

## Natural Rights, Family, and the Conditions of Freedom in the American Founding

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The Claremont Institute has a specific mission: To remind people of the good and noble principles of the American political heritage—those principles articulated and promulgated during the American founding, most prominently and beautifully in the Declaration of Independence, and in many other documents and speeches as well. We believe these principles good and noble not simply because they are our own, not simply because they are part of our tradition, but because they are true, and because they are the only solid foundation for free, constitutional government. The subjects of this conference—human rights and the family—are central to those principles. As I will explain, America was the first country in the history of the world to solve the central political problem that had plagued the West for fifteen hundred years; this gave rise to the freest, most prosperous, and most powerful nation the world has ever seen. The American founding is also unique in that the moral conditions of political freedom, and the private and political institutions necessary for political freedom, were defended by religious no less than secular authorities of the day, because they were understood to be supported by revelation no less than reason.

The political philosopher Leo Strauss took his bearings from what he called the “Crisis of the West,” which he summarized as the West’s becoming uncertain of its purpose—uncertain of what is good, and, therefore, uncertain of what ought to be done. This uncertainty, or forgetfulness, stems from the influence of modern relativistic and nihilistic doctrines, which teach that right and wrong are arbitrary and conventional and understand human life as ultimately purposeless. It was Strauss’s lifelong project, I believe, to demonstrate the errors and dangers of these modern doctrines and call us back to an older and truer understanding of right, an understanding articulated most clearly in the moral and political philosophy of the ancient Greeks. But after doing this, our work is not yet done. As Strauss wrote in the introduction to *The City and Man*, “We cannot reasonably expect that a fresh understanding of classical political philosophy will supply us with recipes for today’s use.” The reason is that monotheism ushered into the world a kind of politics utterly unknown to the ancients. And so it is with a view to understanding this new political situation with which we must begin.

The triumph of monotheism brought about a new problem: the problem of political obligation, or, as some philosophers refer to it, the “theological-political” problem. In particular, the political problem of monotheism is that it severed the connection between law and God. Every ancient

city was a holy city. That is, in every ancient city, citizens understood the law to be of divine origin; there was no question of political obligation. One obeyed the law because the law, or at least the oldest and most authoritative of the laws, came from God, and disobedience of the law was tantamount to inviting the wrath of God. A citizen of ancient Athens, for example, obeyed the Athenian law first and foremost because it was the law of Zeus. In this respect, the Old Testament is the story of a typical ancient city: a particular people whose laws were given to them by their God.

Modernity begins with the rise of Rome and the spread of Christianity, which spelled the demise of the ancient city. When Constantine declared Christianity the official religion of Rome, Rome was following the political logic of the ancient city, only on a universal scale: a universal empire required a monotheistic and universal religion (unlike ancient pagan religions). In Christian Rome, one’s obligations to the universal empire corresponded to one’s obligations to the universal religion; being a good Christian and a good Roman were more or less the same thing.

As the Roman Empire collapsed, however, the people of Europe remained Christian, but they also found themselves as citizens of the new states, kingdoms, and dukedoms created in the wake of Rome. This situation represented a political problem that never before existed. Certain obligations were demanded from the state, others from the church, and often these claims of obligation were in conflict with each other. Wars soon began in violent attempts to settle the question of whether the state or church would rein supreme.

To complicate matters, the Reformation of the sixteenth century began a process by which Christianity was splintered into a number of competing factions. Some political leaders tried to resolve this situation with the doctrine of the divine right of kings—the idea that God ordains some men to rule over others, and that one’s duties to the king are inseparable from one’s duties to God.

The problem was that the God invoked as the source of political obligation was always a sectarian God—the God of the Catholics, or the God of various Protestant religions. One’s political rights were identified with one’s religious beliefs. If one happened to be a Catholic (or non-Christian) in England after Henry the VIII established the Protestant Church of England, one had few political rights: One could not be a good Catholic, Jew, or Muslim, and a good Englishman at the same time. The same was true if one happened to be a non-Catholic in Catholic France.

With civil rights dependent upon religious faith, government by consent of the governed was impossible. No Christian, Catholic, or Protestant, and no Jew or Muslim, would ever consent to have matters of religious faith determined by a political majority, any more than by a king. In Europe, in the centuries leading up to the American founding, countless millions were slaughtered either because they did or did not believe in transubstantiation. This problem was fresh in the memory of the American founders as they reflected on the conditions necessary for free society.

