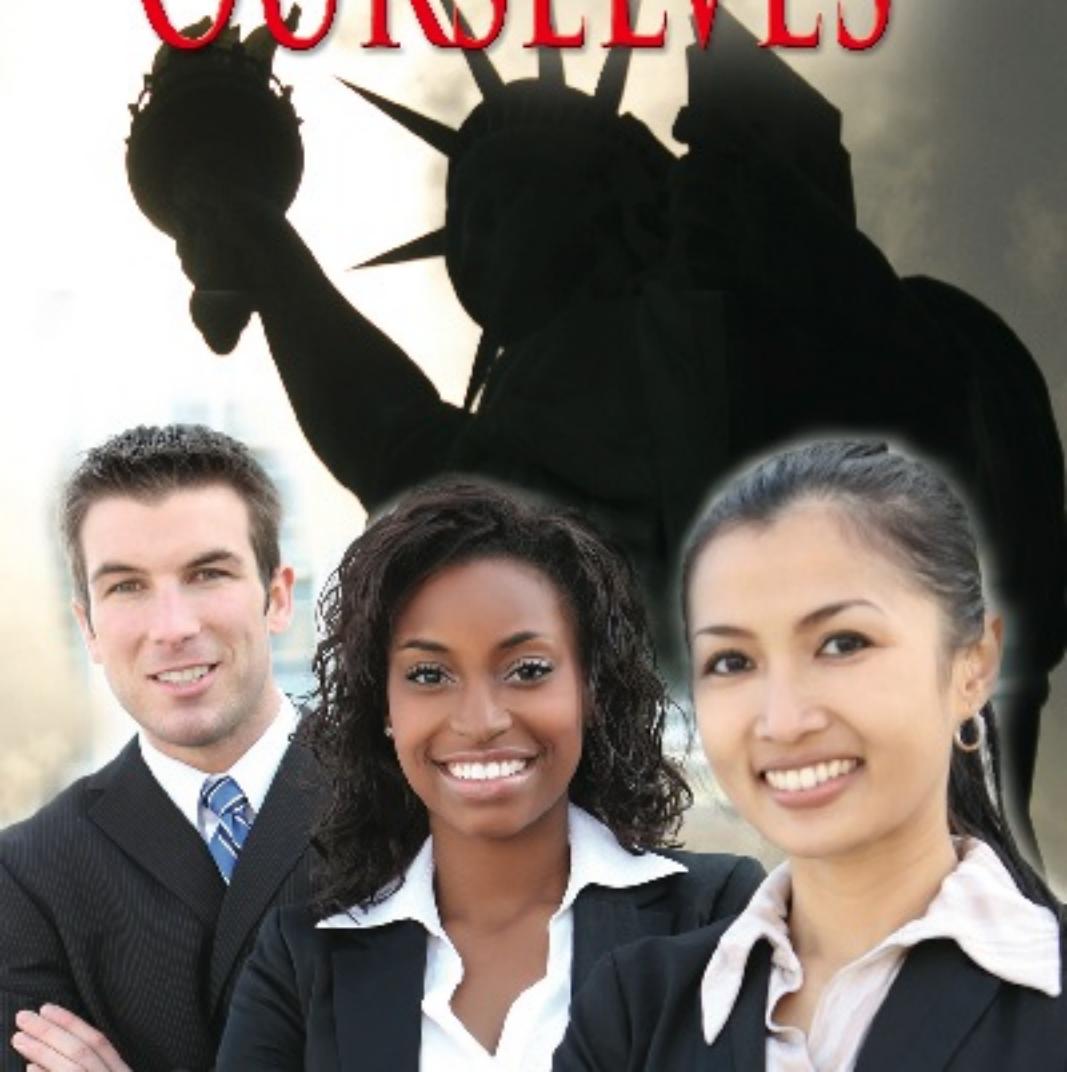
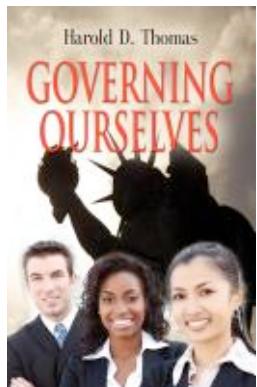


Harold D. Thomas

# GOVERNING OURSELVES





**Governing Ourselves** envisions a free society in the 21st century, beginning with a discussion on the importance of freedom and personal responsibility. The author shows how government, non-governmental organizations, the family, and the economy can work together in a free society, and uses this model to suggest how America can move to restore its freedom. The book is easy to read and requires no previous knowledge of history, politics, or economics to understand.

