

The Gospel, Human Flourishing, and the Foundation of Social Order

JASON GLAS

Jason Glas is a M.Div. graduate of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Presently he serves as an elder at Covenant Baptist Church in Valdosta, Georgia. In addition, he is a vice president and commercial banker with Ameris Bancorp and an investor and developer of commercial real estate. Mr. Glas has pastored churches in Kentucky and Georgia and serves on the board of directors for Reaching and Teaching International Ministries, Inc.

INTRODUCTION

The headlines over the past few months attest our society is experiencing rapid transformation culminating from decades of moral mutiny. Events in Ferguson, Indianapolis, Baltimore, Dallas, Charleston and Supreme Court decisions is a predictable course of America's trajectory because the moral revolutionaries have secularized the public conscience. The myriad of competing voices through the omnipresent media drowns the prophetic voice of the church even confusing evangelicals on how best to think about social, political, and economic issues. The stereotypical rhetoric on economic inequality attempts to reduce everyone who has financial resources as callous toward the poor and their wealth obtained through fraud, extortion, or insatiable avarice. We must steer clear of narrowly judging all rich as immoral and all poor as victims.

The complexity of humanity demands more thought in our analysis and solutions. The problem today, however, is debates over social and economic issues are intensely emotional with a lack of discipline toward sustained

logic that stretches beyond 140 characters. The increased conversation over *human flourishing* is refreshing because it forces the needed holistic approach to understanding and enhancing the human experience since it “encompasses all human activity and goals because there is nothing so natural and inescapable as the desire to live, and to live in peace, security, love, health, and happiness.”¹

The conversation concerning human flourishing and the reach of the gospel extends to *all* spheres of the human experience including the element we treasure most as Americans—*freedom*. The American experience is most privileged in its enjoyment of liberties but the hostility toward Christianity threatens every privilege enjoyed because marriage, race, and borders are moral issues that require shared moral conviction. For humanity to have quiet enjoyment in society it demands specific environmental regularities to nourish freedom in civic, political, and economic life. Sadly, the mission of moral revolutionaries is to punish evangelicals for moral consistency and banish from the public conscience the ability to define anything. The indignation against morality carries economic consequences along with impacting *all* freedoms in civic life. The long term effects of punishing Christians and traditional public consciousness on marriage will challenge economic growth by limiting entrepreneurship where risk to discriminatory litigation is high, reduce available job opportunities and economic mobility to those with moral conviction, and strengthen statism which further deteriorates civic, economic and political freedom (hereinafter collectively, “freedoms”). Who among those with moral convictions are not concerned over discrimination polices, hiring employees or threats by your company’s human resources department for not being inclusive? The shift in moral climate does affect freedom in all forms. Evangelicals must not compartmentalize church, state, and economy into independent spheres but understand that religious freedom, specifically Christianity, is foundational and concomitant to social, political, and economic freedom.

The moral, religious, and philosophical climate of a populace shapes political, civic, and economic conditions of a nation. The United States has benefited from an inheritance predominately Christian in influence. The percentages of church involvement and commitment in America have always fluctuated but there was a public theology from Protestantism, particularly the Puritans, which branded the general public’s conscience thereby creating

moral consensus. The populace understood concepts of sin, judgment, salvation, and hope. These concepts, whether believed by everyone or not, created moral norms and an environment where concepts and practices of freedom could flourish. “Would America be the America it is today if in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it had been settled not by British Protestants but by French, Spanish, or Portuguese Catholics? The answer is no. It would not be America; it would be Quebec, Mexico, or Brazil.”² Protestantism prevailed upon the American conscience throughout the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries with biblical mores and a moral consensus among the citizenry that developed a strong public theology. Alexis de Tocqueville attested to the strength of this public theological influence having observed in the early nineteenth century that among “the Anglo-Americans, some profess Christian dogmas because they believe them, others because they are afraid of not looking like they believe them.”³

To say that conformity to a Christian public consciousness in America today is past is needless ink spent. The question before us is whether freedoms are sustainable in an environment where morality begs for definition? We often speak of political freedom but what about economics? Is the economy an independent machine unaffected by moral climate? As our western society is hyper-secularized embracing nihilistic notions of existence, it is tempting to reduce all social problems to a single system. We often here rhetoric aimed at “capitalism” being the system that creates unbridled greed and unrestrained consumption by the public. No singular system, however, accounts for all problems or solutions. Free societies are the result of complex theological and philosophical thought that is not so easily isolated or cut loose from systemic webs. Since the recession began in 2007, capitalism and the “markets” have faced intense criticism that resulted in more interventionist strategies toward unitary government. Criticizing markets alone is perfect demagoguery that “never wastes an opportunity” to win political votes for a population that jettisoned Christian convictions and lacks real solutions. To merely blame capitalism or the markets only “adds to the social forces that undermine the role of values, faith, and civil society, and exaggerates the case for government involvement to solve the problems of the markets, which opens the door for expansion of state.”⁴

Specific influences upon the public conscience created the success and freedom enjoyed for so long in the United States. Unpacking the core ideas

of that public consciousness is vital to freedom as well as proclaiming and applying the gospel to all aspects of the human experience that promote human flourishing. The aim of this article, then, is twofold: First, to demonstrate that the majority of the general public must share the four convictions of human wickedness, human dignity, transcendence, and family as necessary for freedom and social order. Second, is challenging evangelicals to be more holistic in their gospel proclamation so our focus is not only on the salvation of the individual but also how the gospel radically brings about systemic social benefits from a person's rebirth in Christ Jesus. It is necessary for Christian pastors and teachers to learn and teach a holistic gospel that brings all of the human experience into focus for the benefit of human flourishing. In the end, the gospel is western civilization's only hope.

CORE CONVICTIONS NECESSARY FOR FREEDOM

As we begin, there is particular interest in how Protestant Christianity contributed to freedom and why freedom is failing today. Contra popular deconstructionists, the Framers of America's constitution were not all preachers of Enlightenment politics advocating escape from transcendent vision, reason alone as a sufficient guide, and collapse of the human will to the will of the State. Even David Hume "is famous for his devastating criticism of the contract theory, which is the foundation of Enlightenment politics."⁵ Instead, the Framers held specific convictions concerning the state, human nature, transcendence, and civic freedoms that provided the framework for American government and freedom derivatives.

Humans are Basically Evil

The belief that all human beings are basically evil is one of the most important contributions of Augustinian-based theology *and* importantly, necessary to civic and economic freedom. Due to the fall, humans are by nature children of wrath and "we expect selfishness, conflict, theft, destruction of property, and strife in economic and business sectors. Rather than living in denial of such realities, we should seek enduring solutions that take them into account."⁶ The American constitution is an example of a solution offered. Early American knowledge of human nature was vital to the form of government created that protected liberties. The Framers feared centralized

government as well as government by majority because they rejected the idea that human nature is basically good. While Original Sin may not have been theologically convincing to all of the Framers, it was certainly convincing to them experientially. The American Constitution emerged from the historical reality and belief that concentrated power in the hands of one person or group of persons is a recipe for tyranny. The Constitution practically exposes the Framers' belief that man has fallen from his innocent state and he is not to be trusted with unitary power. Orestes Brownson observed the doctrine of the "fall asserted by Christian theology ... is a fact too sadly confirmed by individual experience and universal history."⁷ Noah Webster remarked that practical belief in the *fall* is one of the peculiarities in "the formation of our constitution" a document where "the wisdom of all ages is collected."⁸ One piece of wisdom he identifies in this history lesson is that "men are ever running into extremes" and every "person, moderately acquainted with human nature, knows that public bodies, as well as individuals, are liable to the influence of sudden and violent passions, under the operation of which, the voice of reason is silenced."⁹

To believe that governments, made up of men, would consistently decline their self-interests for the good of the community is deceptive and denies historical experience. John Adams, America's second President, warned that expecting "self-denial from men, when they have a majority in their favor, and consequently power to gratify themselves, is to disbelieve all history and universal experience; it is to disbelieve Revelation and the Word of God, which informs us, the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."¹⁰ Socialist and utopian ideologies deny history and revelation, but the Framers seemed keenly aware of the *egotistical principle*.¹¹

This egotistical principle is a reminder of the trickery imposed by power's temptation. Policies declared to have society's best interest in mind are instead abused to secure votes from the beneficiaries. The danger of the welfare and entitlement state is that it becomes a vehicle to expand political gluttony of power through further citizen dependency. Bertrand de Jouvenel correctly points out: "Do we not see modern governments as well using public funds to endow social groups or classes, whose votes they are anxious to secure? Today the name is different, and it is called the redistribution of incomes by taxation."¹² Despite the good intentions and seeming harmless nature of social engineering policies, they reject the Christian doctrine of human

depravity and beliefs of the Constitution's architects. The growing welfare state is expansion of power that invites unitary government through convincing a population that social problems are not rooted in personal moral failure but systems.

