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Game Theory and Democracy

Paper 2

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Christianity in American Democracy

Through the work of various influential leader, Christianity has evolved and grown into many different denominations. Christianity and its different denominations have had a lasting impact on the way several governments were formed and maintained.

Christianity has had an enormous impact on the development of the United States democracy. Dating back to the Mayflower Compact formed by the pilgrims in 1620, Christianity and its values have had a huge effect on the Declaration of Independence, the creation of our government system and the writing of the Unites States Constitution.

In the early 1600, English government was controlled by The Church of England. The Church of England had very low tolerance for other forms of Christianity other then its own. A group of separatist puritans known as pilgrims decided to venture to the Americas to form an English colony. After the long voyage across the Atlantic, the pilgrims landed in Plymouth Massachusetts. The Pilgrims ventured to the Americas seeking religious freedom so it was obvious that much of the pilgrims laws would be influenced by their religious beliefs. Puritans believed in direct communication with God and took bible passages literally. Their religion was a large part of their daily life. They prayed multiple times a day, on Sunday's they attended services twice, and often had

mandatory sermons on Thursdays. In order to govern their colony in accordance to Gods will and allow for political freedom the Pilgrims created the Mayflower Compact which was their rules and laws as to how their society would function.



The Mayflower compact is the cornerstone of American Democracy. It was the settlers first attempt at self government. The Mayflower compact was a concise document written to provide just and equal laws for the good of the colony. Most of todays democratic government stems from the original settlers reliance on God and moral law. The Mayflower compact states:

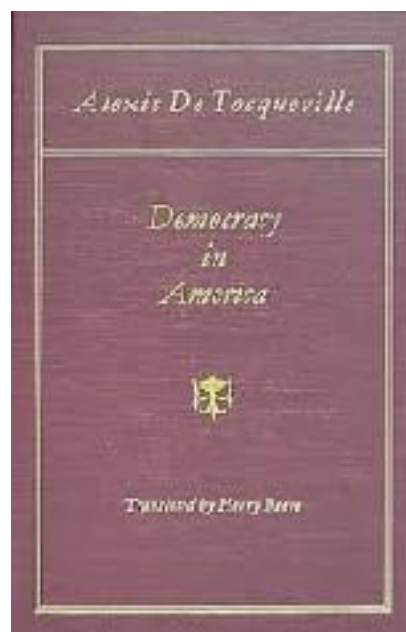
“In the name of God, Amen. We whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God of Great Britain, France, and Ireland King, Defender of the Faith, etc. Having undertaken for the Glory of God and advancement of the Christian Faith

and Honor of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the First Colony in the Northern Parts of Virginia, do by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and one of another, Covenant and Combine ourselves together in a Civil Body Politic, for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute and frame such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cape Cod, the 11th of November, in the year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King James, of England, France and Ireland the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth. Anno Domini 1620.”

The various references to God in the compact shows their devotion to creating a colony that in the eyes of God was pure and just. They reference a covenant which is an agreement with God. This shows that the Mayflower compact was made as a set of rules that they felt were sent by God and that by signing the agreement they were agreeing to live by Gods will. Because churches were governed democratically, the puritans decided that they would govern their colony in a democratic manner as well. The Mayflower compact was very vague in their laws. They pilgrims agreed to deal with issues as they came and solve them according to what they believed was Gods will. Even the pilgrims criminal law was rooted in the teachings and scriptures of Christianity. Much of their punishments were taken directly from the bible. For example, the punishment by the roman empire was taxation. Similarly the the pilgrims would tax

anyone who did not follow laws or committed a venial sin. For more serious offenses citizens would be put to death, usually by hanging. This was the first experiment of self government held in America and was widely studied years later.

Alexis de Tocqueville was a french diplomat, historian, and political scientist born in 1805. Tocqueville is best known for his influential book “Democracy in America” published in 1835. “Democracy in America” was written after Tocqueville spent a few years traveling around America. Tocqueville was originally traveled across the Atlantic to study various penitentiaries. He spent weeks visiting and interviewing people in penitentiaries, but was amazed by the broader idea of American politics. “Democracy in America” was written in awe of American ideals such as equality and having such a stable economy for a new growing area. Tocqueville was also impressed by the popularity of churches in early American history. In “Democracy in America” Tocqueville explains why the practice of christianity was so alive in America. Tocqueville explains that much of their laws and moral code stems directly from christianity. This moral code was easy to enforce because of the fear of God that was instilled within the puritan faith. In the puritan religion, sins were punishable by God and in services the followers would be told that they should fear the punishment in heaven not on earth.



