

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. . . That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

Part III

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

What does it mean to parent by principle? In order to understand this, a summary of the basics of American political thought is necessary. Only through this exploration can we come to appreciate the value of the philosophy, principles of justice, and order that have established domestic tranquility in our nation. To demonstrate how these principles work in the context of parenting, following each idea I have addressed the application to home government.

The proposed system of government is based upon two levels of thought--a philosophy regarding the nature of man and his unalienable rights, and a system of practices that naturally follow the philosophy. The Declaration of Independence expounds upon just such a philosophy of mankind and the proper role of government, as does the Preamble to the Constitution. The remainder of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights is devoted to the task of putting principles into practice. Because the size and structure of a nation differ from that of a family, many of the specifics do not apply so I have not addressed these. However, the general fundamentals apply to any just form of government. Our exploration of basic American ideas is divided into three categories--a closer look at the ideas of the Declaration of Independence, an outline of the six proper purposes of

government as listed in the Preamble to the Constitution, and an examination of a number of related foundation principles.

Within the two and a half sentences of the Declaration of Independence there are packed eight of the most significant statements on government ever made--statements that have changed forever the way people think and feel. Their impact has been felt all over the world from that day to this, as nation after nation turns from repressive forms of government to systems founded upon these principles. They deserve close examination.

1. There are self-evident truths.

The Founding Fathers reasoned that, since there was God, so also were there absolute truths and that these truths could be discovered through reasoning and debate with clear minds. These were called “self-evident” truths because they are in themselves self-evident to the logical, reasonable mind. (It is a fascinating experience to read the accounts of their summer-long debates on the issues of the Constitution. A single issue of controversy would be debated for hours and from all sides and angles, but when someone came up with the “right” solution, the debate then was over.)

I quote Marcus Tullius Cicero, the Founder’s favorite expositor of natural law, “True law is right reason in agreement with nature; it is of universal applications, unchanging and everlasting. . .and we need not look outside ourselves for an expounder or interpreter of it. And there will not be different laws at Rome and at Athens, or different laws now and in the future, but one eternal and unchangeable law will be valid for all nations and all times, and there will be one master and ruler, that is God, over us all, for he is the author of this law, its promulgator, and its enforcing judge.” (Quoted in Ebenstein, *Great Political Thinkers*, p. 133.).

Application to the home: The idea of self-evident truths is the primary theme of this work. Every principle is in and of itself a self-evident truth that can increase understanding, order of thought, and domestic tranquility while decreasing confusion, frustration, and

insanity. These mother principles give birth to a whole crop of related truths.

2. All men are created equal.

The settlers of the new world had come from an aristocratic government in which kings and queens, barons and baronesses, lords and ladies were considered of greater importance than the commoners. In their firm belief in God and the conviction that men and women are the offspring of God, the founders rejected these classifications placed on human worth. They felt that, although individual attributes and personal circumstances in life may vary widely, the Creator made human beings equal in their rights, equal before the bar of justice, and equal in his sight.

Application to the home: Parents and children are equal, but since children possess only the partial vision of youth, the parents must provide the full vision of maturity. As the child matures, and his vision expands, the authority the parent has over the child fades away. This is right and natural. While this idea is the focus of principle seven, it is an underlying theme throughout the book.

3. There is a Creator.

Though they came from various backgrounds of faith, the Founders all believed in a Supreme Creator. We turn to the writings of Benjamin Franklin, “Here is my creed. I believe in one God, the Creator of the universe. That he governs it by his providence. That he ought to be worshipped. That the most acceptable service we render to him is in doing good to his other children. That the soul of man is immortal, and will be treated with justice in another life respecting its conduct in this. These I take to be the fundamental points in all sound religion.” (Smyth, *Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, 10:84)

Application to the home: The nature of man as a child of deity is a basic underlying principle that colors everything related to parenting.

Many books on child guidance are based on the unspoken, unwritten idea that man is a chance occurrence, and evolutionary by-product with little initiative or choice over his destiny. They neither address man's heritage nor his destiny as a child of God. This was one of the most blatant errors in most parenting books. This work is an attempt to remedy this shortsighted view. This idea is also a pervading theme of the book but is specifically addressed in principle two.

4. Men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.

This concept of human rights, revolutionary in the Founding Father's day, remains vital in ours. Traditionally it was believed that kings had a divine right to rule over the people--that man was granted his rights according to the whims of the ruler. The Founding Fathers believed that man comes into the world endowed with rights by the Supreme Creator and that governments are instituted by men for the protection of those rights.

“If we accept the premise that human rights are granted by government, then we must be willing to accept the corollary that they can be denied by government. If Americans should ever come to believe that their rights and freedoms are instituted among men by politicians and bureaucrats, then they will no longer carry the proud inheritance of their forefathers, but will grovel before their masters seeking favors and dispensations--a throwback to the feudal system of the Dark Ages. . . Since God created man with certain inalienable rights, and man in turn, created governments to help safeguard those rights, it follows that man is superior to the government and should remain master over it, not the other way around.” (Ezra Taft Benson, *This Nation Shall Endure*, p. 29)

Application to the home: The unalienable rights of man are those innate attributes of human dignity and individuality. Kings do not

grant these rights, nor can parents--they are a part of the nature of the child. While parents have a divine right to govern in the home, they do not have the right to either bestow or take away these God-given rights. This idea is also a constant theme of the seventeen principles but is focused upon in principles one, three, four, and six.)

5. Rights of man include Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.

The people run the government; the government does not have the right to run the people. The right to life includes the right to direct that life.

Application to the home: The right to direct life includes the recognition of the free will, conscience, and liberty to pursue a course that leads to happiness. Children are not merely the products of biological and environmental factors and, while parents may direct, instruct, and influence toward a certain philosophy of life and pattern of living, the course the child takes is ultimately his decision. For numerous reasons discussed in several of the principles, parenting practices ought to enhance rather than squelch these divine attributes of free will and conscience.

6. Governments are instituted to secure the rights of man.

The only justifiable purpose for government is to secure the rights of man. Man creates government for that purpose; therefore man is superior to government and should always maintain control of it.

Application to the home: Families are instituted to secure the rights of individual members--as a team force working together for the common good of all. This is a constant theme throughout this work.

7. Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed.

Government, in and of itself, has no power but that which the people delegate to it.

Application to the home: On the surface the concept of governmental power deriving from common consent seems to apply strictly to a government of society rather than the government of the home; for whereas the citizens bestow upon the government the rights of authority, in the home the rights of authority are granted to the parents by the Creator who gave them life. Children, especially young children, have an innate recognition of this right

8. Whenever a government becomes destructive to the ends for which it was created, the people have the right to alter or abolish it.

Application to the home: Like true government, the family is instituted to secure the rights of individual members. When those rights are instead being violated through child or spouse abuse, molestation, extreme mental cruelty, or other means, the need arises to alter or, in extreme cases, to abolish it. Neither the government, nor the family stands superior to the rights of its individual members. This principle is an underlying principle, although not directly addressed in this book.

The Preamble to the Constitution

The ends for which government was created are spelled out in the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States of America:

We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Note that these are also the objectives of home government:

1. To form a more perfect Union--to have harmony without contention.
2. To establish Justice--to set a foundation of law.
3. To insure domestic Tranquility--to resolve contentions between the various members.
4. To promote the general welfare
5. To secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity--to increase, not decrease, freedoms.