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# Pro Rege

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Volume 44 | Number 3

Article 1

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March 2016

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### Recommended Citation

De Jong, Norman (2016) "Equality: A False Standard," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 44:  
No. 3, 1 - 6.

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# Equality: A False Standard

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by Norman De Jong

On July 4, 1776, thirteen colonies in North America signed a document that has become one of the most important pieces of paper in American history. It was called then and still is known today as *The Declaration of Independence*. Most people today are familiar only with the opening paragraphs and then focus particularly on the opening line of the second paragraph: “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 240 years since that fateful day have seen countless celebrations and fireworks displays. Most

folks blindly celebrate the occasion, but very few stop to reflect and reconsider it: Was that action justified? Would I vote for that Declaration if I had the opportunity to cast a vote on it today? Would I agree that the grounds were so sufficient as to defy the king that God had placed over me? Would I agree that the twenty-seven separate charges leveled against King George were so weighty and in such violation of international law that I should advocate a war of revolution?<sup>1</sup> Should I stand alongside these radical colonists and declare that I am “equal to the King of England”? Should I campaign for independence and gear up for war?

What Thomas Jefferson and his committee signed was a “declaration of independence” from the King of England. The key concept driving them to that point was the belief that they and all their compatriots were *equal* to the King and needed not obey his laws any longer. Equality was the key. They claimed *equality*, which supposedly gave them a right to disobey. They claimed *equality*, and they insisted that they had a right to practice it.

Recently I asked some of our house guests if they accepted that statement (*all men are created equal*) as being true. The response was a quick affirmative “Yes!” When I pressed the question a bit further, one lady asserted that this was a statement affirming the equality of whites and blacks in the colonies and a refutation of slavery. It was, in her estimation, a precursor of Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation. Wow! She took my rebuttal with much grace but initial disbelief. She did not know that Jefferson had hundreds of slaves and had possibly impregnated at least one of them. According to “Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: A Brief Account,” his having fathered at least four children by slave Sally Hemings still remains a “matter of discussion” and investigation.<sup>2</sup>

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If we could approach Thomas Jefferson and the rest of his committee with that same question, they might also respond affirmatively. But, did they put into practice what they asserted? Were they true to their own principle? Did they grant women the same rights as men? Did they allow people of black skin equal rights with those of white skin? Did slaves have the right to pursue happiness? Did the committee give the same privilege to Roman Catholics as they did to Protestants? Did they give renters the same legal rights that they gave landowners? Did they give children the same rights and privileges that they gave adults?

The answer to all these questions was a resounding “NO, of course not!” Black people were, to them, merely chattel; they were to be treated as slaves and kept in their quarters. If they had had to count them in the next census, they would have considered them to be three-fifths of a person. Women were to do whatever their husbands expected of them. They had no right to vote or participate in politics.<sup>3</sup> Did children have the same rights as adults? Of course not! Roman Catholics may have found safe haven in Maryland, but they were not given voting privileges or property rights.<sup>4</sup> Native Americans surrounded these colonists, but for many of the colonists, these people were savages meant for destruction or confinement to reservations. (Thankfully, there were others who sought to evangelize them with the Christian gospel.)

Today, in the twenty-first century, we need to add another category. Do babies in the womb have the right to pursue life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness? Sad to say, they have no rights at all if the courts and many in the Democratic Party continue to get their way. The “rights” of the unborn are eliminated by selfish or confused mothers and fathers.

The proponents of independence claimed that their decision was “unanimous” because all thirteen colonies endorsed it, but various estimates put the popular support at approximately 33 percent,<sup>5</sup> with another third claiming neutrality, and another third voicing opposition. The opponents were labeled as “Tories.” Many of them fled to Canada, where King George was still ruler. The advocates of independence claimed to be “democratic,” but they ignored the objections of all those who opposed it. In a very real sense, this was mob rule by a minority.