Put another way, in a world dominated by monotheistic religions, God is understood to be the one God of all people, but different peoples live in different states that possess different laws; thus, the one God cannot be a legislating God for any particular people. The fundamental political challenge was to find some ground of obligation upon which the law could stand in the modern monotheist world—a principle or standard of right by which the law could demand the obedience of citizens, and which at the same time would not offend the piety of those who lived under the law. At the end of *Natural Right and History*, Strauss noted that, “The quarrel between the ancients and moderns concerns eventually, and perhaps even from the beginning, the status of ‘individuality.’” If piety in the modern monotheist world concerns only the relationship of the individual to his God, what moral claims of obligation can positive law have on the citizen?

This problem of political obligation plagued the modern West, unsolved until the American founding. The natural law principles of the American founding—principles built upon the ideas of human equality, individual natural rights, and government by compact, and understood in light of the morally obligatory “laws of nature and of nature’s God”—solved that problem, and provide the only ground for a regime in which one can be a good citizen, a good man, and a good Christian, Jew, or Muslim simultaneously. As Harry Jaffa has written, “Nothing has become more commonplace in America, and yet nothing is more extraordinary in itself, than to see Teuton and Slav, Greek and Turk, Protestant and Catholic, Palestinian Arab and Jew, who would in their old world habitat be busily engaged in killing each other, living as the best of friends in the framework of American life.”<sup>1</sup> In this context, one can appreciate the significance of George Washington’s 1790 letter to the Hebrew congregation at Newport, Rhode Island, the first time a leader outside of Israel welcomed Jews as equal citizens:

Toleration is no longer spoken of as if it were the indulgence of one class of people that another enjoy the exercise of their inherent natural rights; happily, the government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who

live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.

The American founding, we believe, represents the only solution to the theological-political problem, while providing the only ground for a regime of majority rule and minority rights—a regime where those who live under laws participate in making the laws, and where no citizen is excluded because of his or her religious faith. In short, it is the basis of the best regime in the modern world. Leo Strauss hinted at the genius of the American founding when, in the middle of his essay “On Classical Political Philosophy,” he cites the republicanism of Thomas Jefferson—“that form of government . . . that provides the most effectually for the pure selection of the natural *aristoi* into the offices of government”<sup>2</sup>—as an example of what the classical philosophers meant by the “best regime.”

In the American founding we find a rare combination of reason and revelation, at least to the extent necessary to support morality and law; the positive law in America would be based upon the moral “laws of nature and of nature’s God,” that is, the natural law. The proposition of natural human equality was identified by early Americans as a corollary to the Biblical account of God making “of one blood all nations,” and the moral precepts derived from human equality are compatible, if not identical, with the Biblical injunction to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. In the monotheist universe, where there exists one God but many nations and many laws, only through the natural-law doctrine of human equality could the positive law of a particular people be sanctioned by God.

The religion supported and propagated during the founding was a religion capable of providing the public law with a public defense of right. That is, the defense of public right was not limited to a particular group of religious believers. Rather, the arguments in defense of morality and free, republican government, while emanating from the pulpit, were often addressed to the public at large—and many times were part of official election ceremonies—because they were at their core not simply sectarian or religious, but rational as well. The moral principles of Biblical revelation were understood not simply as matters of faith, but as a body of objective moral and political truth discoverable by unassisted human reason. The Reverend John Witherspoon, a Revolutionary preacher and signer of the Declaration of Independence, remarked that “[i]f Scripture is true, the discoveries of reason cannot be contrary to it, and therefore it has nothing to fear from that quarter.”

For the American founders, the moral and political implications of natural human equality was true, and was the proper object of unassisted reason, whether exercised by believers or nonbelievers. By locating the defense of moral right and the republican cause in reason no less than rev-

elation, the moral teaching preached during the American founding appealed to citizens of all faiths. It was the closest thing to the “political religion” called for by Abraham Lincoln in his famous 1838 Lyceum speech.

