

**WORLDVIEWS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE:
THE SUPERIORITY OF A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW**

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BY DR. J. STEPHEN PHILLIPS

BELHAVEN COLLEGE

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Worldviews in Political Studies

Both the teaching of political science and the practice of politics are plagued with philosophical conflicts. Driven by diverse ideologies about God, man, and the nature of society and government, a great struggle ensues in the discipline of political science, mirrored by constant debate over public policy at all levels of government. Historically, political study was mostly theoretical, attempting to answer such questions as what is the best form of government, or practical, offering sage advice for governing officials. The underlying theory was that man had the ability to understand and apply concepts of justice and truth in the political sphere. Generally speaking, the related worldview assumed that there were natural laws that governed men's actions, and that men betrayed them to their peril. Discovering and applying these laws to politics was the central concern of political study. This approach can be seen in the Bible, among the ancient Greeks and Romans, and continuing today in a few traditional political science programs.

However, a great transition in the study of politics and government began early in the twentieth century, following a related shift in worldview. This new worldview saw all of reality as an accident of mindless forces. No longer was there a providential God who provides men direction for life and government. There were no fixed laws or truths. Man was merely a product of environmental influences, rather than a morally and intellectually responsible being. Man was now swept along in an evolutionary process (Darwin), driven by irrational impulses (Freud), dominated by the herd (Durkheim), helpless against the inevitable flow of economic destiny (Marx). How

then would one study man and government? The new approach to political science study assumed that men were products, not thinking, independent actors. Discovering the forces that shaped man and developing the ability to predict outcomes became the popular approach to political science.

Today, this approach claims to be empirical and therefore capable of achieving certainty, surpassing the old “subjective” theoretical study. Since man’s political behavior is itself a product of the environment, the new approach uses a methodology that measures environmental influences on man to discover the factors that govern man’s political behavior. This is the analytical/empirical/behavioral school that dominates political science study today; I have termed this “the new political science.”

The Bible in Political Studies

*It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man.
It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes. Ps. 118:8-9 NASB*

With its emphasis on a providential God, universal truth, abiding laws, and man as created in the image and likeness of God, Christianity promotes a unique worldview in the study of government and politics.¹ The Bible declares that God rules not only heaven, but earth, and that he is constantly concerned with the mundane affairs of men. Perhaps the best illustration of this worldly focus is the fact that God himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, became man, and lived as a man in this world subject to temporal concerns and the political order.² Therefore, God, man, and man's social relations are addressed in great detail in the Bible, commonly known as the Old and

¹ The subsequent section was largely taken from a previous study, “Christian Political Thought and the American Founding,” presented to the Southwestern Political Science Association (Ft. Worth, Tx., March 2001).

² John 1:1-14, Hebrews 2:14-18, Galatians 4:4, 1 Corinthians 2:6-8.

New Testaments (or the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures).

The Bible presents God as the creator of man and of the institutions man requires.³ God is also the sovereign who directs and governs all the affairs of men and nations.⁴ God sets forth his requirements for men in terms of biblical laws and moral principles.⁵ God intervenes in human history to bless obedience to his laws or judge violations of them.⁶ God will one day finally judge all men by these standards.⁷

One of the consistent claims of the Bible is that God alone deserves ultimate allegiance, rather than civil rulers.⁸ God alone claims absolute power; thus all human authority is delegated by God and is subservient to God.⁹ The Bible addresses God as having more than a general sovereignty over civil government. While evidences to this fact are abundant, the example of Jesus Christ, whom the Scriptures declares to be "King of kings and Lord of lords," demonstrates the extent of God's claims over every civil ruler and his actions. The Bible reveals that part of Christ's earthly mission was to extend the claims of God's sovereignty and just civil government to the ends of the earth, setting men free from civil oppression.¹⁰

The Bible also includes distinctive views of man. The Bible presents man as made in the image and likeness of God. Because all men are created in the image and

³ Genesis 1-2, 9:5-6.

⁴ Psalm 94:10, Psalm 33:10; Proverbs 16:9, 33.

⁵ Exodus 20, Matthew 5, 22:37-40.

⁶ Psalm 127:1; Psalm 144:9-15.

⁷ Psalm 97, Isaiah 24:1-5, Revelation 20.