# **Governing Ourselves**

## How Americans Can Restore Their Freedom

**Order the complete book from**

**Booklocker.com**

**<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6031.html?s=pdf>**

**or from your favorite neighborhood  
or online bookstore.**

**Your Free excerpt appears below. Enjoy!**

# GOVERNING OURSELVES

*How Americans Can Restore Their Freedom*

Copyright © 2012, Harold D. Thomas

ISBN 978-1-61434-913-6

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published in the United States by BookLocker.com, Inc., Port Charlotte, Florida.

Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the following copyright holders for permission to reprint quotations from their work:

University of Chicago Press, for the quotations on pages 54 and 138, from *The Road to Serfdom*, by Friedrich A. von Hayek, © 1944 by University of Chicago Press.

The Ayn Rand Institute, for the quotation on page 29, from *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand. © 1957 by Ayn Rand.

The font used in this book is Sylfaen, created in 1998 by John Hudson, W. Ross Mills, and Geraldine Wade for Microsoft Typography.

Author portrait on the back cover by Penney Adams, Adler House Photography.  
Cover design by Todd Engel.

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper.

Harold D. Thomas  
2012

First Edition

## Preface

**A**MERICANS LIKE TO THINK OF THEMSELVES as living in the “land of the free and the home of the brave.” This idea has led Americans to become one of the most intensely patriotic people in history.

Yet, we are frustrated. We see a Congress that pursues an agenda of its own, often ignoring the very issues their members promoted during their campaigns.

We see two presidents who have demonstrated their contempt for the U.S. Constitution, the supreme law of the land. George W. Bush has been quoted as saying that the “Constitution is nothing more than a \*\*\*damned scrap of paper.” While this statement cannot be verified, it should be evident that he has asserted a right to enforce the law according to his interpretation of the Constitution. By pressing for the USA PATRIOT Act and the Department of Homeland Security, he has freely disregarded the protections and liberties outlined in the Constitution.”<sup>1</sup>

Barack Obama referred to the Constitution as “a charter of negative liberties.” In 2001, then-State Sen. Obama maintained that the Supreme Court’s decisions on civil rights in the 1960s did not go far enough. In his view, the court should have sought “redistributive justice” and break from the “essential restraints” of the Constitution.<sup>2</sup>

*Harold D. Thomas*

Instead of being a celebration of our freedom and a source of useful information, the political campaign has become a disgusting spectacle of negative sound bites and character assassination. We see government supporting banks and corporations that are “too big to fail,” and “stimulus” programs that funnel taxpayer money into favored interests. The federal government has become a perverted Robin Hood, making the rich richer while keeping down the poor at the expense of the middle class.

The Tea Parties and Occupy movements are venting that frustration. We are seeing more peaceful protests than at any other time since the Vietnam War. Those who have assembled peacefully are exercising a right guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, but the Department of Homeland Security and broadcast media have shrilly denounced Tea Parties as “right-wing extremists” who are allegedly preparing terrorists for some undefined future action. The confrontations in early 2011 in Wisconsin and Ohio over public employees’ collective bargaining rights added an ugly dimension to the political debate, at the same time as state governments are desperately trying to keep their fiscal houses in order. For many of us, the federal government has become so corrupt that no one will support the public interest.<sup>3</sup>

*Governing Ourselves* will not detail how we lost our liberties. Other authors have dealt with this subject well and at length. The Postscript recommends some of their books. Where historical references are necessary, this book tries to ensure that they are easy to follow, even for those who are unfamiliar with the histories of the United States and of Western civilization.

Libertarian candidates and activists tend to contrast their positions with those of “establishment” politicians. This negative approach

*Governing Ourselves*

diminishes voter confidence in their ability to carry out the duties of the office they are seeking.



