

The Founders' Unchanging Principles of Liberty

NOTE: The following is from the July 2004 newsletter of the *National Center for Constitutional Studies*, www.nccs.net, an excellent website that I highly commend for your review.

As we celebrate the Declaration of Independence in July and the Constitution in September, let us once again reflect on the marvelous principles underlying these two documents. The following is a review of these principles together with a comment or a quote by the Founders. [The Five Thousand Year Leap](#) devotes 1 chapter to each of these 28 principles.

Principle 1 - *The only reliable basis for sound government and just human relations is Natural Law.*

Natural law is God's law. There are certain laws which govern the entire universe, and just as Thomas Jefferson said in the Declaration of Independence, there are laws which govern in the affairs of men which are "the laws of nature and of nature's God."

Principle 2 - *A free people cannot survive under a republican constitution unless they remain virtuous and morally strong.*

"Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters." - Benjamin Franklin

Principle 3 - *The most promising method of securing a virtuous people is to elect virtuous leaders.*

"Neither the wisest constitution nor the wisest laws will secure the liberty and happiness of a people whose manners are universally corrupt. He therefore is the truest friend to the liberty of his country who tries most to promote its virtue, and who ... will not suffer a man to be chosen into any office of power and trust who is not a wise and virtuous man." - Samuel Adams

Principle 4 - *Without religion the government of a free people cannot be maintained.*

"Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports.... And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion." – George Washington

Principle 5 - *All things were created by God, therefore upon him all mankind are equally dependent, and to him they are equally responsible .*

The American Founding Fathers considered the existence of the Creator as the most fundamental premise underlying all self-evident truth. They felt a person who boasted he or she was an atheist had just simply failed to apply his or her divine capacity for reason and observation.

Principle 6 - *All mankind were created equal.*

The Founders knew that in these three ways, all mankind are theoretically treated as:

1. Equal before God.
2. Equal before the law.
3. Equal in their rights.

Principle 7 - *The proper role of government is to protect equal rights, not provide equal things.*

The Founders recognized that the people cannot delegate to their government any power except that which they have the lawful right to exercise themselves.

Principle 8 - *Mankind are endowed by God with certain unalienable rights.*

"Those rights, then, which God and nature have established, and are therefore called natural rights, such as are life and liberty, need not the aid of human laws to be more effectually invested in every man than they are; neither do they receive any additional strength when declared by the municipal [or state] laws to be inviolable. On the contrary, no human legislation has power to abridge or destroy them, unless the owner [of the right] shall himself commit some act that amounts to a forfeiture." – William Blackstone

Principle 9 - *To protect human rights, God has revealed a code of divine law.*

"The doctrines thus delivered we call the revealed or divine law, and they are to be found only in the Holy Scriptures. These precepts, when revealed, are found by comparison to be really a part of the original law of nature, as they tend in all their consequences to man's felicity." – William Blackstone

Principle 10 - *The God-given right to govern is vested in the sovereign authority of the whole people.*

"The fabric of American empire ought to rest on the solid basis of the consent of the people. The streams of national power ought to flow immediately from that pure, original fountain of all legislative authority." - Alexander Hamilton

Principle 11 - *The majority of the people may alter or abolish a government which has become tyrannical.*

"Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes ... but when a long train of abuses and usurpations ... evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such

government, and to provide new guards for their future security." - Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence

Principle 12 - *The United States of America shall be a republic.*

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America
And to the *republic* for which it stands...."

Principle 13 – A Constitution should protect the people from the frailties of their rulers.

"If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary.... [But lacking these] you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself." – James Madison

Principle 14 - *Life and liberty are secure only so long as the rights of property are secure .*

John Locke reasoned that God gave the earth and everything in it to the whole human family as a gift. Therefore the land, the sea, the acorns in the forest, the deer feeding in the meadow belong to everyone "in common." However, the moment someone takes the trouble to change something from its original state of nature, that person has added his ingenuity or labor to make that change. Herein lies the secret to the origin of "property rights."

