

The Nature of Good Government

H. Doyle Smith

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With suggestions for building a just and equitable society, The Nature of Good Government is a ranging political science text.

H. Doyle Smith's musing book *The Nature of Good Government* addresses a range of political and economic topics.

The book begins by asserting that churches, states, and citizens have quite different roles to play in American society. It claims that churches should bring congregants together and stay away from divisive, "red herring" issues. It asserts that it is the government's duty to punish those who disobey the law and to tax those with money to pay for the services everyone needs (like health care for all citizens). And citizens, it says, must obey the laws and contribute to society however they can. In addition, a sound economy is also named as a necessary factor for the US's success.

While these early visions of the roles that different entities in the US should play are clear and concise, the book on the whole is disjointed. The first few chapters focus on good government and citizenship, the next discuss economic theories, and the last two chapters propose new health-care and immigration laws as well as means of improving the economy. These differing sections are not made to connect to each other in a meaningful way. Further, though the book makes some consequential claims, the citations needed to support its interpretations are absent.

While it is conscientious about naming broad inequalities in the US, the book's arguments are imprecise and unfocused. Its suggestions include illegal and ethically questionable methods of political and social improvement, such as using prisoners as slave labor and denying people welfare or the minimum wage. Some of the proposed solutions do not address the problems they were intended to remedy. And the book risks alienating its audience further by using outdated terminology to refer to undocumented immigrants and by making unsupported generalizations about Christianity and non-Christian religions (the latter of which are said to be focused on punishment, while Christianity is alleged to be unique in its focus on forgiveness and moving forward).

Inconsistent formatting also undermines the book's delivery. Some quotes are placed in quotation marks; others are not. Some words and paragraphs are split; others are combined. A flowchart is missing from the chapter entitled "The Way the World Works," while the chart in "The Inevitable Monopoly" contains errors. Some examples are repeated, and several thoughts within the chapter on immigration remain incomplete, with question marks as placeholders. Additionally, the book stops in an abrupt manner, without the unifying conclusions needed to make its final case convincing.

Addressing multiple political and economic topics, *The Nature of Good Government* is a faith-based book with recommendations for improving the United States.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (July 5, 2023)

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