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The 2018 Nebraska Senate Series: "Good God: Give Us Good Government!"
Government's Trinity—A Separation of Powers



Trinity—a condition of threeness. Christians are monotheistic Trinitarians, believing God is one in essence but three Persons—Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

We also believe that the God of our Bible has three aspects within Himself through which He rules the world. Note *Isaiah 33:22*, "*The LORD is our **judge**, The LORD is our **lawgiver**, The LORD is our **king**; He will save us.*" It strikes me that these three ruling traits of our God (Who is our Savior) are parallel to the three branches of democratic, civil governments—judicial, legislative, executive.

These governmental aspects of God are a result of a holy, internal synergy within His character. Similarly, the three Persons of the Trinity are in perfect relationship and are in a holy unity with Each Other. This is the Tri-Unitarian Godhead. Did you know that our Founders separated government into three different branches, in part, in reflection of God's threefold governmental nature?

Did you know, steeped in Biblical truths, they did so because of hamartiology^a—which is the Biblical doctrine of human sinfulness? *Romans 3:23*—"*For all have sinned....*" None are exempt. We all need a Savior. *Isaiah 53:6*—"*All we like sheep have gone astray, each has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.*" The "*Him*" is Messiah—Jesus—the Second Person of the Trinity. We all needed help with—and salvation from—our sins.

With Good Friday nine days away, let us thank the Father for laying our sins upon the Son. "*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" (*Rom. 6:23*). Sin is deadly and deceitful. "*The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?*" (*Jeremiah 17:9*). America's Founders understood the sinfulness of the human heart. They crafted our governmental system's separation of powers based on it!

Rev. Perry M. Gauthier, V.D.M

^a Hamartiology (Greek: *ἁμαρτία, hamartia*, "missing the mark"+ *-λογία, -logia*, "study"), in Christian theology, is the study of sin.

Weekly Bible Study During the 105th Legislature's Second Session
SENATORS: 6:45-8:00 am; Wednesdays, **Room #2010** (Sen. Albrecht). *Hot Breakfast Served.*
STAFF: Noon; Wednesdays, **Room #2010** (Sen. Albrecht). *Catered Lunch & B.Y.O.BrownBag.*



A MORAL PEOPLE?

President John Adams



America was 98.6% professing Christians at its founding. Adams and all the Founders meant "Christianity" when they spoke of "Religion."

"We have no Government armed with Power capable of contending with human Passions unbridled by...morality and Religion. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious People. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

The depravity of the human heart is foundational in the civil separation of powers. Deceit is a flaw in every fallen human heart so the Founders built a system of strong checks and balances to counteract the latent sin in the heart of each civil authority.

I. RELIGION WAS INDISPENSABLE IN FORMING OUR REPUBLIC

Religiously, 1700s America was about 98.6% professing Christians. Our second president called himself "a church-going animal." That same John Adams exhorted the officers of the 1798 Massachusetts militia:

We have no Government armed with Power capable of contending with human Passions unbridled by...morality and Religion. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious People. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other. b

In a fallen world, people need self-control. When the founders talked about religion, they meant Christianity. True religion and a relationship, by faith, with the risen Christ of Easter indispensably support human self-control. If people do not control themselves internally, civil governments might have to control them externally. This shows the need for church-state interdependent coadjuvancy.

The state punishes evil by legal force and promotes the common good. The church dispenses truth and grace into the hearts of a culture's people. St. Augustine, the fourth-century Christian theologian from Numidia in North Africa, said:

APART FROM GRACE, GOVERNMENTS ARE BANDITS AND ROBBERS.

We need not despair, since amazing grace can transform the human heart, where the best change really happens, so rulers do not have to be "bandits." The Ten Commandments show that men have an unalienable

right to private property (the Eighth Commandment versus stealing) and a right to life (the Sixth Commandment versus murdering). Since governments bear the sword (Romans 13:4) and need to tax the people (Rom. 13:6), there is reason for caution, fear, and healthy levels of wise distrust by the people.

