

*The Thomas Jefferson Center for Constitutional Studies*

SEMINAR 3

# ATTACKS ON THE CHARTER OF FREEDOM

*Healing of America Series*

Glenn J. Kimber PhD  
& Julianne S. Kimber MA



Thomas Jefferson Center  
FOR CONSTITUTIONAL STUDIES



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The Healing of America  
STUDY GUIDE FOR STUDY COURSE #3  
“Attacks on the  
Charter of Freedom”

Written and Compiled by  
Glenn J. Kimber, PhD  
and Julianne S. Kimber, MA

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Published by  
**Textbook Publishers**

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Study Course #3

# ***Attacks on the Charter of Freedom***

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# Introduction

This course on "Attacks on the Charter of Freedom," subtitled *The Unhinging of America*, is highly important as the foundation for the fourth seminar in this series, which will be called "Restoring the Charter of Freedom."

Unless we understand the nature of our problems and how far we have wandered from our original moorings, it is impossible to appreciate the task of putting together the prescription which will provide the remedy.

The greatness of America is still a viable reality. Nevertheless, the mighty door which was set in place to guard America's greatness has become dangerously unhinged. It is difficult to open and close a door that has loose hinges, and therein lies the dilemma of America today. Consequently, it hangs awkwardly ajar.

The Founders designed four strong hinges for America's door:

- 1—An Educated Citizenry
- 2—A Moral and Ethical Society
- 3—A Government Of the People, By the People,  
For the People
- 4—A Light to the World



On these four hinges hangs the real strength of the American dream. America's door is designed to be open and welcoming to all those seeking freedom, prosperity, and peace.

## **An Educated Citizenry**

The first hinge on the American door is the need for an educated citizenry. Experience has taught that "people tend to behave according to what they believe." Because of this, the Founders knew that unless the principles of their great success formula were carefully taught to the people, the genius of America could be lost in a single generation. The Founders legislated in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 that education should include 1) religion, 2) morality, and 3) knowledge. They said these were all-important for maintaining a free and prosperous society.

It is interesting that the teaching of these principles constitutes one of the most neglected areas in education today. This accounts for a lot of the squeaks in the American door.

## **A Moral and Ethical Society**

The second hinge on the American door is the foundation for all the rest. It is the ideological strength on which the door was originally hung. The bolts which fasten this hinge in place are the moral and spiritual values which the Founders intended to make the strongest bolts in the entire structure. As John Adams pointed out: "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." The loosening of these bolts is undoubtedly the major source of the

social instability which presently plagues the nation and is causing the American door to creak upon its frame.

The Founding Fathers would be shocked and dismayed to learn that religion and morality would not only be removed from society, but its practices would come under severe attack. Their sacred Bill of Rights, designed to protect religious beliefs, have become tools to protect the irreligious.

### **A Government Of the People, By the People, For the People**

The third hinge on the American door is the carefully structured government itself. The Founders knew that Lord Acton of England was correct when he said, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." In the Declaration of Independence the Founders outlined their basic beliefs, and it was in the Constitution where they structured a government to insure these basic beliefs. These were so much a part of the whole fabric, that they bound the two together with a sacred oath.

The Constitution created an effective balance of power. It divided power vertically and horizontally. This balance was considered necessary by the Founders in order to protect the sacred and inalienable rights of all the people.

Today, these checks and balances have not only been weakened, but in many cases, totally removed. This has allowed power to become centralized and too often abusive of the people. This hinge is not only loose, but is also twisted out of shape.

### **A Light to the World**

The fourth hinge encompasses America's strong sense of mission. As professor Conrad Cherry stated:

The belief that America had been providentially chosen for a special destiny has deep roots in the American past, and it is by no means a belief that has been given up in this secular age. It is at the heart of the attempt of contemporary Americans to understand their nation's responsibility at home and abroad....Throughout their history, Americans have been possessed of an acute sense of divine election. [Some of the Founders] fancied themselves a New Israel, a people chosen for the awesome responsibility of serving as a light to the nations, a city set upon a hill. *(See Seminar #1)*

The Founders never intended that America should become a dictator to the world, but rather a model that other countries could follow. This was evident in the Monroe Doctrine which stated that America would not meddle in the affairs of other countries, but would stand by ready to assist as people everywhere were seeking their dreams of freedom, prosperity, and peace. The Founders committed to coordination and cooperation, but not consolidation of power.