The concept of equality has become one of the most powerful forces in Western culture. Over time, it has become elevated to the position of being the primary factor in court decisions, in ecclesiastical polity, and in educational practice. With a little effort, we can trace its history. We see it expressed in our *Declaration of Independence*, cited above, but may not realize that it played a major role in shaping the French Revolution, which ran from 1789 to 1799. One of the key elements in that brutal war was the Declaration cited here:

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789 is a fundamental document of the French Revolution and in the history of human rights.<sup>6</sup>

This Declaration was directly influenced by Thomas Jefferson, serving then as Ambassador to France. He worked with General Lafayette, who introduced it. Influenced also by the doctrine of “natural right,” the rights of man are held to be universal: valid at all times and in every place, pertaining to human nature itself. It became the basis for a nation of free individuals protected equally by law. It is included in the preamble of the constitutions of both the Fourth French Republic (1946) and Fifth Republic (1958) and is still current. Inspired in part by the American Revolution, and also by the Enlightenment philosophers, the Declaration was a core statement of the values of the French Revolution and had a major impact on the development of liberty and democracy in Europe and worldwide.

The French Revolution, unlike the American Revolution, was not a breaking away from a foreign monarch but a revolt within France itself. In many respects, it was far more brutal than was the American Revolutionary War. It involved French killing Frenchmen, not in small numbers but in tens of thousands. It involved warfare against the clergy and the Catholic Church. It also resulted in the beheading of King Louis XVI on January 21, 1793. Later that same year, there was a bloody Reign of Terror directed by the “Committee of Public Safety.” For a period of ten months, there were thousands of people beheaded by the guillotine.<sup>7</sup> For all those brutally executed, “equality before the law” was a cruel joke. Mob rule had re-

placed legal protection. This was democracy in action. It was, in many respects, more complex, more violent, and more anti-Christian than had been the case in America. It ended finally in 1799 with the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte, who established not a democracy but a brutal dictatorship. As in ancient Athens, democracy produced chaos.

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When we fast forward to the twentieth century, we find another revolution, this time, going on in Russia. It is called the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917-22. This revolution began in February of 1917 with the toppling of Tsar Nicholas II of Russia. The nobility did not like the way he was conducting Russia's role in World War I. They considered themselves equal to him and overthrew him. He was replaced with the Russian Provisional Government. However, the provisional government was weak and riven by internal dissension. It continued to wage World War I, which became increasingly unpopular. As a result of the war, a nationwide crisis developed in Russia, affecting social, economic, and political relations. Disorder in industry and transport had intensified, and difficulties in obtaining provisions had increased. Gross industrial production in 1917 had decreased by over 36 percent from what it had been in 1916. In the autumn, as much as 50 percent of all enterprises were closed down in the Urals, the Donbas, and other industrial centers, leading to mass unemployment. At the same time, the cost of living increased sharply. The real wages of the workers fell about 50 percent from what they had been in 1913. Russia's national debt in October 1917 had risen to 50 billion rubles. Of this, debts to foreign governments constituted more than 11 billion rubles. The country faced the threat of financial bankruptcy.<sup>8</sup>

In that chaotic condition, the concept of equality found a new home. Now, the peasants and working class considered themselves to be equal with the

ruling class. They revolted against their masters. In September and October 1917 alone, more than a million workers took part in mass strike actions. Workers established control over production and distribution in many factories and plants in a social revolution. By October 1917 there had been over four thousand peasant uprisings against landowners. When the Provisional Government sent out punitive detachments to quell these disturbances, it only enraged the peasants.

The country was ripe for the writings of Vladimir Lenin, who preached a radical form of equality best known as communism. Lenin was living in exile in Switzerland, but he was secretly transported back to Russia by the Germans, who wanted to de-stabilize Russia. When his writings were distributed, there were series of revolts, until, finally, communism was firmly entrenched and the USSR was formed. Democracy and equality again had produced mass chaos, which cried out for control and stability. Communism provided exactly that, complete with a tyrannical dictator and atheism. God was outlawed and evil triumphed.

When we fast-forward to the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, we find that the concept of *equality* continues to occupy a central place in American culture. One of the most provocative and troubling decisions by the Supreme Court of these United States is that known as *Roe v. Wade*.<sup>9</sup> For more than four decades that decision has provoked a deep divide in our land, with Democrats boldly endorsing and protecting it, while Christians and Republicans militate against it, with very limited success.

In a 7-2 ruling, the Court claimed that the "right to privacy" is "broad enough to encompass a woman's decision whether to terminate her pregnancy." While Justice Blackmun, who wrote the majority opinion, wanted to restrict that right to the first and second trimester, the Court itself ruled that the decision to abort be left "completely to the woman and her physician." In effect, the court declared that any woman and her doctor would have the legal right to murder the baby growing in her uterus. There was no concern for the rights or the life of the baby. In its interpretation, the fetus was just a blob of fetal tissue! It had no rights because it was not a person. In order to be a person, it had to exist outside of the uterus.

