

Human Rights and the Magna Carta

The 800th year anniversary of Magna Carta (The Great Charter) represents an important opportunity to reassert the pivotal role that Christianity played in shaping this key contribution to the development of human rights. However, despite the fact that Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, played a central role in drafting the charter, which was signed by King John at Runnymede, Surrey – with at least 11 other bishops present, it is clear that there is a battle raging today – about yesterday – for tomorrow. And we can expect human rights campaigners, secularists and politicians to seek to ignore or diminish the influence of the bible in the creation of this historic document which refers to God as ‘the source of all liberties’. This session will: explore the biblical and historical roots of Magna Carta; chart its influence upon ideas of freedom, human rights and civil liberties; and review the contemporary trajectory of human rights discourse.

Dave Landrum is the Director of Advocacy at the UK Evangelical Alliance. He is responsible for theology, media, research and public policy, overseeing a team based in the national parliaments of the UK. He received his PhD in policy-making in education with a thesis on politics and the citizenship curriculum. He previously worked in the Houses of Parliament for over a decade developing Bible advocacy. He is a frequent contributor in the national media on a range of political issues, and has an interest in the development of a culture of public leadership in the UK church.

I. The historical context for the creation of Magna Carta

A. Runnymede 1215

1. Kings
2. Barons
3. Bishops

II. What does Magna Carta say?

III. The role of the Church

IV. The theological roots of freedom, justice and law

V. The limits of earthly power

VI. Magna Carta and the evolution of human rights

VII. The corruption of human rights

VIII. Historical deconstruction and the battle for truth

Suggested Readings:

Thomas Andrew, *The Church and the Charter – Christianity and the Forgotten Roots of the Magna Carta* (Theos 2015)

James Holt, *Magna Carta* (Cambridge University Press 1992)

Nicholas Vincent, *Magna Carta – A Very Short History* (Oxford University Press 1992)

Larry Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism* (Allen Lane, London 2014)

Magna Carta: The Foundation for Freedom // 1215-2015

<http://www.worldhistoryinstitute.com/2014/06/17/magna-carta-the-foundation-for-freedom-1215-2015/>

The Forgotten Clauses of the Magna Carta

<http://americanvision.org/3524/the-forgotten-clauses-of-the-magna-carta/>

‘Britishness’ debate: can you do Magna Carta without also doing God?

<http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/coffeehouse/2014/06/britishness-debate-can-you-do-magna-carta-without-also-doing-god/>