

The Federalist Papers

Kerby Anderson takes through a summary of the Federalist Papers as seen from a biblical worldview perspective. Does a Christian view of man and government undergird these foundational documents? Kerby considers this question.

Introduction

The Federalist Papers are a collection of eighty-five essays written by James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay between October 1787 and May 1788. They were written at the time to convince New York State to ratify the U.S. Constitution.



They are perhaps the most famous newspaper columns ever written, and today constitute one of the most important documents of America's founding period. They provide the justification for the Constitution and address some of the most important political issues associated with popular self-government.

Clinton Rossiter says that "*The Federalist* is the most important work in political science that has ever been written, or is likely ever to be written, in the United States. . . . It would not be stretching the truth more than a few inches to say that *The Federalist* stands third only to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution itself among all the sacred writings of American political history."[\[1\]](#) Jacob Cooke agrees. He believes that "The United States has produced three historic documents of major importance: The Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and *The Federalist*." [\[2\]](#)

All the essays were signed "Publius" even though they were written by three different authors (Hamilton wrote fifty-two, Madison wrote twenty-eight, and Jay wrote five). Political

leaders in New York opposed the new government because the state had become an independent nation under the Articles of Confederation and was becoming rich through tariffs on trade with other states. When it became apparent that New York would not ratify the Constitution, Alexander Hamilton enlisted the aid of James Madison (who was available because the Continental Congress was sitting in New York) and John Jay. Unfortunately, Jay was injured and was only able to complete a few essays.

There are many reasons for the importance of *The Federalist Papers*. First, the authors were significant figures during the founding era. James Madison is considered the architect of the Constitution and later served as President of the United States. Alexander Hamilton served in George Washington's cabinet and was a major force in setting U.S. economic policy. John Jay became the first Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Each of these men was present at the constitutional convention and was respected by their peers.

Second, *The Federalist Papers* provide the most systematic and comprehensive analysis of the constitution. Not only do the authors explain the structure of the constitution, but they also defend their decisions against the critics of their day. They were, after all, writing to convince New York to ratify the constitution.

Third, *The Federalist Papers* explain the motives of the Founding Fathers. Often when Supreme Court justices are trying to discern the founder's intentions, they appeal to these writings.^[3] *The Federalist Papers* are the most important interpretative source of constitutional interpretation and give important insight into the framers' intent and purpose for the Constitution.

Human Nature

The writers of *The Federalist Papers* were concerned about the relationship between popular government and human nature. They were well aware that human beings have the propensity to pursue short-term self-interest often at the expense of long-term benefits. The writers were also concerned that factions that formed around these areas of immediate self-interest could ultimately destroy the moral foundations of civil government.

James Madison argued in *Federalist Paper #51* that government must be based upon a realistic view of human nature:

But what is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.{4}

The writers of *The Federalist Papers* certainly believed that there was a positive aspect to human nature. They often talk about reason, virtue, and morality. But they also recognized there was a negative aspect to human nature. They believed that framing a republic required a balance of power that liberates human dignity and rationality and controls human sin and depravity.

As there is a degree of depravity in mankind which requires a certain degree of circumspection and distrust, so there are other qualities in human nature which justify a certain portion of esteem and confidence. Republican government presupposes the existence of these qualities in a higher degree than any other form.{5}

As we will discuss in more detail later, James Madison concluded from his study of governments that they were destroyed by factions. He believed this factionalism was due to “the propensity of mankind, to fall into mutual animosities” (*Federalist Paper #10*) which he believed were “sown in the nature of man.” Constitutional scholars have concluded that “the fallen nature of man influenced Madison’s view of law and government.”[\[6\]](#) He therefore concluded that government must be based upon a more realistic view which also accounts for this sinful side of human nature.

A Christian view of government is based upon a balanced view of human nature. It recognizes both human dignity (we are created in God’s image) and human depravity (we are sinful individuals). Because both grace and sin operate in government, we should neither be too optimistic nor too pessimistic. We should view governmental affairs with a deep sense of biblical realism.

Factions and the Republic

The writers of *The Federalist Papers* were concerned about the previous history of republics. Alexander Hamilton writes that “the history of the petty republics of Greece and Italy” can only evoke “horror and disgust” since they rocked back and forth from “the extremes of tyranny and anarchy.”

James Madison focused on the problem of factions. “By a faction I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of the citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.”[\[7\]](#)

Madison believed there were only two ways to cure the problem of factions: remove the causes or control the effects. He quickly dismisses the first since it would either destroy

liberty or require everyone to have “the same opinions, the same passions, and the same interests.”

He further acknowledges that “causes of faction are thus sown in the nature of man.” So he rejects the idea of changing human nature. And he also rejects the idea that a political leader will be able to deal with the problem of factions: “It is vain to say that enlightened statesmen will be able to adjust these clashing interests and render them all subservient to the public good. Enlightened statesmen will not always be at the helm.”{8}

Madison believed the solution could be found in the extended republic that the framers created. While a small republic might be shattered by factions, the larger number of representatives that would be chosen would “guard against the cabals of a few.”

Also, since “each representative will be chosen by a greater number of citizens, it will be more difficult for unworthy candidates to practice with success the vicious arts by which elections are too often carried.” Also, the voters are “more likely to center on men who possess the most attractive merit and the most diffusive and established characters.”{9}

Madison also believed that this extended republic would minimize the possibility of one faction pushing forward its agenda to the exclusion of others. This was due to the “greater number of citizens and extent of territory.” A smaller society would most likely have fewer distinct parties. But if you extend the sphere, you increase the variety and interests of the parties. And it is less likely any one faction could dominate the political arena.

Madison realized the futility of trying to remove passions or human sinfulness, and instead designed a system that minimized the influence of factions and still provided the greatest amount of liberty for its citizens.

Separation of Powers

The writers of *The Federalist Papers* were concerned with the potential abuse of power, and set forth their rationale for separating the powers of the various branches of government. James Madison summarizes their fear of the centralization of political power in a famous quote in *Federalist Paper #47*.

No political truth is certainly of greater intrinsic value, or is stamped with the authority of more enlightened patrons of liberty, than that on which the objection is founded. The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny.[{10}](#)

Madison quickly dismisses the idea that constitutional provisions alone will prevent an abuse of political power. He argues that mere “parchment barriers” are not adequate “against the encroaching spirit of power.”[{11}](#)

He also believed that the legislature posed the greatest threat to the separation of powers. “The legislative department is everywhere extending the sphere of its activity and drawing all power into its impetuous vortex.”[{12}](#) The framers therefore divided Congress into a bicameral legislature and hoped that the Senate would play a role in checking the passions of popular majorities (*Federalist Paper #63*).

His solution was to give each branch separate but rival powers. This prevented the possibility of concentrating power into the hands of a few. Each branch had certain checks over the other branches so there was a distribution and balance of power.

The effect of this system was to allow ambition and power to control itself. Each branch is given power, and as ambitious

men and women seek to extend their sphere of influence, they provide a check on the other branch.

Madison said, "Ambition must be made to counteract ambition. The interest of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place. It may be a reflection on human nature that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government."[{13}](#) This policy of supplying "opposite and rival interests" has been known as the concept of countervailing ambitions.

In addition to this, the people were given certain means of redress. Elections and an amendment process have kept power from being concentrated in the hands of governmental officials. Each of these checks was motivated by a healthy fear of human nature. The founders believed in human responsibility and human dignity, but they did not trust human nature too much. Their solution was to separate powers and invest each branch with rival powers.

Limited Government

The writers of *The Federalist Papers* realized the futility of trying to remove passions and ambition from the population. They instead divided power and allowed "ambition to counteract ambition." By separating various institutional power structures, they limited the expansion of power.

This not only included a horizontal distribution of powers (separation of powers), but also a vertical distribution of powers (federalism). The federal government was delegated certain powers while the rest of the powers were reserved to the states and the people.

James Madison rightly called this new government a republic which he defined as "a government which derives all its powers directly or indirectly from the great body of people, and is administered by persons holding their offices during pleasure

for a limited period, or during good behavior.”{14}

He also argued that “the proposed government cannot be deemed a national one; since its jurisdiction extends to certain enumerated objects only, and leaves to the several states a residuary and inviolable sovereignty over all other objects.”{15}

Governmental power was limited by the Constitution and its interpretation was delegated to the judicial branch. As Alexander Hamilton explained, the Constitution was to be the supreme law of the land.

A constitution is, in fact, and must be regarded by the judges as, a fundamental law. It therefore belongs to them to ascertain its meaning as well as the meaning of any particular act proceeding from the legislative body. If there should happen to be an irreconcilable variance between the two, that which has the superior obligation and validity ought, of course, to be preferred; or, in other words, the Constitution ought to be preferred to the statute, the intention of the people to the intention of their agents.{16}

Although Hamilton referred to the judiciary as the weakest of the three branches of government, some of the critics of the Constitution warned that the Supreme Court “would be exalted above all power in the government, and subject to no control.”{17} Unfortunately, that assessment certainly has proved correct over the last few decades.

The Federalist Papers provide an overview of the political theory that undergirds the U.S. Constitution and provide important insight into the intentions of the framers in constructing a new government. As we have also seen, it shows us where the current governmental structure strays from the original intent of the framers.

The framers fashioned a government that was based upon a realistic view of human nature. The success of this government

in large part is due to separating power structures because of their desire to limit the impact of human sinfulness.

Notes

1. Clinton Rossiter, *The Federalist Papers* (New York: New American Library, 1961), vii.
2. Jacob E. Cooke, *The Federalist* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), ix.
3. James G. Wilson, "The Most Sacred Text: The Supreme Court's Use of The Federalist Papers," *Brigham Young University Law Review* I (1985).
4. James Madison, *Federalist Papers*, #51 (New York: New American Library, 1961), 322.
5. Madison, *Federalist Papers* #55, 346.
6. John Eidsmoe, *Christianity and the Constitution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1987), 101.
7. Madison, *The Federalist Papers*, #10, 78.
8. Ibid., 80.
9. Ibid., 82-3.
10. Madison, *The Federalist Papers*, #47, 301.
11. Madison, *The Federalist Papers*, #48, 308.
12. Ibid., 309.
13. Madison, *The Federalist Papers*, #51, 322.
14. Madison, *The Federalist Papers*, #39, 241.
15. Ibid, 245.
16. Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist Papers*, #78, 467.
- 17 Herbert Storing and Murray Day, eds. *The Complete Anti-Federalist* (University of Chicago Press, 1981) II, 420.

