

Second Place: David Jen

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A House Built on Sand:

The Dangers of a Liberty Without a Foundation

To build a long lasting house, a strong foundation is essential. If a house is built on sand, the house will collapse in time. Our liberties are a house in danger, teetering on the edge of collapse because our foundations are being attacked. The wavering foundation of our liberties has led to harmful political confusion and controversy that can only be solved if we find our bearings and defend our foundation.

How can we find the foundation of liberty? John Winthrop claims that liberty must be safeguarded by a strong morality and that man's must reflect a moral law¹. However, to simply state that morality is the foundation of religion would be shallow reasoning, because morality must also need a foundation. Alexis de Toqueville modifies Winthrop's ideas, not only agreeing that morals are the "guarantee of the laws", but also asserting that religion is the "safeguards [of] morals"². Looking back on the early stages of colonial development, de Toqueville claims that it was a uniform religious code that made the settlers so compliant to austere laws. This code, the Bible, supplied for unwavering

¹ See John Winthrop's [*History of New England, 1630-1649*](#)

² See Alexis de Toqueville's [*Democracy in America*](#)

morals, which could clearly outline the colonists' protected liberties. The idea that religion is a strong foundation of our liberties has been reflected ever since the founding of our nation. Adams stated that our Constitution was written for a “moral and religious” people³, Washington wrote that “religion and morality are indispensable supports” for maintaining “political prosperity”⁴, and even the reasoning the Declaration of Independence gives for its “inalienable rights” is that these rights have been “endowed by their Creator”.

Surprisingly, a young Laura Ingalls Wilder delightfully captures the importance of liberty defined through Christianity⁵. Wilder ponders the idea of liberty, and she comes to the conclusion that in order to be free, she must be good, and to be good, she must follow God's law. Essentially, Wilder believes that the law of man must first reflect the law of God. Wilder mirrors de Toquville's train of thought, reiterating the idea that religion is the foundation of liberty.

Writing from the perspective of a demon, C. S. Lewis warns of a democracy without religion, citing atheism, anticlericalism, and secularism as “elements in our [the demons] favor”⁶. In an attempt to bring more souls to hell, the demons encourage a democracy and liberty without religion as its backbone. The demons want this because without religion as a backbone to liberty, the lines become blurred as to what is really considered a liberty, leading to debates on controversial issues such as property rights, reproductive rights, and civil marriage. Our liberties are losing its foundations because our democracy is becoming more secularized than ever before. Society has been replacing our concrete

³ See John Adams's [Letter to Massachusetts Militia, October 11, 1798](#)

⁴ See George Washington's [Farewell Address](#)

⁵ See Laura Ingalls Wilder's [Little Town on the Prairie](#)

⁶ See C. S. Lewis's [Screwtape Proposes a Toast](#)

cornerstones with sand and hoping that we will be able to uphold this house by ourselves. We must keep the foundations of liberty upright and hold on tight to our religion; for to relinquish religion is to relinquish liberty.