Ever since World War I, politicians have been playing fast and loose with the defenses of the nation. Reckless policies of indifference toward the Monroe Doctrine, as well as the feeding, fondling, and coddling of avowed enemies abroad have now required an escalation of the defense budget to billions of dollars each year, and committed our valiant troops to participate in wars throughout the world.

In addition, Americans are being taxed to uphold various governments in many countries – some of which do not even want the United States forces to be there.

America has a repair job to do. Each of these four hinges must be fastened tightly into place again. There will never be a genuine assurance for the greatness of America in the future unless we do.



*America's door needs repair!*

## THE ATTACK ON THE FOUNDERS' EDUCATIONAL DREAM

### I. The Key to America's Success

The Founders emphasized that the key to the survival of the American success formula was universal \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. The Founders knew they had made a tremendous breakthrough in human progress by setting up the \_\_\_\_\_ free people in modern times.
- B. They also knew that this great blessing could be \_\_\_\_\_ unless Americans were educated from generation to generation.
  - 1. At that time the idea of universal education was entirely \_\_\_\_\_.
  - 2. For example, when John Adams visited France he was shocked to learn that out of 24 million Frenchmen, only about \_\_\_\_\_ a million could read or write. (Adrienne Koch, ed., *The American Enlightenment*, [New York: George Braziller, 1965], p. 213, 217)
- C. The Founders rejected the European idea that there should be only an elite educated upper \_\_\_\_\_. Speaking on the need for universal education, Thomas Jefferson wrote: "No other sure foundation can be devised for the preservation of freedom and happiness.... Preach ... a crusade against \_\_\_\_\_; establish and improve the law for educating the common people." (Albert Ellery Bergh, ed., *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, 20 vols. [Washington: The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1907], 5:396-97.)



### II. The Cycles of Education

Education in America has passed through two distinct cycles. The first cycle lasted about \_\_\_\_\_ years (1607 to the mid-1830s).

- A. The most remarkable aspect of the first cycle was a goal of excellence in education almost from the earliest colonial period.
  - 1. Perhaps this resulted from the fact that by 1646 a total of \_\_\_\_\_ graduates of Oxford, Cambridge, and Dublin universities had emigrated to America. (Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Oxford History of the American People*, [New York: Oxford University Press, 1965], p. 71)
  - 2. The strict discipline in educational preparation for professional life is described by John Adams. By the time his son, John Quincy Adams, was \_\_\_\_\_, the youth had

become fairly proficient in Latin, French, and Greek. He had also studied English and French literature, many of the Greek classics, Roman, English and Greek history, the theorems of Euclid, plane trigonometry, algebra, decimal fractions, geometrical proportions and conic sections. However, John Adams said his son was still a little weak in calculus! (Koch, *The American Enlightenment*, pp. 190-91)

- B. Direct responsibility was placed on American \_\_\_\_\_ to see that children received the best possible education.
- C. In the late 1700s, when our country was experiencing the first fruits of freedom under the laws of its new Constitution, Noah Webster said:

All government originates in families, and if neglected there, it will hardly exist in society...The foundation of all \_\_\_\_\_ government and of all \_\_\_\_\_ order must be laid in families and in the discipline of youth.

The education of youth, [is] an employment of more consequence than making laws and preaching the gospel, because it lays the \_\_\_\_\_ on which both the law and gospel rest for success.

- D. Webster's opinion expressed the general consensus of the nation. Children were taught these basic foundational beliefs in their families, or they were tutored by the best minds the family could find.

1. "Puritan leaders in 1642 enacted a \_\_\_\_\_ requiring all parents to see that their children could read well enough to understand religious principles and capital laws." (Norman A. Graebner et al., *A History of the American People*, [New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1970], p. 89)

2. By 1700 the demand of parents in Boston for books they could use in the home to train their children resulted in printers putting out over \_\_\_\_\_ editions of spelling books and \_\_\_\_\_ different primary readers. (Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Intellectual Life of New England*, [Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1965], pp. 71-72)

3. "Home education was so common in America that most children knew how to read \_\_\_\_\_ they entered school." (Robert A. Peterson, "Education in Colonial America," *Freeman*, September 1983, p. 553)



- E. Clearly, early Americans wanted their children to learn -- not only the academics of reading and writing-- but also the principles of \_\_\_\_\_ God's commandments. Clinton Rossiter said that colonial education's "chief purpose was to support revealed religion" (*Seedtime of the Republic: The Origin of the American Tradition of Political Liberty* [NY: Harcourt, Brace, 1953] p. 120).