The Psychology of Prisoner Abuse

Those Awful Pictures

Do you remember how you felt as the Iraq prisoner abuse scandal began to unfold in spring 2004? Maybe you saw the disturbing pictures when they were first aired on CBS television's *60 Minutes II*. Soon they were transmitted around the globe. They greeted you on the front page of your morning newspaper and on the evening news. The stream seemed endless.

You saw naked Iraqi prisoners in various stages of humiliation: hooded, naked men stacked in a pyramid; others lying on the floor or secured to a bed; one in a smock standing on a box with his arms outstretched and wires attached to him. In some of the photos, male and female American soldiers grinned and pointed. In one picture, a female soldier stood holding a leash around the neck of a naked male prisoner. In others, soldiers grinned over what appeared to be a corpse packed in ice.

What feelings did you experience? Shock? Anger? Rage? Disgust? Maybe you felt embarrassed or ashamed. "How could they do such degrading things to other human beings?" you might have wondered. Perhaps you feared how the growing storm might affect the life of your friend or family member serving in Iraq. Or wrestled with how to explain the abuse to your children.

Finger pointing began almost as soon as the story broke. High-ranking military and government officials announced that these were aberrations carried out by a few unprincipled prison guards. Accused military police claimed they were merely following orders of military intelligence officials to soften prisoners up for interrogation. Others insisted soldiers had a

moral obligation to disobey orders to do wrong. The accused countered that the harsh techniques were in place before they arrived for duty at the prison. Ethical arguments surfaced that the war on terror demanded tough methods to help prevent another 9/11.

What factors prompt people to abuse others in such degrading ways? What goes on inside the minds of the abusers? Are there special social forces at work? While this article won't attempt to analyze specific cases in the Iraq prison scandal, it will consider some fascinating psychological experiments that reveal clues to the roots of such behavior. The results - - and their implications -- may disturb you. A biblical perspective will also offer some insight.

The Stanford Prison Experiment

CBS News correspondent Andy Rooney said the Iraq prisoner abuse is "a black mark that will be in the history books in a hundred languages for as long as there are history books."[\[1\]](#)

Stanford University psychologist Philip Zimbardo was not surprised by the Abu Ghraib prison abuse. He had observed similar behavior in his famous 1971 experiment involving a mock prison in the basement of the Stanford psychology building.[\[2\]](#) The experiment showed that otherwise normal people can behave in surprisingly outrageous ways.

Zimbardo and his colleagues selected twenty-four young men considered from interviews and psychological tests to be normal and healthy. Volunteers were randomly assigned to be either "prisoners" or "guards." Guards wore uniforms and were told to maintain control of the prison and not to use violence.

On the second day, prisoners rebelled, asserting their independence with barricades, taunting and cursing. Guards suppressed the rebellion. Zimbardo reports that the guards

then “steadily increased their coercive aggression tactics, humiliation and dehumanization of the prisoners.”{3} He says the worst abuse came at night when guards thought no psychology staff were observing.{4} Zimbardo remembers that the guards “began to use the prisoners as playthings for their amusement... They would get them to simulate sodomy. They also stripped prisoners naked for various offenses and put them in solitary for excessive periods.”{5} They dressed them in smocks, chained them together at the ankles, blindfolded them with paper bags on their heads, and herded them along in a group.{6} Sound familiar?

It was Berkeley professor Christina Maslach, Zimbardo’s then romantic interest whom he later married, who jolted him back to reality. On Day Five, she entered the prison to preview the experiment in preparation for some subject interviews she had agreed to conduct the next day. Shocked by what she saw, she challenged Zimbardo’s ethics later that evening – screaming and yelling in quite a fight, she recalls. That night, Zimbardo decided to halt the experiment.{7}

Zimbardo feels that prisons are ripe for abuse without firm measures to check guards’ lower impulses.{8} He recommends “clear rules, a staff that is well trained in those rules and tight management that includes punishment for violations.”{9}

An old Jewish proverb says, “Like a roaring lion or a charging bear is a wicked man ruling over a helpless people.”{10} Unfettered prison officials -- or most anyone -- can yield to their baser natures when tempted by power inequalities.

The Perils of Obedience

What about those who say they were only obeying authority? How far will people go to inflict harm under orders? In the 1960s, Yale psychologist Stanley Milgram conducted classic experiments on obedience.{11} (Ironically, Milgram and Stanford psychologist Philip Zimbardo were high school

classmates.{12})

At Yale, Milgram set up a series of experiments “to test how much pain an ordinary citizen would inflict on another person simply because he was ordered to by an experimental scientist.” He writes, “Stark authority was pitted against the subjects’ strongest moral imperatives against hurting others, and, with the subjects’ ears ringing with the screams of the victims, authority won more often than not.”{13}

Milgram’s basic design involved a volunteer “teacher” and a “learner.” The learner was actually an actor who was in on the deception. The learner was strapped to “a kind of miniature electric chair” with an electrode on his wrist. The teacher sat before an impressive-looking “shock generator ” with switches indicating voltages from 15-450 volts.{14}

The teacher asked test questions of the learner and was instructed to administer increasingly large shocks for each incorrect answer. (You say you’ve known some teachers like that?) The machine here was a fake -- no learner received shocks -- but the teacher thought it was real.

In the initial experiment, over 60 percent of teachers obeyed the experimenter’s orders to the end and punished the victim with the maximum 450 volts. Milgram found similarly disturbing levels of obedience across various socioeconomic levels. His conclusions after hundreds of experiments were chilling:

...Ordinary people, simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a terrible destructive process. Moreover, even when the destructive effects of their work become patently clear, and they are asked to carry out actions incompatible with fundamental standards of morality, relatively few people have the resources needed to resist authority.{15}

Why did they obey? Milgram offers several possibilities. Fears

of appearing rude, desires to please an authority, aspirations to do one's best, and lack of direct accountability can all cloud judgment. But could there be something deeper, something in human nature that influences abuse? A famous novel illustrates how the dark side of human nature can affect group behavior.

Lord of the Flies

Prisoner abuse shows what can happen when power inequalities and inappropriate devotion to authority distort one's moral compass. Nobel laureate William Golding's short novel, *Lord of the Flies*,[{16}](#) illustrates through a fictional story how similar flaws can manifest in society. A film version of the book helped inspire the popular television series *Survivor*.[{17}](#)

Lord of the Flies opens on a remote, uninhabited island on which some British schoolboys, ages six to twelve, find themselves after an airplane crash. An atomic war has begun, and apparently the plane was evacuating the boys when it was shot down. The island has fresh water, fruit, and other food. The setting seems idyllic. Best of all, the boys discover, there are no grownups (the plane and its crew presumably have washed into the sea).

Four central characters soon emerge. Ralph is elected leader. Piggy, an overweight asthmatic and champion of reason, becomes Ralph's friend. Simon is a quiet lad with keen discernment. Jack becomes a hunter.

At first, the boys get along without much conflict. Soon, though, fears envelop them, and they debate whether an evil beast might inhabit the island. Jack and his followers kill a wild pig and, in frenzied blood lust, dance to chants of "*Kill the pig! Cut her throat! Bash her in!*"[{18}](#) When Ralph criticizes Jack for breaking some tribal rules, Jack replies, "Who cares?" His hunting prowess will rule.[{19}](#)

One night, some boys see a dead parachutist, which they mistake for the “evil beast” and flee. Jack posts a pig’s head onto a stick in the ground as a gift for the beast. The decaying, fly- covered pig’s head soon becomes for Simon the “Lord of the Flies,” a sort of personification of evil.{20} Later, Simon discovers that the feared “beast” is only a human corpse. Running to tell the group this good news, he encounters their mock pig-killing ritual. The crazed boys attack Simon and kill him. Nearly all the boys follow Jack and, acting like savages with painted bodies and spears, kill Piggy and hunt down Ralph. Only the surprise appearance of a British naval officer, drawn by the smoke from a fire, halts the mad pursuit. Ralph and the boys dissolve in tears. Ralph weeps, as Golding writes, “for the end of innocence, the darkness of man’s heart....”{21}

Lord of the Flies is filled with symbolism, both biblical and from Greek tragedy. But Golding’s stated purpose was “to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature.”{22} Could his point that darkness lurks in the human heart help explain the prisoner abuse?

Animal House Meets Lord of the Flies

Prisoner abuse is a sad reality in the U.S. and abroad.{23} The Iraq prisoner abuse scandal smacks of fraternity hazing on steroids, *Animal House* meets *Lord of the Flies*. Consider from this sad episode some lessons for both prison reform and society in general:

- *Establish clear rules for prison staff; train them well and punish them for violations*, as Stanford psychologist Philip Zimbardo recommends.
- *Educate against blind conformity*. Some of Milgram’s experimental subjects found the strength to resist abusive authority.{24} Some psychologists feel that strong moral values and experience with conformity can

strengthen moral courage.{25}

- *Involve external observers and critics.* Often outsiders, not emotionally swept up in a project or event, can through their psychological distance more clearly assess ethical issues. For example, Christina Maslach, Philip Zimbardo's friend and colleague who challenged the ethics of his prison experiment, credits her late arrival on the scene with facilitating her concern. The experimenters who had planned and had been conducting the experiment for five days were less likely to be startled by the developing misconduct, she maintained.{26}
- *Realistically appraise human nature's dark side.* Again, Golding said *Lord of the Flies* was "an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature." {27} Jesus of Nazareth was, of course, quite clear on this point. He said, "From within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, eagerness for lustful pleasure, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these vile things come from within..." {28}

Some dismiss as simplistic any analyses of human suffering that begin with alleged defects in human nature. They would rather focus on changing social structures and political systems. While many structures and political systems need changing, may I suggest that a careful analysis of the human heart is not simplistic? Rather it is fundamental.

Perhaps that's why Paul, a leader who agreed with Jesus' assessment of human nature, {29} focused on changing hearts. Paul was a former persecutor of Jesus' followers who zealously imprisoned them {30} but later joined them and became a prisoner himself. {31} Paul eventually claimed that when people place their faith in Jesus as he had, they "become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is

gone. A new life has begun!"^{32} Could this diagnosis and prescription have something to say to us amidst today's prisoner abuse scandals?

Notes

1. Andy Rooney, "Our Darkest Days are Here," CBS 60 Minutes, May 23, 2004, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/05/20/60minutes/rooney/main618783.shtml>.

2. Kathleen O'Toole, "The Stanford Prison Experiment: Still powerful after all these years," Stanford University News Service, January 8, 1997, <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/news/pr/97/970108prisonexp.html>.

