

# Six Essential Principles of Good Government

## The Foundation for Moral Sanity and Civic Functionality

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Note: The following principles constitute the basic foundations for freedom, virtue and justice in a well-regulated society and political system. As C. S. Lewis correctly noted, we do not imagine that any human society will ever be “ideal” given the realities of human nature. Therefore, the best to which we can aspire is “good government” that guarantees individual liberty within the parameters of moral and civic responsibility.

### **1. Good government establishes a political system that aligns with the realities of human nature.**

- Human beings are created in the *imago dei* – the “image of God.”
  - ▶ We have the capacity to think and act rationally and clearly.
  - ▶ We have an innate sense of morality and the capacity to discern good and evil, right and wrong. [Rom. 1:18-32; 2:12-15]
  - ▶ We have the capacity for imaginative and creative thoughts and actions.
- Human beings are innately flawed.
  - ▶ We have an egoistic (self-centered) nature. [Rom. 3:23]
  - ▶ We crave power and autonomy – including the desire to govern our own life according to our own values and agenda – and the desire to control others.
  - ▶ Therefore, a “horizontal separation of powers” is necessary to assure that no one person or elite group exerts total control over others.
    - Governmental power and authority should be divided among three branches, each of which is supreme within its jurisdiction: the legislative, the executive, and the judicial.
- Authoritarian governments operate on the false assumption that most all common people are ignorant, stupid and selfish – and therefore need to be strictly controlled.
  - ▶ The assumption is that these negative characteristics do not generally apply to the elite upper class of superior individuals who control the government and make its laws. In reality, however, this class often characterizes the most unscrupulous, dishonest, greedy, exploitative and dangerous people in society.)
- Libertarian governments operate on the naïve assumption that most all common people are inherently good and wise – and therefore need few laws and little governmental oversight.
  - ▶ James Madison in Federalist No. 10 and 51: “The latent causes of [social discord] are... sown in the nature of man.”
    - “There is a degree of depravity in mankind which requires a certain degree of... distrust,” just as “there are other qualities in human nature which justify a certain portion of esteem and confidence.”

“If men were angels, no government would be necessary.”

- ▶ Therefore, in keeping with the realities of human nature and the tenets of traditional Natural Law, America’s Founding Fathers sought a balance between individual rights and the commonweal – i.e., between civil liberties and the “general welfare” of society.

## **2. Good government is based on a constitutional rule of law.**

- In his classic on political philosophy, *Lex/Rex* (1644), the Scottish minister, educator and scholar Samuel Rutherford made the case for the supremacy of an objective and written code of law over all governing officials.
  - ▶ Rutherford’s philosophy, written during the English Civil War, opposed royal absolutism and authoritarian government.
- The rule of law should operate in strict accord with a written constitution that is consistent, inviolable, and that guarantees basic individual civil liberties.
- The Constitution of the United States:
  - ▶ “We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

## **3. Good government enacts and enforces just laws rooted in the moral and ethical principles of Natural Law and humanitarian Natural Rights.**

- These are basic legal principles that provide equal protection, equal justice, and equal opportunity for all people regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, religion, or social status.
- The Virginia Declaration of Rights (1776): Free government, or the blessings of Liberty, can be preserved to any people but by a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, frugality, and virtue.”
- For a detailed analysis of the history and relevance of Natural Law principles, see Chapter 2 in my book, *American Crisis: Cultural Marxism and the Culture War*.

## **4. Good government protects and defends its citizens from all threats, both foreign and domestic.**

- The establishment of well-trained and provisioned military and police forces so as to deter foreign aggression and domestic criminal activities.
- The secure protection of the nation’s sovereign borders.
- Immigrants should integrate and assimilate into the nation’s culture and adopt its language.
  - ▶ James R. Wood: “Responsible governance requires limits grounded in economic realities, security concerns, and social stability.” [“The Blessing of Borders.”]
  - ▶ Nigel Biggar, an Oxford University theologian and ethicist: Borders are an essential “blessing” that protects the social, cultural, and political conditions necessary for a nation to thrive. The primary duty of any government must be to care for the welfare of their own citizens, which includes maintaining the rule of law, social cohesion, and the economic realities of the situation.

While Christians affirm the right to immigrate, a nation must be able to integrate newcomers. “Compassion” applies not only to migrants but also (and primarily) to working-class citizens whose livelihoods may be threatened. Therefore, a policy of “open borders” is counterproductive and irresponsible.

Maintaining controlled, secure borders is a form of “justice and prudence” that allows for an orderly and sustainable society. It is not necessarily a cruel rejection of outsiders. [Ref. Google: “Nigel Biggar on immigration policy”.]

- ▶ President Barack Obama, 2010: “There are those in the immigrants’ rights community who have argued passionately that we should simply provide those who are [here] illegally with legal status, or at least ignore the laws on the books and put an end to deportation until we have better laws.... I believe such an indiscriminate approach would be both unwise and unfair. It would suggest to those thinking about coming here illegally that there will be no repercussions for such a decision. And this could lead to a surge in more illegal immigration.

