CLR

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ABOUT THE JOURNAL

Purpose and Scope

The *Christian Libertarian Review* (*CLR*) is an open access academic publication founded in 2017 by the 501(c)(3) Libertarian Christian Institute (LCI). The purpose of the *CLR* is to foster intellectual dialogue, exploration, and research surrounding the relationship between Christianity and libertarian thought. As an interdisciplinary journal, contributions may span into fields of philosophy, political philosophy, theology, ethics, law, economics, anthropology, history, social studies and similar disciplines in the humanities and social sciences.

CLR is blind-reviewed by a team of scholars with terminal degrees in their respective fields. Each annual volume contains full-length articles and critical book reviews. Some accepted articles/reviews may be published online prior to the release date of the volume in which they appear. Contributors come from a wide variety of backgrounds and typically have graduate education and/or professional experience in the business world. All contributors identify as "Christian" (as outlined in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds) and "libertarian." The intended reader audience is generally upper-class undergraduate or graduate level.

General Submission Information

Submissions (to editor@christianlibertarianreview.com) should be of academic quality and tone, and should generally conform to the standards laid out within the *Chicago Manual of Style: Sixteenth Edition* supplemented by *The SBL Handbook of Style for Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines: Second Edition* for ancient text citation and abbreviation. All submissions will be evaluated through blind peer-review, edited, and potentially shortened for suitability for publication. Although the *CLR* General Editor makes every effort to promptly acknowledge all submissions, it is important to note that the initial review process generally takes a minimum of two months. Some published articles/reviews may appear online before others in the same volume have been published; all such "pre" publications are at the discretion of the General Editor and have no set schedule. Otherwise, submissions generally occur on an annual cycle and are due before July for the January release. More information can be found at christianlibertarianreview.com.

EDITOR'S PREFACE

It is with great pleasure and joy that I write this inaugural preface to the *Christian Libertarian Review.* The project has been an idea bubbling up in the minds of many professors, pastors, and public intellectuals for several years. The seminal moment arrived during some collaborative discussion at the 2016 *Christians for Liberty* conference in Austin, Texas. I pushed the idea and eventually it was incubated, developed, and brought into public view with the competent work of Dr. Norman Horn, Nick Gausling, and several others connected with the Libertarian Christian Institute (LCI). As you may have noted in the front matter of this publication, LCI is, in fact, the parent organization of *CLR*—and without regret. With similar organizations, LCI has done tremendous work in integrating Christian faith and practice with the cause of peace and liberty. I am honored to serve alongside its leadership, vision, and initiatives.

What, then, is the reason for this journal? Aren't there enough publications out there already?

The reason is apparent after one surveys the landscape: where can one engage in written, academic dialogue about powerful, influential ideas (both historical and contemporary) within a context that is *both* Christian and libertarian? This kind of venue generally doesn't exist. *Libertarian Papers, The Independent Review,* and similar publications are good and necessary, but generally aren't tailored towards those who identify as Christians, much less towards theological content. *Faith and Economics* is another good and necessary publication, but is largely limited to economic discussions. Other journals are either so broad as to intimidate the Christian scholar away from explicitly integrating theology with other

contemporary ideas. Still others are so narrow that the topics are severely limited (giving rise to the popular stereotype of cloistered academics splitting ideological hairs). And then there are those popular publications that swing in the other direction, sacrificing genuine scholarship for the short-sighted demands of the majority and amassing so worthless a library of half-baked click-bait of no more than a thousand words. There appears, then, to be a niche and a need for *CLR.*

The response of our Associate Editors proved as much. In less than a month, LCI staff had acquired most of our current peer-reviewers—who accepted our invitation without question. Several serve as world-class scholars whose credentials, experience, and accomplishments exceed almost anyone's highest expectations. I am particularly grateful and honored to be a part of this project and with the people who have volunteered to ensure its success.

As far as contributions go, this first volume is also as successful as anyone could hope. Like anyone in an editorial position as this, there is always the regular pester about fulfilling commitments and meeting deadlines. But, as far as acquiring *interest* is concerned, there was no effort needed. The very mention of "Christian" and "libertarian" in the same sentence was enough to evoke substantial response. Indeed, it seems that the political climates have shifted (as they often seem to do). The sacred labels and lines no longer mean what they once did—and not just in politics, but in theology and ecclesiology as well. The deadwood of yesteryear's battles are falling into their final smolder as a new generation, with new ideas and without older loyalties, is springing up from the soil to ask all the forbidden questions.[1]

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[1] Cf. Elise Daniel, ed., *Called to Freedom: Why You Can Be Christian and Libertarian* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2017), 9-10: "Many are jaded with the culture wars they grew up with in the eighties and nineties and are, therefore, less likely to call themselves Republican or Democrat. Young Christians are searching for a third political avenue without compromising their Christian faith….With an exploding population of young people considering themselves libertarian, over two-thirds of millennials calling themselves Christian, and a generation passionate about entrepreneurship, innovation, fighting poverty, and economic

And in what better context is there to engage this enterprise than amongst thoughtful written discourse? That is what *CLR* is all about.

What, then, lay ahead? With regard to the journal, you can read more in the first pages of this volume. There, you will find basic information about the journal, its purpose, staff, and submission procedures. One feature of the journal should be noted, however, and that is the meaning of "critical book reviews."

Before the internet, scholars relied on a university's indexed abstracts and popular, hard-copy book reviews for up-to-date summaries of new research. Today, however, online Amazon and blog reviews, vlog reviews, and other "unofficial" media have replaced the functionality of the typical 600-800-word refereed book review. So, for the past two decades, the boards and editors of periodicals (both old and new) have chosen one of three paths: (a) *abolish* book reviews altogether; (b) *retain* book reviews for the sake of tradition, even though they are practically useless and/or redundant; or (c) *reform* book reviews to encourage critical engagement by doubling their size and prohibiting simple chapter summaries for entire review. Like others, *CLR* has chosen the third route for various reasons (which cannot all be explained here). But hopefully you'll find this section of the journal as delightful as we do.

With regard to the future of Christian Libertarianism as a whole, much can be said and there is little room to elaborate here. But, for the sake of new and perhaps confused readers, I want to note a few items that demonstrate how libertarianism is not on the fringes of societal thought as many perceive it to be:

1. In 2008, SAGE published *The Encyclopedia of Libertarianism* by Ronald Hamowy (formerly assistant director of History of Western Civilization at Stanford University).

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justice, the cultural climate of American youth in the early twenty-first century is ripe for the unlikely intersection of Christianity and libertarianism."

2. In Spring of 2017, Pope Francis made it a point to criticize libertarians and libertarianism.[2]
3. In the same year, *The Routledge Handbook to Libertarianism* was published.
4. The Tom Woods show (hosted by the libertarian Harvard and Columbia University graduate, Tom Woods) is downloaded over 500,000 times each month.
5. Albert Mohler, President of one of the largest seminaries in the English-speaking world (SBTS), has frequently criticized Christians for entertaining libertarianism as a legitimate political option—even debating Libertarian Christian Institute Founder, Norman Horn, on national radio.
6. Ron Paul obtained as many electoral votes as Bernie Sanders in the 2016 American Presidential election.
7. The 2009-2015 comedy sitcom *Parks and Recreation* (starring Amy Poehler) featured the outspoken libertarian Ron Swanson as the Director of the Parks and Recreation Department.
8. According to recent polls, "Libertarianism is the most rapidly growing political affiliation in the early twenty-first century."[3]
9. Libertarian-oriented media (e.g., *Libertarian Papers*, Tom Woods Show, Peter Schiff Show, ReasonTV, Reason Magazine, antiwar.com, fee.org, cafehayek.com, lewrockwell.com, etc.) and organizations (Von Mises Institute, Cato Institute, Acton Institute, Foundation for Economic Education, Free State Project, Institute for Justice, Students for Liberty, Bastiat Institute, etc.) have gained a considerable presence outside mainstream media in the past five years.[4]

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[2] Vatican, "Message from the Holy Father to the participants in the Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences" (28 April – 2 May 2017). Available at press.vatican.va.

[3] Daniel, *Called to Freedom*, 9.

[4] Cf. David Boaz, *The Libertarian Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015), 7-9, for other examples on this growing interest.

Libertarianism is certainly on the rise—in both popular and academic circles.

But this provokes new questions for consideration. For that reason, I take up the subject in the first article, entitled "Christian Libertarianism: An Introduction and Signposts for the Road Ahead." I attempt to unfold the basic contours "Christian Libertarianism" before reviewing some of the areas that I would like to see addressed in future publications of *CLR* (or elsewhere).[5] These areas include contemporary theology, postmodernism, feminism, Old Testament theology, and homosexuality, among many others. The article therefore serves as a concise introduction as well as a springboard for curious inquirers. It is also part of a larger monograph on the subject that will (Lord willing) be completed in the next two years.[6]

David V. Urban (Calvin College) then analyzes a new publication on the political thought of C. S. Lewis before going on to address Lewis' views on controversial political topics. Urban scours through a variety of research materials to uncover some provocative finds about Lewis's views on everything ranging from the state, democracy, homosexuality, and government healthcare. In the end, it appears a libertarian stands behind the world of Narnia and dialogues of Screwtape. Fans of the Oxford literary critic and popular Christian author will not want to miss this scholarly and engaging article.

Eugene Callahan (Purchase College) and Alexander William Salter (Texas Tech) shifts gears to address the various economic problems with distributism—which is not, as readers learn, simply the same as socialism or a totalitarian command-economy. The article is important for those in certain Christian circles (e.g., Catholic social work) that tend to confuse distributism with sound economics, since economics is vital for solving economic problems like poverty. Callahan and Salter weave together an

[5] Special thanks to Dr. Zoccali and Dr. Jewell for blind-reviewing this unusual article in shorter order with patience and helpful criticism. (Now you know who wrote it—surprise!)
[6] Jamin Hübner, *Christian Libertarianism: An Introduction* (tentative title, forthcoming).

enlightening mix of primary and secondary sources in a clear assessment about distributism's (in)validity and future.

Finally, in an extended review of a seminal work, Nick Gausling (Libertarian Christian Institute) visits the recent tome by Greg Boyd, *The Crucifixion of the Warrior God.* Many Christians have become disillusioned with the moral majority and "Christian conservative" base in the West and have found solace in Boyd's earlier work *The Myth of a Christian Nation.* Here, in a formidable two-volume study by Fortress Press, Boyd confronts head-on the subject of violence, Christianity, and the biblical narrative. Can the blood and violence of the "God-breathed" Old Testament really be reconciled with the peaceful Jesus of Nazareth? And what does the cross have to do with any of this? Gausling's review is fair and erudite.

The journal then concludes with seven solid book reviews—all on recent, relevant books, all written with curious insight, and all written by those passionate about the subject matter at hand. (As the קֹהֶלֶת reflected, "Of making many books there is no end.")

Jamin Hübner
Rapid City, SD
New Year's Day, 2018

CHRISTIAN LIBERTARIANISM: AN INTRODUCTION AND SIGNPOSTS FOR THE ROAD AHEAD

Jamin Hübner[1]

Abstract: Explicit discourse about "Christian libertarianism" is a relatively recent phenomenon. While relevant concepts have been elucidated throughout scattered publications and private initiatives in the past century, there remains little by way of coherent summary. There are also a number of related subject areas needing clarification and development. This article seeks to ameliorate the situation by attempting to define "Christian libertarianism" and then exploring a number of relevant topics that might need fresh attention.

Keywords: libertarianism, freedom, Christian theology, liberty, theology, nonviolence, Christian libertarianism, Christian politics, classic liberalism

I. INTRODUCTION

The connection between Christian and libertarian thought has never been more explicit than in the past quarter-century. The reasons for this are numerous and cannot all be explored here. But an important concern emerging from this situation is (a) the lack of a sophisticated summary of "Christian libertarianism" (especially in an academic context), and (b) related areas that remain unexplored or undeveloped. Should Christian

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libertarianism continue to grow and remain a viable option for those seeking a coherent interpretive framework for faith, life, and civic (un)involvement, both of these areas should be fully addressed. Until then, the following preliminary considerations will have to suffice.

II. CHRISTIAN LIBERTARIANISM

In brief, Christian libertarianism exhibits an intersection of key concepts and practices in both Christian and libertarian thought, namely, (a) peace and nonviolence, (b) freedom and voluntary order, (c) decentralization and the diffusion of power, and (d) concern for economic flourishing. Not all Christian libertarians would summarize this way, nor include these four specific items even if they did.[2] Furthermore, there is not always a one-for-one correspondence of these characteristics within both the framework of Christianity and libertarianism (for the obvious reason that each framework is different). Such dissonance is partly the focus of the latter half of this article.

Nevertheless, when properly understood, Christianity and libertarianism can be said to be *complementary*. It may even be argued that one (libertarianism) is simply an extension of the other (Christianity) in the realm of political and economic affairs. As such, the key concerns summarized above, along with their embodiments (e.g., in church, society, family, etc.), can easily be found in both early Christian contexts and throughout the "literature of liberty."[3]

To flesh all of this out more explicitly, a brief summary of the four subject areas (above) is in order.

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[2] In fact, some are content to say that Christianity and libertarianism are simply "compatible," and not necessarily complementary at all. Cf. Elise Daniel, ed., *Called to Freedom: Why You Can Be Christian and Libertarian* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2017), 12.

[3] This quote is the title of an appendix in David Boaz, ed. *The Libertarian Reader* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015). Framing the discussion this way does not suggest that libertarianism is merely a literary phenomenon or "pure theory"—especially given strong evidence to the contrary (see the "Editor's Preface" of this volume).

(a) Peace and Nonviolence

Regarding (a), Jesus and the early church advocated a noticeably peaceful movement. This is demonstrated in Jesus' life and teachings (e.g., Sermon on the Mount, his refusal to use political/authoritarian power to rule during his temptations, his non-resistant and yet innocent death, teachings on what it is to be "great," a gentle disposition—especially with the vulnerable, public rebuke of the use of physical violence, etc.). It is also demonstrated in early church literature (e.g., New Testament, early church fathers and mothers, *Didache,* etc.) and practice (e.g., refusal to participate in the military, refusal to use any direct or indirect means of coercion/force, refusal to use state apparatus to spread Christian ideals/message, the promotion of reconciliation and forgiveness instead of revenge, the promotion of patience instead of forcing things to pass).[4]

Peace/nonviolence is also essential in libertarian thought. It is frequently summarized in the "non-aggression principle" (NAP) or "principle of non-aggression." The basic idea is that *violence is wrong*. More specifically, "It is wrong/illegitimate to initiate force or fraud against a person and/or their legitimately-owned property."[5] Notice, it is not that *all* coercion is immoral, for libertarians firmly believe in governance, common/customary law, and the capturing of aggressors in pursuit of

[4] See Jean-Michel Hornus, *It is Not Lawful For Me To Fight: Early Christian Attitudes Toward War, Violence, and the State,* trans. Alan Kreider and Oliver Coburn (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1980); Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), reviewed by Jamin Hübner in *The Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 13 (2017), as well as Ronald Sider, *The Early Church on Killing: A Comprehensive Sourcebook on War, Abortion, and Capital Punishment* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012) and George Kalantzis, *Caesar and the Lamb: Early Christian Attitudes on War and Military Service* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2012).

[5] There are a number of hair-splitting variants (and criticisms) of the NAP, but this need not concern us here and now. It should be noted, however, that some in the classical-liberal tradition have been turned off by both these qualifications and this particular focus, partly because of its seemingly reductionist approach (something I deal with elsewhere) and because of its startling implications (see next page).

justice—which involves the use of force. But this is obviously *responsive* force, not *initiations* of force. It is the instigating of violence that is "wrong" or "illegitimate."[6]

This basic proposal would not be controversial except that libertarians do not (like other political perspectives) exempt the state.[7] Non-aggression is expected of groups of individuals (e.g., governments, organizations, businesses, etc.) as much as individuals themselves.[8] Contrary to the social tradition of millennia, there are not two standards of morality—one for the political apparatus, and another for everything and everyone else. If, for instance, a man walked up to a woman on a sidewalk and started forcefully (non-consensually) touching her, this is sexual assault *regardless if the perpetrator is looking for an illegal plant or employed by the state.* The same principle goes for "war" (mass murder), "eminent domain" (land theft), "enhanced interrogation" (torture), and otherwise.[9] Libertarian perspectives on peace and nonviolence do not search for potential exceptions to nonviolence, much less build an entire theory upon them—

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[6] Cf. "the good neighbor principle" in Mary Ruwart, *Healing Our World: The Compassion of Libertarianism* (SanFrancisco: Sunstar, 2015), 21: "As children, we learned that if no one hits first, no fight is possible. Therefore, refraining from 'first-strike' force, theft, or fraud, is the first step in creating peace."

[7] In contrast to some sociologists and political theorists (see discussions in John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith, eds., *Nationalism* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1995]), libertarians tend to use the term "state" liberally, as well as synonymously with "government" and "nation-state" in most contexts. Following Oppenheimer, Giddens, Weber, and Rothbard (see more on this below), the "state" is generally any group that wields power/force over a certain domain (esp. over a certain geographical region, indicated by "state" or "national borders"). The state is (to plunder Marx) the "overt oppressing class."

[8] This is because groups of individuals are made up of individuals, and the regularities/laws of the lower level are not neutralized when adding additional layers to the higher levels. (Rocket science is complicated, but in the complex layers of equations there is not all of a sudden a point reached where 3 + 3 no longer equals 6.)

[9] In this sense, libertarians perform an incisive rhetorical "deconstruction"; the dominant discourse of state-legitimized violence is pulled out of its "it's OK because it's for a good cause" narrative and recast it into a "…but it's violence" framework. See below for more on libertarianism and postmodernism.

as is so evident in the popular ends-justifies-means Rawlsian[10] tradition.[11] Instead, it fully recognizes—much in line with the disturbing findings of Harvard psychologist Stanley Milgram[12]—that the mere possession of authority does not suspend morality, nullify personal responsibility, or change the basic nature of aggression.[13] Or, put differently, libertarianism is the only political theory that genuinely deals with what philosopher Michael Huemer calls "the problem of political authority":

> Acts that would be considered unjust or morally unacceptable when performed by nongovernmental agents will often be considered perfectly all right, even praiseworthy, when performed by government agents….Why do we accord this special moral status to government and are we justified in so doing? This is the problem of political authority.[14]

A kingly decree or majority vote also does not alter "the general moral law."[15] Neither monarchy nor democracy legitimize violence. In fact, given that the state itself is a monopoly on force, it should be the *last* party

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[10] See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

[11] Strands of the classical liberal tradition (and otherwise) argue that these activities aren't aggression since the governed have given consent to the government to do these things via a vote or "social contract" (cf. Declaration of Independence). But this argument has immediate problems, as not everyone votes, not every election is unanimous, not every winning candidate makes laws, and no one today has voluntarily signed any "social contract" with their government, real or imaginary.

[12] Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974; repr. by Harper Perennial, 2009).

[13] In fact, in Wilder's estimation, "So long as any large group of persons, anywhere on this earth, believe the ancient superstition that some Authority is responsible for their welfare, they will set up some image of that Authority and try to obey it. And the result will be poverty and war." Wilder, *The Discovery of Freedom*, 70.

[14] Michael Huemer, *The Problem of Political Authority: An Examination of the Right to Coerce and the Duty to Obey* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2012), 332-33.

[15] Murray Rothbard, *For a New Liberty* (Auburn: Ludwig Von Mises Institute, 2006), 28.

that is exempt from non-aggression.[16] Those with all the guns should be held to a higher (not *lower*) ethical standard.

The connection to Christianity is obvious at this point. In fact, one popular introduction to libertarianism is aptly entitled *Don't Hurt People and Don't Take Their Stuff: A Libertarian Manifesto*.[17] This thesis is little more than a restatement of two of the Ten Commandments (both of which Jesus

[16] David Friedman, *The Machinery of Freedom,* 3rd ed. (David Friedman via Createspace, 2014), 108: "Government is an agency of legitimized coercion. The special characteristic that distinguishes governments from other agencies of coercion (such as ordinary criminal gangs) is that most people accept government coercion as normal and proper. The same act that is regarded as coercive when done by a private individual seems legitimate if done by an agent of the government"; Rothbard, *For a New Liberty,* 56-58: "[The state is] that organization in society which attempts to maintain a monopoly of the use of force and violence in a given territorial area; in particular, it is the only organization in society that obtains its revenue not by voluntary contribution or payment for services rendered but by coercion"; Franz Oppenheimer, *The State,* trans. John Gitterman (Black Rose Books, 2007, originally published New York: B and W Huebsch, 1908), 15: "The State, completely in its genesis, essentially and almost completely during the first stages of its existence, is a social institution, forced by a victorious group of men on a defeated group, with the sole purpose of regulating the dominion of the victorious group over the vanquished, and securing itself against revolt from within and attacks from abroad. Ideologically, this dominion had no other purpose than the economic exploitation of the vanquished by the victors"; Anthony Giddens, *Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), 2:121: "The nation-state…is a set of institutional forms of governance maintaining an administrative monopoly over a territory with demarcated boundaries (borders), its rule being sanctioned by law and direct control of the means of internal and external violence"; William Arnal, "Banditry," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006), 1:388: "Very much like terrorists…bandits challenge the state's monopoly on certain types of violence. A state is a robber-band that has been recognized as legitimate by other states; a robber-band is an unrecognized state or one that operates within territory claimed by another state."; Max Weber, "Politik als Beruf," in *Gesammelte Politische Schriften* (Muenchen, l921), 396-450: "…we have to say that a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory….at the present time, the right to use physical force is ascribed to other institutions or to individuals only to the extent to which the state permits it. The state is considered the sole source of the 'right' to use violence."

[17] Matt Kibbe, *Don't Hurt People and Don't Take Their Stuff* (New York: William Marrow, 2014).

reiterates in Lk 18:20). The Judeo-Christian tradition and libertarian intellectual tradition share a rich history of advocating property rights—which largely constitutes the ground rules for "initiating violence."[18] In contrast to Christian liberals/leftists, Christian libertarians do not read the "radical egalitarianism"[19] of Jesus through the Marxist lens of private-property abolishment.

(b) Freedom and Voluntary Order

Regarding (b), the themes and advocacy of freedom and voluntary order permeate the New Covenant story and message. The immediate freedom that concerned Jesus' audience was freedom from Roman rule and oppression. Like any Jew in first-century Palestine, Jesus was obviously concerned about this situation. But he ultimately offered a much deeper and lasting freedom (Jn 8:33-34; Lk 4:18) that transcended local politics and even Israel's tumultuous history—socially, spiritually, existentially. This came into fruition in the "Body of Christ" (Paul's metaphor), which is a community characterized by voluntary (not compulsory) giving (2 Cor 9:7), by organic organization based on individuals' gifts (Acts 11:29; Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:7-31; Eph 4:1-14; cf. Hb 2:2-4), and by example, incarnated stories, and persuasion instead of coercion (see, for example, the kind of evangelism exhibited in Acts).[20]

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[18] E.g., to use the previous example, "don't steal" (and the goodness of generosity) presupposes private ownership of property.

[19] John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (New York: HarperOne, 1995), 79. Cf. N. T. Wright, *Simply Jesus* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), 70-71. But note the balancing correctives in N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1969), 389-399, since it is too simplistic to reduce much of what Jesus was doing into ethics.

[20] Hence, Locke: "A church, then, I take to be a voluntary society…I say it is a free and voluntary society. Nobody is born a member of any church; otherwise the religion of parents would descend unto children by the same right of inheritance as their temporal estates, and everyone would hold his faith by the same tenure he does his lands, than which nothing can be imagined more absurd. Thus, therefore, that matter stands. No man by nature is bound unto any particular church or sect, but everyone joins himself voluntarily to that society in

> Authority in the church rests with the congregation as the whole, not with "leaders" within it…The fact that Jesus is "Lord" also needs to be allowed to subvert rather than reinforce the idea that there is a hierarchy within the congregation.[21]

This changed with the legalization (and state embodiment) of Christianity in the early 300s CE.[22] But as far as the first, second, and third centuries are concerned, the church was remarkably uninvolved in civic affairs, in the operations of governments, and in the military precisely because of the church's free and voluntary character.[23] This included the success of

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which he believes he has found that profession and worship which is truly acceptable to God." John Locke, "A Letter Concerning Toleration," cited in Boaz, *The Libertarian Reader,* 66-67. Cf. Tertullian, *Apologeticus Pro Christianis,* xviii: "Christians are made, not born." This aspect has been missed in Presbyterianism, Reformed Theology, Roman Catholicism, and Eastern Orthodoxy, which re-establishes a household/physical element from the Old Covenant in who makes up the church (and thus *who* should be baptized; baptized infants obviously do not exercise choice). See Jamin Hübner, "Acts 2:39 in its Context," in Richard Barcellos, ed., *Recovering a Covenantal Heritage* (Palmdale: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2014) and Alan Conner, *Covenant Children Today: Physical or Spiritual?* (Owensboro: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2007).

[21] John Goldingay, *Biblical Theology: The God of the Christian Scriptures* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2016), 370.

[22] On this shift, see Part IV of Kreider, *Patient Ferment,* chapter 6 of Hornus, *It is Not Lawful,* and Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984). Some church history surveys also include helpful summaries, such as Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity,* vol. 1 (New York: HarperOne, 2010). Contrast with Peter Leithart, *Defending Constantine: The Twilight of an Empire and the Dawn of Christendom* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2010) and, somewhat related, Rodney Stark, *God's Battalions: The Case for the Crusades* (New York: HarperOne, 2010).

[23] See Sider, *The Early Church on Killing* and Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the early Church*. Cf. Keith Giles, *Jesus Untangled: Crucifying Our Politics to Pledge Allegiance to the Lamb* (Orange: Quoir, 2017); Brian Zhand, *A Farewell to Mars: An Evangelical Pastor's Journey Toward the Biblical Gospel of Peace* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014); and fierce arguments of Desiderius Erasmus against war. Note also the phenomenon of "soldier saints," where Christian martyrs were killed for refusing conscription, or Christian soldiers who were killed for refusing to offer pagan sacrifices. There were, of course, exceptions to this general trend. Nevertheless,

spreading Christianity itself. As Lactantius pointed out to Emperor Constantine, "forced conversions" are an oxymoron.[24]

From here—from the new community that absorbs the world[25] and renders the state obsolete—creatures on earth can enjoy the basic kind of freedom originally sought under Roman (or any other) rule.[26] "*Seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness*, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Mt 6:33, NIV, emphasis mine). In the words of New Testament scholar Scot McKnight, "Our responsibility is not to chaplain the state but to call the state to repentance and to surrender to the King who is Lord. Our responsibility is to be an alternative to the state."[27]

This freedom from violence and freedom in Christ therefore means freedom from the heavy binds of nationalism, empire, and other vexing idolatries. In contrast to both socialist-liberal and neo-conservative Christian politics, Christian libertarianism has no inherent national loyalties. There is no "the collective" first or its equivalent, and there is no "America first" or its equivalent. There is only "God's Kingdom first"—precisely as Jesus iterated. Desiderius Erasmus (1469-1536), the great

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Christian soldiers in the first and second century were "an anomaly" (see Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* [New York: HarperOne, 1996], 326-43).

[24] *Divine Institutes*, Book V.

[25] I am playing off the phrase "the Bible absorbs the world" from the post-liberal tradition of George Lindbeck and Hans Frei.

[26] Nietzsche was not all that off-base when he remarked, "Primitive Christianity is abolition of the state: forbids oaths, war service, courts of justice, self-defense and the defense of any kind of community, the distinction between fellow countrymen and foreigners, and also the differentiation of classes…Whoever says today: 'I will not be a soldier,' 'I care nothing for the courts,' 'I shall not claim the services of the police,' 'I will do nothing that may disturb the peace within me'…he would be a Christian." Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power,* trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage books, 1968), 123-125. Nietzsche elsewhere referred to Jesus as "that holy anarchist who roused up the people at the bottom, the outcasts and 'sinners,' the *Chandalas* within Judaism, to opposition against the dominant order," (*Antichrist,* § 27).

[27] Scot McKnight in Zhand, *Farewell to Mars,* 20. Cf. Gandhi's concept of *ramaraj,* the kingdom of God that makes stateless societies possible. See Mahatma Gandhi, ed. Judith Brown, *The Essential Writings* (New York: Oxford, 2008), 104-5.

proto-Christian-libertarian of the Renaissance, captured the spirit of the matter: "My own wish is to be a citizen of the world, to be a fellow-citizen to all enrolled in the city of heaven."[28] "For this apostle of peace," wrote one of his biographers, "nationalism was incompatible with Christianity and humanism."[29] The same attitude could be attributed to Jesus, whose followers risked death just by regularly entitling him with politically and theologically-charged terms. "The triple-description of him as savior, lord, and anointed (Phil 3:20) is 'counter-imperial'."[30] Indeed, it is difficult to overstate the significance that the earliest and most popular Christian creed ("Jesus is Lord") was as political as theological.[31] Consequently, Christian libertarianism consciously avoids the modern ditch of compartmentalizing Christian faith away from politics, and appropriates the burgeoning field of "empire criticism" into a more cohesive whole.[32] Furthermore, given how radically Jesus transformed the concept of authority and kingship—releasing not just the oppressed but the *oppressors* from their chains—Jesus' Kingdom was *liberally* liberating.[33]

"Libertarianism" derives its very name from "liberty" precisely because that is its chief focus. The underlying premise is that freedom (not subjugation) is the good, natural, and desirable posture of human interaction. Individuals are generally[34] autonomous creatures that have

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[28] And to prove his point (and baffle the nationalists), Erasmus sometimes dedicated the same volume to competing political leaders.

[29] Leon E. Halkin, trans. John Tonkin, *Erasmus: A Critical Biography* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994), 281.

[30] Goldingay, *Biblical Theology*, 355. "Third-quest" Jesus scholars frequently point out the association of each of these titles with Caesar Augustus (who ruled 27BCE—14CE).

[31] N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), ch 5; Larry Hurtado, *The Lord Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 108-117.

[32] See Scot McKnight and Joseph Modica, eds., *Jesus Is Lord, Caesar Is Not: Evaluating Empire in New Testament Studies* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013).

[33] See Wright, *Simply Jesus.*

[34] "Generally" is used here to avoid the suggestion that human freedom is absolute (as affirmed in many variants of secular libertarianism). In a Christian libertarian framework,

the "liberty" or "right" to act in any way that does not compromise or violate the freedoms of others.[35] As David Boaz puts it in *The Libertarian Mind:*

> Libertarians believe in the presumption of liberty. That is, libertarians believe people ought to be free to live as they choose unless advocates of coercion can make a compelling case. It's the exercise of power, not the exercise of freedom, that requires justification.[36]

Freedom in this sense is focused on human-to-human relationships as willful, conscious agents. As such, liberty is (again, relating to the principle of non-aggression) defined in primarily strict, negative, and often physical terms (i.e., absence of compulsion/coercion) without immediate reference to larger social structures, spiritual or intellectual states of affairs.[37]

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only God has "absolute freedom"; the freedom of God's images is inherently derivative ("ectypal" instead of "archetypal"). See more on this delineation below.

[35] Cf. Andrew Napolitano, *It's Dangerous to be Right When the Government is Wrong* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011), xxiv: "…we are free to do as we choose, but only to the extent that our actions do not infringe upon the freedoms of others. Thus, my freedom to swing my arms ends a few inches from your nose. In addition to individuals, governments must also obey the nonaggression principle, as governments are merely the constructs of individuals…"; Ron Paul, *Liberty Defined* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2011), xi: "Liberty means to exercise human rights in any manner a person chooses so long as it does not interfere with the exercise of the rights of others." On the meaning of "rights," see Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

[36] Boaz, *The Libertarian Mind,* 1.

[37] Libertarians debate the extent of "force" and "coercion" (e.g., blackmail, psychological and social pressures, etc.). Given the injustice of (for example) stealing digital currency from someone else's wallet, hacking, and the like, it seems simplistic and over-limited to restrict aggression to "physical force." However, there are complications with this view as well. This tension is acute in the debate over "intellectual property." For thoughtful reflections (and arguments) on this subject, see Stephen Kinsella, *Against Intellectual Property* (Auburn: Von Mises Institute, 2015).

Because of this, libertarianism is regularly stereotyped as promoting "selfishness" and "isolationism." On the contrary, "individual rights" *presupposes* personal relationships and social bonds precisely because the boundaries of freedom are contingent on the presence of others.[38] Furthermore, personal liberty is a precondition to all authentic human relationships for any layer of society. *Forced* marriage, *forced* sex, *forced* education, *forced* worship, *forced* play, *forced* sharing, and otherwise exhibit superficiality as much as immorality.[39] As these perverted dynamics extend into larger social structures, the level of superficiality and immorality is only amplified. Conversely, just as the most authentic friendships, learning, worship, etc., are *freely* chosen, so it is with institutions, organizations, and society at large.

In a word, then, society-wide states of affairs do not trivialize states of affairs on the lower level of the individual. (In this way, the libertarian is "pro-society" but anti-collectivist.) Just as a healthy body requires healthy organs, blood and bones, so does a free society require free individuals.

(c) Decentralization and the Diffusion of Power

Regarding (c), Jesus and the early church promoted and incarnated decentralized power dynamics. Naturally (cf. remarks above), this large-scale reorientation of the world began with changing individuals at the bottom, not politics from the top-down. On one occasion, after eating a meal with his friends, Jesus addresses the topic (or something approximating it) in plain terms:

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[38] See in particular, Wolterstorff, *Justice.*

[39] Notice how each of these cases are oxymoronic, having their own terms because of their coercive nature (e.g., "forced sex" = "rape," "forced giving" = "theft," etc.). Government officials and leaders tend to obfuscate these distinctions—undoubtedly to legitimize its own coercive actions. In terms of Foucauldian discourse analysis, one would say the state manufactures its own "truth" and subjugates the competing, local knowledges of dissenters.

> An argument broke out among the disciples over which one of them should be regarded as the greatest. But Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles rule over their subjects, and those in authority over them are called 'friends of the people.' But that's not the way it will be with you. Instead, the greatest among you must become like a person of lower status and the leader like a servant." (Lk 22:25-26, CEB)

Additionally, the marginalized and minority voices in society (women, Samaritans, eunuchs, slaves, etc.) were honored with dignity in counter-cultural episodes that shocked the crowds and altered their communal memories (e.g., Jn 4:1-26; Lk 8:1-3; 10:5-37; 17:11-19; Acts 8:34-39; 1 Cor 7; Gal 3:28). Human beings are human beings; all of the faithful pray to the same Father (Mt 6:9-13; Lk 11:2-4); everyone must repent of their own sins (Mk 1:14-15; Lk 13:1-4; 15:7-10; 17:3-4; Mt 11:20; 12:41; Acts 3:19; 8:20-22; 20:18-20; 17:22, 30; Rom 2:2-4; 3:23; 2 Tim 2:23-25); all must be baptized according to their individual faith (Lk 3; Mt 28:19-20; Acts 2:38-41; 8; Eph 4:5; Col 2:12; Rom 6:4; Gal 3:27)—not on the faith of their parents, "the community," or anyone else.[40] Besides this shift towards the individual,[41] this meant that the elite were not favored. This dangerous disposition was clear enough in the prophets (note Lk 13:34//Mt 23:37), but now it was supremely clear in the Torah-incarnate, the prophet of prophets, Jesus of Nazareth. The violent, hierarchical power structures that characterized the Roman government, earlier Jewish kings and nations, and pagan chieftains dissolved from a temporary (and primarily symbolic) apostolate of twelve disciples into a loosely structured organism of mutual accountability and shared responsibility (1 Cor 3:9;

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[40] See Conner, *Children of the Covenant;* Barcellos, *Recovering*; Shawn Wright and Thomas Schreiner, eds., *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2007); Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, Vol. 4.4, Section 75: Fragment The Foundation of the Christian Life Baptism* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010).

[41] This "shift" is in contrast to the Old Covenant. In comparison to contemporary individualism, primitive Christianity obviously looks far more communal than individualist.

12; 16:16; Phil 1:1; 2:25; 4:1-4; Rom 16:3-21), with only the Messiah himself as the chief cornerstone (Eph 2:19-20).[42]

Indeed, the Messiah consolidated power (Mt 28:18-20) not to selfishly wield it but to voluntarily share through his "Body." This further fulfilled the creation motif (Gen 1) of God bestowing God's images with power to exercise dominion with one another (Gen 1:27-29)—not *over* one another (which is a result of rejecting God's created order for human life; Gen 3:16; cf. Gen 4:7). For it is only God who can say "all authority has been given to me," and only God who can wisely use it for good.

> The new world we see being brought into being in the Gospels is one in which the whole grand cosmic architecture of prerogative, power, and eminence has been shaken and even superseded by a new, positively 'anarchic' order: an order, that is, in which we see the glory of God revealed in a crucified slave, and in which (consequently) we are enjoined to see the forsaken of the earth as the very children of heaven. In this shockingly, ludicrously disordered order (so to speak), even the mockery visited on Christ—the burlesque crown and robe—acquires a kind of ironic opulence: in the light cast backward upon the scene by the empty tomb, it becomes all at once clear that it is not Christ's 'ambitions' that are laughable, but those emblems of earthly authority whose travesties have been draped over his shoulders and pressed into his scalp. We can now see with perfect poignancy the vanity of empires and kingdoms, and the absurdity of men who wrap themselves in rags and adorn themselves with glittering gauds and promote themselves with preposterous titles and thereby claim license to rule over others.[43]

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[42] To reiterate, Christianity's marriage with the state in the 300s and its subsequent mirror-structuring according to Roman organization (e.g., Pope = Emperor at the top and subordinate groups below) was disastrous to this balanced distribution of power. In addition to Zhand, *A Farewell to Mars*, Giles, *Jesus Untangled,* Hornus, *It Is Not Lawful* (ch 6), and Kreider, *Ferment,* see Scot McKnight, *The Kingdom Conspiracy* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016), "Appendix A: The Constantinian Temptation."

[43] David Bentley Hart, *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and Its Fashionable Enemies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 174. Cf. the Christian anarchist tradition (e.g., the works of Leo Tolstoy, Jacques Ellul, Vernard Eller, Dave Andrews, Mark Van Steenwyk, and

Libertarianism, likewise, promotes the diffusion of power by "returning" (restoring) it from groups to the mass of individuals. The "power of choice" becomes important here,[44] as well as innovative thinking that takes shape in a world after modernity.

> In stark contrast to the crucial features of the so-called "enlightenment," some of the most fruitful and productive creations in human history are the result of *emergent*, *organic*, *self-organized*, *decentralized* efforts. The internet, Wikipedia, and cloud-computing are just three small—but revolutionary—examples [cf. block-chain technology]. Orchestras without directors, cars without drivers, globalized market systems without "anyone in control"—all of this has challenged the traditional way of thinking.[45]

Similar to Gandhi's *ramaraj*, libertarians thereby facilitate the onset of stateless societies.[46]

Individual freedom and property rights expressed in the realm of economics is simply "free-market economics," which is another

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others associated with the Catholic Worker movement.). See Alexandre Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism: A Political Commentary on the Gospels* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2010).

[44] Not least because human choice determines our identities and our ability for virtue: "The human faculties of perception, judgement, discriminative feeling, mental activity, and even moral preference, are exercised only in making a choice. [The one who] does anything because it is the custom, makes no choice…gains no practice either in discerning or in desiring what is best." John Stuart Mill in *The Libertarian Reader*, 121-122. A lesser capacity to choose actually means lesser humanity: "Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the world prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and develops itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing" (ibid.).

[45] Jamin Hübner, "Obstacles to Change: Overcoming the Hurdles of the State Apparatus in Higher Education," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 16:1 (Spring 2017): 34.

[46] Gandhi, *The Essential Writings*, 104-105. Cf. Chase Rachels, *A Spontaneous Order* (Createspace, 2015); Rothbard, *For a New Liberty;* Friedman, *The Machinery of Freedom*; Gerard Casey, *Libertarian Anarchy* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012).

manifestation of decentralization in libertarian thought.[47] This stands in direct contrast to centralized control, collectivism, and top-down organization—especially as recently embodied in twentieth century experiments in socialism (e.g., in central banking, energy, food production, agriculture, public education, etc.). "The more the state 'plans'," wrote Nobel-Prize laureate F.A. Hayek in *The Road to Serfdom*, "the more difficult planning becomes for the individual."[48] As in Christianity, no creature can successfully maintain a true monopoly on power and knowledge,[49] nor would it be desirable anyway. The ring of power "cannot be wielded," remarked Strider in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Bad things happen when people try.

(d) Concern for Economic Flourishing

This leads to the fourth and final subject area, which is economics and business. The Christian world-and-life view has always had a general interest (and historic influence) surrounding the relationship between humanity and creation—not least because of the well-known command in the primeval creation account.[50] Varying interpretations notwithstanding, this "creation mandate" of God's images, paired with God's own artistic

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[47] Oddly, then, in an otherwise stimulating volume, Steenwyk sees "anarcho-capitalism" as at odds with the Christian faith as an economic arrangement. See Mark Steenwyk, *That Holy Anarchist* (Minneapolis: Missio Dei, 2012). Too often in ethical discussions about capitalism, "capitalism" mistakenly refers to crony-capitalism (cf. "capture theory") or to American consumerism. In my perspective, the former (capitalism) is a *necessary* but not a *sufficient* condition for the latter (consumerism). See more on this below.

[48] F.A. Hayek, ed. Bruce Caldwell, *The Road to Serfdom,* The Collected Works of F.A. Hayek, vol 2. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 114.

[49] See, for example, the chapter entitled "Knowledge" in Thomas DiLorenzo, *The Problem With Socialism* (Washington D.C.: Regnery, 2016).

[50] "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Gen 1:28, NIV). In doing biblical and systematic theology about creation, other similar accounts must be integrated (e.g., Ps 104, Job 38-42, Is 45).

activity, indicates the *creative* nature of all human beings. Adam and Eve's creation earlier in the narrative highlights the *communal* nature of people, and their basic, biological interdependence (cf. 1 Cor 11:11). All of this means that human beings are *procreative*, *pro-creative*, *productive,* as well as *social* creatures in need of one another and capable of *culturing*.

Such needs and creativity find basic expression in *business*—which constitutes the necessary elements of societal service, growth and material prosperity. The individual voluntary transactions of creatures—creatures who always exhibit needs *and* productive abilities—build a flourishing economy through which the creation mandate to "subdue" and "rule" (or "master" and "take charge," CEB)[51] can actualize.[52] From boats to eating utensils to couches to smart phones, the "entrepreneurial spirit" images God's own creative work in the cosmos.[53]

The dynamics of this economic environment are therefore praised throughout the Christian scriptures (e.g., a strong work ethic and honesty in Torah and Proverbs; the entrepreneurial spirit of the "Wife of Proverbs 31"; cf. 2 Thess 3:10; 1 Thess 4:11), for they are part and parcel of the human flourishing that pleases God (Gen 1:31). And precisely because of creatureliness and interdependence, people are called to give and be generous with our possessions to others (Rom 12:8; 1 Cor 4:7; 2 Cor 9:6-7; 1 Tim 6:18; Lk 11:41; Acts 10:2; Prov 11:25; 22:9). Thus, *serving others and enjoying each other's creativity* are perhaps the primary purposes of "business." Profit, on the other hand, is a necessary but *secondary* outcome

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[51] *Not* to be confused with "destroy."

[52] For a helpful introduction to the intersection between Christianity and economics, see Victor Claar and Robin Klay, *Economics in Christian Perspective: Theory, Policy and Life Choices* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012).