A slideshow presentation of the experiment is at www.prisonexp.org. See also W. Lawrence Neuman, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Third Edition (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997), 447; Claudia Wallis, "Why Did They Do It?" TIME.com, posted May 9, 2004 (from *TIME* magazine, cover date May 17, 2004), <http://www.time.com/time/covers/1101040517/wtorturers.html>; John Schwartz, "Simulated Prison in '71 Showed a Fine Line Between 'Normal' and 'Monster'," *New York Times*, May 6, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/06/international/middleeast/06PSYC.html?pagewanted=print&position=>.

3. O'Toole, loc. cit.

4. Ibid.

5. Wallis, loc. cit.

6. O'Toole, loc. cit.

7. Ibid.

8. Schwartz, loc. cit.

9. Wallis, loc. cit. The words are Wallis'.

10. Proverbs 28:15 NIV.

11. Stanley Milgram, "The Perils of Obedience," *Harper's*, December 1973, 62-66, 75-77. (The article is adapted from Milgram's book, *Obedience to Authority* [Harper and Row, 1974]). See also Neuman, loc. cit.; O'Toole, loc. cit.; Schwartz, loc. cit.; Wallis, loc. cit.; Anahad O'Connor, "Pressure to Go Along With Abuse Is Strong, but Some Soldiers Find Strength to Refuse," *New York Times*, May 14, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/14/international/14RESI.html?ei=5059&en=854c94250243f62d&ex=1084593600&partner=AOL&pagewanted=print&position=>.

12. O'Toole, loc. cit.

13. Milgram 1973, op. cit., 62.

14. Ibid., 62-63.

15. Ibid., 75- 76.

16. William Golding, *Lord of the Flies* (New York: Perigee, 1988). This "Casebook Edition" includes the 1954 novel plus notes and criticism edited by James R. Baker and Arthur P. Ziegler, Jr.

17.

<http://www.cbs.com/primetime/survivor8/show/episode14/s8story3.shtml>.

18. Golding, op. cit., 69; emphasis Golding's.

19. Ibid., 84.

20. Many have noted that the phrase "lord of the flies" translates the word "Beelzebub." See, for instance, E.L. Epstein, "Notes on Lord of the Flies," in Golding, op. cit., 279: "'The lord of the flies' is, of course, a translation of the Hebrew Ba'alzevuv (Beelzebub in Greek) which means

literally 'lord of insects.'" Theologian Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., commenting on Matthew 10:24 ff. says, "Beelzebub (the Gr. has Beezeboul) was a name for Satan, the prince of the demons, perhaps derived from Baal-Zebub, god of the Philistine city of Ekron (2 Kings 1:2). 'Beelzebub' means 'lord of the flies,' and 'Beezeboul' or 'Beelzeboul' means 'lord of the high place.'" (In "Matthew," John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* [Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc., 1983, 1985], Logos Research Systems digital version.) Biblical references to Beelzebub include Matthew 12:24, 27; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15, 18, 19. In a 1962 interview, Golding himself referred to "the pig's head on the stick" as "Beelzebub, or Satan, the devil, whatever you'd like to call it...." (James Keating, "Interview with William Golding," in Golding, op. cit., 192.)

21. Golding, op. cit., 186-187.

22. Epstein, op. cit., 277-278. The words are Golding's.

23. For example, see "Missouri 'Rain' Leads to Toilet Duty," *Inside Journal: The Hometown Newspaper of America's Prisoners*, 14:7, November/December 2003, 5. Inside Journal publisher Prison Fellowship, www.pfm.org, and its affiliates seek to help rehabilitate prisoners and promote restorative justice.

24. Milgram 1973, op. cit., 63-64.

25. O'Connor, loc. cit.

26. O'Toole, loc. cit.

27. Epstein, loc. cit.

28. Mark 7:21-23 NLT.

29. For detailed information on Jesus and evidence to support His claims, see www.WhoIsJesus-Really.com.

30. Acts 8:3; 22:3-5 ff.

31. E.g., Acts 16:19-40.

32. 2 Corinthians 5:17 NLT.

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Man in Search of Himself

A study of man's nature, origin, value and perfectibility raises significant, important questions. Is he the "measure of all things" and made just "a little lower than the angels"? Or has he been reduced to his biochemical components, the quintessence of dust itself? Is it even possible for a man to know "himself"? Is he the glory or the shame of the universe? Or both? Does he even belong here, or is he an interloper—the missing link between his primal ancestors and the really humane being of tomorrow? Is man different from animals and things? How so? And if so, how and why is he different? These are some of the questions considered in this essay, the answers to which create a great divide among people and how they view the reality we all share.

Difference in Degree or Kind?

First of all, if man is to be considered different or unique, how so? Is it a difference in *degree* or *kind*?

Difference in Degree

Some would argue today that man is only different in degree, like the size of the angles in obtuse triangles are different from each other, or like the difference of molecular motions observed in hot and cold water, or the difference between 1 and 100. The concept of difference in degree *only* is at the heart of original Darwinian theory, which sees man as arising

from non-man. According to this view, then, man is different only in degree, not kind, from animals, plants, and things.

Others would modify this view, suggesting that observable distinctions or kinds are really only apparent in the complexities of organic and inorganic development on the planet, and the passage from one qualitative state to another is synthesized with an underlying continuum of degrees which lead to threshold. For example, the link between liquid H₂O and gaseous H₂O is a change in temperature. Or the link between acidic solutions (colorless) and basic solutions (pink) is a color indicator, the change of pH. Lorenz and other ethologists would view man in this light, an observable expression of the continuing processes of mutation and selection. The primatologists doing language studies with chimps and gorillas are conducting their research primarily under the same assumption.

Both of these views have some devastating consequences to man, who continues to resist their implications. The first view suggests that things and animals may assume what has up until now been considered exclusively "human" rights. Adler points this

out in by quoting John Lilly:

The day that communication is established the [dolphin] becomes a legal, ethical, moral and social problem. . . They have reached the level of humanness as it were! (Brackets mine){1}

Of robots, Adler cites a similar conclusion by Michael Scriven:

If it [a robot] is a person, of course it will have moral rights and hence political rights. (Brackets mine){2}

The mixed imagery of man, machines, and animals portrayed in

the “bar scene” of *StarWars* was getting at the same thing, depicting a world where this distinction was removed. And such historians as Arnold Toynbee and Lynn White argue that this very exclusivity of man for rights now denied to animals and robots is that which has brought about an arbitrary and destructive dichotomy between man and the rest of nature:

Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia's religions, not only established a dualism of man and nature, but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends.

When the Greco-Roman world was converted to Christianity, the divinity was drained out of nature and concentrated on a single transcendent God. Man's greedy impulse to exploit nature used to be held in check by his awe, his pious worship of nature. Now monotheism, as enunciated in Genesis, has removed the age-old restraint.[*{3}*](#)

Failure to remove this “dichotomy,” they say, has caused men to live *above* nature and to exploit it for selfish ends. Their solution is to erase it and invite man to become “one” again with nature. Herein lies part of the present attractiveness of Eastern, monistic thought to the contemporary Western mind.

It is, however, noteworthy that attempts to eliminate the dichotomy have brought about varying results in both East and West. In the West, the dignity and value of human life has generally lessened in importance during the past 100 years. This despairing theme has been a dominant force in art, music, drama, and literature of the twentieth century. One of the uncomfortable but inescapable by-products of technological advancement and the exactitudes of scientific measurement is pointed out by Adler, who predicts a new (or old?) kind of dichotomy which divides human *from* human:

We can, therefore, imagine a future state of affairs in which a new global division of mankind replaces all the old

parochial divisions based upon race, nationality, or ethnic groups—a division that separates the human elite at the top of the scale from the human scum at the bottom, a division based on the accurate scientific measurement of human ability and achievement and one, therefore, that is factually incontrovertible. At this future time, let the population pressures have reached that critical level at which emergency measures must be taken if human life is to endure and be endurable. Finish the picture by imagining that before this crisis occurs, a global monopoly of authorized force has passed into the hands of the elite—the mathematicians, the scientists, and the technologists, not only those whose technological skill has mechanized the organization of men in all large scale economical and political processes. The elite are then the de facto as well as the de jure rulers of the world. At that juncture, what would be wrong in principle with their decision to exterminate a large portion of mankind—the lower half, let us say—thus making room for their betters to live and breathe more comfortably?[\[4\]](#)

Thus, Planet Earth becomes the private playground of the planned, the privileged, and the perfect!

The second view is equally unacceptable for two reasons, one of which is related to the material just stated. How can value and dignity originate from the Arbitrary? Is a liquid more valuable than a gas? This approach is a merely subjective, decision-making process which asserts that dignity and value exist on one side of the threshold and not on the other. Utilitarians would answer the question in teleological fashion, saying, “It all depends upon the context: what is happening, what is needed, and what is intended.”

Unhappily, the underlying assumption in this answer is an optimistic, flattering one which idealizes man and his intentions. History has not yet confirmed this. Man will not always do the good and right thing, even when he knows what it

is. We will return to this issue later. Another consideration is that of the reversibility of this approach. With no compelling reason for advance, man could undergo a “devolutionary” process as easily as an “evolutionary” one.

Difference in Kind

A third possibility is that man is truly different from animals and things; he is different in *kind*. By definition, we mean that with respect to some property, two things differ in that one *has* the property and the other *lacks* it. A triangle and a square are different in kind, though both are geometric designs. The same can be said of the differences between a zero and a one, or man and non-man. In making this distinction, it is important to remember that “difference” does not imply “better” or “worse”; therefore other criteria are necessary before there would be legitimate reason to treat people better than things or animals. Are such criteria present? This is a crucial question.

It appears that in defining the question of man’s place and purpose (if any) on the planet, one available option is to view man, along with animals, plants and things, as the accidental result of impersonal, cosmic processes. Under such an assumption, man therefore could not possess any superior claim to dignity and value. In fact, values in this line of reasoning must be relegated to the realm of *what is*, since there *is* nothing else. In true Sartrean fashion, man is condemned to be free—all is permitted and possible. The process is ultimately and totally arbitrary. “Ought” is only opinion, whether expressed publicly or privately by a majority or a minority. Thomas Huxley himself admitted that evolution leads to “bad” ethics.[\[5\]](#)

Ethics built upon nature, it would seem, must ever face the difficulty of how to move from the *descriptive* to the

prescriptive and still maintain its own consistency as a system. Konrad Lorenz attempted to answer this by asserting that human behavior traits and “values” are linked to human physiology, and they have simply been passed on because of their survival value.