⁸ Deuteronomy 6:13, Daniel 3:18, Acts 4:19-20.

⁹ Job 12:23-25, Isaiah 40:13-17, 22-26, Daniel 4:17, Romans 13:1-4.

¹⁰ Revelation 1:5, 19:16, Matthew 28:18-20, Isaiah 42:1-7, Luke 1:32-33, Luke 3:10-18, 4:18-19 (Isaiah 61:1-2), Luke 19:1-9.

likeness of God, they each have value and dignity; man's political rights flow from these concepts.¹¹ Man's life and liberty are precious in the eyes of God. Therefore, men have a duty to work together to protect life, liberty, and property.¹² Men also are given the task of exercising dominion, under God, over the created order.¹³

The Bible holds that men, however, are also fallen in sin, and, as such, not consistently trustworthy or reliable.¹⁴ Thus any conception of man in relation to government must take this into account. Fallen men are easily corrupted by power, and thus all power must be limited.¹⁵ Man primarily loves himself and his possessions rather than his fellow man or God.¹⁶ Man's problems, at root, are spiritual, and no political policy can reform man's sinful nature. The Bible declares that God alone can change man's evil heart, producing goodness where otherwise evil reigns.¹⁷ Therefore, any utopian concept concerned with achieving a perfect society by political manipulation is flawed. Furthermore, man's selfish tendencies undermine any sort of group solidarity. War and strife flow from man's evil heart.¹⁸ The Bible refers to sinful man's communal actions as often being mere combinations of evil.¹⁹

¹¹ Genesis 9:6, Job 32:13-15, Psalm. 8, 1 Corinthians 11:7, James 3:9.

¹² Amos 5:15.

¹³ Genesis 1:26-31, Psalm 8.

¹⁴ Genesis 3, Jeremiah 17:9, John 2:24-25, Romans 1:31, 3:10-19, 8:7-8.

¹⁵ Deuteronomy 17:14-20, Psalm 33, Psalm 118:8-9.

¹⁶ Matthew 7:19-34, 2 Timothy 3:2-4, 1 John 3:10-15. This is not to say that even men outside of God's grace are incapable of showing compassion toward family and friends; see Matthew 6:9-11 and Luke 6:32-34.

¹⁷ Ecclesiastes 9:3, Jeremiah 17:9, Matthew 12:34-35, 15:19, Romans 3:9-23, 8:5-13, 1 Corinthians 2:14, 1 John 3:1-10.

¹⁸ Romans 1:29-31, Galatians 5:19-21, James 3:13-15, 4:1-4.

¹⁹ Genesis 11:1-10, Psalm 2:1-3.

Man's knowledge is also quite limited, in part due to his state as a creature, and in part due to the fall.²⁰ Hence, man in the political sphere must not presume that he has the knowledge or ability to construct a just political order or a good society without God. The Bible portrays man's limitations and the frustrating realities of life in stark terms. The *realpolitik* of the Bible takes man and life as it is; the Bible warns men against empty dreams about past glories or future utopias;²¹ this life, in a world cursed with sin, will be filled with troubles and trials.²²

In spite of this gloomy political forecast, all is not hopeless for man. The Bible claims that God has instituted just laws and principles by which men *should* live in personal dealings, in the family, in the church, in the state, and in all other spheres of life. The Bible explains that God has written the basic principles of his law on the hearts of all men, and given to men the capacity of conscience to distinguish good and evil (this knowledge, however, does not ensure compliance).²³ He has also revealed his laws in detail in the Scriptures.²⁴ The Bible provides not only for right worship, but also for just dealings of men with men.²⁵ Biblical ethics, as many commentators have noted, provide comprehensive guidelines for man's behavior.²⁶

²⁰ Ecclesiastes 3:11, 7:23, 8:17, 9:1, Psalm 94:11, 33:10-12, 1 Corinthians 13:9, 12.

²¹ Ecclesiastes 5:1-8, 6:9, 7:10, 14-17, Proverbs 17:24.

²² Genesis 3:16-19, Job 14:1.

²³ Romans 1:26-32, 2:14-15, 7:18-21. The law written on the heart is a great advantage when legislation corresponds with God's laws, because men know that breaking these laws is wrong; criminal laws should only punish truly wrong behavior; this is the tradition of Christian law; see Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1983), 171-73, 182-84.

