

Principles of Conservatism

Conservatism has been mistaken with a political movement. The Republican Party, in America, has been thought to be the prime authority of all things that are conservative within the United States of America. Deviation of the Republican Party from the principles of conservatism has led to a significant movement of people who have chosen to distrust those who call themselves conservative. The trick is that Republicanism is not conservatism.

Conservatism is not a political movement in the strictest sense, but a lifestyle. It is defined by a set of principles that are applied to oneself and to others. One can be a conservative or a liberal, for that matter, in any respective field. There are conservative Republicans and there are liberal Republicans. There are conservative Bible scholars and there are liberal Bible scholars. There are conservative atheists and there are liberal atheists. There are conservative Libertarians and there are liberal Libertarians. Conservatism is not limited to the political arena, it is a set of values by which a person defines his or her life.

Freedom: The most important aspect of conservatism is how it defines *Freedom*. Conservatism teaches that people are free to live their lives in a manner they see fit so long as it does not infringe on the freedoms of other people. This is what the *Bill of Rights* was intended to accomplish. It outlines 10 rights that nobody, not even the federal government, could infringe upon unless a citizen violates the rights of another citizen.

In a conservative sense, freedom is working toward your own goals. It is choosing to be unharmed by the decisions and words of others. It is taking responsibility for your own actions and allowing yourself and others the opportunity to succeed or fail.

Failure: One of the most criticized aspects of conservatism is that it allows people the opportunity to fail. It is commonly perceived that a great society will not allow people to live in poverty. In conservatism, this is not the case. You are as free to fail as what you are to succeed. Although this is looked at as being a weak point of this ideology, it is actually one of the most positive points of conservatism.

Failure serves multiple purposes. It motivates people to try harder, it teaches people how to improve, and it serves as a mechanism for quality control.

Success: The goal of conservatism is to maximum success. Success is achieved through hard work, perseverance, and playing by the rules. Unlike liberalism, conservatism does not limit the level of success one can achieve.

Acceptance: Conservatism's concept of acceptance is different than that of liberalism. Liberalism teaches that acceptance means that you consider everyone's opinions, actions, lifestyles, and beliefs to be equal. Your values are no better than anyone else's.

Conservatism, on the other hand, views acceptance as respect for everyone's basic rights on an equal plain. You are free to agree, disagree, like, dislike, be prejudiced against, or be as openly celebratory to everyone as you want to be. But you never violate the basic rights of everyone and it is expected that everyone will respect your rights in return.

Right and Wrong: Although conservatism is renowned for being compatible with religion, it is not because it is inherently religious. Conservatism acknowledges that whether or not things are designed by a Supreme Being, there does seem to be an inherent order to the world. In a religious sense, we would refer to the adherence or violation of this inherent order as good or evil. In a non-religious sense, it would be referred to as right or wrong.

The difference between right and wrong vs. good and evil is the moral connection. Good and evil implies that doing what is good is in compliance with moral standards and evil is a violation. Right and wrong simply implies that things will work for the best if you do what is right. Doing what is wrong will yield poor results.

Although an appropriate distinction between good and evil will yield the best results (because violation of the natural order is considered to be upsetting to a higher Being and is thus to be abhorred), a culture that has a plurality of ideas and beliefs only needs to operate under an acknowledgement of right and wrong if it wants to be a functioning civilization.

Religion and Tradition: Religion and tradition have value in all conservative cultures. If that culture chooses to value teachings of older traditions and long lasting religious beliefs it is adhering to a conservative ideology, even if it denies the existence of God. When religion and traditions have proven to be an effective way to bind together a civilization, conservatives at the very least acknowledge that the values espoused by these belief systems are valuable to the human race. Belief in supernatural or metaphysical forces are not a requirement.

In progressive liberalism, religion and tradition are seen to become irrelevant as civilization evolves. People of a liberal ideology will often disparage ancient texts or traditions that were valued in times past opting to allow chance to be the sole determiner of what values a culture ought to adhere to.

Given these two sets of attitudes toward religion and tradition, it is mind boggling that there are secular conservatives and religious liberals.

Individuality: Conservatism is an acknowledgment that every individual, along with his or her goals and dreams, matters. Next to freedom, this is the most important aspect of conservatism. The value placed on the individual is what drives progress in every sense. Realizing that everyone has a set of gifts, skills, and interests that are valuable to society doesn't only result in the prosperity of a culture, but the protection of all people's lives.

Progressive liberalism pushes toward collective thought accompanied by classes of people. A small elite group is appointed to govern the greater mass of people. The average individual is expected to work together for the good of society, driven by the goals and dreams of the elite. In order for a culture like this to survive, everyone must conform to the beliefs of the elite. It is believed that a person's value is based upon how society can best use the skills he or she has regardless of individual vision.

Conclusion: Conservatism seeks to declare truth. This can be observed in the founding documents of the United States. The founders rejected the notion that a foreign elite entity had the right to determine what is best for a society. They then sought to establish a form of government where its sole purpose was to preserve the rights of the people being governed. This was ultimately accomplished through allowing civilians to participate in the process of government. Instead of empowering the government, the people of the country were empowered. This is the heart of conservatism. The only one who has the right to exercise authority over mankind is a higher power whether you call it *nature* or *God Almighty*.

More information may be added in the future. Feel free to submit questions concerning principles of conservatism to preacherbill174@gmail.com