An alternative answer to the above is that *all* things—plants, animals, and people—are valuable, not because they have so designated themselves to be, but because they are the true and real (though finite) expressions of an Infinite Creator. Their value has been assigned to them by a transcendent One. Man thus has worth and is different because his creator ascribed it to him. No one questions man’s “downward” relationship, his identification and similarities to animal, plant and thing. Granted, he shares his “finiteness” with them, and in varying degrees of complexity, his biochemical make-up.

But is this man’s *only* relationship? Is it possible that man’s differences, dissimilarities, and dignity can never find adequate explanations “downward” but might find their source in a second “upward” relationship? This would be the main difference between the Monist (materialism) and the Dualist (theism/transcendence). Both have their philosophical and theological difficulties. The monist must find his solution within the box he has created by his position (the *cosmos*, observable reality, and nothing beyond).

The dualist claims there *is* something outside the box, but human reason and sense perception cannot tell you much (if anything) about it. Both positions are faced with a dilemma of sorts. It would seem that the criteria to establish special, human value is not possible within the framework of monism, and would only be possible in dualism if the “Transcendent One,” the Creator, through self-disclosure (revelation), had made this human value assessment known to us.

The Uniqueness of Man

If we grant the assumption that man is different in kind—qualitatively different, in what ways is he so? The late Francis Schaeffer often used a term to describe this difference: the “mannishness” of man. This uniqueness falls into several areas, including the anatomical, physiological, cultural, psychological, and moral.

Physical

Anatomically, man’s erectness is unique. There is no observed evolution between primates and man. Primates don’t have feet; they literally have four hands. Primates also lack a circulatory system which would support an erect animal. Man, on the other hand, possesses knees that lock. His head is balanced on his shoulders. His spine is curved in four places for comfort in a wide variety of positions. His arms are short and his legs are long. Primates have the opposite proportions.

Man’s erectness has therefore freed him, but not to the extent that it explains his dominance over the entire animal kingdom. In fact, man has dominated in ways totally unrelated to nature’s way of achieving dominance. Man is basically defenseless. He has no dependable instincts (by comparison), no sharp teeth, claws, camouflage or wings. He is physically weak. A 120-pound monkey is three to five times as strong as a man.[{6}](#)

Jose Delgado points out that even man’s brain cannot explain his dominance. His brain is large, but whales and elephants have larger brains. Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon had larger brains. Whale brains are more convoluted than human ones. Monkeys are very intelligent, but they demonstrate little ability to dominate any intra-species animal.[{7}](#)

Other physiological uniquenesses include man’s eating habits.

He can eat nearly every type of food and is nourished by it. He is only 20% efficient and hence eats four times as much as is needed. He is also in a class by himself with respect to thermoregulation. In the cold, his body applies vasoconstriction, tightens skeletal muscles, shivers, and withdraws surface fluids. In the heat, man is truly unique in his thermogenic sweat glands over his body. The hypothalamus responds to a .01% rise in blood temperature. Horses, on the other hand, sweat only in response to stress and adrenalin in the blood. And primates (nearest to man?) are poor thermoregulators.

Man is also susceptible to disease and slow to heal. He is unique in that his tight skin demands sutures when cut. As a sexual being, he can breed anytime and for a variety of reasons. Ovulation and heat do not necessarily coincide. He interbreeds easily with all members of his species. He is also unique in his nakedness and his "wasp" waist.[\[8\]](#)

Cultural

Culturally, man is global in his habitat. The adaptability explained above is largely responsible for this. He makes tools and fire; he uses language with concepts. He is creative, a maker of art. From the dawn of his history, he appears to have been religious. He is a social creature. His young are long in maturing, thus calling for high, enduring family commitment. The male is (or can be) a part of the family.

Psychological

Philosophers, biologists, and psychologists all have to come to grips with the problems involved in trying to explain all that we observe about man in terms of just physical origins

and causes. To encompass the entire realm of the human powers of reasoning, the complicated strata of human emotions, the apparent use of "free will," as well as the more irrational elements of human behavior within a purely physical explanation seems heroic, to say the least. Recent attempts to eliminate all distinctions between humans and higher animals, and therefore hoping to explain man entirely in terms of what is physical or animal, are far from conclusive.

A major effort has been made to demonstrate, for example, that the use of language, long considered man's exclusive and ultimate claim to distinction within the animal kingdom, is now possible among the primates.[\[9\]](#) Chimps have been taught the American Sign Language for the Deaf and are reported to be using sentences and grammar as they put "sign" blocks in proper order, or punch out the correct order of signs on a computer keyboard.

What is being demonstrated thus far by these language studies is not language, but signaling behavior. . .the proper response to a physical stimulus. Many animals, including pigeons, dogs, cats, horses, rats, etc., use this behavior. Whales and dolphins are known to possess communicative abilities superior to monkeys (are whales a nearer relative to man?). But all of these animals fail to use actual concepts, which are the true test of language and grammar. While a chimp can learn "triangular" as a concept, there is still a physical stimulus to which the animal can relate. A true concept like "political science" can only be learned by man. Grammatical structure in chimps or the playing of a complicated song on a little piano by a pigeon are examples of chaining sequences, or shaping behavior by operant condition *a la* B.F. Skinner. The animal need not understand or grasp the pattern in order to use it. Further, chimps who have been given the tools of communication progress to a limit, and no farther. In other words, a chimp may be taught to communicate to some extent, but once trained, he has very little to say![\[10\]](#)

In the area of man's emotions, studies have tried to show that emotions are totally produced by what is happening psychochemically in the body. But some research demonstrates that other factors enter in and affect the emotions. Drug studies with adrenalin produced different (joyful or sad) emotional states in subjects who experienced the same drug states, but different (euphoric or melancholic) social contexts. Human mental states, to some extent, apparently transcend physical states.[{11}](#)

Physiological models of brain function stress the idea that parts of the brain give rise to and control bodily motions, thoughts, and emotional states. Experiments where rats are eating out of control, or raging bulls are stopped dead in their tracks by brain manipulation, are used to demonstrate the absence of free choice, or self-control among animals or humans.[{12}](#)

Skinner felt that the environment "pushed the buttons" on man's computer brain. In either case, man's will is not to be considered to in any sense "free." When the buttons are pushed (from within or without), man and beast will behave accordingly and predictively.

And yet, even in the animal experiments, one wonders if the conclusions are accurate. How can the purely "mechanical" nature of even an animal's mental state be measured? A viewing of the film shows that when the bull charged Delgado in the bull ring, the electric jolt to the implanted electrodes in its head stopped the animal in its tracks, and it appeared to be stunned as if shot. The bull then wheeled around in bewilderment and pain; it did not turn into "Ferdinand" and begin to sniff the flowers!

Brain research with respect to human will is even more conclusive. Brain mechanisms apparently influence, but do not exclusively determine, human behavior, since moral and social factors have been known to overrule brain damage or brain

control. A woman who experienced a damaged hypothalamus gained nearly 100 pounds after her accident, but one day she looked in the mirror and did not like what she saw. She went on a diet and lost the weight.{13}

Another woman suffering with epilepsy was able to override her emotions and her desire to get up and attack her doctor when he stimulated her amygdala with a brain probe. Other factors came to bear on her aggressive tendencies and modified her response. She admitted she felt like it, but she didn't do it!{14}

These two cases indicate that there are elements present within the human brain which transcend and sometimes do override what the physical parts command or demand. Human behavior can never be reduced and totally explained by physical brain function. Something more is present and inexplicable.

Moral

We now come to an assessment of the moral nature of man. There seem to be three basic positions offered to explain human moral notions or inclinations. And all three accept that man has this unique capacity. . .to distinguish right from wrong. The first is one that views man as **morally neutral at birth**. This was John Locke's view, that man enters the world morally ignorant with a "blank tablet." And therefore man's personality and his moral notions are shaped exclusively by his personal experiences and his environment.

J. B. Watson, the father of behaviorism, embraced this view when he said,

Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specific world to bring them up in and I'll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of

specialist I might select—doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief, and yes, even beggar man and thief.[{15}](#)

In “ink blotter” fashion, then, this view sees man’s personality development as extremely malleable, and capable of being shaped dramatically by environmental forces. We do not here deny the strong force that environment can and does play in shaping a human being. But the question must be asked, however: Can *all* personality development be traced to environmental factors? Is there no genetic contribution whatsoever beyond that of providing the “empty tablet?” And how “blank” is blank? Doesn’t it seem that though a conscience must be educated as to specifics of moral behavior, the “tablet” already possesses a moral capacity to comprehend and differentiate moral alternatives? These questions constitute and remain major criticisms of behaviorist theory.

A second view of man presupposes man as essentially good, or on his way to *being* good. In the 19th century, Tennyson spoke to this issue when he wrote:

*Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.*[{16}](#)

It is well to remember that this view of Tennyson’s was not inspired by Darwin’s *Origin of the Species*, because it would not be written until ten years after Tennyson wrote these words in his poem, “In Memoriam.” He, like many others, was caught up in the optimistic tide of the Industrial Revolution. His contemporary, Herbert Spencer, sounded a similar note when he said,

“The inference that as advancement has been hitherto the rule, it will be the rule, it will be the rule henceforth, may be called a plausible speculation. But when it is shown that this advancement is due to the working of a universal law; and in virtue of that law it must continue until the

state we call perfection is reached, then the advent of such a state is removed out of the region of probability into that of certainty. . .