Leaving this point, let us take notes from the Farewell Address of President George Washington.

September 19, 1796 — Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports....The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish themReason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle. c

WHEN THE FOUNDERS TALKED ABOUT RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLE, THEY MEANT THE PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY.

II. SEPARATION: WE DO NOT TRUST YOU WITH SO MUCH POWER

Government's power of taxation and lethal vengeance are fierce. Washington spoke of the dangerous nature of unchecked civil force:

Government is not reason; it is not eloquence; it is force! Like fire it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master.

President James Madison knew Jeremiah 17:9 and the Biblical truth of human depravity, saying:

If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary.

Present-day theologian Dr. Wayne Grudem addresses separation here:

The best safeguard against the abuse of power is divided power, so that one person or group within



a government provides “checks” on the use of power by the other group. When power is divided among several groups, then different people in different parts of government all struggle to be sure that no one part of government has too much power (because they tend to protect their own turf).^d

➤ Looking to the Bible and the republican aspects of the Hebrew’s governance, the Founders divided civil powers **vertically** and **numerically** (federal, state, local) and **horizontally** (legislative, executive, and judicial). Jefferson was strong in his advice that we speak not of our confidence in a powerful government ruler...

“...BUT BIND HIM DOWN FROM MISCHIEF BY THE CHAINS OF THE CONSTITUTION.”^e

Men are sinners. Powers should be limited, delegated, and **separated!**

III. WE TRUST THE BIBLICAL MAXIMS ABOUT CONCENTRATED POWER

Holy Writ is replete with examples of abuse of unchecked power and the wisdom of apportioning power among civil *and* church leaders.

We can glean much from the Bible’s descriptive accounts of King Saul’s pride, King David’s murderous use of civil power to cover up adultery, and King Solomon’s undue lusts for political brawn so as to compromise religiously (worshipping false gods) and sexually (with hundreds of pagan wives). We saw last week how kings did have some checks on their power by priests (like Azariah and 80 bold priests with him). Prophets also counterbalanced kings in their immorality and their abuses of power as was seen with Nathan’s prophetic rebuke of King David.

Ecclesiastically, the church’s power was also wisely divided among multiple leaders. Christ did not choose one apostle but twelve, and even though Peter first served as

their spokesman (Acts 2:24, 3:12), later on, James seems to have fulfilled that role (Acts 15:13, 21:18) and became the leader of the Jerusalem Church. New Testament local churches were to be ruled, not by a single man, but by a plurality of elders flanked and supported by a team of multiple deacons.

IV. A SYSTEM OF TRUST AND DISTRUST DUE TO HUMAN DEPRAVITY

The heart is wicked, according to Jeremiah 17:9. How much trust do godly citizens put in their rulers?

Jeremiah 17:5a

Thus says the LORD, “Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength.”

King David wrote consistently:

Psalms 146:3 (KJV)

Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.

We can learn much from the role-modeling of the Christian founders who applied these truths quite literally to produce a trusting-yet-untrusting system of checks and balances.

➤ Separated powers are illustrated in the checks and balances regarding the use of lethal power.

The power of the army is under the authority of the President and a civilian Secretary of Defense (who is not a member of the Armed Forces but has authority over all of them). Funding for the military has to be approved by Congress. The power of the United States Army is itself limited, for the army is prohibited by law from exercising civilian police functions within the United States. In addition, each of the individual states has a national guard not under the authority of the U.S. Army or the President or any branch of the Federal Government but under the authority of the governor of that state. *(continued on page 4)*

Psalms 118:8 is the center of the Bible.



“It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.”

Psalms 118:8 (NASB)

- *The longest chapter of the Bible falls just after this center chapter-- Psalms 119.*
- *The shortest chapter of the Bible falls just before this center chapter-- Psalms 117.*
- *There are exactly 594 chapters before Psalms 118, and exactly 594 chapters after it. When you add the number of chapters before Psalms 118 to Psalms 118 and all those after it, the sum is 1,189 total chapters in the Bible.*
- *The verse at the very center of the Bible is Psalms 118:8.*





John Jay, the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.



