

Biblical Worldview-Conservatism & The Biblical Worldview

Assertion of The Question of A Political Philosophy of Government in America

I. THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CONSERVATISM

The origins and core principles of conservatism are deeply rooted in the arguments of Edmund Burke, who formulated a philosophy centered on tradition, human fallibility, and the preservation of established societal structures.

Edmund Burke's Core Arguments

Edmund Burke's thought provides the foundational framework for modern conservatism. His philosophy stands in stark contrast to the revolutionary ideals of the Enlightenment, which he argued sought to rebuild society based on abstract, theoretical schemas.

- **Preservation of "Time-Tested Institutions":** Burke contended that revolutionaries were destroying established institutions without providing a valid argument that they could be replaced by something superior.
- **Critique of the Social Contract:** Burke's philosophy opposed the Enlightenment concept of a society based on an "ever-changing social contract with the living."
- **Inherent Human Depravity:** He believed that most people are innately depraved (i.e., original sin) and cannot better themselves through the use of their own reason.
- **Value of "Prejudices" and "Illusions":** Burke argued that society benefits from certain "prejudices," such as an established church and a landed aristocracy, provided the ruling class is subject to a constitutional framework.
- **Reliance on "Latent Wisdom":** Rather than abstract reason, Burke suggested relying on the "latent wisdom" that accumulates within a society over time.
- **Limited Government:** The concept of limited government, confined by a document outlining its responsibilities, traces its roots in part to Burke's ideas.
- **Defense of the American Revolution:** Burke defended the American Revolution on the grounds that it was a justifiable defense of the traditional liberties of Englishmen.

II. THE EVOLUTION AND TYPOLOGY OF CONSERVATISM

The Development of American Conservatism

- **Early Focus:** Members of early American conservative movements generally promoted states' rights against the powers of the federal government. While covenants can be made between humans, the analysis focuses on those initiated by God with humankind.
- **The "Old Right" and the New Deal:** The "Old Right" Republicans strongly opposed President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, which greatly expanded the federal government's influence through taxation and social welfare programs. However, after World War II, Republicans in power adopted most of the New Deal's framework.

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- **Shift in Focus:** Over time, influenced by world wars and new ideas, American conservatism moved away from its aristocratic European roots. It began to focus more on standards of living, economic models, individualism, social consciousness, and a strong opposition to Communism.
- **Skepticism of Social Programs:** A growing perception that the expansion of government social programs in the West was failing to solve society's problems also shaped conservative thought.

Factions Within Conservatism

Type	Core Beliefs and Goals
"Aristocratic" Conservatism	Promotes societal "prejudices" that support "time-tested" culture and systems. This includes an aristocracy (a ruling class), an established state religion, and a constitution to govern and direct the ruling class.
"National" Conservatism	Promotes a national identity and unity. Historically used policies like pensions and unemployment benefits to draw influence away from socialist political movements.
"Neo" (New) Conservatism	Promotes individual effort, modest living, and self-control. It also supports government intervention to promote American values abroad, particularly in opposition to Communism.
"Paleo" (early) Conservatism	Promotes a reverence for traditional family and gender roles, a rejection of government interference, the recognition of Christian moral values, and an established social order.

III. CONSERVATISM AND THE BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW: AN ANALYSIS

Areas of Alignment with Scripture

The foundational element of every biblical covenant is that God initiates it, either appearing directly or speaking through a prophet. He then dictates the terms, parties, and signs.

1. **The Inherent Nature of Humanity:** The conservative view of human beings as innately sinful and depraved mirrors the biblical doctrine of original sin (Genesis 3). This is supported by scriptural passages (e.g., Romans 3:9-18, Ephesians 2:1-3).
2. **The Purpose of Governing Authorities:** The conservative belief that government exists to restrain evil aligns with the biblical explanation for the institution of governing authorities (i.e., Romans 13:1-4).
3. **The Role of Institutions:** The conservative emphasis on family, schools, and churches as institutions for teaching proper conduct aligns with the biblical mandate for these entities to communicate truth. The biblical worldview of education involves training through observing creation (geology, botany, etc.), learning from historical events, and understanding spiritual matters.

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Critiques and Weaknesses from a Biblical Perspective

- **Political vs. Biblical Framework:** Conservatism is, at its core, a political perspective rather than a biblical one. It looks to history and "time-tested" institutions to make its case, rather than to special revelation from God.
- **Moralistic Tendencies:** Its promotion of biblical truth tends to be more moralistic and behavioral in nature, rather than being rooted in deeper theological principles.

Dangers for Christian Believers:

- **Evaluating Christianity by Politics:** It may be used by believers to improperly evaluate the genuineness of another person's Christianity based on their political views.
- **Overlooking Theology for Unity:** It can create a "Christian perspective problem" where foundational theological beliefs are overlooked for the sake of political "unity."
- **Interpreting Scripture Through Politics:** Conservatives are cautioned not to interpret Scripture from their political viewpoint.
- **Inherent Corruption:** Even the "purest" form of conservatism would ultimately be corrupted due to the sinful nature of humanity.
- **Subordinate to the "Most Excellent" Perspective:** While aligned with some biblical principles, conservatism is not the "most excellent" perspective. The ultimate hope for believers is not a perfected political system but a heavenly one (Hebrews 11:13-16).

IV. CONCLUSION: A POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY, NOT AN ULTIMATE REALITY

- **Summary:** Conservatism is a political perspective that is somewhat impacted by biblical principles but ultimately falls short of the comprehensive biblical worldview.
- **Final Caution:** While believers can endorse and promote philosophical systems that align with biblical principles, they must be careful not to equate Conservatism with Christianity.
- **The Believer's Ultimate Hope:** The document emphasizes that while preserving conservative principles may be a good temporal goal, it is not the ultimate reality that believers are waiting for. The final hope is a future theocracy established by God, not a perfected human-led republic.

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Comparative Systems of Government

Feature	Israel (Theocracy)	Other Nations (Monarchies, etc.)	The US (Constitutional Republic)
System of Gov't	Theocracy	Monarchies, Emperors, etc.	Constitutional Republic
Law	Law of Moses	Monarchial/kingly decrees	Constitution
Era	Law	Law & Grace	Grace
Redressing Grievances	God directly	No system / Addressing kings (rare)	Political parties / Courts/ voting
Defense	God directly / Collective defense (armies)	Armies (Collective defense)	Individual / Collective defense
National Punishment	God Directly	Natural Consequences	Natural Consequences
People	Priests of God	Subjects	Citizens