



## Moderation, True Justice and the Golden Rule

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Latest revision: Dec. 27, 2023

Americans despise despotism. They hate tyranny and tyrants that impose unjust or oppressive rule on the people, and are aghast at cruel abuses of power. History emphatically confirms this important observation.

Many of our colonial ancestors in the Thirteen Colonies became angry and resentful at the despotic oppression of British rule and the exploitive mercantile system, and "taxation without representation", as revealed by events leading up to the Boston Tea Party rebellion on December 16, 1773, and the events that followed.

The authors and courageous signers of the Declaration of Independence made it abundantly clear in 1776 that they cherished liberty and bridled under the despotism of King George III and his imperial government.

The leaders of the confederation of states after the Revolutionary War struggled mightily to ensure states rights and prevent despotic abuses of centralized federal government power. But they recognized the weaknesses and vulnerabilities involved in their loose Articles of Confederation, so they eventually supported a Constitutional Convention that assembled in Philadelphia in 1787 to create a new and stronger form of federal government.

The framers of our great United States Constitution hammered out a brilliant framework to create a historic long-lasting Constitutional democratic republic. It was designed to ensure that our nation, conceived in Liberty, would serve *We the People* by advancing causes of liberty and justice for all. They devised an ingenious system of checks and balances between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the federal government, and between the states and the national government. They did this with the overarching purpose of creating a strong defense for our country from any despots conspiring to usurp and abuse power, either from abroad or at home. And they were visionary enough to design the Constitution to be adaptive, so that it could evolve with changing times over the years, and there have been 27 commendable and crucially important Amendments made since the Constitution was ratified to make it more just, resilient and lasting. (Commendable, that is, except for the 18th Amendment that prohibited alcohol, beginning with its ratification in 1919, and ending in its repeal by the 23rd Amendment in 1933.)

Things have gotten so out of whack in politics and our polarized society today that several new Amendments are urgently needed to ensure fairness, equitable treatment and the survival of democracy itself. Such proposed Amendments should: (1) guarantee expansive voting rights in free and fair elections, (2) prevent Big Money from exerting excessive influence in elections and lobbying, and (3) reduce the ill effects of supposed "corporate personhood" rights. These proposed Amendments would be a complete "game changer" in helping protect our democracy and citizens from the epic woes that threaten people today and in the future. These three proposed Amendments are outlined in my essay *Women's Rights: Let Freedom Ring - Honestly!*

### Extremism in the Defense of Liberty

Barry Goldwater, the Senator from Arizona who succeeded in getting the 1964 Republican presidential nomination, famously declared in his acceptance speech, "I would remind you that extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice." After thanking the audience for its rousing applause, he added, "And let me remind you also that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue."

Those are intriguing understandings, and convey simplistic ideas. Anyone interested in an excellent examination of

these two quotes should seek out two online articles by the libertarian Will Wilkinson in January 2016.

Today, almost 60 years after Goldwater's speech, radical political extremism has come in from the fringes to roost like a vulture at the core of the Republican Party, and it is much more than some personal vice. This extremism has become a threat to our democracy and democratic fairness, and to civil rights, inclusive voting rights, personal freedoms, public safety, women's reproductive rights, peaceable coexistence, the general welfare, the blessings of Liberty and people's hopes to be able to reasonably pursue happiness in their lives without being endangered by deceitful power-abusing authorities, intimidating bullies, neo-fascists or violent extremists.

Goldwater also said in his acceptance speech, "Security from domestic violence, no less than from foreign aggression, is the most elementary and fundamental purpose of any government, and a government that cannot fulfill this purpose is one that cannot long command the loyalty of its citizens."

He added, "Now those who seek absolute power, even though they seek it to do what they regard as good, are simply demanding the right to enforce their own version of heaven on earth. And let me remind you, they are the very ones who always create the most hellish tyrannies. Absolute power does corrupt, and those who seek it must be suspect and must be opposed. Their mistaken course stems from false notions, ladies and gentlemen ... that leads first to conformity and then to despotism."

"Fellow Republicans, it is the cause of Republicanism to resist concentrations of power, private or public, which enforce such conformity and inflict such despotism. It is the cause of Republicanism to ensure that power remains in the hands of the people. And, so help us God, that is exactly what a Republican President will do with the help of a Republican Congress." Those words, uttered in 1964, present a glaring contrast to *MAGA* Republicans today, who seem to have no such intention to abide by majority rule.

