

How an Airborne Ranger Became a Voluntarist

The Definition of Voluntarism, and How I Align With It

According to voluntaryist.com, “If you believe – that the initiation of force is wrong; that the institution of government relies on initiatory violence against peaceful people; and that taxation is stealing – then you meet the basic definition of being a voluntarist.” That’s me: I concur on all three points. It continues, “Voluntaryists are advocates of non-political, non-violent strategies to achieve a free society. ” That’s also me; specifically, I favor agorism. Then it reads, “We reject electoral politics, in theory, and in practice, as incompatible with libertarian principles. Governments must cloak their actions in an aura of moral legitimacy in order to sustain their power, and political methods invariably strengthen that legitimacy.” I understand this to mean, ‘don’t vote or support bills that promote freedom.’ Here I diverge somewhat. Does it legitimize the criminal gang in my neighborhood to discourage its leaders from engaging in criminal activity, or if there are rival gangs to encourage one of them to make things difficult for the other? No. I will support any proposition that results in a net gain of freedom. I don’t believe it’s an all or nothing proposition. The definition continues, “Voluntaryists seek instead to delegitimize the State through education.” I’m all for that as well. Many people assume that the State is necessary for the provision of services that could be provided better, more cheaply, and more efficiently by the voluntary actions of the free market: education is the natural remedy for this ignorance. In conclusion, I generally identify with the definition of a voluntarist, except that I stop short of total abstention, believing that as long as the state exists it’s better to make it smaller and make freedom bigger, than to pretend and wish it didn’t exist at all.

How does Voluntarism differ from run-of-the-mill libertarianism? In brief, a voluntarist is more ideologically consistent, taking the principles of libertarianism further than most libertarians do. Libertarians often aren’t even minarchists. Some advocate a universal basic income, just because it would make for a simpler bureaucracy, even though it would certainly expand the role of government in the lives of many people. I believe we shouldn’t have government at all. However, since it exists, I believe there are responsible actions to be taken in regards to government, beyond non-participation in electoral politics.

Family Background, and Their Opinion On My Views

My earliest exposure to libertarian thought was the op-eds in the *Backwoods Home Magazine* anthologies gracing our bookshelves. I don’t think my parents read those much, but I believe they shaped my views for years to come. Even though I was seven years old at the time, I knew common sense when I saw it.

I grew up in a conservative Christian household, with parents voting Republican, Dad serving in the Army for a few years, kids bouncing back and forth between home school, public school, and a local Christian academy. We held a firm belief that government was handed down by God, that it was an institution to be obeyed as from God except in those matters that clearly contradicted Scriptural duties. My parents taught us the Bible, first and foremost, as well as how to think and apply logical conclusions to our lives. Having learned how to think, our logical conclusions sometimes outpaced their comfort levels. For example, I concluded as a teenager that if the American Revolution were a just response to the tyranny of King George and Parliament, then another armed revolution would likewise be an appropriate response to the tyranny found in the modern United States. As you can imagine, this alarmed my parents greatly.

To me, the difference between agorism and voluntaryism is voluntaryism focuses on non-participation in government, while agorism focuses on free market replacement of government. As my political views have evolved toward agorism and voluntaryism, I haven't always discussed the evolving nuances of my belief system with my family. I'm not sure what they think about it. They live 500 miles away, and we all have busy lives and other things to talk about when we talk. Generally, the important thing to my parents is that my belief be based on the Bible, and of course not be heresy (contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture). One of my brothers thinks an independent arbitration system with a separate militia system (one arrangement I favor in place of the state) would constitute a government, so his difference of opinion seems to be mainly semantic.

Educational and Vocational History

I took a class in American Government at Carroll County Christian Academy, learning enough about our civic institutions that in a similar class a few years later in college, I felt I could have taught the class as well as the professor. Having learned a normative version of the political spectrum when I read Gary Allen's *None Dare Call It Conspiracy* in elementary school, I remember declaring in my high school Am Gov class that I was so far to the right of the political spectrum I was practically an anarchist. I wasn't. I was still a minarchist at best, and not a very educated one, either, believing government should provide roads, currency, and maybe even postal service, etc. College expanded my access to classics of libertarian thought, Austrian economics, and current work on libertarian principles. I still believed that our Constitutional Republic was the best form of human government ever devised. I still believe that, although my perspective on the belief has changed dramatically.