Because the religion of the American founding believed right reason leads to the same moral and political conclusions as revelation, religious preachers used the pulpit to defend free political institutions. As the Reverend Samuel Cooper put it in a sermon in 1780:

We want not, indeed, a special revelation from heaven to teach us that men are born equal and free; that no man has a natural claim of dominion over his neighbors . . . and that as government is only the administration of the affairs of a number of men combined for their own security and happiness, such a society have a right freely to determine by whom and in what manner their own affairs shall be administered. These are the plain dictates of that reason and common sense with which the common parent of men has informed the human bosom.

And John Tucker, in a 1771 sermon, explained:

Civil Government is the dictate of nature: it is the voice of reason, which may be said to be the voice of God. . . . All men are naturally in a state of freedom, and have an equal claim to liberty. No one, by nature nor by any special grant from the great Lord of all, has any authority over another. All right therefore in any to rule over others must originate from those they rule over, and be granted by them. Hence all government, consistent with that natural freedom, to which all have an equal claim is founded in compact, or agreement between the parties, between Rulers and their Subjects, and can be none otherwise. Because Rulers, receiving their authority originally and solely from the people, can be rightfully possessed of no more than these have consented to, and conveyed to them.

The Americans founders understood, however, that while the basis of equal rights is something we can know by human reason—human equality and natural rights are rational, self-evident truths—the highest questions of religious faith, questions concerning the afterlife and the eternal salvation of the soul, cannot. Therefore, there is no rational principle by which government can declare one religion to be the official or true religion and prohibit others. As the Virginia Declaration of Rights of 1776 stated, “Religion, or the duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence; and, therefore, all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience.”

In the founders’ view, government must guarantee religious liberty because citizens have a right and duty to give that which they “owe their Creator,” but they cannot force citizens to engage in any particular religion because, as Jef-

erson began his *Statute for Religious Liberty*, “Almighty God hath created the mind free, and manifested his supreme will that free it shall remain by making it altogether insusceptible of restraint; that all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments, or burthen, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness.” Rather, it is through the free exercise of religion, according to the conscience of each citizen, that we are able to fulfill our duty to God as we understand it and live peacefully as neighbors with those of other religious faiths. Religious liberty, then, is a central feature of free society, and good government is no less than the guarantor of civil liberties.

America was the first nation in human history founded upon an idea, that of political freedom. This idea is rooted in the fact that, by nature, every human being possesses equal rights and is born equally free. There is no natural social hierarchy among humans—no principle of who rules and who gets ruled—as there is among the rest of the animal kingdom. But freedom for the founders did not mean freedom to do whatever one pleases. Humans are free because, unlike the lower animals, humans possess reason. Thus, our freedom stems from the fact that we are not enslaved to our passions, however “natural” we may think them to be. As Samuel West explained in a sermon delivered during the Revolutionary War, “Where licentiousness begins, liberty ends.” Or as Jefferson wrote, man is free from “all but the moral law.” This is the simple meaning of the proposition that “all men are created equal.”

From what begins as a fact rooted in nature—a “self-evident truth,” as it is described in the Declaration of Independence—springs key moral and political implications. If all men are equal with respect to their natural rights, then no man can legitimately or justly rule over another man without his consent. Tyrannical rule, or rule without consent, is “unnatural” in this sense; it violates nature as a moral standard of how man ought to behave. The moral justification for individual freedom and government by consent is derived from the principle of human equality, itself rooted in human nature and discernible by human reason.

At the heart of the idea of human nature as a moral standard of right is the distinction between men and women. All moral obligations arise from the fact that only through the union of a man and a woman can a new human being be created. From the moment of conception, nature places obligations on the parents, both toward each other and to the child. That this is so is apparent to anyone who has raised children: a newborn child is utterly helpless and dependent, and it is the responsibility of those who created that new life to care for it. If those who created a new life are not responsible for its well being, who else can be? From this natural obligation of parents to children springs our obligations to each other as friends and citizens, obligations grounded in the fact of

our shared human nature. This, I believe, is what George Washington meant in his first inaugural address, when he said that “the foundation of our national policy will be laid in the pure and immutable principles of private morality.” The principles of private morality, contrary to what some recent American presidents might have said, are immutable, because they are bound up in human nature. The morality of the family is intrinsically tied to the morality that justifies individual liberty; one cannot reasonably defend one without defending the other, and to deny or disparage one is to deny or disparage both.