²⁴ Proverbs 8:12-16, Leviticus 18-27, Deuteronomy 21-27. Though biblical law civilly established religion and punished gross violations of that standard in a fashion which would not be welcome in modern states, biblical law otherwise related to civil government deals with common areas of governmental activity.

²⁵ Proverbs 1:1-7.

²⁶ See, for example, Carl F. H. Henry, *Christian Personal Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957).

God's law and moral principles have both general and particular application to civil government. The Western conception of the rule of law presumes that laws must be based in fundamental and universal standards of morality, truth, and justice. The history of political thought indicates that the Bible has been the only reliable source of such universals.²⁷

The Bible declares that God has created the institutions within which man lives. Civil government is only one of these, an institution ordained of God for the good of mankind, primarily to restrain the violence which had full sway before the Flood. It derives its authority to exercise rule over men from God, as clearly stated in Genesis 9:6.²⁸ God grants to civil government the authority to carry out just penalties on criminal acts, in order to protect people from injury; in this regard civil rulers execute God's wrath on evildoers. Civil government also must protect private property from theft and fraud.²⁹ Civil government should have a special concern with protecting the poor and disabled from abuse.³⁰ All practices of civil government, the Bible insists, must be equal, that is, not preferential to wealth, class, or race.³¹ Due process and proportionate punishments are to be the rule in criminal proceedings.³² On a more

²⁷ Berman, *Law and Revolution*, 8-9, 36-40, 44-45, 144-47. See also John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity As Delivered in the Scriptures*, 1695 and William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, with a Life of the Author and Notes by Christian, Chitty, Lee, Hovenden & Ryland, 4 bks. in 2 vols. (New York, 1832; reprint ed. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1908), "Introduction," vol. 1, secs. 42:28 and 54:36.

²⁸ Genesis 6:5-13, 9:5-6; this Scripture passage has been read in this sense almost universally by Protestant commentators; see discussion on in Robert Duncan Culver, *Toward a Biblical View of Civil Government* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 72-75; Culver's work is useful, although it unfortunately denies Christ's claims of sovereignty over the political order.

²⁹ 2 Chronicles 19:6-11, Psalm 101, Proverbs 8, Proverbs 17:15, 24:24-25, Ecclesiastes 8:11, Romans 13:1-7, 1 Timothy 1:8-11.

³⁰ Psalm 82:3-4, Proverbs 31:3-9.

³¹ Leviticus 19:15, Deuteronomy 1:16-17, 16:18-20.

³² Deuteronomy 17:1-13, Exodus 21.

positive note, the Bible teaches that civil government should promote policies which encourage righteous behavior.³³

The consistent claim of the Bible is that because men are not God, civil government cannot require ultimate loyalty or obedience to itself. Also, because men are fallen in sin, all civil government must be severely checked and balanced. Civil government has no authority to enact legislation which contradicts the laws of God.³⁴ A state which either refuses to carry out its God-given duties, or which usurps jurisdictional authority which has not been given to it by God, is acting in an unjust and illegitimate manner. Civil rulers are not to terrorize or oppress their people, but instead are to serve them.³⁵

The Bible requires all men to establish just civil government, elect godly and honest rulers, and see that civil government remains within its authorized limits. Thus the Bible considers the "people" as an important component in the process of constructing and maintaining just civil government.³⁶

³³ Romans 13:3.

³⁴ Hosea 8.

³⁵ Exodus 22:21-24, Deuteronomy 17:15-20, 24:14-15, Micah 2:1-3, Matthew 20:25-28.

³⁶ Amos 5:15, Deuteronomy 17:15, 2 Samuel 23:3-4, Jeremiah 22, Ezekiel 22:29-31, Matthew 22:21, Romans 13:1-6, Titus 3:1, 1 Peter 2:12-17.