"This Republican Party is a Party for free men," he went on, "not for blind followers, and not for conformists." Today, Trump Republicans are much more like a cult with a demagogic authoritarian as its leader and obedient enabling loyalists and slavish supporters who are riled up by diabolically scheming emotion-manipulating authorities.

Goldwater also said, "Small men, seeking great wealth or power, have too often and too long turned even the highest levels of public service into mere personal opportunity." This criticism, made in 1964, casts a glaring light on Republicans in the Trump era, whose greed and ambitions are betraying the greater good.

"Why the beauty of the very system we Republicans are pledged to restore and revitalize, the beauty of this Federal system of ours is in its reconciliation of diversity with unity. We must not see malice in honest differences of opinion, and no matter how great, so long as they are not inconsistent with the pledges we have given to each other in and through our Constitution." And he added, "Now, certainly, simple honesty is not too much to demand of men in government. We find it in most. Republicans demand it from everyone. They demand it from everyone no matter how exalted or protected his position might be." Hear that, Trump and *MAGA* Republicans?

Unity and simple honesty -- Laugh out loud! Today, *MAGA* Republicans have become aggressive anarchists against honesty, integrity and unity with their misinformation, twisted "alternative facts", deceitful spin, inflammatory propaganda, fake news, denials of facts and evidence, smear campaign attack ads, deceptive disinformation and false conspiracy theories. They are using dishonesty as a cudgel, weaponizing it to use it along with hot button social issues, white supremacist fears, identity politics, culture war conflicts and hyped up resentments to distract people from the malfeasance and misdeeds many of them are engaged in.

The admirable Party of Lincoln morphed into the Party of Dick Nixon and then the Party of Trump, revealing a monomaniacal pursuit of raw political power at the expense of the people and the common good. The new politics of fascist-like authoritarianism is a clear and present danger to our democracy and the values it represents.

### Three Kinds of Coup

See clearly. An electoral coup took place in 2016, when Donald Trump seized the presidency through a long litany of legitimate and illegitimate tactics, which include both legal and illegal methods. For elaborated details on this, see my essay *Demagogy and the Dangers of the Demise of Democracy*.

Also, a judicial coup has taken place in the USA. For the elaborate details on how this coup came about since 1972,

see my essay *Calamitous Consequences of the Conspiratorial Scheme to Capture the Courts*. This essay helps clearly explain the dimensions of this perfidy, and its implications for freedoms, democracy, the common good, the general welfare, overall security, ethical propriety, the moral good, environmental sanity, and sustainable existence.

Also, a legislative coup is becoming far advanced in "red states". This has been enabled by egregiously discriminatory Republican gerrymandering and voter suppression tactics, along with subversive effects of Big Money unleashed to brainwash citizens to make it easier to get voters to allow this excessive influence of polarized legislatures. This is not overblown hyperbole or mere Twainian exaggeration.

Unaccountable and possibly unstoppable despotism is lurking. The Supreme Court chose to hear a case involving the "independent state legislature theory," a doctrine that would undermine checks and balances on state legislatures from state supreme courts and governors and state constitutions. Cunning politicians were rebuffed by a Supreme Court ruling (in a 6-to-3 vote) against this radically expansive interpretation of the Election Clause of the Constitution that would have given state legislatures superlative power. With just two more far-right Justices, gerrymandering-corrupted state legislatures could succeed in bringing our American experiment in representative democracy to an inglorious and ignominious end. This case, *Moore v. Harper*, would have destabilized our government, and led to even more tyrannical rule in red states.

Also, far-right forces around the country are seeking to grab control of state elections by pursuing secretary of state offices and taking over roles typically held by nonpartisan election workers. They're spreading voter fraud conspiracy theories and casting doubt on the integrity of elections. Many are employing violent rhetoric, and some are even pushing for vigilante violence and civil war.

Many people are examining the concerted efforts being made to steal upcoming elections. The progressive organization MoveOn asked, "What happens when election deniers take over the apparatus of our elections?" It noted before the 2022 midterms, "That's precisely what's at stake this November, because Donald Trump and Steve Bannon are running a sophisticated plot to install their lackeys as the election officials who oversee voter registration, vote counting, and have the power to certify -- or decertify -- election results in key battleground states."

"Steve Bannon said it outright: 'We're taking over all the elections.' In all, more than 80 candidates who have embraced the Big Lie are running for state offices that run, oversee or protect elections. These MAGA candidates are hell-bent on consolidating power for themselves at the expense of the rest of us -- and our democracy."

