

Self-Government

Self-government usually refers to a government that consists of freely elected representatives of the people, as opposed to kings, dictatorships, etc. In a moral sense though, it means the ability to govern our desires and impulses; to practice self-control.

John Adams said "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other." Why? Because they already have in place an infrastructure of self-government in their society and private lives which enables them to select leaders that will uphold those values, and they then willingly submit to that government.

What are the moral foundations of civilized society? Things like

Honesty, truthfulness, reliability	Non-violent behavior	Personal labor is rewarded
Respect for parents and authority	Respect for women and children	Respect for property rights
Marriage and fidelity	Family structure	Charity; respect for elderly, poor, disabled
Natural, individual rights		

What are natural rights? Rights that belong to us directly from God, not from human government. e.g., "Life, liberty, pursuit of happiness". Our "worth" is because we are created in the image of God, not because of wealth, caste, or ancestry, or granted by government. "Legal rights" exist as provided by government, "natural rights" come from God.

These moral foundations do not come naturally at birth. They are values that are (should be) instilled in children, so that by the time they leave the parents' care they are able to live above their own selfish motivations. Such people become peaceful and productive members of society. For those who are not taught, or ignore these moral foundations, we have legal systems and police authority. The purpose of laws and enforcement is to get evildoers to keep their desires in check, and to punish those who don't.

One effect of religion, especially genuine Christianity, is to internalize these moral foundations, enabling us to govern our selves.

What does it mean, **to govern**? To rule over, to direct, to guide the affairs, to control. In a moral context, we need to rule over our desires, and govern our actions to be and do what is good and right. "Self-government" becomes self-control.

In the political sense, we are not really governing our selves, but merely participating in the selection of those to whom we then submit. Similarly, in a moral sense, we have learned by experience that we are not truly able to consistently govern ourselves (how often have we tried and failed?), but we can willingly submit ourselves to God, who enables us to bring our lives into subjection. In effect, we are choosing our ruler (God, self, or Satan).

Moral Self-Government

1. In respect to God
 - a. Love and worship God (Ten Commandments 1-4)
2. In respect to self
 - a. Rule over fleshly desires (Ten Commandments 6-10, Gal. 5:16, 23,24)
 - b. Rule over your thoughts (Ten Commandments 1-10, 2 Cor. 10:5)
 - c. Be responsible for your own life, learn to work (Ten Commandments 4, 6, 8, 10)
3. In respect to others
 - a. Learn truthfulness (Ten Commandments 9)
 - b. Respect parents (Ten Commandments 5)
 - c. Respect their property (Ten Commandments 6, 7, 8, 10)
 - d. Charity