A Biblical View of Man, Law, and Government Compared to Traditional Political Study, and Contrasted with the New Political Science

*Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.
Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies. . . .
I understand more than the aged, because I have observed Your precepts. Ps. 119:97-98, 100 NASB*

There has always been a considerable degree of harmony between a traditional approach to the study of politics and government and a biblical perspective. This is why the early Christian fathers could discuss politics in relation to the writings of Aristotle, Plato, and Cicero, for example. The general themes were the same. Christians, however, could offer correctives to the pagan political philosophers in defining justice by the revealed laws of God, calling for the equal treatment of men made in the image and likeness of God, or stressing the fallen nature of man in relation to restraints on government. We see this in such influential works as Augustine's *City of God* (c. 426), or later comprehensive studies, such as Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* (1267-73). Even the Protestant Reformers, such as Luther and Calvin, included similar discussions in their writings on government. Today, the field of political theory (which is becoming something of a lost art), continues to read, discuss, and apply principles covering the great questions about man and politics to the world today.

Also, traditional studies of governmental institutions, law-making, judicial decisions, and international relations continue as a matter of practicality. Whatever one's philosophical presuppositions, men must be trained to deal with politics in a real world inhabited by real men who make reasoned decisions about politics and government. A biblical perspective of God, man, and law offers a superior means of

both evaluating the actions of men and providing guidance for future political decisions.

The new political science, which is a dominate force in political science study today, offers the greatest challenge to a biblical worldview. This is because it is dismissive of man as a thinking, morally responsible being made in the image and likeness of God. It also rejects out of hand any idea of absolutes, whether such be the revealed laws of God or the discernible natural law of which all men are conscious. It does not consider the fallen nature of man in relation to politics or the constraints that are therefore necessary on man to prevent abuse and oppression. The new political science has imprisoned itself within the requirement to amass only the data that lends itself easy analysis, such as voting patterns, race, income, etc. The result is thinking that is so narrow that it is practically useless to address any of the important issues with which politics must really be concerned.

Applying a Biblical Worldview in Teaching Politics and Government

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths. Prov. 3:5-6*

It has been my goal for many years to enhance my ability to understand, articulate, and apply a biblical worldview of politics and government. This quest drove me to extensive readings in politics and government following my undergraduate education, motivated me to work in politics, including running for political office, spurred me on to pursuing graduate degrees in political science, and has inspired my teaching and ongoing research at Belhaven College. I continue broad readings in

several areas of political concerns. Over the last several years, these have included research on natural law, John Locke and his presuppositions and influence, essential components of democracy, Islam and its relation to politics and government, terrorism, and problems preventing political and economic development in Africa. I continue to research and write in several of these areas. In all of these studies I have sought to demonstrate the superiority of a biblical worldview in evaluating problems and providing direction for real improvements.

I have emphasized the centrality of a biblical worldview in my classes as well. All of my political science classes at Belhaven include a substantial biblical component. It is my goal that students be able to understand and articulate the varying approaches to political study, evaluating them from a biblical worldview. Some classes, such as Christian Political Thought, are explicitly focused on studying a Christian perspective of politics and government. It begins with a biblical study, part of which is included above, and includes readings from outstanding Christian thinkers across the centuries addressing the great issues of their day from a biblical perspective.

My class on the Presidency begins with a biblical study on the limits, character, and analysis of kings of Judah and Israel, as well as general admonitions to just rule. We then continue to refer to these throughout the class. The class on Legislative Process begins with a study of biblical law, with an emphasis on equal treatment, due process, proportionate punishment, etc. Again we refer to these biblical standards in the course of the class. My class on Comparative Government begins with a study on biblical principles of government, which then are applied as we evaluate government structures

and political behavior around the world. My Scope and Methods of Political Science Research addresses the large issues of what is the best approach to political science, again beginning with a study establishing the normative assumptions of a biblical perspective. We then consider the presuppositions, methodology, and limits of the new political science, evaluating it by the standards we have established. Other classes proceed in a similar fashion.

I plan to continue to study, write, and articulate a biblical worldview of political study in succeeding years (I read, on average, thirty books and at least fifty journal articles annually). This will include continuing my readings in expanding free market economics, addressing poverty in Africa, and promoting constitutional freedoms around the world, always utilizing a biblical perspective. I plan to present papers at various conferences (usually three each year) on these themes and attempt to get some of these studies published.

As I have written in varied areas, attempting to bring a biblical worldview back into the contemporary political discussion, I have found it useful for my classes to read and discuss these papers. I also continue to evaluate my curriculum for better materials that aid a principled approach to political science study. It is my goal to equip students to become professionals in the fields of politics and government, as well enable them to excel in the academic field of political science study. So they must have many tools, and know how to use them well and wisely.

