

GOVERNMENT¹

1. Definitions.²

- a. Government:
 - (1) Exercise of authority over/performance of functions for a political unit
 - (2) Organization/agency through which a political unit exercises authority and performs functions, classified according to the distribution of power within it
 - (3) Complex of political institutions, laws, and customs through which the function of governing is carried out
- b. Politics:
 - (1) Art/science of government or guiding/influencing governmental policy
 - (2) Art/science concerned with winning and holding control over a government
 - (3) Competition between competing groups/individuals for power and leadership
 - (4) Total complex of relations between people living in society
- c. Statesmanship:
 - (1) Active engagement in conducting the business of a government/in shaping its policies
 - (2) Exercising political leadership wisely and without narrow partisanship
 - (3) "...[T]he difference between politics and statesmanship is philosophy—the ability to see the moment and the part in the light of the lasting and the whole."³
- d. Power:
 - (1) Legal or official authority, capacity, or right
 - (2) Possession of control, authority, or influence over others
 - (3) "[T]he ability to restrict people's options."⁴
- e. Freedom:
 - (1) The absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action
 - (2) Liberation from slavery/restraint/the power of another: independence
 - (3) Not being unduly hampered or frustrated
 - (4) "[E]xemption from having one's options restricted in such matters as religion or the expression of ideas."⁵
- f. Right: power or privilege to which one is justly entitled
 - (1) We must distinguish between negative (right from) and positive (right to) rights.

2. Function/Purpose/Role.

- a. "[T]he prime task of government is to establish order; organized central force is the sole alternative to incalculable and disruptive force in private hands."⁶

¹ Politics/State. Primarily national government is in view. Other governments include international government, family government, church government, city government, etc.

² Most definitions below derive from [Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary](#) (2003).

³ Will Durant, *The Age of Louis XIV*.

⁴ Thomas Sowell, *The Quest for Cosmic Justice* (Sydney: Touchstone, 1999), 176.

⁵ Thomas Sowell, *The Quest for Cosmic Justice* (Sydney: Touchstone, 1999), 176.

⁶ Will and Ariel Durant, "Lessons from History," 31.

b. It is not the function of any government today to enforce Christianity. The norms of Christianity cannot be forced, nor can they be achieved in this life. We must not enforce the biblical vision on non-Christians. We do not advocate for some form of Christian theocracy.

(1) “No one has yet reconciled Christianity with government.”⁷

c. Positions.

(1) Governmentalism: tendency toward extension of the role of government

(2) Statism: concentration of economic controls and planning in the hands of a highly centralized government often extending to government ownership of industry

d. Governments must respect and not encroach upon the sovereignty of individuals, families, churches, and private property. This is the principle of sphere sovereignty.

(1) We must not equate all government with the state. Civil government is only one form of government. Other forms of government are family, church, school, guild, professions, and private associations. Limiting state power does not inevitably lead to individualism or anarchy.⁸

(2) Sphere sovereignty is eroding quickly in New Zealand.

3. Foundation.

a. Introduction.

(1) All governments are founded on some philosophical base. Worldview and government are inseparable. A change of worldview will result in a change of government.

(2) The American government makes no sense “unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith—and I don’t care what it is.”⁹

(3) “In fine, religion, true or false, is and ever has been the centre of gravity in a realm, to which all other things must and will accommodate themselves.”¹⁰

b. Options.

(1) Atheism.

(a) Secular humanism.

1) E.g., the French revolution.

2) See Cameroon’s national anthem.

3) “As religious belief declined, the notion of right and wrong was replaced, in many minds, by that of practicality; and as governments seldom enjoyed the authority of legitimation by time, the habit of obedience to law lapsed, and custom had to be supplanted by force.”¹¹

4) “Representative government is worthy of support in principle because the biblical view of human nature concludes that all of us are flawed and unable to handle unlimited power without falling into pride and

⁷ Will Durant, *The Age of Louis XIV*, 192.

⁸ Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction*, 213.

⁹ D. Eisenhower, quoted in H. Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction*, 251.

¹⁰ Crane Brinton, in Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*.

¹¹ Will Durant, *The Renaissance*, 592.

irresponsibility. Nevertheless, the ratification of law by majority vote does not validate it. To the democratic ideology, any action is just if it is approved by majority rule. To the libertarian ideology, any action is just if it is not coercive. Both are thus humanist to the core. In biblical perspective, right and wrong are not determined by the process leading up to their proclamation, but by the degree of conformity to the law of God.”¹²

(b) Marxism.

