

Six Foundational Principles of Free Republics

“Americans. Let us now attend to those principles, upon which all republican governments, who boast any degree of political liberty, are founded, and which must enter into the spirit of a FREE republican constitution. For all republics are not FREE.” (The Essex Result, April 29, 1778)

- 1. God is the author of free government.**
- 2. Natural rights are bestowed by God.**
- 3. Legitimate governments derive their powers from the consent of the governed.**
- 4. Government is instituted for the purpose of securing to the individual their natural rights.**
- 5. The interests of the majority and the rights of the minority are protected when the government acts within its legitimate charter.**
- 6. Free governments are maintained upon principles of righteousness.**

1) God the Author of Free Government: Liberty and natural rights have a divine origin, as such God given Liberty and natural rights are maintained upon principles of truth given through the “Supreme Governor of the World.” Thus, it follows, that for a free republic to function properly and endure the people and their leaders must be moral.

- a. “The reason why the supreme governor of the world is a rightful and just governor, and entitled to the allegiance of the universe is, because he is infinitely good, wise, and powerful. His goodness prompts him to the best measures, his wisdom qualifies him to discern them, and his power to affect them. In a state likewise, the supreme power is best disposed of, when it is so modelled and balanced, and rested in such hands, that it has the greatest share of goodness, wisdom, and power, which is consistent with the lot of humanity.” (The Essex Result, April 29, 1778)
- b. “Good and wise men, in all ages, have embraced a... theory... supposed, that the deity, from the relations, we stand in, to himself and to each other, has constituted an eternal and immutable law, which is, indispensibly, obligatory upon all mankind, prior to any human institution whatever. This is what is called the law of nature, “which, being coeval with mankind, and dictated by God himself, of course, superior in obligation to any other. It is binding over all the globe, in all countries, and at all times. No human laws are of any validity, if contrary to this; and such of them as are valid, derive all their authority, mediately, or immediately, from this original. Upon this law, depend the natural rights of mankind, the supreme being gave existence to man, together with the means of

preserving and beatifying that existence. He endowed him with rational faculties, by the help of which, to discern and pursue such things, as were consistent with his duty and interest, and invested him with an inviolable right to personal liberty, and personal safety. Hence, in a state of nature, no man had any moral power to deprive another of his life, limbs, property or liberty... The sacred rights of mankind are not to be rummaged for, among old parchments, or musty records. They are written, as with a sun beam, in the whole volume of human nature, by the hand of the divinity itself; and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power.” (“The Farmer Refuted: or, a more comprehensive and impartial View of Dispute between Great Britain and the Colonies,” by Alexander Hamilton, Feb 25, 1775)

- c. “If there is a form of government then, whose principle and foundation is virtue, will not every sober man acknowledge it better calculated to promote the general happiness than any other form?... there is no good government but what is Republican... the very definition of a Republic, is “an Empire of Laws, and not of men... that form of government, which is best contrived to secure an impartial and exact execution of the laws, is the best of Republics.” (“Thoughts on Government,” John Adams, April 1776)
- d. “It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor...” (Thanksgiving Proclamation, George Washington, October 3, 1789)

2) Natural Rights, both alienable and unalienable are bestowed on all men and women by God and cannot in justice be forcibly taken from any person. Natural rights cannot and should not be controlled by any power so far as these rights are exercised without injury to the natural rights of others, said rights are only curtailed for the good of the whole and only by the consent of the majority when that majority judge that the general welfare requires it.

- a. “All men are born equally free. The rights they possess at their births are equal, and of the same kind. Some of those rights are alienable, and may be parted with for an equivalent. Others are unalienable and inherent, and of that importance, that no equivalent can be received in exchange... Those rights which are unalienable, and of that importance, are called the rights of conscience. We have duties, for the discharge of which we are accountable to our Creator and benefactor, which no human power can cancel... and that power which assumes a controul over it, is an usurper; for no consent can be pleaded to justify the controul, as any consent in this case is void.” (The Essex Result, April 29, 1778)