[53] "…in Christian thought [humanity's] moral activity is thought of as being receptively reconstructive." Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*. 4th Ed. (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2008), 76. Cf. J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heavens and a New Earth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014) and *idem, The Liberating Image* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005).

of this pursuit.[54] The strict pursuit of profit—especially for the sake of profit, power, or status—is fervently criticized from one corner of the Christian story to the next (e.g., 2 Sam 12:1-5; Job 36:18; Ps 49:16-17; 62:10; Prov 11:28; 22:2, 16; 23:4-5; 27:24; 28:20, 22; 30:8; Eccl 5:12; Jer 5:26-29; 9:23-24; 17:10-11; 48:7; 49:4; Hos 12:7-8; Mt 19:23-24; Lk 6:2; 12:15, 20-21; 18:24; 2 Cor 2:17; 8:2-9; Eph 4:17-19; 5:3; Col 3:5; 1 Tim 6:9-10, 17-18; Js 1:9-11; 5:1; Rev 2:8-11; 3:17; 18:1-19).[55]

Libertarianism also has a noticeable preoccupation with economics and business. It is no irony that the popularity of libertarianism has increased with the demise of socialism in the twentieth century. It is precisely in trying to control a society via its economy (which ultimately requires controlling *individuals*) that the evils and catastrophes of anti-liberty are exposed.[56] Conversely, it is also in freedom of markets that the "spontaneous" and "self-organizing" economy boasts its most illustrious riches.[57] Unsurprisingly, leading figures of libertarianism—such as Ludwig Von Mises, Murray Rothbard, F.A. Hayek, Frederick Bastiat, Henry Hazlitt, Hans-Hermann Hoppe, David Friedman, and Robert Murphy—are accomplished economists. Other leading libertarians tend to be entrepreneurs in the business world. Still others, like the journalists

[54] It is also an indicator of successfully aligning creative products with actual human needs and desires. See Shawn Ritenour, *Foundations of Economics: A Christian Perspective* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 211-221. Profit does not indicate, however, that *ethical* desires have been fulfilled.

[55] Cf. Craig Blomberg, *Neither Poverty Nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Possessions* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999).

[56] E.g., mass starvation and forced famines, gulags and concentration camps, economy-wide boom-bust cycles, hyperinflation and the destruction of currencies, wars, etc.

[57] E.g., eradicating poverty for nearly a third of the human population by producing unprecedented amounts of food, clean water, housing, and wealth; countless innovations taken for granted such as the wash machine, internet, phone, drone, computer, etc. See the section "Spontaneous Order" in *The Libertarian Reader* for short essays on this concept of unplanned organization, as well as Jamin Hübner, "A Concise Theory of Emergence," *Faith and Thought,* 57 (October, 2015): 2-17.

and literary critics Rose Wilder and Isabel Paterson, had keen eyes toward economic inequalities around the globe and the reasons behind them.

In addition to being uncompromisingly anti-fraud, anti-theft, and pro-private-property, libertarianism recognizes that evil virtues (e.g., greed, selfishness, dishonesty, envy, etc.) are best mitigated through the same mechanisms that produce wealth: *diffused power*. In the realm of economics and law, that means markets based on voluntary (not coercive) exchange, property rights, and contract law.[58] There is only so much harm than can come from diffused power; but great harm can come from centralized power. A *competitive* economy, as ugly and annoying as it may get, remains far more effective at discouraging greed, envy, reducing waste, eliminating fraud, preventing theft, and improving the standards of living for everyone (*especially* the poor) than the alternative of mandated monopolies, price controls, government-facilitated cartels, and crony-capitalism. ("If you think CEOs are greedy," the saying goes, "just wait until you meet a politician.")[59]

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[58] Classic works on this subject include Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); George Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty* (Washington D.C.: Regnery, 2012); Robert Sirico, *Defending the Free Market: The Moral Case for a Free Economy* (Washington D.C.: Regnery, 2012) and Jay Richards, *Money, Greed, and God: Why Capitalism Is the Solution and Not the Problem* (New York: HarperOne, 2010).

[59] As noted in Doug Bandow, *The Politics of Envy: Statism as* Theology (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1994), xvii, capitalism may sometimes be charged with catalyzing greed, but one must remember that statism and socialism catalyzes envy, which is far worse: "…politics, in the United States, at least, has increasingly been based on envy, the desire not to produce more for oneself, but to take as much as possible from others. Of course, all of the proponents of the politics of envy proclaim themselves animated by public-spiritedness: who in Washington would admit that the higher taxes he advocates will be used to pay off the interest group of the day, whether farmer, corporation, or union? Who would suggest that he has anything but good will toward those who he is intent on mulcting? Indeed, the problem of envy has always been much more serious than that of greed. Those who are greedy may ruin their own lives, but those who are envious contaminate the larger community by letting their covetousness interfere with their relations with others. Moreover, one can satisfy greed in innocuous, even positive ways — by being brighter, working harder,

Indeed, CEOs must satisfy *many common* people to stay employed. The politician and government administrator, however, only has to satisfy a *few wealthy* people to stay employed. In free markets "the consumer is king" instead of an *actual king* (or bureaucratic committee), so the reward for better goods and services is high, and the punishment for *poorer* goods and services is also high.[60] This contrasts with goods and services produced by the state, which must be accepted no matter how unsatisfying or dehumanizing they are. Consumers cannot avoid or correct the grotesqueries of such things as the welfare system, the VA system, Native-American Reservations, public schools, or otherwise (e.g., prison systems) simply by withholding payment.[61] Consequently, improvement in the affairs of the state is notoriously sluggish.

> [Regarding] the market, in society in general, we expect and accommodate rapidly to change, to the unending marvels and improvements of our civilization. New products, new life styles, new ideas are often embraced eagerly. But in the area of government we follow blindly the path of centuries, content to believe that whatever has been must be right.[62]

A society with free enterprise, however, can flourish (and has flourished) more than any other arrangement. It remains a fact that free trade and free enterprise is the leading cause for eradicating poverty for

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seeing new opportunities, and meeting the demands of others, for instance. In contrast, envy today is rarely satisfied without use of the state."

[60] For example, in 2016 a doctor was forcibly removed from an overbooked United Airlines flight, making headlines across the world. The punishment for this poor service was immediate: United Airlines lost over $250,000,000 in crashed stock within 48 hours of the incident. (Something like this is obviously not possible with the state, which can—and does—forcibly remove peaceful persons from public streets, and even from their own homes, without any penalty whatsoever.)

[61] "The Government monopoly, being maintained by force, does not depend upon its customers. Their desires have no direct effect on it." Wilder, *The Discovery of Freedom,* 45.

[62] Rothbard, *For a New Liberty,* 241.

nearly two billion persons in the past half-century—an unparalleled accomplishment in the history world-wide humanitarianism.[63] Walmart and Amazon (entrepreneurs and the market) are the true friend of the poor—not the Labor and Welfare Bureau (the state).

The Christian-libertarian connection, then, is complementary:

> We build, create, and restore in a way that fulfills our purpose as human beings created in the image of God. It is here that libertarians have so much to add to the conversation. Libertarianism teaches that creating, building, and producing are all ways we participate in the broader market process, which libertarians typically believe should be left alone to the fullest extent possible. While this can't save souls or put an ultimate salve on the problem of pain, peaceful engagement in market processes and societal institutions is a fruitful way to live life on earth….Libertarianism explains and empowers some of the most beneficial ways we can practically serve our fellow men and women.[64]

Were it not for its Marxist framework, liberation theology would not be so incompatible with libertarianism in this respect: "Private enterprise capitalism, is, in fact, the answer for anyone who really does have a preferential option for the poor."[65] Or, in the words of Prime Minister and theologian Abraham Kuyper:

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[63] In addition to Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom,* see Deirdre McCloskey, *Bourgeois Equality: How Ideas, Not Capital or Institutions, Enriched the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), Deirdre McCloskey, *Bourgeois Dignity: Why Economics Can't Explain the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), and the thoughtful reflections in Rose Wilder, *The Discovery of Freedom* and Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan (New York: The Modern Library, 1994 [1776]).

[64] Leah Hughey, "Bards with Breadcrumbs," in *Called to Freedom,* 108. This writeup is particularly persuasive with unusually eloquent prose (making for most pleasurable essay-reading).

[65] Edmund Opitz, "Biblical Roots of American Liberty," *FEE* (July, 1991). Accessed at https://fee.org/articles/biblical-roots-of-american-liberty/

> Never forget that all state relief for the poor is a blot on the honor of your savior. The fact that the government needs a safety net to catch those who would slip between the cracks of our economic system is evidence that I have failed to do God's work. The government cannot take the place of Christian charity. A loving embrace isn't given with food stamps. The care of a community isn't provided with government housing. The face of our Creator can't be seen on a welfare voucher. What the poor need is not another government program; what they need is for Christians like me to honor our savior.[66]

Finally, this creative world of wealth also makes *large-scale generosity* an exciting new possibility.[67] This is particularly exciting for the Christian who is called to be (if not already habitually) generous.[68]

Such material prosperity may, nevertheless, lead to increased temptations. An environment of wealth may even lead to spiritual impoverishment—as it seems to have in the "developed world."[69] Many (but not all) libertarians recognize this and, in the spirit of the Messiah who fed the hungry and healed the blind before preaching sermons, attempt to balance their efforts for the whole spectrum of human needs.[70]

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[66] Abraham Kuyper, trans. James Skillen, *The Problem of Poverty* (Sioux Center: Dordt College Press, 2011), 78.

[67] This is evidenced not only in countless new charity organizations, but in microloans, crowd-sharing platforms, tuition-free advertising-based education, and a string of new financial instruments to "put wealth to work" for the church and the community.

[68] Cf. Isabel Paterson, *The God of the Machine* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1993, orig. 1943), 239: "The great religions, which are also great intellectual systems, have always recognized the conditions of the natural order. They enjoy charity, benevolence, as a moral obligation, to be met out of the producer's surplus…without production there could be nothing to give." See also, Edmund Opitz, *Religion and Capitalism, Friends Not Enemies* (FEE, 1992, previously published in 1970 by Arlington House).

[69] An internet search for "banker suicides" or "wall street suicide" will make this evident.

[70] Edmund Opitz, perhaps the greatest Christian libertarian of the twentieth century, dedicated a whole chapter towards the strengths *and* weaknesses of the marketplace. See Edmund Opitz, *Religion and Capitalism: Allies, Not Enemies* (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1970), ch 4.

For the libertarian who is Christian, the haunting words of Jesus allow no confusion: "For what will it profit [κερδαίνω, primarily an economic term] them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?" (Mk 8:36, NRSV).[71]

All things considered, it is well-founded to say that "libertarianism is the most consistent expression of Christian political thought."[72] To conservative evangelicals committed to the Republican party and to the progressive left that reads socialism into the New Testament, this may be a baffling conclusion, indeed. But it is a valid conclusion, formidably argued, and must be dealt with on its own terms.

We are now in a position to discuss where all of these issues might go—need or *ought* to go—if Christian libertarianism is to remain a viable option. The purpose of the following sections are to expose vistas for exploration by invoking open-ended questions and points of contemporary dialogue.

III. FREEDOM AND AUTONOMY

"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free…the one who sins is a slave to sin."
—Jesus (John 8:31, 34, NIV).

In what sense is freedom (and slavery) meant here and elsewhere in Jesus' teaching? Moral? Existential? Salvific? Socio-political? Economic? It

[71] It must also be noted that libertarians carefully distinguish capitalism (a general arrangement) from *American* capitalism (a particular expression of capitalism) and from *consumerism* (another particular expression, not geographically located). These three are not all the same and must be distinguished. Free markets, because they are *free,* do not all look the same because not all peoples and societies use their freedoms in the same way. Contemporary critiques of "capitalism" very rarely take this into account and assume that the worst forms of American enterprise are simply "the result of capitalism." This would be like saying "Thousands die each day of car wrecks. Look at the evils of cars! How can we keep saying automobiles are a good idea?"

[72] This motto was coined by Dr. Norman Horn, founder of The Libertarian Christian Institute.

doesn't immediately seem to be freedom from violence—although perhaps this was a potentially latent or ongoing implication. Whatever the case, these words at least give reason for pause before saying without qualification, "all people are free creatures."

Jesus and his Kingdom did not exactly materialize as anticipated. The fanfare on the way to Jerusalem involved a donkey and palm branches, not warhorses and swords. "Enemies" of every kind were made into friends. The Romans ended up killing Jesus (not the other way around). The Messiah was resurrected, which was never supposed to happen (because the Messiah was never supposed to die).[73] Followers of the Messiah grew in number because of their character and convictions—not because of their political authority or some federal programs. Similarly, then, the freedom Jesus offered wasn't merely freedom from civil and political oppression—if it was even that, at all.

The legal scholar and Christian ethicist Stanley Hauerwas observes, "Christian nonviolence does not gain its intelligibility from a high humanism presupposing that freedom is the absence of 'coercion.' Rather, Christian nonviolence gains its intelligibility from the cross, where we see our God suffering so that we might be freed from the violence that grips our lives."[74] What, then, is the intersection between freedom from coercion and violence and the freedom(s) offered in the New Testament story? There is no question that Jesus embodied the principle of non-aggression,[75] but how does this inform the larger theology of Christ and

[73] See N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

[74] Hauerwas, *A Better Hope: Resources for a Church Confronting Capitalism, Democracy, and Postmodernity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2000), 114. Cf. Daniel Finn, *Christian Economic Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 99: "Thus the Christian view of freedom insists that individuals make their own decision but recognize that not every decision being made is a free one. We are free when we actively choose to do what fulfills ourselves, in accord with God's plan."

[75] Despite speculative claims to the contrary, such as in Lloyd Steffen, "Religion and Violence in Christian Traditions," ed. Mark Juergensmeyer, Margo Kitts, and Michael Jerryson, *Violence in the World's Religious Traditions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 114-

the NT with regard to physical non-violence—and is such basic nonviolence simply an uncritical adoption of "high humanism" and Enlightenment thought?

David Bentley Hart picks up on these concerns in his brilliant work *Atheist Delusions.* After a blistering critique of the modernist narrative of progress, Hart presses the point about how the myth of "freedom" and "autonomy" actually motivated the most evil acts of aggression in recent times:

> The ambition to refashion humanity in its very essence—social, political, economic, moral, psychological—was inconceivable when human beings were regarded as creatures of God. But with the disappearance of the transcendent, and of its lure, and of its authority, it becomes possible to will a human future conformed to whatever ideals we choose to embrace. This is why it is correct to say that the sheer ruthlessness of so much of post-Christian social idealism in some sense arises from the very same concept of freedom that lies at the heart of our most precious modern values. The savagery of triumphant Jacobinism, the clinical heartlessness of classical socialist eugenics, the Nazi movement, Stalinism—all the grand utopian projects of the modern age that have directly or indirectly spilled such oceans of human blood—are no less results of the enlightenment myth of liberation than are the liberal democratic state or the vulgarity of late capitalist consumerism or the pettiness of bourgeois individualism. The most pitilessly and self-righteously violent regimes of modern history—in the West or in those other quarters of the world contaminated by our worst ideas—have been those that have most explicitly cast off the Christian vision of reality and sought to replace it with a more 'human' set of values. No cause in history—no religion or imperial ambition or military adventure—has destroyed more lives with more confident enthusiasm than the case of the 'brotherhood of man,' the postreligious utopia, or the progress of the race.

118, also published in *idem., The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

> To fail to acknowledge this would be to mock the memory of all those millions that have perished before the advance of secular reason in its most extreme manifestations. And all the astonishing violence of the modern age—from the earliest European wars of the emergent nation-state onward—is no less proper an expression (and measure) of the modern story of human freedom than are the various political and social movements that have produced the modern west's special combination of general liberty, material abundance, cultural mediocrity, and spiritual poverty. To fail to acknowledge this would be to close our eyes to the possibilities for evil that have been opened up in our history by the values we most dearly prize and by the same 'truths' we most fervently adore.[76]

Jürgen Moltmann, another leading theologian of our age, recently brought attention to the same disturbing problem by drawing the connection between atheism and anarchism:

> [In Bakunin,] if we want to liberate human beings, we must negate God. Atheism is the presupposition for true human liberty. Human liberty stems from rebellion. For Bakunin as for Feuerbach, God and the human being are not one and the same. Ironically enough, Bakunin uses the biblical story of the fall as justification for his doctrine of freedom: 'But then came Satan, the eternal rebel, the first free thinker and universal liberator…He frees him [i.e., the human being] and impresses on his brow the seal of freedom and humanity by driving him to be disobedient and to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge.' And 'God said that Satan was right' and found that the human being 'had become like God.' Bakunin concludes from this myth about the fall that human beings have liberated themselves—and will liberate themselves—'through rebellion and thought.'
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> That was undoubtedly meant politically. Bakunin was living in the holy Russia of the autocratic tsars and the Orthodox state church. 'As the slaves of God, men and women must also be slaves of the church and of

[76] Hart, *Atheist Delusions*, 108.

> the state, inasmuch as the state is blessed by the church.' Consequently, his writing *God and the State* culminates in the anarchistic cry, '*Ni Dieu ni maitre*'—neither God nor state! He knew only the political state god and rose against it for freedom's state—politically speaking, rightly so.[77]

This leads one to ask: to what extent has contemporary libertarianism (and its emphasis on "liberty") been shaped by the Enlightenment philosophy of autonomy, if at all? More crassly, is "Christian libertarianism" a hopeless rip-off of an atheistic philosophy, a sort of "Christianized" spin on modernist autonomy? How might answering this inform our discourse about "liberty"?

This is important to ask not merely for historical and philosophical reasons, but because "autonomy" is a particularly dirty word for theologians. Rothbard said "everyone has the *absolute right* to be 'free' from aggression."[78] However, Christian theology suggests that only the Creator is "absolute" and "absolutely free." Are we then left with a dubious "relatively absolute freedom" in describing the liberties of creatures?

"The revelation of a self-sufficient God," wrote the Calvinist professor Cornelius Van Til, "can have no meaning for a mind that thinks of itself as ultimately autonomous." In fact,

> The entire idea of inscripturated supernatural revelation is not merely foreign to but would be destructive of the idea of autonomy on which the modern man builds his thought. If modern man is right in his own assumption with respect to his own autonomy, then he cannot even for a

[77] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Living God and the Fullness of Life* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2016), 104. Note also the title of the anarchist anthology, Daniel Guerin and Paul Sharkey, *No Gods No Masters* (Oakland: AK Press, 2005).

[78] Rothbard, *For a New Liber*ty, 27. Emphasis mine.

> moment logically consider evidence for the fact of the supernatural in any form as appearing to man.[79]

In other words, the one who sins is a slave to sin—*and this appears to be everyone on earth not "reborn."* We're back to Jesus once again.[80]

So it seems that there might be some room for clarification when it comes to the nature of human freedom and action with respect to other people—*within* the context of God's creation. At the very least, we ought to distance ourselves from simplistic reductionisms regarding freedom. David Friedman is right, after all: "Liberty is not the only value, nor is it infinitely important compared to other values."[81]

IV. DISTINCTIVES OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTARIANISM

"What if one of you said, "Go in peace! Stay warm! Have a nice meal!"? What good is it if you don't actually give them what their body needs?"
—James (2:16, CEB)

To put it differently, there would seem to be a *Christian version* of the Non-Aggression Principle, one that goes beyond the protection of natural negative rights and into the protection of *positive* rights (e.g., to health,

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[79] Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, 163. Greg Bahnsen, Van Til's successor, later clarified in terms of thought and epistemology: "The non-Christian thinks that his thinking process is normal. He thinks that his mind is the final court of appeal in all matters of knowledge. He takes himself to be the reference point for all interpretation of the facts. That is, he has epistemologically become a law unto himself: autonomous." Greg Bahnsen, *Always Ready* (Nacogdoches: Covenant Media Press, 1996), 20.

[80] This isn't even to mention the philosophical debates surrounding "libertarian free-will" (the power of contrary choice), which has long plagued the church since Augustine, to Aquinas, to Luther and Erasmus, and post-reformation scholasticism.

[81] Friedman, *The Machinery of Freedom*, 173. Hence Daniel, *Called to Freedom,* 6: "For the libertarian Christian, liberty is an opportunity to freely choose true Christian virtue. Worshipping and knowing God is still the chief aim of life, not radical individualism."

education, housing, water, food, etc.). This was largely Hauerwas's point above, and it was definitely what Jesus and the early church embodied.

In other words, Christian libertarianism, as expressed in the local church and elsewhere, is non-aggression *plus.* It is absence from violence *and* the individual and communal pursuit of the good, true, and beautiful.[82] It's as if the (libertarian) Silver Rule of Confucius ("Don't do to others what you'd not have them do to you")[83] combines with the (Christian) Golden Rule of Jesus ("Do to others what you'd have them do to you").[84] Reformulated into the typical NAP creed, it might look something like the following:

> It is legitimate—*blessed*, in fact—to initiate goodness, grace and all the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) towards another person and/or their property.[85]

[82] "True freedom is the gift of the Spirit, the result of grace; but precisely because it is freedom *for* as well as freedom *from,* it isn't simply a matter of being forced now to be good, against our wills and without our cooperation (what damage to genuine pastoral theology has been done by making a bogey-word out of the Pauline term *synergism,* 'working together with God'), but a matter of being released from slavery precisely into responsibility, into being able at last to choose, to exercise moral muscle, knowing both that one is doing it oneself and that the Spirit is at work within, that God himself is doing that which I am too doing." N. T. Wright, *Justification* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2016), 189.

[83] 己所不欲，勿施於人. *Analects* XV.24.

[84] Mt 7:12.

[85] Although different, this may alleviate Friedman's concern in *The Machinery of Freedom,* 171, "Perhaps we should replace a statement about what one should do ('never initiate coercion') with a statement about what objective one should seek ('do whatever minimizes total amount of coercion')."

Rothbard creatively imagined what a society might look like if it adhered to the NAP and remained peaceful[86]; what might a society look like if it was Christlike and adhered to *this* creed?[87]

Is it then appropriate to speak of a Christian "obligation" to look after the "positive liberties" of others—and perhaps even "enforce" this within the Christian community? Internal discipline did, after all, make stark appearances in the early church of Acts, Corinth, and Galatia.[88] And Jesus did expect distinctive habits, behaviors, and attitudes that would set the new covenant community apart (e.g., Jn 21:15; Mt 28:19-20). These, too, are questions that might need attention.

It should be noted, nevertheless, that *Christian* libertarianism, based on the reign of King Jesus and gospel of peace, might lay to rest Friedman's claim that "libertarians have not yet produced any proof that our moral position is correct."[89] If God's own self-revelation—coupled with two thousand years of contemplation by some of the brightest minds ever known—does not suffice, then nothing probably will. The highest form of moral "proof" is not so much a compelling syllogism, a discovery of fresh evidence, or numerical consensus as much as it is the chief Metaphor of God breaking into creation and living an entire life of moral uprightness, fulfilling a well-documented and deeply rich 2,000 year-old drama (complete with prophetic expectation), teaching ethics (among other things) in our language, performing extraordinary wonders to help

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[86] See the latter half of *For a New Liberty,* and also *The Ethics of Liberty* (New York: New York University Press, 2003).

[87] One doesn't have to wonder, of course, for this was one the reasons the Gospels were written. To look at the world inaugurated in the narratives of Matthew, Mark, John, and Luke-Acts is to witness the first-stages of the new creation. Cf. N. T. Wright, *Simply Christian* (New York: HarperOne, 2010); *idem., Surprised by Hope* (New York: HarperOne, 2008).

[88] Some, like Peter Leithart, *Against Christianity* (Moscow: Canon Press, 2003), would go as far as to say that the NT church was modeled after the Greek πόλις (city). While there may be something to this (especially as Paul also uses "citizenship" in a transformative way in Phil 3:20, etc.), it has the negative potential of importing the coercive elements of statism and nationalism into the ethos of the church.

[89] Friedman, *The Machinery of Freedom,* 163.

others, and having all of this written down in the most reliable documents of the ancient world *and* the most influential collection of writings in all of human history. *This should at least be an option to consider*—though this would, of course, require an openness to non-atheistic metaphysics and non-modern epistemologies.[90]

This introduces us to some of the ways in which secular libertarianism may differ from *Christian* libertarianism. Some of these ways were alluded to earlier (e.g., human beings having relative, not absolute freedom, business is a means of service and not merely the pursuit of profit, etc.). At the very least, "Libertarians do not have to be libertines."[91] Popular topics from media headlines furnish other case studies. Take guns and "gun rights" for example. "Christian conservatives" have always tended to be "pro-gun," but what follower of Jesus could possibly justify the *promotion of weapons*—especially when not under immediate threat? (The Sermon was "blessed are the peacemakers," not "blessed are the drone-bombers.")

On the other hand, what can justify the forceful removal of guns from an entire population—only to dangerously monopolize all this firepower into the hands of a single, authoritative group? Again, if weapons function as power, they should be disseminated through the masses and not hoarded by an elite few. Whatever the case, there are a variety of reasons for caution when either limiting or promoting weapons.

> It is one thing to say that we are permitted to own and use guns. It is quite another to place one's trust and safety solely on what's in a holster close by. There are psychological ramifications to possessing the power to kill, and we must search our own hearts to ensure we have not misplaced our security. It is disheartening when Christians permit their gun-owning

[90] And this option (at least as I've stated it) is anything but turning off one's brain and capitulating to a statist-like system of religious authority and obedience. Christians ought not adopt an uncritical, simplistic understanding of "divine revelation" (e.g., "God said it, that settles it")—which is a legitimate concern of contemporary skeptics (e.g., Sam Harris).

[91] Taylor Barkley, "Cool It: You Don't Have to Be a Libertine," in *Called to Freedom,* 85.

> rights to become an opportunity to relish the power that comes with protection. We cannot mistake insecurity for prudence.[92]

It seems once again that the promotion of liberty and property looks different within a Christian orientation than from outside of it.[93]

V. SEXUAL FREEDOM AND FEMINISM

"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."
—Apostle Paul (Gal 3:28, NRSV)

"What business is it of the State?"
—C. S. Lewis (on illegalizing homosexual acts)

And then there is the hot-topic of *sexual* freedom. Libertarians (especially those who have lived through the 1960s and 70s) have addressed the subject of sexual freedom against the coercive/legislative approach of right-wing conservatives. (As the saying goes: "*Libertarianism: keeping liberals out of your fridge and conservatives out of your bedroom*.")

This is a thorny issue for Christian libertarians on two fronts. The first concerns homosexuality and homoeroticism.[94] How should homosexuality (and those identifying with the LGBT[…] group[s]) be properly perceived within a Christian theological and ethical framework, and how does an ethic of non-violence inform the local Christian response to it? If libertarianism is all about freedom, to what extent does this apply to sexual freedom—both in and outside the "law of Christ"? Christian

[92] Douglas Stuart, "Christians and Guns: A Libertarian Christian Perspective." Libertarian Christian Institute (January 16, 2016).

[93] For preliminary investigations of this topic, see Barkley, "Cool It," in *Called to Freedom*, 87-96.

[94] For reasons that cannot all be explained here, I think this delineation is important especially as "homosexual" and "homosexuality" are notoriously imprecise.

libertarians generally agree that the state, if it is to exist at all, should not interfere with the choices of others unless those choices are coercive in nature. There is nothing, in principle, that should deem any sexual act "illegal" except those which are coercive (e.g., rape).[95] But, because Christian ethics goes beyond non-aggression into virtue ethics, the Spirit of Christ (i.e., Golden Rule), and the moral vision of the New Testament,[96] a whole host of sexual acts (e.g., bestiality, adultery, fornication, pederasty/pedophilia, necrophilia, etc.) fall outside the boundaries for those in the community of Christ. In fact, one of the reasons for the church's initial growth in the second and third centuries was due to its noticeably radical sexual ethic.[97] How should such boundaries be understood and enacted, and what attitudes might be adopted along the way?[98]

The second thorny issue regarding sexuality and libertarianism is feminism and/or "egalitarianism." The subject is equally as divisive as the homosexuality, gay-marriage, and LGBT debates. In seems that on any given day, one can view videos, listen to podcasts, or read essays of

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[95] Furthermore, there is generally no reason to forbid the freedom to contract and freedom of association between consenting partners of a particular sex or gender orientation, whether for business, or sharing of assets, or whatever (cf. Paul, *Liberty Defined*). The same for aspects of religion, income, ethnicity, etc. Whether the state (or a contract-enforcing agency) decides to call one particular type of contract "marriage" or not is up to that agency or government, and changes little about the nature of the contract itself. All of this, unfortunately, is clouded in the contemporary debates about gay marriage because (a) the laws regarding marriage are not treated like other contracts; (b) the distinction between what is legal and what is moral is regularly blurred.

[96] See Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (New York: HarperOne, 1996).

[97] See Kreider, *Patient Ferment*.

[98] The (conscious or unconscious) cross-fertilization between sexual liberty and Christian libertarianism has recently reaped some valuable fruit in the work of Preston Sprinkle. See Preston Sprinkle, *People to Be Loved: Why Homosexuality Is Not Just an Issue* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015); *idem., Fight: A Christian Case for Non-Violence* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2013). Sprinkle has also been interviewed on *The Christian Libertarian Podcast* on the topic of homosexuality (July, 2017), which again, is not a surprise given this conceptual overlap regarding freedom in non-violent relationships.

libertarians criticizing or *supporting* various types of "feminism." The same goes for Christians, some of which find contemporary feminism bluntly anti-Christian, while others see it as a natural and consistent extension of New Testament ethics.

Confusion largely originates through contemporary ignorance of both (a) the New Testament world and literature and (b) the meaning and historical origins of feminism. Regarding (a), there is little question that Jesus and the early church contained an implicit and explicit critique of patriarchalism.[99] There generally is hardly another credible way of reading stories and texts like John 4:1-41, Galatians 3:28, 1 Corinthians 7,[100] Luke 10:38-42, or even Hebrew literature like the Song of Songs,[101] in their ancient historical and cultural context. This is not to naïvely say that all of biblical literature was ahead of its time, uniformly pointing towards some utopian, egalitarian society or Enlightenment ideal. But it is to say that the critiques are there, as are seeds for larger movements that would unfold later over the next two thousand years.[102]

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[99] See Leonard Swidler, *Jesus Was a Feminist* (Landham: Sheed and War, 2007); Cindy Westfall, *Paul and Gender* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016); Philip Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2009); Ben Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); *idem, Women and the Ministry of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); *idem, Women in the Earliest Churches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), and the many writings of Craig Keener on the subject. By "patriarchalism," I generally mean an ideology and social structure characterized by male hegemony, especially where women are viewed as naturally and permanently subordinate. (This is perhaps most explicitly embodied in male-only or male-advantaged property rights, but also in various prohibitions of personal liberties based on sex.)

[100] See Ronald Pierce, "First Corinthians 7: Paul's Neglected Treatise on Gender," *Priscilla Papers* 23:3 (Summer 2009): 8-13.

[101] See Tremper Longman III, *The Song of Songs,* NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 66; Arthur Lewis, "Equality of Sexes in Marriage: Exposition of the Song of Songs," *Priscilla Papers* 11:2 (Spring 1997).

[102] Note, for example, the theological concerns in the Seneca Falls Declaration—especially the resolutions.

Scholars also point to a number of redemptive-historical, theological, and ethical aspects of the Israel-Christ story that suggest a hopeful restoration of the sexes—which was perhaps a curse all along (Gen 3:16). The question for some is *the extent* of this alternative arrangement,[103] especially given the confusing patriarchal framework of the ancient world and biblical literature.[104] Some, of course, dismiss Christianity as hopelessly lost in a male-centered world, while others do not acknowledge the harm of sexism, androcentricism, chauvinism, misogyny, and patriarchalism at all (i.e., the world was simply made to be ruled by men). Still others see the Bible as a book that can be "salvaged," though perhaps not entirely.[105]

Regarding (b), the raw variety of feminism is rarely acknowledged in public discourse, which alone inhibits meaningful dialogue. Historians

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[103] "Good" or "biblical" patriarchalism is known in American evangelicalism as "complementarianism." See John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006); Andreas Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), and the many books on this subject by Douglas Wilson. This ideology was largely forged by George Knight III in the 1970s. Its distinctive feature is that instead of viewing women as inferior (as the church generally did throughout history), women's essential equality with men is affirmed but women are still to *act* as subordinates (*as if* inferior), and are thus forbidden/discouraged from occupying positions of power and authority.

[104] See Richard Hess, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016); Matthew Schlimm, *This Strange and Sacred Scripture: Wrestling With the Old Testament and Its Oddities* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015); Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006); Ann Loades, ed., *Feminist Theology: A Reader* (London: SPCK, 1990); Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1984).

[105] This topic, along with the abortion issue, is largely what divides "Christian feminists" from "evangelical feminists" or "egalitarians" (which, in this case, has no relationship to the Marxist conception of "egalitarianism"). Contrast, for example, the works of CBE's founders (Christians for Biblical Equality) and contributors of Ronald Pierce and Cindy Westfall, eds., *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 3rd edition (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, forthcoming) with the work of Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Phyllis Trible, Rosemary Reuther, and the contributors of Mary Hunt and Diann Neu, eds., *New Feminist Christianity* (Woodstock: Skylight Paths, 2010).

have traditionally framed feminism around first, second, and third "waves."[106] This can greatly help clarify the discussion, but still leaves plenty of room for stereotyping and confusion. More logical intellectual scaffolding can be found in the lucid and well-researched appraisal of Tong and Botts in *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction.* There, readers discover a solid ten different ideological categories—many of which are mutually exclusive and vary in the extreme.[107] But, as so often is the case, the most distracting feature of the contemporary debates is not

[106] Scholars disagree on the arrangement of these historical epochs (e.g., some speak of a "fourth wave," while others might see the first wave as early as the late Medieval period). In my own understanding, the first wave (1700s and 1800s) revolved around property rights (ownership of basic goods), labor rights (ability to work various jobs), educational rights (not being forbidden from attending schools), inheritance rights (property rights of daughters whose fathers' left an inheritance), suffrage (voting), and often had explicit roots in Christian ethics and religious values (see the Married Women's Property Act, Seneca Falls Declaration, and the writings of Sojourner Truth, Grimke Sisters, Elizabeth Stanton, and others like Katherine Booth and Katherine Bushnell). It also boasted, in certain spheres, a sophisticated intellectual critique (e.g., John Stuart Mill's *The Subjugation of Women,* Mary Wollstone Craft's *The Vindication of the Rights of Women,* Virginia Wolff's *Three Guineas,* Simone Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*). The second wave (1950s-1980s) was spurred by the post-war period in which women who were working in factories and businesses were now expected to go back to "work at home." It became associated with the sexual revolution, pro-abortion movement ("reproductive rights"), the more formal demands for (to give one example) "equal pay," and global critique of female circumcision (see, among others, Friedan's *Feminist Mystique*). The third wave (1990s to present) is more difficult to summarize because of its overlap with transnational, queer, existentialist, postmodern, post-structuralist, ecofeminist, and women of color (and other intersectional) feminisms. But Ralph Smith points to the strong (and perhaps predominant) ethos in the following list of ideas: "(1) all categories are falsifications, especially if they are binary and descriptive of sexuality; (2) all assertions about reality are socially constructed; (3) all human behavior can be read as textual significations; (4) texts form discourses that are exercises in power/knowledge and situated systems of regulation; (5) and deconstruction of all categories of normality and deviance can best be accomplished by queer readings of performative texts ranging from literature…to other cultural expressions." Cited in Rosemarie Tong and Tina Fernandes Botts, *Feminist Thought,* 5th ed. (New York: Westview Press, 2018), 271.

[107] Tong and Botts, *Feminist Thought*.

even the lack of qualifications or research, but extremists with microphones in a media apparatus gone wild.

The rationale behind each competing perspective(s) is not difficult to understand. "Feminism," especially (using Tong and Botts' categorization) popular and recent varieties (i.e., post-structuralist-Neo-Marxist, queer theory, select strands of "radical cultural feminism," etc.), can easily be viewed as malevolent. Its orientation is largely socialist (anti-private-property and critical of economic freedom), pro-abortion (and anti-family[108]), and anti-free speech. It also seems to lack discernment because of blurring the line between aggression (use of force) and "microaggression" (rude, but *absent* of force).[109] Using the term "violent" to describe both rape and cat-calls seems to cheapen the insidiousness of authentic aggression. To make matters worse, many adherents of this more recent variety of feminism appear eager to use coercion to achieve "equality" (e.g., "equal pay" laws, "non-discrimination" laws, maternity leave laws, etc.), and therefore function as conduit for statism.[110] As many see it, then, to the extent that these efforts are radically egalitarian,

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[108] I.e., opposed to motherhood, marriage, heterosexuality, and procreation.

[109] "Microaggression: a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority); also, behavior or speech that is characterized by such comments or actions." *Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary.* An example of such behavior would be a white person waiting to ride the next elevator when an African-American person is on it, or saying to a foreigner, "You have good English" (which draws attention to the "otherness" of the person—in this case, not being American).

[110] Note, of course, that I am not questioning the (im)moral status of the issues that each of these policies is trying to address, but rather the use of force to right such wrongs. (For example, I am in favor of business owners granting maternity leave for both fathers and mothers, as some companies do, but that is a right—not an obligation—of the business owner to grant.)

On a similar topic, there also appears to be an effort in some (but not all) variants of contemporary feminism to eradicate all sexual and gender differentiation (socially, linguistically, ideologically) through the public school and public university education system. (I'm not speaking about the transgender bathroom controversy, but other issues.)

feminism *is* "a revolt against nature"[111] and (ironically) an assault against human diversity and tolerance for public opinion.[112]

On the other hand, "feminism" (of the more "classic liberal" and some "radical cultural" varieties) can easily be viewed as a subset of *libertarianism*, emphasizing non-aggression and property rights for a particular demographic (in this case, women). This was the case throughout much of history. It was once "illegal" in numerous American cities and counties for women to wear "trousers" in public, "play baseball,"[113] etc.[114] In fact, in the U.S., women weren't allowed credit cards until 1974, weren't allowed to attend Yale and Princeton until 1969, and weren't allowed to serve on a jury until 1973. Thus, it has been said, "Feminism is the radical notion that women are human."[115]

Contrary to dissenters, many would argue that this (unfortunate) state of affairs remains true today. Millions of women in middle-eastern and south-eastern countries need "permission" just to appear in public

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[111] See Murray Rothbard, *Egalitarianism as a Revolt Against Nature* (Auburn: Von Mises Institute, 2010).

[112] One might recall the (prophetic?) insight of Kuyper from 1898: "Modernism, which denies and abolishes every difference, cannot rest until it has made woman man and man woman, and, putting every distinction on a common level, kills life by placing it under the ban of uniformity." Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 11. Cf. radical cultural feminism: "Just as the ultimate goal of the communist revolution is, in a classless society, to obliterate class distinction, the ultimate goal of the feminist revolution is, in an androgynous society, to obliterate sexual distinction." Tong and Botts, *Feminist Thought,* 53.

[113] See the excellent doctoral dissertation on women's baseball in the 1800s by Deborah Shattuck, *Bloomer Girls* (Des Moines: University of Iowa Press, 2017).

[114] "As late as 1840 there were only seven vocations outside the home into which the women of New England had entered. At this time women had no property rights…A woman was not supposed to be capable of spending her own, or of using other people's money." Miriam Schneir, ed. *Feminism: Essential Historical Writings* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 55. This volume by Schneir serves as an excellent primary-source introduction to feminism.

[115] The citation of this quote is disputed and I was unable to verify its source; it appears in a number of publications and online sources. Note, however, the book by the similar title, Dorothy Sayers, *Are Women Human?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

without a "male representative."[116] More seriously, there are over *one-hundred million* missing adolescent and teenage girls around the globe.[117] Many or most are trapped in involuntary servitude. Over 1.5 million girls are currently trafficked in the United States alone. Together, this comprises one of the largest cases of systematic aggression in modern history. On the other side of the spectrum are the less serious and traceable (but no less real) prejudices and biases against women.[118] Sexual harassment at the workplace, presumptions about women's abilities and "roles," objectification of women in pornography, movies, and video games, and other similar phenomena pervade contemporary culture.[119] To speak as if sexism and the subjugation of women simply disappeared when it became legal for women to vote in the 1920s is naïve at best.[120]

Much of this leaves some asking: can one legitimately say that the feminist "progressive left" of today is guilty of committing precisely the kind of power plays that it so passionately condemns—and precisely on the same grounds that are condemned (e.g., on the basis of sex, gender, ethnicity, class, etc.)? If so (as neo-conservatives would have it), are these acts against men just as serious as discrimination and oppression against women? And can one say that the "oppressive" nature of value systems (which always exclude someone) has simply reincarnated into identity politics instead of explicit metanarratives about progress, "brotherhood of

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[116] One must ask why women in Saudi Arabia have recently been allowed to wear bikinis on public beaches but are still forbidden from driving cars. (I.e., are these laws reflective of what the female population generally wants, or what the male population generally wants? And are they meant to benefit women more, or men more?). Interestingly, it was recently announced that the Saudi Arabian government may relax this law. See Ben Hubbard, "Saudi Arabia Agrees to Let Women Drive," *New York Times* (September 26, 2017).

[117] Amartya Sen, "The Many Faces of Gender Inequality," *Frontline* 18:22 (2001).

[118] For a frank look at these sexist dynamics within higher education, see Neal DeRoo, "Does Gender Matter in the Academic World?" *In All Things* (September 16, 2015).

[119] One popular double-blind study about such bias is Corinne A. Moss-Racusin et. al., "Science faculty's subtle gender biases favor male students," *PNAS* 109:41 (2012): 16474–79.

[120] An example of this attitude can be found in the innumerable, vitriolic commentaries by Milo Yiannopoulos and similarly uninformed anti-feminist personalities.

man," or other modernist mantras?[121] Or is this simply what the privileged majority *would* say in a situation where a long-time minority is finally awakening to its full humanity?

Might it also be said that subtle, systematic prejudices against various minorities exist, *and* are both powerful and regularly unnoticed, *and* require our focused attention if there is to be some kind of "social justice"?[122] How exactly does the Christian libertarian "balance the scales" in a world of gender-based (and race-based) violence?

Ron Paul once wrote:

> Racism is simply an ugly form of collectivism, the mindset that views humans strictly as members of groups rather than as individuals. By encouraging Americans to adopt a group mentality, the advocates of so-called 'diversity' actually perpetuate racism.[123]

Perhaps the same can be said about sexism and similar cases.

If so, it is no wonder that many today find libertarianism a hurricane of fresh air. At least in theory, I can be me, you can be you, with no prejudice assumed or required; all parties are innocent until proven guilty, not guilty until proven innocent. While this posture may not eliminate (or even address) hidden prejudices (or immediately change anyone's attitudes), perhaps it would at least give room for people to listen, think, and act accordingly. Such space for dialogue seems critically important in

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[121] Note the 1993 Symposium on Feminism and Libertarianism. Sessions of this event were published in *Reasons Papers* 18 (Fall 1993).

[122] It is unfortunate that phrases like these have been corrupted by mainstream politics, because if the terms are more carefully defined, it would seem that Christian libertarians are the ultimate "social justice warriors," just as Jesus and the early church were for their time. But, that is neither here nor there.

[123] This was originally the official racism policy of Ron Paul's campaign in 2007. I am unable to locate this original source that is currently available; it is cited in many other websites online.

a world of cultural and ideological pressures, campus riots for holding talks on free-speech, and YouTube personality tribalisms.

Many feminists might actually find libertarianism attractive for reasons beyond property rights and equal treatment under the law. It can easily be argued that patriarchalism in feminist theory and statism in libertarian theory are two versions of the same phenomenon (e.g., "kyriarchy").[124] The state is, in a way, the ultimate "patriarch," privileging itself with its own standards of morality, making authoritative decrees that serve as absolute truth and the law of the land, and using coercion as the default means of maintaining monopolized power.[125] The solution, then, is not to replace the patriarch with a matriarch, or to replace male governors and leaders with female governors and leaders, but to do away with systematic violence altogether. The *arrangement* is the problem, not the one (or the skin color, sex, gender, or religion of the one) who occupies it.[126]

Lest one dismiss this as hopelessly "Neo-Marxist," it was "Mr. Libertarian" himself who said, "the very existence of taxation and the State necessarily sets up a class division between the exploiting rulers and the exploited ruled."[127] Wilder, too, writes her *The Discovery of Freedom* in a similar framework (the subtitle of the volume is "Man's Struggle Against Authority"). The struggle for freedom and liberty *is* between oppressed and oppressor. But it's not a struggle between the bourgeoisie and

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[124] The term "kyriarchy" was coined in Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Introduction" in *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings*, ed. *Idem.* and Laura Nasrallah (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 9: "In antiquity, the social system of kyriarchy was institutionalized either in empire or as a democratic political form of ruling. Kyriarchy is best theorized as a complex pyramidal system of intersecting multiplicative social structures of superordination and subordination, of ruling and oppression."

[125] It can even be argued that the patriarchy exhibited in ancient marriage and polygamy functioned as the social origin of the state; the strength of the alpha male determined the order and obedience of household territory, so the state with the strongest army became (becomes) dominant over national territory.

[126] Cf. Zhand, *Farewell to Mars*.

