

## CHRISTIAN VISION OF A FREE GOVERNMENT

### I. The Purpose of a Free Government: The Common Good

### II. Natural Government

A. Dominion of the Imago Dei: Human beings are created to govern ourselves and some part of the world.

B. Natural Law and the Common Good: Human beings can use our reason to achieve a common good and do what is right and just.

C. Authority and Law: Human beings need authority and law in order to achieve the common good. We often cannot coordinate our actions for the common good of the community without an authoritative decision what is to be done. Examples:

1. Parents have authority over the family.
2. Teachers have authority over the classroom.
3. Coaches have authority over the athletic team.

### III. Artificial Government

A. Some authority is not intrinsically good but strictly necessary to achieve the common good. Examples:

1. Property and contract rights:
2. Legislatures:
3. Judges and juries:
4. Corporations and legal associations:

B. Vice and Sin: Human communities need remedies and sanctions for wrongs. So we sometimes must resort to coercion. Examples:

1. Militaries are necessary to protect us against foreign threats.
2. Police forces are necessary to protect us against domestic threats and to enforce legal judgments.

#### IV. The Problem With Government

A. Power Corrupts: Government must be powerful enough to protect us from wrongdoers without becoming a bully itself.

B. The tension between law and freedom consists in:

1. rules versus autonomy.
2. rulers versus the ruled.
3. collective good versus individual interest.

#### V. The Proper Role and Limits of Artificial Governments

A. The Rule of Law: The first reason to have government is to hold the law above the powerful and to provide remedies and sanctions for wrongs.

1. Private wrongs infringe private rights and must be remedied.
2. Crimes usurp public order and must be punished.

B. Ordered Liberty: The purposes of political government are instrumental. Political government exists to enable ordered liberty.

1. Subsidiarity: Government is made for people; people are not made for government.
2. Limited Powers: Governments function best whose powers are limited to the instrumental goods that governments are created to secure.