- 1) E.g., the Bolshevik revolution.

(c) Postmodernism.

(2) Theism.

(a) In general.

- 1) Order in this world is contingent on order above.¹³
- 2) “The consecration of the state by a state religious establishment is necessary...to operate with a wholesome awe upon free citizens; because, in order to secure their freedom, they must enjoy some determinate portion of power. To them, therefore, a religion connected with the state, and with their duty towards it, becomes even more necessary than in such societies where the people, by the terms of their subjection, are confined to private sentiments, and the management of their own family concerns. All persons possessing any portion of power ought to be strongly and awfully impressed with an idea that they act in trust, and that they are to account for their conduct in that trust to the one great Master, Author, and Founder of society.”¹⁴

(b) Christianity.

- 1) E.g., the American revolution.
- 2) See the national anthems of New Zealand, S. Africa, Ghana, S. Sudan, and Kenya.
- 3) “While few today can define the difference between a democracy and a republic, the difference rests in the origin of its rights. A democracy is ruled solely by majority, what the Framers described as a ‘mobocracy.’ A republic is ruled by law, but not laws built solely on the vacillating whims of the people; rather, the laws were grounded in the transcendent values and inalienable rights established by the creator. ...The Framers understood that transcendent values formed the basis of a republic and that the purpose of a republic was to protect inalienable natural rights. A democracy, however, based neither on transcendent values nor inalienable rights, was, as James Madison explained, ‘incompatible with personal security’ and, according to Fisher Ames, tended toward ‘licentiousness....’ ...Interestingly, the Framers often spoke of the French government as a democracy rather than the republic that the French themselves called their government. In the minds of the Framers, simply

¹² Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction*, 330.

¹³ Edmund Burke, in Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*.

¹⁴ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790).

titling a government a republic did not make it so if it lacked transcendent values or immutable rights or was ruled as a ‘mobocracy.’ As Fisher Ames, a Framers of the Bill of Rights, explained, ‘[I]t was only in name that [France] ever was republican....’¹⁵

- 4) “[T]he historical records are exceedingly clear that our Framers were well-acquainted with the theories and principal teachings of evolution—as well as the science and philosophy for and against evolution—well before Darwin synthesized those long-standing teachings in his writings. ... Clearly, it was not in the absence of knowledge about the debate over evolution, but rather in its presence, that our Framers made the decision to incorporate the principle of a creator in our governing documents.”¹⁶
- (c) The biblical worldview is the best foundation for human government. This is proven historically. Christianity has proven to be the best foundation for human happiness and religious, political, and economic freedom. Christians desire freedom for all, not just freedom for Christians.
- (d) Islam.
 - 1) E.g., Iran’s Islamic revolution.
- (3) Pantheism.
 - (a) New age spirituality.

4. Branches.

- a. Executive: the branch of government charged with diplomatic representation, superintendence of the execution of the laws through administrative bodies, and appointment of officials, with usually some power over legislation (as through veto).
- b. Legislative: belonging to the branch of government that is charged with such powers as making laws, levying and collecting taxes, and making financial appropriations.
 - (1) Avoid omniscient single assemblies and unitary states.¹⁷
- c. Judicial: belonging to the branch of government that is charged with trying all cases that involve the government and with the administration of justice within its jurisdiction.
- d. New Zealand’s Westminster system.
 - (1) The [Westminster system](#) is distinguished by a particular entwining of powers, such as in [New Zealand](#). New Zealand's [constitution](#) is based on the principle of separation of powers through a series of constitutional safeguards, many of which are tacit. The Executive’s ability to carry out decisions often depends on the Legislature, which is elected under the [mixed member proportional](#) system. This means the government is rarely a single party but a coalition of parties. The Judiciary is also free of government interference. If a series of judicial decisions result in an interpretation of the law which the Executive considers does not reflect the intention of the policy, the Executive can initiate changes to the legislation in question through the Legislature. The Executive cannot direct or request a judicial officer to revise or reconsider a decision; decisions are final.

¹⁵ David Barton, “A Death Struggle between Two Civilizations,” 13 Regent U. L. Rev. (2000-01), 346-47.

¹⁶ David Barton, “A Death Struggle between Two Civilizations,” 13 Regent U. L. Rev. (2000-01), 303-05.

¹⁷ John Adams (1735-1826).