[127] Rothbard, *For a New Liberty*, 30.

proletariat, or the employer and employers; it's between the state and its subjects.[128]

In the end, libertarianism appears to be rather inclusive, practical, and relevant to the cause of all who desire freedom from oppression and equal representation under law. How is *this* genuine "equality" achieved? And what will steps towards communicating these realities involve?

VI. CAPITALISM AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Another issue that always seems to surface is the relationship between free markets and Christian ethics. Does capitalism truly have God's blessing as the ideal form of market interactions? And just what *type* of capitalism? Joseph Schumpeter (who coined the economic term "creative destruction") had an interesting point in noting how

> Ceaseless innovation in the form of creative destruction brings heavy social costs. Family fortunes are destroyed, while communities are damaged, and an intellectual class becomes alienated from the very materialism that brought it in the leisure to think deep thoughts.[129]

How should Christians conduct themselves in free markets? What makes Christian business and economic interactions different than non-Christian ones, especially in today's world of crypto-currency, central banking, and

[128] This (among other reasons) is precisely why "Marxist and Socialist Feminisms" (ch 3 of *Feminist Thought*) are doomed to fail. (On a related issue, some have put it frankly and colloquially to liberal feminists essentially by arguing, "Why would you want to empower Donald Trump—and a bunch of other old white guys with guns—with the task of enforcing sexual and racial equality? Because that's precisely what passing laws on those issues does.")
[129] Thomas McCraw, cited in Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008, orig. 1950), xxviii.

crowd-funding? Is it possible to live *with* capitalism and *without* consumerism?[130] If so, *how?*

Samuel Gregg tackled some of these subjects in *For God and Profit: How Money and Banking Can Serve the Common Good.*[131] He addresses the conditions in which Christians might legitimately loan money, charge interest, and conduct other financial and economic activities. This is a tremendous start, but, as reviewers have noted, there are some important issues that need further attention.[132] Many other books have also tried to address these issues, but tend to collapse into a hopeless form of democratic socialism.[133]

Just how moral is it for Christians to be using Federal Reserve Notes—a monopolized currency that directly funds fraud while simultaneously creating poverty—as currency in their churches? What about being "registered" with the state as a "non-profit"? And at what point does paying taxes sear the Christian conscience so that it is morally justified and wise to *refuse*? 70% income tax? 80% income tax? When taxes fund two dozen illegal and unjust wars instead of only four or five? When it funds abortion *and* racism? There simply is no escaping the question of civil disobedience, and perhaps Christian libertarians have something unique and principled to offered in that regard—but this needs fleshing out in clear language.

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[130] Note the review of Cavanaugh's *Being Consumed* in this journal. For thoughtful Christian reflections on the "worldview" of consumerism, see Steve Wilkins and Mark Sandford, *Hidden Worldviews: Eight Cultural Stories That Shape Our Lives* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Academic, 2009), ch 3.

[131] Samuel Gregg, *For God and Profit: How Banking and Finance Can Serve the Common Good* (New York: Crossroads Publishing, 2016).

[132] See Jamin Hübner, review of *For God and Profit* in *Faith and Economics* 68 (2016):142-146.

[133] E.g., James Skillen, *The Pursuit of Justice: Christian-Democratic Explorations* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004); Gary Waters, *Just Capitalism: A Christian Ethic of Economic Globalization* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2016); Walter Brueggemann, *Money and Possessions* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2016); Ronald Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015); Joerg Rieger, *No Rising Tide: Theology, Economics, and the Future* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).

VII. LIBERTARIANISM AND THE VARIETIES OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

Just as libertarianism spans across religious, ethnic, and geographic boundaries, so *Christian* libertarianism spans across Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism. But is it possible that one expression of Christianity is more consistent with libertarianism than another? What might this suggest regarding its future success?

It is tempting to point a lazy finger at contemporary figures, see what fits, and declare a "winner." But this falls short even on a cursory examination. Robert Sirico, Thomas Woods, and Andrew Napolitano are (for example) deeply committed Catholics, and yet, Robert Murphy, Ron Paul, and others are Protestant/evangelicals. Is it simply the case that the property-rights and classic liberal tradition has its roots in the church-state of Western Christendom, or is the Roman magisterium merely a mirror image of statism in the realm of religion, needing abolishment just like Washington D.C.? Do the critiques against the state apply to *any* professing Christian institution at all—being that they often exhibit a monopoly of power (e.g., over the "means of grace"), centralized power structures, coercion, and unquestionable sources of authority and truth? Von Mises, Rothbard, and a number of other non-Christian libertarians seem to think along these lines, regularly comparing the institutions of religion with the institutions of government.

Questions like these are important ones since *coherency* is a key claim and motivator behind Christian libertarianism. And it would be a tragedy if something in Christians' lives other than Jesus—whether an organization, a church institution, nonprofit, school, or ideology—functioned as Lord and Savior instead. But, at the same time, one might also be careful not to become distracted from what is held in common—a faith historically rooted in the Nicene tradition, a deep suspicion about Caesar and authoritarian hegemony, and respect for life, liberty, and property.

VIII. VIOLENCE IN THE BIBLE AND THE OLD COVENANT

Christian libertarianism is based on peace. But, how can this be reconciled with the wars, death penalties, and communal property management found in the Mosaic covenant? Were the law codes of Judaism a timeless projection of God's unchanging holiness, a temporary institution, a shameless rip-off from surrounding law codes in the Ancient Near East, a fabrication by post-exilic scribes, a combination of these proposals, or none of the above?

Countless books have been written on this subject—many of which will be reviewed in this journal. Just how should *any* Christian approach the "strange" world of the Old Testament?[134] Is Israel's story really *our* story today, and if so, how? What is actually being revealed by the violence in the OT? Are proposals, like those in Copan's *Did God Really Command Genocide?* and Boyd's *Crucifixion of the Warrior God* legitimate, or failed attempts at trying to redeem a primitive and barbaric religion?[135] What is so "new" about the "new covenant," and how does this inform one's theology of violence and evil in the world?

The jury is still out on many of these questions, partly because the answers depend on differing starting points. The most important starting point is perhaps the Bible's nature and purpose. What exactly does it mean for the Bible to be "God's Word"? There are countless answers to the question as one surveys the relevant literature,[136] and there is hardly a

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[134] Cf. Schlimm, *This Strange and Sacred Scripture*.

[135] See Paul Copan and Matthew Flannagan, *Did God Really Command Genocide?* (Grand Rapids: Backer, 2014) and Greg Boyd, *The Crucifixion of the Warrior God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017). Cf. the broader perspectives in Mark Juergensmeyer, Margo Kitts, Michael Jerryson, *Violence in the World's Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[136] For a variety of enlightening Bible introductions, see Andrew Arterbury, W. H. Bellinger, Derek Dodson, *Engaging the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014); Todd Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); Joel Kaminsky, Mark Reasoner, Joel Nohr, *The Abingdon Introduction to the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2014). For other helpful works on bibliology and doctrine of scripture, see most of all John

"traditional view" that can be attached to any of them, whether verbal, verbal plenary, organic, mechanic, a "spiritual truth" perspective, or otherwise. Contending for a "high" view of scripture is also inadequate, as fundamentalist treatments of biblical literature (supposedly the "highest" view of the Bible)[137] can often be found to be *abusive*—whether

Goldingay, *Models for Scripture* (Toronto: Clements, 2004), but also John Barton, *People of the Book? The Authority of the Bible in Christianity* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1989); Bavinck, Herman. Trans. John Vriend (*Reformed Dogmatics, Vol 1: Prolegomena* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008); Donald Bloesch, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration, and Interpretation (*Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005); Christopher Bryan, *And God Spoke: The Authority of the Bible for the Church Today* (Cambridge: Cowley, 2002); C. H. Dodd, *The Authority of the Bible.* London: Fontana, 1960); Miroslav Volf, *Captive to the Word of God: Engaging the Scriptures for Contemporary Theological Reflection* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); Timothy Ward, *Words of Life: Scripture as the Living and Active Word of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009); John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speak*s (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.)

[137] Attempts at having the "highest" view of scripture can be found in recent works such as Steven Cowan and Terry Wilder, eds. *In Defense of the Bible: A Comprehensive Apologetic for the Authority of Scripture* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Academic, 2013); Craig Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible?: An Evangelical Engagement with Contemporary Questions* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2014); Wayne Grudem, Thomas Schreiner, and John Collins, eds., *Understanding Scripture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012); John Piper, *A Particular Glory* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), but also other related works such as Gleason Archer, *The New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001); Gregory Beale, *The Erosion of Inerrancy* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008); D. A. Carson, *Collected Writings on Scripture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010); *idem.,* ed. *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016); Harvie Conn, ed., *Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, a Challenge, a Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988); David Dockery, *Christian Scripture* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2004); David Ewert, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990); John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2010); Norman Geisler, ed., *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980); *idem., A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody, 1986); Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008); Norman Geisler and William Roach *Defending Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012); Norman Geisler and F. Farnell. *Vital Issues in the Inerrancy Debate* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2016); Ken Ham, *Demolishing Supposed Bible Contradictions.* 2 vols (Master Books, 2010, 2012); Ken Ham and Bodie Hodge, eds., *How Do We Know the Bible is True?* 2 vols. (Master Books, 2011, 2012); John Hannah, ed., *Inerrancy*

through proof-texting, poor scholarship, superficial hermeneutics, or outright distortion. Criticisms of such biblicism are now vast.[138]

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and the Church (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984); R. Harris, *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969); Carl Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1999); Michael Kruger, *The Question of Canon: Challenging the Status Quo in the New Testament Debate* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2013); *idem., Canon Revisited* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012); Eta Linnemann, Trans. Robert Yarbrough, *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology: Reflections of a Bultmannian Turned Evangelical* (Louisville: Kregel, 2001); *idem., Is There a Synoptic Problem?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992); *idem.,* trans Robert Yarbrough, *Biblical Criticism on Trial: How Scientific is Scientific Theology?* (Louisville: Kregel, 2001); Robert Lightner, *The Case for Total Inerrancy* (Louisville: Kregel, 1997); John MacArthur, John, ed. *The Inerrant Word: Biblical Historical, and Pastoral Perspectives* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016); John Morrison, *Has God Said? Scripture, the Word of God, and the Crisis of Theological Authority* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2006); Roger Nicole and J. Ramsey Michaels, *Inerrancy and Common Sense* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980); Vern Poythress, *Inerrancy and Worldview: Answering Modern Challenges to the Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012); *idem., Inerrancy and the Gospels: A God-Centered Approach to the Challenges of Harmonization* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012); N. B. Stonehouse and Paul Woolley, eds. *The Infallible Word: A Symposium by the Members of the Faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1967); B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980); James Williams, *God's Word in Our Hands: The Bible Preserved for Us* (Ambassador International, 2016); John Woodbridge and D. A. Carson, eds. *Scripture and Truth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992); *idem., Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2009).

[138] A short sampling of these critiques should include Craig Allert, *A High View of Scripture?: The Authority of the Bible and the Formation of the New Testament Canon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007); Carlos Bovell, *Inerrancy and the Spiritual Formation of Younger Evangelicals* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2007); *idem, Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Authority of Scripture: Historical, Biblical, and Theoretical Perspectives* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2011); *idem., Rehabilitating Inerrancy in a Culture of Fear* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2012); James Dunn, *The Living Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003); Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); *idem., The Bible Tells Me So: Why Defending Scripture Has Made Us Unable to Read It (*New York: HarperOne, 2014); Christopher Hays and Christopher Ansberry, eds., *Evangelical Faith and the Challenge of Historical Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013); Christian Smith, *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2012); Kenton Sparks, *Sacred Word, Broken Word* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012); *idem., God's Word in Human Words: An Evangelical Appropriation of Critical Biblical Scholarship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008); Thom Stark, *The Human Faces of*

Many assert that this entire debate is part of the problem: looking for a single correct theory. John Goldingay, for example, argues in his seminal book *Models for Scripture* that multiple frameworks are necessary for properly understanding the Bible's significance and purpose.[139] It is precisely in reducing the Bible to a single concept, purpose, or genre (e.g. "teaching") that blinds readers from seeing its rich colors and dimensions. It does no good, for example, to restrict one's use of a national map to a road map, nor is it comprehensible to overlay the same road map with a topographical map, temperature and wind map, terrain map, and population map of the same area at the same time. It would be best to have multiple maps of different kinds available for viewing (not necessarily at the same time). Goldingay suggests that the scriptures can be primarily viewed and used as a "witnessing tradition," "authoritative canon," "inspired word," and "experienced revelation." Restricting Christians' language and description of the scriptures into a single metaphor, Goldingay suggests, will only limit our perspective and ruin the story.[140]

Another starting point has to do with God's covenants through redemptive history. What does it mean for the Hebrew scriptures to be "God's Word" today? Theologians have contrived a number of hermeneutical and heuristic devices to answer this question in relation to the Old Testament. Dispensationalism—defunct but still influential in many churches—asserts a sharp distinction between Israel and the church,

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God: What Scripture Reveals When It Gets God Wrong (And Why Inerrancy Tries to Hide It) (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2011); Ben Witherington, *The Living Word: Rethinking the Theology of the Bible* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009). Earlier efforts can be found in the seminal work by Jack Rogers and Donald McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979) and James Barr's three volumes on scripture and additional three volumes on fundamentalism. Daniel Finn, who offers a Catholic proposal of economic ethics in *Christian Economic Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), also wisely distances himself from biblicism.

[139] Goldingay, *Models for Scripture*.

[140] This proposal might be labeled "perspectivalism" in a broad, but not philosophically narrow sense (e.g., in the eccentric "perspectivalism" of John Frame and Vern Poythress).

a literal hermeneutic (especially for Old Testament prophecies), and a program of salvation enacted through seven dispensations.[141] Christian theonomism sees little distinction between God's law and its *contextual expression* (e.g., Sinai), and therefore sees the Mosaic Covenant as permanent, binding, and only partially modified since Christ.[142] "Old Covenant Theology" sees the commands in the Old Covenant as "in force"[143] except what is explicitly abolished in the New Covenant (e.g., a category "ceremonial" and/or "civil" law).[144] "New Covenant Theology" asserts the reverse—that everything in the Old Covenant is abolished except what is explicitly "renewed" in the New Covenant (e.g., a category of "moral law").[145]

Others plainly reject this entire way of thinking. N. T. Wright, for example, says in *Scripture and the Authority of God* that, not only would "most ancient Jews…not have recognized such a distinction" of three law categories, but furthermore, "*all* scripture is 'culturally conditioned.' It is naïve to pretend that some parts are not, and can therefore be treated as in some sense 'primary' or 'universal,' while other parts are, and can therefore safely be set aside."[146] Instead, "all of that scripture had been summed up in Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:17, itself summing up much of the

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[141] Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody, 2007). The updated version, "progressive dispensationalism," is outlined in Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000).

[142] See Greg Bahnsen, *By This Standard: The Authority of God's Law Today* (Powder Springs: American Vision, 2008) and R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973).

[143] I.e., "applies."

[144] See John Murray, *Principles of Ethical Conduct* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957); John Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2008); Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948).

[145] A. Blake White, *What is New Covenant Theology?* (Frederick: New Covenant Media, 2012); Fred Zaspel and Tom Wells, *New Covenant Theology* (Frederick: New Covenant Media, 2002).

[146] N.T. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), 57, 128. Emphasis mine. Contrast with the "literal" vs. "historically contextual" in Hughey, "What Does the Bible say about Government?" in *Called to Freedom.*

book; Romans 3:31; 2 Corinthians 1:20) and now God's project of new covenant and new creation had begun, necessarily taking a new mode."[147] "Progressive Covenantalism" largely concurs, stressing the centrality of Christ and the newness of the New Covenant but without restricting the Old Testament to historical usage.[148]

Yet, James Dunn does this very thing when saying, "…the Old Testament commandments…*were* the word of God to millions of Israelites down through many centuries. But they no longer are so for us—certainly not in their obvious and intended sense. We honor these passages as God's word in a historic sense."[149] God's Word is *living*, Dunn contends, a script that changes and grows with time.[150] This is precisely what makes it meaningful. The conservative overreaction to Modernism's criticism of the Bible killed this living Word and made it a dead letter:

> …a primary feeder of fundamentalism is the lust for certainty and security. It is the certainty that God has spoken in particular words and formulations which are clear-cut and fixed for all time…The lust for certainty turns the icon into an idol, pulls the living word from the soil in which it was rooted, turns the metaphor into a mathematical formula, and abuses the scriptural authority it seeks to affirm.[151]

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[147] Ibid., 56.

[148] See Stephen Wellum and Brent Parker, eds., *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2016); Stephen Wellum and Peter Gentry, *God's Kingdom through God's Covenants: A Concise Biblical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015); cf. the articles in Barcellos, *Recovering a Covenantal Heritage.*

[149] James Dunn, *The Living Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 51. Cf. Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1982), 60-63.

[150] Cf. Carl Raschke, *The Next Reformation: Why Evangelicals Must Embrace Postmodernity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), ch 2, as well as John Goldingay, *Models for the Interpretation of Scripture* (Toronto: Clements, 2004); Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2009); contributions by Merold Westphal in Stanley Porter and Beth Stovell, eds., *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012).

[151] Dunn, *The Living Word*, 7, 147.

The point, then, is that one's view of the Bible and framework of interpretation is going to determine one's views on violence in theology. While no one may simply have the "right" interpretation or "right" bibliology, there are certainly boundaries as to what are legitimate perspectives. The question is, what are these boundaries? And how can they be effectively communicated for those who wield the scriptures for war, wield them for empire, or throw them out altogether?

IX. LIBERTARIANISM: A PHENOMENON OF MODERNITY OR POSTMODERNITY?

Sometime in the heyday of the twentieth century, a renowned intellectual and author complained during an interview about "these uniformed men, who have the exclusive right to carry arms, who demand our papers, who come and prowl on our doorsteps."[152] The comment sounds rather "libertarian," or at least like someone suffering from a communist project of that era.

It actually comes from the French historian Michel Foucault. Foucault's work on the dehumanizing prison system is enough to rally a cheer from libertarians—as is his critique of the surveillance state, the government's need for "criminals,"[153] and his exposure of centralized, manufactured "truth" and "knowledge" as an instrument of social

[152] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge,* ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, Kate Soper (New York: Vintage Books), 47.

[153] Ibid.: "At the end of the eighteenth century, people dreamed of a society without crime. And then the dream evaporated. Crime was too useful for them to dream of anything as crazy---or ultimately as dangerous---as a society without crime. No crime means no police. What makes the presence and control of the police tolerable for the population, if not fear of the criminal? This institution of the police, which is so recent and so oppressive, is only justified by that fear. If we accept the presence in our midst of these uniformed men, who have the exclusive right to carry arms, who demand our papers, who come and prowl on our doorsteps, how would any of this be possible if there were no criminals? And if there weren't articles everyday in the newspapers telling us how numerous and dangerous our criminals are?"

power.[154] So strong was his critique of the state, at times, that he had to say:

> I don't claim at all that the State apparatus is unimportant, but it seems to me that among all the conditions for avoiding a repetition of the Soviet experience and preventing the revolutionary process from running into the ground, one of the first things that has to be understood is that power isn't localized in the State apparatus and that nothing in society will be changed if the mechanisms of power that function outside, below and alongside the State apparatuses, on a much more minute and everyday level, are not also changed.[155]

Indeed, "a postmodern social theory…demands the dissolution of the state as a construct of social life and brings to the fore the multiplicity and heterogeneity of relationships in and through society as the 'immanence' of culture."[156]

Foucault is just *one* of the many "post-modern" authors and scholars that sound all too much like Von Mises, Spooner, Mencken, or Rothbard. Perhaps it's no surprise why: late/post-modern intellectuals lived during the same era and shared some of the same discontents—many of them critical of modernism.

But it still causes one to at least ask about the ideological origins of today's contemporary libertarianism, as it is too simplistic to draw a straight line to it from Locke, Bastiat, Mill, or others. This is especially true

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[154] "We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth. This is the case for every society, but I believe that in ours the relationship between power, right and truth is organized in a highly specific fashion….Power never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth: it institutionalizes, professionalizes and rewards its pursuit. In the last analysis, we must produce truth as we must produce wealth, indeed we must produce truth in order to produce wealth in the first place." Ibid., 93-94. Compare these ideas with those of the critique of democracy in Schumpeter, *Capitalism,* 262-263.

[155] Ibid., 60.

[156] Raschke, *The Next Reformation*, 151.

when one finds someone like Von Mises performing brilliant deconstruction of intentionally-deceptive terms (e.g., "inflation") years before the French post-structuralists even began forming this literary and philosophical enterprise.[157] Beside the linguistic turn, the social power of metanarratives (whether Marxism, Darwinism, or a story of "progress" via state machinery), the intrusion of empiricism on the social sciences and humanities,[158] and importance of local knowledge for both social identity and economic flourishing are deeply rooted concerns in the writings of early and mid-twentieth century libertarians *and,* say, the contributors in volumes like *The Post-Modern Reader.*[159] It is no surprise, then, that Rothbard goes out of his way to spotlight the work of psychiatrist Thomas Szasz in his seminal *For a New Liberty,* or that experts in sociology—a field that some view as wholly opposed to liberty—like Anthony Giddens, plainly define the state apparatus as "a set of institutional forms of governance maintaining an administrative monopoly over a territory with demarcated boundaries (borders), its rule being sanctioned by law and direct control of the means of internal and external violence,"[160] or that Hans Herman Hoppe's *Democracy: The God that Failed* stands alongside a growing "interrogation of consensus" in contemporary philosophical, literary, and social studies.[161]

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[157] E.g., Von Mises, *Human Action,* 419-421. Cf. "the linguistic turn" to Mises' "the semantic revolution" in *Human Action,* 420.

[158] The take-over of economics by mathematics is essential to note here.

[159] Joseph Natoli and Linda Hutcheon, eds., *A Postmodern Reader* (Albany: State of University New York Press, 1993).

[160] Anthony Giddens in *Nationalism,* ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 35. Cf. Murray Rothbard, *Anatomy of the State* (Auburn: Ludwig Von Mises Institute, 2009), 59: "that organization in society which attempts to maintain a monopoly of the use of force and violence in a given territorial area; in particular, it is the only organization in society that obtains its revenue not by voluntary contribution or payment for services rendered but by coercion."

[161] See the essays by Lyotard, Hutcheon, and Herman in *The Post-Modern Reader* for more on the problems of "consensus."

Then again, some strands of post-modern thought are notorious for radically rejecting *all* forms of authority, universal truth claims and standards of rationality, and moral absolutes without any coherent, positive direction forward—at least in a way that provides a firm footing for societal justice and organization.[162] This directly contrasts with the idea of "inalienable rights" or individuals' "absolute freedom." So then, is the libertarian enterprise really just another power-play for the privileged? A false-call to universal truths of reason? Or is there something more limited and fixed, like natural law or universal principles of human nature that the Enlightenment got right? (And what about the "laws" of economics?) Habermas may speak for those, like Von Mises, who had a foot in both the old world of Enlightenment dreams and new world of social construction when he said, "I think that instead of giving up modernity and its project as a lost cause, we should learn from the mistakes of those extravagant programs which have tried to negate modernity."[163]

Whatever the case, it is important to study this subject further before assuming a simple polarity between progressive, Neo-Marxist post-modernism and Christian libertarianism. It was, after all, the Christian anarchist and scholar Jacques Ellul who said:

> …the Christian should desacralize the idols of modern society—whether politics, the state, or the marketplace—and create alternative zones of "free life." In other words, Christians should be 'troublemakers, creators of uncertainty, agents of a dimension incompatible with society.[164]

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[162] See *Post-Modern Reader*, esp. 3-66. As a case study, see Placher's remarks about Foucault and Rorty's contributions in William Placher, *Unapologetic Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989). In passing, one should note that "post-modernism" and "moral relativism" are not the same thing—and one does not necessitate the other. This has been pointed out countless times by Christian scholars on the subject (e.g., Carl Raschke, James K.A. Smith, Kevin Vanhoozer, Stanley Grenz, John Franke, et. al.).

[163] Cited in *Post-Modern Reader*, 101.

[164] Jacques Ellul, cited in Shane Claiborne, *Irresistible Revolution* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 231.

X. THEOLOGY IN LIGHT OF LIBERTARIANISM

If human beings are made free and meant to live peacefully, and if all human beings are God's images, what might this suggest about God's nature—and our knowledge of God?

It is precisely in the wake of modernity's violence[165] that theologians have begun to shift their understanding about God's attributes and relation to creation. Theology in Western Christendom was shaped all too much in the eyes of the West—colonial, hierarchical, coercive, masculine, demanding blind obedience by divine right.[166] Thus, to avoid this idolatry,[167] the twentieth century charted new courses with the "social Trinity," liberation theology, feminist theology, process theology, post-liberalism, interfaith pluralism, and a number of other inquiries. These proposals are still being debated, but there are undoubtedly results emerging.

Even for the most committed thinkers in the classic Reformed or Catholic tradition, the primacy of *peace* in speaking of God's relationship to people and creation has gained a foothold. Herman Bavinck, for example, plainly says at the turn of the twentieth century in his magisterial *Reformed Dogmatics*, "...coercion is alien to the essence of God."[168] He says the kingdom of Jesus is "not a kingship of violence and weapons; it rules by Word and Spirit, by grace and truth, by justice and righteousness."[169] Earlier on Bavinck reiterates this point when talking of covenant theology: "covenant honors the fact that God created men and women as rational

[165] See, for example, the review of *Stalin* in this volume.

[166] It was this God that modernism largely (and to an extent, legitimately) rejected.

[167] See Raschke, *The Next Reformation* and McFague, *Metaphorical Theology* for a powerful indictment regarding those who would unwittingly idolize their theologies and ideological constructs of God (which were supposedly just "truth" or "reality") over and against the living God as actually revealed in scripture, tradition, history, and experience.

[168] Herman Bavinck, trans. John Vriend, ed. John Bolt, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 519.

[169] Ibid., 434.

and moral beings. He treats us as such by not coercing us but using persuasion; he wants us freely and willingly to serve him in love (Ps. 100:3f.)."[170] For someone so deeply indebted to the Western intellectual tradition, the tenor of reflections are noteworthy.

This "libertarian" impulse in theology from the late 1800s can be traced all the way to one of today's leading theological texts, *Faith Seeking Understanding* by Daniel Migliore (Princeton).[171] As if copying and pasting from Bavinck, Migliore says "God's grace is not coercive but gives humanity time."[172] Furthermore,

> …God raised the crucified Jesus and made him the chief cornerstone of a new humanity that no longer espouses acts and systems of violence, that no longer needs scapegoats, that no longer wills to live at the expense of victims, that no longer imagines or worships a bloodthirsty God, that is no longer interested in legitimations of violence, but instead follows Jesus in the power of a new and Holy Spirit.[173]

> …true apostolic witness to the gospel eschews force, intimidation, and deception as strategies to win adherents, whether in the form of a blatant appeal for state power to secure the church's position and influence or the more covert forms of threat and coercion or narrow appeals to self-interest employed in certain kinds of evangelism, both on and off television.[174]

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[170] Ibid., 332.

[171] Paterson's *The God of the Machine* vigorously argues that it was the Christian concept of free-will that gave rise to free society in the first place: "The United States is the Age of the Dynamo. By carrying over the axiom of free will from religious to political doctrines, a Niagara of kinetic energy was released." Paterson, *The God of the Machine,* 157. This subject has recently been explored in Timothy Shah and Alan Hertske, eds., *Christianity and Freedom,* vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[172] Daniel Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 298.

[173] Ibid., 195.

[174] Ibid., 283.

In-line with some of these twentieth century developments, Cambridge University's *An Introduction to Christian Theology* (written by three professors at Calvin College) openly questions several of the "traditional" attributes of God—from immutability, to impassibility, to simplicity.[175] Greek philosophy and other currents of Medieval scholasticism seems to have slipped into the category of "dogma"—and perhaps, through the state-church, assisted in the suppression of liberty along the way.

Those not committed to traditional Protestantism or Catholicism do more than crack open the windows to God's vulnerability. Sallie McFague's process theology has gained considerable traction since it was first introduced in the 1980s.[176] In addition to her pioneering work on religious language, she proposes that the universe be thought of as "God's body," thus alleviating a number of problems created by a radical (or perverse) transcendence.[177] One of her colleagues expresses a strong sentiment sympathetic of McFague's perspective:

> It is time for Christianity to outgrow its dishonest deployment of the rhetoric of divine transcendence. This pseudo-transcendence in the name of its "personal relationship to the Lord" conveniently declares Him [sic] radically other than bodily creatures while surreptitiously uploading a masculine autonomy onto "Him." For we can imagine no personal relationship with the bottomless mystery of life if we seal it off with all-too-human images of power as paternity or royalty…our…affirmations will need to come from the best metaphors of relationship, not the worst (the dominative, oppressive, the patriarchal).[178]

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[175] Richard Plantinga, Thomas Thompson, and Matthew Lundberg, *An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[176] Her predecessors are Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne.

[177] See Sallie McFague, *Models of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1987) and *Metaphorical Theology*.

[178] Katherine Keller, "The Flesh of God," in *Theology That Matters: Ecology, Economy, and God,* ed. Darby Ray (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 102.

This last point was given attention in a review of Matthew Bates' book *Salvation by Allegiance Alone,* which—like similar works of its kind[179]—stresses kingship as a defining metaphor for Christology and soteriology. The review suggests that Christians should not let the state determine their discourse about God.[180] This was the important thesis in Rieger's *Christ and Empire,* but it has largely gone unheard:

> From the very beginning, our images of Jesus Christ have developed in the context of empire. Jesus was born under the rule of the Roman Emperor Augustus, lived under the auspices of the Roman Empire, and was executed by a common means of punishment for political rebels in unruly provinces: the cross. Empire in one form or another has been the context in which some of the most important later images of Christ developed: the notion of Jesus' lordship gained prominence at a time when the Roman emperors would claim to be the only lords; the idea of Jesus' equality with God and with humanity developed at a time when the Roman emperors had become Christians and drew their authority from the Christian God: Christ's role as God-human in salvation was clarified during the early years of the Norman conquest of England; the way of Jesus Christ was further explicated in the midst of the Spanish conquest of the New World; Jesus' roles as prophet, priest, and king were picked up during the heydays of Northern European colonialism; Christ victorious was proclaimed in neocolonialist circumstances; and even the cosmic Christ is tied to another empire. Yet the images of the Christ of

[179] E.g., the popular books by Scot McKnight and N. T. Wright.

[180] Matthew Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017). "It is important that Jesus Christ is not only King, but the Prince of Peace, the Lamb of God, the true Vine, the Light of the World, Temple, and so forth. Kingship was stressed in the New Testament because of the contemporary context of the Roman emperor and Jewish Messiah (a perfect backdrop, by the way, to show Jesus' divinity). This should not overpower Christ as the *logos* or other, non-Jewish and non-nationalist titles, images, and metaphors." Jamin Hübner, review of Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone* in *The Canadian-American Theological Review* 5:2 (2016).

> empire have not managed to block out alternative visions of Christ completely; Christ continues to assert a different reality.[181]

Yes, in statist environments (like the first-century), it is both necessary and appropriate to pit "King" Jesus against Caesar, and to unravel all that is contained in such royal descriptions (especially given the Jewish background of Davidic Kingship). The same is true today where the state reigns supreme in many minds. But without caution, might the church run the serious risk of becoming polluted by the language, ideas, and culture of government in its theological discourse?[182]

This "nonviolent" perspective in theology has even led systematicians to reassess traditional dogmas like the Trinity. As a case in point, Migliore says:

> God is not the supreme will-to-power over others but the supreme will-to-communion in which power and life are shared. To speak of God as the ultimate power whose being is in giving, receiving, and sharing love, who gives life to others and wills to live in communion, is to turn upside down our understandings of both divine and human power. The reign of the triune God is the rule of sovereign love rather than the rule of force.[183]

What does one make of these revisions? Is there something to process theology, or is it a trendy heresy? To what extent should God be conceived as "non-coercive" and "vulnerable"—and might these questions be best answered upon reflection of the cross once more?

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[181] Joerg Rieger, *Christ and Empire: From Paul to Postcolonial Times* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).

[182] After all, "it is necessary to reinterpret the language of Christian faith—its stories, doctrines, and symbols—for our own time and place if we are faithfully to serve the gospel rather than uncritically to endorse the cultural forms in which it has been mediated to us." Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 14.

[183] Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 74-75.

XI. CONCLUSION

Christian libertarianism is not complicated. Creation was designed to operate harmoniously without multiple layers of coercion. Like two children playing checkers, human societies need only recognize and uphold a few simple principles to enable a culture of peace, prosperity, and liberty. What continually ruins this restful and productive state is not freedom, but its opposite: the age-old desire to control and dominate.

We were warned about this ages ago: "Sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it" (Gen. 4:7b, NRSV); and again in the first-century: "my kingdom is not of this world," "all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Jn 18:36; Mt 26:52, NIV); and again in countless stories across the ages (the ring of power *cannot be wielded*). A Christian politic, properly understood, appears to be the only perspective that gives full justice to this realization and others. As Bastiat eloquently reflected,

> If the natural tendencies of mankind are so bad that it is not safe to permit people to be free, how is it that the tendencies of these organizers are always good? Do not the legislators and their appointed agents also belong to the human race? Or do they believe themselves to be made of finer clay than the rest of mankind?[184]

Nevertheless, within such "Christian libertarianism," there are a number of areas that could use considerable attention and clarification. This article outlined just a handful of these. Hopefully this introduction will serve to refine our thinking and living so we can better serve others as Christ's Body, here and now.

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[184] Frédéric Bastiat, *The Law*, trans. Dean Russell, forward Walter E. Williams, introduction Richard Ebeling, afterward Sheldon Richman (Irvington-on-Hudson, NY: Foundation for Economic Education, 1998), 63.

CONTEXTUALIZING C. S. LEWIS' CHRISTIAN LIBERTARIANISM: ENGAGING DYER AND WATSON AND BEYOND

David V. Urban[1]

Abstract: Analyzes C. S. Lewis' Christian libertarianism by engaging important recent scholarship on Lewis' natural law-based political thought and by considering both Lewis' place within Christian classical liberal/libertarian thought since the late eighteenth century and how his insights are germane to contemporary political and ethical controversies.

Keywords: C. S. Lewis, classical liberalism, political philosophy, Dyer, Watson, libertarianism, NHS, Madison, Bastiat, Acton, Machen, Tocqueville, homosexuality

I. INTRODUCTION

The notion that C. S. Lewis was effectively apolitical has remained the conventional understanding of Lewis' admirers. Such a belief is no doubt understandable in light of the words of his closest relatives. Lewis' brother Warnie, acknowledging Lewis' reputed "contempt for politics and politicians," spoke of Lewis' enduring "disgust and revulsion from the very idea of politics."[2] In his biography of Lewis, Lewis' stepson Douglas

[1] David V. Urban (Ph.D English, University of Illinois at Chicago) is Professor of English at Calvin College.

[2] Quoted in Justin Buckley Dyer and Micah J. Watson, *C. S. Lewis on Politics and the Natural Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 5. I would like to thank Calvin College, whose sabbatical release time benefitted the research and writing of this essay. Thanks also to Jamin Hübner and the anonymous readers at *CLR* for their helpful suggestions. Finally,

Gresham writes that "Jack was not interested in politics."[3] And less than a week before his November 1963 death, Lewis himself wrote to Mrs. Frank Jones, "Our papers at the moment are filled with nothing but politics, a subject in which I cannot take any interest."[4] There is also the oft-retold account of Lewis refusing the 1951 offer by Conservative Party leader Winston Churchill to bear the honorary title "Commander of the British Empire." Lewis wrote to Churchill's secretary explaining that, though he appreciated the offer, he was, in the words of John G. West, "worried about the political implications."[5] Although Lewis admired Churchill, he wrote to Churchill's secretary, "There are always…knaves who say, and fools who believe, that my religious writings are all covert anti-Leftist propaganda, and my appearance in the Honours List wd. of course strengthen their hands. It is therefore better that I shd. not appear there."[6] In this letter, Lewis makes clear that he does not want to be associated with a particular political party or movement.

But Lewis' aversion to party politics does not mean that that he was unconcerned with political matters. Rather, the notion that Lewis was in fact utterly apolitical has in recent decades been challenged and effectively discredited by a series of writings that have highlighted Lewis' concern with various political issues, with certain recent articles demonstrating Lewis' commitment, not to party politics, but to principles of limited

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thanks to Micah Watson who read a draft of this article after it had been accepted, and who suggested that I address the matter of Lewis and the NHS.

[3] Douglas Gresham, *Jack's Life: The Life Story of C. S. Lewis* (Nashville, TN: B&H Books, 2005), 28.

[4] Quoted in Dyer and Watson, C. *S. Lewis*, 6.

[5] John G. West, "Finding the Permanent in the Political: C. S. Lewis as a Political Thinker," in Andrew A. Tadie and Michael Macdonald, eds., *Permanent Things: Toward the Recovery of a More Human Scale at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 137. My discussion of Lewis and Churchill follows West's account. West's article is available online at http://www.discovery.org/a/457.

[6] C. S. Lewis, *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis*, vol. 3: *Narnia, Cambridge, and Joy 1950-1963*, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 147.

government.[7] Indeed, in a 2009 article, Steven Gillen observes that, in light of Lewis' theologically informed beliefs in limited government, "one could rightly call him a 'Christian Libertarian.'"[8] As we shall see later in this essay, Lewis' libertarianism is not without caveat, and, as the preceding paragraph suggests, he avoided political classification and was certainly wary of the damage of associating Christianity with a particular political movement. Nonetheless, it seems fair to recognize that Lewis' political thought, albeit not expressed particularly systematically, can in general accurately be considered Christian libertarian, provided that we always remember that, for Lewis, his libertarianism should be recognized as emanating from and necessarily subordinate to his Christianity and not vice-versa.

II. REVIEWING DYER AND WATSON ON LEWIS

Justin Buckley Dyer and Micah J. Watson's *C. S. Lewis on Politics and the Natural Law* offers the most thorough rebuttal to date of the idea that Lewis was indifferent about politics and its societal ramifications. Furthermore,

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[7] See, for example, Gilbert Meilander, *The Taste for the Other: The Social and Ethical Thought of C. S. Lewis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980); John G. West, "Finding the Permanent in the Political: C. S. Lewis as a Political Thinker," 137-48; Judith Wolf, "On Power," in *The Cambridge Companion to C. S. Lewis*, eds. Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 174-88; Stanley Hauerwas, "On Violence," in *The Cambridge Companion to C. S. Lewis*, 189-202; Steven Gillen, "C. S. Lewis and the Meaning of Freedom," *Journal of Markets and Morality* 12.2 (Fall 2009): 259-76 (available online); David J. Theroux, "C. S. Lewis on Mere Liberty and the Evils of Statism," in *Culture & Civilization*, volume 3: *Globalism*, ed. Irving Louis Horowitz (New Brunswick, NJ: 2011), 192-210 (available online at https://www.issues4life.org/pdfs/dtarticle.pdf); for a perspective that argues for Lewis' statist sympathies on matters of health care, see William Fraatz, "C. S. Lewis and America's Health Care Debate," *Anglican Theological Review* 94.3 (Summer 2012): 383-402. Gillen's and Theroux's pieces specifically emphasize Lewis' deep suspicion of statism and his belief in limited government. My recent online article for the Foundation for Economic Education, "Was C. S. Lewis a Libertarian?" (October 22, 2017), draws on Dyer and Watson's book and Theroux's article.

[8] Steven Gillen, "C. S. Lewis and the Meaning of Freedom," 272.

although Dyer and Watson do not use the term "libertarian" to describe Lewis, they do, throughout their well-structured presentation, demonstrate Lewis' commitments to the natural law tradition and to limited government. And they emphasize that Lewis' said commitments, evident in the various genres of his writings throughout his career, are grounded in Lewis' Christian convictions. Indeed, Dyer and Watson's book is a watershed effort in the growing understanding of Lewis as a thinker whose understanding of Christianity ineluctably led him to shun statism and embrace the classical liberal tradition, particularly those elements of that tradition that distrusted human power because it distrusted fallen humanity.

At the same time, Dyer and Watson's slim volume, for all its strengths, is necessarily limited in its coverage, and one may fairly argue that it pays insufficient attention to Lewis' classical liberal/libertarian beliefs. Indeed, far from being the final word on its subject matter, it invites further investigation into Lewis' Christian embrace of the traditions of natural law and limited government. Consequently, I will in the following pages seek to offer a thorough discussion of Dyer and Watson's book even as I, at times drawing on other scholars of Lewis and pieces by Lewis that Dyer and Watson do not thoroughly address, engage certain topics that the authors either neglect or only briefly cover.[9] Then moving beyond Dyer and Watson's book, the remaining sections of this essay seek, respectively, to situate Lewis within the broader stream of Christian classical liberal/libertarian thinkers that preceded him in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries; and to discuss how Lewis' writings might or might not be considered with reference to a Christian libertarian perspective concerning current debates regarding same-sex marriage and health care. Throughout the first half of this essay, I endeavor to suggest

[9] My overview of *C. S. Lewis on Politics and the Natural Law* is an adapted and significantly extended version of my recent review of that book in *Christianity and Literature* 67.1 (December 2017): 247-50. Used with permission. Future quotations of Dyer and Watson's book will be referenced parenthetically by page number.

various ways in which Dyer and Watson's book might inspire further exploration into various matters concerning Lewis' discussions of politics and the natural law; in the second half, I suggest how Lewis can be properly understood as a Christian libertarian thinker whose ideas well fit within the tradition of Christian classical liberalism/libertarianism since the late eighteenth century and provide insight into the controversies of our present day.

III. A DETAILED ENGAGEMENT WITH DYER AND WATSON

Lewis, Politics, Reason, and Human Nature

The book's opening chapter, "The Apolitical and Political C. S. Lewis," notes that although both the testimony of Lewis' close friends and relatives and Lewis' personal statements (some already quoted above) proclaim his disdain for politics and politicians, his writings reveal his broader political concerns. Both Lewis' novels, including the *Chronicles of Narnia*, the Space Trilogy, and *Till We Have Faces*; and his apologetic and ethical writings, including *The Screwtape Letters*, *Mere Christianity*, and *The Abolition of Man*, "brim with political themes" (p. 11). Dyer and Watson contend that although "Lewis was not actively involved in partisan politics and took little interest in transitory policy questions," he "had much to say about the underlying foundations of a just political order" (p. 7). They agree with West's premise that Lewis was "always interested in identifying the 'permanent in the political'" (p. 7). Moreover, biographical evidence suggests Lewis' lifelong interest in politics. At age ten, Lewis wrote an essay entitled "Home Rule" concerning "the future relationship between Ireland and the British crown" (p. 8). At age twelve, Lewis composed two novels that "revolved entirely around politics" (p. 5). Lewis regularly taught political theory at Magdalen College, Oxford. And his personal letters, including one written only six days before his death, comment on various contemporary political events and issues.

Chapter 2, "Creation, Fall, and Human Nature," addresses "the underlying philosophical commitments that ground Lewis' thought" (p. 14). Dyer and Watson demonstrate how Lewis' Christianity compelled him to believe in a world with a natural order that was created good but was also profoundly fallen. Lewis' belief in natural law is seen in his book *Miracles* (1947), which articulates Lewis' "argument from reason," an "argument for the plausibility of theism and creation" that contradicts both "blind, purposeless materialism *and* teleological, rational naturalism" (p. 26). Indeed, "Rational thought…is a metaphysical intrusion into the physical world," for "reason is not simply a part of nature, and nature could have never produced reason" (p. 28). For Lewis, "the reason of God is the self-existent principle by which the natural world was created" (p. 29). God gave humans "the choice and the duty to rationally rule their nonrational appetites and passions," but fallen humans allow "appetite and passion" to rebel against God-given reason, causing human reason to be "disfigured and out of harmony with the natural world it was designed to rule" (p. 30). Ultimately, human will is even more damaged by the Fall than is human reason, but "neither is *totally* depraved" (p. 33). Rather, fallen humans are able exercise reason and will, and even those without access to the special revelation of the Bible "can be illuminated by God's revelation in nature" (p. 35). In holding this position, Lewis stands in the line of Thomas Aquinas and the Anglican theologian Richard Hooker, whose influence Lewis acknowledges in his *English Literature of the Sixteenth Century* (1954).