In this most important and fundamental thing—the meaning of morality, revealed religion and reason agree. Or, as the American founders would have put it, right reason is no less the voice of God than sacred scripture. In fact, the founders would have argued that without reason and nature it is impossible to distinguish true from false revelation: true revelation conforms to the dictates of the natural law.

But it is this very idea of an objective, rational, and moral standard that today is denied by many people, most emphatically by our intellectual and political elites. It is denied by many of those who advocate “human rights,” who often equate such rights with radical individual autonomy, or the idea that every human being is free to do anything he or she pleases. This emphasis on autonomy culminates in the identification of right with individual will. Whatever an individual wants to do is right for him; individuals do not obey the moral law, they create it. And as there are as many kinds of moralities as there are autonomous selves, the only thing we can identify as immoral is the judgmental idea that one morality is superior, or more true, than others. According to this new view, the only moral position is that of nonjudgmentalism, according to which all moral values are equally true and equally legitimate, relative to those who hold them.

But the morality of nonjudgmentalism is built upon two contradictory ideas: First, that nature is morally neutral, or, that all morality is conventional and therefore arbitrary. Man by nature is radically free of any moral restraints, natural or otherwise. In particular, the distinction between moral sexuality and sexual license is dissolved. From the position of nonjudgmentalism, sexual license is praised as a form of human liberation. Second, because man is radically free, no one has a right to be judgmental of two or more consenting adults, especially in the realm of personal sexual relations, so long as they do no harm to others. This, for example, is the core defense of “gay rights,” and the cause for celebrating so-called “alternative lifestyles.” But here we must ask, why is *consent* necessary? Why is harming others *wrong*? Why limit the principle to *adults*? If man is radically free by nature, do not the requirements of consent and the prohibition against harming others represent restrictions on his freedom? Do they not represent various forms of that older morality, the

rejection of which we are told is necessary for genuine human liberation? In addition—and this is where the argument for nonjudgmentalism collapses on itself, if morality and the idea of human nature are simply conventional, then why is freedom *good*? And why is it *wrong* to judge or persecute various groups of people? Those few who hold such a position consistently conclude that it is impossible to judge or criticize the most heinous actions in world history, because such actions are merely the reflections of differing moralities and values.

As the American founders would argue, however, a society that understands the natural law justification of freedom understands the family to be a central feature of the conditions of freedom. That society protects the family by encouraging men and women to get married and stay married, and to raise their own children well, and by discouraging divorce, single parenthood, and sexual license.<sup>3</sup> It encourages parents to be selfless, to put their children ahead of their own selfish desires and to work hard to make their families strong and healthy. As James Wilson explained in a law lecture in 1790, “[The family] is the principle of the community; it is that seminary, on which the commonwealth, for its manners as well as for its numbers, must ultimately depend. As its establishment is the source, so its happiness is the end, of every institution of government, which is wise and good.” Such work requires sacrifice and dedication, but it also yields tremendous happiness, for, in the end, virtue is its own reward. With strong families, then, is sheltered the idea of natural human equality and equal natural rights, the idea upon which the civil rights of all citizens rest.

As we recall the political principles of the American founding, we are reminded of the paradoxical fact that, while those principles are universal in character, arising from an unchanging human nature which all men at all times equally share, in 1776 they were invoked as the justification for the formation of a particular nation. Reflection on the relationship between the universal and the particular leads us, as it led the American founders, to the idea of sovereignty.

In light of the natural law principle of human equality, sovereignty comes to view as the right by which a people govern themselves with and through the consent of the governed. For the founders, the idea of sovereignty originates in the fact that, by nature, each man owns himself; by nature, no man is the property of another man. National or political sovereignty is an abstraction from this original sovereignty. National sovereignty is legitimate only when it rests on the consent of the sovereign individuals who form the original social compact, and only when the body politic protects the rights of those individuals. James Madison provided what is perhaps the most succinct account of sovereignty in his 1835 essay titled, “On Sovereignty,” in which he offered to “go to the bottom of the subject.” “Let us consult the Theory,” Madison wrote:

Which contemplates a certain number of individuals as meeting and agreeing to form one political society, in

order that the rights, the safety, and the interest of each may be under the safeguard of the whole. The first supposition is, that each individual being previously independent of the others, the compact which is to make them one society must result from the *free* consent of every individual (Madison's emphasis).

