

Biblical

PRIN'CIPIE, n [L. *principium*, beginning]; a truth; that which supports an assertion, an action, or a series of actions; a law comprehending many subordinate truths.

ONE IN A SERIES

PUBLISHED IN THE SERVICE OF THE KING
BY PLYMOUTH ROCK FOUNDATION

Self-Government-In Christ

gov-ern-ment \ 'gov-er(n)-ment \ L. *gubernare* to steer, govern. n. 1. *obs*: moral conduct or behavior: Discretion 2: the act or process of governing; specif: authoritative direction or control 3. a: the office, authority, or function of governing. The form of fundamental rules and principles by which a nation or state is governed. **Self-government**: The government of oneself.

The Biblical Principle

In the eyes of God, each individual counts and is accountable for the manner in which he or she governs his or her personal affairs. It is His desire that each person live in accordance with His will; that His creatures will follow and obey His laws, principles, precepts, and teachings of Christ Jesus set forth in His written Word.

Self-government, then, is the heart of the matter.

Self-government is "internal" government. It is the flow of power and force (the "voice of authority") within the individual which determines his or her thoughts, values, character and conduct. (The thought precedes—indeed, generates—the act: the thief covets before he steals.)

The internal is causative to the external: A people who govern themselves according to God's Word (principles, laws, and precepts) will produce a civil government in harmony with God's laws and purpose. (Self-governance without Christ leads to error, excess, and abominations.) Like begets like, God's law of reproduction (Genesis 1:25-26).

Yet, as God's Word stresses, and as we must honestly admit, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). How, then, can man hope to govern himself in obedience to God? Only through the power of the living Christ within! By being transformed, by being regenerated! "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away;

behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2).

Thus, self-government in Christ produces godly external government. Conversely, self-government without Christ leads to license rather than liberty; to anarchy, despotism, and ungodly civil government. Christ, then, is the answer. Only through Christ Jesus within can we hope to achieve the fullest measure of godly self and civil government: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us" (2 Corinthians 4:7)!

Old Testament Government

There are two distinct types of government set forth in the Bible: **External** Government, and **Internal** (self) government. The predominant form of government in the Old Testament is external.

In the beginning, the Lord God prescribed self-government. In the Garden of Eden, God set forth certain rules. Adam was to govern himself accordingly; and Eve, also. God made clear the consequences of disobedience (Genesis 2:17). Here we have two facts of life:

- (1) Each individual counts, and is accountable.
 - (2) Ideas—and actions—have consequences.
- Adam and Eve were lousy self-governors. They

disobeyed God; they paid the consequences (Genesis 3:16–19; 22–24). Man, unregenerated man, has been disobeying God ever since.

Fallen man, man separated from God and of a depraved nature, was evil in all his thoughts and wicked in his ways; so much so that God repented of His creation and destroyed him from the face of the earth (Genesis 6:5–7). All but one: Noah and his family (6:8–9). After the flood, God added external (civil) government to internal (self) government (Genesis 9:6). Throughout the Old Testament, we read of external government pressing in and down upon the individual (an outside power and force both ecclesiastical and civil). It was, and is, even as the prophet Samuel warned: When man rejects God and denies His laws, he will be governed by tyrants (1 Samuel 8:10–18).

New Testament Government

The New Testament, by contrast, concerns self-government; the internal flow of power and force working within the individual and expressing itself through external deportment. Whereas the laws of the Old Testament were writ on tablets of stone (Exodus 24:12), under the New Covenant, God's laws are written on the fleshly tablet of the believer's heart (Hebrews 10:16).

The Christian methodology of government is Christ-centered self-government: not ego-centered, not man-centered, not denomination-centered—*Christ-centered*—founded on the Word of God.

When Christ is enthroned in the heart, when His Word, His law, His love and His power are "taken to heart," they radiate from the inside out. They are manifested in the conduct of our lives.

Some Key Scriptures

- "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:6).
- "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city" (Proverbs 16:32).
- "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he [man]" (Proverbs 23:7a).
- "Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls" (Proverbs 25:28).
- "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:18-19).
- "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men'" (Acts 5:29).
- "This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men" (Acts 24:16).
- "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" (Romans 6:1–2).
- "For it is written: 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.' So then each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:11–12) (see also Isaiah 45:23).
- "Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).
- "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).
- "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above. . . . Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. " (Colossians 3:1–2).
- "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Colossians 3:17).
- "For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?" (1 Timothy 3:5).

Thus, we begin to understand the depth, the demand, the strenuous nature of true self-governance in Christ. As Christ's freemen, we are, indeed, His servants—His slaves: "For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave" (1 Corinthians 7:22); "... [A]s free, yet not using your liberty as a cloak for vice, but as servants of God" (1 Peter 2:15-16).

Such self-government in and through Christ deals not simply with deeds, not simply with outward show; it penetrates those secret chambers of the inner self; it commands our innermost thoughts (Matthew 5:27-28). It is revolutionary; it transforms the heart (Acts 17:6b).

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties" (Psalm 139:23). "Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me." (Psalm 51:10).

It captures the mind; it scours the soul ("all things become new").

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1, 2).

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, there comes within a new sense, a new direction, a new purpose . . . a new voice of authority, a new self-government:

"Show me Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths" (Psalm 25:4).

"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

Enthroned upon the heart-seat of government "... there is another king—Jesus" (Acts 17:7).

Such are the demands—and the blessings!—of the most rigorous of all forms of government: Self government in Christ. It is a government which requires not merely external obedience but internal conformity—not only an appearance of truth but a heart-commitment to God's truth. It looks beyond the outward deed to the inner source (the heart condition) wherein the act is generated.

It is that form of government which, if men would only seek it and employ it, could change the world . . . which did, in fact, birth a nation!