As surely as a blacksmith's arm grows large and the skin of a laborer's hand becomes thick; . . .as surely as passion grows by indulgence and diminishes when restrained; . . .so surely must the things we call evil and immorality disappear; so surely must man become perfect." (emphasis mine){17}

This spirit of optimism for an improving moral future was reinforced a little later by Darwin and others. With confidence about the progress of tomorrow, Darwin said:

Hence we may look with some confidence to a secure future of equally inappreciable length. And as Natural Selection [notice capital letters] works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental environments will tend to progress towards perfection. (comment mine){18}

H.G. Wells looked to the future with the same optimism when he wrote in his *Short History of the World*:

Can we doubt that presently our race will more than realize our boldest imaginations. . .in a world made more splendid and lovely than any palace or garden that we have known, going on from strength to strength in an ever widening circle of adventure and achievement? What man has done, the little triumphs of his present state. . .form but the prelude to the things that man has yet to do.{19}

Two world wars and accompanying aftermath shook Wells, the Huxleys, C.E.M. Joad, Bertrand Russell, and many others to the core. Optimism turned to discouragement and then to disillusionment. Wells would later write:

Quite apart from any bodily depression, the spectacle of evil

in the world—the wanton destruction of homes, the ruthless hounding of decent folk into exile, the bombings of open cities, the cold blooded massacres and mutilations of children and defenseless gentlefolk, the rapes and filthy humiliations and, above all, the return of deliberate and organized torture, mental torment, and fear to a world from which such things had seemed well nigh banished. . .has come near to breaking my heart.[{20}](#)

Ironically, many leading humanistic psychologists (including such notables as Karl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, Eric Fromm, Rollo May) who watched thirty or forty more years of the twentieth century pass by with Koreas and Vietnams, iron and bamboo curtains, cold and hot wars, famines, atrocities, etc., still do not recognize, admit, nor share Well's perspective, but rather have chosen to ignore the lessons of those years. This galaxy of individuals would still tenaciously hold to the basic conviction that man is **essentially and basically good**. Maslow, considered to be the father of Humanistic Psychology, wrote these words just before the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley and the Vietnam War. Speaking of human nature he said:

Since this inner nature is good or neutral rather than bad, it is best to bring it out, to encourage it rather than suppress it. If it is permitted to guide our life, we grow healthy, fruitful and happy.[{21}](#)

And yet Maslow, with all his optimism, at the same time was forced to acknowledge a apparent weakness in man to demonstrate his goodness and how it might be brought into life experience consistently:

There are certainly good and strong and successful men in the world. . .But it also remains true that there are so few of them, even though there could be so many more, and that they are often badly treated by their fellows. So this, too, must

be studied, this fear of human goodness and greatness, this lack of knowledge of how to be good and strong, this inability to turn one's anger into productive activities, this fear of feeling virtuous, self-loving, respectable.{22}

This brings us to the third view concerning man's moral nature, which sees him as **possessing some innate and ever-present propensity to self-centeredness and pride**. Plato early on recognized the presence and power of evil in human beings when he said: "There is a dangerous, wild, and lawless kind of desire in everyone, even the few of us who *appear* moderate." (emphasis mine){23} Aristotle admitted the same when he observed that most people did not pursue the good:

Their nature is to obey by fear, rather than by right shame; and they do not abstain from the bad because it is wrong, but because of the possible punishment. They live by emotion and pursue those pleasures that are related to emotion, and the means to these pleasures.{24}

The entire Bible and all of the Church Fathers certainly take this view, although man's cruelty is juxtaposed with a nobility which he is deemed to possess, and which is asserted to have resulted from being created in God's image (*Imago Dei*). It is this second concept of nobility and goodness which provides a possible explanation for all those things mentioned above which distinguish and set man apart from all other animals, plants and things. Worship, rational thought, language, moral notions, and creativity are all components stemming from his upward link, not his supposed evolutionary past.

On through history we find other leading thinkers echoing this third view: Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan* saw man as self-centered, competitive, stubborn, forgiving of himself and condemning others:

For all men are by nature provided of notable multiplying glasses, that is their passions and self-love through which every little payment appeareth a great grievance; but are destitute. . .of those prospective glasses. . .to see afar off the miseries that hang over them. (emphasis mine){25}

Karl Marx shared the same perspective in describing “egoistic” man:

Thus, none of the so-called rights of man goes beyond egoistic man as he is in civil society, namely an individual withdrawn behind his private interest and whims separated from the community.{26}

Sigmund Freud also acknowledged man’s aggressive tendencies:

I adopt the standpoint. . .that the inclination to aggression is an original, self-subsisting instinctual disposition in man, and I return to my view that it constitutes the greatest impediment to civilization. (emphasis mine){27}

B.F. Skinner denies any “innate” disposition, but he does speak about the future with foreboding unless great environmental changes are made:

It is now widely recognized that great changes must be made in the American way of life. Not only can we not face the rest of the world while consuming and polluting as we do, we cannot for long face ourselves while acknowledging the violence and chaos in which we live. The choice is clear: either we do nothing and allow a miserable and probably catastrophic future to overtake us, or we use our knowledge about human behavior to create a social environment in which we shall live productive and creative lives and do so without jeopardizing the chances that those who follow us will be able to do the same.{28}

Skinner's contemporary, ethologist Konrad Lorenz, ignores possible solutions for the future through environmental changes, and simply acknowledges the fact that man's "inherited aggressive tendencies" are yet to be brought under control. To Lorenz, man is not finished; he's still under construction.[\[29\]](#)

We have considered the three major views concerning man's moral nature: man as (1) neutral, (2) basically good, and (3) morally flawed or deficient. In the light of our discussion and abundant observations of man's behavior—both past and present—the third view appears to be the most accurate.

To those who seek to address this issue, both its causes and proposed solutions vary greatly. They do, however cluster around several key ideas:

First, the evolutionists, like Lorenz above, argue that humans have had **insufficient time** to eliminate the primal aggressions from our evolutionary past. To them, it is a vestigial problem. Darwin, Lorenz, and much of humanistic psychology would fall into this category. Geneticists could also fit here, some of whom would perhaps like to help by speeding the process along.

One question that comes to my mind is if man is a part of Nature, as the evolutionist insists, then how has it come about that a method which is so successful in dealing with one part of Nature—the world *outside* of man—has failed so miserably in dealing with the other part of Nature—that which lies *within* him?

Second, a large group holds to the premise that a **proper environment** is the answer to man's moral ills. Plato would create his *Republic*. Hobbes would argue for a *Commonwealth*, Karl Marx a "classless" society, and Skinner would alter the environment through beneficent "planners." It might be well to remember that chuck roast sitting out on the counter *decays*.

But what happens when it is placed in the freezer? It still decays, but at a much slower rate. Environment may check, or even improve certain behaviors, but there is growing evidence that, like the bacteria within the meat, man's basic moral problem is internal.

A third view would focus on **education** of some sort. Beginning with the Greek thinkers and up to Freud and Maslow, there are those who say man should be actively involved in the pursuit of the good—knowledge and self-understanding. The assumption is that if a man *knows* or is shown what is good, he will *do* it. At this juncture, man unfortunately and negatively displays his uniqueness from animals. Where animals readily alter their behavior through simple “trial and error” methods, man will persist in repeating all kinds of behaviors detrimental to himself and others!

The point of agreement with each of these three views is that man's moral deficiency is the result of something lacking. The evolutionist says *time* is lacking. Behaviorists say a *proper environment* is lacking; the educators say that *knowledge* is lacking. But the crux of rightly assessing the moral nature of man is not what is lacking, but what is present and persistent about his behavior over the millenia. The Fall of man was down. [\[30\]](#)

In this regard, John Hallowell comments on Reinhold Niebuhr's insights:

One of America's most astute thinkers, Reinhold Niebuhr, has recalled to our consciousness a fact which both liberalism and Marxism have ignored with almost fatal consequences to our civilization. Evil, he points out, is something real, not an appearance only, and the proper name for it is sin. Its locus is not in institutions, which are but a reflection of human purposes, but in human nature itself. It is pride, self-righteousness, greed, envy, hatred and sloth that are the real evils and the ones from which social evils spring.

When man is thwarted in his attempts to realize justice it is because he is thwarted by his own sinful predisposition. The recognition of this inherent predisposition to sin helps to explain why the best laid plans of men never quite succeed (emphasis mine).{31}

Every academic discipline has a name for this problem of man:

Biology calls it “primitive instinct” or “primal aggression”

History calls it “class struggle”

Humanities calls it “human weakness” or “hubris”

Sociology calls it “cultural lag”

Psychology calls it “emotional behavior”

Philosophy calls it “irrational thinking”

The Bible calls it **sin**.

The teachings of Jesus Christ underscore the truth of this internal flaw in man:

Do you not see that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him; because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach and is eliminated. . . That which proceeds out of a man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed the evil thoughts and fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from *within* and defiles the man.{32}

While largely unpopular at present, until society again comes to accept and embrace this assessment by the Founder of Christianity as the most accurate and true picture of human nature, no real progress can be made toward the building of a really “Great” society, much less a Global Community devoid of malice. And by their very nature, methodology, and

presuppositions, science and philosophy will never recognize this truth, even when their own findings point in this direction, for they will not accept what God has revealed nor can they discover the truth by their own methods of inquiry.

Fifty years ago, from the decks of the great battleship, *U.S.S. Missouri*, General Douglas MacArthur accepted the unconditional surrender of the Japanese with these words:

We've had our last chance. If we will not devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at our door. The problem is basically theological, and involves the spiritual recandescence and improvement of human character, that will synchronize with our matchless advances in science, art, literature, and all the cultural and material developments of the past 2,000 years. It must be of the spirit, if we are to save the flesh (emphasis mine).[{33}](#)

MacArthur's prescription for humanity's future was essentially a religious one.

And at the dawn of the 21st century, little progress has been made. We live in a much more unstable and troubled world today than existed sixty years ago even when Hitler and the Japanese were at the pinnacle of their power.

When one observes what is happening throughout the world right now, one must conclude that, in spite of great technological and economic advances, three fourths of the planet is still functioning at the Medieval Level:

- Ethnic Cleansing (a euphemism for genocide).
- Poverty and Famine.
- Governmental corruption and Moral Failure.
- IRS Quota Incentives.
- Ecclesiastical Corruption and Moral Failure.
- Conquest.
- Human Rights abuses, particularly of Women and Children.

- Child and Spousal Abuse.
- Gun Control.
- Lawlessness and Crime.
- Sexual deviants and predators.
- Serial Killers.
- Pornography.
- Prostitution.
- Slavery (Yes, it still exists).
- Corrupt Judicial and Prison Systems.
- Unprincipled, Capricious Juries.
- Drug Traffic.
- Environmental and Ecological Abuse and Corruption.
- Endangered Species.
- Global Warming.
- Weapons of Mass Destruction for Sale!
- Deforestation.
- Over-fishing/depletion of Marine Life.
- Aids and other Killer viruses.
- Reality of Chemical warfare.
- Terrorism—at home and abroad.
- Nuclear Reactors.
- Waste Products.
- Contamination.
- Teen Pregnancy.
- Slaughter of the Innocents.
- Babies for Sale!
- Fetal Tissue and Organs for Sale!
- Sperm Banks of the Rich and Famous for Sale!
- Divorces outnumber Marriages.
- Disintegration of Healthy Family Systems.
- Welfare Mothers.
- AWOL Dads.
- Drive-by shootings and Road Rage.
- Juvenile Killers.
- Teen Suicide.
- Race motivated Crimes.
- Patriot Groups.