At the start of “Democracy in America”, Tocqueville points out that without the religious foundation of our democracy we would have no freedom. “Christianity, which has rendered all men equal before God, will not be loath to see all citizens equal before the law.”(Tocqueville) Christianity teaches that all men are equal in the eyes of God. It is natural for this to translate into the political views of the people. Without this idea of equality, freedom is unattainable.



Tocqueville attributes American democratic freedom to our nation's link to Christianity. He claims that in order to have political freedom a nation must have a strong moral foundation. The moral foundation that exists in Christianity parallels that of our democracy. Because of this Christian moral foundation America is able to combat

negative democratic tendencies such as tyranny of the majority and despotism of the government on its people. Tyranny of the majority can occur if a majority creates a policy without regard for the well being of any minority. Because of the idea that all men are created equally under the law, minorities are protected in a democracy because of democracy's roots in christianity. Despotism of the government is when people are more concerned with the pursuit of their own interests rather than the greater good that they neglect to partake in politics. Christianity emphasizes citizens duties to each other, which translates to citizens duty to actively participate in their government. This prevents despotism of government Tocqueville claimed that the order of American democracy was dependent on the preservation of religious beliefs.

After the establishment of the Massachusetts colony, many other colonies were established for various different reasons. Many of them also planned their government systems in the spirit of christianity. Years later the colonies declared independence from the English government. The declaration of independence was written because of christianity's teaching that man has a God-given free will which allows them to choose self-rule. The opening of the Declaration of Independence is as follows;

“When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.”(Declaration of Independence)

The declaration's authors justified their right to declare independence by saying that it was their god given right.

After the colonies won their independence from the English government, It came time for them to write an official set of laws. They began to draft the constitution in May 25, 1787 and was not completed until September 17, 1787. like the Declaration of independence, the constitution was also written with the influence of the teachings of christianity. The constitution consists of political principals that are consistent with christian values. For example the Bill of Rights was added to protect the natural God given rights and ensure that all men are treated equally. The Bill of Rights shares very similar teaching as the New Testament of the Bible.

The framers of the constitution believed in the christian idea of the natural moral laws and rights given by God for all mankind. In 1775 Alexander Hamilton expressed his views of the emerging nation by stating, "The sacred rights of mankind are not to be

rummaged for among old parchments or musty records. They are written, as with a sunbeam, in the whole volume of human nature, by the hand of the Divinity itself, and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power. ... Good and wise men, in all ages...have supposed that the Deity, from the relations we stand in to Himself, and to each other, has constituted an eternal and immutable law, which is indispensably obligatory upon all mankind, prior to any human institutions whatsoever."(Alexander Hamilton)

Alexander Hamilton believed that these God given rights should be consistently protected under the new government. He believed that they were universal so they could never be taken away or denied of any man.

In 1788 James Madison published an essay known as “The Federalist No. 51”. In “The Federalist No. 51” Madison writes about the political uses of the various views of human nature. Madison writes, “The interest of the man must be connected

with the constitutional rights of the place. It may be a reflection on human nature that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of the government. 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.” (James Madison)

This idea was the bases of the constitutional concept of checks and balances. Although the government protects mans natural christian rights and protects against the sinful nature of human beings, the government itself is not immune to this sinful nature.

Madison argues that the authority in charge of the government are equally capable of committing sins to gain more power which is why the concept of checks and balances exists.

Many important political leaders have commented and commended the influence of christianity on the American Democracy. George Washington spoke to this in his

farewell address. Washington stated, “And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.” (George Washington). In this excerpt of his farewell address Washington is stating that religion is a necessary part of the American democracy. He states that our basic human rights stem from God. He believed that without God and religion national morality can not be maintained.



Similarly John Adams also spoke about the importance of Christianity's influence on American Democracy. John Adams became the second president of the united states. In a letter he sent to an officer of the Massachusetts Militia he wrote, “We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of

any other.” (John Adams) John Adams recognized that the constitution was written for a religious people and that their values were instilled in the constitution. He believed that without the population maintaining their christian morals and values the constitution would not have as great of an effect as it could have.

It is evident that throughout American history, Christianity has greatly influenced the formation and sustainability of American Democracy. The initial impact of the Puritans desire to form a new colony with laws that directly relate to Christian teachings paved way for christian values to be instilled in other important law making documents. Our freedom and equality come from Christian teachings and allow American democracy to be a government for the people.

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