Fortunately, voters rejected most of these extremists in November 2022. But the real goal of many Republicans today may NOT BE to "stop the steal" -- it is actually to steal future elections. This is fundamentally wrong. This is *The Biggest Threat to Democracy*. As someone said, "Donald Trump's self-serving politics aren't just a national disgrace. They're a clear and present danger to the future of our democracy." This is becoming more glaringly evident in late 2023 as the Trump campaign and Heritage Foundation make more fascistic proposals.

The following observation was made in *The Next Presidential Election Is Already Being Stolen*: "The people who certify elections used to have one of the most mundane and bureaucratic positions in politics, but not anymore. This week on *Reveal*, we investigate how Michigan has become the test lab of the anti-democratic movement. It started in 2020, when then-President Donald Trump and his allies made Michigan a key battleground in their attempts to stop Joe Biden's certification. It turns out the battle hasn't ended. The state's GOP has purged officials who certified the election, replacing them with people who say they wouldn't have certified the election."

"Jeff Timmer, who ran the Republican Party in Michigan from 2005 to 2009, expresses alarm by what's happening. He says, 'They've been able to infiltrate the Republican Party right down to the precinct level in a way that I've been astounded by. They have paid attention to those obscure, small party positions ... getting their people in place to chair county Republican parties all across the country -- not just in Michigan.' ... Indeed, Republican candidates nationwide are tapping into the myth that the 2020 election was stolen and campaigning for office on promises to change how future elections are run. In Michigan, these candidates are targeting offices from the county level all the way up to secretary of state. And they're not stopping there. The Republican-led state Senate in Michigan has introduced nearly 40 bills to change its election laws, all of which propose new barriers to voting. Across the

country, there are 20 candidates for secretary of state who are casting doubt on the integrity of our elections."

We should rightly enact the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact to greatly strengthen democracy and prevent many kinds of election skullduggery, irregularities, and grave inequities. Auspiciously, states representing 76% of the required 270 electoral votes needed to elect a president by direct popular vote have already adopted this Compact. Let's all rightly support finding the other 24% needed.

### Republican Party Radicalism

The Republican Party has become a nemesis to core democratic values, and to women's freedoms, sensible climate action, clean energy, the general welfare, progress, fairness, the best interests of people of color, gun safety, respectability, virtue, anti-corruption reform, compassion, empathetic kindness, religious tolerance, constructive criticism, healthy domestic tranquility, environmental sanity and sustainable existence.

Republicans strive to eliminate regulations to benefit corporate entities, and to deregulate banks, at serious risk with recent bank failures, and at the same time they double down on regulating the hell out of voting rights and fair representation and women's right to choose.

Today's dominion-demanding "rule or ruin" Republicans have become turncoats against democracy, fairness, honesty, honor, integrity, decency, reasonable righteousness, inclusion and expansive rights for people over corporations. They have created a new twist to P.J. O'Rourke's old assertion that Republicans are the party that says government doesn't work and then get elected and prove it. Today, after they win elections, they run roughshod over the greater good in their zeal to give more tax breaks to the rich and increase the power, privileges and exclusionary liberties of the few at the expense of the many. And they double down on rigging both the economy and the political system to their domineering advantage, making it their top priority to stay in power -- even though it involves sabotaging fairness. One way they do this is by winning elections and guaranteeing themselves majority power through gerrymandering, so that outcomes are almost predetermined even before votes are cast.

And when Republican politicians lose, they yell "fraud" and redouble their efforts to rig elections ever more advantageously for themselves and big corporations and rich megadonors to this cause -- almost always to the detriment of the majority of people. And they increase their aggressive efforts to use divide-to-conquer tactics, fear mongering and the promotion of disinformation, and to agitate people over culture war conflicts, hot button social issues and inflamed passions over scapegoated groups.

The once illustrious GOP has become a victim of its own absurdity, weakly giving in to becoming a parody of itself as the former Grand Old Party and the times it used to demonstrate much more integrity, honor and responsibility. Trump Republicans have become loyalists to a cult of personality that is slavishly obedient to a conniving con man and demagogue. The Party is a coalition of groups that are pathologically afraid of offending the dominating bullying bloviating cult leader who laid siege to it, exploiting its vulnerability to being emotionally hijacked and manipulated and betrayed. Rich conservatives and billionaires in the Koch network, along with giant corporations and the right-wing Religious Right, have miserably used the Party as a Trojan horse to advance a pathetically unfair agenda. They wrongly oppose most needed reforms, and torpedo anti-corruption efforts, and violate all the ideals that the framers of the U.S. Constitution brilliantly set forth in the Preamble of this great founding document.