In both high school and college, I learned David Barton's enthusiastic endorsement of the Constitution as a document clearly embodying the principles of Scripture. In college, I also encountered Ted R. Weiland's eloquent rebuttal of the Constitution as a document departing in almost every important way from the guidance of the Bible. At the time, I

found Barton's arguments convincing. Much later, I realized the United States government is an excellent example of how even in the best possible circumstances – intelligent, educated, and experienced men with a respect for God and His Word, if not a personal relationship with Him, sitting down and rationally and peacefully creating a government from scratch, on a landmass possessing natural defenses from outside interference, abundant natural resources, and room to expand – human efforts at creating governments are bound to result in massive deprivations of liberty, in a fairly short period of time.

After graduating Cum Laude (B.A. in Political Science, Pensacola Christian College) in 2013, I enlisted in the United States Army, with aspirations of a career in Special Forces. I hoped to support the revitalization of the Constitutional Militia, as outlined by Dr. Edwin Vieira. The Special Forces career path failed to pan out due to medical reasons, although I did serve in the 75th Ranger Regiment for a time. I continued reading libertarian works and interacting with the libertarian community online. I started a Facebook page, which I had to take down for a while as my chain of command informed me it was not acceptable for a service member to label the Commander in Chief a "tyrant," even through an anonymous internet soapbox.

About that time, I read *Alongside Night* by J. Neil Schulman, finding it interesting and enjoyable, but failing at first to internalize the concept of agorism. I eventually began to realize that government fails at almost everything it does, although I continued to believe that we needed a government to provide many basic services.

The Turning Point

Still relying on Scripture as the foundation for my belief system, even while my understanding of God's Word and the ways it applies to the world continues to evolve, I eventually arrived at a pivotal question: "Where in the Bible does God instruct man to create a government?" My college Poli Sci classes had posited that civil government was first instituted when God ordained capital punishment in Genesis 9. I had always hesitated to endorse that view, as I could see no mention of civil government in the text. The position assumes without textual foundation that capital punishment is the exclusive province of civil government. As I presented my pivotal query to my educated Christian friends, some pointed me to Romans 13 (the classic text for Christians who believe government must be obeyed in all things). However, I noted that divine guidance on the proper relationship with government is far from an endorsement of the institution. Consider Mosaic divorce law: divorce was clearly outside of God's perfect will, but He nonetheless allowed for it in His Law, and gave guidance on the proper way to handle it. I noted also the guidance of Deuteronomy 17 regarding the selection of a King, which was certainly against God's perfect will.

Ultimately, I have been unable to find anything in the Bible instructing us to create a

government, other than the Deuteronomy 16 directive to choose judges and (militia) officers. Arbitration does not require a government now, any more than it did then. Nor does collective organized defense with a chain of command constitute a government. Having failed to find a divine command to create a government, and being unable to conclude that such a major aspect of human experience would be omitted by neglect rather than by intent, I am forced to conclude that human civil government is outside of the perfect will of God. I further conclude that the best form of governance (not government) is that prescribed by God Himself in the Mosaic Law, and practiced by ancient Israel during the time of the Judges, generally speaking. This would be a form of anarchy – “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” – with no coercive government taxation, conscription, eminent domain, etc. There would be individual responsibility to abide by God’s Law (as there is now, recognized or not) and communal responsibility to enforce His Law, e.g. execute murderers. Which parts of the Mosaic Law ought to be enforced under God’s current relationship with mankind is open for discussion among responsible adults. If such an anarchistic community declines to enforce some important aspects of the Law, they can hardly do worse than every government in the history of the world.

But I digress from the account of my transition to voluntaryism, into an explanation of my understanding of it, and an ideal application of it. The fact remains that I have concluded it would be better if governments did not exist, leaving men to interact voluntarily with each other. Furthermore, I believe much of God’s Law can be summed up in the zero aggression principle (initiation of force is morally wrong), furthermore government institutions inevitably rely on violations of that principle and thus of God’s Law, and – although we are instructed to pay taxes when doing otherwise would cause too much trouble – taxation constitutes theft, taking property without consent. Government directives to do evil (whether by commission or omission) do not override our conscience and our understanding of right and wrong. I favor agoristic obviation of government institutions. I support voluntary alternatives to government services as much as I can and continue to encourage government institutions to reduce and eliminate their restrictions on our freedoms.