A Biblical Worldview in Research Applications

I have included below a few excerpts from recent studies that I have done in which I have attempted to be consistent with my stated goals.

Tyranny and Economic Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: Botswana, Ghana, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe

Human Nature and Power

Abuse of power, in both economic and political terms, in Sub-Saharan Africa is, perhaps, the underlying concern of this study.³⁷ The essential problem in Africa may be a misplaced trust in man. This may be the reason for the ongoing ideological divide between Africa and the West. The West has been heavily influenced by Christianity, which has a very realistic view of fallen human nature. The maxim of Lord Acton summarizes this heritage: "Power tends to corruption, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." John Adams, in his *Novanglus*, noted, from Scripture, that "the heart of many is desperately wicked," concluding that men cannot be trusted with unchecked power. And Thomas Jefferson similarly noted: "In questions of power, then, let no more be heard of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution."³⁸

³⁷ Section from "Tyranny and Economic Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: Botswana, Ghana, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe," presented to Southern Political Science Association (New Orleans, 2009).

³⁸ John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton, *Essays on Freedom and Power* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1948), 364, John Adams, *Novanglus, Letters Addressed to the Colony of Massachusetts Bay* (1775), Thomas Jefferson: Draft Kentucky Resolutions (1798).

The writers of the *Federalist Papers* held that government must be based on popular consent in order to be considered legitimate, because "the people are the only legitimate fountain of power."³⁹ But Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison held no illusions as to the essential goodness of man. The *Federalist* essays, indeed, were rather matter of fact about both the depravity of human nature and the resulting failures of popular governments through the course of human history.⁴⁰

The *Federalist* authors used a technical theological term to describe the state of human nature: it had a horrible *propensity* to selfishness, pride, and ambition, all of which were undermining to a stable political order. According to their contemporary, Noah Webster, "propensity" was used in a moral sense, and the propensity, or disposition of man, was generally to evil.⁴¹ The references to this concept in the *Federalist* are nothing less than remarkable. Among other things, the *Federalist* argued that man had a "propensity" to the "dangerous vice" of faction. Mankind had a "propensity" to "fall into mutual animosities." Men were "much more disposed to vex and oppress each other than to co-operate for their common good." Men had a "propensity to condemn" others and justify themselves; they had a "propensity" to strife that resulted in political dissension and disunion. Men had a "propensity" to yield to "sudden and violent passions," being easily "seduced." Men had a "propensity" to

³⁹ Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, Clinton Rossiter, ed. (1788; New York: Mentor Books, 1961), No. 49, 313, No. 37, 227, No. 39, 241.

⁴⁰ *Federalist*, No. 37, 231, No. 51, 322, No. 55, 346.

⁴¹ Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828; San Francisco: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1967), s.v.

protect themselves at the sacrifice of their fellows. Men had a "propensity" to seek to promote themselves at the expense of the public good. Men in office had a "propensity" to take advantage of any opportunity for political corruption. The legislative body had a "propensity" to invade the rights of other branches, as well as to divide into factions rather than uniting to uphold justice.⁴² If this were not bad enough, men were cruel, violent, avaricious, vain, and ungrateful.⁴³

The message of the *Federalist* is clear: the corruption of human nature was not institutional; it was constitutional. Republican government, while just, offered no solution to the essential human condition. The problem was in man:

Are not the former [republics] administered by MEN as well as the latter [monarchies]? Are there not aversions, predilections, rivalships, and desires of unjust acquisitions, that affect nations as well as kings? Are not popular assemblies frequently subject to the impulses of rage, resentment, jealousy, avarice, and of other irregular and violent propensities?⁴⁴

It is by no means surprising to hear Hamilton declare "there is a degree of depravity in mankind which requires a certain degree of circumspection and distrust."⁴⁵

Where do we find these concerns in African ideology or in the literature on Africa?

⁴² *Federalist*, Nos. 10, 40, 45, 63, 66, 72, 73, 81.

⁴³ *Federalist*, No. 57, 352. This parade of horrors reminds of the Apostle Paul's dressing down of mankind in Romans chap. 1 and 3.