So how is the doctrine of human depravity related to economic and civic liberty? First, it teaches us that humans are moral creatures and we have a moral problem. Unlike fairytale notions of utopian idealists, no political or economic system can provide real solutions if it does not have a real diagnosis to the human problem. There is no gospel without revealed truth that humans are guilty of moral failure and need regeneration (Rom 2:29). Unless there is a prevailing public consciousness that humans are basically evil then salvation will always be spoken of in terms of social systems instead of the gospel that demands regeneration. For a political or economic system to "move forward constructively [it] must take into account both the sin in ourselves and the weaknesses, irrationalities, and evil forces pervasive in the world, and disbelieve the promises that 'the world now or ever will be transformed into the City of God.'"¹³

Second, it demands a free society be ruled by law. This is increasingly difficult because there "is a breakdown in consensus with regard to what is moral."¹⁴ "Moreover, as we increasingly make what is immoral legal, society assumes that since it is legal it must be moral."¹⁵ In banking, the first of the five "C's" of credit that is always evaluated about the borrower before making a loan is *character*.¹⁶ How does one define character in an age where what is moral lacks definition? Without it, immoral behavior is excused through blaming society and in some cases rewarded. A society that divorces itself from moral definition is no longer a society ruled by law but controlled by cronyism, bribery, corruption, and special interest groups. This kind of unjust behavior impacts the economic climate through unfair trade and practices.

Third, economic structures should be paradigmatically commensurate to the egotistical principle. As noted above, rule by law is mandatory for freedom. "The courts are the primary means for guaranteeing that everyone in a nation is subject to the rule of the law."¹⁷ Human wickedness is the challenge the Framers faced in creating a government to protect liberties from abuse of power. Publius argued in the Federalist Papers that in "framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the greatest difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in

the next place oblige it to control itself.”¹⁸ Hence the elaborate system of checks and spheres of power in the Constitution intended to guard against the aggrandizing temptation of governmental power. The Constitution left the national government’s powers few and defined to thwart centralization and encourage self-government among its citizenry. “Political power is made necessary by the undeniable fact of human wickedness” and should any person “find himself in a society not needing the apparatus of force (laws, courts, police, prisons) it is likely that he has entered the kingdom of God.”¹⁹

The theological, historical, and experiential reality of human wickedness was a major contribution to the creation of the American form of government. Unfortunately, the naïve denial of human wickedness is contributing to America’s undoing. Law, fair trade, and security of private property are only possible in a society that believes humanity is morally flawed and those flaws must be harnessed in an elaborate system of laws and freedom of religion. An enforced legal system deters people punitively while freedom of religion, particularly the gospel, addresses the will of persons where the commands of God are no longer burdensome (1 John 5:3) offering the only viable moral corrective. Blaming systems, society, and treating moral problems as “disorders” only furthers corrosion and never deals with the root issue of the current demise which is moral failure.

Humans are Valuable

The biblical truth on human wickedness does not mean we are incapable of producing orderly political and economic structures that promote human liberty and flourishing. Instead, it means we have reasonable and limited expectations for what can be accomplished in this present order and our goal now is “to foster the temporary preservation of life and social order until the end of the present world.”²⁰ Just as human wickedness is a real component that must be accounted for in free government and economics structures, so is human dignity. What is striking about secularism and its penetrating effects in our society is the more we detach from Christianity, our optimism in human nature increases and convictions over human dignity decline. The very opposite is true for historic Christian thought.

Conviction concerning human dignity begins with recognizing from sacred Scripture that humanity is the result of *the* Creator. The cosmos is neither accidental nor random but all of creation is the result of “Then God

said...”. Conviction concerning revealed truth over creation necessitates meaning, order, and purpose. Humanity is designed with certain properties and purposes that we must learn from our Creator to know how to fully experience being human. As Francis Schaeffer pointed out, the “Scriptures give the key to two kinds of knowledge—the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of men and nature.”²¹ We look to God as the supreme interpreter of what it means to be human and how best to live a flourishing life. For a free society to exist it must believe that humans are not accidental or merely the product of Darwinian selection, but created by God with specific roles. This view is upheld by four thoughts: Humans are made in God’s image, society should be structured to encourage aspects of human exceptionalism, not all persons are created equal, and no human is chattel.

First, human beings are created in the image of God. In summary, humanity possesses both a *structural* and a *functional* capacity for imaging God. The structural capacity provides qualities and characteristics that are similar to God such as personhood, sociality, rationality, aesthetic sensitivity, moral awareness, linguistic ability, and the communicable attributes. The structural (reflective) sense of the *imago Dei* is abilities or gifts endowed by God for a particular function. The functional aspects entails imaging God as a representative.²² Humanity having structural capacity is instructed on function (i.e., designed to do) which is to represent God. The first man Adam, for example, in Genesis is God’s representative in the world. He does God’s work, but under God (Gen 1:28). God is Lord and Adam is God’s vice-regent or vassal lord displaying control and authority over the creation just as God. “Man, then, was created in God’s image so that he or she might represent God, like an ambassador from a foreign country.”²³

So how does this help us? Since humanity is the result of creation and is endowed with faculties for specific purpose, it means the subjects of politics and economics are theological. Work, for example, is now to be understood within the light of revelation that God works not just in creation but even in providence for continued stability. God’s “creativity, initiative, and resourcefulness displayed in creation are also traits that have been given to human beings by virtue of being made in his image.”²⁴ Human wickedness, therefore, originated from rebellion against God that marred aspects of God-imaging capabilities. The implications of this epistemological framework upon society are significant because belief or rejection over the truth concerning creation

will result in divergent political and economic systems. A society that believes the natural world and humanity are the result of an accident lacking *telos* will lead to government and economic systems of exploitation. Simply examine the previous century and the impact of Darwinian, Marxist, and Nietzschean philosophies that resulted in oppressive totalitarian regimes and the murder of millions born and unborn persons. How does humanity flourish within an epistemological paradigm where humanity is reduced to an animal and considered malleable? Such views result in eugenical sterilization laws, concentration camps, abortion clinics, health courts, cost benefit healthcare, designer babies, and transhuman technologies.²⁵ The human race can never flourish in a structural framework where conviction over divine creation is absent. If human evil is not checked by transcendent awareness of human creation, meaning, purpose, and fear of judgment then there is no restraint against evils perpetrated by those who wield the sword of power whether on a throne or in a clinic.

Second, social structures (especially government) should be arranged in such a manner that elevates human exceptionalism and promotes the flourishing of humanity's God-imaging aspects. Concepts of work, rest through enjoyment, private property, freedom, family, and responsibility toward others all take on specific definition in the formation of society. The Bible promotes the ideas of work and enjoyment of one's work. Just as the Lord saw that what he created was good, so it is good for humanity to be productive and be satisfied with the result of one's labor (Eccl 5:18; Prov 27:18; Ps 128:2). This means it is right and good to own private property and condemn those who unjustly take away the fruits of one's labor for enjoyment.²⁶ Scripture prohibits theft (Ex 20:15) and this applies both person to person as well as state to persons (1 Kings 21). Private property ownership is the archenemy of the *Communist Manifesto*.²⁷ The Bible, however, speaks completely contrary to this idea. The denial of private property stifles human flourishing because it strips away the satisfaction of one's work and the joy of inheritance to posterity.