- b. "When human laws contradict or discountenance the means, which are necessary to preserve the essential rights of any society, they defeat the proper end of all laws, and become null and void... the whole human race is entitled to [natural rights], and that it can be wrested from no part of them without the blackest and most aggravated guilt."
("The Farmer Refuted: or, a more comprehensive and impartial View of Dispute between Great Britain and the Colonies," by Alexander Hamilton, Feb 25, 1775)
- c. "...A wise and frugal Government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned. This is the sum of good government..." ("Thomas Jefferson's First Inaugural Address," Thomas Jefferson, March 4, 1801)
- d. Property "In its larger and juster meaning, embraces everything to which a man may attach a value and have a right; and which leaves to everyone else the like advantage." It is often thought that "a man's land, or merchandize, or money is called his property..." but "a man has a property in his opinions and the free communication of them. He has a property of peculiar value in his religious opinions, and in the profession and practice dictated by them. He has a property very dear to him in the safety and liberty of his person. He has an equal property in the free use of his faculties and free choice of the objects on which to employ them. In a word, as a man is said to have a right to his property, he may be equally said to have a property in his rights... Government is instituted to protect property of every sort; as well that which lies in the various rights of individuals, as that which the term particularly expresses. This being the end of government, that alone is a just government, which impartially secures to every man, whatever is his own." ("Property" James Madison, March 29, 1792)
- e. "The Declaration of Rights reminds citizens of their civic duties as well, including 'the right as well as the duty of all men in society, publicly, and at stated seasons, to worship the SUPREME BEING.' (Massachusetts Constitution, 1780) Such worship must follow the dictates of one's own conscience or religious beliefs and not disturb the 'public peace' or the worship of others." (The American Founding, Heritage Foundation commentary on Massachusetts Constitution, 1780)
- f. "The reason and understanding of mankind, as well as the experience of all ages, confirm the truth of this proposition, that the benefits resulting to individuals from a free government, conduce much more to their happiness, than the retaining of all their natural rights in a state of nature... [however] no man ought to surrender any part of his natural rights, without receiving the greatest possible equivalent..." (The Essex Result, April 29, 1778)

3) Consent of the Governed: The only form of just and legitimate government is one which receives its power from the consent of the governed, and maintains those liberties that will secure such rights in perpetuity. That a government by the people and for the people be maintained for future generations it is necessary that free republican government is constructed with those mechanisms most apt to protect those forms of administration able to secure the natural rights of all men from the usurpation of an overarching central authority.

- a. "That all men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety." ("Virginia Declaration of Rights," George Mason, 1725-1792)
- b. "Of all the various modes and forms of Government, that is best which is capable of producing the greatest degree of happiness and safety, and is most effectually secured against the danger of mal-administration." (Washington's Farewell Address, 1792)
- c. "...the origin of all civil government, justly established, must be a voluntary compact, between the rulers and the ruled; and must be liable to such limitations, as are necessary for the security of the absolute rights of the latter; for what original title can any man or set of men have, to govern others, except their own consent? To usurp dominion over a people, in their own despite, or to grasp at a more extensive power than they are willing to entrust, is to violate that law of nature, which gives every man a right to his personal liberty; and can, therefore, confer no obligation to obedience." ("The Farmer Refuted: or, a more comprehensive and impartial View of Dispute between Great Britain and the Colonies," by Alexander Hamilton, Feb 25, 1775)
- d. Free forms of republican government are "the world's best hope" to secure liberty and are "the strongest Government on earth... Sometimes it is said that man can not be trusted with the government of himself. Can he, then, be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the forms of kings to govern him? Let history answer this question." ("Thomas Jefferson's First Inaugural Address," Thomas Jefferson, March 4, 1801)
- e. "...The State. This supreme power is composed of the powers of each individual collected together, and VOLUNTARILY parted with by him. No individual, in this case, parts with his unalienable rights, the supreme power therefore cannot controul them. Each individual also surrenders the power of controuling his natural alienable rights, ONLY WHEN THE GOOD OF THE WHOLE REQUIRES it. The supreme power therefore can do nothing but

what is for the good of the whole; and when it goes beyond this line, it is a power usurped.” (The Essex Result, April 29, 1778)

- f. “To constitute a perfect law in a free state, affecting the persons and property of the members, it is necessary that the law be for the good of the whole, which is to be determined by a majority of the members, and that majority should include those, who possess a major part of the property in the state.” (The Essex Result, April 29, 1778)

4) Government is Instituted for the Purpose of Securing to the Individuals their Natural

Rights: The legitimate purpose of government is for the securing of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness through the protection of Natural Rights. “Happiness of society is the end of government -- the happiness of individuals is the end of man” (John Adams, “Thoughts on Government”) and that happiness is best achieved for the whole of society by securing to them their natural rights.

- a. “The principal aim of society is to protect individuals, in the enjoyment of those absolute rights, which were vested in them by the immutable laws of nature; but which could not be preserved, in peace, without that mutual assistance, and intercourse, which is gained by the institution of friendly and social communities. Hence it follows, that the first and primary end of human laws, is to maintain and regulate these absolute rights of individuals.” Blackstone. (“The Farmer Refuted: or, a more comprehensive and impartial View of Dispute between Great Britain and the Colonies,” by Alexander Hamilton, Feb 25, 1775)
- b. “Nothing is more certain from the history of nations, and the nature of man, than that some forms of government are better fitted for being well administered than others.” (“Thoughts on Government,” John Adams, April 1776)
- c. “What I deem the essential principles of our Government... I will compress them within the narrowest compass they will bear... Equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political; peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none; the support of the State governments in all their rights, as the most competent administrations for our domestic concerns and the surest bulwarks against “anti-republican tendencies; the preservation of the General Government in its whole constitutional vigor, as the sheet anchor of our peace at home and safety abroad; a jealous care of the right of election by the people...absolute acquiescence in the decisions of the majority... a well-disciplined militia, our best reliance in peace the supremacy of the civil over the military authority; economy in the public expense, that labor may be lightly burthened; the honest payment of our debts and

