

**LIBERTY UNDER LAW: AN
INTERPRETATION OF THE
PRINCIPLES OF OUR
CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT**

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Liberty Under Law: An Interpretation of the Principles of Our Constitutional government by
William Howard Taft

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WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT

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**THE CUTLER LECTURE
FOR 1921**

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THE CUTLER LECTURES



ESTABLISHED IN
THE UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER
BY JAMES GOULD CUTLER



It appears to me that the most useful contribution which I can make to promote the making of democracy safe for the world (to invert Mr. Wilson's aphorism) is to found in The University of Rochester, a course of lectures, designed to promote serious consideration, and consideration by as many people as possible, of certain points fundamental, and therefore vital, to the permanence of constitutional government in the United States.

My basic proposition is that our political system breaks down, when and where it fails, because of lack of a sound education of the people for whom and by whom it is intended to be carried on:

- (a) In its principles;
- (b) In its historical development as illustrating the application of it to and under changing conditions, and
- (c) In those moral standards, perhaps best to be developed in religious teaching but not safely to be separated entirely from University work.

FROM MR. CUTLER'S LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY

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UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

LIBERTY UNDER LAW

AN INTERPRETATION OF THE
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Mr. Cutler, the public-spirited donor of this Lecture Foundation, in the letter establishing it, expressed the view that where our political system shows weakness, it fails for lack of sound education of our people:

(1) In the principles of our Constitutional Government;

(2) In the history of its development and its application to changing conditions, and

(3) In the moral standards best developed in religious teaching and not safely to be separated from university work. He, therefore, concluded that the most useful contribution he could make, to render democracy safe for the world, was to found a course of lectures to pro-

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more serious consideration by as many people as possible of the fundamental and vital elements of permanence in the Constitutional Government in the United States. I am proud to have been selected as the first speaker in this course.

Accepting the language of the gift as the text for this opening lecture, we must examine what is the true nature of our Constitutional Government as a means of judging what is needed to preserve it.

The Constitution of the United States was not born as Minerva is said to have been, full armed from the brain of Jove. No great and abiding institution ever is. It was the first written constitution of an independent nation which, after creating its governmental organization and the agencies by which it was to be carried on, imposed on those agencies effective limitations of their powers by creating machinery for enforcing most of them. It recognized the ultimate power in the people of the United States and in their name pro-