There are implications of this idea such as limited government and the general welfare of society that cannot be ignored. The right to private property means that government should not burden its citizens with taxation that discourages the ability to property ownership. The Bible is not silent over the issue of burdening taxation. The prophet Samuel sternly warned

Israel on the consequences of centralized government (1 Sam 8:10-18) and how the exacting demands of large government is weary to a citizenry and stifles flourishing. The burden of taxation split the people of Israel (1 Kgs 12:1-24) and it contributed to the fall of the Roman Empire. Salvian the Presbyter who lived in the province of Gaul during the 5th century described Roman taxation so burdensome that when invaded by the “barbarians” the Roman people had a general prayer “that they be allowed to carry on the life they lead with the barbarians”²⁸ because many within the empire judged the enemy to be “more lenient to them than the tax collectors.”²⁹ Once Rome collapsed, humanity could flourish as many new technologies began to appear, ordinary people were living far better, and the population began to grow again. The fact that “invention flourished in the aftermath of the fall of Rome demonstrates the principle that despotic states discourage and even prevent progress.”³⁰

Limited government allows for economic freedom, greater retention of private property, and increased capacity for *voluntary* social welfare. Increased taxation, regulation, and government impositions limit capital freedom which includes its use toward charity. As marriage continues to decline and government entitlement programs increase, the United States not only burdens its wage earning citizens with higher taxes to support social programs but actually encourages social detachment by destroying ties to family and community. Government is replacing the family, church, and community by breaking down these ancient institutions of social permanence and increasing a population’s dependency upon itself. Eventually, the Internal Revenue Service or even state governments will no longer recognize churches or other Christian based not-for-profit organizations as tax exempt or contributions as tax deductible. What will be the outcome of churches and charitable organizations as voluntary programs are discouraged and government strengthens its paternal role over every citizen? What does it say about our concept of human dignity and role of government when the federal government was initially established with “few and defined” powers that were limited to defense, commerce, and infrastructure but now has 48% of its budget toward Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and other subsidy programs? Social Security alone is twenty-four percent of the federal budget while defense is in second place at eighteen percent.³¹ Social Security is a Ponzi scheme. The ratio of retirees drawing benefits to workers is significantly

squeezed meaning either taxes will only increase or benefits will decline. Not only does a society become dependent on government benefits but workers are discouraged as their wages are decreased to pay for these benefits. When Social Security began in 1937, taxes for the program were only 1 percent of earnings, up to \$3,000. Today, just the Social Security tax rate alone for employees and employers each stands at 6.2% while those self-employed find it at 12.4% for up to \$117,000.³²

As the United States further detaches from Christian influence, taxes will increase, economic production will slow, and income inequality will expand. It happens in every country where centralization occurs. “Altogether, the current federal income tax code, tax regulations, and explanations add up to more than 70,000 pages. Our tax laws are unnecessarily complex and loaded with numerous deductions, exemptions, credits, preferential rates, and other loopholes that distort economic decision-making and hurt our economy.”³³ While the federal income tax system is broken in many respects, consider other taxes paid in addition to federal: state, county, city, school, gasoline, sales, property, real estate, licenses, telephone, internet, utilities, special assessments, and the list goes on. Taxation is a major concern because as government control expands it means more is taken away from the private sector and there is less accountability to the tax payer.

A third element of human dignity requiring careful explanation is that not all persons are created equal. To make such a statement in our egalitarian day is highly controversial but recognition of functional inequality among persons is necessary for free societies. That not all humans are created equal is obvious. Humans have numerous inequalities about them from size, shape, hair color, eye color, strength, intellect, and aptitude. While we recognize inequalities among persons we are not suggesting inferiority in their intrinsic value as human. Inequality in capability does not suggest inequality in value, or to say it another way, not all persons are created equal, but all have equal worth. Variety, complexity, and diversity are a part of God’s creation and a society should organize its structures to utilize this important aspect of human dignity and reject government and economic structures that promote a narrowing uniformity to humanity.

Conversations concerning diversity today are charged with multiculturalism and mutual cohabitation of philosophical-religious pluralism among various ethnic and cultural groups, but such rhetoric does not strengthen

a free society, instead it accelerates its demise. Assimilation to American founding principles rooted in Protestant Christianity is anathema in our current context but history teaches diversity is the “form of belonging that typifies empires, just as nationality has been the form that typifies republics. The British Empire, the Roman Empire, and the Habsburg Empire—these were diverse. England, Italy, and Austria, until recently, were not. The motto *E pluribus unum* is a sign that the [American] founders saw diversity as a challenge to be mastered, not a resource to be tapped.³⁴ John Adams once wrote to his wife Abigail that the “equality [of men] is nature and political only ... but a physical inequality, an intellectual inequality, of the most serious kind, is established unchangeably by the Author of nature.”³⁵ In other words, Adams believed that God himself created all men equal to law and responsibility, but he created them functionally unequal for social contribution. The theological conviction of the *Imago Dei* distinguishes republicanism from idealistic anthropologies rooted in naturalism.³⁶ The only equality of persons government should advocate is equality on the grounds of their moral and political responsibility to uphold justice for equal application of the law to all persons regardless of class, race, and religion. The strength of a republic is rule by law, not men.

Diversity means there are variations of economic contribution and distribution in a free society. Anyone in a business arrangement expects that one’s profit of a business deal should be proportionate to their equity contribution. Instead, the conversations concerning equality today create an expectation of distribution without proportionate contribution. Every person in society has contributive inequality, so why should we expect an economic system that has distributive equality? Our political and economic structures should incorporate this productive inequality as a valuable asset. In a society that accepts inequality in production there is a place for everyone. Not everyone needs college education to perform certain tasks nor is everyone capable of performing the same tasks. A free society needs blue-collar, white-collar, and no-collar contributors to carry out the vast needs of economic activity, provisions, and sanitation each day.

For Christians, functional unified diversity is nothing new because it is God’s design for community. The Apostle Paul repeatedly mentions the Spirit’s work in diversifying gifts among the church for the singular function of gospel ministry and Christ-like maturity (cf. 1 Cor 12:4-31; Rom 12:3-8;

Eph 4:7-16). Unity among diversity reflects the triune God where all three members of the godhead possess ontological equality but economic diversity (cf. Eph 1:3-14). The reality is human beings intrinsically accept and even cheer inequality through meritocracy. We love to compete, win, and enjoy the spoils labor. Non-competitive athletics dehumanizes and reinforces ideas of equal reward without equal work. Competition and the drive to get better whether in work, athletics, character development, spousal responsibilities in marriage, etc. is always good. We as humans need a goal to reach and enjoy a sense of achievement. That is because we are made in God's image. It is sin and wickedness that invites envy, greed, and covetousness making us discontent to demand equal pay without equal play.

Fourth, the value of each human being demands each life be treated with dignity and never reduced to chattel. Humans do not own other humans but each are made in God's image therefore deserving of equality under law and opportunity to flourish in a free society. Human exceptionalism never supports slavery or its contemporary applications like attempted patenting of human genes or genetic discrimination. Humans are not to be exploited by other humans. This view of human life also opens the hand to charity. When we see a fellow person as equally valuable we will not ignore their suffering but extend the hand of generosity whether through money or time. We will also desire justice and the equal application of the law knowing that each person is morally responsible for their actions and must apply a dignified view of everyone in society.

Recognizing no person is property or should be subject to exploitation has numerous implications for the benefit and promotion of human flourishing. Only when human life is stripped away from divine definition do we find exploitation of others whether in slavery, factories, brothels, abortion clinics, or laboratories. When humans are reduced to mere evolutionary origins rather than an act of divine creation, there is no limit to means of exploitation. When meaning to life is no longer defined by God but becomes a human construct then the application of law is arbitrary. When life is no longer dignified, then citizens should be wary of those at the helm of centralized power as history attests.