This coalition is one of rich people and big corporate entities that has allied itself with white supremacists, evangelizing religious fundamentalists, big lie promoting insurrectionists, far-right groups like the Proud Boys, neo-fascists, racists, anti-democracy conspiracy theorists, the scheming Jesus-loving K Street crowd, anti-choice women-oppressing sexist zealots, coldly calculating propagandists, and phonies, fraudsters and swindlers. AND of anti-environmentalists, public land exploiters, maximum-profit-expecting investors and those who weakly give in to sacrificing Creation and the biological diversity of life on Earth. This coalition is driven by Fox News and alt-right agitators that rile up resentments at being left behind. Let's instead put behind us the politicians who push these things, in every future election!

The Chinese philosopher Confucius no doubt somewhere suggested a truth: citizens distinctly dislike having their gullibility taken advantage of. They also hate having their antagonisms inflamed over hot button social wedge issues, and their fury incited over a war between the sexes and culture war strife, tribalism and identity politics.

Even the MAGA base might feel umbrage at being made to so ridiculously go along with being part of *A Confederacy of Dunces* (and being so obsequious to collaborating co-conspirators).

Without fair, functional and accountable government, people's health and safety are not adequately protected. As always, the disproportionate burdens of public health harms and environmental injustices continue to be felt by Blacks, Latinos, and Indigenous and low-income communities who find themselves in ever more bitter fights trying to vote, and to get their votes counted, and to have their voices respected and best interests taken into account.

*The Republican Party has officially devolved into the party of "rule or ruin."* They've obstructed nearly every good bill to come out of Congress, and consistently and relentlessly taken the side of the rich over everyone else. By promoting baseless conspiracies, they keep folks in their political base agitated, making it easier for their scheme to work to gain dominating power and excessive influence, especially in the House and on the Supreme Court, and in red state governments. Republican Supreme Court Justices and red state officials have thereby succeeded in launching insidious attacks against voting rights and women's reproductive rights and other civil liberties.

Republicans in Congress have consistently refused to even begin a debate over major bills that make access to the ballot box easier, or reduce the influence of big money in our elections, or ban gerrymandering, or implement ethics rules for public servants and Supreme Court Justices, or to enact other anti-corruption measures, or act to create a fairer society and strengthen our democracy and improve the performance of government.

Republicans in red states have introduced and passed more bills since the 2020 elections that restrict access to abortion or contraception or reproductive health services than at any point in history. And they're cruelly increasingly scapegoating gay people and gender anomalous persons, and drag queens and those in trans communities.

"For a year we've sought consequences and accountability for those who have lied and threatened democracy, from the lawyers who have abused authority, filing frivolous lawsuits lacking any evidence of voter fraud wrongdoing, to the leaders who enabled and supported the tragedy in our United States Capitol on January 6."

Extensive evidence today suggests "we are no closer to ensuring the truth prevails over lies than we were last November." Now more than ever, elected leaders are gaining power by deceiving people, promoting policies that make it harder for citizens to vote, cutting election funding, and empowering partisan officials to block or overturn future election results. Politicians who zealously subvert our democracy are finding right-wing populist popularity celebrity and notoriety in spreading blatant lies. Many Republican candidates for governor, attorney general and secretary of state positions repeated and ran on conspiracy theories in 2022 that arose after the 2020 elections.

The conservative movement within the Republican Party has forged an unholy alliance between democracy-undermining corporate interests and extremely conservative evangelical Christians, and it has managed to stack the Supreme Court with Republican partisans who have become an ultimate weapon to undermine democratic values in America. Trump has dangerously amplified the woes related to this unholy alliance by strengthening it with the support of white supremacists, neo-fascists and anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim groups.

Conservative dominance over governments, churches and societies is perpetuated not because it enjoys majority support, or appeals to the general welfare, or is consistent with the common good, but because of its superior effectiveness in manipulating voters through their emotions, fears, prejudices, antagonisms, anger at hardships, suspicions and susceptibility to tribal and religious affiliation. All of these things are made immeasurably worse by the deceptions and manipulative suasion propagated by the "conservative political media complex" messaging machine.

Conservatives exert dominating minority power through an all-overriding commitment to gaining and maintaining power and control, no matter what means is necessary. They eagerly use deceptive rhetoric, divide-to-conquer tactics, election malfeasance, undemocratic ploys, a variety of voter suppression tactics, distorted gerrymanders of congressional districts, and diabolically effective repetitive far-right messaging.