# Table of Contents

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Acknowledgments .....   | iii |
| Preface .....   | v   |
| Introduction .....  | xi  |
| 1 The Crisis.....   | 1   |
| 2 Envisioning a Free Society.....   | 6   |
| 3 Defining Freedom .....  | 20  |
| 4 Accepting Personal Responsibility .....                                   | 30  |
| 5 Identifying the Legitimate Functions of Government .....                  | 40  |
| 6 Understanding Relationships between the Four Institutions of Society..... | 51  |
| 7 Helping the Needy .....   | 76  |
| 8 Educating Our Children .....  | 87  |
| 9 Ensuring Opportunity for All.....   | 94  |
| 10 Preventing Inflation and Boom-Bust Cycles .....                          | 107 |
| 11 Protecting the People .....  | 111 |
| 12 Keeping Ourselves Free in a Troubled World .....                         | 119 |
| 13 Making Our System Sustainable.....                                       | 127 |
| 14 Why Self-Government is the Most Pressing Issue .....                     | 137 |
| Postscript .....  | 141 |
| Appendix Decentralist League of Vermont Statement of Principles.....        | 150 |
| Endnotes.....   | 154 |



# **Introduction**

This book offers a practical vision of a free society and suggests the benefits it will confer to all Americans, regardless of their status in life.

We begin by describing the current situation in America and the crisis that is likely to occur in the coming months. This will enable us in Chapter 2 to paint a picture of a time in the future when Americans again experience freedom. We will see how the lives of a suburban family, a farm family, an inner-city family, and a small-town banker have changed from what we know today. Chapters 3 and 4 define freedom and the relationship between freedom and personal responsibility.

Chapters 5 and 6 define the proper role of government in a free society and suggest how we can downsize government at all levels to fit its reduced role.

Chapters 7–12 suggest how we can safely abolish many functions of government.

Chapter 13 lays out how our free society can become financially and environmentally sustainable.

*Harold D. Thomas*

Chapter 14 explains why the most pressing issue of our time is whether we will govern ourselves, or let others govern for us.

Finally, in the Postscript we will acknowledge the sources for our ideas and suggest further reading for those wishing to delve further into these topics.

One final note: This book contains a number of Biblical references. The purpose of using them is not to gain converts or to preach to the reader, but to use a cultural resource that is accessible to most readers.

# 1

## The Crisis

HARDLY ANYONE THINKS that Americans are living in normal times. While people may differ as to the causes of our current problems, very few dispute the facts:

- The United States has waged a “War on Poverty” for more than 40 years without reducing the poverty rate, a “War on Drugs” for 30 years without significantly reducing either the importation or consumption of illicit drugs, and a “War on Terror” for a decade with no end in sight. All three wars have exponentially increased **federal government** spending and the national debt. They have also provided our leaders with excuses for curtailing our personal freedoms. We will document these assertions later in the book.
- The current recession, which began in August 2007, is technically in a recovery, but high unemployment persists.<sup>4</sup>
- The federal government has balanced its budget only five times in the last 66 years (1969, and 1997-2000).<sup>5</sup>

*Harold D. Thomas*

- The official national debt increased for the twelfth time in fourteen years to \$16.8 trillion. On August 5, 2011, Standard & Poor expressed its lack of confidence in the United States government by downgrading its debt for the first time in history, from AAA to AA+.<sup>6</sup>

Consequently, the free spending ways of the federal government have caused the United States dollar to lose value. Foreign currencies and precious metals are increasing in value against the dollar. We are experiencing sharp increases in the price of other commodities, such as gasoline and food. We shall examine these issues in chapter 10.

None of these problems is new. However, more and more Americans sense that a crisis is coming, one that will have an immense and potentially devastating impact on our daily lives.

We stand on the brink of a catastrophe. Of course, no one can know exactly what the future holds, but here are some likely outcomes to the facts we just described:

- An economic collapse may result in withdrawal of United States military forces around the world. While this may prove to be a good thing for our foreign relations, as we will show in Chapter 12, a sudden withdrawal is likely to leave legions of unemployed or underemployed young adults. Experience around the world and through history shows that the presence of large numbers of unemployed young adults is extremely dangerous to domestic peace.
- The default of a major bank, massive selling of U.S. government securities by foreign nations, or a further increase in the

## *Governing Ourselves*

national debt ceiling, which may cause a panic by investors, leading to massive withdrawals from bank accounts.