It is by "compact" that the natural freedom and independence of each individual is transformed into the sovereignty of a people. It was by virtue of such popular sovereignty that citizens of the several colonies declared their independence from Great Britain and their union with each other, adopted the Articles of Confederation, and later replaced those articles with the "more perfect union" of the Constitution.

Civil society, or the body politic, is a *voluntary* association. The first and most fundamental characteristic of a free society arises from the first and most fundamental characteristic of the social compact. The supposition mentioned by Madison, that each individual had been independent prior to the compact, means that there had been no relationship of governing or being governed between them. That is to say, in the state of nature and by nature, each individual is equal in authority to every other. It is only by virtue of each person's recognition of this equality in those with whom he contracts to form a civil society, that legitimate civil society can be formed.

The compact theory describes how legitimate political authority can arise among men and describes why such authority is consistent with human nature. Of course, authority can arise in many ways other than compact. Conquest is the most common. But force is not the same as right. Some men may demand obedience on the ground of their alleged god-like superiority, or because of the alleged inferiority of others. But these demands are pronounced fraudulent. No one can rightfully demand obedience of another, however plausible his claims to superior ability, until he has proved that his ability will be devoted, not to exploiting, but to benefiting the other. Only the compact guarantees that the rulers will rule in the interest of the ruled.

While unanimous consent between each member of society and the whole of society, and between the whole and each member, is the only foundation of sovereignty, unanimous consent is impossible for the operations of government. Madison continued:

But as the objects in view could not be attained, if every measure conducive to them required the consent of every member of the society, the theory further supposes, either that it was part of the original compact that the will of the majority was to be deemed the will of the whole, or that this was a law of nature, resulting from the nature of political society itself, the offspring of the natural wants of man.

Whatever be the hypothesis of the origin of the *lex majoris partis*, it is evident that it operates as a plenary substitute

of the will of the majority of the society for the will of the whole society; and that the sovereignty of the society as vested and exercisable by the majority, may do anything that could be *rightfully* done by the unanimous concurrence of the members; the reserved rights of individuals (of conscience for example) in becoming parties to the original compact being beyond the legitimate reach of sovereignty, wherever vested or however viewed.

Majority rule is a necessary consequence of the compact, because a government, no less than an individual, must be capable of being moved by a single will if it is to preserve itself or those for whom it acts. That will is the will of the majority, so long as that will is rightful, and does not violate what Madison calls the "reserved rights of individuals," those unalienable rights with which all men are endowed by their Creator. As Jefferson explained in his first inaugural address, "The will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, but that will to be rightful must be reasonable, that the minority possess their equal rights which equal law must protect." A government built upon the consent of the governed, operating through majority will and protecting the equal rights of all citizens, is the only truly sovereign government according to the principles of natural justice.

In his Farewell Address, George Washington observed that "of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports." He continued to emphasize the importance of religion and morality by sounding a warning to his fellow countrymen: "In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism who should labor to subvert these great Pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of Men and citizens." For Washington and the other founders, religion and morality are necessary for the happiness of individuals and the nation; in their opinions, there was no necessary contradiction between the classical understanding that true happiness is living a virtuous and moral life, and the Lockean principles of modern republicanism.

In fact, John Locke himself employed language later used by Washington and other Americans to make the same point, that there exists a moral universe that man must understand and obey if he is to be happy. In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke wrote, "God, having, by an inseparable connection, joined Virtue and public Happiness together; and made the practice thereof necessary to the preservation of Society, and visibly beneficial to all. . . ." Compare this to Washington's first inaugural address, where he remarked:

There is no truth more thoroughly established than that there exists in the economy and course of nature an indissoluble union between virtue and happiness; between duty and advantage; between the genuine maxims of an honest and magnanimous policy and the solid rewards of public prosperity and felicity; since we ought to be no less

persuaded that the propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained.