Human Vision Must Account for Things Seen and Unseen

The rejection of human wickedness and human dignity commenced with

humanity's rebellion against revealed truth leading our society into an age of *anti*-theism and unbridled secularism. Secularism convinces a populace that reality is nothing more than a human construct and "history is simply the activity of man pursuing his own aims and that human nature is nothing more than the reflection of social conditions at any given time. Change the social conditions ... and you can change human nature."³⁷ For freedoms to endure and humanity to flourish, reality must include things both seen and unseen. Transcendent reality is shorthand for a public theology that is Christian in nature and proclaiming a narrative of creation, providence, sin, salvation, and judgment. Although variations of these concepts have appeared throughout American history, the truth is these broad Christian concepts were generally accepted by the public and taught humanity "reality is not something men make but something to which they must conform."³⁸

Before continuing, it is important to point out what is not meant by transcendent reality. Civil religion is not a substitute for the gospel. Civic religion that is theologically vague and reduced to orderly behavior is not the gospel and saves no one from the righteous judgment of God. Only the work of the Holy Spirit upon a believing heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ can regenerate a person and reorient their desires.³⁹ Notwithstanding, society benefits from the residual influence of the gospel and conversion of sinners to saints. Society also benefits when the church is the accepted prophetic voice because the collapse of biblical revelation as the transcendent narrative for western society is the fountainhead of freedom's collapse.

Economic freedom, or its less dignified alternative "capitalism," receives a steady stream of criticism for manufacturing consumption and greed. Some evangelical leaders seem unable to resist the trend to make American evangelicals feel guilty for political and economic well-being which is akin to social liberals who insist "that businesses need to 'give back' to their communities as if they took something away in the first place."⁴⁰ Those who parade a destruction of the American dream in the name of the gospel need to understand two things: first, it is commitment to Christian theology that led to political and economic freedom and second, the problem today is living a dream loosed from transcendent reality that reduces life to the material and causes businesses to drive for profits only. "The Christian tradition views business as a manifestation of a natural right of persons to form an association to achieve some common end."⁴¹ Business, viewed within transcendence, is

beyond mere profit but connects to broader issues of human dignity aforementioned. Prosperity does *not* necessitate idolatry. Even the Apostle Paul points out in 1 Timothy 6:17–19 that riches are a gift from God for enjoyment and there is a “difference between setting one’s hope on something and simply enjoying it.”⁴² Certainly riches can be an instrument of idolatry but they are not the cause. Virtue is the necessary restraint against the vices and excesses we witness today to prevent the worship of the work of our hands (Isa 2:8). Transcendent reality buffers our hoarding of worldly possessions, curbs our greed, opens our hand to generosity, and reminds us the best things of our existence are not to be found in this present order. Unfortunately, the rejection of transcendence ushered in our Darwinian-nihilistic-narcissistic-hedonistic age has given itself over to a consumerist, entertaining, and virtual world with no moral or transcendent vision. Freedom remains so long as historic-orthodox Christianity is the *accepted* prophetic voice among our society to proclaim the gospel and the derivative promotion of virtue and moral self-regulation among persons. Below are five reasons why the church is the stabilizer in society to protect freedoms.

First, consumerism is humanity’s attempt to replace transcendence. Retail advertising for example “presents consumption as the answer to loneliness, boredom, [and] a lack of fulfillment in one’s life.”⁴³ The collapse of the theological narrative and eschatological reality leads to earnest creation of a personal narrative that must stand out and get noticed else we get lost in the dreadful realm of the “ordinary.” Today, boredom is a person’s greatest fear (not hell) and escape from the ordinary is the new transcendence (not heaven). We have freed ourselves from a meaningful life beyond and from the fear of judgment to come so there is religious zeal in self-worth (narcissism) and self-fulfillment (hedonism). “In a world intoxicated by such freedom, everydayness is boring. This vision of reality affects us all. Even more than I’m afraid of failure, I’m terrified by boredom. Facing another day, with ordinary callings to ordinary people all around me is much more difficult than chasing the dreams I have envisioned for the grand story of my life.”⁴⁴ The vanishing thought of being made in God’s image and for his glory is replaced with self-made image and personal glory that places all hope in this life. It is dangerous for a society when people see “the primary goal in life to be the increase of consumption and define themselves by that consumption rather than something deeper and truer.”⁴⁵ Evangelicals, therefore, must be careful not to smear economic

prosperity believing it is the source of idolatrous consumption, but see the collapse of transcendent reality as the cause.

Second, the embrace of transcendent reality not only curbs a consumeristic binge but fosters generosity. People tend to be more generous when they know one is accountable to God. A balanced approach to biblical truth will create an atmosphere of human flourishing by praising the creation of wealth as well as its voluntary release for the benefit of others. When one knows that wealth is not the foundation of their existence⁴⁶ and they are stewards of what is given they enjoy charity because it brings deep satisfaction to benefit another life. Plus, voluntary giving against government extraction allows the giver to gain some accountability and control over the efficiency of their gift in contrast to the unscrupulous waste of bureaucracy.

Third, transcendent reality is the only compatible stabilizer to freedoms. “A religious belief compatible with the goals of a society—such as the doctrine of universal divine judgment—can condition social behavior more than totalitarian coercion, enlightened self-interest, and a merely secular belief that one should respect the rights of others.”⁴⁷ The air of freedom is only possible with a population who can *self-legislate*. The collapse of transcendent reality begs the collapse of virtue whereby legislation, “and regulation must now do what civility, self-restraint, honesty, and charitable concern once did.”⁴⁸ The courts must now regulate what was commonly expected among civilians through decency and common moral code, but even the courts have now subverted the cause of public virtue through abuse of the First Amendment turning it into a “major mechanism by which the Supreme Court has invalidated the public promotion of virtue.”⁴⁹ Freedom is not unrestrained individualism but constraint through equal application of law that benefits a community. Even one’s speech must be constrained by transcendent reality that dignifies fellow humanity and constrains itself against impulsive harm to fellow citizens.⁵⁰ Virtue, defined by transcendent moral norms, is the counterpart to freedom. Liberty is not a license for unrestrained individualism but respect for other persons balanced with the respect for unchanging moral norms.⁵¹ Without virtue, there is no freedom.

Fourth, where humanity is unable to self-legislate, centralized government fills the vacuum. George Orwell’s imagination of “Big Brother” does not seem so far-fetched now considering technological accessibility and the invasive details of government regulation from healthcare to proposed taxes on junk

food. Government now regulates the most basic matters of life taking the place of the family and the church. Citizens today have come to expect the government to be their provisional resource where smaller institutions of society met basic needs. Centralization thrives upon the increase of vertical ties to the government over the horizontal of social relationships in effort to replace “local, non-government initiatives that actively pursue public goods with its own programs.”⁵² The horizontal ties are citizens’ cultural allegiances such as family, church, local associations, and even local government which are the most powerful resources to curb centralization. “A healthy democratic society trusts its government to exercise *certain defined tasks*. Citizens actually *weaken* democracy, however, by placing in the government the trust, hope, and loyalty that properly belong to local associations. Government officials encourage this erosion when they use rhetoric that implies they can ‘save’ people from society’s most serious problems by top-down social engineering;”⁵³ a measure that further entrenches government interest into personal affairs while threatening civil liberties. The collapse of transcendence and moral norms in a society creates growing irresponsibility among citizens that demands more regulation in the most elementary affairs of everyday life.

The need for transcendent reality is not only for the general populace but for the government as well. Government without theological grounding will pass legislation and issue edicts that erode responsibility and increase its control over people’s lives. For example, current monetary policies breed irresponsibility and encourage indebtedness. When the [Federal Reserve] increases money supply and cuts interest rates it excites credit-based consumption that actually discourages savings thereby inducing “malinvestment, or misdirected business projects.”⁵⁴ Cheap credit enables citizens to “live beyond their means” creating a false assumption of wealth that ultimately enslaves a whole economic system to irresponsible consumption. With the general public further detached from theological reality now accepting nothing short of instant gratification through credit, what alternate course does a government have but to keep the economy “stimulated” by ongoing irresponsible policies?

Lastly, it is not a general civil religion that will endorse and preserve freedoms in a society, but specifically the theological influence of evangelical Protestantism. The preamble of the 1641 *Body of Liberties of the Massachusetts Collonie in New England* that outlined seventeen rights to be enjoyed by the

churches and citizens of the colony is one example of many demonstrating early American convictions that stability and protection of churches secures freedoms in civil society.⁵⁵ It is the appeal to transcendent reality or universal moral norms defined by sacred Scripture that allows for impartial execution of justice and protection of liberties. The consequence of the current downturn of evangelical influence and the “rise of the Nones”⁵⁶ is the church has lost its counterpart role of prophetic responsibility toward government and civil society to encourage rule by law and moral, self-legislation among the general populace.

