to any truly civil society, compel us to abhor them. The 1st Amendment to the Constitution abolishes these Commandments. Article 6 also effectively repudiates the first four, while the Constitution’s Preamble contradicts the fourth and tenth, in its pursuit of liberty and happiness. Thus, already half of Moses’ doctrines cannot be the foundation of our modern society—to the contrary, they are anathema to modern ideals, and were effectively opposed and repealed by the American Constitution.

So that leaves just five commandments. Murder, theft and perjury have been outlawed by all societies and thus are not peculiar to the Bible. No society could function that did not constrain them to some extent. Whereas by contrast, shunning adultery has never contributed to the rise of civil rights and democratic principles (despite much trying, there is no Adultery Amendment and neither is it against the law in most of this country). It is often regarded as immoral—but then it always has been, by nearly all societies, before and since the time of Moses, for the simple reason that it, like lying, theft, and murder, can harm others, and thus these commandments are as redundant as they are unprofound. There is nothing peculiarly Christian about them. Or Jewish.

Finally, we are left with only one commandment, to honor our parents. This of course has been a basic principle of nearly every society ever since such things as ‘societies’ existed. Yet the greatest advances in civil rights and civic moral consciousness in human history occurred precisely as the result not of obeying, but disobeying this very commandment: the social revolutions of the sixties, still abhorred by conservatives, yet spearheaded by rebellious teenagers and young adults, nevertheless secured the moral rights of women and minorities—something unprecedented in human history, and nowhere advocated by Moses. And by opposing the Vietnam war our children displayed for the first time a massive popular movement in defense of the very pacifism which Christians boast of having introduced into the world, yet are usually the last to actually stand up for.

It can even be said that our entire moral ethos is one of thinking for ourselves, of rebellion and moral autonomy, of daring to stand up against even our elders when our conscience compels it. Thus, it would seem that even the fifth commandment does not lie at the heart of our modern society—it is largely an anachronism, lacking the essential nuances that a more profound ethic promotes. As a result, we have no laws against dishonoring our parents; and in fact no mention of parental privilege is to be found anywhere in the Constitution. [To the contrary, the Constitution even repeals the Ten Commandments' corruption of blood clause: compare Article 3, Section 3 with Exodus 20:5 ... so much for the Constitution being based on the Ten Commandments.]

Only two of the Ten Commandments are realized anywhere in the American Constitution. The nearest you’ll find is the declaration in the 5th Amendment that no one shall be “deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law,” which in effect agrees with the sixth and eighth commandments, against murder and theft. But like I already said, laws against murder and theft long predate The Ten Commandments, exist in all religions and societies (including Solon’s Athens), and are too obviously necessary for any functional society to have required divine inspiration. So those do not in any sense ‘derive’ from the Ten Commandments of Moses.

Which means the Constitution, and American society in general, are not rooted in the Ten Commandments of Moses.

Let us now turn to the Ten Commandments of Solon. These were the ten ethical principles pronounced by Solon, not as laws, but as morals, a distinction that does not exist in the Old Testament.

1. Trust good character more than promises.

2. Do not speak falsely.

3. Do good things.

4. Do not be hasty in making friends, but do not abandon them once made.

5. Learn to obey before you command.

6. When giving advice, don't recommend the most pleasing, but the most

useful.

7. Make reason your supreme commander.

8. Do not associate with people who do bad things.

9. Honor the gods.

10. Have regard for your parents.

Unlike the Commandments of Moses, when suitably interpreted, none of these is outdated or antithetical to modern moral or political thought. Every one could be taken up by anyone today. Indeed, there is something much more profound in these commandments. They are far more useful as precepts for living one’s life.

Can society or government prevail and prosper if we fail to uphold the First Commandment of Moses? By our own written declaration of religious liberty for all, we have staked our entire national destiny on the belief that we not only can get by without the first commandment of Moses, but that we ought to abolish it entirely. And history bears that out.

Yet what if we were to fail to uphold Solon’s first commandment? (To trust good character more than promises.) If we ignored that, the danger to society would be clear. Indeed, doesn’t this commandment speak to the heart of what makes or breaks a democratic society? Isn’t it truly fundamental that we not trust the mere promises of politicians and flatterers, but elect our leaders and choose our friends instead by taking the trouble to evaluate the quality of their character? This can be said to be an ideal that is fundamental to modern moral and political thought.