- Ku Klux Klan.
- Skinheads.
- Cult Groups.
- Goddess Worship.
- Witchcraft.
- A Media which panders to the baser elements of humanity: Increased Nudity, Sex, Violence, and Filthy Language.
- Same for Advertisements.
- Dearth of Role Models—in Politics, Sports, Music, and Film.
- Ditto Dads, Moms, Brothers, Sisters, Uncles, Aunts, and Grandparents.

Reflecting on the above reminds me of an observation made by someone. The person commented that it was easier for him to believe in the existence of the Devil than to believe that God exists!

The Raging Planet. It would be comforting if we could say that the above behaviors did not include the United States of America. But that is not the case. While the U.S. does not face many of the severe problems and abuses which plague much of the globe, she does, in numerous ways, contribute to the moral instability of the rest of the world. Admired and hated at the same time, America continually sends a mixed message to her neighbors. She has been both a blessing and a curse to the rest of the world, and it is not yet apparent which path she will ultimately choose.

But what *can* be said, in spite of the above, is that she and her citizens are still impacted by the Judeo-Christian heritage which the colonists brought with them from the other side of the Atlantic. The moral and spiritual mindset which they owned as part of their very lives, laid the foundation stones upon which they intended to, and did live in this new land. We today are still being impacted and conditioned by the values they brought with them. By nature, we still largely think and behave within the framework they left us. This was a

legacy of honesty, integrity, hard work, individualism, fair play, dependability, and personal freedom.

Much of this behavior is still evident in America. But what is slipping away, the crucial ingredient that makes it all work, is the spiritual dimension in American life. MacArthur said "It must be of the *spirit* if we are to save the flesh." Jesus said, "All these evil things proceed from *within* and defile the man."

A young father was reading the newspaper and came across a map of the world. He decided to have some fun with his small son. Taking scissors, he cut out the various countries of the world and said to his son, "Bobby, here's a puzzle for you. Take these pieces and put the world back together." The father resumed his reading of the morning paper, and, surprisingly, in less than a minute, the little boy came back and said, "Daddy, come look! I've put the world back together!" The father was amazed that his little son could have accomplished this task so quickly. He asked, "Good for you, Bobby. How did you do it so fast?" The little boy said, "Well, I turned the pieces over and on the back was the picture of a man. I put the *man* together, and the world was right!"

Perhaps we should try it. Nothing else has worked.

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A Biblical View of Economics – A Christian Life Perspective

Kerby Anderson shows that economics is an important part of one's Christian worldview. Our view of economics is where many of Christ's teachings find their daily application.

In this article we are going to be developing a Christian view of economics. Although most of us do not think of economics in moral terms, there has (until the last century) always been a strong connection between economics and Christian thought.

✖ If you look at the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas, you find whole sections of his theological work devoted to economic issues. He asked such questions as: “What is a just price?” or “How should we deal with poverty?”

Today, these questions, if they are even discussed at all, would be discussed in a class on economic theory. But in his time, these were theological questions that were a critical and integral part of the educational curricula.

In the Protestant Reformation, we find the same thing. In John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, whole sections are devoted to government and economics. So Christians should not feel that economics is outside the domain of Christian thinking. If anything, we need to recapture this arena and bring a strong biblical message to it.

In reality, the Bible speaks to economic issues more than any other issue. Whole sections of the book of Proverbs and many of the parables of Jesus deal with economic matters. They tell us what our attitude should be toward wealth and how a Christian should handle his or her finances. The Bible also provides a description of human nature, which helps us evaluate the possible success of an economic system in society.

The Bible teaches that there are two aspects to human nature. First, we are created in the image of God and thus able to control the economic system. But second, human beings are sinful and thus tend towards greed and exploitation. This points to the need to protect individuals from human sinfulness in the economic system. So Christians have a much more balanced view of economics and can therefore construct economic theories and analyze existing economic systems.

Christians should see the fallacy of such utopian economic theories because they fail to take seriously human sinfulness. Instead of changing people from the inside out as the gospel

does, Marxists believe that people will be changed from the outside in. Change the economic base, they say, and you will change human beings. This is one of the reasons that Marxism was doomed to failure, because it did not take into account human sinfulness and our need for spiritual redemption.

It is important for Christians to think about the economic arena. It is a place where much of everyday life takes place, and we can evaluate economics from a biblical perspective. When we use the Bible as our framework, we can begin to construct a government and an economy that liberates human potentiality and limits human sinfulness.

Many Christians are surprised to find out how much the Bible says about economic issues. And one of the most important aspects of the biblical teaching is not the specific economic matters it explores, but the more general description of human nature.

Economics and Human Nature

When we are looking at either theories of government or theories of economics, an important starting point is our view of human nature. This helps us analyze these theories and predict their possible success in society. Therefore, we must go to the Scriptures to evaluate the very foundation of each economic theory.

First, the Bible says that human beings are created in the image of God. This implies that we have rationality and responsibility. Because we have rationality and volition, we can choose between various competing products and services. Furthermore, we can function within a market system in which people can exercise their power of choice. We are not like the animals that are governed by instinct. We are governed by rationality and can make meaningful choices within a market system.

We can also assume that private property can exist within this system because of the biblical idea of dominion. In Genesis 1:28, God says we are to subdue the earth and have dominion over the creation. Certainly one aspect of this is that humans can own property in which they can exercise their dominion.

Since we have both volition and private property rights, we can then assume that we should have the freedom to exchange these private property rights in a free market where goods and services can be exchanged.

The second part of human nature is also important. The Bible describes the fall of the world and the fall of mankind. We are fallen creatures with a sin nature. This sinfulness manifests itself in selfishness, greed, and exploitation. Thus, we need some protection in an economic system from the sinful effects of human interaction.

Since the Bible teaches about the effects of sinful behavior on the world, we should be concerned about any system that would concentrate economic power and thereby unleash the ravages of sinful behavior on the society. Christians, therefore, should reject state-controlled or centrally controlled economies, which would concentrate power in the hands of a few sinful individuals. Instead, we should support an economic system that would disperse that power and protect us from greed and exploitation.

Finally, we should also recognize that not only is human nature fallen, but the world is fallen. The world has become a place of decay and scarcity. In a fallen world, we have to be good managers of the limited resources that can be made available in a market economy. God has given us dominion over His creation, and we must be good stewards of the resources at our disposal.

The free enterprise system has provided the greatest amount of freedom and the most effective economic gains of any economic

system ever devised. Nevertheless, Christians often wonder if they can support capitalism. So the rest of this article, we are going to take a closer look at the free enterprise system.

Capitalism: Foundations

Capitalism had its beginning with the publication of *The Wealth of Nations*, written by Adam Smith in 1776. He argued that the mercantile economic system working at that time in Great Britain was not the best economic foundation. Instead, he argued that the wealth of nations could be increased by allowing the individual to seek his own self-interest and by removing governmental control over the economy.

His theory rested on three major premises. First, his system was based upon the observation that people are motivated by self-interest. He said, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest." Smith went on to say that "neither intends to promote the public interest," yet each is "led by an invisible hand to promote an end that was not part of [his] intention."

A second premise of Adam Smith was the acceptance of private property. Property was not to be held in common but owned and freely traded in a market system. Profits generated from the use and exchange of private property rights provided incentive and became the mechanism that drives the capitalist system.

From a Christian perspective we can see that the basis of private property rests in our being created in God's image. We can make choices over property that we can exchange in a market system. The need for private property grows out of our sinfulness. Our sinful nature produces laziness, neglect, and slothfulness. Economic justice can best be achieved if each person is accountable for his own productivity.

A third premise of Adam Smith's theory was the minimization of

the role of government. Borrowing a phrase from the French physiocrats, he called this laissez-faire. Smith argued that we should decrease the role of government and increase the role of a free market.

Historically, capitalism has had a number of advantages. It has liberated economic potential. It has also provided the foundation for a great deal of political and economic freedom. When government is not controlling markets, then there is economic freedom to be involved in a whole array of entrepreneurial activities.

Capitalism has also led to a great deal of political freedom, because once you limit the role of government in economics, you limit the scope of government in other areas. It is no accident that most of the countries with the greatest political freedom usually have a great deal of economic freedom.

At the outset, let me say that Christians cannot and should not endorse every aspect of capitalism. For example, many proponents of capitalism hold a view known as utilitarianism, which is opposed to the notion of biblical absolutes. Certainly we must reject this philosophy. But here I would like to provide an economic critique.

Capitalism: Economic Criticisms

The first economic criticism is that capitalism leads to monopolies. These develop for two reasons: too little government and too much government. Monopolies have occurred in the past because government has not been willing to exercise its God-given authority. Government finally stepped in and broke up the big trusts that were not allowing the free enterprise system to function correctly.

But in recent decades, the reason for monopolies has often been too much government. Many of the largest monopolies today

are government sanctioned or sponsored monopolies that prevent true competition from taking place. The solution is for government to allow a freer market where competition can take place.

Let me add that many people often call markets with limited competition monopolies when the term is not appropriate. For example, the three major U.S. car companies may seem like a monopoly or oligopoly until you realize that in the market of consumer durables the true market is the entire western world.

The second criticism of capitalism is that it leads to pollution. In a capitalistic system, pollutants are considered externalities. The producer will incur costs that are external to the firm so often there is no incentive to clean up the pollution. Instead, it is dumped into areas held in common such as the air or water.

The solution in this case is governmental intervention. But I don't believe that this should be a justification for building a massive bureaucracy. We need to find creative ways to direct self-interest so that people work towards the common good.

For example, most communities use the water supply from a river and dump treated waste back into the water to flow downstream. Often there is a tendency to cut corners and leave the waste treatment problem for those downstream. But if you required that the water intake pipe be downstream and the waste pipe be upstream you could insure less pollution problems. It is now in the self-interest of the community to clean the wastewater being pumped back into the river. So while there is a need for governmental action, much less might be needed if we think of creative ways to constrain self-interest and make it work for the common good.

We can acknowledge that although there are some valid economic criticisms of capitalism, these can be controlled by limited governmental control. And when capitalism is wisely

controlled, it generates significant economic prosperity and economic freedom for its citizens. Next, let us discuss some of the moral problems of capitalism.

Capitalism: Moral Critiques

One of the first moral arguments against capitalism involves the issue of greed. And this is why many Christians feel ambivalent towards the free enterprise system. After all, some critics of capitalism contend that this economic system makes people greedy.