One of the most disappointing aspects of this court decision, and that of many subsequent ones, is that there is absolutely no appeal to and no concern for the Law of God. Every doctor and every woman ought to realize that life begins at conception and not at the moment of birth, but they are blind to that reality. Medical science has demonstrated that truth in a myriad of ways; for example, already in 1975 a standard text in embryology declared, "The development of a human being begins with conception."<sup>10</sup> Also, the Scriptures make that point abundantly clear, as in Psalm 139:13-16, where the Psalmist claims that he was "fearfully and wonderfully made." We see another evidence in the Gospel of Luke where we are told that the baby "leaped" in Elizabeth's womb.<sup>11</sup> But blindness seems to dominate. Every reasonable person ought to realize that there is a living, pulsating person in that uterus. To borrow a phrase from the Almighty, these "are a stiff-necked people."<sup>12</sup> They refuse to listen!

But, there is reason for such a barbaric decision by the highest court of the land. The ground for such an evil conclusion had been plowed ever since 1947. In that year, the United States Supreme Court passed one of the most flawed decisions ever made. It was labeled *The Everson Case*.<sup>13</sup> Without any pretense of looking at historical precedent, the Court based its entire decision on a piece of correspondence between Jefferson and the Danbury Baptist Association, written in 1800. In that letter, the Baptists in Connecticut asked the newly elected President to establish a wall of separation between church and state. With the majority opinion written by Justice Hugo Black, it had all the markings of an anti-Catholic ruling, even though it allowed the busing of Catholic students at state expense. Black was a known, prominent member of the KKK, which was anti-black, anti-Jewish, and anti-Catholic.

In rapid succession, a number of other religious issues confronted the Court. One year after the *Everson* decision, the Court ruled in *McCullum v. Board of Education* that a Champaign, Illinois public school had violated the establishment clause because it had allowed a released time program.<sup>14</sup> It had allowed religious issues to invade the public sector.

In 1962 the Court rejected the New York Board

of Regents prayer in *Engel v. Vitale*. It was once again Justice Hugo Black who wrote the majority opinion. In concluding his argument, Black asserted that a "union of government and religion tends to destroy government and to degrade religion."<sup>15</sup> The "wall of separation" that Jefferson and the Baptists so strongly desired was getting higher and higher. In 1973 it was the genesis of *Roe v. Wade*.

Evil often seems to progress and grow. In spite of challenges from numerous quarters, the Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* was considered binding, and abortion on demand was the law of the land. It was, presumably, guaranteed by the Constitution! In pursuit of the rights of women, another demand was forming. Some women wanted to redefine marriage, claiming that they had the right to marry another woman, i.e., to legalize a lesbian relationship so that the two partners might have the same legal rights as married couples traditionally and Biblically defined.

One substantial roadblock was the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), passed by Congress during the administration of President Bill Clinton. Two women who had been married in Canada but who were living in New York challenged the State of New York on its stand defining marriage as being between "one man and one woman," the same language as found in DOMA. The case worked its way to the U.S. Supreme Court and was decided on June 26, 2013. In a 5-4 decision, the Court ruled that Section 3 of DOMA was unconstitutional.<sup>16</sup> Justice Kennedy, writing the majority opinion, "cited the principles of state autonomy, equal protection and liberty" as the basis for its decision, but this muddled the waters, for this ruling only applied to those living in New York State.

Of significance, however, is the fact that the concept of "equality" was central to the Court's decision. Marriage had always been defined as being a union between one man and one woman. The United States Congress and a Democratic President had reinforced that definition with binding legislation. A majority of States, including New York State, had stamped their approval. But, all of that had to bow before the more sacred doctrine of "equality." These two women had rights equal to those of all other citizens and thus were entitled to the benefits of a marriage license. New York State had to grant them

legal status as a married couple.

But, again, equality raised its ugly head. In the Windsor ruling, Justice Kennedy had argued that DOMA had written inequality into the entire United States Code. The principal purpose of DOMA was to impose inequality, he argued.<sup>17</sup> If two lesbians could have equal rights in New York, should not others also enjoy those same rights in other states? Are not all the states equal, in one sense, equal to all other states? But, what about men? Do men have the same rights as women? Should not two men have the right to “marry” in other parts of the country?