Should there be a dispute between the Executive and Judiciary, the Executive has no authority to direct the Judiciary, or its individual members and vice versa.¹⁸

- (2) In New Zealand the same party usually dominates the executive and legislative branches, and the judicial branch is relatively weak. Also the power of regions is weak compared to the federal systems in Australia and the U.S.
- e. Checks and balances.

5. Levels.

- a. Federalism: the distribution of power in a government between a central authority and the constituent units.
- b. Centralism: the concentration of power and control in the central authority of a political system.
- c. All simple forms of government are bad because human nature is complex and mysterious.¹⁹

6. Forms.

- a. Monarchy: undivided rule or absolute sovereignty by a single person
- b. Oligarchy: government by a few, especially for corrupt/selfish purposes
- c. Aristocracy:
 - (1) government by the best individuals or by a small privileged class
 - (2) government in which power is vested in a minority consisting of those believed to be best qualified
 - (3) governing body or upper class usually made up of a hereditary nobility
 - (4) This form of government was predominant among Maori tribes before the arrival of Pakeha.
 - (5) Men should seek not the right to govern themselves, but the right to be governed well.²⁰
- d. Democracy:
 - (1) government by the people, especially rule of the majority
 - (2) government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised through a system of representation involving periodic free elections
 - (3) the absence of hereditary or arbitrary class distinctions or privileges
 - (4) "In a democracy, the people have a right to make fools of themselves."²¹
 - (5) "If the people are not capable of acquiring [a liberal] education, they should be deprived of political power and probably of leisure. Their uneducated political power is dangerous, and their uneducated leisure is degrading and will be dangerous. If the people are incapable of achieving the education that responsible democratic citizenship demands, then democracy is doomed, Aristotle rightly

¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westminster_system.

¹⁹ George Canning (1770-1827).

²⁰ John Adams, in Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*.

²¹ Oliver Wendell Holmes.

- condemned the mass of mankind to natural slavery, and the sooner we set about reversing the trend toward democracy the better it will be for the world.”²²
- (6) “Independent judgment is the sine qua non of effective citizenship in a democracy.”²³
 - (7) They must never “be allowed to raise Aristotle’s question: whether ‘democratic behavior’ means the behavior that democracies like or the behavior that will preserve democracy. ... These need not be the same.”²⁴
 - (8) “[Y]ou can use the word democracy to sanction in his thoughts the most degrading (and also least enjoyable) of all human feelings. You can get him to practice, not only without shame but with a positive glow of self-approval, conduct which, if undefended by the magic word, would be universally derided.”²⁵
 - (9) “The delightful novelty of the present situation is that you can sanction [Envy]—make it respectable and even laudable—by the incantatory use of the word democratic.”²⁶
 - (a) E.g., German voters’ confiscation of privately-owned flats in Berlin.
 - (10) “What I want to fix your attention on is the vast overall movement towards the discrediting, and finally the elimination, of every kind of human excellence—moral, cultural, social, or intellectual. ... A democracy does not want great men.”²⁷
 - (11) “For ‘democracy’ or the ‘democratic spirit’ (diabolical sense) leads to a nation without great men, a nation mainly of subliterates, full of cocksureness which flattery breeds on ignorance, and quick to snarl or whimper at the first hint of criticism. And that is what Hell wishes every democratic people to be.”²⁸
 - (12) “... All deductions having been made, democracy has done less harm, and more good, than any other form of government. It gave to human existence a zest and camaraderie that outweighed its pitfalls and defects. ... Under its stimulus Athens and Rome become the most creative cities in history, and America in two centuries has provided abundance for an unprecedentedly large proportion of its population.”²⁹
 - (13) The majority have no right to make a law prejudicial to the whole community, against the principles of superior law, which is not in the power of any community, or the whole race of men, to alter.³⁰

²² Robert M. Hutchins, *The Great Conversation*.

²³ Robert M. Hutchins, *The Great Conversation*.

²⁴ C. S. Lewis [d. 1963], “Screwtape Proposes a Toast” (1961).

²⁵ C. S. Lewis [d. 1963], “Screwtape Proposes a Toast” (1961).

²⁶ C. S. Lewis [d. 1963], “Screwtape Proposes a Toast” (1961).

²⁷ C. S. Lewis [d. 1963], “Screwtape Proposes a Toast” (1961).

²⁸ C. S. Lewis [d. 1963], “Screwtape Proposes a Toast” (1961).

²⁹ Will and Ariel Durant, “Lessons from History,” 34.

³⁰ Edmund Burke (1729-97).