Defining the prophetic role of the church is necessary in our era of theological confusion. What is not meant by the prophetic role, for example, is that advocated by liberals such as Jim Wallace of Sojourners who insist the prophetic role of churches is to call the *federal government* to not cut welfare programs because the “community of faith” cares “about widows and orphans.”⁵⁷ Consequently, the position of groups like Sojourners view the role of congregations is to “keep articulating a sense of priorities about what government needs to be doing in a recession to ... help those who are hurting.”⁵⁸ Unfortunately, this is a complete reversal of what early Americans understood about the role of government and more of what society came to expect from the church and voluntary associations. What Americans have come to expect from government today was once provided by the family, church, and local organizations that gave assistance when needed to those in the community. The destruction of family and decline of evangelicalism have ushered in an age of expansive government control to be the parent and savior of a populace who no longer has moral and transcendent vision.

In early nineteenth century America, voluntary societies were the development by Protestants as an innovative and powerful vehicle to link private faith and public life. These were independent organizations, frequently of diverse denominations, that worked to address social problems and needs such as missions, poverty, slavery, and disease. “Whether providing books and Bibles through traveling vendors, organizing to improve the treatment of the insane, or reaching out to the prostitutes and other social outcasts, the Protestant voluntary agencies aimed at the social conversion of the United States.”⁵⁹ The influence of intermediate institutions⁶⁰ like the “voluntary societies” upon the moral and social fabric of America cannot be dismissed or denied. It is this kind of civic involvement the Framers’ hoped for and

assumed America's citizens would undertake since private organizations are better acquainted and equipped to address social issues than centralized government.⁶¹ The survivability of these organizations, however, depends on the strength of the church to proclaim transcendent reality through the gospel of Jesus Christ. With no gospel or eschatology, a population expects from a government only what the kingdom of heaven can provide and people become negligent in duties toward one another expecting government agencies to help instead.

The increased vices, destruction of family, widening economic gaps, and centralized government control is the result of a nation having lost its theological grounding and vision of reality. Voltaire once remarked that "not until the last priest is hanged with the entrails of the last king will mankind finally be free."⁶² The irony is that the more American society rebels against the high king of heaven the more those freedoms diminish. Centralized government fills the space once occupied by a popular Christian theology that indeed impacted and directed much of the public conscience toward virtue and transcendent reality. The consumption addiction we experience in our society is not because of capitalism but the banishment of transcendence from the public conscience. This is the era of anti-providence and anti-theism. The anti-Christian rhetoric of American society today gives no hope to persons beyond what they can experience, accumulate, and enjoy *now*. The church must articulate the gospel that sets humanity free "from bondage to the gods of our sinful desires in this life."⁶³ The church must fulfill its prophetic role of gospel proclamation so we expect less from government, are cautious over centralized power, understand the genuine need of humanity is regeneration, have eschatological hope that promotes our duties toward fellow humanity and curbs our appetites by the temporal nature of this present order, and have moral vision for grounding virtue.

Marriage and Family is Basic and Necessary

The redefinition of marriage and family is the poster child of human wickedness and social decline. Despite social and judicial confusion, it does not replace the historic-traditional view of marriage understood and believed by millennia of civilization. Marriage and family is most basic and indispensable to a free society. It is defined by biblical revelation, restrains the full effects of human wickedness, and upholds human dignity by creating life and directing

social relations. Against the rebellious confusion of our day, marriage is for one-man and one-woman and sex is one of many rewards specific to the marriage union. It is a sad day when such definition is required but it is part of the continued assault against Christianity by moral revolutionaries who want public vindication for deviance and acceptance for abnormal behavior. The problem, however, is that such changes do not impact sex and romantic relationships alone but *all of society*.

The agenda by moral revolutionaries over the last century is to force the idea that sexual activity should be without consequence. The reality is libertine sex in this post-foundational moral climate has direct consequences upon freedom. The future of freedoms reside in the protection and stability of marriage and family since it is the first political order in society containing the relations of authority and subordination thereby establishing other derivative forms of order.⁶⁴ This vital institution for social stability lies devastated by the storm of the sexual revolution and feminists having ushered in the “new normal” across the west where forty percent or more of all children are born without married parents⁶⁵ victimizing those most vulnerable in society. The ironic twist is that *women* and children suffer the greatest fallout of *feminist* achievements from abortion to abuse exacting a heavy toll upon their mental, emotional, physical, and economic well-being.⁶⁶ “Never before has mankind faced such a rapid and widespread disintegration of morality and concurrent increase in gender confusion and conflict.”⁶⁷

Only deliberate denial of the social chaos today can ignore the fallout created from decline of marriage, no-fault divorces, and sex defined by the pornographic industry. These aspects of the sexual revolution alone have torn asunder entire networks of human relationships; “husband from wife, parents from children, aunts and uncles from their nephews and nieces, grandparents from grandchildren, cousins from one another; all of that web of meaning and belonging, extending far into the past and future, untimely ripped, battered, or severed forever, to satisfy the ‘needs’ (often lust-driven, and nearly always selfish) of the divorcing adults.”⁶⁸ What should we expect, however in this anti-providence *Zeitgeist* that accepts Darwinian notions of beauty and desire as nothing more than sexual selection and humans as mere animals with biological urges to be satisfied? The relentless and invasive pornographic age screams sexual satisfaction as the highest achievement so why be stuck with one spouse for life and a bunch of kids to settle you

down? Unfortunately for so many, “the most important thing in life is sexual gratification. If you are not being sexually gratified as frequently as possible with as many partners as possible, you are somehow being deprived of a life worth living.”⁶⁹ Nevertheless, against all moral revolutionary rhetoric today, the family alone “is capable of providing the necessary stability for the profound relationship that sexual union both symbolizes and cements and for the welfare of the children who issue from it.”⁷⁰ The breakdown of marriage and family is the final leg holding the table of freedom. In order for this leg to remain there must be three convictions on marriage and family: Marriage must be viewed as a covenant, family is the primary institution of moral and character development, and society must protect the family as the smallest unit of political order.

Marriage as a covenant involves three parties: a man, woman, and the triune God. It is a covenant initiated by God in the primal order and is the most basic unit of social relationships because all others derive from it. Marriage, with God as its author, is a bond creating structure for order and communicating mutual love, service, and sacrifice for one another. It also joins together associations of other families with in-laws and blood relatives creating a sense of belonging, history, and permanence.⁷¹ The covenantal view of marriage is deeply connected to freedom because freedom is only possible in the air of people who can morally *self-legislate*. Curiously, the “etymology of the term *freedom*, at least when it is traced back to its German origins, shows that it is associated with the family” and the root meaning includes the concept of love and devotion to a beloved.⁷² It is within this covenant union of family, guided by divine revelation, where a bond of love flows between a husband and wife “each loving what is good in the other and voluntarily working for the fulfillment and happiness of the beloved” that forms the basis of a free society.⁷³ Out of this covenant union children are issued and taught morality and virtues that will create social bonds free to organize, trade, and accomplish because they have a moral foundation that respects the dignity of their fellow citizen and a society where rule by law punishes those who do otherwise. While such a view may seem Norman Rockwell picturesque, Alexis de Tocqueville found marriage in America to be most praiseworthy and most healthy in contrast to other nations in the early nineteenth century. Of all the world’s countries, he wrote, “America is surely the one where the bond of marriage is most respected and where

they have conceived the highest and most just idea of conjugal happiness.”⁷⁴ Tocqueville traces the strength of the American family to religious belief (i.e. Christianity) and highlights the cyclical reinforcement of the marriage and family to the strength of freedom. Tocqueville concluded that one “cannot say that in the United States religion exerts an influence on the laws or the details of political opinions, but it directs mores, and it is in regulating the family that it works to regulate the state.”⁷⁵ Tocqueville’s observation undoubtedly reinforces the critical role of marriage and family in a free society.