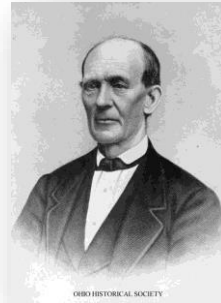
- F. Another author concludes:



Doubtless, many a colonial youngster learned to read by mastering the letters and syllables phonetically and then hearing \_\_\_\_\_ passages again and again, with the reader pointing to each word until the relationship between the printed and oral passages became manifest. (*The American Experience*, by Barnard and Burner, p. 8)

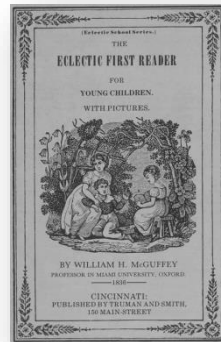
G. Gradually, influential writings emerged on the scene, such as the *New England Primer* and Noah Webster's books *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language* and *The American Spelling Book*. One hundred million copies of the latter book were sold in early America! All these books contained \_\_\_\_\_ rhymes and biblical \_\_\_\_\_.

H. By 1836 William Holmes McGuffey (1800-1873) began publishing his famous *McGuffey Readers*. It was fortunate for America that the Creator placed upon this continent one of the greatest educators of all time. This gifted teacher and writer produced a set of educational primers which included all the aspects of high moral character and God-centered principles.



I. McGuffey's books were indicative of the original cycle of American education, with a strong emphasis on the "\_\_\_\_\_." These included:

1. Basics in \_\_\_\_\_, which embraced phonics and memorizing.
2. Basics in \_\_\_\_\_, with extensive practice in penmanship. Script was taught in the first grade.
3. Basics in \_\_\_\_\_, as applied to bookkeeping and business.
4. Basics in oral and written communication, with emphasis on vocabulary and spelling.
5. Basics in literature, music, art forms and nature study.
6. Basics in \_\_\_\_\_, particularly American history, including geography.
7. Basics in civics and the American system of Constitutional government.
8. Basics in hygiene, physical and mental.
9. Basics in community ethic with emphasis on respect for one's "elders." (See *Twenty Techniques for Effective Teachers* by Glenn J. Kimber.)



J. McGuffey's works also placed a strong significance on \_\_\_\_\_ values, together with the mandates of morality and the qualities needed to develop sound character. There were

frequent references to the Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, and popular Bible stories.

1. These readers became national best sellers. By the turn of the century nearly every child in America was studying from one or more of the McGuffey Readers.

2. Eventually there were over \_\_\_\_\_ million copies of the McGuffey Readers in print. This was unmatched by any other publications at that time except the Bible and Webster's Dictionary.

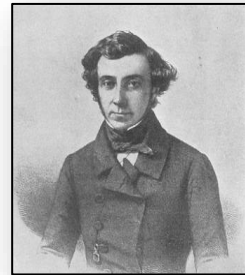
K. Parents and community leaders alike \_\_\_\_\_ both the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to drill into the students the necessity of being trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent. These principles not only became incorporated in the laws of the Boy Scouts of America, but likewise were included in the routine disciplines of every "little red schoolhouse" across the nation.

L. The first cycle of education also laid great stress on the need to "improve and perpetuate" the American economic and political \_\_\_\_\_.

1. The Founders said this was the responsibility of those who followed after them. James Madison, in *The Federalist Papers*, No. 14 stated:

Happily for America, happily we trust for the whole human race, they [the Founders] pursued a new and more noble course. They accomplished a revolution which has no parallel in the annals of human society. They reared the fabrics of governments which have no model on the face of the globe. They formed the design of a great Confederacy, which it is incumbent on their \_\_\_\_\_ to improve and perpetuate. (Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, [New York: Mentor Books, 1961], pp. 104-5)

2. In 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville, came to the United States to study the American system. He was so impressed with what he saw that he stayed nearly two years and then went back to France and wrote his famous two-volume work entitled \_\_\_\_\_ in *America*. Here is what he had to say about the importance of education: "It cannot be doubted that in the United States the instruction of the people powerfully contributes to the support of the democratic republic; and such must \_\_\_\_\_ be the case, I believe, where the instruction which enlightens the understanding is not separated from the moral education." (De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 1:329-30)



3. De Tocqueville recognized the importance of the moral foundation which Americans attributed to their success formula. He interviewed Americans at every level of society and wrote: