

An American Catechism

11 Brief Questions and Answers About the American Form of Government

The basic understanding of the American form of Government is all but lost to the general population. The purpose of this brief catechism is to help restore this basic knowledge and empower people to make informed choices regarding our government. If we can restore the few points in this document to a significant portion of the population, we will have taken a huge step in restoring our foundations and securing our freedoms.

1. What form of government was established by our founders and the Constitution?

After much deliberation, the founders of our nation decided upon a republic. Article IV, Sec. 4 of the U.S. Constitution guarantees to all the states a republican form of government.

2. What is a republic?

In a republic, representatives are elected by the people to govern according to established laws. The founders of America were very adamant about clearly defining a republic. This is seen in the following excerpt from a letter written by Noah Webster to English theologian and philosopher, Joseph Priestly.

"Sir, ... You call the Constitution of this country a democracy, and every man who is not a Democrat, an enemy of this Constitution. But whatever you may call the true meaning of these words, the practice of our country has annexed to them ... a different signification... By republicans, we understand ... that no influence whatsoever should be exercised in a state which is not directly authorized by the Constitution and laws."

- Noah Webster

3. How does a republic differ from a democracy?

In a democracy the people exercise their will directly by the vote of a majority instead of through elected representatives who are sworn to follow the Constitution. Though our government may maintain the form of a republic by electing representatives, the essence of the republic is lost and it essentially operates as a democracy when the representatives are influenced by polls, popular opinion, and lobbyists instead of leading by the principles found in the Constitution and established laws.

4. Why did the founders consider democracy a bad and unstable form of government?

The founders understood that humans, by nature, are fickle and capricious. Moods of the people change as often as the direction of the wind because they are easily influenced by deceptive propaganda, selfish desires, or he who has the loudest megaphone. Below are just two of the many quotes reflecting the view of the founders.

"A simple democracy... is one of the greatest of evils."

-Dr. Benjamin Rush

"Democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have, in general, been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths."

-James Madison

5. Where did the founders get the idea for a republican form of government?

Most honest researchers agree that the founders gleaned the general idea of a representative republic from the Bible. Exodus, Chapter 18, shows the selection of representatives for different segments of the population. Moses, whose image is enshrined above the entrance of the Supreme Court Building in Washington D.C., set up a decentralization structure of governmental authority based on the advice of his father-in-law:

And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them *to be* rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

-Exodus 18:20-21 (NKJV)

6. What sets the American republic apart from other republics?

Though a republic means "ruled by law," not all laws are good laws. A republic with bad laws is a shortcut to despotism. What sets the American republic apart is the source of its principles and laws. The Declaration of Independence reveals this source when it says each individual has unalienable rights that come from the Creator, not government, and the purpose of government is to secure those rights. Noah Webster, the father of American Education, said,

"...our citizens should early understand that the genuine source of correct republican principles is the Bible, particularly the New Testament, or the Christian religion."

— Noah Webster

There are many misconceptions and misrepresentations regarding true Christian principles, but where true Christian principles are upheld and practiced, people have the ability to be self-governing which eliminates the need for most government oversight. This is why the American republic produced limited government and more freedom than any government in history.

7. Why is federal government divided into three branches?

The founders were well aware of the flaws in human nature. So instead of consolidating power in one institution with fewer people, they divided the powers and spread the power among more people. No one branch has the final say. The idea of three branches of government came from the Bible. Isaiah says:

"For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, The Lord is our King..."

- Isaiah 33:22

In this we find the basis for the Judicial Branch, the Legislative Branch, and the Executive Branch.

- Lawgiver (corresponds to Congress): Congress is made up of 100 Senators and more than 430 Congressmen. This is intended to be a safeguard against fast changing laws.
- King (corresponds to President): The Executive Branch (President) is designed primarily for carrying out or executing legislation.
- Judge (corresponds to the Judicial Branch): The Judicial Branch is interpretive and advisory in nature. The Supreme Court examines laws to see if they are compatible with the original intent of the Constitution, which is the supreme law of the land. It then offers its opinion but should never legislate or execute political agendas.

8. Which produces more freedom and economic stability, a republic or a democracy?

Good law, as found in the original American republic, always produces more freedom and economic stability. But planning for a secure future is difficult in a democracy due to the fact that laws can change almost weekly based on the popular mood. In a properly functioning republic, people can plan and lay the foundation for a secure stable future because they are more confident that laws will remain consistent.

9. Why does democracy degenerate toward socialism, poverty, and despotism?

A quote often attributed to Benjamin Franklin says: "When people find that they can vote themselves money; that will herald the end of the republic." Though the accuracy of this quote has been questioned, the factuality of it is indisputable. History has shown that democracies always produce socialism and dependent people who feel entitled to provision. Margaret Thatcher, the former Prime

Minister of Great Britain put it well: "The problem with socialism is that you eventually run out of other people's money."

Instead of the southern cotton plantations of the 18th and 19th centuries where slaves were oppressed and made to depend upon the plantation owners, socialistic democracies ultimately produce "urban plantations" where people are oppressed by high taxes and made to depend upon government programs. Dependence upon government locks people of all races into minimal existence with no hope of a better future. Whenever government takes from those who work, and gives to those who do not, the groundwork is laid for class warfare. When this happens, those economically considered the "middle class" decrease or disappear and the result is poverty for most with a class of rich ruling elite. The tension between the classes escalates until chaos ensues and government has to step in to forcefully bring order resulting in the loss of freedom and despotism.

10. Which is intended by the Constitution to have broader powers, Federal Government or State government?

State government is intended to have broader power than Federal government. The Constitution was originally designed to restrict and limit the powers of Federal government while leaving much more latitude to the states. In the past century, we have seen an alarming increase in centralized federal power. The purpose of the Bill of Rights (the first 10 amendments to the Constitution) was to restrict federal government even more than did the original Constitution. The Preamble to the Bill of Rights states that its purpose was to prevent the Constitution from being misconstrued and to further limit its powers.

"The Conventions of a number of the States having at the time of their adopting the Constitution, expressed a desire, in order to prevent misconstruction or abuse of its powers, that further declaratory and restrictive clauses should be added..."

— Preamble to the Bill of Rights

As we can see the Bill of Rights was an effort to prevent abuse of federal power. The tenth amendment in the Bill of rights says:

"The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

11. How do we restore the American Republic?

Thomas Jefferson provides a clear answer to this question - educate the people. He said:

"I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education. This is the true corrective of abuses of constitutional power."

- Thomas Jefferson

Restoring republican principles as intended by our founders is much bigger than any one candidate or party. We must educate the people with the original principles of the American republic. This will empower them to elect representatives who most closely align with those principles. This document is a start. You can help correct the abuses to the Constitution and our republic by sharing this information with as many people as possible.

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