State intervention is responsive in a society that revokes such sacred appreciation for marriage and family. Today, relationships are not viewed in terms of holistic benefits and covenant commitments but are “now conceived in terms of flexibility and fulfillment of the self.”⁷⁶ When the idea of marriage was reduced from a covenant to contract, it gave *individuals* the “implicit freedom to modify or terminate the contract according to their own pleasure.”⁷⁷ Marriage and relationships are now largely based upon mutual inclination or convenience and what “is based upon inclination and convenience, and not the nature of man and his duties towards his ancestors, his children, and his fellow men, will fall when the inclination fades and circumstances change.”⁷⁸ This covenantal and obligatory view of marriage and family extends to all social relationships. If one cannot be faithful to those whom they marry then how can loan agreements be honored, business partners be trusted, manufactures be reliable, and brokers be honorable? When one is loosed from personal obligation before God there is no moral compulsion to let their *yes be yes* and *no be no*. Without exaggeration, the breakdown of marriage disrupts all social relationships because society is reduced from a community to a collection of individuals each looking to promote their interests at the expense of the good of others.

Secondly, family is the seedbed of virtue and cultivation of character working compatibly with transcendent reality to sustain freedoms. Free society must share a common body of values⁷⁹ and for the United States this common value system derived from a Protestant-Christian moral framework. Consider this idea relative to economic freedom and activity. Intact families promote character development that is virtuous. Only where common moral code exists can free trade exist. This is in contrast to views that competition alone and harnessing of self-interest against self-interest is sufficient for free market operation. Those views are too abstract because they are ideas born out of a moral climate

created by Christianity. Western society, even during the Enlightenment era, was still guided by a Christian value system so there was a common expectation of how people ought to behave in transactions. When the value system goes away, so do free markets because society becomes dependent upon the state as the regulator for all affairs when people cannot regulate themselves. To be colloquial for a moment, when you don't have your mama and daddy at home telling you to eat your vegetables, lay off the cupcakes, and turn off the video games, then you get proposals from the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee of the American federal government "calling for the adoption of 'plant-based' diets, taxes on dessert, trained obesity 'interventionists' at worksites, and electronic monitoring of how long Americans sit in front of the television."⁸⁰ Again, family breakdown invites the state to take over where mom and dad once provided the training.

By promoting moral character and displaying covenant commitment, the family sponsors productive citizens for economic freedom and helps restrain selfish inclination. Marriage and family develop "habits of collaboration, focused attention, punctuality, honesty, dedication, patience, internal discipline and self-control."⁸¹ Living in a fallen order where moral evil and corruption exists, it does not take away the reality that for a company to have long term sustainability in a free market it must have "virtuous, skillful and honest employees."⁸² The collapse of moral character has led our over-lawyered society away from handshake deals and "back of a napkin" agreements because free markets demand one thing from all persons, *trust*. Trust comes from virtue which must have the covenant of family to incubate.

Family is the necessary restraint against unbridled covetousness. Just because one may have the capability of producing vast sums of wealth, Christian based family virtue restrains the sacrifice of marriage and family to achieve such fortunes. Certainly "capitalism" is an easy target to attack when pursuit of monetary gain is valued far above transcendent and permanent commitments. Robert Nisbet attributes the changes in our society to the "loose individual" noting:

Without doubt there are a great many loose individuals in American society at the present time: loose from marriage and the family, from the school, the church, the nation, job, and moral responsibility. What sociologists are prone to call social disintegration is really nothing more than the spectacle of a rising number

of individuals playing fast and loose with other individuals in relationships of trust and responsibility.⁸³

Those who value covenant commitments to marriage and family will place those “responsibilities before ... material lifestyle and increased consumption” maintaining a “balance between paid work, family time and spiritual time” that does not allow wealth to interfere with reliance upon God.⁸⁴ Free markets are not for unlimited wealth at whatever the cost, but a capitalist works “for his family, meaning chiefly his children and their children, and thereby for the future—so vital to long-run investments.”⁸⁵ Responsible household management does not burden a family with vast debts for the sake of “lifestyle” but sacrifices for the future to ensure there is private property to bequeath and enjoy a legacy of God-honoring virtue. “To work for family—the family-in-time—necessitated forbearance and sacrifice. You choose between spending annual income on self and its desires or on future generations who would carry your name proudly for all posterity”⁸⁶ (Prov 13:22). Marriage and family promote selflessness and restraint against a consumerist binge. Unfortunately, as anti-Christian views become more prevalent, children “have gone from a *marker* of economic success to a *barrier* to economic success” which is what occurs when family is removed as a priority and individuals place themselves as priority.⁸⁷

Third, a free society must protect the family from policies that suppress its flourishing or state replacement. Family must create the common values, not the state because the state will only cultivate loyalty unto itself not to the family. Government entitlement programs directly compete with family forcing one’s complete dependence in retirement not upon children but upon the government. Social security along with most government subsidies should be viewed as competition against family. Consider the promotional “Life of Julia” story depicting an entire woman’s “empowered” life without a husband, having one child, no father in view, no family ties, and relying on government for every need.⁸⁸ Government subsidies pull loyalty away from God and family to the state and millions “of people have arranged their lives in the expectation of various forms of government support that will be mathematically impossible to provide.”⁸⁹ The increased reliance on government subsidy means that future generations “will have to work harder and longer than did their parents just to tread water, if they can find work

at all in artificial economies battered by years of ‘stimulus’ and misdirected resources.”⁹⁰ The moral revolution now challenges countries in the free world economically with too much sovereign debt and a declining birthrate because people are less likely to marry and have children.⁹¹

Sadly, the public conscience seems to favor a welfare *Zeitgeist* of family disintegration whereby “more people now expect their governments to perform tasks once assumed by sons, daughters, maiden aunts, and the like.”⁹² The rejection of Christian transcendence in the western world follows early Enlightenment tendencies of anti-theists like Jean-Jacques Rousseau who sought to destroy family because by “destroying man’s familial, social, and political ties, the state could make each individual totally dependent on the state and independent of each other.”⁹³ What else should one expect from a man who was

incapable of holding a job and sponged off women his entire life. He spawned five children, not one of whom he bothered to name, all of whom he abandoned to almost certain death at an asylum. He was a sexual pervert and enjoyed physical punishment and exposing himself to women. Should it surprise us, then, that he advocated a philosophy of sexual anarchy, state ownership of children, and the subsidization of those unwilling to work?⁹⁴

Statism is neither the path to economic success nor the solution to poverty. In reality, “the best anti-poverty program in America may not be tax cuts, debt reduction or regulatory relief, but rather that old-fashioned institution called marriage.”⁹⁵ The decline of marriage is one of the “leading causes of the wealth gap and the stubborn poverty trap in many low-income neighborhoods.”⁹⁶ What remains “irrefutable is that marriage with a devoted husband and wife in the home is a far better social program than food stamps, Medicaid, public housing or even all of them combined.”⁹⁷ Evangelicals should not seek from government increased programs for the poor,⁹⁸ but view these as competition against society’s most basic source of freedom, family. We should advocate what Scripture advocates to uphold the honor of marriage before everyone and keep it undefiled (Heb 13:4). Only when marriage and family is restored within the transcendent guidance of orthodox Christianity will virtuous citizens be promoted, government spending be balanced, and economies grow.

CONCLUDING REFLECTION

The Gospel is our only hope. Too often we limit the impact of salvation to reconciliation between God and the individual instead of recognizing the broader social benefits. The Gospel is our only hope both individually and collectively for humanity to flourish and social order to exist as Gospel truths are embraced and lived out. Hope in Christ and the consummation of his kingdom temper our expectations from human government. Nevertheless, history attests to the fact that freedom and human flourishing is possible when society embraces the four convictions of human wickedness, human dignity, transcendence, and family. When these shared convictions slip from the public conscience, freedom evaporates. The task of the church is to bear witness to the true King, Jesus Christ, to live lives that reflect God's transforming power in us, and to proclaim that social stability and human flourishing is only possible when sinful and fallen creatures bow their knees to the Lord Jesus and find their redemption and salvation in him. All of society benefits from every individual that trusts in Jesus Christ for salvation as they order their lives according to Scripture.

1 Jonathan T. Pennington, "A Biblical Theology of Human Flourishing," *Institute for Faith, Work & Economics* (March 2015 via <http://ifwe.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Pennington-A-Biblical-Theology-of-Human-Flourishing.pdf>), 1-2.

2 Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 59.

