

Essay on the enlightenment

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Enlightenment Essay The Enlightenment may have happened a long time ago, ideas of the thinkers of that era have shaped and influenced ideas of today. Thinkers like Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Locke may have directly influenced the government of the United States. Montesquieu argued that the best government would be one whose power was balanced between three groups of officials. He thought England - which divided power between the king (who enforced laws), Parliament (which made laws), and the judges of the English courts (who interpreted laws) - was a good model of this. "Separation of powers" was what Montesquieu called this idea of dividing government power into three branches. He thought it most important to create separate branches of government with equal but different powers. Because this, the government would never place too much power with one individual or group of individuals. He wrote, " When the [law making] and [law enforcement] powers are united in the same person... there can be no liberty. " Montesquieu said each branch of government could limit the power of the other two branches.

Therefore, no branch of the government could threaten the freedom of the people. His ideas about separation of powers became the basis for the United States Constitution. Voltaire was a French essayist, novelist, poet, and political reformer, just to name a few things. He advocated Religious and social tolerance, which are two things our own government believes in. Voltaire was a proponent of personal liberty and freedom of speech, he said the famous statement " I disagree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it. Freedom of speech is the first amendment in our constitution, and the fourth amendment is the right to personal liberty. One

of his more controversial beliefs was the separation of church and state, which we believe in today. This belief was one of the beliefs that landed Voltaire in prison, and ultimately exile. The Social Contract was one of Rousseau's most important ideas. Rousseau believed that society and government created a social contract where their goals were freedom and benefit to the public.

Government's existence depended on the will of the people. The social order was based on general will, a shared belief in a common set of interest. He believed that in a democracy, the general will of the democratic people, expressed in the way of a majority vote, to make all the decisions. The general will was also a form of freedom, and the purpose of law was to combine the general will with the desires of the people. These ideas on democracy, general will, and freedom are found in our own government today.

Locke was one of the most influential philosophers of the Enlightenment. He believed that by nature men are free, and that God made it so people need a leader. He argued people have rights. Those rights include right to life, liberty, and property. He used this claim to promote the idea of the social contract, so people can enjoy their right to comfortably enjoy their lives, liberty, and property. Locke also said that governments existed to protect the people and promote public good so governments who don't do that should be replaced with new governments.

He said people had a right to revolution. Locke also denied the idea of divine right. All these ideas are found in the constitution. The right to revolution was especially important to the colonists, because they believed the British

government was not a good one, so they wanted to replace it with their own new form of government. It was a time of absolute monarchies and tyranny in Europe. The US constitution was a reaction to that, a very republican, representative constitution.

Also, it was a time when people were persecuted or even exiled, for having a religious belief other than the one of the government, the constitution reacted to that. It's also federalist because the US at the time was very decentralized in terms of communities, people wanted to retain self-governance, rather than hand it off to far away England. Many other things in the constitution were different than the beliefs of the governments in Europe, and the colonists wanted to change that. That is how the constitution reflects the times it was written in.