sacred preservation of the public faith; encouragement of agriculture, and of commerce as its handmaid... the diffusion of information and arraignment of all abuses at the bar of the public reason; freedom of religion; freedom of the press, and freedom of person under the protection of the habeas corpus, and trial by juries impartially selected. These principles form the bright constellation which has gone before us and guided our steps through an age of revolution and reformation. The wisdom of our sages and blood of our heroes have been devoted to their attainment. They should be the creed of our political faith, the text of civic instruction, the touchstone by which to try the services of those we trust; and should we wander from them in moments of error or of alarm, let us hasten to retrace our steps and to regain the road which alone leads to peace, liberty, and safety.” (“Thomas Jefferson’s First Inaugural Address,” Thomas Jefferson, March 4, 1801)

- d. “A Constitution, founded on these principles, introduces knowledge among the People, and inspires them with a conscious dignity, becoming Freemen. A general emulation takes place, which causes good humour, sociability, good manners, and good morals to be general. That elevation of sentiment, inspired by such a government, makes the common people brave and enterprising. That ambition which is inspired by it makes them sober, industrious and frugal. You will find among them some elegance, perhaps, but more solidity; a little pleasure, but a great deal of business some politeness, but more civility.” (“Thoughts on Government,” John Adams, April 1776)

5) The Interests of the Majority and the Rights of the Minority are Protected when

Government Acts within its Legitimate Charter: Being that the proper role of government is to secure those natural rights to all individuals in perpetuity, a government so committed will always function to protect the Minority.

- a. “Natural liberty is a gift of the beneficent Creator to the whole human race, and civil liberty is founded in that, and cannot be wrested from any people without the most manifest violation of justice. Civil liberty is only natural liberty, modified and secured by the sanctions of civil society. It is not a thing, in its own nature, precarious and dependent on human will and caprice, but it is conformable to the constitution of man, as well as necessary to the well-being of society... The safety of the whole depends upon the mutual protection of every part. If the sword of oppression be permitted to lop off one limb without opposition, reiterated strokes will soon dismember the whole body.” (“The Farmer Refuted: or, a more comprehensive and impartial View of Dispute between Great Britain and the Colonies,” by Alexander Hamilton, Feb 25, 1775)

- b. "Though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will to be rightful must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal law must protect, and to violate would be oppression... And let us reflect that, having banished from our land that religious intolerance under which mankind so long bled and suffered, we have yet gained little if we countenance a political intolerance as despotic, as wicked, and capable of as bitter and bloody persecutions." ("Thomas Jefferson's First Inaugural Address," Thomas Jefferson, March 4, 1801)
- c. "For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support." ("Letter to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island." George Washington, August 18, 1790)

6) Free Republics are Maintained Upon Principles of Righteousness: Liberty will not long endure among a people unresolved to govern their own appetites and place checks upon their own behavior for the good of society. Natural rights are protected by the will of a people well informed and dedicated to the principles upon which Liberty rests.

- a. "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." (Message from John Adams to the Officers of the First Brigade of the Third Division of the Militia of Massachusetts, John Adams, October 11, 1798)
- b. "That your Union and brotherly affection may be perpetual; that the free constitution, which is the work of your hands, may be sacredly maintained; that its Administration in every department may be stamped with wisdom and Virtue; that, in fine, the happiness of the people of these States, under the auspices of liberty, may be made complete, by so careful a preservation and so prudent a use of this blessing as will acquire to them the glory of recommending it to the applause, the affection, and adoption of every nation which is yet a stranger to it." (Washington's Farewell Address, 1792)
- c. "All sober enquiries after truth, ancient and modern, Pagan and Christian, have declared that the happiness of man, as well as his dignity consists in virtue." ("Thoughts on Government," John Adams, April 1776)
- d. "Our own Federal and Republican principles and representative government [will endure upon our] due sense of our equal right to the use of our own faculties, to the acquisitions of our own industry, to honor and confidence from our fellow-citizens, resulting not from birth, but from our actions and their sense of them; enlightened by a benign religion,

professed, indeed, and practiced in various forms, yet all of them inculcating honesty, truth, temperance, gratitude, and the love of man; acknowledging and adoring an overruling Providence, which by all its dispensations proves that it delights in the happiness of man here and his greater happiness hereafter—with all these blessings, what more is necessary to make us a happy and a prosperous people...” (“Thomas Jefferson’s First Inaugural Address,” Thomas Jefferson, March 4, 1801)

- e. “Since public order and happiness ‘essentially depend upon piety, religion, and morality,’ local governments are obliged to support religion.” (The American Founding, Heritage Foundation commentary on Massachusetts Constitution, 1780)
- f. “All men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; and that it is the mutual duty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love, and charity, towards each other.” (“Virginia Declaration of Rights,” George Mason, 1725-1792)
- g. “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great Pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of Men and Citizens. The mere Politician, equally with the pious man ought to respect and to cherish them.” (Washington’s Farewell Address, 1792)