Calling Lewis "a trenchant moral realist but a reluctant natural-law theorist," Dyer and Watson cite *Mere Christianity* (1952) to assert Lewis' contention that "belief in a moral law known through the exercise of reason" is "one of the pillars of 'all clear thinking about the universe we live in'" (p. 37). According to Lewis, the foundations of morality "are known through reason and morally obligatory to follow" through reason's conquest over "appetites and passions" (p. 37). Dyer and Watson then connect Lewis' beliefs concerning the moral law to Dostoevsky's

depiction of Raskonikov in *Crime and Punishment* (1866), stating that for both authors "the ingrained moral law is an integral part of human experience" and what "demonstrates to us our wretched condition" (p. 39). Dyer and Watson's investigation of Dostoevsky's novel is brief, and they offer no evidence that Lewis ever wrote about, taught, or even read Dostoevsky. But their analysis—which is valuable in and of itself—invites readers to consider what other literary characters might be analyzed through the moral law rubric Dyer and Watson discuss here. As a scholar currently writing on John Milton's influence upon Lewis, I myself am exploring how Lewis' moral law rubric can be applied to the character of Satan in Milton's epic *Paradise Lost*, a connection all the more appropriate in light of the fact that Lewis was an accomplished Milton scholar whose discussion of Satan in his book *A Preface to "Paradise Lost"* (1942) has influenced the scholarly and popular understanding of Milton's Satan for three-quarters of a century.

Natural Law and Lewis' Conflict with Karl Barth

Chapter 3, "Divine Commands, Natural Law, and Modern Politics," addresses Lewis' conflict with Karl Barth on the matter of natural law. In his 1934 Barmen Declaration, Barth, protesting the German Evangelical Church's acquiescence to Nazism, "traced the errors of the 'German Christian' movement—and especially the syncretism of Nazism and Christianity—to the church's acceptance of 'natural theology'" (p. 42). In doing so, Barth opposed the tendency of contemporary liberal Christian theology to challenge the reliability of the Bible in favor of "affirming God's progressive revelation in human history" (p. 42), a viewpoint that was used to view Hitler as "a source of specific new revelation of God" (p. 41). Barth's response to such heresy, however, included a rejection of the theologically based natural law tradition embraced throughout the centuries by orthodox Catholics and Protestants. Barth reaffirmed his position in his August 1941 letter to Britain, published as the pamphlet

*This Christian Cau*se. That same month, Lewis responded to the Nazis by *affirming* the ideals of natural law, arguing in a BBC broadcast (later incorporated into *Mere Christianity*) that the "basic moral principles" revealed to all humanity point to the deficiencies in Nazi moral ideology (p. 44). In contrast to Barth's sharp antithesis between scriptural revelation and natural revelation, Lewis' theory of natural law—articulated most clearly in his 1943 article "The Poison of Subjectivism"—"rested on an ontological claim about the divine nature, a claim that was inseparable from Christian revelation" (p. 53). A decade later, affirming the natural law tradition of Richard Hooker, Lewis in *English Literature of the Sixteenth Century* lashes out against what he called "Barthianism," a theology that, in Lewis' words, "set a God of inscrutable will" against the "accursed nature of man." Lewis was so grieved by Barth's rejection of natural theology that he went so far as to call Barth's theology "something 'not unlike devil worship'" (p. 48). For Lewis, Dyer and Watson write, "the price of abandoning the natural law tradition…was practical nihilism" (p. 55).

The chapter concludes by looking briefly at Lewis' efforts to articulate truth to modern audiences through fiction, an effort, Dyer and Watson aver, inspired by Lewis' increasing skepticism toward "the ability of rational arguments to penetrate the defenses modern society had erected against reason itself" (p. 59). Dyer and Watson specifically mention the final volume of the Space Trilogy, *That Hideous Strength* (1945), as the best example of Lewis' fictional efforts to communicate such truth. Along those same lines, we might also consider that Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-56) can be viewed in a similar vein, specifically in terms of how Lewis' novels for children—an endeavor Lewis began after his Space Trilogy—impress upon young hearts and minds timeless truths that will be more easily understood and rationally embraced in adulthood because of the foundation laid by Lewis' fiction. Lewis himself touches on this matter in his essay "On Juvenile Tastes" (1958), in which he affirms that "[t]he right sort" of children's book authors "work from the common, universally

human, ground they share with children, and indeed with countless adults."[10]

Lewis and Objective Moral Truth

Chapter 4, "The Early Modern Turn and the Abolition of Man," focuses on Lewis' commitment to objective moral truth, both in his rebuttals of early modern champions of subjectivism and in his articulation of moral truth within his contemporary context. Dyer and Watson trace Lewis' discussion in *English Literature of the Sixteenth Century* of how medieval Christian understandings of natural law and truth, based on Augustine and Aquinas, were challenged by figures such as Machiavelli and Hobbes, and later by Rousseau and Hegel, all of whom articulated in different ways the right of the ruler or ruling class to determine what is right and good. This "new theory of sovereignty," in Lewis' words, "makes political power inventive, creative. Its seat is transferred from the reason which humbly and patiently discerns what is right to the will which decrees what shall be right" (p. 67). This new theory, as Lewis suggests in "Screwtape Proposes a Toast" (1959), paved the way for the modern totalitarianism evidenced by "both the Nazi and the Communist state" and its disdain toward personal liberty and self-government (p. 69).

Lewis' most sustained affirmation of objective truth is *The Abolition of Man* (1943), which marshals the natural law tradition across history and cultures to oppose the Hobbesian perspective—articulated, to Lewis' great consternation, in a popular contemporary grammar book for secondary schools—that ultimately "makes appetite the legitimate (or at least unavoidable) ruler of reason, with thoughts serving passions 'as scouts and spies' that 'find the way to the things desired'" (p. 77). *Abolition* also expresses Lewis' concern that such thought permeates even liberal

[10] C. S. Lewis, "On Juvenile Tastes," in *On Stories and Other Essays on Literature*, ed. Walter Hooper (San Diego: Harcourt, Inc., 1982), 51.

democracies, which, in the absence of belief in objective morality, give way to "a different form of totalitarianism: a benevolent scientific bureaucracy, which destroys or damages mediating institutions such as the church and the family, and makes genuine freedom (understood as a virtuous life built on economic, cultural, and ecclesiastical independence) difficult to achieve" (p. 61). In his novel *That Hideous Strength* (1945), Lewis depicts such a scientific bureaucracy—one which proves to be not benevolent but murderous—in the form of the National Institutes for Coordinated Experiments (N.I.C.E.), a "scientific social planning agency" that seeks "to overcome nature with science" (p. 81-82).

Fallen Human Nature and the Need for Limited Government

Chapter 5, "Lewis' Lockean Liberalism," explains how Lewis' commitment to natural law theory did not translate into a belief in a hierarchical system of government. Rather, Lewis' Christian convictions led him to the belief that government should be limited and decentralized. And it is on this matter, I would argue, where Lewis' Christian libertarianism becomes particularly evident. In his essay "Equality" (1943), Lewis affirms the ideal of "democracy"—understood, as David Theroux points out, as "self-government as in Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*"—as "the least bad political structure."[11] Lewis writes, "I am a democrat because I believe in the Fall of Man." But he promptly distinguishes himself from democrats whose inspiration for their positions "descends from the ideas of people like Rousseau,[12] who

[11] David J. Theroux, "C. S. Lewis on Mere Liberty and the Evils of Statism," 204.

[12] Dyer and Buckley note that in "On the Transmission of Christianity," in *God on the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 118, "Lewis referred to Rousseau as the 'father of the totalitarians'" (p. 97).

believed in democracy because they thought mankind so wise and good that everyone deserved a share in the government."[13] Lewis continues:

> The danger of defending democracy on those grounds is that they're not true. And whenever their weakness is exposed, the people who prefer tyranny make capital out of the exposure. I find that they're not true without looking further than myself. I don't deserve a share in governing a hen-roost, much less a nation. Nor do most people….The real reason for democracy is just the reverse. Mankind is so fallen that no man can be trusted with unchecked power over his fellows. Aristotle said that some people were only fit to be slaves. I do not contradict him. But I reject slavery because I see no men fit to be masters.[14]

I would argue that Dyer and Watson do not develop this matter sufficiently, but Lewis' emphasis on human fallenness is at the very heart of any claims one may make for Lewis falling within the Christian classical liberal/libertarian position, a subject I will address later in this essay.

Lewis Against Theocratic and Technocratic Totalitarianism

Later in chapter 5, Dyer and Watson compare Lewis' classical liberal beliefs with those of John Locke, who believed that government's role should be limited to "the protection of individual natural rights" (p. 89-90). Locke grounded human rights in the natural law tradition as expressed by Hooker, but, significantly, Locke deemphasized "government's perfecting role" (p. 90). Similarly, Lewis, who wrote favorably of Locke, believed that strongly limiting government would protect against the tyrannizing impulse endemic in theocracies on one hand and secularist, statist programs for human perfection on the other. Lewis' discussion of both such governmental systems is instructive. In his

[13] C. S. Lewis, "Equality," in *Present Concerns*, ed. Walter Hooper (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), 17.

[14] C. S. Lewis, "Equality," 17. I quote this essay somewhat more than do Dyer and Buckley.

posthumously published essay "A Reply to Professor Haldane," likely written in late 1946, Lewis explains his aversion to theocracy, using terminology that recalls his diction in "Equality":

> I am a democrat because I believe that no man or group of men is good enough to be trusted with uncontrolled power over others. And the higher the pretensions of such power, the more dangerous I think it both to the rulers and to the subjects. Hence Theocracy is the worst of all governments…the inquisitor who mistakes his own cruelty and lust of power and fear for the voice of Heaven will torment us infinitely because he torments us with the approval of his own conscience and his better impulses appear to him as temptations. And since Theocracy is the worst, the nearer any government approaches to Theocracy the worse it will be.[15]

It is striking that "Equality," written a year after the conclusion of World War II, addresses with such vehemence the seemingly obsolete category of theocracy. But we must consider the larger historical context. Indeed, writing in 1944 in the Preface to *Omnipotent Government*, Ludwig von Mises discusses the "theocratical justification of dictatorship" offered by the "fanatical advocate of Nazism" Werner Sombart, who "was bold enough to assert that the Fuhrer gets his orders from God, the supreme Fuhrer of the universe, and that Fuhrertum is a permanent revelation."[16] And the matter of Nazism and other totalitarian governments being theocratic in nature was something that Lewis himself explicitly

[15] C. S. Lewis, "A Reply to Professor Haldane," in *On Stories and other Essays on Literature*, 75-76. My quotation of this article is more extensive than what Dyer and Watson quote. Lewis wrote this essay in reply to an article published by the Marxist biologist J.B.S. Handrane, whose article "Auld Hornie, F.R.S.," *Modern Quarterly* (Autumn 1946): 32-40, criticizes Lewis' Space Trilogy "for being anti-science and against a 'planned world'" (I quote David J. Theroux, "C. S. Lewis on Mere Liberty and the Evils of Statism," 204).

[16] Ludwig von Mises, *Omnipotent Government: The Rise of the Total State and Total War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1944), iii. Mises refers to Sombart's *Deutscher Sozialismus* (Charlottenburg: Buchholz & Weisswange, 1934), 213.

pondered. In this same essay, Lewis writes of "the emergence of 'the party' in the modern sense—the Fascists, Nazis, or Communists." Noting the religious characters of these "Parties," Lewis writes of "the belief that the process which the Party embodies is inevitable, and the belief that the forwarding of this process is the supreme duty and abrogates all ordinary moral laws." When Party members embrace this mentality, they "can become devil-worshippers in the sense that they can now *honour*, as well as obey, their own vices…[W]hen cruelty, envy, and lust of power appear as the commands of a great super-personal force…they can be exercised with self-approval."[17] In the final, unfinished paragraph of this same essay, Lewis writes, "It is, at present, in their sense of serving a metaphysical force that the modern 'Parties' approximate most closely to religions." Lewis mentions "Odinism in Germany" and "the cult of Lenin's corpse in Russia" before his manuscript ends.[18]

Chapter 5 also addresses Lewis' concern about the tyrannizing impulse endemic in secularist, statist programs for human perfection. In his July 20, 1958 *Observer* article entitled "Willing Slaves of the Welfare State," Lewis reveals that his present concern is less with theocracy but rather what Dyer and Watson call "scientific technocracy" (p. 95). Lewis writes:

> I dread government in the name of science. That is how most tyrannies come in. In every age the men who want us under their thumb, if they have any sense, will put forward the particular pretension which the hopes and fears of that age render most potent. They "cash in." It has been magic, it has been Christianity. Now it will certainly be science.[19]

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[17] C. S. Lewis, "A Reply to Professor Haldane," 78-79.

[18] Ibid., 79. Editor Walter Hooper suggests that Lewis "probably lost" the essay "soon after" he wrote it.

[19] C. S. Lewis, "Is Progress Possible?: Willing Slaves to the Welfare State," in *God on the Dock*, 315. An example of such hope in scientific planning and human progress can be seen in *Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York:

Significantly, however, we should note that Lewis recognized that totalitarian government could simultaneously be both theocratic and technocratic in nature. Writing in "A Reply to Professor Haldrane," Lewis asserts, "Under modern conditions any effective invitation to Hell will certainly appear in the guise of scientific planning—as Hitler's regime in fact did."[20] He continues:

> Every tyrant must begin by claiming to have what his victims respect and to give what they want. The majority in most modern countries respect science and want to be planned. And, therefore, almost by definition, if any man or group wishes to enslave us it will of course describe itself as "scientific planned democracy."[21]

Lewis' dread of statist "scientific planning" finds a parallel with Mises' and F.A. Hayek's various critiques of economic planning.[22] Significantly, although Lewis never went into the kind of analytical detail of the aforementioned economists, Lewis certainly recognized the danger of state "planning" within various sorts of totalitarian states, be they controlled by "Fascists, Nazis, or Communists."

Human Nature and the Perils of Democracy

But for all his concern regarding totalitarianism in its different forms, Lewis was also pointedly suspicious even of democracy, a suspicion again based in his recognition of fallen human nature. Dyer and Watson do not offer a sustained discussion of Lewis' critique of democracy, but as

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Harper and Brothers, 1944), who writes, "We have today in social science a greater faith in the improvability of man and society than we have ever had since the Enlightenment" (1024).

[20] C. S. Lewis, "A Reply to Professor Haldane," 74.

[21] C. S. Lewis, "A Reply to Professor Haldane," 74-75.

[22] See, for example, Mises' and Hayek's respective contributions in *Collectivist Economic Planning*, ed. F. A. Hayek (1935. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963).

Theroux points out, "Lewis fully understood that democracy, if unchecked, becomes egalitarianism and will trample on liberty as a collectivist force for evil by celebrating pride and envy as it fosters tyranny." Indeed, such evil has taken place "even in the supposed pursuit of liberty."[23] Theroux highlights how Lewis articulates his suspicion through the demon Screwtape in "Screwtape Proposes a Toast" (1959). Screwtape opines:

> Hidden in the heart of this striving for Liberty there was also a deep hatred of personal freedom. That invaluable man Rousseau first revealed it. In his perfect democracy, only the state religion is permitted, slavery is restored, and the individual is told that he has really willed (though he didn't know it) whatever the Government tells him to do. From that starting point, via Hegel (another indispensable propagandist on our side), we easily contrived both the Nazi and the Communist state. Even in England we were pretty successful. I heard the other day that in that country a man could not, without a permit, cut down his own tree with his own axe, make it into planks with his own saw, and use the planks to build a tool shed in his own garden.[24]

Screwtape goes on to explain that tyranny can be brought about by "democracy and egalitarianism,"[25] fostering a system of self-righteous indignation against the more successful members of society and insidious coddling of the indolent:

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[23] David J. Theroux, "C. S. Lewis on Mere Liberty and the Evils of Statism," 206. See also Steven Gillen, "C. S. Lewis and the Meaning of Freedom," 265-67, who connects Lewis with classical liberals like Benjamin Constant and F. A. Hayek, over and against Jean-Jacques Rousseau, as one who, though favoring democracy, fears that "increasing political freedom without checks and balances on the will of the masses would merely replace tyranny of the few with what Mill and others called the tyranny of the majority" (266).

[24] C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 121-22.

[25] David J. Theroux, "C. S. Lewis on Mere Liberty and the Evils of Statism," 206.

> *Democracy* is the word with which you must lead [humans] by the nose. The good work which our philological experts have already done in the corruption of the human language makes it unnecessary to warn you that they should never be allowed to give this word a clear and definable meaning. They won't. It will never occur to them that democracy is properly the name of a political system, even a system of voting, and that this has only the most remote and tenuous connection with what you are trying to sell them…
>
> You are to use the word [democracy] purely as an incantation; if you like, purely for its selling power. And of course it is connected with the political ideal that men should be equally treated. You then make a stealthy transition in their minds from this political ideal to a factual belief that all men *are* equal. Especially the man you are working on. As a result you can use the word *democracy* to sanction in his thought the most degrading (and also the least enjoyable) of all human feelings. You can get him practice, not only without shame but with a positive glow of self-approval, conduct which, if undefended by the magic word, would be universally derided.
>
> The feeling I mean is of course that which prompts a man to say *I'm as good as you*…
>
> Now, this useful phenomenon is itself by no means new. Under the name of Envy it has been known to the humans for thousands of years. But hitherto they always regarded it as the most odious, and also the most comical of vices. Those who were aware of feeling it felt it with shame; those who were not gave it no quarter in others. The delightful novelty of the present situation is that you can sanction it—make it respectable and downright laudable—by the incantatory use of the word *democratic*…
>
> [Within the "educational system"], dunces and idlers must not be made to feel inferior to intelligent and industrious pupils. That would be "undemocratic."…All incentives to learn and all penalties for not learning will vanish…And anyway the teachers—or should I say

> nurses?—will be far too busy reassuring the dunces and patting them on the back to waste any time on real teaching….Of course, this would not follow unless all education became state education. But it will. That is part of the same movement. Penal taxes, designed for that purpose, are liquidating the Middle Class, the class who were prepared to save and spend and make sacrifices in order to have their children privately educated.[26]

I quote Screwtape's speech at length to demonstrate Lewis' prescience in recognizing not only the way envy can undermine the virtues of a democracy but also how such envy, combined with the entitlements of an ever-expanding welfare state and its inevitable perversion of language itself, can serve to squelch individual initiative and achievement, curtail the influence of parents, and corrupt our very understanding of what is moral and immoral.

In his essay, Gillen points out another of Lewis' concerns about the welfare state, stating that "Lewis regarded welfare guaranteed by the state as a form of control by the state and considered private property to be an indispensable safeguard against that control."[27] Gillen quotes "Willing Slaves of the Welfare State":

> I believe a man is happier, and happy in a richer way, if he has 'the freeborn mind'. But I doubt whether he can have this without economic independence, which the new society is abolishing. For economic independence allows an education not controlled by Government, and in

[26] C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, 122, 123, 125, 126. See also Lewis' December 8, 1959 letter to American journalist Dan Tucker, in *Collected Letters*, vol. 3, where Lewis writes, "democracy in the end always destroys education" (p. 1105). Significantly, and to their book's detriment, Dyer and Watson offer only passing reference to Screwtape's speech and do not quote any of it.

[27] Steven Gillen, "C. S. Lewis and the Meaning of Freedom," 264.

> adult life it is the man who needs, and asks, nothing of Government who can criticize its acts and snap his fingers at its ideology.[28]

This passage demonstrates Lewis' far-ranging understanding of liberty, for here he explicitly recognizes that economic freedom goes hand in hand with other liberties, and that government control of the economic realm enables government to control various other facets of citizens' lives. Gillen rightly notes that "Lewis' views were congruent with those of Hayek, who warned in *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), 'Economic control is not merely control of a sector of human life which can be separated from the rest; it is the control of the means for all our ends.'"[29]

Divorce, Homosexuality, and the Nanny State

Returning to Dyer and Watson's book, we see that chapter 6, "Screwtape is in the Details," develops the concerns of the previous chapter, affirming that "The strength of Lewis' commitment to a transcendent moral reality might be rivaled only by his distrust of government's ability to determine, enforce, and encourage that same morality" (p. 116). Especially significant in this regard is Lewis' belief that government should not criminalize sinful behavior as long as it does not directly harm others. He also did not believe it right for Christians to advocate legislation that would impose Christian morality upon unbelievers. Specifically, in *Mere Christianity* (1952), Lewis "distinguishe[s] between the Christian and secular views of marriage" (p. 115). In reading Lewis' views below, we should remember that divorce was until 1969 generally illegal in the UK:

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[28] C. S. Lewis, "Is Progress Possible? Willing Slaves of the Welfare State," in *God on the Dock*, 314.

[29] Steven Gillen, "C. S. Lewis and the Meaning of Freedom," 264. Gillen quotes F.A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), 92.

> I should like to distinguish two things which are very often confused. The Christian conception of marriage is one: the other is the quite different question—how far Christians, if they are voters or members of Parliament, ought to try to force divorce laws. A great many people seem to think that if you are a Christian yourself you should try to make divorce difficult for everyone. I do not think that. At least I know I should be very angry if the Mohammedans tried to prevent the rest of us from drinking wine. My own view is that the Churches should frankly recognise that the majority of the British people are not Christians and, therefore, cannot be expected to live Christian lives. There ought to be two distinct kinds of marriage: one governed by the State with rules enforced on all citizens, the other governed by the Church with rules enforced by her on her own members. The distinction ought to be quite sharp, so that a man knows which couples are married in a Christian sense and which are not.[30]

Here we may see that Lewis affirms libertarian principles of individual choice and free association as he distinguishes not merely between Christian marriage and secular marriage, but also between the appropriate purviews of church authority and state authority. Significantly, in his distaste for Christians using the state to enforce their morality on non-Christians, he also affirms the need for the church to enforce Christian morality upon its members—who, it is worth emphasizing, have *chosen* to attach themselves to the church and thus submit to its government.

Dyer and Watson also highlight how Lewis distinguished between the morality of male homosexual behavior—which was not decriminalized in the UK until after Lewis' death—and its criminalization. On one hand, Lewis wrote to Sheldon Vanauken in 1954, "I take it for certain that the *physical* satisfaction of homosexual desires is a sin."[31] On the other hand, Lewis was adamant about the government not punishing homosexual

[30] C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 101-102.

[31] C. S. Lewis, *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis*, 3:471.

acts. In a 1959 letter in which Lewis expresses compassion for "persecuted" homosexuals, he writes, "I quite agree with you about Homosexuals: to make the thing criminal cures nothing and only creates a blackmailers' paradise. Anyway, what business is it of the State?"[32] And addressing the matter of homosexuality in a 1958 letter, Lewis writes:

> [N]o *sin*, simply as such, should be made a *crime*. Who the deuce are our rulers to enforce their opinion of sin on us?—A lot of professional politicians, often venal time-servers, whose opinion on a moral problem in one's life we shd. attach very little value to. Of course many acts which are sins against God are also injuries to our fellow-citizens, and must on that account, but only on that account, be made crimes. But of all the sins in the world I shd. have thought homosexuality was the one that least concerns the State. We hear too much of the State. Government is at best a necessary evil. Let's keep it in its place.[33]

Lewis' discussion of homosexuality here reveals his larger distinction between sin and crime. In Lewis' words, crimes must need be "injuries to our fellow-citizens." Dyer and Watson observe that Lewis' "perhaps libertarian" argument "falls well within the classical natural law tradition" (p. 113). They quote the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas:

> Human law is framed for the mass of men, the majority of which are not perfectly virtuous. Therefore human law does not prohibit every vice from which the majority can abstain, and especially those that harm others and must be prohibited for human society to survive, such as homicide, theft, and the like.[34]

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[32] Lewis, *Collected Letters*, 3:1154.

[33] C. S. Lewis, *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, rev. ed., ed. Warren Lewis (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2003), 473.

[34] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*. Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: R. & T. Washbourne, 1914-1938) I-II, Q. 96, A. 2. Steven Gillen, "C. S. Lewis and the Meaning of Freedom," 265, makes this same point.

Lewis, Mill, and the "Harm Principle"

Dyer and Watson also compare Lewis' basic philosophy of limited government interference with John Stuart Mill's "harm principle" as expressed in *On Liberty* (1859). They quote Mill as follows:

> [T]he sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant. He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forebear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because, in the opinions of others, to do so would be wise or even right…The only part of the conduct of any one, for which he is amenable to society, is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.[35]

Dyer and Watson's connection between Lewis and Mill is helpful, but we should be wary of taking the parallel between them too far. First, although Dyer and Watson claim that Lewis "borrows the harm principle from Mill" (p. 121), they offer no explicit evidence that Lewis' position was directly influenced by Mill. (Indeed, as Dyer and Watson acknowledge, Adam Barkman has concluded, based on Lewis' marginalia of Mill's writings, "that Mill was wrong 'about nearly everything'" [118].[36]) Second, as Gillen points out, Lewis in "Man or Rabbit" (c. 1946), though describing

[35] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press/The World's Classics, 1991), 14. Dyer and Watson mistakenly quote this as two separate paragraphs without ellipses.

[36] Adam Barkman, *C. S. Lewis and Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Allentown, PA: Zossima Press, 2009), 447.

Mill as "good," "could not accept the atheistic teleological morality underlying Mill's notion of freedom."[37]

Perhaps most importantly, Mill, unlike Lewis, does not make the sharp distinction between the authority of the state and the authority of the church or, for that matter, any institution that the individual has aligned him or herself with through the principle of free association. Rather, although the introductory chapter of *On Liberty* that Dyer and Watson quotes focuses on the matter of state coercion, Mill in that same chapter writes against the influence of "religion" which, despite the modern "separation between spiritual and temporal authority," exerts its powerful influence upon "the formation of moral feeling"; Mill also criticizes "churches and sects" (as well certain non-Christian "modern reformers") for "their assertion of the right of spiritual domination."[38] Significantly, Mill explicitly states the "one very simple principle" which guides *On Liberty* is that "society" should not practice "compulsion and control" against "the individual," "whether the means used be physical force in the form of legal penalties, or the moral coercion of public opinion."[39] Clearly Mill would disagree with Lewis' belief that churches should correct and even discipline its members for heterodox beliefs and sinful behavior; and although Lewis, as we have seen, agreed that churches and even individual Christians should not inappropriately exert legal influence on moral issues, he still encouraged Christians to exercise moral influence both within the churches and the broader society in ways that Mill would find distasteful and even objectionable.

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[37] Steven Gillen, "C. S. Lewis and the Meaning of Freedom," 262. Gillen also notes, regarding matters of economic liberty, that Lewis' "instrumental reasoning," while seeming on some level "to mimic Mill," is actually "unlike Mill" in that "Lewis ascribed intrinsic value to liberty and traced that value to natural law, which was given by the Creator and supersedes laws given by the state" (264). Much like Dyer and Watson do seven years later, Gillen traces this Christian natural law influence upon Lewis from Aquinas, Richard Hooker, Hugo Grotius (whom Dyer and Watson do not mention), and John Locke.

[38] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, 18.

[39] Ibid., 13-14.

The Violation of Natural Law in Lewis' Space Trilogy

Dyer and Watson's concluding chapter, "Politics in the Shadowlands," analyzes how the concepts Lewis articulated in *The Abolition of Man* manifest themselves in Lewis' Space Trilogy, a vehicle by which Lewis articulated "belief in Christianity and the moral law…to a skeptical culture" (p. 144). In the first two novels of the trilogy, *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938) and *Perelandra* (1943), the villain Weston carries out the agenda of *Abolition*'s "nameless innovator." In *Out of the Silent Planet*, Weston "takes the legitimate value of human posterity and warps it beyond recognition by subjecting all other values to it" (p. 138). In *Perelandra*, Weston's agenda transforms into "an infinite perpetuation" of a kind of sinister all-encompassing spirituality (p. 139). And in *That Hideous Strength*, the leaders of the N.I.C.E. seek to bring about the post-human world Lewis warned of in *Abolition*. Dyer and Watson's discussions of Lewis' fiction are brief, but their observations are valuable in themselves even as they encourage future analysis by other scholars.

The Limitations of Dyer and Watson's Study

Throughout their book, Dyer and Watson effectively examine the sweep of Lewis' writings—covering his books of Christian apologetics, periodical essays, novels, letters, and literary criticism—to demonstrate his consistent articulation of natural law and, albeit stated less frequently, classical liberal beliefs. My reservations with their book concern matters of omission more than commission. In the pages that follow, I will discuss certain matters that Dyer and Watson's comparatively short book does not address. I do this not to criticize their efforts but rather to extend the discussion to which they have offered such a substantial contribution.

Before I move on to those topics, however, I will mention my disappointment that Dyer and Watson all but ignore the articles by Gillen

and Theroux that I cite throughout this present essay. Gillen and Theroux each valuably address various topics that Dyer and Watson explore, but their book only mentions Theroux's essay once in passing, and it does not mention Gillen's contribution. This failure to engage with Gillen and Theroux is perplexing to me because both authors anticipate, some years prior, Dyer and Watson's insights, and in fact address several important matters that Dyer and Watson ignore altogether. Indeed, I recommend that readers interested in understanding Lewis' classical liberal/libertarian viewpoints first read Gillen's and Theroux's articles—both available free online—before they proceed to Dyer and Watson's book.

IV. LEWIS CONSIDERED WITHIN THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTARIANISM

Madison, Bastiat, and Tocqueville

Moving beyond the parameters of Dyer and Watson's book, I will now discuss how our understanding of Lewis' libertarianism may be enhanced as we examine how Lewis' ideas connect with the broader stream of Christian classical liberal/libertarian thinking that preceded him in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. As noted earlier, Dyer and Watson do an admirable job recognizing the Christian natural law influence upon Lewis from Aquinas, Hooker, and the broadly Christian Locke, but they stop at Locke and then make the aforementioned speculative and not entirely satisfying connection with the agnostic Mill. As we consider ways to further study Lewis' political ideas, we may profit by examining how Lewis' ideas intersect with other thinkers in the Christian classical liberal/libertarian tradition.

I will offer five examples, the first three being thinkers whose ideological connections with Christianity have been established but whose own Christian belief and practice have been the subject of some dispute. The first is James Madison (1751-1836). Michael Novak writes that

"there can be no doubt that [Madison's] world view is no other than Christian…[W]hile it does not affirm everything that orthodox Christian faith affirms, Madison's vision is sufficiently impregnated with Christian faith to be not only unconvincing, but *unintelligible* without it."[40] Particularly relevant to Lewis is how Madison, who was mentored at Princeton by the Scots Presbyterian Calvinist John Witherspoon, based his belief in a federalist political system, with its many checks and balances, upon his belief in human moral imperfection. In Federalist 51, Madison writes that because of "human nature," men are not "angels," and therefore "Ambition must be made to counteract ambition."[41] Madison's affirmations here relate to Lewis' statement that he believed in limited government because he believed in the Fall of humanity.

Similarly, Lewis' understanding of how corrupted human nature necessarily corrupts government leaders resembles that of the nineteenth-century French Catholic liberal Frédéric Bastiat (1801-50),[42] who writes in *The Law*:

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[40] Robert Novak, *On Two Wings: Humble Faith and Common Sense at the American Founding*, expanded ed. (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2003), 139. For a discussion of Madison's religious beliefs and his theology of religious freedom, see Vincent Phillip Munoz, "Religion in the Life, Thought, and Presidency of James Madison," in *Religion and the American Presidency*, 2nd ed., ed. Mark J. Rozell and Gleaves Whitney (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 51-72.

[41] James Madison, Federalist 51, in Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, *The Federalist*, the Gideon Edition, ed. George W. Carey and James McCellan (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2001), 268-69.

[42] Mark Skousen, *The Making of Modern Economics: The Lives and Ideas of Great Thinkers*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2009), writes that Bastiat "was a strong believer in the Catholic faith" (62); David Todd, *Free Trade and Its Enemies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), calls Bastiat "A devout Catholic" (p. 192); and Charles Kaupe, "Bastiat's Vision," *Acton Institute Powerblog*, June 29, 2012, writes that "Bastiat drew on his Catholic faith and the writings of Adam Smith and John Locke to articulate a vision of limited, efficient government." But an alternative understanding is offered by the entry on Bastiat in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (accessed at http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02345b.htm), which states that Bastiat "was fitted to understand and defend Catholic truth, but the prejudices in the midst of which he lived kept him aloof from the Faith until the very eve of his death."

> If the natural tendencies of mankind are so bad that it is not safe to permit people to be free, how is it that the tendencies of these organizers are always good? Do not the legislators and their appointed agents also belong to the human race? Or do they believe themselves to be made of finer clay than the rest of mankind?[43]

Another significant connection between Lewis and the historical sweep of Christian classical liberalism can be seen between Lewis and Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-59), specifically concerning Lewis' critique of envy within democracy as articulated in "Screwtape Proposes a Toast." The matter of envy within democracy was a danger that Tocqueville—whose political philosophy was largely dependent on Christianity[44]—addressed well before the advent of the welfare state. Richard Swedberg observes:

> To Tocqueville, envy was inherent in democracy. "Envy," he wrote [in *Democracy in America*], "is a feeling that develops strongly among equals; and that is why it is so ardent in democratic times." In addition, "the desire for equality becomes ever more insatiable as the degree of

[43] Frédéric Bastiat, *The Law*, trans. Dean Russell, forward Walter E. Williams, introduction Richard Ebeling, afterward Sheldon Richman (Irvington-on-Hudson, NY: Foundation for Economic Education, 1998), 63. I draw my comparisons between Lewis and Madison and Bastiat from my "Was C. S. Lewis a Libertarian?," paragraphs 8-9.

[44] For discussions of both Tocqueville's philosophical dependence on Christianity as well as his own strained relationship with the Catholic church, see Doris S. Goldstein, "The Religious Beliefs of Alexis de Tocqueville," *French Historical Studies* 1.4 (Autumn 1960): 379-93; and Luk Sanders, "The Strange Belief of Alexis de Tocqueville: Christianity as Philosophy," *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 74.1 (2013): 33-53. Goldstein argues that although Tocqueville could not "accept those doctrines which would have made him a member of the Roman Catholic Church" (393), "his belief may truly be called 'Christian'" (392). Sanders argues instead that "Christianity was Tocqueville's philosophical belief, rather than his religious belief" (33).

> inequality increases"—with a corresponding rise in desire to own the same things as others have.[45]

At the same time, Tocqueville believed that Christianity could mitigate the human impulse toward envy that democracy exacerbated. In the words of Joshua Mitchell, Tocqueville suggested that Christianity was "palliative for envy and difference," believing that "there must be an orientation toward the transcendent if the temptations of the world are to be ameliorated" and that "only a (creator) God may draw the (created) soul away from the comparative and toward the absolute. As social conditions become ever more equal, the need for God becomes ever more acute." Mitchell specifically quotes Tocqueville's statement in *Democracy in America* that "religion places the object of man's desires outside and beyond worldly goods and naturally lifts the soul into regions far above the realm of the senses."[46] Certainly Tocqueville's understanding of these matters can illuminate our understanding of why Lewis' Screwtape would seek to obfuscate his and his fellow demons' victims' Christianity in his attempt to encourage—by means of exciting their envy—an idolatrous reverence for democracy and equality.

Lord Acton

Fruitful connections may also be seen between Lewis and the prominent 19th-century Christian classical liberal Lord Acton (John Emerich Edward Dalberg, 1834-1902), who was without dispute devoutly Catholic. Most obviously, we may see how Lewis' distrust of human nature and human power may be compared to Acton's famous maxim,

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[45] Richard Swedberg, *Toqueville's Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 21.

[46] Joshua Mitchell, *Tocqueville on Religion, Democracy, and the American Future* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 183, 187.

"Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely."[47] And this comparison is particularly germane when we examine the context of Acton's maxim, which appears within a letter to Church of England Archbishop Mandell Creighton that spoke to the need for historians to accurately judge past popes for their abuses and corruption.[48] Significantly, Creighton in his three-volume history of the Renaissance popes "appeared to suggest that because of [these popes'] great office and heavy responsibility they should be judged less harshly for their moral imperfections."[49] Responding to Creighton's position, Acton—whose earlier opposition to the doctrine of Papal Infallibility (codified by the Catholic Church in 1870) was grounded in his distrust of human nature in its exercise of extreme power—writes:

> I cannot accept your canon that we are to judge Pope and King unlike other men, with a favourable presumption that they did no wrong. If there is any presumption it is the other way against holders of power, increasing as the power increases. Historic responsibility [the responsibility of historians] has to make up for the want of legal responsibility [the lack of legal condemnation of such rulers while they lived]. Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority: still more when you superadd the tendency or the certainty of corruption by authority. There is no worse heresy than that the office sanctifies the holder of it.[50]

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[47] John Emerich Edward Dalberg, Lord Acton, "Letter I" (Cannes, April 5, 1887), in *Acton-Creighton Correspondence*. Accessed at <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/acton-acton-creighton-correspondence#lf1524_label_010>, paragraph 22.

[48] Oliver H. Richardson, "Lord Acton and His Obiter Dicta on History," *The Sewanee Review* 13.2 (April 1905), writes that Acton's "opinion of human nature, as revealed in history, is low" (p. 132).

[49] David Lee, "The Wisdom of Lord Acton," *Sophia* 103 (Easter 2012), 10.

[50] John Emerich Edward Dalberg, Lord Acton, "Letter I," paragraph 22.

We may surmise that Acton's influence is evident in Lewis' statement in "Equality" that "Mankind is so fallen that no man can be trusted with unchecked power over his fellows."[51] Indeed, Lewis himself approvingly quotes Acton in his address "Membership" (1945), in which Lewis writes, "But since we have learned sin, we have found, as Lord Acton says, that 'all power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely'."[52]

Significantly, Acton, like Lewis, was also deeply sensitive to the potential corruption of democracy, with Acton emphasizing how the power democracy gives its practitioners can corrupt them in the same way it has kings. In *The History of Freedom in Antiquity*, Acton writes, "the possession of unlimited power, which corrodes the conscience, hardens the heart, and confounds the understanding of monarchs, exercised its demoralising influence on the illustrious democracy of Athens."[53] Acton also notes how these same Athenian democrats, believing that "the sovereign people had a right to do whatever was in its power, and was bound by no rule of right or wrong but its own judgment of expediency," indulged in envy as they "plundered the rich."[54] Acton concludes that abuses of Athenian democracy serve as a lesson

> for all times, for it teaches that government by the whole people, being the government of the most numerous and most powerful class, is an evil of the same nature as unmixed monarchy, and requires, for nearly the same reasons, institutions that shall protect it against itself, and shall uphold the permanent reign of law against arbitrary revolutions of opinion.[55]

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[51] C. S. Lewis, "Equality," 17.

[52] C. S. Lewis, "Membership," in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 168. Dyer and Watson note Lewis' quotation of Acton (102) but offer no substantive discussion of Acton.

[53] John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton, First Baron Acton, "The History of Freedom in Antiquity" (1877), in *The Selected Writings of Lord Acton*, vol. 1: *Essays in the History of Liberty*, ed. J. Rufus Fears (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund 1985), 13.

[54] Acton, "The History of Freedom in Antiquity" 13-14.

[55] Ibid., 14-15.

Acton's emphasis on the need for checks and balances within a democracy is germane to Lewis' affirmation in "A Reply to Professor Haldane" that "no man or group of men is good enough to be trusted with uncontrolled power over others"[56] even as it parallels Lewis' warning in "Screwtape Proposes a Toast" of the eviscerating plunder of extreme taxation that takes place within a democracy given to envy.

J. Gresham Machen

Finally, we may connect Lewis with the Christian libertarian whose ideas and concerns are arguably most similar to Lewis', his near contemporary J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937), a Princeton Seminary professor and later the leading influence behind the founding of both Westminster Theological Seminary and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.[57] Although I have found no evidence that Lewis was familiar with Machen's writings, the parallels between Lewis and Machen are numerous and worthy of developed scholarly coverage. Here I will only attempt a brief overview.

First, Machen, a thoroughgoing Calvinist who embraced the doctrine of total depravity, was as wary as Lewis, if not more so, of fallen human nature, and his extensive theological writings on human fallenness and sinfulness include warnings against tyranny, totalitarian government, and the loss of liberty.[58] Like Lewis, Machen was specifically concerned about the tyranny of scientific "experts." In *The Christian View of Man* (1937), he writes, "I think the tyranny of experts is the worst and most dangerous

[56] C. S. Lewis, "A Reply to Professor Haldane," 75.

[57] For discussions of Machen's libertarianism, see Daniel Walker, "J. Gresham Machen: A Forgotten Libertarian," Foundation for Economic Education, December 1, 1993 (online); and Lawrence W. Reed, "J. Gresham Machen: God's Forgotten Libertarian," Foundation for Economic Education, August 28, 2015 (online).

[58] See, for example, J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian View of Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1937), 209, 226-31.

tyranny that ever was devised" as he discusses the pretense of "the modern advocates of euthanasia" who argue for what they claim "produces happiness and avoids pain for the human race."[59]

Machen also shared Lewis' concern regarding state dominance of their respective countries' educational systems. In *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923), Machen criticizes the state's growing involvement with education, in which "the choice of schools" is "taken away from the individual parent and placed in the hands of the state," which would, in turn, place children "under the control of psychological experts."[60] Like Lewis, Machen was gravely concerned about the expanding nanny state seeking to monopolize the education system, a movement Machen directly linked to "tyranny." In "The Responsibility of the Church in Our New Age" (1933), Machen writes that the "worst" aspect of the "centralization of [political] power" is the "monopolistic control of education by the state." He also writes:

> a state-controlled compulsory education has proved far more effective in crushing out liberty than the older and cruder weapons of fire and sword, and modern experts have proved to be more efficient than the dilettante tyrants of the past.[61]

Machen's concern regarding state tyranny in schooling also prompted Machen to testify before the US congress in 1926 against the proposed federal Department of Education,[62] and in numerous publications he

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[59] J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian View of Man*, 209, 210. In "Christianity and Liberty" (1931), in *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. D.G. Hart (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004), Machen also speaks out against the pretense of "Modern scientific utilitarianism" (p. 356).

[60] J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923. New York: Macmillan, 1934), 11.

[61] J. Gresham Machen, "The Responsibility of the Church in Our New Age," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 165 (January 1933), 39-40.

[62] The transcript of Machen's testimony before the US Senate Committee on Education and Labor and the House Committee on Education is available as J. Gresham Machen, "Proposed Department of Education," in *Education, Christianity, and the State*, ed. John W. Robbins

wrote against the 1921 Lusk Laws in New York state, which required that all private schools and teachers be licensed and supervised by the state government.[63]

Parallels between Lewis and Machen are also evident in the distinctions each made between temporal and church authority. Lewis' concerns regarding Christians inappropriately influencing divorce laws in the UK—which, curiously, he articulated in conjunction with stating how upset he would be if Muslims "tried to prevent the rest of us from drinking wine"—can be compared to Machen's disapproval of the Presbytery of New Brunswick's motion to support the Eighteenth Amendment to the US Constitution and the Volstead Act. In his opposition to church-endorsed state-enforced prohibition of alcohol, Machen opposed an ecclesiastical "policy which places the church in its corporate capacity, as distinguished from the activity of its members, on record with regard to such political questions." He argued that, despite his great "horror of the evils of drunkenness" and "detestation of any corrupt traffic" that seeks to "profit" from "this horrible sin," it was "clearly the duty of the church"—not the state—"to combat this evil."[64] Like Lewis, Machen combined his libertarian view of state authority with a firm belief that church government should discipline church members who departed from codified rules of faith and practice. In defending "why as a libertarian he would not allow as much liberty in the church as he would

(Jefferson, MD: The Trinity Foundation, 1987), 99-123; see also J. Gresham Machen, "Shall We Have a Federal Department of Education?," in *Education, Christianity, and the State*, 84-97.

[63] See, for example, *Christianity and Liberalism*, 13; "Does Fundamentalism Obstruct Social Progress?" (1924) in *Selected Shorter Writings*, 112; "Shall We Have a Federal Department of Education?," 92; and "Christianity and Liberty," 358.