Principle 15 - *The highest level of prosperity occurs when there is a free-market economy and a minimum of government regulations.*

Prosperity depends upon a climate of wholesome stimulation with four basic freedoms in operation:

1. The Freedom to try.
2. The Freedom to buy.
3. The Freedom to sell.
4. The Freedom to fail.

Principle 16 - *The government should be separated into three branches .*

"I call you to witness that I was the first member of the Congress who ventured to come out in public, as I did in January 1776, in my Thoughts on Government ... in favor of a government with three branches and an independent judiciary. This pamphlet, you know, was very unpopular. No man appeared in public to support it but yourself." - John Adams

Principle 17 - *A system of checks and balances should be adopted to prevent the abuse of power by the different branches of government.*

"It will not be denied that power is of an encroaching nature and that it ought to be effectually restrained from passing the limits assigned to it." - James Madison

Principle 18 - *The unalienable rights of the people are most likely to be preserved if the principles of government are set forth in a written Constitution.*

The structure of the American system is set forth in the Constitution of the United States and the only weaknesses which have appeared are those which were allowed to creep in despite the Constitution.

Principle 19 - *Only limited and carefully defined powers should be delegated to government, all others being retained by the people.*

The Tenth Amendment is the most widely violated provision of the bill of rights. If it had been respected and enforced America would be an amazingly different country than it is today. This amendment provides:

"The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

Principle 20 - *Efficiency and dispatch require that the government operate according to the will of the majority, but constitutional provisions must be made to protect the rights of the minority.*

"Every man, by consenting with others to make one body politic under one government, puts himself under an obligation to every one of that society to submit to the determination of the majority, and to be concluded [bound] by it." – John Locke

Principle 21 - *Strong local self-government is the keystone to preserving human freedom.*

"The way to have good and safe government is not to trust it all to one, but to divide it among the many, distributing to every one exactly the functions he is competent [to perform best]. - Thomas Jefferson

Principle 22 - *A free people should be governed by law and not by the whims of men.*

"The end of law is not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom. For in all the states of created beings, capable of laws, where there is no law there is no freedom. For liberty is to be free from restraint and violence of others, which cannot be where there is no law." – John Locke

Principle 23 - *A free society cannot survive as a republic without a broad program of general education.*

"They made an early provision by law that every town consisting of so many families should be always furnished with a grammar school. They made it a crime for such a town to be destitute of a grammar schoolmaster for a few months, and subjected it to a heavy penalty. So that the education of all ranks of people was made the care and expense of the public, in a manner that I believe has been unknown to any other people, ancient or modern. The consequences of these

establishments we see and feel every day [written in 1765]. A native of America who cannot read and write is as rare ... as a comet or an earthquake." John Adams

Principle 24 - *A free people will not survive unless they stay strong.*

"To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace." – George Washington

Principle 25 - *"Peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations -- entangling alliances with none."* - Thomas Jefferson, given in his first inaugural address.

Principle 26 - *The core unit which determines the strength of any society is the family; therefore the government should foster and protect its integrity.*

"There is certainly no country in the world where the tie of marriage is more respected than in America, or where conjugal happiness is more highly or worthily appreciated." Alexis de Tocqueville

Principle 27 - *The burden of debt is as destructive to human freedom as subjugation by conquest.*

"We are bound to defray expenses [of the war] within our own time, and are unauthorized to burden posterity with them.... We shall all consider ourselves morally bound to pay them ourselves and consequently within the life [expectancy] of the majority." – Thomas Jefferson

Principle 28 - *The United States has a manifest destiny to eventually become a glorious example of God's law under a restored Constitution that will inspire the entire human race.*

The Founders sensed from the very beginning that they were on a divine mission. Their great disappointment was that it didn't all come to pass in their day, but they knew that someday it would. John Adams wrote:

"I always consider the settlement of America with reverence and wonder, as the opening of a grand scene and design in Providence for the illumination of the ignorant, and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth."

I once again commend these to you. Freedom-loving citizens, young and older, find that memorizing these principles proves to be a valuable asset in their defense of our liberty.

Sincerely,

Earl Taylor, Jr.
National Center for Constitutional Studies
www.nccs.net