- The Federal Reserve declares a bank holiday and creates more trillions of dollars to enable the banks to meet withdrawal requests. The President might seek the aid of the International Monetary Fund in support of this effort. People unable to withdraw from their accounts go on a spending spree with their checkbooks and debit cards, leading to hoarding and a scarcity of basic food and clothing items.
- Emerging economic powers replace the U.S. dollar as an international reserve currency with a basket of foreign currencies. The dollar immediately becomes worthless in foreign trade.<sup>7</sup>
- Prices increase dramatically. People begin to carry “bricks” of small-denomination bills, and the Federal Reserve begins printing \$100, then \$1,000, then perhaps even larger bills for everyday use, or attempts to replace the U.S. dollar with another currency, such as the “amero.”
- The price of oil also increases dramatically, slowing down our transportation system and in some areas causing electrical brownouts and blackouts. Shipments of imported goods become prohibitively expensive. Since very little is manufactured here, and because certain agricultural products cannot be grown in the United States, the economy grinds to a halt. Mass looting and rioting afflict major cities.<sup>8</sup>

*Harold D. Thomas*

- As all of this is taking place, the savings of ordinary people literally vanish, and with it, all hope for personal and family financial security. Already we are seeing middle class suburban families reduced to poverty.<sup>9</sup>
- The setbacks to our economy offer Arab, Chinese, Russian, and other foreign investors opportunities to buy American assets, which they could manage against the interest of our people. Extracting natural resources for their customers that we need at home is just one example.

In other words, we may be living in revolutionary times. People fear revolution, and for a good reason—public order is lost for a time, or is maintained by a force that is not accountable to the people. In a revolution, we cannot count on government to keep us out of harm's way. Looters, paramilitary forces, or corrupt government agents may vandalize and steal from private homes with impunity. A people gripped with fear seek a strong leader who will restore order, even if it means living in a society tightly controlled for the benefit of that leader and his friends.

Modern revolution is dangerous for another reason—its results are completely unpredictable. *Modern revolution* is a massive civil disorder resulting in a radical change of government. The American Revolution was not a revolution in this sense, because the legal and governmental institutions of the Thirteen Colonies remained intact. It would be more accurate to call The American Revolution a war of secession from the British Empire.

The first modern revolution took place in France (1789–1797). Originally intended to replace the French king with a republic modeled on the United States, the dynamics of that revolution

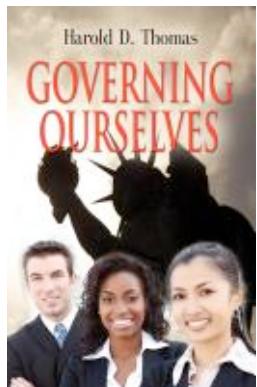
## *Governing Ourselves*

resulted in a Reign of Terror, followed by cataclysmic changes to practically every institution. Only with the rise of Napoleon did order return to France. While Napoleon was a benevolent despot, he still exercised dictatorial powers. Similarly, in 1917, the Russians staged a revolution to replace the tsar with a European-style republic, but the government they created under Alexander Kerensky was so ineffective that it lasted less than nine months. The result was Communism under Lenin, followed by the brutal dictatorship of Josef Stalin. It should be clear by now that the “Arab Spring” in 2011 that the people of Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and Libya were hoping for has not nurtured the flowering of anything like democracy in any of those countries.<sup>10</sup>

What comes next depends on how we react to chaos. Will we, like the French and the Russians, yearn for a strong man to restore order and rebuild our economy? Or will we hear the siren song of global government, with its promise that war will cease if the whole world obeys a single master? Or, will we see the United States collapse as the Soviet Union did twenty years ago into a number of smaller nations, some of which will experience a “new birth of freedom”?

The stories told in the next chapter assume that we have gone through this crisis to come. They anticipate that the American people—or at least some of them—have come to embrace the vision of our Founders for a Republic dedicated to protecting the lives, liberties, and property of its people. Such a Republic would recognize that while some government is necessary, people are most likely to thrive within a community that values the ordinary person, and where everyone can have some influence over its collective decisions.

It is a hopeful vision, but not an impossible one.



**Governing Ourselves** envisions a free society in the 21st century, beginning with a discussion on the importance of freedom and personal responsibility. The author shows how government, non-governmental organizations, the family, and the economy can work together in a free society, and uses this model to suggest how America can move to restore its freedom. The book is easy to read and requires no previous knowledge of history, politics, or economics to understand.

# **Governing Ourselves**

## How Americans Can Restore Their Freedom

**Order the complete book from**

**Booklocker.com**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6031.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood  
or online bookstore.**