[64] J. Gresham Machen, "Statement on the Eighteenth Amendment" (1926), in *Selected Shorter Writings*, 394. D. G. Hart, *Defending the Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism in America* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 136-37, notes that Machen's support in 1928 of the Catholic, Democratic presidential nominee Al Smith was primarily because of Smith's favoring the repeal of Prohibition.

in the state,"[65] Machen clearly distinguished "between voluntary and involuntary organizations" and between individuals' voluntary association with the church and their *involuntary* association with the state. He writes, "Insistence on fundamental agreement within a voluntary organization" is logically consistent "with insistence upon the widest tolerance in the state."[66]

V. LEWIS AND SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

As the United States Supreme Court currently considers the case of Masterpiece Cakeshop vs. Colorado Civil Rights Commission, it is particularly timely to consider how Lewis might respond to contemporary controversies regarding same-sex marriage, a subject that seems highly germane in light of Lewis' aforementioned statements regarding marriage, divorce, and homosexuality.[67] Certain scholars have speculated on this matter; citing Lewis' proposal in *Mere Christianity* for a clear distinction between state-governed and church-governed marriages, Lewis scholar Will Vaus has suggested that "Lewis would have approved of [same-sex] civil unions but not gay marriage….I think he would have approved of civil unions for all offered through the state, but Christian marriage offered through the Church only to those willing to meet biblical requirements for marriage." Norman Horn of the Christian Libertarian Institute, making no mention of civil unions, has suggested that Lewis would propose an approach to same-sex marriage that would emphasize freedom of association and would reflect the distinction between church

[65] George Marsden, "Understanding J. Gresham Machen," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 11.1 (1990), 57.

[66] J. Gresham Machen, "Does Fundamentalism Obstruct Social Progress?," 113. Significantly, Machen for twenty years ministered to and personally financially supported Richard Hodges, an elderly alcoholic. See Stephen J. Nichols, *J. Gresham Machen: A Guided Tour of His Life and Thought* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004), 149.

[67] My discussion of this topic develops significantly what I write in the final three paragraphs of "Was C. S. Lewis a Libertarian?"

and state that Lewis made in *Mere Christianity*.[68] Perhaps significantly, both Vaus and Horn offered their thoughts before the US Supreme Court's 2015 Obergefell vs. Hodges ruling legalized same-sex marriage in all fifty states.

We cannot know precisely how Lewis would have addressed this topic, and one must be cautious in speculation, but I will address a few factors that seem pertinent to Lewis and the matter of same-sex marriage as it has recently evolved and now stands, specifically in the United States.

First, we should recognize that although Vaus' suggestion seems consistent with Lewis' proposed distinction between Christian and secular marriage, this distinction is complicated by the fact that, in the US, various Christian church denominations sanctioned and their ministers officiated same-sex marriages before the state ever officially recognized such marriages. With this fact in mind, I believe that Lewis would likely be more concerned about what he would view as unbiblical marriages within churches than he would be concerned about state legalization of same-sex marriage.

At the same time, recognizing that the institution of same-sex civil unions within the US proved a short-lived middle ground before the Obergefell ruling effectively made it obsolete, we might consider, in light of Lewis' commitment to natural law (which he called the "*Tao*") as articulated in *The Abolition of Man*, that Lewis would be none too sanguine regarding even civil sanctioning of same-sex marriage. I postulate this because, in light of there being before the late twentieth century no recognized historical precedent for or tradition of same-sex marriage in any culture, he would see it as a violation of the *Tao* and the product of

[68] Will Vaus, "C. S. Lewis on Homosexuality," The Lamppost: C. S. Lewis, Narnia, & Mere Christianity (May 11, 2012). See Vaus' second comment after his online article. Dr. Norman Horn, "C. S. Lewis on Christian Marriage (in Brief)," Christian Libertarian Institute (April 29, 2013).

the kind of moral and linguistic innovation he decries in *Abolition*.[69] And given Lewis' stated concern about the abuses endemic to those afforded extreme degrees of power, he would probably view the Obergefell ruling, with its turning over of laws codified within dozens of state constitutions, as an example of the kind of abuse of power he critiques in "Equality" and "A Reply to Professor Haldane." Moreover, Lewis might well consider state recognition of same-sex marriage—with all the attendant bureaucracy and legal enforcements involved in such recognition—to be an example of the state's ever-growing interference in personal matters, something counter to Lewis' overall disposition that the state should keep out of things as much as possible.

Despite such likely concerns, in light of growing public support for same-sex marriage, Lewis might finally view the matter as tantamount to the controversies regarding divorce in the UK in his own lifetime, and eventually advocate that orthodox Christians should accept that the majority of the public disagrees with them on the morality of same-sex marriage and stop trying to prevent its legality. In this case, keeping in mind Dyer and Watson's assertion that, for Lewis, "[t]he first purpose of limited government is to safeguard the sanctity of the Church" (p. 120), Lewis might well defer to the legalization of same-sex marriage under the condition that no church, institution, or individual Christian (or other person of faith) be legally required to participate in or provide services for a same-sex marriage ceremony in violation of conscience. Indeed, for Lewis, who is throughout his books and essays "a firm critic of imposed egalitarianism for *any* reason,"[70] any such legal mandate would be another

[69] See C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 30-51. In the very recent words of commentator and gay rights advocate Andrew Sullivan, "The Case of the Baker in the Gay Culture War," *New York Magazine*, December 8, 2017 (online), "Opposition to same-sex marriage has been an uncontested pillar of every major world religion for aeons" (paragraph 2). In his article, Sullivan in fact reluctantly sides with Masterpiece Cakeshop owner Jack Phillips in his lawsuit before the US Supreme Court.

[70] David J. Theroux, "C. S. Lewis on Mere Liberty and the Evils of Statism," 200.

manifestation of the state tyrannically enforcing morality and violating its appropriate limits.

VI. THE NHS CAVEAT, HUMAN SUFFERING, HEALTH CARE, AND CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Lewis' Correspondence with Mary Willis Shelburne and the NHS

Lewis' opposition to imposed egalitarianism notwithstanding, a final matter deserving our examination concerns Lewis' positive comments, made late in his life, regarding Great Britain's National Health Service (NHS).[71] Lewis' remarks appear not in any of his published essays, but rather in several private letters written to Mary Willis Shelburne, an American woman with whom he corresponded some thirteen years (1950-63), writing her more than one hundred letters.[72] Significantly, Shelburne was twice widowed, experienced various health ailments, and, in Walter Hooper's words, "suffered acutely from anxiety about what she should live on."[73] Lewis' comments about the NHS should be seen within the larger context of his generally distrustful attitude toward the British welfare state expressed in his previously quoted 1958 article "Willing Slaves of the Welfare State" and "Screwtape Proposes a Toast," which was originally published in the *Saturday Evening Post* on December 19, 1959.[74] In a January 14, 1958 letter to Shelburne, Lewis writes:

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[71] William Fraatz, "C. S. Lewis and America's Health Care Debate," addresses this matter at length.

[72] See C. S. Lewis, *Letters to an American Lady*, ed. Clyde S. Kilby (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967) as well as C. S. Lewis, *Collected Letters*, vol. 3.

[73] *Collected Letters*, 3:1718.

[74] See also Lewis' December 8, 1959 letter to journalist Dan Tucker, in *Collected Letters*, 3:1104-05. Briefly discussing Lewis' July 7, 1959 letter to Shelburne, Dyer and Watson write, "Lewis was not doctrinaire about his opposition to the welfare state, but he did insist that it came with a cost and a danger" (p. 103).

> The worst of all economies is on necessary medicines, tho' I quite understand how you are tempted to it. What a pity you haven't got our National System in America. I wish I could help. I can only continue my prayers.[75]

As Hooper notes, Lewis did later in 1958 arrange for his lawyer, Owen Barfield, "to have [Lewis'] New York lawyers send her money every month."[76] Nonetheless, on July 7, 1959, Lewis, in response to learning of "a very nasty experience" that left Shelburne feeling like she was, in her words, "looking at the face of death," once again wrote sympathetically of the NHS:

> What you have gone through begins to reconcile me to our national Welfare State of which I have said so many hard things. "National Health Service" with free treatment for all has its drawbacks—one being that Doctors are incessantly pestered by people who have nothing wrong with them. But it is better than leaving people to sink or swim on their own resources.[77]

Lewis' final and most positive remark regarding the NHS is evident in a June 10, 1963 letter to Shelburne, written only five months before his death. He writes:

> I am sorry to hear of the acute pain and the various other troubles. It makes me unsay all I have ever said against our English "welfare state," which at least provides free medical treatment for all.[78]

It might be tempting to dismiss Lewis' comments to Shelbourne as informally and likely quickly written ruminations offered in the context

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[75] C. S. Lewis, *Collected Letters*, 3:914.

[76] Ibid., 3:1718; see also footnote on 1004.

[77] Ibid., 3:1064.

[78] Ibid., 3:1429.

of the sufferings of a personal friend, ruminations that should not be equated with formal affirmations of government policy. Obviously, if Lewis had seen fit to publish comments in favor of the NHS, he could have done so and received an ample audience for his efforts. The fact that he chose not to do so is significant. Nonetheless, we ought to consider if the above comments can be reconciled with what seems to be the consistently libertarian Lewis evidenced in the writings we examined earlier.

At the very least, Lewis' above comments regarding the NHS remind us that Lewis, whatever his obvious libertarian leanings, did not endeavor to be an unflinching libertarian; indeed, as we observed early in this essay, Lewis resisted political categorization altogether. Moreover, he warned against the spiritual devastation that could result from Christianity being "valued chiefly because of the excellent arguments it can produce in favour of" a particular political position.[79] Returning to Gillen's statement that Lewis "could rightly" be called "a 'Christian Libertarian,'" we should note that Gillen then immediately points out Lewis' aversion "to substituting for the faith itself 'some Fashion with a Christian colouring.'" Gillen concludes: "Therefore, C. S. Lewis would likely insist that his concept of freedom is *merely Christian*."[80]

Human Suffering, Christian Charity, and State-Run Medical Care

We must remember that Lewis' "concept of freedom" and its attendant need for limited government are rooted in his deep belief in the Fall of humanity. And the doctrine of the Fall emphasizes not merely human evil but also the pain and suffering that necessarily plagues fallen

[79] C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, 39. Similarly, in *Mere Christianity*, Lewis writes: "Most of us are not really approaching the subject [of a Christian society] in order to find out what Christianity says: we are approaching it in the hope of finding support from Christianity for the views of our own party" (p. 87).

[80] Gillen, "C. S. Lewis and the Meaning of Freedom," 272. Gillen quotes *The Screwtape Letters* (1942. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 91.

humanity. And Lewis emphasized the need for Christians to work to alleviate the effects of the fall. He writes in *Mere Christianity* that Christianity believes "that a great many things have gone wrong with the world that God made and that God insists, and insists very loudly, on our putting them right again."[81] Each of Lewis' above comments to Shelburne regarding the NHS is made in the context of his deep compassion for her pain and suffering and his desire to aid her. And Lewis would have been particularly sensitive to Shelburne's situation in light of the suffering and eventual death of his wife, Joy Davidman, who died in July 1960 of the cancer that had plagued her since 1956. Significantly, Davidman's cancer treatments were covered by the NHS and Lewis recorded no complaints regarding these treatments.[82] His comments should also be considered in the context of Lewis' own beliefs and practices regarding the Christian obligation to relieve others' needs through personal generosity. Lewis himself lived under financial strain because he tenaciously maintained a vow to donate all the royalties he earned through his Christian books even as he still had to pay the taxes on royalties he'd already given away.[83] In a portion of *Mere Christianity* ("Christian Behaviour") originally published in 1943, Lewis also exhorted his Christian readers to practice sacrificial giving:

> Charity—giving to the poor—is an essential part of Christian morality: in the frightening parable of the sheep and the goats it seems to be the point on which everything turns. Some people nowadays say that charity ought to be unnecessary and that instead of giving to the poor we ought to be producing a society in which there were no poor to give to. They may be quite right in saying that we ought to produce this kind of society. But if anyone thinks that, as a consequence, you can stop giving in the meantime, then he has parted company with all Christian morality. I do

[81] C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 38.

[82] William Fraatz, "C. S. Lewis and America's Health Care Debate," 397.

[83] John Blake, "The C. S. Lewis You Never Knew," CNN Belief Blog, December 1, 2013, paragraphs 9-13.

> not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc., is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charities expenditure excludes them. I am speaking now of 'charities' in the common way. Particular causes of distress among your own relatives, friends, neighbors or employees, which God, as it were, forces upon your notice, may demand much more: even to the crippling and endangering of your own position.[84]

This passage and Lewis' own example indicates that Lewis preferred voluntary—and extremely costly—charity over government intervention to relieve want and suffering. But Lewis' words do not exclude the possibility of such humanitarian state intervention. In fact, given that the sweeping social welfare reforms recommended by the 1942 Beveridge Report lay in the background of the second sentence of the above quotation,[85] it is possible that Lewis here indicates an implicit openness to such reforms. Significantly, a few pages earlier, Lewis emphasizes:

> Christianity has not, and does not profess to have, a detailed political programme for applying "Do as you would be done by" to a particular society at a particular moment. It could not have. It is meant for all men at all times and the particular programme which suited one place or time would not suit another.[86]

This passage suggests even more forcefully that Lewis maintained an openness regarding what kind of methods a particular society might employ at a particular time to relieve its people's want and suffering, an

[84] C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 86.

[85] William Fraatz, "C. S. Lewis and America's Health Care Debate," 394.

[86] *Mere Christianity*, 82.

openness that could include, if deemed appropriate, the practices of the NHS. We might also speculate, in light of his personal practice of and uncompromising advocacy of sacrificial charitable giving, if Lewis, despite his aforementioned criticism of excessive taxation to benefit state-run schools, was less concerned than many other libertarians with the taxpayer cost—particularly to wealthier individuals—of socialized medicine.

Lewis and Free-Market Alternatives

All this being acknowledged, it seems presumptuous to read Lewis' comments to Shelburne regarding the NHS as an endorsement of the NHS or socialized medicine in general.[87] Rather, they are Lewis' recognition that, for all his concerns about the Welfare State, the NHS most certainly benefitted many individuals and also would have benefitted Americans in Shelburne's situation. But it does not logically follow that Lewis believed that socialized medicine was the optimal way to address the health needs to which he, as a compassionate Christian so conscious of the devastating realities of the Fall, was acutely sensitive. And it is likely that his concerns with socialized medicine would only increase in response to state-mandated ethical decisions that manifested themselves after his death. We can imagine, for example, Lewis' likely revulsion toward the NHS's now-longstanding practice of providing taxpayer-funded abortions,[88] and we have already discussed Lewis' abiding distaste for the government meddling that any facet of the welfare state must necessarily promote.

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[87] My thoughts in this section differ from those of William Fraatz, "C. S. Lewis and America's Health Care Debate," who in 2012 argues that Lewis would likely "support the Obama health care plan of universal health insurance coverage" (p. 399), adding that Lewis "probably would regard as churlish anyone who disagreed" (pp. 399-400).

[88] Abortion was generally illegal in the UK until 1968, when it became broadly legal and freely provided by the NHS.

Well worth considering is the perspective offered by business professor Harold B. Jones, Jr. in his provocatively titled "C. S. Lewis: Free-Market Advocate." Jones writes that although "Lewis seems never to have thought specifically about the principles of the free market," his opposition to replacing Christian doctrines with Progressive politics, his commitment to principles of reason and logic, his recognition of imperfect human knowledge, his deep distrust of idealistic scientific social engineering, and his realistic understanding of limited resources amid benevolent intentions led Lewis to suspect the larger socialistic project in ways that fundamentally parallel the concerns of the great free-market economists of his day, Mises and Hayek.[89] Jones notes that Lewis "understood that the execution of benevolent intentions requires the expenditure of resources. Since these are in any given moment severely limited, choices must be made."[90] Jones discusses the section of Lewis' "Why I am not a Pacifist" in which Lewis explains the need to choose who to help and who not to help when one has limited abilities and resources.[91] In Lewis' words, "You cannot do simply good to simply Man; you must do this or that good to this or that man. And if you do this good, you can't at the same time do that; and if you do it *these* men, you also can't do it to *those*."[92] Indeed, when we consider Lewis' larger body of work, it seems entirely plausible that Lewis would sympathize with current free-market proposals to help alleviate the seemingly perpetual health care crises of our present day. I believe that Lewis, in keeping with the principles of his other writings, would be attracted to ideas that lowered costs, eliminated bureaucratic interference, and empowered individual patients to obtain quality services at competitive prices. And given Lewis' strong emphasis

[89] Harold B. Jones, "C. S. Lewis: Free-Market Advocate," Foundation for Economic Education, October 3, 2012, online. Quoted at paragraph 3. See also the other connections between Lewis and Mises and Hayek noted earlier in this essay.

[90] Harold B. Jones, "C. S. Lewis: Free-Market Advocate," paragraph 12.

[91] Ibid., paragraphs 12-13. See C. S. Lewis, "Why I am not a Pacifist," in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses*, 75-76. This 1940 address was published posthumously.

[92] C. S. Lewis, "Why I am not a Pacifist," in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses*, 75.

upon voluntary Christian charity, I believe he would be particularly intrigued by Christian healthcare sharing ministries in which members voluntarily pool together to share medical costs and pray for each other's needs.[93]

Conclusion

In the end, Lewis' libertarianism must be viewed in the context of and as a consequence of his thoroughgoing Christianity, particularly his understanding of the Fall of humanity. His distrust of fallen human nature and its consequent abuses of power was too great for him to suffer the machinations of social planners who would believe themselves wiser than the collective wisdom of the ages and impose their sweeping vision upon the larger populace.

Moreover, Lewis' apparent departure exhibited from the libertarian principles of limited government and voluntary association must be seen in the context of his relentless desire to live out the mandates of sacrificial Christian love over and above any political program. We should recognize that although Lewis' expertise in and commitment to a Christian natural law philosophy did not extend to Lewis having any kind of a deep understanding of free-market economics, his overall approach to reason and social issues indicates a disposition that would be receptive to properly ordered and efficient free-market solutions that would benefit "the least of these."

Finally, Lewis' own model of gracious compassion and personal generosity stands as an enduring legacy and a godly challenge to all Christians who would extol the virtues of voluntary association and giving over and against the mandates of the interventionist state.

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[93] Two popular Christian healthcare sharing ministries are Medi-Share and Christian Healthcare Ministries, both of whose information is available online. Ironically, although I believe Lewis would recommend such ministries to others, his habitual smoking would disqualify Lewis himself from participating in them.

DEAD ENDS AND LIVING CURRENTS: DISTRIBUTISM AS A PROGRESSIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM

Eugene Callahan[1] and Alexander William Salter[2]

Abstract: Distributism, a social program most closely associated with Catholic social teaching, calls for widespread and decentralized property ownership. Much in distributist thought, when considered in light of standard price theory, is simply untenable. But there is also much in distributist thought that is interesting and viable. We discuss the aspects of distributism best discarded, and the aspects that can serve as the foundation for a progressive research program.

Keywords: catholic social teaching, socialism, distributism, progressivism, economics, price theory, property rights

I. INTRODUCTION

"Distributism calls for a reform of economic systems in general, and capitalism in particular."[3] So declares John Médaille towards the beginning of his work, *Towards a Truly Free Market*.

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[3] John Médaille, *Toward a Truly Free Market: A Distributist Perspective on the Role of Government, Taxes, Health Care, Deficits, and More* (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books., 2011).

What is distributism, and what does it want to reform about capitalism? And more specifically, for our purposes, what parts of distributism are living proposals for reform, and what parts should be considered dead, killed by a better comprehension of economic reality?

Distributism can be defined as the social-economic philosophy holding that private property, while licit, indeed, even vital, must be widely dispersed for the good of society. Small property holders, small business owners, and tradesmen who own their machinery and other tools are looked upon favorably; large governments and corporations, frequently wielding significant economic power, are looked upon with suspicion. Distributism began in England, early in the last century. The founders of distributism, Chesterton and Belloc,[4] were two of the most prominent English writers of the early twentieth century. Both Catholics, they sought to turn the social teaching of Pope Leo XIII and Pope Pius XI into a concrete program of action. They rejected socialism, believing that private property was an essential component of human wellbeing, but also rejected capitalism, because they perceive it as concentrated private property in far too few hands.

Chesterton and Belloc shared a diagnosis for what they saw as the ills of the England of their day: the problem was not private property, as Marxists argued, but the fact that private property owners were scarce. In other words, property was not widely dispersed enough throughout society. As Chesterton put it:

> The truth is that what we call Capitalism ought to be called Proletarianism. The point of it is not that some people have capital, but that most people only have wages because they do not have capital.[5]

[4] French by birth, Belloc spent his childhood and most of his adult life in England.

[5] G. K. Chesterton, "The Outline of Sanity," in *Three Works on Distributism* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2009), 167.

As this quote illustrates, when the Chesterbelloc (as G. B. Shaw named the pair) talked about property, their focus was on *capital* goods, not consumption goods. They would not be impressed by arguments showing that, while American workers may be totally dispossessed of the means of production, at least they have huge plasma-screen televisions and SUVs. Belloc understood what had occurred in the last several centuries, politically speaking, as a regression to conditions resembling those in the late Roman Empire, where a few owned great landed estates and the masses owned little or nothing in the way of productive property. He wrote:

> The two marks, then, defining the Capitalist State are: (i) that the citizens thereof are politically free: i.e. can use or withhold at will their possessions or their labor, but are also (ii) divided into capitalist and proletarian in such proportions that the state as a whole is not characterized by the institution of ownership among free citizens, but by the restriction of ownership to a section markedly less than the whole, or even to a small minority.[6]

But these ideas did not circulate only in Britain at that time, nor only among Catholics. Famed mystery novelist and Episcopalian theologian Dorothy Sayers was a fan of distributism. The Spanish worker's cooperative Mondragón (still a going concern) was founded on distributist lines. In Germany, ordoliberalism (*Ordoliberalismus*), propounded by such thinkers as Walter Eucken and Wilhelm Röpke, offered a similar critique of "unfettered" capitalism as did the distributists. And American historian Christopher Lasch noted that there was once a vigorous strain of American politics that advocated similar

[6] Hillaire Belloc, *The Servile State* ([S.I.]: Seven Treasures Publications, 2014), 16.

ideas. As described by Matthew Harwood,[7] Lasch lauded an American populism that was neither socialist nor capitalist:

> Revolting against the dehumanizing conditions of deskilled wage labor, yet understanding that large-scale factory production was here to stay, skilled craftsmen and owners of productive land… envisioned a new society that resisted both state capitalism and state socialism. Centralization, whether it was at the behest of the boss or the bureaucrat, was their enemy. Their nemesis, however, prevailed, as Americans accepted that the cost of affluence and abundance was the loss of control over their very lives. With no sense of how history could have gone any other way, any pursuit of worker control today has been lost to history, smeared as communist rather than authentically American.[8]

But aside from historical interest, distributism is interesting because it has seen something of a revival of late.[9]

So what parts of distributism deserve a revival, and which should be left in the past? Let us begin with the latter bits.

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[7] Matthew Harwood, "Why Read Christopher Lasch?" *The American Conservative* (July 28. 2015). Accessed January 7, 2017 at:
http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/why-read-christopher-lasch/.

[8] Harwood's use of the term "state capitalism," which has also been called "crony capitalism," suggests a categorical difference between that system and a genuine free market. We accept this distinction, but many distributists do not.

[9] See, for instance, Gene Callahan, "Distributism is the Future," *The American Conservative* (April 11, 2016). Accessed January 10, 2017 at
http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/distributism-is-the-future/.; Allan C. Carlson, *Third Ways: How Bulgarian Greens, Swedish Housewives, and Beer-Swilling Englishmen Created Family-Centered Economies-- and Why They Disappeared* (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2007); John D. Mueller, *Redeeming Economics: Free Markets and the Human Person* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006); Liam D. O'Huallachain and John Sharpe, *Distributist Perspectives: Essays on the Economics of Justice and Charity, Volume II* (Norfolk: IHS Press, 2006); Daniel Schwindt, *Catholic Social Teaching: A New Synthesis: Rerum Novarum to Laudato Si'* (Kansas: Daniel Schwindt, 2015); John Sharpe and Liam D. O'Huallachain, *Distributist Perspectives: Essays on the Economics of Justice and Charity, Volume I* (Norfolk: IHS Press, 2004).

II. WHAT'S DEAD IN DISTRIBUTIST THOUGHT

Many of the suggestions made by distributist writers are economically unsound. They do not work in theory nor in practice. This is especially true of proposals such as the advocacy of wage and price controls.[10] The error in distributist writers' specific proposals lies in their lack of attention to economic reality: many of their proposals would, in fact, produce effects quite different from those they intend.

Ludwig von Mises notes that the failure to recognize the nature of human action is an ancient and frequently repeated mistake made by social commentators.[11] Economics as means-ends analysis in the context of exchange activity sheds light on whether a proposed social arrangement, such as a political-economic system, is capable of achieving what its advocates desire. When distributists give poor advice, meaning advice intended to advance a goal but having the practical effect of failing of achieving more nearly the opposite of that goal, it is generally because they fail to pay attention to the actual effects their proposals will have, and instead focus on the effects they *intend* them to have.

For example, consider the orthodox distributist perspective on property. Distributists believe in private property, and also believe it should be widely decentralized. Distributists tend to be skeptical of large-scale operations in both the private and the public sector, seeing them both as the unfortunate result of industrial capitalism and the development of the administrative state. Both of these are worrisome because they can dehumanize those who work within them. Mass production and mass governance are not conducive to appreciating the worker or the bureaucrat as a human person. It is far too easy for humans to begin to use

[10] See, e.g., the essays in Sharpe and O'Huallachain 2004 and O'Huallachain and Sharpe 2008, or Schwindt 2015. On the other hand, Mueller 2006, chapter 15, recognizes the problems caused by price fixing.

[11] Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics* (Auburn: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2008 [1949]).

others as mere ends in the service of their own scramble to consume ever-higher quantities of goods and services. These normative considerations deserve careful consideration. But they also must be augmented by a realistic understanding of the role private property plays in facilitating social coordination.

Mises, in critiquing social systems in which all property was publicly owned, developed a theory of the relationship between property and markets that shows the importance of private property, and why socialist proposals fail on their own terms.[12] Mises's argument, in brief, is that private property is a necessary prerequisite to market exchange. Where there is no private property, there can be no voluntary exchange, and hence no market. This means there can be no market prices for the factors of production. Without market prices for capital goods, producers who use these goods as an input to making final goods and services would have no way of knowing how to produce efficiently. Efficiency, meaning least-cost production, is beneficial both to the producer who achieves it and to society at large: the producer gets more profit, and society has more resources left over to satisfy other wants. But ascertaining the costliness of production requires profit-and-loss accounting, which itself requires market prices as an input. When they significantly attenuate, or outright destroy, private property, social planners are also inadvertently destroying the mechanism by which producers and consumers coordinate their behavior and come to mutually satisfactory bargains concerning the employment of the factors of production. As an example, imagine a railroad company is considering building a new branch line, and wants to know whether to use steel or titanium rails. The obvious answer is steel. While perhaps marginally safer, titanium is significantly more expensive. Consumers would not be willing to pay the increased costs for titanium rails, even taking into account possible safety benefits. But without a functioning market for steel and titanium, the railroad company would

[12] Ludwig von Mises, *Socialism: An Economic and Sociological Analysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951 [1922]).

have no way of knowing that titanium would have had a much higher market price than steel, and thus would have been judged by market participants to have much higher-valued alternative uses.

Distributists are obviously not advocates of socialism, so at first it may be unclear as to the relevance of Mises's critiques. The key is to recognize that in markets what is being exchanged is property rights. A social theorist can speak to the characteristics of market exchange undertaken in a particular legal regime. But any attempt to lock-in a specifically desired distribution of property will have unintended consequences. If markets exist in a society, and individuals are unhappy with the existing distribution of property, then they will exchange property to reach more desired distributions. There is no guarantee that some ideal, 'decentralized' property distribution, which distributists may desire, will be sustainable, even if it were reachable by an act of initial redistribution. Individuals who own factors of production, but cannot employ those factors most profitably, would probably be happy to sell that property to a large enterprise that can put those factors of production to higher-yielding uses. Because many lines of production benefit from significant economies of scale, some of the results of free property exchange will be large businesses. Because some individuals are not the efficient owners of the factors of production, some will own no factors of production except their own labor, and would be satisfied with a wage contract rather than working as an independent proprietor. Furthermore, attempts to freeze in place a decentralized distribution of the factors of production would destroy many avenues for mutually beneficial exchange and social cooperation. To maintain a given distribution or set of distributions would require coercive enforcement. This enforcement would significantly impede, or outright destroy, the market as an exchange process.

The goal of the distributist plan of decentralized property ownership, and especially factor-of-production-ownership, is every household having at its disposal the means to attain a minimally acceptable standard of living. But attempting to preserve these distributions would in fact

result in greater poverty, since it would destroy the exchange process by which resources are allocated to high-yielding uses, which is the source of that income. The only way to prevent this is to allow the free exchange of property, including the factors of production. The result may be that many households own only their own labor, and are satisfied with that arrangement. Distributist ends regarding property ownership and the employment of the factors of production are thus unrealizable by the means stated by at least some distributist authors.[13]

This is one arena in which Chesterton,[14] in particular, came up short. Understandably opposed to simple confiscation of property from existing owners—for how, exactly, could the confiscators decide exactly which holdings were amassed through "crony capitalism" and which through honest innovation and work?—he recommended that the state compensate large landowners for their land and distribute it to small ones. The problem with this idea is that the funds to pay the compensation have to be taxed away from somebody: if from the large landowners, then they are just having their property confiscated by a different route. But if the people to receive the land are taxed to pay for the public-domain seizures, then it would have been more sensible just to let them buy the land themselves.

Furthermore, distributist proposals to 'fix' a particular distribution of property ignore F. A. Hayek's[15] work on the informational role of the price

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[13] Furthermore, recent innovations and developments in capital markets may have made the prevalence of large, hierarchical firms less worrisome, by distributists' own criteria. In particular, it is now much easier for ordinary individuals to own shares in such firms. Reduced transaction costs have made it much easier for those of even modest means to invest in financial instruments, such as mutual funds. This enables individuals to participate in the broad gains that long-run equities markets historically have created, while mitigating risk. Opportunities for capital holdings by non-wealthy households are thus greater than distributists realize.

[14] Chesterton, *Three Works*, 243.

[15] Friedrich A. Hayek, *Individualism and Economic Order* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).

system. This work is still the foundation for a positive theory of how markets advance social cooperation under the division of labor. Hayek, who was arguably Mises's greatest student, builds on Mises's insights regarding the informational role of property and market exchange. Hayek argues that market prices convey crucial knowledge that helps buyers and sellers coordinate their actions in a way that, unintendedly, *tends towards* efficient resource allocation. In Hayek's scheme of thought, prices are both pieces of knowledge and knowledge surrogates. They convey information about real resource scarcities across lines of production, as determined by supply and demand, and they also can be used in place of detailed and specific information, as a way of economizing on knowledge. For example, suppose that an unexpected frost kills a large part of an orange crop. Because there are fewer oranges, the marginal orange—the next additional orange offered on the market—must be put to a higher-valued use than previously. Market prices tend to bring about this result (albeit while accepting the existing ability to pay as a given), even without any participants knowing all the information regarding the effects of the frost, as well as information about the value of oranges across all possible lines of orange-related production. The reduced supply of oranges would raise the market price of the marginal orange; only those who valued the orange highly in consumption, or wished to use the orange as an input into a relatively more valuable output good (e.g., mimosas as opposed to plain orange juice), would be willing to pay the higher price. Ultimately, Hayek's work shows how market prices, adjusting in response to changed supply and demand conditions, enable buyers and sellers to capture gains from exchange, even while knowing only a tiny fraction of the information embedded within the economic system.

Some distributist proposals call for explicit price fixing[16] by guilds or other trade associations. This is intended to assure both skilled and unskilled producers a degree of certainty in selling their product. It is also

[16] See fn. 8 above.

an attempt to institutionalize something approximating justice in exchange. But this is another example of how ignoring economic reality yields ineffectual proposals. As Hayek showed, market prices are necessary to facilitate coordination in exchange. Non-market prices, prevented from adjusting so that buyers and sellers can capture the maximum gains from exchange, impede the coordination of markets. If the fixed-pricing scheme favored by some distributists results in artificially high prices, the result will be persistent surpluses; if artificially low, persistent shortages. In addition to frustrating buyers' and sellers' plans, these proposals destroy social wealth by preventing these misalignments of production and consumption from being corrected. Correcting errors in production and consumption plans over time is the chief benefit of markets, and the cause of the phenomenal wealth created by market exchange. Normally it is the adjustment of relative prices that facilitates this error correction, but the more interventionist distributist programs rule out this coordination mechanism. Again, we see that some of the proposals adopted by distributists lead to results that they would find undesirable. The only predictability and assurance given by fixed prices is the guarantee of discoordination in markets—both buyers and sellers being unable to achieve their highest available satisfactions. Because market exchange is always limited by the party least willing to trade, price fixing schemes will result in a reduced volume of market transactions. This will make it more difficult for producers to secure minimally remunerative work, and more difficult for consumers to get the goods and services they desire. Both negatively impact these parties' standard of living.

Distributists also go wrong on more specialized areas of economic theory. For instance, Médaille's theory of the business cycle was debunked in the nineteenth century by Marx, among others. Médaille turns to the labor theory of value to judge that "the same kind and quality of labor, whether in its original or 'stored-up' form of capital, should produce

roughly the same return."[17] But in the current system, capital gets an "inordinate share of the rewards of production." The result is "an overall decrease in purchasing power," since there are so few capitalists compared to workers, meaning "that the vast majority of men and women will not have sufficient purchasing power to clear the markets, and the result will be…a recession."[18]

The problem here is that Médaille offers us no reason at all to think his analysis is sound, or actually explains *any* real recessions. As Marx[19] pointed out long ago, recessions tend to hit when workers' wages are relatively high, rather than when they are relatively low—the direct opposite of what we should see if a lack of consumption on the part of workers explains recessions. Anyone trained in neoclassical economics will immediately wonder, if purchasing power is in the hands of plutocrats, why the economy just doesn't produce more meals at ritzy restaurants and fewer at diners, more boutique shops and fewer big box stores, more yachts and fewer rowboats? If one considers the great palaces and monuments of antiquity, it is obvious that the rich can consume enough to suck up a great portion of a society's output. Have our modern-day wealthy suddenly lost that spirit of conspicuous consumption? Standard theory would indicate that there are equilibrium bundles of goods that could be produced corresponding to any distribution of income; why are we stuck producing a mix of goods for a distribution we don't have?

What's more, Médaille is attempting to explain a cyclical phenomenon with a constant cause: according to him, capital is always garnering an unfair share of income at the expense of labor. Why aren't we then in a permanent recession?

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[17] Médaille, *Towards a Truly Free Market*, 53.

[18] Médaille, *Towards a Truly Free Market*, 53-54.

[19] Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume II,* Trans. I. Lasker (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1956), ch 20. Downloaded from
http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1885-c2/ on Sep. 21, 2011.

We find similarly poor economic analysis in, for instance, Schwindt:

> St. Basil likened wealth to a great spring: if the water is drawn frequently, all the purer it will remain; yet if it is left unused it becomes foul and stagnant. Now this is of interest to us because of its economic parallel, which is the concept of the velocity of money. This concept says that money, if it falls into the hands of a poor man, will almost immediately leave his hands, either for rent or for lunch or for some other pressing need. If it goes into the hands of a very wealthy man, it may go into a bank account to draw interest, or it may go nowhere at all for a very long time. Now, economically speaking, the first is best, at least from the standpoint of a healthy, vibrant, functioning economy, why the latter is poisonous and leads to stagnation.[20]

There are several errors here. Schwindt apparently is unaware that banks don't actually keep the rich man's money sitting in a vault, but lend it out. And while we imagine very few rich people are burying their money in cans in the back yard, if they were to do this, the effect would be a lowering of the general price level, not "poisonous…stagnation."

III. WHATS ALIVE IN DISTRIBUTIST THOUGHT

The problems with distributist thought we discuss above identify economic "dead ends" of particular theoretical claims or policy proposals. This does not mean that distributist thought in its entirety should be ignored or discarded. On the contrary: we contend that there is much "alive" in distributist thought that deserves serious scholarly attention. In particular, distributists recognize an essential truth that has long been proclaimed by practitioners of "mainline" economics.[21] Distributists' emphasis on private and widespread property ownership as a political-

[20] Schwindt, *Catholic Social Teaching*, 152.

[21] On mainline economics, see Peter J. Boettke, *Living Economics: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (Oakland: Independent Institute, 2012).

economic foundation of a "good society" highlights the importance of *institutional* foundations for markets.[22] The assumption behind all distributist proposals, whether they are feasible or not, is that political and economic outcomes are a function of the underlying rules that constitute these social realms. Certain rules predictably result in cooperation and prosperity, while others predictably result in predation and poverty. Concern for simultaneously private and widespread ownership of private property, and in particular the factors of production, stems from the sound intuition that power must be dispersed in order for it to be wielded safely by anybody. The live and valuable thread of distributist thought recognizes that the background conditions for both markets and politics—conceptually but not in actuality separable realms of human action and potential cooperation—must be sound in order for the nexus of exchange relationships humans forge with each other to create mutually harmonious living. When this sensible starting point is augmented by sound economics, namely the applied theory of price as represented in works such as Mises,[23] Becker,[24] and Alchian and Allen,[25] a potentially powerful research program emerges out of the distributist paradigm.

Perhaps most troubling from a distributist perspective, in this regard, are the host of legal restrictions on economic activity that tilt the playing field against individual proprietors and small businesses. This creates an economic environment that selects for large organizations that are capable

[22] Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* (New York: Crown Business, 2013); James M. Buchanan, *The Limits of Liberty: Between Anarchy and Leviathan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); Douglas C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan (New York: The Modern Library, 1994 [1776]); see also Mises, *Human Action*.

[23] Mises, *Human Action*.

[24] Gary Becker, *Economic Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

[25] Armen Alchian and William Allen, *Exchange and Production: Competition, Coordination, and Control* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 1983).

of bearing the costs associated with legal compliance. This is particularly true when compliance with legal barriers is a fixed cost. Large fixed costs select for large organizations over smaller ones, because large organizations can spread a given fixed cost over a large range of output, which makes the cost easier to absorb. Smaller organizations have less output to absorb this fixed cost; they must increase price by proportionately more in order to remain profitable. Importantly, this is a feature of the institutional environment underpinning commercial activity. But because the comparative cost advantage of large organizations is due to legal and political, rather than economic, factors, it does not imply that smaller organizations are inherently unviable. In addition to creating more opportunities for widespread wealth creation, removing various barriers on commercial activity can 'open up' commercial space for individual proprietors and small businesses.[26]

Consider, for example, tax policy in the United States. The federal tax system in particular is well known to be incredibly complex, and thus difficult to navigate. The length and complication of the federal tax code has grown steadily since the 1950's. According to the Tax Foundation,[27] in 1955 the tax code and accompanying regulations were 1.4 million words in length. Today, the tax code and accompanying regulations are over 10 million words long. In addition, the tax code can change significantly from

[26] Not all regulatory barriers are disproportionately hard on smaller businesses. Sometimes the reverse is the case. Consider, for example, the Affordable Care Act's exemption for firms with fewer than 50 employees. Large corporations, in virtue of their profitability, also can be targets for rent extraction by public officials. Ultimately, whether any particular regulation is more costly for smaller or larger firms is an empirical question. But on balance we think that the current regulatory environment, with its labyrinthine rules and exceptions to those rules, makes it more likely that large, hierarchical businesses—which can afford specialized personnel just to help them comply with the rules—have an advantage.

[27] Scott Greenberg, "Federal Tax Laws and Regulations are Now Over 10 Million Words Long." *Tax Foundation* (October 8, 2015). http://taxfoundation.org/blog/federal-tax-laws-and-regulations-are-now-over-10-million-words-long. Accessed October 20th, 2016.

year to year. Fichtner and Feldman[28] find there were 4428 changes to the tax code between 2001 and 2010, averaging more than one change per day. Understandably, this generates a highly uncertain environment in which individuals and firms must expend significant resources just to comply with existing rules. In the same study, Fichtner and Feldman also find that compliance costs Americans around $1 trillion per year, or roughly 5% of GDP. This is a political environment that favors large firms that can afford staffs of accountants and lawyers capable of navigating the complexities of the tax code. It also allows large firms to secure advantages that are prohibitively costly for individual proprietors and small firms to discover.[29]

A distributist perspective on the tax code would emphasize the particularly burdensome effects of existing tax law on smaller organizations. In addition to general economic losses, restrictions on commerce of this kind disproportionately disadvantage individual proprietors and small businesses, and place significant barriers to direct employment of the factors of production by these smaller organizations. Distributist proposals would focus on just how particular aspects of the tax code impose these disproportionate burdens. Positive economic scholarship augmented by the distributist perspective would explore questions such as why these disproportionate burdens are politically profitable to implement, and how they can be removed with minimal cost. Normative scholarship augmented by the distributist perspective would focus on the injustice of imposing these disproportionate burdens on

[28] Jason Fichtner and Jacob Feldman, *The Hidden Costs of Tax Compliance* (Arlington: Mercatus Center, 2015). Available at:
https://www.mercatus.org/system/files/Fichtner_TaxCompliance_v3.pdf, 2013.

[29] These advantages are sometimes called "loopholes," a term we have avoided due to the derogatory connotation. We emphasize that it is not firms' securing of advantage in this context that we find objectionable. What we do find objectionable is the lack of a level playing field this complexity creates. There is also the broader economic argument: resources used by firms to secure advantage under the tax code represent a social loss, to the extent that, in absence of this complexity, firms could use those resources to create value for consumers.

smaller organizations. A strong case can be made, using the social teaching from which many distributist proposals draw their inspiration, that these burdens violate norms of individual freedom, the rule of law, and subsidiarity.

There are many other areas that can profit from positive and normative analysis from a distributist perspective. Licensing restrictions are another example. These are particularly important, because regulations requiring permission to produce present perhaps the greatest barrier to the direct employment of the factors of production on a small scale. Consider the increased prominence of the 'sharing economy,' most popularly in the form of ride sharing services such as Uber, or domicile sharing services such as Airbnb. One study estimates that nearly 20% of the US population has engaged in a sharing economy transaction.[30] Uber currently operates in more than 250 cities worldwide, and has a market capitalization of $41.2 billion. AirbnB averages nearly 430,000 guests per night, and nearly 160 million per year, which is more than large hospitality service chains such as Hilton Worldwide. These services are increasingly used because they empower individuals by allowing them to transform goods which formerly were consumer durables into useful capital. Individuals with a car or a spare room are in possession of a good that delivers a stream of services to the owner of these goods. Technologies such as Uber and AirbnB allow owners to offer that stream of services to others in exchange for money. By lowering the transaction costs of linking excess demanders of shelter and transportation with excess suppliers of these services, sharing economy technologies create live, productive capital out of goods limited previously to personal consumption. Anybody with a car and free time, or a room to spare, can thus use these goods as factors of production. But this potentially empowering transformation is often hindered by legal restrictions. Taxi companies lobby for, and sometimes successfully get, legal restrictions on ride-

[30] PricewaterhouseCooper, "The Sharing Economy," 4. *Consumer Intelligence Series* (2015). Available at pwc.com/CISsharing.

sharing services ranging from specific use conditions to outright bans. Hotel companies do the same for domicile sharing services. Licensing restrictions of these kinds prevent individuals from using their property to improve their wellbeing in ways that almost certainly will be unjustified from a distributist perspective.

Other aspects of the current legal regime which tilt the playing field towards the large and the giant include complex environmental regulations, elaborate workplace safety rules, and perhaps even the corporate form of organization itself, [31] something attacked by such noted market fans as Adam Smith.

So these are some topics for which a distributive perspective can generate good scholarship and raise the quality of public debate. There are undoubtedly more. We want to emphasize again that the strength of this perspective comes from understanding how markets actually work, and applies the tools that generate this understanding to the structure of institutions that underpin economic and political activity. That these positive questions are motivated by normative positions stemming from a particular tradition of social teaching in no way impugns the product of such a research paradigm. All scholarship is ultimately normatively motivated, and the social teaching within which distributism developed is a rich source for understanding the nature of the good society. These normative positions can be and should be pursued using means appropriate for the attainment of the desired end, which is why incorporation of price theory is a necessary component of a living distributism.

[31] This is admittedly a more speculative claim. Limited liability and public ownership can conceivably benefit small business owners and other individuals of modest means. For example, given our current highly litigious culture, limited liability can protect small business owners' personal assets from a crippling lawsuit. And we have already discussed in a previous footnote how ordinary households can turn the existence of large, publicly traded firms to their financial benefit.