To answer this question we need to resolve the following question. Does capitalism make people greedy or do we already have greedy people who use the economic freedom of the capitalistic system to achieve their ends? In light of the biblical description of human nature, the latter seems more likely.

Because people are sinful and selfish, some are going to use the capitalist system to feed their greed. But that is not so much a criticism of capitalism as it is a realization of the human condition. The goal of capitalism is not to change people but to protect us from human sinfulness.

Capitalism is a system in which bad people can do the least harm, and good people have the freedom to do good works. Capitalism works well if you have completely moral individuals. But it also functions adequately when you have selfish and greedy people.

Important to this discussion is the realization that there is a difference between self-interest and selfishness. All people have self-interest and that can operate in ways that are not selfish. For example, it is in my self-interest to get a job and earn an income so that I can support my family. I can do that in ways that are not selfish.

Adam Smith recognized that every one of us have self-interest

and rather than trying to change that, he made self-interest the motor of the capitalist system. And before you react to that, consider the fact that even the gospel appeals to our self-interest. It is in our self-interest to accept Jesus Christ as our savior so that our eternal destiny will be assured.

By contrast, other economic systems like socialism ignore the biblical definitions of human nature. Thus, they allow economic power to be centralized and concentrate power in the hands of a few greedy people. Those who complain of the influence major corporations have on our lives should consider the socialist alternative of how a few governmental bureaucrats control every aspect of their lives.

Greed certainly occurs in the capitalist system. But it does not surface just in this economic system. It is part of our sinfulness. The solution is not to change the economic system, but to change human nature with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, we may readily acknowledge that capitalism has its flaws as an economic system, but it can be controlled to give us a great deal of economic prosperity and economic freedom.

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Christian View of Government and Law

Kerby Anderson helps us develop a biblically based, Christian view of both government and the laws it enforces. Understanding that the New Testament does not direct a

particular type of government, Kerby leads us to understand how the principles of the New Testament will help us select governmental models that are conducive to Christian life and witness.

Christian View of Government

Government affects our lives daily. It tells us how fast to drive. It regulates our commerce. It protects us from foreign and domestic strife. Yet we rarely take time to consider its basic function. What is a biblical view of government? Why do we have government? What kind of government does the Bible allow?

Developing a Christian view of government is difficult since the Bible does not provide an exhaustive treatment of government. This itself is perhaps instructive and provides some latitude for these institutions to reflect the needs and demands of particular cultural situations. Because the Bible does not speak directly to every area of political discussion, Christians often hold different views on particular political issues. However, Christians are not free to believe whatever they want. Christians should not abandon the Bible when they begin to think about these issues because there is a great deal of biblical material that can be used to judge particular political options.

The Old Testament teaches that God established government after the flood (Gen. 9:6). And the Old Testament provides clear guidelines for the development of a theocracy in which God was the head of government. These guidelines, however, were written for particular circumstances involving a covenant people chosen by God. These guidelines do not apply today because our modern governments are not the direct inheritors of the promises God made to the nation of Israel.

Apart from that unique situation, the Bible does not propose nor endorse any specific political system. The Bible, however,

does provide a basis for evaluating various political philosophies because it clearly delineates a view of human nature. And every political theory rests on a particular view of human nature.

The Bible describes two elements of human nature. This viewpoint is helpful in judging government systems. Because humans are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26–27), they are able to exercise judgment and rationality. However, humans are also fallen creatures (Gen. 3). This human sinfulness (Rom. 3:23) has therefore created a need to control evil and sinful human behavior through civil government.

Many theologians have suggested that the only reason we have government today is to control sinful behavior because of the Fall. But there is every indication that government would have existed even if we lived in a sinless world. For example, there seems to be some structuring of authority in the Garden (Gen. 1–2). The Bible also speaks of the angelic host as being organized into levels of authority and function.

In the creation, God ordained government as the means by which human beings and angelic hosts are ruled. The rest of the created order is governed by instinct (Prov. 30:24–28) and God's providence. Insect colonies, for example, may show a level of order, but this is due merely to genetically controlled instinct.

Human beings, on the other hand, are created in the image of God and thus are responsible to the commands of God. We are created by a God of order (1 Cor. 14:33); therefore we also seek order through governmental structures.

A Christian view of government differs significantly from views proposed by many political theorists. The basis for civil government is rooted in our created nature. We are rational and volitional beings. We are not determined by fate, as the Greeks would have said, nor are we determined by our

environment as modern behaviorists say. We have the power of choice. Therefore we can exercise delegated power over the created order. Thus a biblical view of human nature requires a governmental system that acknowledges human responsibility.

While the source of civil government is rooted in human responsibility, the need for government derives from the necessity of controlling human sinfulness. God ordained civil government to restrain evil (cf. Gen. 9). Anarchy, for example, is not a viable option because all have sinned (Rom. 3:23) and are in need of external control.

Notice how a Christian view of human nature provides a basis to judge various political philosophies. For example, Christians must reject political philosophies which ignore human sinfulness. Many utopian political theories are based upon this flawed assumption. In *The Republic*, Plato proposed an ideal government where the enlightened philosopher-kings would lead the country. The Bible, however, teaches that all are sinful (Rom. 3:23). Plato's proposed leaders would also be affected by the sinful effects of the Fall (Gen. 3). They would not always have the benevolent and enlightened disposition necessary to lead the republic.

Christians should also reject a marxist view of government. Karl Marx believed that human nature was conditioned by society, and in particular, the capitalist economy. His solution was to change the economy so that you would change human nature. Why do we have greed? Because we live in a greedy capitalist society. Marx taught that if society changed the economy from capitalism to socialism and then communism, greed would cease.

Christians should reject the utopian vision of marxism because it is based upon an inaccurate view of human nature. The Bible teaches that believers can become new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17) through spiritual conversion, but that does not mean that the effects of sin are completely overcome in this life. The Bible

also teaches that we will continue to live in a world tainted by sin. The view of Karl Marx contradicts biblical teaching by proposing a new man in a new society perfected by man's own efforts.

Since civil government is necessary and divinely ordained by God (Rom. 13:1–7), it is ultimately under God's control. It has been given three political responsibilities: the sword of justice (to punish criminals), the sword of order (to thwart rebellion), and the sword of war (to defend the state).

As citizens, Christians have been given a number of responsibilities. They are called to render service and obedience to the government (Matt. 22:21). Because it is a God-ordained institution, they are to submit to civil authority (1 Pet. 2:13–17) as they would to other institutions of God. As will be discussed later, Christians are not to give total and final allegiance to the secular state. Other God-ordained institutions exist in society alongside the state. Christians' final allegiance must be to God. They are to obey civil authorities (Rom. 13:5) in order to avoid anarchy and chaos, but there may be times when they may be forced to disobey (Acts 5:29).

Because government is a divinely ordained institution, Christians have a responsibility to work within governmental structures to bring about change. Government is part of the order of creation and a minister of God (Rom. 13:4). Christians are to obey governmental authorities (Rom. 13:1–4, 1 Peter 2:13–14). Christians are also to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13–16) in the midst of the political context.

Although governments may be guilty of injustice, Christians should not stop working for justice or cease to be concerned about human rights. We do not give up on marriage as an institution simply because there are so many divorces, and we do not give up on the church because of many internal

problems. Each God-ordained institution manifests human sinfulness and disobedience. Our responsibility as Christians is to call political leaders back to this God-ordained task. Government is a legitimate sphere of Christian service, and so we should not look to government only when our rights are being abused. We are to be concerned with social justice and should see governmental action as a legitimate instrument to achieve just ends.

A Christian view of government should also be concerned with human rights. Human rights in a Christian system are based on a biblical view of human dignity. A bill of rights, therefore, does not grant rights to individuals, but instead acknowledges these rights as already existing. The writings of John Locke along with the Declaration of Independence capture this idea by stating that government is based on the inalienable rights of individuals. Government based on humanism, however, would not see rights as inalienable, and thus opens the possibility for the state to redefine what rights its citizens may enjoy. The rights of citizens in a republic, for example, are articulated in terms of what the government is forbidden to do. But in totalitarian governments, while the rights of citizens may also be spelled out, power ultimately resides in the government not the people.

A Christian view of government also recognizes the need to limit the influence of sin in society. This is best achieved by placing certain checks on governmental authority. This protects citizens from the abuse or misuse of governmental power which results when sinful individuals are given too much governmental control.

The greatest threat to liberty comes from the exercise of power. History has shown that power is a corrupting force when placed in human hands. In the Old Testament theocracy there was less danger of abuse because the head of state was God. The Bible amply documents the dangers that ensued when power was transferred to a single king. Even David, a man after

God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22), abused his power and Israel experienced great calamity (2 Sam. 11–21).

Governmental Authority

A key question in political theory is how to determine the limits of governmental authority. With the remarkable growth in the size and scope of government in the 20th century, it is necessary to define clearly the lines of governmental authority. The Bible provides some guidelines.

However, it is often difficult to set limits or draw lines on governmental authority. As already noted, the Old Testament theocracy differed from our modern democratic government. Although human nature is the same, drawing biblical principles from an agrarian, monolithic culture and applying them to a technological, pluralistic culture requires discernment.

Part of this difficulty can be eased by separating two issues. First, should government legislate morality? We will discuss this in the section on social action. Second, what are the limits of governmental sovereignty? The following are a few general principles helpful in determining the limits of governmental authority.

As Christians, we recognize that God has ordained other institutions besides civil government which exercise authority in their particular sphere of influence. This is in contrast to other political systems that see the state as the sovereign agent over human affairs, exercising sovereignty over every other human institution. A Christian view is different.

The first institution is the church (Heb. 12:18–24; 1 Pet. 2:9–10). Jesus taught that the government should work in harmony with the church and should recognize its sovereignty in spiritual matters (Matt. 22:21).

The second institution is the family (Eph. 5:22–32, 1 Pet. 3:1–7). The family is an institution under God and His

authority (Gen.1:26–28, 2:20–25). When the family breaks down, the government often has to step in to protect the rights of the wife (in cases of wife abuse) or children (in cases of child abuse or adoption). The biblical emphasis, however, is not so much on rights as it is on responsibilities and mutual submission (Eph. 5:21).

A third institution is education. Children are not the wards of the state, but belong to God (Ps. 127:3) and are given to parents as a gift from God. Parents are to teach their children (Deut. 4:9) and may also entrust them to tutors (Gal. 4:2).