- e. Mobocracy: rule by the mob.
- f. Republic: a government in which supreme power resides in a body of citizens entitled to vote and is exercised by elected officers and representatives responsible to them and governing according to law.
 - (1) “The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government....”³¹
- g. Tyranny:
 - (1) Oppressive power exerted by government.
 - (2) Government in which absolute power is vested in a single ruler
 - (3) “A totalitarian regime is one that seeks to control every aspect of communal life, and to bring as much of private life as possible into the sphere of the communal.”³²
 - (4) A democracy can be just as tyrannical as a dictatorship, because it is the extent, not the source of government power that impinges on freedom.³³
- h. Autocracy: government in which one person possesses unlimited power.
- i. Dictatorship: a form of government in which absolute power is concentrated in a dictator or a small clique.
 - (1) “History had given another illustration to Plato’s sardonic sequence of monarchy, aristocracy, democracy, dictatorship, and monarchy.”³⁴
- j. Totalitarianism:
 - (1) Centralized control by an autocratic authority.
 - (2) Political concept that citizens should be totally subject to absolute state authority.
- k. Anarchy:
 - (1) Absence or denial of government or any authority or established order
 - (2) Lawlessness or political disorder due to the absence of governmental authority
 - (3) Utopian society of individuals who enjoy complete freedom without government
 - (4) Absence or denial of any authority or established order
- l. Theocracy: government of a state by immediate divine guidance or by officials who are regarded as divinely guided.
- m. Biblical worldview truths.
 - (1) God allows nation to choose their own forms of government.
 - (a) “God has left nations unto the liberty of setting up such governments as please themselves.”³⁵
 - (2) Between the Fall and the Messianic kingdom, a biblically-based limited, national government is the most preferred form of government. This accords with the constrained vision of human nature.
 - (a) “That government governs best which governs least.”³⁶

³¹ U.S. Constitution, art. V, § 4 (1789).

³² Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction*, 222.

³³ William F. Buckley, Jr., *God and Man at Yale*, 74.

³⁴ Will Durant, *The Age of Louis XIV*, Kindle Locations 4601-4603.

³⁵ Lord Shaftesbury, as he was being put to death, quoted in *The Age of Louis XIV*, 286.

³⁶ Henry David Thoreau.

- (b) “The best we can hope for is a government that, though manned by corrupt and imperfect men, will provide enough law and order to enable us to cultivate our gardens in security, and pursue our studies or hobbies in peace.”³⁷

7. Visions.

- a. See *Conflict of Visions, Constrained Vision, and Unconstrained Vision*.
- b. Definitions.
 - (1) Utopia:
 - (a) A place of ideal perfection especially in laws, government, and social conditions.
 - (b) An impractical scheme for social improvement.
 - (2) Dystopia: an imaginary place where people lead dehumanised and often fearful lives.
- c. Biblical truths.
 - (1) Prior to the Messianic kingdom, no human government will be ideal.
 - (a) Political movements across the spectrum from left to right are “rival deck stewards competing with each other about the arrangement of the deck chairs just before the Titanic hits the iceberg.”³⁸
 - (b) “...[T]he swaying fortunes of democracy and of fascism and of communism are of time, but the Fellowship in God is of all times and is eternal.”³⁹
 - (2) The reason human nature is constrained, not unconstrained. We must do the best we can under the constraints imposed upon us by our mortality, inherent selfishness, and lack of omniscience.

8. Parties.

- a. Libertarianism: political party advocating the principles of individual liberty especially of thought and action
- b. Conservatism: political philosophy based on tradition and social stability, stressing established institutions, and preferring gradual development to abrupt change
- c. Liberalism:
 - (1) Political philosophy based on belief in progress, the essential goodness of the human race, individual autonomy, and the protection of political and civil liberties.
 - (2) Theory in economics emphasising individual freedom from restraint and usually based on free competition, the self-regulating market, and the gold standard.
- d. Right: individuals professing support of the established order and favouring traditional attitudes and practices and conservative governmental policies
- e. Left: those professing views usually characterized by desire to reform or overthrow the established order especially in politics and usually advocating change in the name of the greater freedom or well-being of the common man
- f. Progressivism: political and economic doctrines of those believing in moderate political change and social improvement by governmental action.

³⁷ Pierre Bayle, paraphrased by Will Durant in *The Age of Louis XIV*, 612.

³⁸ George Forell, quoted in H. Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction*, 9.

³⁹ T. R. Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, 85.