Republicans mischaracterize anti-corruption reformers and progressive populists as "socialists". They do this in efforts to irresponsibly emasculate opposition by tying such respect-worthy people to repressive authoritarian socialist regimes back in history. But reformers advocate policies and priorities that are people-centric rather than corporate-centric, and call for governance that is inclusive and equitable rather than allowing dominant

influence to the rich and controlling corporate interests. In actuality, Republicans pose a far greater threat to people's liberties and well-being and rights through their authority-abusing schemes than liberals do.

Republicans blame President Biden for the ongoing COVID tragedy, despite the fact that they have opposed many efforts to contain it and have sabotaged public safety measures like mask wearing and getting vaccinated that help contain the contagious disease. "This is an old Republican trick," wrote Heather Digby Parton at Salon.com. "They leave the country in shambles when they are voted out of office, obstruct the Democrats every step of the way when they try to fix it, and then blame them for failing to fulfill their promises." And due to persuasive propaganda, repetitive right-wing messaging, big lies, fear mongering, and the propagation of deceitful conspiracies, they get away with this and regain excessive influence. They are helped in this by voter suppression, gerrymandering and election subversion tactics that are inimical to fairly representative democracy.

### An Acerbic Riff on the Moral Turpitude of MAGA Republicans

In a delightfully and deservedly acerbic tirade against the sinister moral turpitude of Trump and his scheming enablers, Jordan Zakarin provided this historical perspective in a recent online blog: "When Donald Trump was elected president in 2016, it marked the culmination of one of America's oldest traditions. From the moment that colonists began swindling land away from Native tribes, the United States has been a nation of scammers, crooks, and underhanded schemers, who often accidentally shaped history in their quest to make money off the public." ... "Allowing Trump -- a serially bankrupt celebrity best known for cheating on his wives and stiffing his creditors -- to take his con-man show to the White House was the purest expression of America's tolerance of charlatans. His temporary banishment has done nothing to diminish the zeal and efficacy of shady crooks."

"It might have been hard for jaded Beltway reporters to imagine, but powerful evidence presented dramatically in an easily accessible way -- along with steady amplification by the media -- may well be draining Trump of his support and encouraging Republicans to look elsewhere for a leader. No wonder the right-wing editorial pages of the New York Post and Wall Street Journal, both Rupert Murdoch publications, have broken sharply with Trump. Trump of all people should understand how the aura of being a 'loser' turns people off."

"At the start of a CNN *State of the Union* panel on Sunday morning (July 24, 2022), conservative commentator Amanda Carpenter went on an extensive rant attacking Donald Trump and (then) House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) over the Jan 6th insurrection. With host Jake Tapper and a smiling Bakari Sellers looking on, the former adviser to Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX) lashed out at her fellow Republicans." She declared, "I think many more Republicans need to say straight out, Trump should be disqualified from the presidency, period, end of story."

Historian Heather Cox Richardson wrote last year that the extremism of the Republican Party today shows most clearly in the party's stance after the Supreme Court overturned the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision. She pointed out that the high court has been packed with extremists by Trump and (then) Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

"The overturning of settled law itself was radical. That it tries to strip away a constitutional right for the first time in our history is radical. And the way it is playing out demonstrates just how radical the current Republican Party is. The case in Ohio in which a 10-year-old rape victim could not obtain an abortion, horrific as it was, only started the firestorm, as Republican lawmakers first denied the case was real -- it was -- and then called for prosecuting the Indiana doctor who performed the procedure, which she did entirely legally."

Some lawmakers went on to say they wanted legislation that would have prohibited the child from traveling across state lines to get medical treatment. Since then, we have seen what the considerable majority of Americans who supported *Roe v. Wade* said would happen: women are unable to get medical care after miscarriages, leaving them in pain, or with developing infections, or with dangerous blood loss. And yet, by a 4-to-1 margin, delegates to the July 2022 Republican Party convention in Idaho rejected an amendment to their platform that would have permitted an abortion to save the life of the mother. The platform considers every fertilized egg a person from the moment of fertilization, and criminalizes abortion from that moment on as murder.

In an echo of the past, they declared: "Idaho has the sovereign authority to defy the federal judiciary should they once again propose the fiction that abortion is a federal constitutional right." This is wrong! (To be continued.)

Truly, Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

Dec. 27, 2023 (updated from the original in August 2022 and a Good Friday version on April 7, 2023)