IV. CONCLUSION: DISTRIBUTISM BY ANY OTHER NAME?

Our discussion contained only a few examples of the contents of a research program that would render distributism a living paradigm in scholarly economics and political economy. There are countless more. One other, which has been in the public eye recently, is the proposal for a guaranteed minimum (or "basic") income, or a negative income tax. While the specifics of the proposals vary, the constant theme is for the state to guarantee to each citizen some certain minimum standard of living, ideally set neither too low (and so genuinely staves off intolerable poverty) nor too high (and so discourages work). A distributist research program would highlight how these proposals fit into a political-economic worldview, both positive and normative, and perhaps would tackle the thorny issues associated with actually securing and implementing these proposals. At this point the scholarship on economics and political economy would engage the scholarship on governance and public policy. This is a virtue of a research program that is sufficiently interdisciplinary to give the complexities of human social life their due. So long as these various sub-projects are informed by the economic way of thinking, as we have highlighted in this article, the possibilities for distributism as a progressive research program, rather than a curious footnote in the history of economic thought, are quite promising.

One question we foresee as being urgent to answer, as well as being particularly fruitful as a research project, is how specific alternative institutional arrangements for making political decisions fits into a distributist program. We have in mind here, especially, the principle of subsidiarity. Famously explicated by Pope Leo XII in the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*[32] and later by Pope Pius XI in the encyclical *Quadragesino Anno*,[33]

[32] Pope Leo XII, *Rerum Novarum: On Capital and Labor*. Given at St. Peter's (May, 1891). Available online at: http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Leo13/l13rerum.htm.

[33] Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesino Anno: On the Reconstruction of the Social Order*. Given at St. Peter's (May 15, 1931). Available online at:

subsidiarity is the norm holding that public sector activity ought to be conducted at the most local level possible. The local council ought not perform functions that can adequately be performed within the family; the municipal government ought not perform functions that can adequately be performed by the local council; the state government ought not perform functions that can be adequately performed by the municipal government; and the national government ought not perform functions that can be adequately performed by the state government. While subsidiarity has been interpreted as limiting the power of the state, this is not all it does. Subsidiarity protects local communities from larger and more powerful bodies that might infringe on local communities' just claims and prerogatives. Thus it is properly understood as a norm for facilitating cooperation within the various political orders comprised by persons, rather than as a guarantee of rights above and against political orders *per se*.

Interpreted economically, subsidiarity implies that public goods (those that are partially nonrival and nonexcludable in consumption) ought to be supplied at the institutional unit of least 'social distance' from those who would fund and enjoy them. In this way, institutions of public goods provision are more likely to only produce those goods that advance the common welfare, instead of being captured by special interest groups to advance their narrow self-interest at the expense of the common welfare. Subsidiarity is thus one way of achieving James Buchanan's[34] goal of unleashing the productive and protective state, while constraining the predatory state. Hence subsidiary is closely related (although not identical to) norms of federalism, especially in the tradition of governance in the United States.[35] This suggests that distributism as a research program,

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http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html.

[34] Buchanan, *Limits of Liberty*, 1975.

[35] James M. Buchanan, "Federalism as an Ideal Political Order and an Objective for Constitutional Reform," *Publius* 25:2 (1995): 19-27; James M. Buchanan and Gordon Tullock,

focused at the institutional level, has potential overlap with public choice economics and the Virginia School of political economy, which approaches questions of public institutions in a similar manner, and is explicitly informed by the economic way of thinking.

We believe questions of subsidiarity, federalism, and local public goods provision are a natural topic for scholars looking to apply distributist insights because of an intuitive hypothesis: perhaps the current economic landscape is tilted against small-scale production, or production methods where workers otherwise have additional 'skin in the game' because the *political* landscape is itself overly centralized. In the US, for example, the federal government's relegation to itself of extraordinary control over economic life over the past century favors large firms that can afford the high costs of maintaining a permanent lobbying presence in Washington and regularly investing in relationships with legislators and bureaucrats. The 'rent seeking society,' explored by Gordon Tullock,[36] naturally makes those without the deep pockets required to make and maintain these political investments less likely to compete and thrive. Thus, growing public concerns over rising income and wealth inequality can be interpreted as a result not of some disembodied social program known as 'capitalism,' but a specific institutional arrangement that favors the granting of privileges and dispensations to individuals and groups of specific dispositions, redistributing wealth to them and from the average worker. Given the normative commitments of those with distributist priors, this phenomenon is obviously troubling, and worthy of serious study. Informed by the economic way of thinking, a distributist research program can more accurately identify specific institutional features that result in normatively troubling circumstances, and better understand what institutional changes will ameliorate them.

The Calculus of Consent: Logical Foundations of Constitutional Democracy (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962); see also the essays in James E. Fleming and Jacob T. Levy, *Federalism and Subsidiarity: NOMOS LV* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

[36] Gordon Tullock, *The Rent Seeking Society* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005).

Importantly, these avenues are hypothetical, in the sense that the proposed policies within existing institutions, and proposed changes to the institutions themselves, may not result in more widespread ownership of what is traditionally conceived as capital. It is always dangerous to have strong beliefs about the distribution of particular factors of production in response to within- and across-institutional change, since the accompanying exchange of property rights as predicted by the economic way of thinking frequently has unforeseen results. But at least the argument that particular aspects of the tilted playing field have resulted in a normatively unacceptable distribution of capital goods can, according to this method of investigation, be 'falsified,' in Buchanan's[37] sense. That is, interpreted as a means-ends argument about why a particular distribution of capital goods has arisen, it can be shown that the desired distribution does not secure the consent of those subject to the distribution and the laws that govern it. Of course, whether this conclusion impugns the belief that capital goods ownership ought to be widespread, or whether the proposed policies and institutional alternatives were insufficient to achieve a still-desirable normative goal, is itself a 'higher-order' question within a distributist worldview.

In conclusion, distributism can be interpreted not just as a historical intellectual tradition, but a living paradigm for organizing and conducting research on important topics in economics and political economy. However, to steer it away from some of the dead ends that distributist proposals have sometimes entered, distributism must be augmented by the economic way of thinking. There is little that is viable, as a scholarly project, in calls for wage and price controls, or for the reestablishment of a guild-dominated economy. In contrast, there is much viable in the motivations underlying such calls, channeled to explore questions of public importance by considering these questions in light of the pure logic of choice, as well as the role of social institutions in generating information

[37] James M. Buchanan, "Positive Economics, Welfare Economics, and Political Economy," *Journal of Political Economy* 2:3 (1959): 124-138.

and aligning incentives. Adopting these analytical precepts is required for distributism to become a progressive and fruitful research program.

AN EXTENDED REVIEW OF BOYD'S *CRUCIFIXION OF THE WARRIOR GOD*

Nicholas Gausling[1]

Abstract: Gregory Boyd's *Crucifixion of the Warrior God* presents an insightful, thoroughly-researched and historically-grounded thesis regarding how Christians should understand the violence attributed to Yahweh in the Old Testament. Drawing on extensive exegetical and theological considerations in dialogue with the historic and ecumenical Church, Boyd presents a treatise that is both academically rigorous and pastorally conversational. While at times he unnecessarily conflates his thesis with other elements of his theology, Boyd's book constitutes a very important monograph in the study of hermeneutics and theology proper at this crucial time in Church history when many Christians around the world are reconnecting with the practices and interpretive example set by the ancient Church.

Keywords: God's wrath, violence of God, divine judgment, hell, hermeneutics, patristic theology, church history

I. INTRODUCTORY CONSIDERATIONS

Since the earliest days of Christianity, believers have struggled with the hermeneutic challenge of interpreting the violent portrayals of God in the Old Testament in light of the New Testament revelation of Jesus Christ as a self-sacrificial and forgiving deity. Furthermore, these same portrayals

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are often a stumbling block to unbelievers, with Richard Dawkins' heavy-handed rhetoric in *The God Delusion* providing one of the most cited and representative examples of this critique to come out of the contemporary New Atheist movement. How can the God of the Old Testament, who is often portrayed as wrathful and jealous, be squared with the nonviolent, enemy-loving ministry of Jesus Christ? Theologian and pastor Gregory Boyd attempts to answer that question in his latest scholarly monograph, *Crucifixion of the Warrior God* (hereafter "*CWG*").

CWG holds impressive endorsements from diverse scholars like Scot McKnight and Walter Brueggemann. The book is divided into two volumes. The first volume, subtitled "The Cruciform Hermeneutic," lays out the theological and historical basis for Boyd's interpretive strategy. The second volume, "The Cruciform Thesis," provides specific exegetical and theological analysis of many key passages from the Old Testament which portray Yahweh acting violently. While readers interested in the topic will find the entire work worthwhile, the most important hermeneutic argumentation is found in the first volume.

The footnotes in *CWG* are extensive and appear on nearly every page. No one could justly accuse Boyd of either a superficial engagement with opposing views or shoddy research; he continuously cites relevant scholarly material throughout the entire book, and he lucidly explains his disagreements with scholars from opposing schools of thought. The topically-organized bibliography ("Suggested Readings") at the end of Volume 2 goes on for an impressive 37 pages.

Boyd realizes the enormity of his task, and consequently he goes through great pains to emphasize his orthodoxy and commitment to the authority of Scripture. Eventually, the reader who is open-minded to Boyd's thesis begins to tire of how much he belabors this point. However, it is understandable why he feels the need to do so given what is so often the tragically uncharitable and vitriolic state of intra-Christian polemics.

Boyd's conversational rhetoric makes the book accessible to educated laity as well as scholars. It is clear that Boyd views the role of theologian

not merely as publishing for the sake of publishing; all theology must ultimately be for the edification of the Body of Christ. In fact, Boyd often takes his conversational approach a little too far, padding the crux of his argument with lengthy introductions on what he intends to demonstrate, or recapitulations of what has been demonstrated, or homiletic tangents which sound like sermonizing. While this all provides a more accessible monograph for non-experts, it also stretches out the length of the book for a couple hundred pages longer than was probably necessary.

Volume 1 is the most valuable part of the book, in which Boyd explains the foundation for his hermeneutic: a theological, biblical, philosophical and historical case for why the violent portraits of Yahweh in the Old Testament are not representative of how God actually is, while at the same time upholding the inspiration and authority of the entire canon. Without Volume 1, the specific analyses of Old Testament passages that Boyd delves into in Volume 2 would be void *ab initio*. Yet if one accepts the thesis of Volume 1, then there are multiple perspectives and insights which could be applied to the Old Testament's violent portrayals of Yahweh, with Volume 2 of *CWG* simply being Boyd's own perspective. Consequently, this review will focus heavily on Volume 1.

II. "THE CRUCIFORM HERMENEUTIC" (VOLUME 1)

The first volume opens with a concise introduction to Boyd's herculean task. He explains that when he began researching ten years ago for what became *CWG*, his thesis was that God actually did engage in all of the violence attributed to him in the Old Testament. Even for many of those in the Anabaptist, Mennonite, or Peace Church movements, and others who espouse a fully-nonviolent ethic for Christian behavior (as does Boyd), it is often believed that while humans are prohibited from engaging in violence, God himself exercises violence against his enemies. In short, Christians can and must refrain from all violence in imitation of Christ's earthly ministry, and are able to do so precisely because God will

ultimately either redeem their enemies through Christ's atoning sacrifice, or else he will eschatalogically destroy them.

Yet as he continued to research, Boyd says he came to a different conclusion: that the character of God is intrinsically and eternally nonviolent, and all violent depictions of God in the Bible (particularly the Old Testament) must be interpreted through that lens. Instead of subjecting the Bible to scientific inquiry like any other text in order to discern the meaning, Boyd argues that we must read the Old Testament through what he calls the Cruciform Hermeneutic. This is itself an outcropping of the theological interpretation of Scripture which was mainstream in Christian thought prior to the Enlightenment.

In Chapter 1, Boyd discusses the practical dynamics and implications of struggling to understand violent portrayals of God in light of the cross. He explains his commitment to the θεόπνευστος ("God-breathed") nature and authority of the entire Bible, but he places it within the context of ancient Jewish thought, including the struggles of doubt and crises of faith that almost invariably strike every believer at some point and which are replete throughout the Old Testament narrative. Instead of psychological assent or certainty, says Boyd, biblical faith is "about retaining covenantal trust in one's covenant partner in the face of uncertainty."[2] He thus shows readers that they should feel free to explore their faith and pursue God through their questions and doubts, rather than reflexively approaching controversial or challenging theses from a defensive posture. This preface constitutes a balanced and helpful representation of the inviting and pastoral approach Boyd brings to the entire subject.

Boyd explains the significance of how we understand the character of God, especially as it pertains to how we behave towards others. He briefly explores the history of religiously-motivated violence and how Christians

[2] Gregory A. Boyd, *Crucifixion of the Warrior God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 13. For additional exploration of this theme, see also Peter Enns, *The Sin of Certainty* (New York: HarperOne, 2016).

have tragically been no exception. Indeed, throughout Christian history, leaders inspired by misappropriated biblical stories have used them to defend the killing of suspected witches, Muslims, and even fellow Christians; to stir up nationalistic military fervor for war; and sometimes to commence wholesale genocide. In contemporary Christianity, Boyd cites post-9/11 militarism as an example of what happens when any modern country is equated with Old Testament Israel.[3] Boyd ends the chapter with a discussion of how taking the violent portrayals of God at face value can hurt the Church's witness to the world. Skeptical readers may rightly retort that such practical considerations do not affect objective truth, though it could also be said that if Boyd's thesis is correct, then practical considerations pertaining to what happens if we have an improper perception of God become immensely relevant.

In Chapter 2, Boyd begins to lay out the primary crux of the Cruciform Hermeneutic. Citing Hebrews 1:1-3, he argues that the revelation of God in the person and work of Christ is superior to any revelation found in the Old Testament. The author of Hebrews affirms that God spoke through the Old Testament prophets, but "the author views these previous revelations as inferior to the revelation of God in Jesus – indeed, as inferior as a mere shadow is to the substantial reality that casts it (Heb 10:1; cf. Heb 8:5; Col 2:17)."[4] In other words, any and all revelation prior to Christ is necessarily incomplete and therefore subject to authoritative interpretation (or reinterpretation) through the lens of Christ.

After additional exploration of this theme in Hebrews and some parallel passages in the epistles, Boyd turns to Jesus himself. Since Jesus said John the Baptist was greater than all the Old Testament prophets (Mt 11:1), and yet also claimed to supersede John (Jn 5:36), it follows that Jesus supersedes the Old Testament prophets. In fact, the entirety of the Old Testament points to Jesus (Lk 24:25-27, 44-45). Thus, Boyd argues,

[3] For more on this topic, see also Boyd's earlier work, *The Myth of a Christian Nation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).

[4] Boyd, *CWG*, 38.

interpreters of the Bible must "read backwards"—in the words of Richard Hays—and interpret the Old Testament in light of Christ. Citing Paul's argument in 2 Corinthians 4, Boyd reasons that "Not only is the revelation of the OT not on the same level as the revelation found in Christ, but when the OT is read in light of Christ, Paul is claiming, we can no longer legitimately speak of 'two' distinct sources of revelation."[5]

Boyd acknowledges that there is still significant continuity between the Old and New Testaments. Yet while Jesus himself cites the Old Testament as God-breathed, it nevertheless pales in comparison to the perfect and final revelation of Christ himself, who is the exact image of the Father, the fulfiller of the covenant, and the bringer of the eschaton. In discussing John 1:18, Boyd argues that "it is unlikely that John is speaking merely of a physical perception when he denies that anyone has ever 'seen God.' … John rather seems to be insinuating, in a hyperbolic way, that no one truly knew God prior to the Word becoming flesh." [6] While the Old Testament narrative features numerous theophanies, no human truly knew God until the advent of Christ, and those who have seen Christ have now seen the Father (Jn 14:7-9).

Boyd then works through various epistles, such as Colossians 2, 1 Timothy 2, Ephesians 1, 2 Corinthians 3, and more to demonstrate the presence of this theme throughout New Testament theology. He then discusses some ways in which Christ overturns certain Old Testament precepts (cf. Deut 6:13; Mt 5:33-37, 12:1-8; Lev 1, 15:25-27; Mk 7:19; Luke 8:43-47; Ex 34:21). Boyd observes that "though the earliest Christian disciples regarded the OT as God's word, they subordinated its authority to the authority of Christ and were thus okay with setting aside whatever 'seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to [them]' (Acts 15:28)."[7] According to Boyd, the most important example of this which pertains to the Cruciform Hermeneutic is the *lex talionis* (Ex 21:24; Lev 24:19-20; Dt 19:21)

[5] Ibid., 46-47.

[6] Ibid., 56.

[7] Ibid., 69.

which is supplanted by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. Even more radically, obedience to this command is expressly tied to the character of the Father, and thus the enemy-loving character of God is the grounds for the ethic he demands of his children (Mt 5:45).

Answering the major objection of Jesus stating that he came not to abolish the Law but rather to fulfill it, Boyd argues that Jesus meant he would perfect and complete the Law. Since the entirety of the Law and the Prophets hinges on loving God and neighbor (Mt 22:37-40), love is the true fulfillment of the law (Rom 13:10). The essence of *agape* thus provides the framework through which we must reinterpret and supersede the deficiencies of the Old Testament law in light of the fuller revelation we have in Christ. Yet perhaps Boyd glosses over Matthew 5:17-20 a bit too quickly. The two great commandments of Matthew 22 draw from Torah, so while we rightly may say the Old Testament law is deficient, its core still holds a central place in New Testament ethical thinking.

Boyd also exposits the story of James and John seeking to call down fire from Heaven against the Samaritans (Lk 9:54), which they probably thought was a thoroughly prophetic action (cf. 2 Kgs 1:10-12). Instead, Jesus rebukes them. Writes Boyd, "The desire of James and John to replicate Elijah's miraculous destruction of Samaritan foes with fire 'from heaven' reflected a 'spirit' that was antithetical to that of Jesus …"[8] While the gospel narratives draw many positive parallels between Jesus and both Elijah and Elisha, on this specific point, Jesus rejects the example set by Elijah in favor of a more excellent way.

Perhaps most importantly, Jesus did not follow the assumed script for the Davidic Messiah, who was largely-assumed to be a nationalistic political savior against oppressing earthly powers and who would restore the glory of geopolitical Israel. In contrast, the New Covenant brought by Jesus has sharp differences with the Old Covenant (cf. Deut 28:4, 7, 10-11; Lk 6:20-26; Mt 5:9). Boyd remarks, "Far from enforcing the covenant, as

[8] Ibid., 79.

people assumed God's messiah would do, Jesus seems to have completely subverted it."[9]

Boyd's assessment is perhaps not an entirely balanced reading of the Old Covenant. The author of Hebrews, drawing on Jeremiah, does not discard the Old Covenant as something bad to be subverted; rather, it is depicted as something good which was replaced by something better. As the Beatitudes intensify the demands of the Old Testament law from outward compliance into inner obedience, it can also be said that the New Covenant enforces the heart of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel by reorienting against the true enemies (sin, *ha satan* and death) and reinforcing the true purpose of God's people (a renewed humanity, a covenant family, and a royal priesthood, to draw imagery from both Pauline and Petrine theology). It would be more accurate to say that Jesus subverted the misshapen and worldly expectations that Israel had for Messiah and the Old Covenant.

Boyd also draws attention to Luke 4:16-27, or what he calls the 'Scandalous Inaugural Address' of Jesus. While reading the messianic announcement from Isaiah 61:1-2 and proclaiming himself its fulfillment, Jesus deliberately omits the second portion of the passage: "the day of vengeance of our God." With Israel under Roman rule and looking back on centuries of failed precedent to militarily establish a geopolitical state, Jesus instead teaches that to live by the sword is to die by the sword (Mt 26:52). Boyd sums up by stating that "while Jesus affirmed the divine inspiration of the whole OT, its [sic] apparent that in the process of offering people this nonviolent kingdom, Jesus reflected an authority that superseded the OT and that allowed him to radically reframe its meaning."[10] Alleged endorsements of violent action by Jesus receive additional treatment in Appendix II. The temple cleansing is discussed later in the main body of the work.

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[9] Ibid., 87.

[10] Ibid., 89-90.

Moving into Chapter 3, Boyd explores the use of the Old Testament by the New, and considers what principles we post-apostolic interpreters can draw from that example. The section is largely reminiscent of Peter Enns' *Inspiration and Incarnation*, with Boyd predictably arguing that the creative interpretive hermeneutic of the New Testament authors in their use of the Old Testament is also normative for interpreters today. However, Boyd pushes the point farther than most by saying that "when we study the manner in which NT authors cite and allude to the OT, it becomes clear that finding Christ in Scripture was a far more pressing concern for them than discerning an OT author's originally intended meaning."[11] Boyd thus departs strongly from the post-Enlightenment emphasis on grammatical-historical exegesis as being the bedrock of Scriptural study.

While Boyd's view is far outside the contemporary western mainstream, to an extent he is utilizing hermeneutic methods which were prominent in both the Middle Ages and ancient Christianity. However, it would behoove us to not push this claim too far lest we wind up with some form of the Four Sense model of medieval interpretation. Careful scholarship and grammatical-historical exegesis are extremely valuable tools (a statement with which Boyd would almost certainly agree); the danger of which we should steer clear is the temptation to make them primary at the expense of the deeper theological meaning.

To develop his case, Boyd begins by discussing how the gospels (especially Matthew) portray Jesus as the fulfillment of Israel's story; Boyd loosely links such an interpretive framework to the *pesher* method of hermeneutics. As one example, Matthew 2:17 draws on Jeremiah 31:15, though the latter text was not predictive; Matthew reinterprets it and applies it to Herod's massacre. Boyd also cites the use of Psalm 69:21 by John 19:28-29 to prove the same point: while the Old Testament text is not predictive, the New Testament authors are reinterpreting portions of the

[11] Ibid., 97.

Old Testament in light of Christ. Boyd also highlights Paul's oft-cited allegorical interpretation of the Israelites in the wilderness found in 1 Corinthians 10, as well as the argument of Hebrews that the Old Covenant only provided a shadow for which Christ and the New Covenant are the substance.

Closing out this section, Boyd acknowledges that his interpretive strategy will probably not land well on readers today, and he distances himself from the allegorical excesses of certain strands of ancient and medieval interpretation which contrived hidden meaning in virtually every passage. Nevertheless, Boyd argues, that is no reason to discard the guiding principle of this ancient hermeneutic: that we must read the entire Bible through the lens of the person and work of Christ. He then proceeds to consider how various theologians throughout the ages have handled such interpretive issues.

Boyd says that while the proto-orthodox Christians utilized a wide range of hermeneutic methods, "most shared the willingness of NT authors to go to creative extremes to find Christ in the OT.… While early Christian thinkers did not generally consider the original meaning of passages in the OT to be irrelevant, they nevertheless considered it to be merely 'preparatory' for the fuller meaning that was unlocked when these passages were interpreted in the light of Christ."[12] An early Christian tradition, Boyd notes, viewed the scroll of Revelation 5 as the Scriptures, with writing both inside and out. The reader must cross over the outer writing (the letter) to reach the inner writing (the spirit). From the early Church onward through the Middle Ages, theologians assumed that all of Scripture is summed up in the person and work of Christ.

Boyd references Gregory of Nyssa, John Cassian, and Origen as examples of significant early theologians who believed that violent Old Testament portraits of God which did not evidently look like Christ were "unworthy of God" (or, in Boyd's terms, "sub-Christ-like portraits of

[12] Ibid., 116.

God"), but which nevertheless were God-breathed and somehow pointed to Christ. He also discusses how both Justin Martyr and Irenaeus explained such portrayals as a result of progressive revelation. Through these and other interpretive strategies, the early Christians—increasingly isolated from Judaism—held firm to the Old Testament as inspired Scripture while also insisting that supreme hermeneutic priority must be given to the person and work of Christ.

Boyd also briefly explores theological interpretation in the works of Martin Luther and John Calvin, and while he wisely does not press this argument too far, there is certainly something to be said for Luther's claim that Moses and the Old Testament prophets are like a wax candle which fades into insignificance compared to Jesus. Yet far more important in the Reformation section of Boyd's historical analysis are the Anabaptists, whom Boyd argues were driven by a Christocentric narrative theology. The Anabaptists foreshadowed what has become in contemporary theology the interpretive principle that "where a passage is located within this grand narrative is essential to determining the meaning it has for we who know the grand narrative as a whole, and this meaning may go well beyond, and even be quite different from, the meaning the passage had at the time it was written."[13]

After briefly discussing the Anabaptist principle of the hermeneutics of obedience, Boyd moves into the modern era, citing Karl Barth as the major factor in reviving Christocentricism in the twentieth century. He proceeds to reference other notable modern theologians who have expounded this thinking, including Brevard Childs, Peter Leithart, Vern Poythress, Miroslav Volf, Kevin Vanhoozer, Pope Benedict XVI, Thomas Torrance, and Graeme Goldsworthy. He then follows up with a brief refutation against the charge of Christomonism.

In Chapter 4, Boyd begins to hone in on how we actually utilize Christocentrism. In other words, specifically what about Christ forms our

[13] Ibid., 126.

interpretive lens? The cross, Boyd argues, must be primary, for it is not necessarily good news in and of itself that Jesus is the perfect revelation of God; the news is good because the God revealed by Jesus is of beautiful character. One may observe that Boyd's point here suffers from tautology; if God is the source of all that is true, good, and beautiful, then how can God's character be judged by some outside standard of beauty? Herein lies a key problem with large swaths of progressive evangelicalism which often seek to define 'love' or 'looking like Jesus' apart from the narrative of the New Testament itself. How can we know the character and person of Christ apart from the apostolic witness? Boyd himself certainly does not advocate for such thinking, but his statements on what constitute beauty and goodness at times inadvertently walk that fine line.

Boyd then briefly expounds the Johannine teaching that God is love. We cannot view God's love alongside things like his justice or wrath; love is intrinsically part of God's very being. "If God's eternal essence is love, then to experience God is to experience perfect love."[14] The sin in the heart of the wicked is what causes them to experience God's love as wrath. Therefore, reasons Boyd, we should be immediately skeptical of Old Testament portraits of God's wrath as volitional violence as somehow being consistent expressions of the intrinsic love of God. Yet while it may be true that love is intrinsic to God's being whereas wrath is not, does that prove that God would not be angry (and in some sense, violent) against evil on account of his love? After all, if God's loving purpose for creation is worship, then it follows that God's love would lead to anger at the anti-creational forces of idolatry and chaos which threaten *shalom*. Anger does not necessarily equate to violence, but perhaps Boyd assumes his conclusion here a bit too quickly, though he discusses his take on God's wrath in much more detail later in the book.

Boyd identifies Augustine as the primary origin of the alleged misinterpretation of the love of God. While Augustine's 'Rule of Love'

[14] Ibid., 146.

hermeneutic had good intentions, it was misapplied on account of Augustine's Platonism. Philosophically committed to the pre-Christian idea that a supreme being must be immutable, impassable, and timeless, Augustine reasoned that love was an internal disposition which could be separated from external action. Therefore, both God and Christians could love their enemies internally and still destroy them externally. Augustine extended this even to intra-Christian ecclesiastic disputes, using Luke 14:16-24 as justification for inflicting violence on alleged heretics.

With Augustine's view as a foundation, the post-Constantinian Church became much more comfortable with viewing the Old Testament's violent depictions of God as co-equal revelations alongside Christ, which also had the unfortunate effect of inspiring church-sanctioned state violence. However, the last century of renewed Christocentric theology has brought with it a sharpening of Augustine's Rule of Love by specifically orienting it around the cross. 1 John 3:16 teaches that we know what love is by looking at Christ crucified, and that this necessarily connects to how Christians must live. For God to step down from his glory and suffer the abuse, torture and spiritual agony of the crucifixion for his enemies (Rom 5:8-10), to become our sin (2 Cor 5:21), and to become a curse for us (Gal 3:13; Mt 27:46), is what best represents the love of God. Thus Boyd, turning a phrase from Anselm, writes that "the cross is that revelation beyond which none greater can be conceived."[15]

In Chapter 5, Boyd continues to discuss his theology of the cross. The gospels, particularly the synoptics, function as a narrative build-up to the climax of Jesus' crucifixion. Again returning to Luke 24, Boyd cites Jesus' own claim that the Old Testament pointed to the suffering of the Messiah prior to his glorification. This theme is also expounded in 1 Corinthians 15, Acts 3, and Acts 26. The cross is then set forth as an example for Christian living in Luke 9:23, Luke 14:27, 1 Peter 2:20-22 and elsewhere.

[15] Ibid., 155.

This way of life is so counter-intuitive, it challenges all of the world's conventional wisdom and flips it on its head. Indeed, the very concept of a crucified messiah was foreign; a crucified messiah would be assumed a failed messiah.

Boyd explores ways in which Jesus' public ministry carried this cruciform character: exorcising demons, touching lepers, socializing with prostitutes, engaging the poor, welcoming Samaritans and Romans, and other such actions which were abhorrent to many customs within Second Temple Judaism. He then moves into the Gospel of John and its focus on the intra-Trinitarian relationship between the Father and the Son culminating in Jesus' voluntary submission at the cross. Through this action, Jesus also drives out Satan and liberates his people from bondage to sin.

In addition, the cross is also central to Pauline theology. It is the focus of Philippians 2:6-11, is critical to numerous passages in Galatians, and is equated with the gospel in 1 Corinthians 1:17-23. For Paul, Christ crucified was the very heart of Christianity (1 Cor 2:2), and Pauline theology holds it out as the preeminent display of God's love (Rom 5:8; Eph 5:1-2), the means of evil's defeat (1 Cor 2:6-8 ; Col 2:14-15), the basis of atonement for sin (Rom 3:15, 5:9; Eph 1:7), the foundation of human reconciliation (Rom 5:10; 2 Cor 5:14-21; Col 1:20 ; Eph 2:14-16), the means by which people are healed and made righteous (Rom 5:15-19, 6:6; 2 Cor 13:4; Phil 3:10), and the power and wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:18, 24). It also provides the example for Pauline ethics (e.g., Eph 5:1-2; 1 Cor 16:14; 2 Cor 8:9; Phil 2:4-5). The allegation that Paul endorsed violence in certain portions of the epistles is addressed in Appendix III.

Discussing Revelation, Boyd says the cross is the interpretive key to the book. Reasoning from Revelation 5:1-10, he highlights that it is specifically the slaughtered Lamb of God who is worthy to open the scroll. Christ is worthy because he paradoxically resolved the cosmic conflict by laying down his life. He conquers his enemies by the sword that proceeds from his mouth, that is, his word (Rev 1:16, 2:16, 19:15, 21). When he

appears soaked in blood (Revelation 19:13), it is his own, not the blood of his slaughtered enemies. His heavenly army imitates his cruciform leadership (Revelation 14:4) and thus triumphs over darkness with love (Revelation 12:9-11). Revelation therefore subverts and reinterprets violent imagery in light of the cross. Boyd treats this subject in greater detail in Appendix IV.

Boyd briefly returns to Hebrews, as well as 1 Peter, for some additional discussion of how they highlight the centrality of the cross, followed by a concise treatment of how the ordinances of communion and baptism bear witness to the cross. He then conducts an analysis of the ethics of Christian nonviolence which, while not the subject of this book, he certainly could not get away without mentioning. Boyd's discussion here is balanced and helpful, but readers specifically wanting an in-depth and contemporary scholarly analysis of Christian nonviolence would be better off consulting the work of Richard Hays, Stanley Hauerwas, or Walter Wink.

Boyd then turns to the cleansing of the temple. He notes the scholarly consensus is that Jesus' actions were symbolic and prophetic. While Jesus was righteously angry and made a whip (Jn 2:15), there is no exegetical basis for thinking he must have actually used the whip on humans or animals, and the most plausible reading is that the whip was used for its common purpose of driving out animals through the sound of the cracking. Also, if Jesus had actually whipped any temple officers, he would have been immediately arrested. Lastly, considering this episode in light of the nonviolent ethic of the rest of Jesus' ministry, it becomes clear that the temple cleansing was a nonviolent yet staunchly-prophetic action, and Jesus links it to the cross and the coming atonement which would take place in his own body rather than in the temple (Jn 2:19-22).

Boyd briefly treats the slightly more dubious subject of verbal violence in the ministry of Jesus (such as the way he spoke to the Pharisees in Mt 23), arguing that Jesus' statements were never intended to ridicule or embarrass someone, but rather to call them to repentance. For example,

even amidst verbal rebuke, Jesus' emotional depth towards the lost Israelites is evident in Matthew 23:37-38. While this is all well and good, Boyd may come a bit too close for comfort to the caricatured idea of an 'easygoing Jesus' who would never want to offend or upset anyone. This is not Boyd's view, and it is granted that he expounds what he means by arguing that all of Jesus' (even harsh) words are ultimately for a godly and loving purpose, but even raising the question of 'verbal violence' will likely strike some readers as questionable.

Boyd closes the chapter by discussing eschatalogical violence and the supposed necessity of violence for true justice. Those who interpret the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Mt 18:21-25) to conclude that God will ultimately slaughter his enemies miss the point, Boyd argues, because the core principle of the parable is to teach the disciples to forgive not just seven times, but seventy times seven. We cannot conclude from Luke 18:1-8 that God is an unjust judge, or from Luke 16:1-9 that we should be dishonest managers. The parables are intended to teach powerful spiritual truths, not to illustrate a 1:1 equivalence with reality. Boyd also says we must anchor our concepts of justice and wrath in God as supremely revealed on the cross, not what we think justice should mean; this subject is treated more later on.

Chapter 6 is a rejoinder to two specific criticisms which may be raised against the previous chapters. First, Boyd takes on certain (non-Christian) scholars who claim that the cross and a theology of redemption were not particularly relevant in Christianity until after Constantine; he makes quick work of such a view. Next, he takes up the objection that the history of Christian interpretation has not focused on the centrality of the cross as much as one would expect if it were so obvious. He already demonstrated the relevant historical and scriptural precedent in earlier chapters, and while this section does contain some new material, it is not entirely clear why he chooses to bring the subject up again at this point in the book. Unfortunately, Boyd also hitches the Cruciform Thesis to a somewhat canned depiction of the determinism/free-will debate (specifically in

reference to Augustine acting as a watershed in patristic thought), and offers very brief criticism of the work of some Reformed theologians. This section is a bit clumsy and sparse on argumentation, and Boyd's pressing on it will likely alienate some otherwise-sympathetic readers from the Reformed camp; after all, even Barth and Moltmann—cited as influences on Boyd's thesis—hail from the Reformed tradition. Overall, the chapter does bring some new material to the table, but it is material that could have been better incorporated into other chapters or an appendix, and some other parts still should have been left out altogether.

In Chapter 7, Boyd broadly discusses the Old Testament's depictions of Yahweh's violence. He begins with a helpful reminder that contrary to the skewed representation of people like Richard Dawkins, the normative portrayal of Yahweh in the Old Testament is as a relational God who, on account of *hesed*, relentlessly pursues *shalom* between God and man. Boyd draws on some of the relevant scholarship to demonstrate why we cannot interpret Torah merely as a *suzerain*/vassal treaty (although it does carry those elements); in contrast to the pagan gods of the Ancient Near East, Yahweh's covenant with Israel is intrinsically familial, paternal, and matrimonial.

Moving into specific controversial texts, Boyd reminds us to eschew any sort of Neo-Marcionism. Paraphrasing Kenton Sparks, Boyd instead says that while we must respect the entire Bible, "we are not respecting the Bible when we try to minimize, rationalize, justify, or otherwise soften its offensive material…"[16] He pastorally says to the uncomfortable reader that "the God we are called to wrestle with is one who puts the highest priority on honest authenticity…"[17] and that in the fashion of the ancient Jews, a mark of true faith involves candidly wrestling with God. Boyd also prepares readers for his rhetorical descriptions of Old Testament violence in extremely negative terms, referencing similar rhetoric by John Calvin,

[16] Ibid., 287.

[17] Ibid., 288.

John Stott and others to make the point that his wording is neither novel nor sacrilegious.

Boyd first discusses the *herem* commands, weaving in ethical considerations, comparing Yahweh's depicted actions with those of other Ancient Near Eastern deities, and demonstrating that divinely-sanctioned holy war was a common view of pagan nations. The pagan gods demanded blood sacrifice and the destruction of whole people groups, and so also Yahweh is sometimes depicted in the Old Testament. In this section and repeatedly throughout *CWG*, Boyd cites and offers refutations of Paul Copan's work; he later explains that this is because Copan provides the strongest contemporary defense of the view that Yahweh actually did (righteously) engage in the acts of violence attributed to him in the Old Testament.

Boyd next considers various acts of violence that Yahweh is said to have ordered Moses to carry out, as well as other examples of delegated violence from books like Joshua, Judges, and 1-2 Samuel. Boyd then summarizes key violent prescriptions from the Old Testament law, followed by a myriad of other examples of divine violence including the Genesis flood, the judgments on Egypt, sending angels of destruction or deception, the striking down of Uzzah, consuming the sons of Aaron with fire, sending nations against other nations as instruments of divine judgment, causing acts of cannibalism and mass slaughter, and imprecatory Psalms. Boyd concludes the chapter by saying he hopes to have demonstrated the vast gap between the depictions of Yahweh in the Old Testament and the perfect revelation of Yahweh found in Christ crucified for his enemies, and that it is incumbent upon us to search deeply for how these Scriptures bear witness to Jesus.

In the next two chapters, Boyd analyzes and offers responses to other schools of thought on how we should interpret Yahweh's violence as depicted in the Old Testament. Chapter 8 is a lengthy refutation of Neo-Marcionism, including a defense of the infallibility (but not the inerrancy) of the entire Bible. The key principle, Boyd argues, is whether we

approach Scripture theologically or historically-critically. He does not discount the historical-critical method and even acknowledges its relative necessity, but he argues that it can only take us so far; if we are to rightly understand the Scriptures, we must move beyond the surface meaning and into the deeper theological meaning. Drawing on Barth, Boyd says we must take the text as 'literal' within the world of the biblical narrative, which is a different question from whether it 'actually happened' in history. Regarding the assertion that Jesus cited the Old Testament as 'actual history,' Boyd responds that this is an anachronistic, post-Enlightenment assumption being imposed on the text. For interpreters in ancient Judaism, the Scriptures were God-breathed, and that had nothing to do with the modern concept of historical consciousness.

After a brief discussion on the differences between ancient and modern views of history, Boyd offers a theological defense of the idea that God could inspire a text which records events that did not 'actually happen.' His argument ultimately centers on the historical Jesus: because Jesus was the literal, historical, crucified and risen Son of God, and because Jesus—as an ancient Jew steeped in ancient Jewish methods of interpretation—treated the Old Testament as God-breathed, we must treat it the same way. Inspiration, Boyd argues, applies to the text of the Old Testament, not to its conformity to 'actual history' as judged by post-Enlightenment standards. The chapter closes with a helpful discussion of the limitations of what contemporary evangelicals consider 'biblical inerrancy,' and Boyd's preference for 'infallibility' understood within the context of God's covenant faithfulness.

In Chapter 9, Boyd presents an argument for why synthesizing violent portrayals of God with Christ is unworkable. He begins with Romans 9:14-24, drawing on pre-Augustinian theology to counter the later Augustinian interpretation. The only Old Testament passage which significantly develops the potter/clay analogy is Jeremiah 18:1-10, and there it refers to the wisdom of God in responding to nations. Boyd also argues that man's ethical intuition is damaged by sin, but it is not completely destroyed; by

natural revelation, we can recognize good and evil with some sort of objectivity. If an action that would be considered evil if done by anyone else somehow becomes good when done by God, then man could not possibly have any real natural law basis for objective ethics. To fall into a might-makes-right approach to ethics, Boyd says, is to endorse the moral philosophy of Nietzsche. Boyd also briefly attempts to bring psychology into the argument, but he clearly steps outside his area of expertise and it is not done particularly well. Thankfully, he then turns back to the primary theological argumentation of the book, and observes that the depiction of Jesus as 'divine emperor' only appeared after the time of Constantine.

Boyd briefly raises the issue of the necessity of God judging sin, reaffirming that the wrath of God is real; what it actually entails, however, is another matter. This subject is dealt with more in Volume II. Boyd also briefly considers the claim that God's violence is centered on a greater good, acknowledging some positive points of this school of thought but finding it ultimately unconvincing and inconsistent with Christ as revealed in the New Testament.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of progressive revelation and divine accommodation: the idea that God sometimes portrayed himself to be different than he actually is in order to reach finite people, particularly in the context of the Ancient Near East. While Boyd affirms certain portions of this thinking, he reasons it cannot be used to claim that God actually commanded or engaged in violence. To do so, he says, would be another rehashing of pre-Christian ideas about what God must be like. Boyd also observes that the Old Testament trajectory does not consistently minimize or lessen violence as we should expect of a truly progressive revelation and, most importantly, to say that God engaged in any violence (albeit it in progressively decreasing degrees) would necessarily qualify the supreme revelation of God's character found in Christ crucified. Boyd also observes that to whatever extent people do not have a true understanding of God, they logically must be embracing a false

understanding; looking to Christ crucified as the supreme revelation of God solves these difficulties. Nevertheless, Boyd holds that progressive revelation and divine accommodation, when understood not as God accommodating his character but as his breaking through man's sinful perceptions, is a necessary component of the Cruciform Hermeneutic. Readers may here think of Peter Enns' dictum that "God lets his children tell the story."

In the subsequent chapters, Boyd begins to exposit a specific framework for the Cruciform Hermeneutic. Chapter 10 is a detailed discussion of Origen, and the fact that Boyd utilizes his thought so heavily is guaranteed to draw criticism; while Origen is undoubtedly one of the most influential theologians in all of Church history, he is not without controversy and detractors. However, Boyd also reminds the reader that the principles of this hermeneutic are firmly grounded in a wide range of Christian interpretation stretching back to the ancient world, and do not rely solely on Origen. In fact, Boyd tells us, allegorical exegesis was often used against Marcionism, Gnosticism, and other early sects which were skeptical of the Old Testament's authority.

Chapter 11 opens by discussing the modern theologians Boyd considers the most important forerunners to the Cruciform Hermeneutic: Thomas Torrance, Anthony Thiselton, Richard Hays, George Knight, John Goldingay, and Jürgen Moltmann. Boyd then moves into an analysis of the relational aspects of a God-breathed Scripture, arguing that God does not mechanically overtake the human authors, but rather the Holy Spirit worked through them to produce texts which bear the imprint of both the divine and the human.

To those who would then question the New Testament authors on the grounds that God may have divinely accommodated to their understanding as he did the Old Testament authors, Boyd acknowledges that there is also divine accommodation in the New Testament, yet he reminds us that the center of divine revelation is the historical reliability of the person and work of Christ himself. The reason there are conflicting

views within the Old Testament, Boyd says, is because God's method of inspiring the biblical authors is noncoercive and dialectical, whereas in the person of Christ there was no sinful resistance or conflict with the Father's will. And as it takes faith to see beyond the outwardly human appearance of the cross to discern the supreme revelation of God, so also it takes faith to look beyond the violent portraits of God in the Old Testament to see Jesus. While Boyd's explanation is plausible, he does not really flesh out the question of how divine accommodation may work in reference to the apostolic writings, that is, authoritative writings by men who are not Christ and hence who do have some sinful resistance. The latter part of the chapter features a discussion on direct versus indirect revelation, and concludes with additional analysis of how the New Testament (particularly Paul) utilizes the Old Testament. In short, we must look beyond the veil (2 Corinthians 3) to find Christ in the text.

In Chapter 12, Boyd provides more detail on the rise of historical-critical exegesis, as well as the contemporary revival of theological exegesis that was inspired by Karl Barth. Because the Bible uniquely is the written Word of God, it cannot be treated just like any other text; it requires the Holy Spirit and the Church (as the community of faith) to correctly interpret. As such, it is impossible to objectively understand the Bible simply by using historical-critical methods. However, historical-critical exegesis still plays an important (though qualified) role for the Church; our theological exegesis should begin by considering how the original audience would have probably understood the text, but should not attempt the *prima facie* impossible task of analyzing the author's psychology to objectively uncover his intended meaning. Boyd refers to this as his "Conservative Hermeneutical Principle."

