

10.1 Foundations of Western Political Thought

Historical Background: Judeo-Christian beliefs support the idea that every person is *born with worth and dignity*, individuals *have the ability to choose* and every person has a *responsibility to help others* in need and the community. Greco-Roman beliefs support the idea that all people have the *ability to reason*. Greeks and Romans were the first to use *democracy*. Later, the Magna Carta served as a modern document to revive classical ideas of democracy in England. Therefore, many historians argue that ideas from Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman thought are the main foundation for western political thought.

Directions: Read each source and complete the 6Cs.

Prompt: Based on your understanding of the documents, *How did the Jews, Christians, Greeks, Romans and the Magna Carta influence Western Political Thought?*

1

The Ten Commandments



The Ten Commandments are the ten orders or laws given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. These orders serve as the basis for Jewish laws.

Primary Source: The Ten Commandments

1. I am the Lord thy God... Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image...
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain...
4. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.
5. Honor thy father and thy mother...
6. Thou shalt not kill.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
10. Thou shalt not covet... anything that is thy neighbor's.

Deuteronomy 5:6-22

2

The Spread of Christianity

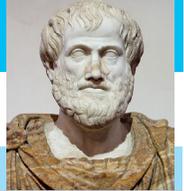
After the death of Jesus, the disciples of Jesus began to preach in Jewish communities throughout the Roman world. Paul played the most influential role in the spread of Christianity. Christian ethics appealed to many people because Jesus welcomed all people especially the humble, poor and oppressed. Belief in the equality of all brought widespread support among common people, as did the promise of a better life beyond the grave.

Primary Source: Spread of Christianity, c 325-600



3

Greek Philosophy



Aristotle promoted reason as the guiding force of learning. He proposes that even the rulers must be subject to the law. This main principle lies at the heart of modern constitutional governments.

Primary Source: Aristotle Politics

“And the rule of law, it is argued, is preferable to that of any individual. On the same principle, even if it be better for certain individuals to govern, they should be made only guardians and ministers of the law.”

4

The Roman’s Twelve Tables

The Roman Forum was a collection of buildings that stood at the heart of ancient Rome. Buildings included temples, monuments, and the Curia- the meeting place of the Roman Senate. The Twelve Tables were displayed in the Forum so that everyone would know what the laws were.

Primary Source: The Roman Forum



5

The Magna Carta, 1215



The Magna Carta is one of the most widely viewed legal documents. The purpose of this document was to limited to power of the king and bring documented rights to the people of England. According to one account, “King John, seeing that he was inferior in strength to the barons,... granted the underwritten laws and liberties, and confirmed them by his charter...”

Primary Source: The Magna Carta, 1215

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(38) In the future no official shall place a man on trial upon his own unsupported statement, without producing credible witnesses to the truth of it.

(39) No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled... except by the lawful judgement of his equals or by the law of the land.

(40) To no one will we sell, to no one deny or delay right or justice.

(45) We will appoint as justices, constables, sheriffs, or other officials, only men that know the law of the realm and are minded to keep it well. ”

Works Cited:

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Ellis, Elisabeth Gaynor., Anthony Esler. World History The Modern World. United States of America: Prentice Hall, 2007. 21-42.