Founders like Jay believed and framed the Constitution so that we should not have three equal branches of government. The legislative is intentionally the most powerful and the judiciary intentionally the least powerful.

Local police forces are accountable only to the city or county government for whom they work. This means that no one could take over the U.S. simply by assuming control of the army (as can happen in some nations), for the army has no authority over the hundreds of thousands of local police forces that answer only to the citizens in their own cities and towns.^f

What a brilliant system of distrust!

V. “HERE COMES THE JUDGE!” (BUT WE REALLY DON’T TRUST HIM MUCH)

Deuteronomy 16:18-20
You shall appoint for yourself judges...and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. ¹⁹You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise....²⁰Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue.

Among the three, separated, federal powers, our Founders had the most distrust in the judicial branch as can be seen in the minimalistic design of the Constitution’s Article III.

The *Federalist* author Alexander Hamilton explained “the judiciary is beyond comparison the weakest of the three departments of power.” It was intentionally weak since:

**POWER CORRUPTS,
AND ABSOLUTE POWER
CORRUPTS ABSOLUTELY.**

➡ In 2017, Faith and I drove 25,000 miles in 150 days to minister in 31 U.S. Capitols. In one state, a federal judge reminded us that “the term is **activist judges**” as we spoke of judges who think it’s their role to create law instead of interpreting law. Justices who do so are unjust. Such power is imbalanced. It is corrupt. Woe to such judges who arrogantly destroy culture with their activist opinions at the state, federal, and SCOTUS levels. Oh, the human heart is indeed deceitful.

Dr. Phillip G. Kayser (founder of Biblical Blueprints)^e shows more:

The judiciary could not endanger the liberty of the people because the Founders specifically **withheld all policy-making powers from the courts**. Furthermore, at the Constitutional Convention, they explicitly rejected all proposals allowing the judiciary to strike down laws or policies passed by the other two branches. Thomas Jefferson later explained: “[T]he opinion which gives to the judges the right to decide what laws are constitutional and what not... would make the judiciary a despotic branch.” “[T]o consider the judges as the ultimate arbiters of all constitutional questions [is] a very dangerous doctrine indeed, and one which would place us under the despotism of an oligarchy. . . . The Constitution has erected no such single tribunal.”

VI. WHEN TRUST IS BADLY BROKEN: INTERPOSITION

Civil rulers who are despotic or tyrannical forfeit their right to rule, having perverted their God-given authority as delegated to them from the King of kings. We studied these principles in “Rebels With a Cause” in Week 6 of this series available [HERE](#) (PDF downloads) or [HERE](#) (for audio MP3s).^g We examined the Biblical doctrines of lesser magistrates and civil interposition. Interposition happens when lesser authorities protect and “get in between” higher authorities and the people whom they are abusing. In such cases it is right to protect, interfere, and oppose high ranking government leaders because:

GOD’S GENERAL CREATION OF GOVERNMENT DOES NOT IMPLY HIS SPECIFIC APPROVAL OF EACH RULER IN OFFICE (OR THEIR MANNERS, METHODS, OR MORALS).

God gives rulers “the slot” and an opportunity in office to *serve people* and *serve His purposes* on earth. Rulers who violate such *service privileges* are rightly interposed, opposed, and removed from office.



VII. OH REALLY? CAN I SEE THAT IN WRITING?

Men are only as good as their word. Their word is only as good as their heart. Jesus said in *Matthew 15:18*:

The things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man.

Jeremiah said the fallen human heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. St. Augustine of Hippo said that apart from grace such fallen human hearts make for *bandits and robbers in rulers—oh my!* How can we honestly and best communicate then? In writing! Important things and the best laws are written down!

➔ To have a written Constitution so that our republican nation could be ruled *by the law* was revolutionary. Previously much of the world was ruled *by the king's* word (in our case, a mad monarch, King George).