By January of 2015, four separate same-sex marriage cases had worked their way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Appeals Court decisions had come to different conclusions, almost guaranteeing that the highest court would take the case. On January 16, 2015 the Court consolidated the four cases and pinned the label of *Obergefell v. Hodges*<sup>18</sup> on it. The case garnered much national attention and had 148 *amici curiae* briefs submitted, more than any other U.S. Supreme Court case on record.<sup>19</sup> On June 26, 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a 5-4 decision that the Fourteenth Amendment requires all states to grant same-sex marriages and recognize same-sex marriages granted in other states. Given the fact that Justice Kennedy had written the Windsor opinion, it is not surprising that he would also write this one. The fallout is huge and growing. The probability of numerous lawsuits coming out of it is very high.

Our Lord instituted marriage already in the Garden of Eden and blessed it at Cana. Down through history, it was quietly accepted that marriage was between one man and one woman, but no longer. Now there is a majority of persons in the United States who are willing to accept the Court’s decision. Same-sex marriage, like abortion, is the law of the land. We are to accept it, stop our protests, and bow before the sacred doctrine of “EQUALITY”!!

As a nation, we have quietly embraced secularism. It has been routinely, systematically taught in our public schools for the better part of a century. Approximately 90 percent of all the school-age children attend those schools.<sup>20</sup> They have been indoctrinated with the gospel of democracy, for the public school has become our nation’s established church. That does not bode well for our future. God, in His

righteous indignation, may decide to punish us as He did to Sodom and Gomorrah. He may also be more merciful than we deserve, for He is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.”<sup>21</sup>

In the meantime, we need to become more discerning. We need to gain wisdom and reassess our love for “democracy” and for “equality.” Neither one of these doctrines is embraced in Scripture. To the contrary, we are called to obedience, not only to the governments that God has placed over us<sup>22</sup> but especially to the King who created us and called us to be His children. We need to live every day “*pro rege*,” for the King. We need also to adopt the same attitude as Jesus Christ, “who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”<sup>23</sup>

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Equality is a false standard. It is a mathematical term that has crept into our social fabric and has created chaos. We need to reject it now. Instead of appealing to it, we need to emphasize the second petition of our Lord’s Prayer: “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

#### Endnotes

1. [www.USHistory.org/Declaration of Independence](http://www.USHistory.org/Declaration%20of%20Independence)
2. “Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: A Brief Account.” The Jefferson Monticello. [www.monticello.org](http://www.monticello.org).
3. Women were denied the right to vote in federal elections until passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. Even then, it was strongly opposed by the Democratic Party.
4. As late as 1877, New Hampshire refused to let Catholics vote in their state.



5. Precise numbers are difficult to determine because there were so many issues at stake. Nine of the colonies had established state churches, with the mother institution still in England. Would independence require them to forfeit their church membership? For a detailed analysis of this complex situation, see De Jong & Van Der Slik, *Separation of Church and State: The Myth Revisited* (Paideia Press, 1984), 35-51.
6. Simon Schama, "Terror is the Order of the Day," *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (Vintage Books, 1990). 726-766.
7. Ibid. p.726. For a concise summary, go to Wikipedia. com/French Revolution/Reign of Terror.
8. Gregory L. Freeze, *Russia: A History* (Oxford U Press, 1997), 231-262. See also W. Bruce Lincoln, *In War's Dark Shadow* (The Dial Press, 1983), 421-444. This source gives a complex picture of events leading up to the Revolution of 1917.
9. *Roe v. Wade* 510 US 113 (1973).
10. Jan Langman, *Medical Embryology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1975), 3.
11. Luke 1:36,41,45.
12. Exodus 32:9; 33:3,5; Deuteronomy 9:6,13
13. *Everson v. Board of Education* (330 U.S. 1,67 S. Ct.504) (1947).
14. *McCullum v. Board of Education* (333 U.S. 203) (1948).
15. *Engel v. Vitale* (1962).
16. *United States v. Windsor* 570 U.S. (2013).
17. Ibid., Majority opinion.
18. *Obergefell v. Hodges* 576 U.S. (14-556) (2015).
19. Supreme Court of the United States/Blog/Proceedings and Orders. All 148 briefs are listed there.
20. National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). In 1995-6, the public schools enrolled 88% of all elementary and secondary students, while private schools enrolled 12%. In 2014-2015, those numbers changed to 90% and 10%.
21. Exodus 34:6,7 (ESV)
22. See Romans 13:1; Daniel 4:3,17, 34
23. Philippians 2: 6 (ESSV)