3 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (ed. and trans., Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 279.

4 John Larrivee, "It's Not the Markets, It's the Morals: How Excessively Blaming Markets Undermines Civil Society," in *Back on the Road to Serfdom: The Resurgence of Statism* (ed. Thomas E. Woods, Jr.; Wilmington: ISI Books, 2010), 132.

5 Donald W. Livingston, "The Founding and the Enlightenment: Two Theories of Sovereignty," in *Vital Remnants: America's Founding and the Western Tradition* (ed. Gary L. Gregg II; Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 1999), 249.

6 David W. Hall and Matthew D. Burton, *Calvin and Commerce: The Transforming Power of Calvinism in Market Economics* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2009), 63.

7 Orestes A. Brownson, *The American Republic* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books), 12-13. Brownson argues that whether the *fall* occurred or not, government would still be a necessity due to the socializing tendencies of human nature. We are social beings and society calls for order. Law, argues Brownson, "exists in heaven as well as on earth, and in heaven in its perfection (13). James Madison likely used his statement, "If men were angels, no government would be necessary" as a rhetorical device not a philosophical point that government only exists to curb the *fallen* interests of humanity. Nonetheless, it illustrates our argument that the framers endorsed the assumptions of Protestantism concerning humanity's fallen condition.

8 Ibid.

- ⁹ Noah Webster, “An Examination of the Leading Principles of the Federal Constitution” in *The American Republic: Primary Sources* (ed. Bruce Frohnen; Indianapolis: Liberty Fund Inc., 2002), 282. For this reason, explains Ronald Nash, the Framers “knew better than to think that any group of men could be trusted with unchecked power. Because of this conviction, they created a complicated and cumbersome system of government in which various checks and balances served to make the attainment of absolute power by any one man or group extremely difficult, if not impossible.” Ronald H. Nash, *Freedom, Justice, and the State* (Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 1980), 19.
- ¹⁰ John Adams, *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States: with a Life of the Author, Notes and Illustrations, by his Grandson Charles Francis Adams* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1856). 10 volumes. Vol. 6. Chapter 1. Accessed from <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2104/159890/2827116> on 04-09-2008.
- ¹¹ The basic premise behind the egotistical principle is that man is ultimately in love with himself, and despite whether his motives are good or evil, he loves to expand his influence over others. Jouvanel reminds us that ever “since the divine dreamings of Plato, themselves stemming from earlier Utopias, the search has gone on for an entirely virtuous government and one which lives only for the interests and the wishes of the governed.” This search, however, ends in repeated failure. Even those forms of government with the best social intentions in mind witness how “the egoist principle comes to life again in its most barbarous shape every time that Power changes hands.” It cannot be assumed that because one individual or group is able to overcome the gluttony of power that its successors will follow suit. Another example is Jouvanel points out failed promises of many American politicians who vow to reduce government power yet often are responsible for its expansion once they take the reigns of power. An elected official, once voted into power, is not “concerned to cut down an office to which he aspires one day himself, or to put sand in a machine which he means to use himself when his turn comes” (13). See Bertrand de Jouvanel, *On Power: The Natural History of Its Growth* (trans. J. F. Huntington; New York: Viking Penguin, 1976; reprint, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund), 130.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 128.
- ¹³ John E. Stapleford, *Bulls, Bears, and Golden Calves: Applying Christian Ethics in Economics* (2nd ed.; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 48.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶ The five Cs of credit are: Character, Capacity, Capital, Collateral, Conditions.
- ¹⁷ Wayne Grudem and Barry Asmus, *The Poverty of Nations: A Sustainable Solution* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 227.
- ¹⁸ The Federalist, No. 51, 271.
- ¹⁹ Nash, *Freedom, Justice and the State*, 87.
- ²⁰ David VanDrunen, *Living in God’s Two Kingdoms: A Biblical Vision for Christianity and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010) 165).
- ²¹ Francis A. Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1968), 21.
- ²² *Tselem*: “image” is the most common translation of this word. It’s Greek correspondent in the LXX and NT is *eikon* as used in passages such as Rom 8:29 and 2 Cor 3:18. Aside from the passages in Genesis above, other verses where this word appears are: Numbers 33:51-52; 1 Samuel 6:5: “So you shall make likenesses of your tumors and likenesses of your mice that ravage the land, and you shall give glory to the God of Israel; perhaps he will ease his hand from you, your gods, and your land. Cf. 2 Chron 23:17; Ezek 7:20. Definition: Based upon the usage of this word throughout the OT, the best definition I believe for *tselem* is “image as representation.” It is an image that intends to represent another object or being; hence why it is typically employed for idols.
- ²³ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 67.
- ²⁴ Austin Hill and Scott Rae, *The Virtues of Capitalism: A Moral Case for Free Markets* (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2010), 26.
- ²⁵ I borrowed the “transhuman” term from Charles Rubin who describes the transhumanist agenda as redesigning humanity through converging technologies that allow the manipulation of human nature through various biological and robotic technologies. See Charles T. Rubin, *Eclipse of Man: Human Extinction and the Meaning of Progress* (New York: Encounter Books, 2014).
- ²⁶ This also applies to generational inheritance of property where estates are lost through unjust seizure of property through taxation.
- ²⁷ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: Bantam Classics, 1992), 27.
- ²⁸ Salvian the Presbyter, “The Burden of Taxation” in *The End of the Roman Empire* (3rd ed.; Donald Kagan;

- Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1992), 57.
- 29 Ibid., 55.
- 30 Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success* (New York: Random House, 2005), 36-37.
- 31 <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=1258>
- 32 <http://www.ssa.gov/oact/progdata/oasdiRates.html>
- 33 "How Much Do Americans Pay in Federal Taxes?" Peter G. Peterson Foundation accessed April 21, 2015: <http://pgpf.org/budget-explainer/taxes>
- 34 Christopher Caldwell, "The Browning of America" *Claremont Review of Books XV:1* (March 9, 2015) a review of: Diversity Explosion: How New Racial Demographics Are Remaking America, by William H. Frey. Accessed on March 19, 2015 at http://www.claremont.org/article/the-browning-of-america/#.VTd5_ClTFIN
- 35 Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Elliot* (rev. 7th ed.; Washington: Regnery, 1985), 95.
- 36 Thereby rejecting the philosophies of Voltaire and Rousseau and their followers.
- 37 John H. Hallowell, *The Moral Foundation of Democracy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1954; reprint, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund), 86.
- 38 Ibid., 90.
- 39 Since economics is the focus of this conversation it must be understood that some measures to benefit a society are distinct from that of the church which is made up of regenerate persons born anew by the Holy Spirit. It is the conviction of this author that humanity's deepest problem is moral because it separates us from God. The only pathway to moral correction is believing on the Lord Jesus Christ by trusting in his atoning death and glorious resurrection to justify sinners and set them free from the bondage of sin and death and thereby being regenerated in heart and mind by the Holy Spirit. Do not misunderstand the use of moral training as referring to salvation but only as the residual benefits of being surrounded by moral consciousness. To know right and wrong and to right things does not necessitate one be a Christian but they may do those things because of the moral conscious pressure from their social surroundings. Since humanity has a moral problem it requires the Gospel to regenerate a person and reorient their desires.
- 40 Michael J. Miller, "Business as Moral Enterprise" in *Christian Theology and Market Economics* (eds. Ian R. Harper and Samuel Gregg; Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2008), 117.
- 41 Ibid., 115.
- 42 Joe Rigney, *The Things of Earth: Treasuring God by Enjoying His Gifts* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 190.
- 43 Mark Ellingsen, *Blessed are the Cynical: How Original Sin Can Make America a Better Place* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2003), 22.
- 44 Michael S. Horton, "What If Having an Extraordinary Life Isn't the Point?" *Relevant Magazine* (October 7, 2014): <http://www.relevantmagazine.com/life/what-if-having-extraordinary-life-isnt-point>.
- 45 John Larrivee, "It's Not the Markets, It's the Morals: How Excessively Blaming Markets Undermines Civil Society" in *Back on the Road to Serfdom: The Resurgence of Statism* (ed. Thomas E. Woods, Jr.; Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2010), 144.
- 46 John R Schneider, *The Good of Affluence: Seeking God in a Culture of Wealth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 39.
- 47 Carl F. H. Henry, *Has Democracy Had Its Day?* (Nashville: ERLC Publications, 1986), 24.
- 48 David F. Wells, *Losing our Virtue: Why the Church Must Recover Its Moral Vision* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 75ff.
- 49 Graham Walker, "Virtue and the Constitution: Augustine Theology and the Frame of American Common Sense," *Vital Remnants: America's Founding and the Western Tradition* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 1999), 103.
- 50 Reflecting on this idea, Barry A. Shain wrote: "Liberty was either voluntary submission to rules of behavior tightly constrained by narrow boundaries framed by Holy Scripture and natural law, and authoritatively mediated by congregation or local community, or it was a political gift to a designated group providing a provisional dispensation from normally authoritative central governmental controls. In both instances, it was an opportunity for the community to guide the individual toward self-regulation in the service of God, the public good, and family. Individual autonomy it was not." Barry Allen Shain, *The Myth of American Individualism: The Protestant Origins of American Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; reprint, 1996), 216-217.
- 51 See Nash, *Freedom, Justice, and the State*, 99.
- 52 Ryan Messmore, "A Moral Case Against Big Government: How Government Shapes the Character, Vision, and Virtue of Citizens" *First Principles Series 9* (February 2007): 8 [online: www.heritage.org].
- 53 Ibid.