REX LEX

In Latin, this means “the king is the law.” The Founders reversed it.

LEX REX

The “law is king.” There was to be an executive branch in government, but not a king. *Put it in writing!* The federal Constitution was finished in 1787, but Patrick Henry and the anti-Federalists were still very distrusting of human nature. The Bill of Rights would come next in 1789 (ratified in 1791) to ensure the unalienable rights of men as endowed by Creator God. Fearing “the feds” would grow out of control, Henry insisted that written laws be added to the Constitution as further safeguards against tyranny:

To prevent misconstruction or abuse of [the Constitution's] powers, that **further declaratory and restrictive clauses should be added.**

The Bible says the heart is deceitful. Writing keeps things in check!

VIII. A PAIR OF SYSTEMS TO SLOW CIVIL SINS

Two final ways of checking rulers' power, separating controls, and balancing against civil sins follow.

A. SLOW DOWN LAWMAKING

I like to say, “Government is best when small, and laws are best made s-l-o-w-l-y.” Congress was split on purpose—to slow the process of lawmaking—into **two** houses:

**100—435
UPPER—LOWER
SIX YEARS—TWO YEARS
THE SENATE—THE HOUSE
IDEALISTIC—POPULIST
THE STATES—THE PEOPLE**

B. A JURY OF YOUR PEERS

The jury system has been called *the fourth branch of the government*. Due to a healthy distrust of those in power, juries (from Latin *jurare*—“to swear”) were given the sworn duty to judge their peers based on evidence and based on the law. This is yet another reflection of the Founders' healthy distrust of the sinful human heart and the corrupting influence of civil power.

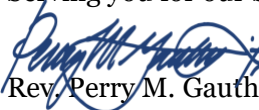
**IF JUDGES WERE ANGELS,
JURIES WOULD NOT EXIST.**

IX. MEN ARE NOT ANGELS. HAVE YOU BEEN SAVED?

Most Honorable Senator:

Our Christian Founders believed profoundly in the deadliness of sin. If you were to die tonight, do you know for certain that *all* your sins are forgiven and you would wake up in heaven? You *can* be sure of this. This is the most vital thing in the world—your eternal destiny.

Serving you for our Savior,


Rev. Perry M. Gauthier, V.D.M.

Thomas Paine (1737-1809)



“But where, say some, is the King of America? I'll tell you, friend, he reigns above, and doth not make havoc of mankind like the Royal Brute of Great Britain. Yet that we may not appear to be defective even in earthly honours, let a day be solemnly set apart for proclaiming the Charter; let it be brought forth placed on the Divine Law, the Word of God; let a crown be placed thereon, by which the world may know, that so far as we approve of monarchy, that in America the law is king.”

— Paine was an English-born American political activist, philosopher, political theorist and revolutionary. He is famous for his quote, “These are the times that try men's souls.”



^b founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-3102

^c <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/quotes/george-washington-on-the-importance-of-religion-to-political-prosperity-in-his-farewell-speech>

^d *Politics According to the Bible*, Zondervan, © 2010, p 102.

^e Dr. Phillip Kayser, Dominion Covenant Church, notes. Page four's quotation is Jefferson's view of the SCOTUS.

^f Grudem, p 103.

^g Might you spiritually lead and impact your constituents by spreading this Biblical information in your District?



VERSE OF THE WEEK



Jeremiah 17:9

"The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?"



Making disciples of Jesus Christ in the political arena throughout the world

Capitol Ministries® provides Bible studies, evangelism, and discipleship to political leaders. Founded in 1996, we have started ongoing ministries in over 40 U.S. State Capitols and dozens of foreign federal Capitols.

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t @PerryGauthier



Capitol Ministries® Nebraska State Offices

4547 Calvert Street, Lincoln, NE 68506
402-327-0011 work
402-770-6270 cell/text
Perry@NECapMin.org
Faith@NECapMin.org
www.NECapMin.org

National Office
www.capmin.org

Senator's Personal Study Notes

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My Personal Application

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