

## CHRISTIAN VISION OF A FREE GOVERNMENT

- I. Dominion of the Imago Dei: God created human beings to govern ourselves and some part of the world.

Dominion > both domination and chaos.

- II. Natural Law and the Common Good: Human beings can use our reason to choose what is good. We can coordinate our actions to achieve a common good by exercising and obeying authority.

Authority > both tyranny and anarchy.

- A. The Common Good is:

1. good for everyone,
2. shared by everyone, and
3. known to everyone.

The common good is also:

4. plural and
5. various.

- B. Natural government and intrinsic goods: To achieve an intrinsic good, a community needs someone to decide what to do and how to do it.

Examples:

1. Teachers have authority over the classroom to achieve the good of knowledge.
2. Conductors have authority over the orchestra to achieve the good of beautiful performance.
3. Parents have authority over the family to achieve the all-around flourishing of children.

- C. Artificial government: Some authority is not intrinsically good but is strictly necessary to achieve the common good.

Examples:

1. Property and contract rights
2. Legislatures
3. Judges and juries
4. Corporations and partnerships

- III. Law and Justice: Human beings coordinate our actions for the common good by making and obeying settled reasons known as laws. Laws direct us to do what is right and just.

Justice > both lawlessness and legalism.

A. The Right and the Just

Justice is the set and constant purpose which gives to everyone what he or she is due as a matter of right.

Justice has two parts:

1. Legal justice → law
2. Natural justice → equity

The purpose of a good government is to secure justice under law by means of:

1. remedies and sanctions for wrongs and
2. limited political powers

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 the community against foreign threats.
2. Police forces are necessary to protect the community against domestic threats and to enforce legal judgments.

The power to exercise coercion must be constrained. So we need:

1. to place constitutional powers under the just and the right.
2. to place constitutional limits on legislative, executive, and judicial power.