- ⁵⁴ Antony P. Mueller, "The Origins of the Crisis," *Back on the Road to Serfdom: The Resurgence of Statism* (ed. Thomas E. Woods, Jr.; Wilmington: ISI Books, 2010), 58.
- ⁵⁵ "The free fuitiion of such liberties Immunities and priveledges as humanitie, Civiltie, and Christianitie call for as due to every man in his place and proportion without impeachment and Infringement hath ever bene and ever will be the tranquillitie and Stabilitie of Churches and Commonwealths. And the denial and deprival thereof, the disturbance if not the ruine of both...We doe therefore this day religiously and unanimously decree and confirme these following Rites, liberties and priveledges concerning our Churches, and Civill State to be respectively impartiallie and inviolably enjoyed and observed throughout our Jurisdiction for ever." "The Body of Liberties of the Massachusets Collonie in New England 1641 MHS Collections, 3d ser., 8:216-19" in *The Founders' Constitution vol. 1 Major Themes* (ed. Philip B. Kurland and Ralph Lerner; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987, reprint: Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, Inc), 428.
- ⁵⁶ According to a report released by the Pew Research Center later in October 2012, the "none" category shows no sign of slowing down. In just five years, from 2007 to 2012, the number of religiously unaffiliated grew from 15% to just under 20%. In February 2014, a new survey released by the Public Religion Research Institute found that the number of "Nones" now tops 21%. So even past 1990, those identified as "religiously unaffiliated" was below 10%, but since the mid-90's decade the number has more than doubled. 64% of those who classify themselves as religiously unaffiliated are ages 33 and below. So, of this growing trend to detach oneself, 2/3 of the group is Generation Y and Millennials. The "Nones" are now America's fastest growing religious group. See "'Nones' on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation" *The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life* (October 9, 2012): 9. The decline is concentrated among white Protestants, both evangelical and mainline. Currently, 19% of U.S. adults identify themselves as white, born-again or evangelical Protestants, down slightly from 21% in 2007. And 15% of adults describe themselves as white Protestants but say they are not born-again or evangelical Christians, down from 18% in 2007. There has been no change in minority Protestants' share of the population over the past five years (14).
- ⁵⁷ These quotes came from Wallace's interview with economist Rebecca Blank carrying his full endorsement. See Jim Wallis, *Rediscovering Values: A Guide for Economic and Moral Recovery* (New York: Howard Books, 2010), 194.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid.
- ⁵⁹ Mark A. Noll, *The Old Religion in a New World: The History of North American Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 68-69.
- ⁶⁰ By "intermediate institutions" I mean those associations, organizations, or collective order of persons who act as a buffer between central government and the private individual. Intermediate institutions also refer broadly to city, county, and state government meant to address the details of its constituency against an expansive centralized government.
- ⁶¹ Tocqueville observed, "Everywhere that, at the head of a new undertaking, you see the government of France and a great lord in England, count on it that you will perceive an association in the United States." See: Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 489.
- ⁶² D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 28.
- ⁶³ Stapleford, *Bulls, Bears, and Golden Calves*, 47.
- ⁶⁴ Livingston, "The Founding and the Enlightenment: Two Theories of Sovereignty," 247.
- ⁶⁵ Eberstadt, *How the West Really Lost God*, 172.
- ⁶⁶ For a great summary of the fallout from the sexual revolution see: Mary Eberstandt, *Adam and Eve after the Pill: Paradoxes of the Sexual Revolution* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012) and Mary Kassian, *The Feminist Mistake: The Radical Impact of Feminism on Church and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2005).
- ⁶⁷ Kassian, *The Feminist Mistake*, 9.
- ⁶⁸ Anthony Esolen, *Defending Marriage: Twelve Arguments for Sanity* (Charlotte: St. Benedict Press, 2014), 6.
- ⁶⁹ William M. Struthers, *Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 57.
- ⁷⁰ Reilly, *Making Gay Okay*, 13.
- ⁷¹ This section is a summary of: Johannes Althusius, *Politica: An Abridged Translation of Politics Methodically Set Forth and Illustrated with Sacred and Profane Examples* (ed. and trans. Frederick S. Carney; Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995), 27ff.
- ⁷² See Gregory R. Beabout, "The Principle of Subsidiarity and Freedom in the Family, Church, Market, and Government," *JMM* 1:2 (October 1998), 131.
- ⁷³ Ibid.
- ⁷⁴ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 279.

- ⁷⁵ Ibid., 278.
- ⁷⁶ Ellingsen, *Blessed are the Cynical*, 141.
- ⁷⁷ Jonathan V. Last, *What to Expect When No One's Expecting: America's Coming Demographic Disaster* (New York: Encounter Books, 2013), 68.
- ⁷⁸ Anthony Esolen, *Defending Marriage: Twelve Arguments for Sanity* (Charlotte: St. Benedict Press, 2014), 23.
- ⁷⁹ See Nash, *Freedom, Justice, and the State*, 110ff.
- ⁸⁰ <http://freebeacon.com/issues/feds-america-should-adopt-plant-based-diet/>.
- ⁸¹ Miller, "Business as Moral Enterprise," 118.
- ⁸² Ibid., 119.
- ⁸³ Robert Nisbet, *The Present Age: Progress and Anarchy in Modern America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988; reprint, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1988), 87.
- ⁸⁴ Stapleford, *Bulls, Bears, and Golden Calves*, 116-117.
- ⁸⁵ Nisbet, *The Present Age*, 91.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid., 22.
- ⁸⁷ Last, *What to Expect When No One's Expecting*, 44, 93.
- ⁸⁸ See: <http://www.cnn.com/2012/05/09/opinion/bennett-obama-campaign/index.html>.
- ⁸⁹ Thomas Woods, Jr., in *Back on the Road to Serfdom: The Resurgence of Statism* (ed. Thomas E. Woods, Jr.; Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2010), ix.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid., x.
- ⁹¹ Szu Ping Chan, "The world is drowning in debt, warns Goldman Sachs" *The Telegraph* (accessed on May 26, 2015): <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/economics/11625406/The-world-is-drowning-in-debt-warns-Goldman-Sachs.html>.
- ⁹² Eberstandt, *How the West*, 16.
- ⁹³ Reilly, *Making Gay Okay*, 30.
- ⁹⁴ Brad Scott, *Streams of Confusion: Thirteen Great Ideas that are Contaminating Our Thought and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1999), 33.
- ⁹⁵ Stephen Moore, "Marriage, the Surest Economic Stimulus" <http://www.heritage.org/research/commentary/2014/11/marriage-the-surest-economic-stimulus>.
- ⁹⁶ Ibid.
- ⁹⁷ Ibid.
- ⁹⁸ Jim Wallis views the prophetic role of the church is pushing for more government subsidized programs and welfare benefits. See: *Rediscovering Values: A Guide for Economic and Moral Recovery* (New York: Howard Books, 2011), 194.