

peoples of history have had more or less comparable experiences. The uniqueness lies in the precept upon which America was founded; persons possess freedom and natural rights at birth — before they become part of any government — and these rights are not merely part of the biological process but are implanted in the soul of man as a birth-right. Inherent rights belong to the people, not to government, for the state has only *functions* which are granted to it in limited measure by the consent of free people. The American concept is that government cannot grant nor abridge these natural rights; it can only protect them. If this fundamental concept should be denied, or even diminished, the true meaning of the American Revolution would disappear.

Freedom of Religion

THE ARTICLES of the United Nations Covenant relating to the freedom of religion and of the press are most pertinent for our discussion. Article 13 of the Covenant states:

“(1) Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. . . .
(2) Freedom to manifest one's religion or belief shall be subject only to such limitations as are pursuant to law and are reasonable and necessary to protect public safety, order,

health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.”*

Study carefully the list of limitations. A person may manifest (it does not say practice) his religion, only if such manifestation is considered by the government not to be against the order, health, morals, or public safety of the community.

If a dictator wished to circumscribe or prohibit the practice of religion, what other shackles would he need than these? The charge made against Jesus of Nazareth before Pilate was that “He stirreth up the people.” Under the Covenant on Human Rights, could not Pilate have said that, in order to protect the public safety, he would have to deny Jesus the right to manifest His religion? Certainly he would have had a legal justification for doing so under this Covenant.

Or what about public morals and order?

*The quotations from the Covenant used throughout this article are from the “Draft International Covenant on Human Rights” as revised at the Seventh Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, April-May, 1951.

It was announced on February 5, 1952, that the General Assembly of the United Nations, meeting in Paris, adopted a resolution to divide the Covenant into two sections, each to be presented as a treaty. One would contain the political and civil provisions (Articles 1-18); the other would contain the social and economic provisions (Articles 19-73). This action is merely procedural and will have no bearing on the issues involved in this discussion.