



## **A July 4 Reading on the Gift of America**

### **Chapter 1 Mortal Man's History**

#### **Along the Southern Nile River, 1876 BC**

As he toiled, his back to the sun, the day passed exactly as the day before had passed. And though he didn't realize it, this day was his seventeenth birthday. Had he remembered, he might have taken a moment to consider the life that lay ahead. Nothing but toil and work and death. A million tons of rock to cut and shape and move. Sometime around the age of thirty, he would almost certainly be dead. That was all that was expected of him now: ten or fifteen years of cruel labor. Cut the stone. Build the temple. Sacrifice his body to the pharaoh and his gods. And the reward for all his efforts? Life. Food. A little water every hour. Straw to make a bed when he was exhausted. A sparse whip if he was dedicated.

#### **Hangchow, China, 230 BC**

Zhu Raun Sung was only twelve, but he already understood the most important lessons that life had to teach. He knew how to work. He knew how to get by on nothing but a daily bowl of rice and an occasional chicken foot or rat bone for sustenance, he knew when to talk and when to be silent, when to bow and when to run. He knew he would honor his father and their ancestors until the day that he died, just as his children would honor him even in his old age. He knew that in four years he would marry a girl he might care for or maybe not, the primary purpose of the marriage being to produce children who could labor alongside him on the ragged piece of land that they were tasked to work. He knew he would never own his own home or even an animal except for maybe a rabbit or a dog. Every piece of ground, every hut, every building, city wall, shop, water hole, and piece of further or food belonged to the royal family and no one else.

#### **Omsk, Siberia, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, AD 1986**

The Russian investigator stared at the papers scattered across his desk, then leaned back and closed his eyes, unconsciously holding his breath. It was too much. It simply couldn't be! The numbers didn't make any sense! He stared at the water-stained ceiling and exhaled, then closed his eyes again. Forty million people in the first generation. Maybe ten or twenty million after that. Leaning forward, he let his breath escape, then picked up a yellow page from the top of the pile and read some of the numbers that he had just compiled. Sixty million people! And we did this to ourselves! Gulag. Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Camps and Colonies.

At one time, there had been at least five hundred separate labor, penal or "reeducation" camps scattered throughout the Communist nation, a vast majority of them concentrated in the northern tiers, each of them containing tens of thousands of the dying and condemned.



## Chapter 2

### From Where Did Freedom Come?

From the most ancient civilizations to modern times, across every continent and culture, from generations and kingdoms lost in the fog of history to the well-documented atrocities of modern day, stories such as those just related represent how most members of the human family have lived. Freedom of man is only a recent experience, and a fleeting one when not understandably preserved.

Noted American scholar Thomas Sowell relates that once a student asked his professor of history, “Where did slavery come from?” The professor replied, “You’re asking the wrong question. The real question is: Where did freedom come from?”

How *was* freedom born? And how does it survive? Freedom exists because Christian Europe created an environment where an incredibly rare combination of values—commitment to reason, personal accountability, individual freedom, equality, rule of law, the right of self-government—provided a philosophical nursery that allowed these ideas to take root and then to flourish.


How *was* freedom born? By a moment of man being receptive to God’s truth, by man letting that light continue to shine in consciousness.

Because of this evolution in human thinking—which took place uniquely in the West, along with a commitment to expend blood and treasure in its defense—many people today enjoy the blessing of living free.

This led to the Magna Carta, then to the U.S. Declaration of Independence and its Constitution. The Declaration of July 4, 1776 begins: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights. That among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

The Declaration and the Constitution are really two parts of one document. The Declaration sets forth the fundamental rights of man and the primary principles upon which America is based. The framers of the Constitution had the much more difficult task of putting those principles into effect. The Constitution is a farsighted document without which the Declaration would be only a visionary proclamation. The Declaration gave the people of America a framework of principles, principals that included liberty and equality.

History shows that the freedom distinctively found in what we call the Western world did not suddenly emerge out of nothing. This astounding mesh of morals, philosophy, respect for human rights, and understanding of the role of government did not emerge from thin air. It came with a price. And it took a long time. The march of freedom was like a fire in total darkness that smoldered with barely visible embers. From time to time, a breeze might blow to flame it, but then it retreated



to an ember once again. Finally, in the form of the United States of America, it burst into full blaze and has served as the beacon of light ever since.

## Chapter 3

### The Reason for Our Celebration, American Exceptionalism

Millions of people in the United States of America honestly believe there is something special, something *exceptional*, about the United States. And the idea of American exceptionalism is not confined to within our borders. Millions of people scattered across the world believe the same thing, *wish* the same thing, *want* the same thing to be true. They look to us for example. They look to us for hope. These beliefs and desires are well founded.

The idea of American exceptionalism encompasses at least these general principles:

1. Americans' long-held belief that all of God's children are created equal. Because of this, Americans accept and adhere to the principle that all are equal *before* the law and all should have equal access to the protection of the law.
2. America's Constitution—the fact that the “highest law of the land” emphasizes individual rights and decentralization of power, thus assuring protection for liberty and freedom.
3. The American belief that personal liberty and freedom is the highest priority—a higher priority even than a risk- or want-free life.
4. A belief in a meritocracy—that we should be judged by what we accomplish and what we can do, not by our family lineage.
5. Adherence to private morality—a belief that there can be no public virtue without private morality, and that public virtue is essential to the success of our government and the preservation of individual liberty and freedom.
6. Cultural make up—Americans are inherently more patriotic, religious, independent, and inventive. As an outgrowth of these traits, we uniquely committed to competition and entrepreneurship, and attitude that allows our decentralized and market-driven economy to provide opportunity for extraordinary individual success.
7. Social integration a commitment to the social integration of individuals from various racial, religious, and ethnic groups, making it possible for them to find themselves part of the American landscape.
8. Geographical—recognition that our geography, climate, and abundant natural resources provide us an enormous opportunity for material well-being.



## Chapter 4

### God's Grace, Our Prayers

Is it possible that God considers the United States an exceptional place? A country with a mission? A special nation with a specific purpose in His plan? Is it possible that He has blessed us and so expects more of us than of other nations?

Ultimately, man is free because he has the kingdom of God within his consciousness, and what is called “man” is the manifestation of the divine consciousness, as noted in the first account of creation in Genesis. Man is but the reflection of the “I AM that I am.”

#### Note

More than 80% of the world's population live in nations that restrict religious freedom as of 2009, and the situation has not improved according to a study by Pew Research. There is a correlation worthy of earnest contemplation.

**This article was made possible in part by the excellent work taken from the authors noted below.**

Hannan, D. (2014). *Inventing Freedom: How the English-Speaking Peoples Made the Modern World*. New York: Broadside Books

Stewart, C., & Stewart, T. (2011). *The Miracle of Freedom: 7 Tipping Points That Saved the World*. Salt Lake City, UT: Shadow Mountain.

Stewart, C., & Stewart, T. (2014). *Seven Miracles that Saved America: Why They Matter and Why we Should Have Hope*. Salt Lake City, UT: Shadow Mountain.

*America, Cradle for the Second Coming of the Christ*, Helen Wright