Of course, two of the commandments of Solon are similar to those of Moses: do not speak falsely, and have regard for your parents. Yet Solon does not restrict his first injunction to false accusations or testimony against others, as Moses does. Solon’s commandment is more universal and thus more fundamental. Since his third commandment simply says “do good things.” By comparison, no commandment to do good appears in the Ten Commandments of Moses. Think about that.

Likewise, whereas Moses calls us to honor our parents, Solon’s choice of words is more appropriate—he only asks us to treat our parents in a respectful way, which we can do even if we disobey or oppose them, and even if we disapprove of their character and thus have no grounds to actually “honor” or “glorify” them.

Instead of simply commanding us to follow rules, Solon’s commandments involve significant social and political advice: temper our readiness to rebel and to do our own thing, by learning first how to follow others. Take care when making friends, and stick by them. Be reasonable. Try to give good advice—don’t just say what people want to hear. Shun the company of bad people.

This advice is just the sort of thing we need in order to be successful and secure—as individuals, as communities, and even as a nation. The notion of exactly what is “good” or “bad” does require thought and reflection. But that’s as it should be. Even with that, the ideals represented by Solon’s commandments clearly do rest at the foundation of modern American morality and society, and would be far more useful for school children to learn, whose greatest dangers are peer pressure, rashness, and naiveté, the very sins Solon’s commandments denounce.

There is only one of them that might give a secularist pause: Solon’s commandment to honor the gods. Yet when we compare it to the analogous First Four Commandments of Moses, we see how much more Solon’s single religious commandment can be made to suit our society and our civic ideals: it does not restrict religious freedom, for it does not demand that we believe in anyone’s god or follow anyone’s religious rules, and it does not outlaw other religions than ours. It remains in the appropriate plural.

This would remain true to our most prized American ethic of religious liberty and civility, which we enact in the way we respect the rules of a church, mosque or synagogue when we are a guest in them, and in the way we don’t aim to force anyone to stop paying cult and homage to their deities as they see fit [as long as public safety and human rights are not infringed].

Is it an accident that when Solon’s ideals reigned, there grew democracies and civil rights, and ideals we now consider fundamental to modern Western society, yet when the ideals of Moses replaced them, we had a thousand years of oppression, darkness, and tyranny?

Is it coincidence that when the ideals of Moses were replaced with those of Solon, when men decided to fight and die not for the Ten Commandments of Moses but for the resurrection of Athenian civil society, we ended up with the great Democratic Revolutions, the American Constitution, and the social and legal structures that we now take for granted as the height and glory of human achievement and goodness?

I think we owe our thanks to Solon. Moses did nothing for us—his laws were neither original nor significant in comparison. They even stand against our Constitution and its ideals. When people cry for the hanging of the Ten Commandments of Moses on school and court walls, I am astonished. Solon’s Ten Commandments have far more right to hang in those places than those of Moses. The great Athenian’s Commandments are far more noble and profound, and far more appropriate to a free society. Who would have guessed this of a pagan?

Well, maybe everyone with sense.

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THE SCIENCE SEGMENT

ANCIENT ASTEROID STRIKE IN AUSTRALIA "CHANGED THE FACE OF EARTH"

A strike from a big asteroid more than 300 million years ago left a huge impact zone buried in Australia and changed the face of the earth.

The dust and greenhouse gases released from the crater, the seismic shock and the initial fireball would have incinerated large parts of the earth.

The asteroid was bigger than 6 miles in diameter, while the impact zone itself was larger than 120 miles - the third largest impact zone in the world.

The greenhouse gases would stay in the atmosphere for tens of thousands of years.

The discovery was made after a researcher discovered some unusual mineral deposits in the East Warburton Basin in South Australia.

The strike may have been part of an asteroid impact cluster which caused an era of mass extinction, wiping out primitive coral reefs and other species.

The impact happened before the dinosaurs.

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FAMOUS QUOTES

ANONYMOUS

"Design in nature is but a concatenation of accidents,

culled by natural selection until the result is so beautiful or effective

as to seem a miracle of purpose."