Boyd then discusses the Bible as a record of God's covenant faithfulness—the bedrock for conducting theological interpretation—with the cross serving as the ultimate example of that faithfulness. Also critical to conducting theological exegesis, Boyd writes, is an acknowledgment of *sensus plenior*, with the cross serving as the key to a text's ultimate

revelatory meaning. He thus holds that "whatever a passage might have meant to its original audience, we should be able to directly or indirectly discern in it the same cruciform character of God that was revealed on the cross…"[18]

Borrowing from Richard Hays, Boyd says it requires a conversion of the imagination to discern the *sensus plenior* of violent portraits of God in the Old Testament through the lens of the crucified Christ. We must also, contra much of the secular application of the historical-critical method, read the Bible as a united narrative about Christ, not merely as a collection of books. By seeing Christ crucified as the central revelatory act around which the entire Bible revolves, we are able to rightly understand it, reject sin, and to grow in faith and Christ-like character. Furthermore, we can do so while upholding the inspiration and authority of the God-breathed texts of violence, while also renouncing their surface depictions based on the authority and lens of Christ crucified.

Thus concludes Volume I. By this point, Boyd has laid down a very plausible thesis that essentially runs thus: Christ crucified for sinners is the supreme and unqualified revelation of God's true character; prior revelations are authoritative, but to a lesser degree, and consist in elements of God's true character mixed with obscured portraits of God discolored by man's sinful nature; all interpretations of the Bible and God's being must be filtered through Christ crucified for his enemies as the final interpretive authority; and as such, the violent portrayals of Yahweh in the Old Testament cannot depict God as he truly is, for this would conflict with the supreme revelation of Christ crucified. While some of the particulars suggested by Boyd suffer from various weaknesses—several of which have been discussed in this review—the core of the thesis remains essentially historically-based and exegetically sound.

[18] Ibid., 534-535.

III. "THE CRUCIFORM THESIS" (VOLUME 2)

I mentioned at the outset that this review would spend less time on Volume II insofar as the primary argumentation for Boyd's thesis occurs in Volume I. The lengthier Volume II consists mostly of Boyd's theological exposition—assuming the validity of the Cruciform Hermeneutic—of how various depictions of Yahweh's violence in the Old Testament point to Christ. The introduction to the second volume begins with a metaphorical illustration involving Boyd witnessing his beloved wife of many years attacking a homeless man, totally out of her normal character. He returns to this metaphor multiple times throughout Volume II to illustrate the point that if we see depictions of God that do not evidently look like Jesus, then we need to examine them more deeply to find the true meaning within those depictions.

Chapters 13 and 14 are a broad preface of how to understand the portrayals of Yahweh's violence in the Old Testament. If God is supremely revealed in his stooping to the cross, then stooping to accommodate finite humans must somehow be intrinsic to the being of God. Furthermore, this accommodation ultimately brings us (relationally, not ontologically) into the loving fellowship of the Trinity itself. Boyd writes that paradoxically, "the more a scriptural accommodation *conceals* God's true nature on its surface, the more profoundly it *reveals* God's true nature in its depths."[19] Such a conclusion could possibly be deduced from a number of specific examples, but stating it as a blanket truth is a rather aggressive proposition that Boyd does not definitively prove.

Using Aquinas's Aristotelianism as his example, Boyd explores and critiques classical theism's conception of God's being. Rather than reasoning from philosophy what we think God must be like, Boyd argues we must start with Christ crucified as the authoritative and perfect revelation of God. After additional discussion regarding Luther and the

[19] Ibid., 651.

literary masking of God's being within the text of the Bible, Boyd then draws (with heavy qualification) on Rene Girard's insights that Jesus, as the perfect and sinless man, was the ultimate scapegoat, and his sacrificial death thereby exposes and disarms the forces of evil and all the violence they entail.

God is the heavenly missionary, argues Boyd, who assumes an appearance that resembles other Ancient Near Eastern warrior gods to accommodate the sinful hearts of his people until the coming of Christ. The peoples' violent portrayals of Yahweh, often so similar to the pagan gods of the surrounding nations, "reflect the culturally conditioned mindset of their authors more than they reflect authentic spiritual insights into the true character and will of God."[20]

Boyd says the ability to see Christ in Scripture goes beyond study alone; it also depends on the heart (Jn 5:39-42). If the words of Jesus are not clear, it is because the listener is unable to hear (Jn 8:43). In other words, God's appearance is conditioned by the heart of the observer (2 Sam 22:26-27; Ps 18:25-26). Sometimes, God withholds knowledge that his people are unable to bear (John 16:12; Mk 4:33-34). Like Yahweh hiding Moses in the cleft of the rock as his glory passed by, so also God accommodates to our level of ability to discern spiritual truths. Nevertheless, God's true character breaks through even obscured portraits, including the eschatological hope of *shalom* (Mic 4:3; cf. Isa 2:4; Ps 46:9-10; cf. Hos 2:18), and the deficiencies of the world's ways of war (Ps 146:3-5; Hos 10:13-14; Isa 31:1). The rest of these chapters constitute detailed discussion of other alleged accommodations of God to Ancient Near Eastern culture, as well as comparisons of Yahweh to the pagan gods.

Chapters 15–20 are an extensive, book-length discussion of the mechanics of God's wrath, which Boyd refers to as "Divine Aikido." The Japanese martial art *aikido* (合気道) does not initiate force against an

[20] Ibid., 703-704.

enemy; instead, it turns the enemy's own force back on him, not only to neutralize the violence, but also to show the attacker the destructive evil within his heart. The wrath of God is dreadful and fierce, Boyd acknowledges, but it consists not in God directly crushing his enemies, but rather withdrawing his protective presence and allowing them to crush themselves under the weight of their own evil, or to be crushed by the cosmic forces of darkness which are only restrained by God's hand. The purpose of all God's judgments (except for final judgment), Boyd says, is redemptive in intent. The *aikido* analogy is certainly not perfect, but Boyd also does not treat it as such.

Of course, Boyd's theology of judgment has implications for how we understand the atonement, and Boyd here argues for the Christus Victor view over and against the penal substitution view. The former is probably a more evident fit with Boyd's understanding of Divine Aikido, and while Boyd himself seems to imply that penal substitution cannot be squared with the Cruciform Hermeneutic, a plausible response could be made that even if we understand God's judgment as Divine Aikido, that doesn't necessarily preclude Christ standing in the place of sinners as having a penal dimension. As N. T. Wright has persuasively argued in *The Day the Revolution Began*, God condemned Sin in the flesh of Christ (Rom 8:3); this is not the same thing as saying God punished Christ instead of punishing sinners, but it is nevertheless a penal act.[21] In any case, a thorough study of atonement theory is certainly relevant to the Cruciform Hermeneutic, but outside the scope of *CWG*.

Boyd also briefly discusses the theory of Christocentric ultimate reconciliation (or universal redemption), and explains why he instead sides with the annihilationist (or conditional mortality) view of final judgment. While the Cruciform Hermeneutic could clearly fit with the ultimate reconciliation view, and potentially with the annihilationist view (as Boyd holds), one could also argue that the Cruciform Hermeneutic is

[21] See N. T. Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began: Reconsidering the Meaning of Jesus' Crucifixion* (New York: HarperOne, 2017).

compatible with the eternal conscious torment view, so long as that torment is understood as God giving over the unredeemed to cosmic chaos and/or the misery of their own sin rather than directly afflicting them. A thorough analysis of the doctrine of final eschatalogical judgment is also outside *CWG*'s scope, though Boyd presents a plausible (yet relatively short) argument for why he takes the annihilationist position. In fact, one of the key deficiencies of the book is that Boyd does not explore this specific (and most important) judgment in greater detail. For example, however one understands final judgment, how does Boyd reckon with those New Testament texts which seem to show God acting coercively (cf. Mt 8:11-12, 13:41-42; Jn 15:6; Rev 20:15)? The academic theological community would be well-served by Boyd exploring his understanding of God's eschatalogical wrath in greater depth, particularly in dialogue with leading scholars from the annihilationist and ultimate reconciliation camps.

Also in these chapters, as he has elsewhere, Boyd delves into the sovereignty of God and the free agency of man, including a discussion of what God does versus what God allows. Again, Boyd seems to argue that a Reformed or Augustinian view of God's sovereignty is incompatible with the Cruciform Hermeneutic, but the ethical tension of the theodicy problem that he purports to resolve by emphasizing man's free will is not actually solved at all; if God is sovereign, and makes a man knowing that he will sin and not be ultimately redeemed, then God is in some sense still the ultimate metaphysical linchpin of that person's damnation (however 'damnation' is understood). In this respect, Boyd's own thesis on divine sovereignty and free will also pairs well with his open theism, but that likewise does not solve the theodicy problem: even if one accepts a partly-open future as it pertains to God and time, because Boyd (as most open theists) affirms that God is sovereign, he still needs to contend with the fact that an omnipotent God set off a chain of events knowing that at least some humans would not be redeemed, or at least plausibly may not be redeemed. Holding to ultimate reconciliation would resolve this problem,

but Boyd is an annihilationist, hence his own take on the matter suffers from just as many apparent problems as the Reformed view. Despite Boyd's protest to the contrary, squaring the Cruciform Hermeneutic with a Reformed understanding of divine sovereignty is entirely plausible, though it requires heavy nuance and undoubtedly has implications for how we view other subjects such as atonement and final judgment.

It is important to remember that Volume II consists of Boyd's specific application of how he understands the Cruciform Hermeneutic developed in Volume I. While the second volume contains tremendous and well-researched insights, it is nevertheless very possible to embrace the principles of the Cruciform Hermeneutic without adopting Boyd's specific interpretations. One could adhere to the central tenets of the Cruciform Hermeneutic and also believe in some form of eternal conscious torment at final judgment, or some type of Reformed understanding of divine sovereignty, or a variety of the penal substitutionary view of atonement. If one accepts the Cruciform Hermeneutic, they will likely find that their doctrine on these (and other) topics at the very least require reconsideration as to the specifics, but not necessarily their wholesale abandonment. The reader would do well to study Boyd's work and make their own judgments regarding how it may apply (or not apply) to other elements of their theology.

Chapters 21-24 discuss how Boyd applies the Cruciform Hermeneutic to spiritual warfare, ranging from the creation motifs of Yahweh bringing order out of chaos, through the Old Testament portrayals of Yahweh doing battle against the pagan gods, on into the life and ministry and Christ, and ultimately culminating in the eschaton. Those who have read Walter Wink's *Powers* trilogy will encounter a lot of familiar themes in these pages. Boyd presents a strong case for understanding the biblical narrative as reflecting the fundamental, overarching spiritual battle between God and the forces of evil, while also demonstrating why such a view is not Manichaeism. He covers many of the major topics one would expect to be raised concerning the Old Testament narratives of God's

violence, shows how we can understand them against the backdrop of spiritual warfare, and explains his take on how they point to Jesus. Among other things, this includes the Great Flood, the conquest narratives, Job, imprecatory Psalms, Korah's rebellion, the Exodus plagues, the drowning of the Egyptian army, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Chapter 25 is a discussion of positive intra-biblical references to Old Testament heroes who were known for inflicting divinely-empowered violence, such as Elijah destroying the prophets of Baal, Elisha summoning bears on his detractors, and Samson's various adventures. Boyd ultimately attributes this to the concept of semi-autonomous divine power in Ancient Near Eastern thought: the idea that a god's power could be imbued into objects or people without the god itself directly controlling every use of that power. As a primary example, Boyd discusses the power which apparently dwelt physically within the Ark of the Covenant. The chapter is filled with valuable insight, though it does seem odd that it was made the last chapter of the book.

IV. POSTSCRIPT AND CONCLUSION

The postscript is a concise and well-written recapitulation of Boyd's argument. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah is revealed as the slaughtered Lamb who conquers his enemies by dying for them (Rev 5:5-6, 19:11-13). The Lamb's sword is the word which proceeds from his mouth, and he conquers not by destroying flesh and blood (Eph 6:12), but by speaking truth that sets the captives free (Rev 19:15, 21; Jn 8:32). The lens of the crucified Christ reveals that God triumphs over evil and rules the world with cruciform love (Rev 5:5-6).

The breathing of God, through which he speaks to us in the Scriptures, is dialectical rather than unilateral, and the stooping of God on the cross reveals the love which is intrinsic to his nature. The crucifixion also supremely reveals the ugliness of sin and the judgment which Christ took upon himself. Because the cross is both God acting towards man and

allowing himself to be acted upon by man, the cross is the consummate example of dialectic revelation, and the 'sub-Christlike' portraits of God in the Old Testament therefore display both the beauty of Christ and the ugliness of human sin. Just as the supreme revelation of God is found by looking beyond the surface appearance of a crucified malefactor, so also we must peer deeply into the entirety of Scripture through this lens, and this is only truly possible when we grab hold of the lesson that God is completely and supremely revealed in Christ crucified. To do anything less is to exchange the clear and perfect revelation of God in Christ for an obscure, clouded revelation which has been made obsolete by the advent.

The cross is the supreme accommodation of God to reach sinful men, and contrary to any preconceived philosophical ideas of what we think God must be like, the cross shows us exactly what God is like. If a previous portrayal of God conflicts with this perfect revelation, it must be judged an accommodation to God's people at an earlier point in redemptive history.

The judgment of God consists not in violent affliction at the Lord's hand, but in the withdrawal of God's protecting and life-sustaining presence, wherein sinners are left to suffer the consequences of their evil and/or the destructive influence of the forces of darkness. God always triumphs over evil in this manner, and at the cross he turned the tables on Satan to cause the kingdom of darkness to seal its own demise. Spiritual warfare undergirds the entire biblical story. God's intent for judgment, furthermore, is redemptive rather than vindictive, and the final annihilation of the wicked is ultimately a merciful act.

Lastly, the Ancient Near Eastern principle of semi-autonomous divine power means that at times, God's people may have been able to use his divine power improperly and without his ethical consent; God is not directly causal when sinners use this power in ungodly ways.

Considering the whole scope of the biblical narrative and the unqualified supremacy of the revelation of God's character in the person

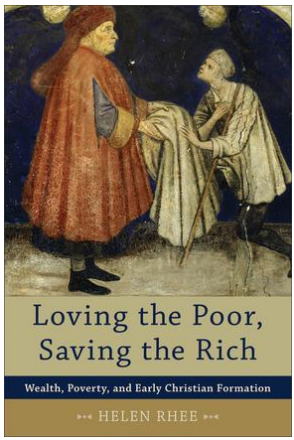
and work of Christ crucified, Boyd argues that we can and must see in that revelation "the permanent crucifixion of the warrior god."[22]

CWG is thoroughly-researched, deeply rooted in historic hermeneutics, and firmly oriented towards the edification of the Church. While there are certainly some weak or unnecessary points throughout the book, that is to be expected of any work of such length and depth. Boyd's overall thesis is strong, historically-based, and steeped in biblical theology. No one could honestly dismiss its core conclusions without serious, ecumenically-informed study and consideration.

[22] Ibid., 1261.

BOOK REVIEWS

Helen Rhee. ***Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich: Wealth, Poverty, and Early Christian Formation.*** **Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012. Pp. xx + 279. ISBN 978-0801048241. Paperback $30.00.**



In her recent study *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich*, Helen Rhee addresses the attitudes of early Christians toward "wealth/the wealthy and poverty/the poor" in their Greco-Roman and Jewish religious, socioeconomic, and cultural contexts, and she argues that the development and manifestation of these attitudes was intimately tied to Christian identity formation (p. xiii). Focusing on the second and third centuries, up through the "Constantinian revolution" of the early fourth century, she embarks on a work of social and theological history. She draws from an extensive bibliography of primary and secondary sources, drawing heavily from Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, and Cyprian of Carthage, as well as Eusebius's *Church History*, the *Didache*, the *Didascalia*, and the *Apostolic Tradition*.

In the first chapter, Rhee presents the Greco-Roman and Jewish socioeconomic, cultural, and theological contexts with respect to attitudes toward wealth and poverty. She observes the differences between the socioeconomic contexts of Greco-Roman society and that of contemporary, developed nations. Especially important for this study is the sociopolitical stratification and the importance of honor and social status – as well as a reciprocal, symbiotic relationship – in Roman imperial patronage. Drawing primarily from the Hebrew Bible, she describes the

Jewish theological attitudes toward wealth and poverty in sharp contrast to Greco-Roman values: it is here we find references to the "wicked rich" and the "pious poor." It is from this fusion of and tension between Greco-Roman and Jewish attitudes toward wealth and poverty that early Christians developed their own cultural and theological positions on the matter.

In Chapter 2, she relates the issues of wealth and poverty to early Christian eschatology. She highlights how early Christian apocalyptic imagery regularly reiterated the *topos* of the eschatological "great reversal" of fortunes for the wicked rich and the pious poor. At the same time, however, as the ranks of Christians increasingly swelled with members of the elite class, rhetoric against the wicked rich was replaced with language that spiritualized and relativized wealth (with respect to its uses) and exhorted the rich to use their wealth to care for the poor in their midst. Thus the rich were able to safeguard their salvation through "redemptive almsgiving" in a symbiotic relationship with the poor. In return, the poor would intercede on their behalf in a form of Christianized patronage.

In the third chapter, the author demonstrates the continuation of the spiritualization of wealth and poverty and the attendant theme of redemptive almsgiving in relation to Christian soteriology. Drawing largely from Clement of Alexandria and Origen, she argues that wealth was viewed as essentially neutral but that its proper use was seen as critical for salvation. The poor, who were expected to intercede for their rich benefactors, were considered instrumental in the salvation of the rich. Citing Cyprian of Carthage, she highlights the use of redemptive almsgiving as an antidote to postbaptismal sin for the wealthy, including the sin of apostasy, as well as a means of reconciling the rich for the purpose of collecting alms to provide for the poor.

In Chapter 4, Rhee situates wealth and poverty in relationship to Christian *koinonia* (fellowship/communion) specifically by focusing on the tangible expressions of charity in community. These manifestations of mercy and justice took multiple forms: the common fund, the *agapē* meal,

gifts of food (often made possible through fasting), and hospitality which included "entertaining missionaries and strangers, burying the dead, caring for confessors, ransoming captives, and caring for the sick" (p. xix). She highlights in particular the prominent role of women in performing these acts of mercy which, because they were "obligatory and binding by virtue of the very Christian understanding of the Great Commandment," also constituted acts of justice (p. 135).

In Chapter 5, the author delves into the institutionalization of charity that occurred alongside the centralization of clerical and episcopal authority during the third century. This development, she argues, reflected the Christianization of patronage as charity fell under clerical administration and clerical salaries came under episcopal control. In this form of Christianized patronage, the bishops and clergy appropriated the status of patrons with the recipients of charity as their clients, who in turn offered up intercession for their benefactors. It was during this time that the church also evolved into an economic institution as it acquired and managed properties and engaged in other various economic activities.

In Chapter 6, the author focuses explicitly on the concepts of wealth and poverty with respect to Christian identity. Here, she discusses the early Christians' disapproval of business and commercial activities, as such dealings were perceived to be driven primarily by greed and distracted from Christian responsibilities. Nevertheless, she provides evidence that instructions to avoid acquiring wealth were likely disregarded by those who were able to be socially mobile. The "Constantinian revolution" saw the emergence of Christian ascetics as another group of "the poor," whose poverty "was modeled after the classical, but Christianized, ideal of self-sufficiency (simplicity) and generosity" (p. 189). She emphasizes that "Common use of resources and properties as God's intent of creation did not mean renunciation of private properties, practice of communism, or erasure of socioeconomic distinctions, but meant generous almsgiving and sharing of one's God-

given possessions with those in need, primarily fellow Christians (though not limited to them)" (p. 188).

In Chapter 7, the author concludes her study by evaluating the ways in which our understanding of early Christian attitudes toward wealth and poverty might offer insight as to how we ought to approach these issues today. She compares the socioeconomic framework of early Christians with contemporary free-market economics and argues that (wealthy) Christians need to acknowledge their own materialism and consumerism and adopt a lifestyle characterized by simplicity and generous giving. She highlights Catholic Social Teaching and the Pentecostal "prosperity gospel" of the Global South as examples of how "free-market economics" can be "redeemed" (p. 209).

This book is excellently researched and is a valuable study of the economic and ideological contexts in which early Christianity developed its identity alongside its own attitudes and responses to wealth and poverty. There are, however, several weaknesses in her analysis in Chapter 7, which seem to derive from a general lack of understanding of free-market capitalism and the nature of government. She acknowledges the fact that "free-market capitalism" is responsible for wealth-creation and lifting much of the world out of poverty, but argues that "this relative and fluid sense of sufficiency, necessities, and material enjoyment blurs and softens what used to be thought of as avarice and materialism" (p. 195). She suggests that even acts such as "working multiple jobs to own a home" or "moving to a 'better' or 'safer' neighborhood in suburbia for kids' schools and education" are possibly symptomatic of a hidden preoccupation with wealth and a "distrust in God's provision for the future" (p. 196). A few pages later, she lauds the prosperity gospel in the Global South for its role in motivating the poor to make personal and financial choices that have the potential to transform them from "the pious poor" into "the pious rich" (p. 219).

It is unclear why she believes those she has identified as "the rich" are guilty of avarice while "the poor" are justified in seeking to become rich,

or why "the rich" should trust God to provide for them apart from their own economic decisions while "the poor" should practice financial planning and capitalize on the opportunities available to them. It is puzzling that she only expresses an adequate understanding of free-market principles when discussing the means by which the poor are finding entry to the market in the Global South, such as forming community networks which provide apprenticeships, encourage entrepreneurship, and utilize voluntary giving to provide for the needs of those within the community (p. 217).

Rhee accurately contends that the Christian exercise of generosity requires "creativity, planning, and a thoughtful strategy for giving of our material possession" (p. 201). She also recognizes the importance of working toward "long-term, structural, and institutional changes and policies for the betterment of the poor and the underprivileged" (p. 201). It should follow, then, that our approach to providing relief for the poor ought to reflect the development of modern economic science and our improved understanding of the mechanisms of free-market economics. Unfortunately, the means by which the author suggests these goals be realized are deeply misguided, as they are characterized largely by an expansion of government welfare programs.

While she states in her introduction to Chapter 7 that she "will not engage in various theories or analyses of free-market economics and global economy or theories of ethics," as it is not her area of expertise, she fails to recognize her own implicit assumptions that (1) our economy is actually primarily a free-market economy, (2) the problems she identifies in our economy are due to free-market principles, and (3) the government can solve these problems better than the free market. The primary problem she identifies with what she believes to be "free-market capitalism" is that "it does not address or respond to the basic needs of those who lack the 'initial endowments' to begin with," that is, those whose poverty precludes them from participation in the market (p. 206). She fails to recognize that the ills she observes are due not to free-market

principles, but to government intervention (regulation and cronyism), and that the means by which government provides services is through the form of theft known as taxation. It is government regulation that bars entry to the market for the poor, and the only way to provide them access is by limiting the role of government.

Minimum wage laws, for example, mean that only those who possess skills that are worth more than the minimum wage will be able to find employment. An employer who would be willing to pay someone what one's labor is worth is not legally allowed to do so if its value is less than the minimum wage. The entrepreneurial poor who have goods and services for which others would happily pay them are handicapped by regulations and fees, such as occupational licensing, that they cannot afford. Government education and child labor laws prevent children from helping to support their families and learning trades through apprenticeships. Instead they are institutionalized until adulthood, which they enter having acquired no marketable skills, no work ethic, and no sense of dignity. Subsidies, price-fixing, and food regulations keep perfectly good, affordable food from the mouths of the poor while the government dictates that it be thrown in the trash. Mandated minimum coverage and coverage for pre-existing conditions dramatically increase the cost of health insurance, while government regulations of medical practice and collusion with the pharmaceutical industry keep healthcare itself unaffordable.

Rhee is correct in stating, "It is part of Christian responsibility to discern, support, engage in, and advocate the kinds of domestic and international policies that could make a positive difference in the lives of billions of people" (p. 208). However, it is absolutely incorrect to argue that it is a Christian responsibility to support government programs. To place such trust in the government is a prime example of the "distrust in God's provision" she associated with acquisitiveness, and is itself a type of idolatry no less than the love of money. It too reveals greed and envy:

the desire to take from others to acquire for oneself by means of government and its threats of violence.

Despite the critiques of the final chapter, this book is an excellent resource for those interested in learning about early Christian interpretations of wealth and poverty and their relationship to Christian identity. It is an important and needed reminder for affluent Christians of their responsibility to care for the poor, and Rhee's broad conclusions about Christian responsibility are appropriate. Her analyses are, more often than not, measured and nuanced, and she displays a refreshing degree of appreciation for free-market capitalism, if not always accurately defined, that is all too uncommon in academia's contemporary political climate.

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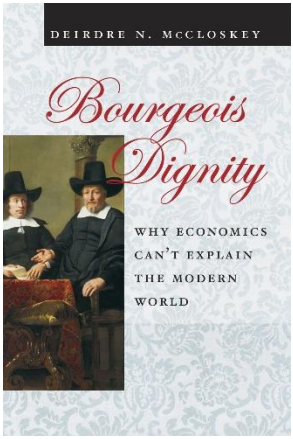
Deirdre McCloskey. *Bourgeois Dignity: Why Economics Can't Explain the Modern World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010. Pp. xvi + 571. ISBN 978-0226556741. Paperback $22.50.



Deirdre McCloskey is on a mission to prove to the world this proposition: "Markets and innovation, which are ancient but recently have grown dignified and free, are consistent with an ethical life" (p. 40). Making the overall argument in favor of this idea evidently requires several volumes, which the author calls the "Bourgeois Era." *Bourgeois Dignity* is the second volume in the series. It builds on foundations laid in *Bourgeois Virtues: Ethics for an Age of Commerce* (2006), in which McCloskey argues that bourgeois life "is, and was, and could be, and should be" ethical, not simply an unseemly quest for material gain. A third volume, *Bourgeois Equality: How Ideas, Not Capital or Institutions, Enriched the World*, appeared in 2016.

The primary argument of *Bourgeois Dignity*, as its subtitle indicates, is that the various materialist explanations historians and economists offer for the Industrial Revolution and accompanying enrichment of the world's population since 1700 all fail. After one disposes of all the materialist hypotheses, the only explanations left rely on intangibles not easily measured, such as a change in thinking about the dignity of commercial activity. Recognizing that this approach quickly becomes irritating—"one tires of being told what did *not* happen" (p. 36)—McCloskey cites several examples from various disciplines in which this rejection-of-alternatives method has led to discovery of important knowledge.

McCloskey begins by impressing upon the reader the sheer magnitude of the "Great Fact": the sixteen-fold rise in material standards

of living enjoyed by the average person today as compared to one living in almost any period of world history before the year 1800. This emphasis is important to the analysis that comes later in the book, for a change of this magnitude sets up a very high bar over which any causal hypothesis must leap in order to be accepted. It's difficult to overstate the importance of this point; even I, a professional historian who has studied the period in question for decades, didn't fully grasp the meaning of this huge disparity in living standards until reviewing the data in this book's early chapters. Moreover, the sixteen-fold improvement understates the real rise in prosperity because our statistical measurements do not fully capture the increase in the quality of the goods we use. When these improvements are taken into account, McCloskey estimates, the real purchasing power of Americans has risen somewhere between forty and one-hundred ninety times since 1800.

Once this high bar has been established, McCloskey methodically devotes most of the book's remaining pages to disposing of each materialist hypothesis that attempts to explain the Industrial Revolution and, by extension, the Great Fact. Savings and capital accumulation didn't change significantly from previous eras, and there is no empirical evidence of the "original accumulation" posited by thinkers like Karl Marx. The accumulation of human capital has in fact become important in recent decades, but was not so in the early stages of the Industrial Revolution. Transportation, geography, and natural resources all have an insufficiently large impact to explain the Great Fact. Imperialism did not actually enrich the European countries that engaged in it; for example, economic growth in Britain jumped significantly *after* it divested itself of its empire in the mid-twentieth century. Foreign trade in general, and the slave trade in particular, by any empirical measure accounted for a very small percentage of economic prosperity. (Obviously, certain Europeans derived great benefit from the slave trade and other exploitations, but McCloskey shows that these could not have had any significant general effect on European living standards.)

Eugenic theories, such as the idea that personality traits leading to economic success cascaded downwards through the English population via the merchant classes' disproportionate reproduction in the early modern period, founder on multiple grounds, such as the high mortality rate in urban areas for the downwardly mobile and the prevalence of adoption (as opposed to biological reproduction) among the bourgeoisie. Good institutions and incentives, a favorite explanation of Chicago-school economists, influence behavior within the context of a given set of social values, but they are not transformative, nor do they explain how those social values themselves change. At any rate, some other societies outside Europe had good institutions with respect for private property long before northwestern Europe did, but they did not industrialize. Likewise, the "science-and-technology" explanation fails to account for other societies' superior scientific achievements in the pre-modern period.

If none of these materialistic explanations can explain the Great Fact, McCloskey concludes, we are left with looking to changes in the way people thought about commercial activity. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Netherlands and Britain gradually dignified commerce in rhetoric at the same time they set commercial actors at relative liberty in law. When this unique combination interacted with the ideas of the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment, northwestern Europe developed a culture of innovation, the best explanation for the Great Fact. McCloskey argues that this "Bourgeois Revaluation" gave commercial expression not only to prudence, but "also to the six other principal virtues of temperance, justice, courage, love, faith, and hope" (p. 393). Because this adoption of bourgeois values has helped the poor most of all over the past two centuries, modern attacks on the bourgeoisie by both left and right threaten to harm the poor by undermining the culture that has provided them with prosperity undreamed of by their ancestors.

A great strength of this book is that McCloskey shows command—"from the inside," as it were—of the methodologies employed in the various materialistic hypotheses while also providing a humanistic

critique of their shortcomings "from the outside." In numerous places the reader encounters (with adequate warning) a shift from logical, common-sense argumentation appealing to the general reader to more technical, mathematical argumentation suited to specialists in the social sciences. In fact, a major theme of *Bourgeois Dignity*, implicit throughout and explicitly stated once or twice, is the need for more interdisciplinary awareness. Scholars in the humanities operate largely unaware of the significant findings, often decades old, that their colleagues in the social sciences have securely established, and the reverse is also true. For example, English professors still peddle the long-debunked theory that labor's "surplus value" provided the capital base for innovation, and economists ignore literary scholars' discovery that bourgeois values spread through the medium of the novel in the eighteenth century. McCloskey is certainly not the first to point to the problem of academic silos in the various disciplines, but *Bourgeois Dignity* is one of the most effective works in recent years to illustrate the practical impact of the insularity.

I am sympathetic to McCloskey's thesis, which I think is argued very well both rhetorically and in terms of its analysis of data. Perhaps, though, I am biased in favor of it due to my own background in the humanistic tradition. Others have criticized it on various grounds. An example is the lengthy exchange in the October 2010 issue of *Cato Unbound*, in which three other scholars favoring materialistic explanations push back against the "Bourgeois Revaluation." In my opinion, McCloskey anticipates and effectively answers these objections; readers can judge for themselves. But clearly, for a full understanding of this thesis, readers would need to take into account all three volumes of the "Bourgeois Era" series published to this point.

The stakes in this debate are huge. If McCloskey is correct, the growing hostility to bourgeois values on display in recent years at all levels of society threatens the material prosperity on which modern society depends for its social harmony. A devaluation of the bourgeoisie's dignity or liberty, leading in turn to a decrease in material welfare for the

poor, could produce civil unrest and other extremely negative outcomes. It is critical that the intellectuals get this one right. Those of us who understand the power of ideas know who must win this argument.

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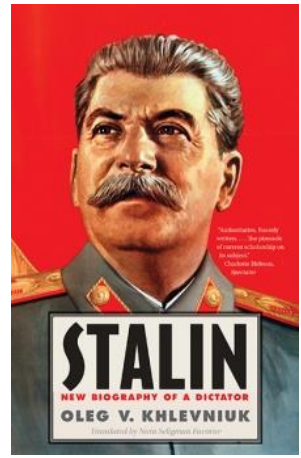
Oleg Khlevniuk. Translated by Nora Seligman Favorov. *Stalin: New Biography of a Dictator*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015. Pp. xvi + 392. ISBN: 978-0-300-16388-9. Hardback $24.99.



Eastern Orthodox theologian David Bentley Hart wrote the following in his 2009 book *Atheist Delusions:*

> We live now in the wake of the most monstrously violent century in human history, during which the secular order (on both the political right and the political left), freed from the authority of religion, showed itself willing to kill on an unprecedented scale and the with an ease of conscience worse than merely depraved. If ever an age deserved to be thought an age of darkness, it is surely ours. One might almost be tempted to conclude that secular government is the one form of government that has shown itself too violent, capricious, and unprincipled to be trusted.[1]

How, then, can anyone today begin to come to grips with this terrifying reality? What would be the quickest way for busy Americans and others to get some kind of exposure to this nightmare called the twentieth century?

Perhaps by reading a lucid account of recent socialist experiments, like Richard Pipes' history of communism[2]—or better, *Stalin: New Biography of a Dictator.*

Given its publisher (Yale) and the sheer number of conflicting biographies about Joseph Stalin, I was initially worried that this release might prove to be little more than an exercise in cloistered academic

[1] David Bentley Hart, *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and Its Fashionable Enemies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 105-6.

[2] Richard Pipes, *Communism: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2003).

research—technical discussions, assuming lots of prior knowledge, correcting obscure scholars, etc. Fortunately, this proved not to be the case. Thanks to both the author and translator, *Stalin* is, despite its painstaking primary-source research, generally easy to read for those with little knowledge of Stalin or the Soviet Union. The work follows a loose chronological order of eight chapters with seven short interludes recounting the last few days of Stalin's life, which are equally interspersed throughout the main content. This unique format transports readers into a mesmerizing journey that stair-steps through Stalin's life—from birth to death—while constantly revisiting the tension surrounding his final agonizing hours.

The first chapter ("Before the Revolution") briefly recounts some of the earliest years of Soso's (Joseph's) life. He was born successfully (after two previous miscarriages by his mother Ekaterina) into a humble Georgian family in 1878. The difficulties of his upbringing are not entirely clear. But both parents did physically abuse him, and his father drank heavily and eventually abandoned the family (pp. 12-13). Despite these conditions—and a permanent disability with his left arm—Ioseb and his mother worked hard and hoped for the best.

Against life's odds, Stalin entered a Christian high school (Gori Theological School) on track to become an Orthodox Priest. "He earned a grade of 'excellent' for behavior, as well as for Sacred History, Orthodox Catechism, Liturgical Exegesis and Ecclesiastical Typikon, Russian and Church Slavonic, Georgian, geography, penmanship, and liturgical chant" (p. 15). He graduated in 1884 and soon enrolled in Tiflis Theological Seminary with a partial stipend to offset expenses. But stresses in moving to the big city (Georgia's capital), the legalist environment of the seminary, and boredom in the classroom led Stalin searching for something more hands-on and relevant. The book-raids (secular literature was forbidden on campus) and other power-plays by the seminary administration created considerable resentment by the student body, and by early 1897, Stalin was taking part in an underground book club, lost interest in class,

and saw himself as a budding political revolutionary. Above all, he was consumed with the all-encompassing narrative of Marxism, and he saw that he had an important part to play in its realization (p. 18).

The administration decided to expel Stalin before graduating—but gave him a certificate of completion anyway. Now free of oppression from the seminary, he combated the oppression of the Russian Empire. From around 1899 to 1902, Stalin indulged in radical, political revolutionary activity—something he proved to be good at. "He had just the right balance of decisiveness and caution, obsession and cynicism, to emerge unscathed through the revolution's countless dangers" (p. 22). But all this "success" would come at tremendous costs to him and to others.

After being arrested for revolutionary activity in 1901, he was sent into exile to northern Siberia in 1903, but escaped a year later. Through several more years of hustle-and-bustle rebellion, he married Yaketerina in 1906 and began working with Lenin. Less than two years later, his wife died of illness. He was arrested again in 1910 and released a year later. Back on the saddle with more determination than ever, "He engaged in underground work in Russia, assisted in the publication of Bolshevik newspapers, wrote articles, and strategized with Bolshevik representatives in the State Duma. He also became one of Lenin's closest associates" (p. 28). But he was once again caught, and in 1913 sent into Siberian exile.

This time, he didn't escape, and wasn't released until about four years later. The conditions were hellish. Sick, malnourished, and freezing, Stalin nearly died. He struggled to obtain basic resources and negotiate a release, but he was stuck in a dirty house in a town of less than 80 people, about a hundred miles north of the Artic Arctic Circle, [and/where he was] forced to fish for white salmon. The thirty-five year-old managed, however, to move in with a family of orphans and sleep with a fourteen year-old girl, causing a fistfight between him and his guard (p. 30). Overtime, the local police (for various reasons) came to favor Stalin, and he began to recover health and life. But his intellectual curiosity still waned: "And what is

there to do," he wrote Lenin, "when there is no or almost no serious books?" (p. 32). The North Pole was no place for a philosopher.

The Revolution of 1917 meant the end of Stalin's exile, the end of the monarchy, and the beginning of a new chapter in Russia's history. Political parties rushed to control seats of the newly established parliament, but soon enough the Bolsheviks created their own "Provisional Government," in which Stalin and Lenin took part. These competing gangs forged a civil war that plagued the country from 1918-1920. A staggering eight million perished.

> Statistics cannot capture the pervasive misery, the numbing of human feelings, the destruction of any sense of right and wrong. Savage murders and mass terror became common place. The epidemic of savagery inevitably engulfed the Bolsheviks themselves. The Civil War shaped the new state and largely determined its trajectory. (p. 54)

These tumultuous years determined Stalin's trajectory as well. In 1919, two seeds were planted that sprouted into darkness: he married the teenage Nadezhda Alliluyeva (who would later commit suicide, affecting Stalin deeply) and was elected to the Politburo in 1919, "the body that remained at the center of power in Soviet Russia and the USSR for the next seventy years" (p. 54). The virtuous philosopher finally became a lawless bureaucrat.

His first task was to obtain grain for the starving troops. But, given the impossibility of controlling an economy without using violence, "This economic mission quickly turned into a military one" (p. 54). Stalin knew nothing about governmental administration, war, economics, diplomacy, or even politics. All he knew about was the two tools he picked up from that Pharisaic seminary: *force and fear*.

As economic controls failed, he didn't seek counsel and education as one might expect a responsible leader to do. Instead, he openly mocked the "specialists," professionals, and other educated, trained know-nothings (p. 55). But even that wasn't enough to vindicate his authority:

> Stalin responded to the threat of defeat with a maneuver that would later become his political signature: a hunt for 'counterrrevolutionary plots.'…A case was thrown together in a matter of days, culminating in execution and an announcement in the local newspaper. (p. 56)

Interestingly, when Stalin *did* achieve military or economic success (usually at random), he took full responsibility for it. This warped, "can't-be-wrong" mentality was reinforced by the socialist hierarchy of power and authority that requires it, and eventually a dictator of unstoppable destruction emerged.

The civil war ended, but it left millions to die in the famine of 1921-22. Over the next several years, Stalin consolidated power in the Politburo through factionalism, political intrigues, and fabricated charges. This section of the biography is a fast-paced narrative reminiscent of Speer's memoirs about Hitler's rise to power.[3] Stalin sought to realize Marx's dream of abolishing private property through a system of land collectivization. This meant that land was confiscated and the peasantry became slaves.

> As Stalin's opponents had warned, these measures yielded immediate but unsustainable results. The confiscations took away peasants' economic incentive and led to a drop in production. Each harvest was worse than the one before, leading the grain collectors to resort to increasingly ruthless methods…[In his new model, the] Kulaks [business owners] and their families were to be exiled to remote areas of the USSR, arrested, placed in camps, or shot….[he believed that] a moneyless form of socialism based on the exchange of goods was right around the corner. (pp. 111-12)

This process required a massive amount of resources and labor just to enforce—and it also incentivized violence. "The plundering of

[3] See Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997).

'dekulakized' property and the raping of women were standard. Churches were closed and clergy members arrested" (p. 113). Having their property taken away and beginning to starve, a wave of rural revolts occurred from 1926-27. Over three million peasants revolted by 1930, many fighting with stakes (being otherwise unarmed) to prevent arrests. But with a monopoly of power firmly in place, there was no hope.

> The soviet village, ravaged by collectivization, was seriously degraded. Agricultural production plummeted, and the livestock sector was hit hard. Between 1928 and 1933, the number of horses dropped from 32 million to 17 million, heads of cattle fell from 60 million to 33 million and pigs from 22 million to 10 million. (p. 116)

From 1932-33, around seven million people died (and millions more disabled/malnourished) in "The Great Famine." There was no chapter or verse of Marx (whose portrait hung beside Lenin in Stalin's office) that would overcome the primeval desire to eat. Eventually, millions risked their lives by committing a heinous crime: consuming food that one produced instead of handing it over to the state.

> All food supplies were taken away from the starving peasants—not only grain, but also vegetables, meat, and dairy products. Teams of marauders, made up of local officials and activists from the cities, hunted down hidden supplies—so-called *yamas* (holes in the ground), where peasants, in accordance with age-old tradition, kept grain as a sort of insurance against famine. Hungry peasants were tortured to reveal these *yamas* and other food stores, their families' only safeguard against death. They were beaten, forced out into sub-freezing temperatures without clothing, arrested, or exiled to Siberia…Refugees were forced to return to their villages, doomed to slowly perish, or be arrested. By mid-1933, 2.5 million people were in labor camps, prisons, or exile. Many of them fared better than those who starved to death 'in freedom.'...Secret OGPU and party summaries (*svodkas*), especially during the months of 1933, are filled with accounts of widespread cannibalism. Mothers murdered their

> children, and deranged activists robbed and tormented the population (p. 118-119).

Nadezhda had enough of this socialist utopia and ended her life in 1932. Countless friends and family members wrote to Stalin for help. Some of his own officials wrote letters describing these unprecedented horrors. But in such an atheistic, hierarchical regime, the state was essentially divine, so there was no higher source of truth, law, or authority by which to abide by. In fact, during these desperate times, the General Secretary of the government happily announced the *success* of collectivization: "the vast masses of the poor…have attained material security…It is an achievement such as has never been known in the world before, such as no other state in the world has yet made" (p. 120).

Faced with total collapse, Stalin nevertheless had to bend. In the next two years he introduced economic and industrial reforms that allowed peasants to farm their own small plot of land and allowed cash to enter the marketplace once again. These simple concessions were enough to save millions of lives from further starvation. But it would be a mistake to think that Stalin's mind had changed.

New concerns loomed over the dysfunctional Soviet Union. Hitler started taking over Europe, Japan later invaded China, and war seemed inevitable. Stalin became more and more paranoid. He began a series of internal purges, torturing and killing many of his own officials. Eventually this purge expanded beyond the confines of the Politburo and into the ranks of ordinary citizens.

> Over the roughly year-and-a-half duration of the Great Terror approximately 1,500 "enemies" were killed every day…Scholars have debated Stalin's motives for years. The horrific nature of his deeds has led some to think he might have been insane…[Transcripts of speeches] are filled with references to conspiracies and omnipresent enemies. (p. 151)

> He not only ordered the arrest and execution of hundreds of thousands of people, but he also took a strong interest in the details….He personally participated in interrogations and issued orders to apply torture. (p. 159)

What could the people do? "Write a letter to Congress"? It seemed better than nothing:

> In January 1937 alone, 13,000 complaints were filed with the procuracy, and in February-March 1938 the number reached 120,000….What was Stalin's reaction to the suffering of his own fellow citizens? The historical record gives no clear answer to this question. But there is no evidence that he felt the slightest remorse or pity. (p. 161)

Khlevniuk then recounts the various geopolitical moves of Stalin in WWII, the Korean War, his meeting with Mao, and other key events of his administration.

There is so much more fascinating information and subtle angles of Stalin's personal life that it seems horribly unfair to end this review now, but we must.

There is perhaps no better way to peer through a window into the past than to read a well-written biography. With the shocking resurgence of Marxism and socialism in contemporary culture (and its galvanizing claims that "no previous government got it right—*but we will this time*"), shameless ignorance about the most bloody century in the history of the world, and a still-modern society that promises a utopia through centralized coercion, Khlevniuk's *Stalin* is not a volume to casually pass over.[4] It has my highest recommendation. Buy ten and give them away to anyone who might read them. Like pouring through *The Brothers*

[4] His final words are noteworthy: "How great is the danger that a blend of historical ignorance, bitterness, and social discontent will provide fertile ground for pro-Stalinist lies and distortions to take root? Could it really be that Russia in the twenty-first century is in danger of repeating the mistakes of the twentieth?" (p. 330).

Karamazov or Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* for the first time, you will not finish this work the same person.