“And it would also ignore the millions of people around the world who are waiting in line to come here legally. Ultimately, our nation, like all nations, has the right and obligation to control its borders and set laws for residency and citizenship. And no matter how decent they are, no matter their reasons, the eleven million who broke these laws should be held accountable.”

[<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=3717555878384172>]

## **5. Good government balances individual liberty with personal virtue and civic responsibility.**

- While personal liberty and expression is necessary and proper, it must be within decent and healthy boundaries.
- In a self-governing constitutional republic, individual responsibility is paramount. Good laws do not promote irresponsible or anti-social behavior and libertinism.
- All laws should have a moral and ethical foundation in keeping with the principles of Natural Law.
  - ▶ Benjamin Franklin: “Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom.”
  - ▶ John Adams: “Public virtue cannot exist without private, and public Virtue is the only foundation of Republics.”
  - ▶ George Washington: “The foundations of our National policy will be laid in the pure and immutable principles of private morality.”
  - ▶ George Tindall and David Shi: “The new American republic would endure so long as the majority of the people were virtuous and willingly placed the good of society above the self-interest of individuals [or groups]. Herein lay the danger of the new American experiment in popular government; even as leaders enthusiastically fashioned new state constitutions, they feared that their experiments in republicanism would fail because of the lack of civic virtue.”

[*America: A Narrative History*. Fifth Edition (1984), p. 273]

## **6. Good government is neither authoritarian nor purely democratic, but a constitutional republic governed by the rule of law.**

- Authoritarianism is tyrannical, and it suppresses personal freedom and the unique individuality and creative potential in human beings.
- A constitutional republic is based on the principle of representative democracy, not a “pure democracy” with little or no qualitative standards for voting and office-holding other than age and official citizenship (see below).
- Democracy is a flawed political ideology.
  - ▶ Based on “majority rule,” democracy typically elects mediocre politicians who often enact mediocre and inefficient policies.
  - ▶ The word “democracy” appears nowhere in the Declaration of Independence or the U. S. Constitution.
    - Article IV, Section 4 of the Constitution guarantees “to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government.”
  - ▶ Thomas Jefferson: “Democracy is nothing more than mob rule, where 51% of the people may take away the rights of the other 49%.”
  - ▶ Democracy assumes that all citizens are morally and mentally “equal” – when in reality some are better educated, better informed, more public-minded and more qualified to vote responsibly than are others.
  - ▶ In reality, many adults unfortunately have neither the moral sensibility nor the mental capacity to make wise decisions.
  - ▶ Many citizens vote strictly on the basis of how they will benefit personally rather than on the basis of the common good.
  - ▶ C. S. Lewis: Most people are selfish and poorly educated in civic education.
    - Egalitarianism – the assumption that all people are “equal” intellectually, morally, and in terms of talent – is absurd.
    - Democracy is a lowest-common-denominator form of government that rewards mediocrity and social conformity.
  - ▶ A quote attributed to the Scottish historian Alexander Tytler: “A democracy is always temporary in nature; it simply cannot exist as a permanent form of government. A democracy will continue to exist up until the time that voters discover that they can vote themselves generous gifts from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidates who promise the most benefits from the public treasury, with the result that every democracy will finally collapse due to loose fiscal policy.”
  - ▶ John Adams: “Democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There was never a democracy yet that did not commit suicide.”
- A republic establishes reasonable qualifications for full citizenship – including voting rights.
- A good government would qualify all legal citizens age twenty-one or older to vote and hold public office regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, religion or social status – but with certain restrictions:

- ▶ They are not currently incarcerated or subject to incarceration, and have not committed a felonious crime in at least ten years;
- ▶ They are proficient in the English language;
- ▶ They have passed a standard cultural literacy quiz that includes knowledge of basic U.S. history, the U.S. Constitution, and the American political system.
- ▶ They (or their spouse) are gainfully employed and do not derive a significant portion of their household income from public welfare.
  - Exceptions include retirees over sixty-five years of age or those with specified physical disabilities that prohibit their capacity to be employed.

### **The Summa:**

- There is a strong correlation between these foundational principles and the system established by America's Founding Fathers.
  - ▶ The Declaration of Independence: "... [T]o secure these [unalienable] rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."
- There are, of course, many specific issues that merit our attention – everything from the sanctity of human life and "unalienable" (God-given) natural rights to election integrity, responsible environmental management, the restoration of traditional civics education in schools, and sensible fiscal, economic and foreign policies – all of which fall under the guidelines of these Essential Principles of Good Government.
- Given the realities of human nature, the number one priority regarding electoral politics is this: It is mostly about damage control – i.e., keeping the very worst people and political party out of power.

There is a sharp contrast between the modern Republican and Democrat parties regarding their respective political ideologies and their social, cultural and moral agendas – including controversial issues such as abortion, the liberalization of drug and pornography laws, the LGBTQ agenda, "democratic socialism," etc.

Therefore, the essential question is this: Individual candidates aside (including their individual styles and personalities), which party is more closely aligned with these basic principles of "good" government? Such an assessment should determine how conscientious Christians think and vote so as to best preserve and perpetuate America's unique and Christian-influenced heritage.

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