The American Republic

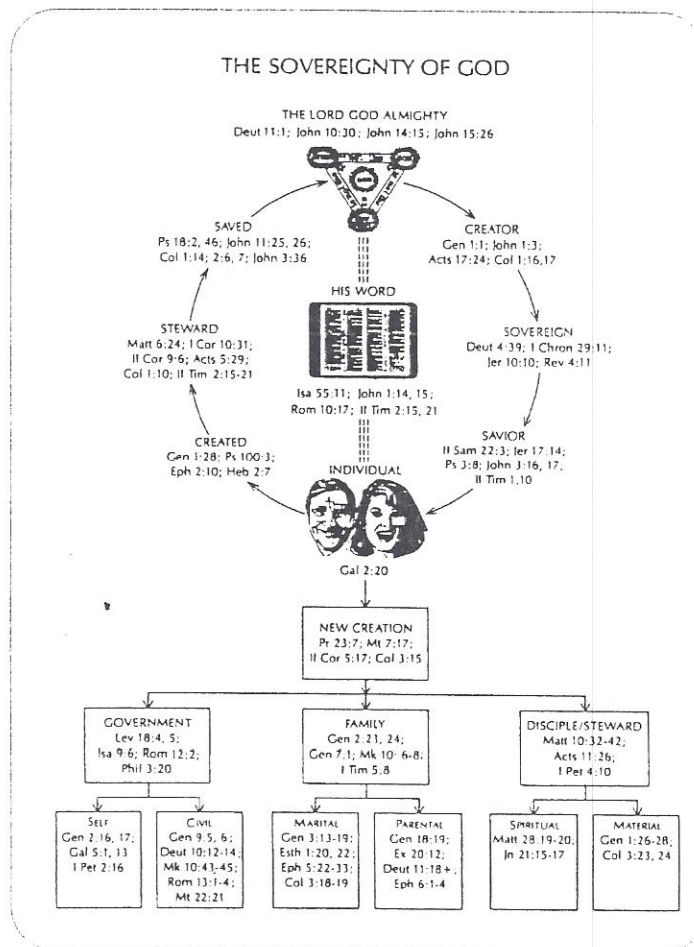
"Each religion has a form of government, and Christianity astonished the world by establishing self-government. With the landing of the Pilgrims in 1620, Christian self-government became the foundation stone of the United States of America."*

Note the key word in Miss Hall's statement: "Christian!" "Christian self-government."

It was self-government in Christ—the Christian methodology of governance—which produced a republic based upon self-government with union.

"Consider the diversity of those three million who made up the population of the 13 colonies . . . political, racial, economic, cultural or religious.

"Such diversity would have brought about 13 separate nations . . . if the land had been located



PRINCIPLES, page 4

3,000 miles eastward, in Europe. But it didn't! It held together on a completely voluntary basis with no central government, no national taxing power.

"Why? Because the people, in spite of their diversity, were educated in the Biblical principles of civil government (self-government in Christ) . . . Biblical Christian unity held them together."*
E pluribus unum!

Unity in Christ. That was the cement, the bond, that brought unity to the colonies and held them together! Despite stress and strain and schisms on the other issues, unity in Christ birthed the American Republic.

We have staked the whole future of American Civilization, not upon the capacity of mankind for self-government; upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God.

—James Madison, "master builder" of the U.S. Constitution and fourth president of the nation.

Applying the Principle

Christians, those who would truly follow Christ, devoutly seek godly civil government. We pray for and long for a government based on God's will and in harmony with God's laws for public officials (magistrates) who are "God's minister to you for good."

Before such a transformation can take place in the nation, it must take place in the hearts and minds of God's people. Before there can be a change in civil (external) government: there must be a change in self (internal) government. A people get the kind of government they resemble.

Only the flow of godly self-government can reduce and finally eliminate the flow of bad civil government. When the source of self-government is Jesus Christ, the stronger the flow of that inner government, the less the need for external controls. Conversely, when man without God is the source of self-government, the greater the need for external (civil) control.

Thus, the quest for godly civil government must begin with and spring from godly self-government. It must begin as an "inside job." Godly government does not come from the outside in; it is not built from the top down; it is seeded, nurtured, developed within

Self-Government—In Christ

the heart and mind, and flows from the inside out.

As Miss Hall has written, Christian civil government—the fruitage of Christian self-government—is of God. We are as dependent upon God for the maintenance of individual liberty now as our forefathers were for the gift of liberty in the beginning.

The same purity of motive, the same respect for lawful authority, the same opposition to tyranny, the same vigilance in detecting the first insidious approaches of despotism, the same stern resolution in resisting its progress, which made us a nation are equally essential as the means of preserving those liberties our fathers bequeathed to us, and those institutions they framed.

—Peter Force, *historian and archivist, 1830.*

If we, as faithful Christians, will seek and apply godly, Christ-centered governance in our lives, in all affairs and areas, we will manifest the light of godly self-government before men so that they will see such good works "and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Thus will begin the change in self, in the home, the workplace, the church. That impact will go forth in ever-increasing circles—in the community, in the state and, eventually, in the nation. Rather than looking for "men on white horses" who will change things for us, we, as His, must look first to ourselves. We must seek a Christ-centered heart condition and a godly personal deportment. From such comes the true witness and the worthy testimony, for then we truly become His instruments—His good and faithful servants.

*Verna Hall, *The Christian History of the Constitution of the United States, 1960.* Foundation for American Christian Education (FACE), San Francisco.

NOTE: All Scripture is from the New King James Version

For copies of this paper, or for further information, please write or call Plymouth Rock Foundation, Fisk Mill, P.O. Box 425, Marlborough, NH 03455, (603) 876-4685. Corporate offices are located in Plymouth, Massachusetts .