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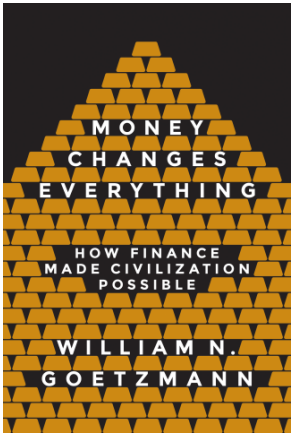
William Goetzmann. *Money Changes Everything: How Finance Made Civilization Possible.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016. Pp. x + 584. ISBN 978-0691143781. Hardback $35.



"We make civilization happen." These were the words of a former boss at an investment firm where I worked, and something I will never forget. They were not said with pride or arrogance, but a genuine belief that our work of finding profitable investments and allocating capital made the advances of human civilization a reality. For those that are skeptical of this claim, William N. Goetzmann's book *Money Changes Everything: How Finance Made Civilization Possible* offers a compelling case.

The book is largely a historical account of the various financial innovations since the earliest records, stretching back well over five-thousand years ago to the near present modern times. However, Goetzmann clearly states at the outset that it is not meant to be a systematic textbook to document every financial innovation throughout history. Instead, the purpose of the book is much more exciting and beneficial: to argue that "financial technology allowed for more complex political institutions, enhances social mobility, and greater economic growth—in short, all the major indicators of complex society we call civilization" (p. 14).

The book is divided into four major parts, each covering a large swath of history or civilization. In each section Goetzmann notes how a particular financial innovation led to or allowed a building block of civilization. Part I starts with some of the earliest written records of counting used to track commodities in storehouses and brings the reader through time to Roman finance, noting that tools of finance allowed for the growth and sustenance of one of the greatest empires on record. It is

also striking that the complex tools of finance we still use today were discovered long ago, including financial contracts, equity and debt instruments, compound interest, and corporations. There truly is nothing new under the sun.

Part II examines the financial legacy of China, tracing the emergence of money and how China developed its own unique financial system intertwined with the state. Part III focuses on Europe, transporting the reader to the crusades, early Venice, and the exploration and discovery of the New World. The coverage of both the South Sea and Mississippi bubble is highly entertaining. Part IV discusses the emergence of global markets and the tensions surrounding Marx, Lenin, the world wars, and Keynes.

Although the book is not a short read at six-hundred pages, it feels breezy given such a large passage of time is covered and how the reader is quickly transported from one place to another. Currently a professor of finance at Yale, Goetzmann readily admits that his choice of events and civilizations are biased according to his travels, as well as his participation in archeology and filmmaking. Some will undoubtedly argue that key events were left out. However, the reader benefits from Goetzmann's rich storytelling and vivid imagery, which provides a sense of place and culture to give readers the full context and significance of each new financial innovation.

The strength of Goetzmann's argument is his insistence that the story of finance is a story of technology: a way of doing things. He is also on sound footing in arguing the power of finance is the ability to move economic value forward and backward through time (think of a mortgage contract or retirement account). He states that "civilizations demand sophisticated tools for managing the economics of time and risk" (p. 2).

Perhaps this argument is not very controversial nor insightful. Yet I believe the parallels between financial technology and other pivotal technological advances really are profound. One parallel is how technological advances have the power to literally change the course of

history. Consider firearms, steam engines, penicillin, or the internet, to name just a handful of examples. These major advances also have a way of upsetting the prevailing order. As Goetzmann notes, "While finance can solve great problems it can also threaten the status quo" (p. 7). It has the power to reallocate wealth, power, and cause social disruption.

We easily recognize this throughout history with regard to technological advances in all other fields. From the protests of the Luddites, the explosion of the internet and freedom of speech, to the striking of taxi cab drivers in response to Uber—technology upsets the status quo and undermines the prevailing power structure. However, it seems that people typically do not think of advances in finance the same way they think of other technological advances. Finance seems like it belongs in a separate category that is not like other technologies. Why?

Goetzmann appears to identify one reason, but misses another. One reason people view finance differently than other technologies is that it is more abstract. It requires thinking in terms of intertemporal choices, abstract values, and future (uncertain) cash flows. Pieces of paper such as currency or contracts represent value, and increasingly these things are all digital. Goetzmann's book seeks to dispel this notion. He emphasizes that finance is personal and concrete, not abstract and theoretical. It's about people and how they use their money, time, resources, and energy.

But people also view money and finance as something much different than the latest technological invention, something more dangerous. Goetzmann understands this to some extent as he observes, "Because finance is a potentially destabilizing force, society has often sought to place bounds on it. These constraints are sometimes couched in moral terms" (p. 8). One example given is Britain's "Bubble Act," which restricted the creation of businesses under the pretense of stopping immoral speculation.

Because finance involves money and people's life savings, and also because money evokes such strong feelings and responses, especially greed, many believe finance should receive special consideration when it

comes to laws, restrictions, and protections—most notably from the state. Goetzmann follows this path himself remarking that behind these restrictions is the "implicit and reasonable supposition that rules are needed to prevent the financially adept from exploiting those less sophisticated" (p. 8).

The book ends on a weaker note as Goetzmann clearly believes the present and future of financial technology lies in government programs and organizations. He praises the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as global institutions that have served us well in the past and will hopefully continue to in the future (although he does at least mention economist William Easterly's criticism of the World Bank). Despite paying tribute to Ayn Rand and her influence in a few of the last pages, he concludes that her thought suffers from many of the same deficiencies as the writings of people like Marx and Lenin—full of inspiring rhetoric but short on practical, *political* solutions (emphasis mine). He complains that, "Rand portrays politics as the enemy of principle" (p. 452).

Goetzmann believes financial markets and government coexist and complement each other and that financial tools need to keep up as the world moves toward a "collective global civilization" (p. 521). He showcases government pension systems and sovereign wealth funds aimed at providing for its citizens, and it appears that he believes that is how future financial problems will be dealt with. However, he is due some credit for noting some of the social and cultural problems inherent to these systems, as well as their lack of feasibility.

These government schemes are not financial innovations or novel ways of doing things. They are merely age-old plans of robbing Peter to pay Paul, or (as is increasingly the case) robbing future generations to pay current ones. Indeed, this book itself illustrates how governments throughout history have sought to bend the financial system to their priorities, from the Roman empire, to the Chinese dynasties, to world leaders using it to pay for atrocious world wars.

Starting with such a powerful and accurate thesis that finance is technology, I would challenge Goetzmann into following his own logic and the arc of history to imagine how future generations will continue to innovate in the financial realm to solve unique and complex challenges. He even admits that what financial solutions we have created are "generally life improving" (p. 584) and we have made progress dealing with problems they may have created in the process.

As a very recently published book it would have been refreshing to see profiled some of the more cutting-edge tools that are currently being tested and experimented with as a glimpse of what is to come. New models and forms of credit such as peer-to-peer lending are disrupting traditional banks. New technological platforms are giving everyday workers and savers easy access to financial products and asset classes that were previously only for the wealthy, such as managed futures funds, direct ownership of rental real estate, and some of the lowest cost global portfolios imaginable.

Goetzmann also claims that finance is neither intrinsically good or evil, yet he shows that finance has been the basis of, or the impetus for, the development of writing, mathematics, and law. Although many believe that finance is always and ever a corrupting force, as Christian we must recognize that, as one of God's creations, finance is inherently good.[1]

In conclusion, *Money Changes Everything* is a *tour de force* and a captivating read that zips through history, jumping from one civilization and time period to the next, demonstrating the role of finance in the story of human progress. As a professor, most of Goetzmann's work is scholarly, but he specifically states that he intended this book for a broader audience: anyone who is curious about "the origins of a toolkit that we all share and a mindset that seems at times difficult and perhaps unnatural"(p. 14). Readers will likely be convinced that finance is indeed

[1] Cf. Samuel Gregg, *For God and Profit: How Banking and Finance Can Serve the Common Good* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2015), reviewed by Jamin Hübner in *Faith and Economics* 68 (2016):142-146.

another technology or way of doing things. Therefore, it should be embraced, not only for its magnificent power but also as a domain to be continually reformed and improved through entrepreneurship and creativity, just as it has for thousands of years.

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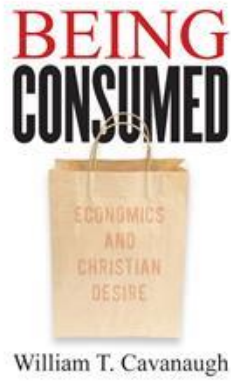
William T. Cavanaugh. *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. Pp. xii + 103. ISBN 978-0802845610. Paperback $14.



Being Consumed is a clearly-written, intelligent little provocation by American Catholic theologian William Cavanaugh (DePaul). Cavanaugh's specialty is theological interventions in politics, culture, and history; and this book is no exception. In it he offers a moral critique of consumerism, globalization, and the assumptions behind them, as well as giving theologically-based answers to the problems he describes. His critique is not of the free market as such, but of free market theory unaccompanied by an ethics based on a theological account of human nature.

He begins in chapter 1 by contesting the freedom of the "free market" as advocated by Friedman and Hayek. The free-market thinkers are chiefly concerned only with "negative" freedom—the absence of restraints on exchange, but fail to consider the "end" or proper goal of human desires. The free market is supposedly the mechanism that best harmonizes scarcity, price, and desire so that any transaction can satisfy both buyer and seller. But free-market thinkers "are agnostic" (p. 6) on what makes desires themselves desirable—what makes them "good." They have no philosophy of human nature to direct their theories.

Cavanaugh turns to Saint Augustine's theological anthropology to argue that, in fact, free-market participants are not free. They are instead like the addict that

> is profoundly unfree and cannot free himself. In order for him to regain freedom of choice, he cannot be left alone. He can only be free by being liberated from his false desires and being moved to desire rightly. (p. 9)

In sum, "the absence of external force is not sufficient to determine the freedom of any particular exchange. In order to judge whether or not an exchange is free, one must know whether or not the will is moved toward a good end" (p. 13). So free-marketeers grant freedom only in an external sense, while ignoring the internal chains.

Another question Cavanaugh considers is whether, in an advertising-saturated culture, people are choosing what they really want. According to Friedman (as summarized by Cavanaugh), you distinguish between real and artificial desire based on "what people in fact choose" (p. 7). "The problem with the 'free-market' view is that it assumes that the abolition of objective goods provides the conditions for the individual will to function more or less autonomously" (p. 16). The problem with this assumption is that advertisers are not just informing choices; they are much more shaping the desires, or even the very self, of the consumer. Advertisers are brilliant storytellers: they craft enticing narratives, portray characters, and attract the senses with music and imagery—all to forge "emotional bonds" between audience and product.

The second chapter discusses a central paradox of the free market as considered without a transcendent or theological dimension: on the one hand, people are more attached to things insofar as free market theory is functionally materialistic; on the other hand, people are paradoxically detached from things as such, insofar as the immanentized free-market *reduces everything to a commodity*. The chapter boils down to a theological critique of consumer culture, but I don't think Cavanaugh is clear enough on the free-market connection. He is saying that free-market theory implies a low view of material things, because it views consumers as autonomous choosers of anything (they can afford), regardless of their created ends, community, or other standards of fittingness. In other words, its commodification of material things results from its reduced view of human nature and human freedom. It expects people to use and discard objects rather than treasure them. The theory, in other words, is descriptively right—it predicts the consumerism we in fact have.

But, according to Cavanaugh, it is prescriptively wrong. We should not relate to matter this way, neglecting its personal, divinely created and sustained aspects. A sign of our neglect is that consumerism has to fill the vacuum of transcendence by investing "[t]hings and brands…with mythologies, with spiritual aspirations; things come to represent freedom, status, love" (p. 48). Such commodification and consumerism devalues human creativity and can reinforce—though it certainly doesn't cause—the objectification of people and their bodies. Thus it also detaches people from each other—virtualizing community on social media while reducing virtue to sentiment. "The virtual becomes a substitute for concrete political solidarity, or to put it another way, a fundamentally different act—consumption—is substituted for political action" (p. 51, quoting Vincent Miller).

In reading this chapter, by the way, I was troubled by a possible implied critique of my own mainstream Protestant evangelicalism. Does it tend to collude with consumerism by marketing denominations, local churches, programs, personalities, and Christianity itself as just one more "choice" of consumption? Perhaps so.

More cheeringly, Cavanaugh's theological perspective plays a constructive role in the discussion at the end of the chapter. For him, it is not enough simply to criticize consumerism in theory, not enough even to abstain in practice. We must transform our entire relationship to matter through a practice *opposed* to consumerism: namely, the liturgy of the Lord's Supper. By participating in this communal meal, "we are absorbed into a larger body. The small individual self is de-centered and put in the context of a much wider community of participation with others in the divine life" (p. 55). Our autonomous selves, with their auto-hedonistic purchasing habits, become the (body) parts of the Church whose head is Christ. This is not passive mysticism, although it is a mystery. "In the Eucharist, Christ is gift, giver, and recipient; we are simultaneously fed and become food for others" (p. 56). The Eucharist is the event that empowers us to *be consumed* instead of consuming, to serve instead of

being served, to love actively instead of merely showing sentiment. On this reading, the Eucharist is nothing less than a new basis for both freedom and an economy of self-sacrificial giving: participants remember, and are spurred to imitate, the ultimate self-sacrifice.

The next chapter deals with globalization and multi-culturalism, and here again the connection with the previous chapter is less clear than it should be. Put simply, our relation to things via consumption carries over to our relation to culture as a whole. We think we can sample cultures and traditions, like foods from a global buffet, apart from their fittingness to place and time. So what if I have Chinese food in Kansas on Christmas Eve? I'll try the Mexican place next door tomorrow. As previously, Cavanaugh is keen to point out the paradoxes that ensue with globalization. On the one hand, the free market sees the world—regardless of ethnic, traditional, or spatial boundaries—as one giant fund of material and human resources to be churned into profits. Multi-nationals, sometimes colluding with corrupt local officials, plunder third-world countries for cheap labor, preferring profits to human flourishing. (Even corporate philanthropy in these countries is "consumed" as advertising credit.) Cavanaugh gives the usual examples of brand-name products made in sweatshops, and one could mention the more recently revealed conditions at the plants of Chinese Apple supplier Foxconn.[1]

In this discussion, Cavanaugh follows common usage in equivocating "labor" and "work," and then distinguishing "creative" from repetitive, mind-numbing work. It would be useful, in my opinion, to distinguish labor and work, as Hannah Arendt does in *The Human Condition*.[2] "Labor" is activity aimed mostly at perpetuating the cycle of life—feeding, clothing, sheltering—with little "human" (rational or imaginative) input and little duration. On the other hand, "work" is activity that leaves

[1] "Apple under fire again for working conditions at Chinese factories." *The Guardian* (December 19, 2014). https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/dec/19/apple-under-fire-again-for-working-conditions-at-chinese-factories (accessed 7/25/2017).

[2] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), ch. 11.

something behind, like a statue, painting, or poem—something stamped with human ingenuity and left to beautify the world. The Industrial Age shifts much of human activity from work to labor, while mass production (e.g., famous photographs on posters at Wal-Mart) transfers "works" into the cycle of consumption.

In any case, Cavanaugh's point here is that globalization damages and expends the "local." But, on the other hand, it intensifies, multiplies—by commodifying—the local. Hence the phenomenon of finding cuisine from all over the world in a single "restaurant row" in the average suburb. Of course one can do better at the mall. There one can find similar cheap imitations of ethnic cuisine in the same tacky shops but then, after getting sick from the high-fructose corn syrup, you can shop for ethnically-inspired clothes made by under-compensated workers from all over the world.

The end result of this "universalization and fragmentation" (p. 61) is the devaluing of the very "local" flavors, textures, designs, and sounds that are now encountered everywhere, but in a commodified, bastardized Western form. Cuisine over-sweetened for the American palate and "foreign" movie soundtracks with ethnic melodies over a hip-hop beat, are just two examples.

In our commodified, one-world shop we tourist-consumers are ever haunted by the exports of our free market profiteering. We are at once everywhere and nowhere.

To this dismal situation Cavanaugh opposes the reality of Christ as the "concrete universal" and the Catholic Church as the "unification of the many through attachment to the local Eucharistic community" (p. 85). I found this section the least helpful of Cavanaugh's theological interventions, nor did I find the Hegelian jargon he borrows from Von Balthasar especially illuminating. Approaching the subject through the language of Scripture would probably have been clearer. Still, Cavanaugh draws some important practical conclusions from his systematics. "Without God [as revealed particularly *and* universally in Christ], there is

nothing really unique; the temptations will always be to absorb the individual into the universal, the person into an all-encompassing nature" (p. 82). Moreover, "If detachment from particular places and communities has contributed to the depersonalization of the global economy, then a proper aesthetic of the particular would place the human person back at the center of economic relations, as Pope John Paul II has repeatedly insisted" (p. 86). And in his next and last chapter, on "Scarcity and Abundance," he turns to a famous passage on Christian ethics from the Gospel of John ("I was hungry and you gave me food" [25:35]) to argue that God himself underlies and should motivate our concern for the Two-Thirds World that supports our consumption.

At this point I would like to offer some contextualization and evaluation. *Being Consumed* is not quite so *sui generis* as some readers might think. It bears the mark of many of the theological interventions emanating from the "Radical Orthodoxy" school within British theology, which stems from John Milbank's epochal *Theology and Social Theory*. (For example, Cavanaugh's comment, "Globalization as I have been describing it often takes the form of a parody of true catholicity," echoes Milbank's point that modern social theory is a heretical form of theology.) *Being Consumed* bears comparison with D. Stephen Long's *Divine Economy* and Phillip Goodchild's *The Theology of Money*, which are more-or-less within the RO camp. I am also reminded of Long's dialogue with economist Nancy Ruth Fox in *Calculated Futures*.[3]

Some readers of *Being Consumed* will wonder, as Fox does in *Calculated Futures*, what theology has to do with economics. Economics is often seen as an amoral, math-based science that prescribes the fairest system of exchange between buyer and seller, while taking their specific desires for

[3] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 2nd ed. (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006); D. Stephen Long, *Divine Economy: Theology and the Market* (London: Routledge, 2000); Phillip Goodchild, *Theology of Money* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); D. Stephen Long and Nancy Ruth Fox, *Calculated Futures: Theology, Ethics and Economics* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007).

products and profits, along with their ultimate goals, as given. Conceived as such, economics suffers from the same mathematical reductionism that plagues the other social sciences; its practitioners claim the same false rigor (one critic has called this attitude "mathism"[4]); and it is similarly over-specialized and isolated from the humanities (which, to be fair, have their own problems). By contrast, Radical Orthodoxy seeks to return theology to its traditional position as Queen *of the sciences*, therefore in some sense "ruling" economics.

One needn't buy into every aspect of this movement to agree with Cavanaugh's criticisms of free-market theory. His point, put simply, is that economics needs an ethics to be complete; and such an ethics, in turn, needs a theological metaphysics to be complete. A system of exchange, to avoid the massive damage of globalization and consumerism, needs a view of the good life—of the ultimate good for human beings—to know what kinds of desires, choices, and community one should advocate.

This is the point to bring a specifically Christian libertarian economics into the discussion. It seems to me that the libertarian has a fuller set of values guiding his theory than the typical free-marketer. The libertarian, after all, calls (at the very least) for a return to the scope of the federal government as designed by the Founders. On the other hand, the libertarian might fear moral legislation, or some threat to economic freedom, as if Cavanaugh were suggesting people vet their transactions with the local priest.

Cavanaugh is not "doing economics," and readers with specialist training in economics will find much oversimplification. What he is doing is offering a theological ethics *of* economics in response to problems that have issued from a certain economic system (free-market capitalism), especially when effected on a global scale. For this reason, Christian

[4] Alan Jay Levinovitz, "The New Astrology: By fetishizing mathematical models, economists turned economics into a highly paid pseudoscience." *Aeon* (April 4, 2016). https://aeon.co/essays/how-economists-rode-maths-to-become-our-era-s-astrologers (accessed 7/25/2017).

libertarians ought to sit up and pay attention. What, after all, do we mean by "Christian"? Cavanaugh's theological framework is informed by traditional Catholic social thought, Aquinas, Augustine, and Von Balthasar. (Predictably, as a Protestant I found myself wishing for more biblical input, such as in the writings of Gary North.) Cavanaugh has a keen eye for how doctrine is expressed in ritual, and how ritual feeds back into doctrine. This is important if you think, as I do, that beliefs and practices shape who we are, and therefore the purchasing choices, systems of exchange, and overall cultures we engage in. On this view, Christianity is not a private hobby just for Sundays and holidays, but a world-shaping way of life that streams out of our fingertips into every moment of the week. Cavanaugh has a thickly described, concrete and ramifying "Christianity," which is something I think many Christian libertarians need.

It is in this area of concrete practices that *Being Consumed* provoked me most. How can I oppose consumerism, materialism, globalization, etc.—in my own life? Some of Cavanaugh's suggestions, like supporting sustainable, ethical employment practices, were par-for-the-course. However, he also advocates "turn[ing] our homes into sites of production, not just consumption…[S]imple acts such as making our own bread or our own music can become significant ways to reshape the way we approach the material world" (p. 57). First of all, I appreciate his awareness throughout the book of how liturgy shape shapes worldview. (James K. A. Smith has been writing much on this topic in recent years.[5]) But this recommendation also provoked further self-evaluation. For example, perhaps I should resist buying pre-packaged, creativity-killing toys and games for my kids for the same reason—so that they have to learn to re-imagine and reshape the humble but potent raw material the Creator puts in their way. Cavanaugh has several of these simple, practical suggestions near the end of nearly every chapter. It is, among other things, his balance

[5] See for example, James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016).

of critique and program that makes his slender volume such a rewarding read.

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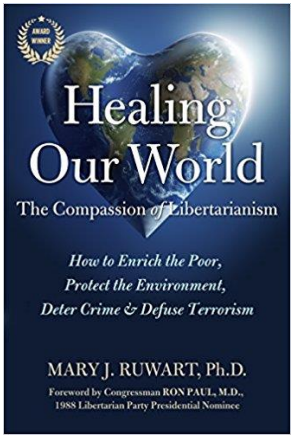
Mary J. Ruwart. *Healing Our World: The Compassion of Libertarianism*. Kalamazoo: Sunstar Press, 2015. Pp. xviii + 453. ISBN 978-0963233677. Paperback $30.



Now in its fourth edition, *Healing Our World* has become a new standard for one-volume introductions to rigorous libertarian thought. With a foreword by Ron Paul, the retired biophysicist and medical researcher Mary Ruwart unfolds, chapter by chapter, the countless harms that inevitably occur when non-aggression (or "the good neighbor principle") is systematically compromised. At the same time, in comparison to similar works, Ruwart takes a different approach than Paul in *The Revolution* (framed by American politics) and Rothbard in *For a New Liberty* (framed primarily by rational discourse). Her underlying thesis is that freedom from aggression is the means to *human flourishing*. As the cover subtitle puts it: "How to Enrich the Poor, Protect the Environment, Deter Crime, and Defuse Terrorism." So the trajectory of the work is not so much a call to liberty or even the presentation of an alternative political perspective. Rather, *Healing Our World* is a roadmap on how to achieve the basic goals that everyone wants—peace, prosperity, and a life of fulfilling human relationships. This course is chartered by an uncompromising application of the principle of non-aggression.

The bigger distinction of the book, however, is its meticulously empirical orientation. Ruwart's background as a research scientist becomes more than apparent—especially in chapters related to her field(s) (e.g., pharmaceuticals). With over a thousand citations and numerous charts and graphs, it was not enough to simply establish the internal coherence of libertarianism and let others put the pieces together. No, virtually every assertion is backed by a real-life case study. She doesn't

say "aggression-through-government has caused most of the war and poverty that we see in the modern world" (p. 378) until this has been thoroughly *demonstrated.* In this way, the book may be a bit exhausting for those who already agree with her perspective, but acutely challenging for those who think libertarianism is more theory than fact. Similarly, those who are tired of the axioms and logical corollaries characteristic of philosophical libertarianism will find where "the rubber meets the road."

In this daunting undertaking, no stone goes unturned. Readers will learn with acuity and practicality how and why aggression is unethical, how it manifests itself and how it can be avoided, how wealth is created (and why it is *created* and not limited), how wage and licensing laws actually destroy jobs and discriminate against lower classes of society (in addition to stifling innovation and lowering product quality), how "consumer protection" and other regulations actually harm (physically and psychologically) consumers, the devastating effects of monopoly proper (government-privileged monopoly), how private property effectively protects the environment (in contrast to public lands), the fraudulent system of fractional reserve banking and the boom-bust cycle it creates, the economic harms of fiat currency, myths about consumer-spending "stimulating the economy," the (short and long-term) educational and psychological harms done through government-mandated schools, "how welfare traps minorities" (p. 176), the kinds of generosities that help or harm, how to deal with aggression through restitution procedures, how centralized bureaucracies increase world-wide pollution, the mechanics and harms of the drug war, the shocking realities of "gun control," how those who live by peace instead of aggression live longer, more enjoyable lives, the numerous harms achieved through government foreign-aid, the growing police state and the ambiguity about who is perpetrating "terror," the madness of war and efficiency and benefits (especially for the poor) of private defense, and many more topics. When one combines all of these matters with dozens of quotations from various scholars, authors, religious figures, economists,

and classic literature, it really becomes apparent that this 450-page *tour de force* is the work of a lifetime.

Thankfully, each chapter ends with a one-page summary of what was covered plus a (humorous) cartoon illustrating these realities in no uncertain terms. Most chapters also include a subsection entitled "The Rich Get Richer…With Our Help!," which highlights how renowned social injustices occur through public complicity and/or complacency. Even more helpful is the prose itself—which is anything but an exercise of cloistered academic sterility. The cadence is well-paced, the chapter and paragraph structure is logically coherent, and few sentences are ever too long to instigate confusion. This balance between the evidential side of things and communicating for a popular audience is a difficult dance few authors can master, but Ruwart generally pulls it off.

The energy behind the book is difficult to overstate. Each paragraph drips with passion. It reminds one of Rose Wilder's fast-paced treatise, *The Discovery of Freedom.* Consequently, readers may find Ruwart's regular use of exclamatory marks off-putting, but that's just her style. Conceptually, the book strongly maintains the sharpness and consistency of the anarcho-capitalist tradition (e.g., taxation is identified as theft literally in the first chapter), but never loses sight of immediate personal experience in day-to-day life. This realistic hopefulness and team-building attitude is particularly refreshing against the backdrop of a world saturated by violence.

> The great wealth that Good Neighbors [those who uphold non-aggression] enjoy is a product of honoring our neighbor's choice. In other words, tolerance and respect for others and their property comes first and the wealth follows. Peaceful relations promote prosperity, not vice versa.
>
> When we can't force people to do our will, we can only persuade them. Successful persuasion requires that we understand others' needs and wants so that we can best make our appeal. When we understand others, we are more likely to feel compassion for their plight, and less likely to

> respond with prejudice. Becoming Good Neighbors won't make us perfect, nor will a nonaggressive world be perfect. However, honoring our neighbor's choice and righting our wrongs moves us closer towards that ideal. The path of aggression takes us in the opposite direction. (p. 376-77)

Incisive psychological observations like these are scattered throughout. This helps identify personal concessions that have to be made before aggression can occur, thus providing indirect insight to the more complicated matters of racism, sexism, and other kinds of prejudice.

> Before we can deceive people, steal from them, or assault them, we must first separate ourselves from them internally. We feel justified in bending them to our will because we consider ourselves wiser, nobler, or stronger. In other words, we feel that we are somehow better than they are; we are different, separate, apart. *Aggression is the physical manifestation of our judgement of others and our internal separation from them…in using aggression as our means, we have destroyed the connectedness (goodwill toward all) that appears to be a necessary precondition of the happiness we seek.* In using aggression as our means, we sabotage our ends. (p. 276)

Thus, as Rothbard maintained, even things like taxation presumes a kind of social conflict like that mentioned above: "the very existence of taxation and the State necessarily sets up a class division between the exploiting rulers and the exploited ruled."[1] Thus, "class warfare" and basic inequalities incarnated in society are more the result of ancient statism than late capitalism.

To cap things off, Ruwart concludes by clarifying what exactly the overarching goals of "Good Neighbors" (i.e., libertarians) are:

[1] Murray Rothbard, *For a New Liberty* (Auburn: Von Mises Institute, 1973, 2006), 30.

> Instead of maintaining *centralization* of power through guns of government, we promoted *decentralization.* Instead of providing services through regulated government monopolies, we keep the marketplace free from aggression, letting small businesses flourish. We reject the idea of forcibly taking our neighbor's hard-earned wealth as taxes for government-run programs. We choose voluntary, private services, which lower costs and improve quality. We do away with subsidies and encourage private ownership of land and animals to stop special interest groups from exploiting the public domain…We stop aggression before it starts and deter crime through restitution instead of punishment. In doing so, we set the stage for healing both the victim and the attacker. (p. 377)

Because it is neither an atheist nor a Christian case for libertarianism, *Healing Our World* has the potential for an even larger reading audience—one that makes appeals to age-old intuitions of human experience. (Who wants to starve? Die in war?) Even so, the connection between Christian ethics and libertarianism is evident enough that it need not even be mentioned; Ruwart's citations of Jesus, biblical texts, and other religious figures and scriptures point in the same direction of her arguments.

Healing Our World: The Compassion of Libertarianism may be the single most persuasive volume that makes a case for libertarianism "from the ground up." It is readable and practical enough for a wide audience, but integrated enough with scholarship and research to function with some degree of sophistication—and even as a reference work for others. Ruwart's own insight into the devastating effects of medical and drug regulations is worth the price of the book alone. It will likely not satisfy the specific sensitivities of an academic audience, but it was never meant to. Given the format and wide variety of subject areas, the book may even serve as a textbook or in a classroom setting.

All in all, Ruwart has provided a tremendous service to those who want to see a better world take shape—and take shape through peace and

not violence, because that is the only way to achieve a better world anyway. Highly recommended.

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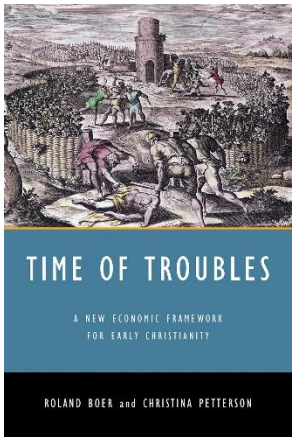
Roland Boer and Christina Petterson. *Time of Troubles: A New Economic Framework for Early Christianity*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017. Pp. xxi + 229. ISBN 978-1506406312. Paperback. $39.00.



Interest in the ancient Roman economy has recently surged amongst New Testament scholars, especially as the topic relates to the Pauline collection for the gentiles (per Rom 15:22-33; 1 Cor 16:1-4). However, what is often not explored in this debate is one's methodological understanding of the ancient Roman economy, and *Time of Troubles* by Boer and Petterson "proposes nothing less than a new model for understanding the economy of the Greco-Roman era, in which Christianity arose" (p. xi). Fundamentally, this book is an attempt to promote a Marxist reading of the ancient economy; it is this methodology to which the authors are "deeply" indebted (p. xv). They not only have mainstream capitalistic readings of the ancient Greco-Roman economy in their sights, but the broader interpretative sphere, which they call "economics imperialism" (p. xvi). To this end, their arguments and methods are set forth with clarity and argued with zeal.

While the majority of the book is largely accessible for seminary students and graduates, it must be said that the most dense and difficult section of the book can be found in the first chapter on economic theory (pp. 1-48). The authors' primary target, as already noted, is neoclassical economic theory and specifically the argumentation of the philosopher Adam Smith (1723-1790; pp. 3-9). The representative statement by Smith that Boer and Petterson find most troubling states, "[there] is…a certain propensity in human nature…the propensity to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another" (p. 3 n. 3). Boer and Petterson note,

"economics imperialism is premised on the three reductions of individualizing, desocializing, and dehistoricizing" (p. 3). That is, the universal human nature is bound up in economic "self-interest" (p. 3). The authors unambiguously contend against such an assumption by saying proponents of "neoclassical economics" "assume that what counts as 'the economy' is autonomous and self-regulating, where individual 'entrepreneurs' engage in trade and commerce, following their natural inclinations in terms of rational self-interest and comparative advantage without any consideration for social determining forces" (p. 6). Hence, Boer and Petterson argue that said proponents often anachronistically import modern assumptions of human nature back into the texts of the ancient world. Thus they conclude

> The reasons for [neoclassical economic theory] inadequacy are many but we emphasize its claims to a form of disciplinary and ideological imperialism, which has become known as economic imperialism. A dual process is involved in such imperialism in which radical reductionism produces a set of basic premises which are then applied to all human activity at all times. In other words, economic imperialism involves a false universal, which simultaneously draws upon the specific, limited conditions of a particular approach and negates those specifics to claim universality. (p. 3)

Instead of economic theory being located with "moral philosophers," the issue has become centered on "applied sciences" (p. 7). Boer and Petterson are keen to avoid any form of imperialism, but one is left wondering if there is anything such as a concept of a 'universal' human experience, and if there is not, then what becomes of history itself? The methodology, laid out in great detail in the opening chapter, ultimately concludes that *Régulation* theory (defined as "the social, institutional, and ideological factors that determine the stabilities and transformations of a system," p. 40, pp. 40-46) is their most preferred lens by which they view the ancient evidence. "Flexibility" within this construct is concerned with ensuring

that such categories remain supple" (p. 45). "Crisis," that is, disruptive patterns to the establishment, is supplied as a "universal." Thus, the "flexibility" (p. 45) offered by Marxism and *Régulation* theory is the most important heuristic device for Boer and Petterson's reconstruction of the ancient economy. For Boer and Petterson, the complexities, crises, and dynamic power shifts of the ancient world demand a sort of elasticity in order to account for the various conceptual agents of the Greco-Roman world. In viewing the ancient evidence in this manner, Boer and Petterson see the clear exploitation of land and bodies (more precisely, slaves) by the ruling class as the principal baseline of the ancient world economy.

Chapters 2 (pp. 49-74) and 3 (pp. 75-101) survey various agricultural issues in the ancient world including the notion of subsistence survival and the use of "space." In this assessment Boer and Petterson pull in vast resources concerning crop production, the use of animals and the issue of "prosperity." They rightly question the economic hegemony of the ancient world, precisely in relation to the flexibility needed for the ancients to survive. For instance, Boer and Petterson note the treatment of animals in terms of necessity where "the techniques of production became more intensive, and human beings and animals began to live collectively in villages" (p. 52). In order to survive, people had to be creative in how they tilled the ground and treated their livestock, illustrating the authors' point about flexibility and the lack of personal resources for the 'peasants' (p. 59).

Finally, they bring up the notion of exploitation and the issue of "constructed space" (p. 75). The debate concerning "city" (*polis*) and "village" (*chōra*) is given specific primacy in Boer and Petterson's arguments. Rome is the principle "parasitic city" (*polis*; p. 81) whereas the remainder of the Roman Empire can be categorized as Rome's "colonized *chōra*" (p. 81). The use of the land in terms of optimal output (specifically grain and goods) by *chōra* for the *polis* reveals the exploitative nature of Rome and the use of the land: whoever controls the soil controls the bodies of slaves and controls the *polis*. Thus, Boer and Petterson note the

integrative nature of exploitation and reliance, where flexibility is necessary due to the crises involved in the empire and amongst the populace. While Marxist language is used throughout, it is still not entirely clear that flexibility is specifically excluded by capitalist or neoclassical theory. However, Boer and Petterson have rightly stressed the exploitative nature of the ancient world with clarity.

Perhaps the most rewarding and disturbing chapter of *Time of Troubles* is chapter 4 (pp. 103-127), which centers on Boer and Petterson's exploration of the ancient "slave-relationship." As they rightly note, "Slavery in the course of the Greco-Roman era became the prime mode of extracting surplus, to the extent that one may speak of a slave economy" (p. 103). In their argumentation, Boer and Petterson seek to undermine any notion of "free labor" (pp. 104-109) in the slave economy, although most advocates of neoclassical economic theory would surely concur with their conclusions, specifically in the sense that slavery was a cornerstone of the ancient economy, but this does not seem to exclude patronage or labor done amongst the community. Given the nature of ancient "gift" giving,[1] one wonders if Boer and Petterson have offered readers the most probable interpretation of the ancient evidence. Additionally, Boer and Petterson conclude that the notion of "private property" is predicated upon the notion of a slave being a "thing" (pp. 114-118), and any such idea is fundamentally "created by the economic reality of slavery" (p. 118). This argument has significant force and deserves more engagement than one can offer in a review, but their argument does reveal the extent authoritarians will go to ensure their own survival at the expense of others: this seems to confirm an additional universal axiom—that powerful people often have their own self-interests in mind. Boer and Petterson's line of argumentation is clarified and expanded in chapter five (pp. 129-151), where the chronology of ancient "regimes," "a constellation of institutional forms in which one form becomes dominant over the

[1] See John M.G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

others" (p. 129) illustrates the dynamics of political and social power, and how empires and emperors controlled the masses through violence and land, and how they viewed the land and the workers of the land.

The final chapter (pp. 153-184) is the incorporated summation of the various economic and theoretical threads, culminating in the exploratory outworking of these various principles in the New Testament. While chapter 4 was the most disturbing in how it laid out the various treatments of slaves, this chapter challenges multiple aspects of various texts of the New Testament. "Everything about Jesus stands against the deeply-held values of the Greco-Roman ruling class, almost uniquely in the literature of the ancient world" (p. 156). However, Boer and Petterson believe the Gospels are "second generation texts" (p. 157), and it is their belief that these texts illustrate a *polis* point of view: that is, the author of the Gospel of John has a "ruling class ideology" in mind when depicting Jesus and his surroundings (p. 159). Even in the Gospel of Mark, "often assumed to be the text closest to the "rural" roots of Jesus and early Christianity" (p. 160) contains a *polis*-based perspective, viewing various laborers from the perspective of the rich, rather than among said exploited class.

How the interpretation of Boer and Petterson works with various liberation or marginal readings of Jesus remains to be seen, especially because of their belief that both John and Mark (and presumably Luke and Matthew as well) held *polis*-level beliefs of the various infirm and diseased people in the Gospels (pp. 160-161). For instance, they note that Mark's depiction of the recipients of healing in the miracle stories "function not so much as echoes of the tough realities of life where disease and hard, repetitive labor reshaped bodies, but as *polis*-based perceptions of the working rural population" (p. 160). In support of this contention, Boer and Petterson assert that popular perception of the *polis* emphasized the "misshapen, ugly, and unlucky" nature of the poor (pp. 160-161), although they are quick to note that Mark does not "offer a ruling class perspective per se" (p. 161).

Additionally, Boer and Petterson's application of the "slave-relation" to the various texts in the New Testament concerning slavery is both interesting and disconcerting, especially since they affirm with others that Paul was himself a slave-owner and a believer that slaves (e.g. Onesimus in Philemon) were “things” (pp. 169-170), perhaps even sexual “things” (p. 171). Fundamentally, the Apostle Paul was inconsistent with regards to slavery, equality and subordination, and he made no attempt at resolving this conundrum (p. 174). Thus, the harsh realities of the ancient world and all of its exploitative mechanics offer us a grim and necessary corrective to overly idealistic methods of interpreting the New Testament, and Boer and Petterson conclude with this lingering and powerful question: “what do we make of these realities?” (p. 188).

First, the strengths of this work are several. The most significant area lies within the uniformity of the writing itself: in a work written by two people (specifically academics), the writing remains streamlined throughout with no shifts in personal style or unusual colloquialisms. The challenge of two people writing a singular work on such a dense and difficult topic is shown to be easily attainable by the well-defined incorporative writing style of Boer and Petterson, even when they note their own disagreements (pp. xxi, 190).

A second major accomplishment of this work is their emphasis on the nature of the ancient world, specifically through their engagement with ancient primary sources. Their surveys of land, agriculture and the treatment of slaves are appropriately in-depth and necessary for any student of the New Testament.

Thirdly, they rightly emphasize the nature of "power" and "exploitation" in the ancient world, and while their reading is not ultimately persuasive in this author's opinion, their emphasis on "flexibility" and "crisis" highlights a need for those of us who adopt neoclassical economic theory to be more precise and coherent in our reading of ancient literature. To this end, this work is a brilliant success.

However, there are some concerns and lingering questions concerning the conclusions and methods within the book. For instance, there is a lack of engagement with modern sources generally considered to be relevant to the ancient economy, particularly the work of Longenecker, Friesen, deSilva, and Downs.[2] In particular, Downs has recently shown that patronage is a large part of the Greco-Roman world.[3] Boer and Petterson are largely dismissive of ancient patronage (pp. 18, 129-130) seeing it as a ruling class option. However, they do not address Paul's relationship with Phoebe in Rom 16:1-2, whom he calls a προστάτις ("patron").[4] If patronage is predicated upon the free exchange of goods or services, regardless of one's social standing, then this element of the social world undermines Boer and Petterson's conceptual framework significantly. Paul's own impoverishment (cf. 2 Cor 6:10)[5] and imprisonment (cf. Phil 1; Col 4:18 if Pauline) would seem to emphasize his own "crisis" model as well, especially with his relationship to Phoebe. Unfortunately, Boer and Petterson never explore the issue of Paul and poverty.

A final criticism stems from a lack of engagement with disjunctive elements of Paul's epistles concerning power and exploitation. To illustrate this, one might consider Paul's contested relationship with slaves and women. Paul's own rhetoric of Onesimus in the Epistle to Philemon does not appear to be consistent with Boer and Petterson's reading of the New Testament, suggesting discontinuity between some of the New

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[2] Cf. Bruce W. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2000); David J. Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles: Paul's Collection for Jerusalem in its Chronological, Cultural, and Cultic Contexts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016); Walter Scheidel and Steven J. Friesen, "The Size of the Economy and the Distribution of Income in the Roman Empire," *Journal of Roman Studies* 99 (2009): 61-91. Scheidel is mentioned several times in *Time of Troubles*, but not Friesen.

[3] Downs, *Collection*, 85-89.

[4] Cf. Elizabeth A. McCabe "A Reexamination of Phoebe as a "Diakonos" and "Prostatis": exposing the Inaccuracies of English Translations." SBL Forum 7.5, 2009 (http://www.sbl-site.org/publications/article.aspx?articleId=830)

[5] ὡς πτωχοὶ πολλοὺς δὲ πλουτίζοντες; see also 2 Cor 8:9.

Testament authors and the wider Greco-Roman world. For instance, Onesimus being called ἐμοῦ τέκνου (v.10, "my very child") and τὰ ἐμὰ σπλάγχνα (v.12, "my own affections") suggests that Onesimus has been moved from the realm of "slave" or "thing" and into the realm of family (v.17: προσλαβοῦ αὐτὸν ὡς ἐμέ, "receive him as me"). This sort of emotional rhetoric does not seem appropriate for a slave, but it makes sense as an ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν ("beloved brother").

Additionally as regarding Paul and women, Paul himself appears to undermine any semblance of marital hierarchy in 1 Cor 7:4, where explicit language concerning sexual ἐξουσιάζει ("authority") is entirely removed from the conjugal equation, where even the husband's body is emptied of authoritarianism. Paul even believes women have sexual needs and desires, for neither party has the freedom to deny the other (v.5: μὴ ἀποστερεῖτε ἀλλήλους).[6] When neither husband nor wife has an ontological basis for subordination, one wonders how consistent Boer and Petterson's interpretation actually is when applied to the New Testament. The lack of any specific subject or scripture indexes in the work is also a minor issue for the reader.

As regards their methodology, the questions that still linger are: is "flexibility" itself a universal reality in the ancient world and today? If so, why should "flexibility" be colonized exclusively under Marxist theory? Is flexibility excluded from capitalist or neoclassic economic theory? Have Boer and Petterson exchanged one universal axiom for another? Are slaves excluded from patronage or gift-relationships?

Despite my criticisms and lingering questions, the strength of this book lies in its survey of the raw data and in its challenge to all New Testament scholars to consider their own assumptions regarding these ancient texts. While the methodology is quite questionable in numerous places and their reading of certain texts is highly unlikely, the provocative

[6] See Cynthia Long Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016) and Ronald Pierce, "1 Corinthians 7: Paul's Neglected Treatise on Gender," *Priscilla Papers* 23:3 (Summer 2009): 8-13.

and clear articulation of their thesis nevertheless renders this book worthy of sustained engagement with those who seek to explore the unattractive realities of the ancient world.

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