⁴⁴ *Federalist*, No. 6, 56.

⁴⁵ *Federalist*, No. 55, 346.

The Morality of Free Trade

A Moral Standard for Trade

“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it.” Gen. 1:28

It might be noted that this study has not approached issues of free and fair trade from a libertarian perspective.⁴⁶ While the libertarian position has some appeal, largely holding to maximized individual freedom restrained only by the Stoic “do no harm” principle, it is too limited to provide a comprehensive normative standard. The author has intentionally drawn on biblical principles to provide these norms. Biblical principles include the negative duty to avoid harm to others as well as oneself, and add positives duties to self, others, and God. As per Locke: “For Men being all the Workmanship of one Omnipotent, and infinitely wise Maker; All the Servants of one Sovereign Master, sent into the World by his order and about his business, they are his Property, whose Workmanship they are, made to last during his, not one another’s Pleasure. . . . Every one as he is *bound to preserve himself*, . . . ought he, as much as he can, *to preserve the rest of Mankind.*”⁴⁷

When God created man, He gave to him a duty to multiply and fill the earth, and to subdue and exercise dominion over it (Genesis 1:28). Throughout the Scriptures, the duty of man to work, progress, and prosper is a constant theme. “Six days shall you labor” (Exodus 20:9). The Scripture commends skill in labor, and promises prosperity

⁴⁶ Excerpt from “Free Trade and Morality,” presented to Hillsdale Free Market Forum (Dearborn, Mi., September 2008).

⁴⁷ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), “Second Treatise,” secs. 5-6.

to the diligent (Proverbs 13:4, 21:5, 22:29, 1 Thess. 4:11). Also, many biblical passages praise increasing efficiency through trade and commerce (Job 42:12, Proverbs 14:4, Proverbs 31, Eccl. 9:10, 19, Luke 19:11-27). Generally speaking, God blesses honest labor and trade with prosperity (Ps. 144, 3 John 2). It is God, not an invisible hand, who makes free markets work.

However, there is also a caveat the Scriptures repeat: while men are busy with their daily labors, they must not neglect love for God and man. Allowing liberty to fulfill these dominion duties, while disallowing license, is always a difficult challenge. While God made men free, men fell in sin, and this creates, to say the least, complications. The free market, rightly understood, is the system that allows men to exercise their God-given duty to progress and prosper. Unfortunately, the market can become a means of promoting license instead of liberty; it can allow exchange of immoral and harmful goods, include collusion with government to gain advantage and oppress, and become an idol that replaces love for God and man. It is not free trade, but immorality, covetousness, idolatry, fraud, oppression, and slavery that God condemns (e.g., Leviticus 19, Deuteronomy 24, Ezekiel 22, Amos 2, James 5, Revelation 18). These abuses are not a failure of the market; they are a failure of man.

Christians should not be ambivalent about the free market, and certainly they should not assume a free market is inherently oppressive. We should not approach the market as inherently flawed, requiring government planning, programs, and regulations to fix market failures. Instead, the concern should be with moral freedom and moral responsibility in market exchange. The Scripture approaches freedom as a

moral value (Leviticus 25, Jeremiah 34, 1 Corinthians 7:21-23, Galatians 5:13). Men have liberty from God to do that which is just and right. But they do not have license to do that which is harmful, wrong, or immoral. In order for men to exercise liberty but not license, they must be governed by a moral standard.

God, of course, is the ultimate source of morality. He created man in his own image and likeness, from which flows an understanding of right and wrong (Romans 1, 2). God has also spoken to men, declaring more clearly the moral principles and precepts by which mankind must live. These are freeing: "The law of the law is perfect, converting the soul. The testimonies of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple. . . . The commandments of the Lord are true, enlightening the eyes" (Ps. 19:7-8). "I walk at liberty, because I have sought your precepts" (Ps. 119:45). God's law calls for men to deal fairly and justly with one another: "You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another . . . You shall not defraud your neighbor or rob him; the wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until morning" (Leviticus 19:11, 13). The violation of moral precepts brings consequences; we betray them to our peril. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatever a man sows, that also shall he reap" (Galatians 6:7). God providentially blesses obedience to His precepts and brings curses on disobedience (Deuteronomy 28).