Further, from a political point of view, the founders supported religion because they understood that only a people capable of self-restraint and self-reliance would be able to live freely and prosper under a government of limited power; religion promoted these moral qualities. The American founders understood that political freedom requires limited government—that is, government should leave people alone, for the most part, in their private associations, such as in family, religion, and business. But the founders also understood that limited government is risky; when people are left alone, they might use that freedom to violate the rights of others; or they might simply live irresponsibly, depending on others with money and resources to care for them. As political freedom requires limited government, then, limited government requires a significant degree of civic virtue. James Madison observed at the end of *Federalist 55*, “republican government presupposes the existence of [virtue] in a higher degree than any other form,” and if a people do not possess the requisite virtue, then “nothing less than the chains of despotism can restrain them from destroying and devouring one another.”

The founders’ argument for religion and morality is either rejected or ignored today. I believe it is no coincidence that the decline in religious morality has coincided with the rejection of the founders’ argument for constitutional government. The founders understood that constitutional government by consent—a government of majority rule and minority rights—finds its ultimate justification in those principles enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, rational principles of natural justice, grounded in natural human equality. For the Americans at the time of the American founding, the precepts of right personal behavior, built upon the morality of the traditional family no less than the precepts of civil and religious liberty, were understood to be grounded in the same principles, principles knowable by natural reason and confirmed by true revelation.

Modern philosophy, however, denies the power of reason to discover right; it denies the existence of an objective, natural, moral universe. In doing so, it denies the very ground of political freedom, as well as any ground upon which true religion can be distinguished from false religion. That is, if right and wrong are merely arbitrary opinions, then so too are freedom and tyranny. There is no more reason to choose or defend one than the other. Further, if truth is subjective, if truth is relative to the historical era or geography or economic class or gender of the one who proclaims the truth, then the distinction between true and false revelation must also be subjective. There is no *reason* to believe that a revelation instructing men to enslave others is any less true than a revelation instructing men to fight for freedom. Under the

influence of modern philosophy, revelation comes to mean whatever one wants it to mean. It becomes a tool of human desire, not a message of divine purpose.

But it was the true relationship between man and the divine that the natural law sought to restore. In particular, the natural law doctrine of the Declaration of Independence was an attempt to reconnect the foundations of law with the divine. The natural law—resting on the idea of a Creator and the intelligible, moral universe He created—is grounded in a natural theology compatible with the major religions of the modern world, yet is the sole province of none of those particular religions. This is the necessary condition for a regime of religious and civil liberties. It also means that America is in some sense the city of God. That is, God commands the divine law. And as Thomas Aquinas teaches, the natural law is reason’s participation in the divine law—reason allows man to understand the law by which God commands the universe, insofar as that law is reasonable. A regime based upon the natural law, then, is a regime based upon the law of God. America is like an ancient city: it is the Holy City in the modern monotheist world.

While it is certainly true that at some level reason and revelation go separate ways, it is nonetheless true that the republican theorists, the statesmen, and churchmen of the American founding shared a faith that reason is able to discern certain truths—“self-evident truths”—about man and the moral world of which he is part. In this fundamental respect, Socrates, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln all stand together: they all agreed that the fundamental reality of the universe is an objective moral reality, that this moral reality is discernible by the human mind, and that the moral law is binding on man. Today, when our universities, political institutions, and popular culture are dominated by the modern doctrines of positivism, relativism, historicism, and nihilism, and after we have abandoned reason because of our faith in those doctrines, we find ourselves alienated from true religion and the natural principles of good government, those principles that made America the great nation it is. This is the Crisis of the West; the crisis of our time. This crisis represents nothing less than an assault on the basic moral precepts of the world’s religions, and a denial of the basic principles of free society. It is a crisis that commands the attention of men of all faiths, as well as men of little faith, who believe in truth, morality, and freedom. Our interest in the political principles of the American founding is neither self-forgetting and pain-loving antiquarianism, nor self-forgetting and intoxicating romanticism. Rather, this subject is of the utmost relevance and importance for us today. By revisiting those principles, and by attempting to understand them as the Founders themselves understood them, we will be reminded of the original meaning—and the natural and reasonable foundations—of true religion, true morality, and good government, which in the end are the only foundation for peace and happi-

ness in our modern world.

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**Notes**

1. Harry Jaffa, *American Conservatism and the American Founding*, Carolina Academic Press, 1984, p. 258.
2. Jefferson, letter to John Adams, 28 October 1813.
3. William Bennett makes clear the misery and damage suffered by the breakdown of the family in his recent book, *The Broken Hearth: Reversing the Moral Collapse of the American Family*, Doubleday, 2001.