- g. Green/Environmentalism: activist political party focusing on environmental and social issues.
- h. Socialism:
 - (1) Economic and political theories advocating collective or governmental ownership and administration of the means of production and distribution of goods.
 - (2) System or condition of society in which the means of production are owned and controlled by the state.
- i. Statism: concentration of economic controls and planning in the hands of a highly centralized government often extending to government ownership of industry
 - (1) See *Statism*.
- j. Communism:
 - (1) Theory advocating elimination of private property.
 - (2) System in which goods are owned in common and are available to all as needed.
 - (3) Totalitarian system of government in which a single authoritarian party controls state-owned means of production.
 - (4) Final stage of society in Marxist theory in which the state has withered away and economic goods are distributed equitably.
- k. Fascism: political philosophy, movement, or regime that exalts nation and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralised autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition.
 - (1) Fascism and conservatives are worlds apart!
- l. Radicalism:
 - (1) Tending or disposed to make extreme changes in existing views, habits, conditions, or institutions
 - (2) A political group associated with views, practices, and policies of extreme change
- m. A nation's system of government and its ruling party reflects who that nation is. In other words, God gives a nation the political leaders it deserves.

9. Participation.

- a. As Christians, we are to be active, engaged citizens.
 - (1) Christians may engage in the political process as much as any others. They may vote, petition, sue, protest, etc. But they should always do so with wisdom.
 - (2) It is particularly important for Christians to speak truthfully based on facts.
- b. We are to be law-abiding.
 - (1) Christians are to be loyal citizens who seek the welfare of their nation. They pray for its leaders, and pay their taxes. Of course, those who have confessed Jesus as Lord cannot also call other authorities Lord, and if commanded to do so, or to do anything which God forbids, must disobey. But they are conscientious citizens. They also contribute to their country's well-being by the stability of their marriages and their homes, their honesty in business, their hard work, and their

voluntary activity in the service of the handicapped and needy. Just governments have nothing to fear from Christians.⁴⁰

c. Christians should speak up clearly on certain fundamental issues.

(1) Process.

(a) Limited government.

- 1) Absolute power intoxicates alike despots, monarchs, aristocrats and democrats.⁴¹

(b) Rule of law/procedure.

- 1) “No totalitarian authority nor authoritarian state can tolerate those who have an absolute by which to judge that state and its actions. The Christians had that absolute in God’s revelation.”⁴²
- 2) “Two hours after the interest deductibility rules were unveiled yesterday, the government sent an unexpected press release that it was rewriting tenancy agreements without notice. According to Stuff, a clause will now be inserted into commercial property leases requiring that only a ‘fair proportion’ of rent be paid when tenants are impacted by Covid-19 restrictions. Landlords who can’t agree with tenants on what constitutes a fair rent will be forced into arbitration. The rules came into force yesterday, almost immediately. Also, residential tenancies can no longer be terminated under level four and it’ll be easier for ministers to create new restrictions on landlords. Angered, the Property Council put out a statement calling the sudden change ‘a kick in the teeth for the backbone of the nation.’”⁴³

(2) Substance.

(a) Existence of truth.

(b) Sanctity of human life.

(c) Traditional morality.

(d) Religious freedom.

(e) “Let us strive for the goal of religious freedom for all people. This requires advocacy before governments on behalf of Christians and people of other faiths who are persecuted.”⁴⁴

(f) “Dissenters need the truth of Christianity to have the liberty to dissent.”⁴⁵

(3) Traditional family.

d. There are times when Christians must disobey their governments.

- (1) “Christian freedom stems from the separation of the creation and Creator; ... from the rejection of determinisms and the affirmation of responsibility; and from the limitations on Caesar, the declaration that he is a creature, and the removal of the

⁴⁰ Lausanne Movement, *The Manila Manifesto* (1989).

⁴¹ John Adams (1735-1826).

⁴² Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?*, 28.

⁴³ Spinoff, 29 Sep 21

⁴⁴ Lausanne Movement, *The Cape Town Commitment* (2011).

⁴⁵ Alliance Defense Fund, Blackstone Fellowship.

divine status that he continually seeks to acquire. Christian liberty rests on the foundation that man's responsibility to God may not be abridged or compromised by lesser loyalties. This is the conviction that made it possible for Peter to say that he would obey God rather than man, and thus relativizes all human powers. When loyalty to God disappears, there is no longer a barrier to an omniscient state."⁴⁶

10. Strategy.

- a. Like Jesus, it is often necessary for Christians to bypass societal elites to take their case directly to ordinary people.

⁴⁶ H. Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction*, 228-29.

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