In a humanistic system of government, the institutions of church and family are usually subordinated to the state. In an atheistic system, ultimately the state becomes a substitute god and is given additional power to adjudicate disputes and bring order to a society. Since institutions exist by permission of the state, there is always the possibility that a new social contract will allow government to intervene in the areas of church and family.

A Christian view of government recognizes the sovereignty of these spheres. Governmental intervention into the spheres of church and family is necessary in certain cases where there is threat to life, liberty, or property. Otherwise civil government should recognize the sovereignty of other God-ordained institutions.

Moral Basis of Law

Law should be the foundation of any government. Whether law is based upon moral absolutes, changing consensus, or totalitarian whim is of crucial importance. Until fairly recently, Western culture held to a notion that common law was founded upon God's revealed moral absolutes.

In a Christian view of government, law is based upon God's

revealed commandments. Law is not based upon human opinion or sociological convention. Law is rooted in God's unchangeable character and derived from biblical principles of morality.

In humanism, humanity is the source of law. Law is merely the expression of human will or mind. Since ethics and morality are man-made, so also is law. Humanists' law is rooted in human opinion, and thus is relative and arbitrary.

Two important figures in the history of law are Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661) and William Blackstone (1723-1780). Rutherford's *Lex Rex* (written in 1644) had profound effect on British and American law. His treatise challenged the foundations of 17th century politics by proclaiming that law must be based upon the Bible, rather than upon the word of any man.

Up until that time, the king had been the law. The book created a great controversy because it attacked the idea of the divine right of kings. This doctrine had held that the king or the state ruled as God's appointed regent. Thus, the king's word had been law. Rutherford properly argued from passages such as Romans 13 that the king, as well as anyone else, was under God's law and not above it.

Sir William Blackstone was an English jurist in the 18th century and is famous for his *Commentaries on the Law of England* which embodied the tenets of Judeo-Christian theism. Published in 1765, the *Commentaries* became the definitive treatise on the common law in England and in America. According to Blackstone, the two foundations for law are nature and revelation through the Scriptures. Blackstone believed that the fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom, and thus taught that God was the source of all laws. It is interesting that even the humanist Rousseau noted in his *Social Contract* that one needs someone outside the world system to provide a moral basis for law. He said, "It would take gods to give men laws."

Unfortunately, our modern legal structure has been influenced by relativism and utilitarianism, instead of moral absolutes revealed in Scripture. Relativism provides no secure basis for moral judgments. There are no firm moral absolutes upon which to build a secure legal foundation.

Utilitarianism looks merely at consequences and ignores moral principles. This legal foundation has been further eroded by the relatively recent phenomenon of sociological law. In this view, law should be based upon relative sociological standards. No discipline is more helpless without a moral foundation than law. Law is a tool, and it needs a jurisprudential foundation. Just as contractors and builders need the architect's blueprint in order to build, so also lawyers need theologians and moral philosophers to make good laws. Yet, most lawyers today are extensively trained in technique, but little in moral and legal philosophy.

Legal justice in the Western world has been based upon a proper, biblical understanding of human nature and human choice. We hold criminals accountable for their crimes, rather than excuse their behavior as part of environmental conditioning. We also acknowledge differences between willful, premeditated acts (such as murder) and so-called crimes of passion (i.e., manslaughter) or accidents.

One of the problems in our society today is that we do not operate from assumptions of human choice. The influence of the behaviorist, the evolutionist, and the sociobiologist are quite profound. The evolutionist and sociobiologist say that human behavior is genetically determined. The behaviorist says that human behavior is environmentally determined. Where do we find free choice in a system that argues that actions are a result of heredity and environment? Free choice and personal responsibility have been diminished in the criminal justice system, due to the influence of these secular perspectives.

It is, therefore, not by accident that we have seen a dramatic

change in our view of criminal justice. The emphasis has moved from a view of punishment and restitution to one of rehabilitation. If our actions are governed by something external, and human choice is denied, then we cannot punish someone for something they cannot control. However, we must rehabilitate them if the influences are merely heredity and environmental. But such a view of human actions diminishes human dignity. If a person cannot choose, then he is merely a victim of circumstances and must become a ward of the state.

As Christians, we must take the criminal act seriously and punish human choices. While we recognize the value of rehabilitation (especially through spiritual conversion, John 3:3), we also recognize the need for punishing wrong-doing. The Old Testament provisions for punishment and restitution make more sense in light of the biblical view of human nature. Yet today, we have a justice system which promotes no-fault divorce, no-fault insurance, and continues to erode away the notion of human responsibility.

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Human Nature

Don Closson provides an overview to how naturalism, pantheism and Christian theism view human nature. He discusses questions considering how each view deals with purpose, good and evil, and death.

In the twenty-five years prior to 1993, the federal government spent 2.5 trillion dollars on welfare and aid to cities. This was enough money to buy all the assets of the top Fortune 500 firms as well as all the farmland in America at that time.[\[1\]](#) As part of the Great War on poverty, begun by the Johnson

administration in the 1960's, the government's goal was to reduce the number of poor, and the effects of poverty on American society. As one administration official put it, "The way to eliminate poverty is to give the poor people enough money so that they won't be poor anymore."[\[2\]](#)) Sounds simple. But offering money didn't get rid of poverty; in fact, just the opposite has occurred. The number of children covered by the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program has gone from 4.5 percent of all children in America in 1965, to almost 13 percent of all children in 1991. One of the reasons for this increase has been the rapid deterioration of the family for those most affected by the welfare bureaucracy. Since 1960, the number of single parent families has more than tripled, reflecting high rates of children born out of wedlock and high divorce rates.[\[3\]](#) Rather than strengthening the family in America and ridding the country of poverty, just the opposite has occurred. Why such disastrous results from such good intentions?

Part of the answer must be found in human nature itself. Might it be, that those creating welfare policy in the 1960's had a faulty view of human nature and thus misread what the solution to poverty should be? In this essay I will look at how three different world views—theism, naturalism, and pantheism—view human nature. Which view we adopt, both individually and as a people, will have a great influence on how we educate our children, how and if we punish criminals, and how we run our government.

Christian theism is often chided as being simplistic and lacking in sophistication, yet on this subject, it is the naturalist and pantheist who tend to be reductionistic. Both will simplify human nature in a way that detracts from our uniqueness and God-given purpose here on this planet. It should be mentioned that the views of Christian theists, naturalists, and pantheists are mutually exclusive. They might all be wrong, but they cannot all be right. The naturalist

sees man as a biological machine that has evolved by chance. The pantheist perceives humankind as forgetful deity, whose essence is a complex series of energy fields which are hidden by an illusion of this apparent physical reality. Christian theism accepts the reality of both our physical and spiritual natures, presenting a balanced, livable view of what it means to be human.

In this essay I will show how Christian theism, naturalism, and pantheism answer three important questions concerning the nature of humanity. First, are humans special in any way; do we have a purpose and origin that sets us apart from the rest of the animal world? Second, are we good, evil, or neither? Third, what happens when we die? These fundamental questions have been asked since the written word appeared and are central to what we believe about ourselves.

Are Humans Special?

One doesn't usually think of Hollywood's Terminator, as played by Arnold Schwarzenegger, as a profound thinker. Yet in *Terminator II*, the robot sent back from the future to protect a young boy asks a serious question.

Boy: *"You were going to kill that guy!"*

Terminator: *"Of course! I'm a terminator."*

Boy: *"Listen to me very carefully, OK? You're not a terminator anymore. All right? You got that?! You just can't go around killing people!"*

Terminator: *"Why?"*

Boy: *"What do ya mean, Why? 'Cause you can't!"*

Terminator: *"Why?"*

Boy: *"Because you just can't, OK? Trust me on this!"* [{4}](#)

Indeed, why not terminate people? Why are they special? To a naturalist, one who believes that no spiritual reality exists, options to this question are few. Natural scientists like astronomer Carl Sagan and entomologist E.O. Wilson find man to be no more than a product of time plus chance, an accident of mindless evolution. Psychologist Sigmund Freud and existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre agree, humankind is a biological machine, perhaps slightly more complex than other animals, but governed by the same physical needs and drives.

Yet as Mr. Spock of *Star Trek* fame put it in the original *Star Trek* movie, logic and knowledge aren't always enough. He discovered this by mind melding with V-GER, a man made machine that, after leaving our solar system, evolves into a thinking machine elsewhere in the galaxy and returns to earth to find its creator.[{5}](#) If logic and knowledge aren't enough, where do we turn to for significance or purpose? A naturalist has nowhere to turn. For example, Sartre argued that man must make his own meaning in the face of an absurd universe.[{6}](#) The best that entomologist E. O. Wilson could come up with is that we do whatever it takes to pass on our genetic code, our DNA, to the next generation. Everything we do is based on promoting survival and reproduction.[{7}](#)

Pantheists have a very different response to the question of human purpose or uniqueness. Dr. Brough Joy, a medical doctor who has accepted an Eastern view of reality, argues that all life forms are divine, consisting of complex energy fields. In fact, the entire universe is ultimately made up of this energy; the appearance of a physical reality is really an illusion.[{8}](#) Gerald Jampolsky, another doctor, argues that love is the only part of us that is real, but love itself cannot be defined.[{9}](#) This is all very consistent with pantheism which teaches a radical monism, that all is one, and all is god. But if all is god, all is just as it is supposed to be and you end up with statements like this from the

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh:

There is no purpose to life; existence is non-purposive. That is why it is called a leela, a play. Existence itself has no purpose to fulfill. It is not going anywhere—there is no end that it is moving toward...[{10}](#)

Christianity teaches that human beings are unique. We are created in God's image and for a purpose, to glorify God. Genesis 1:26 declares our image-bearing nature and the mandate to rule over the other creatures of God's creation. Jesus further delineated our purpose when he gave us the two commandments to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Romans 12:1 calls us to be living sacrifices to God. Unlike naturalism or pantheism, the Bible doesn't reduce us down to either just our material, physical nature or to just our spiritual nature. Christianity recognizes the real complexity of humanity as it is found in our physical, emotional and spiritual components.

Are We Good, Bad, or Neither?

To a naturalist, this notion of good and evil can only apply to the question of survival. If something promotes survival, it is good; if not, it is evil. The only real question is how malleable human behavior is. B. F. Skinner, a Harvard psychology professor, believed that humans are completely programmable via classical conditioning methods. A newborn baby can be conditioned to become a doctor, lawyer, or serial killer depending on its environment.[{11}](#)

The movie that won "Best Picture" in 1970 was a response to Skinner's theories. *A Clockwork Orange* depicted a brutal criminal being subjected to a conditioning program that would create a violent physical reaction to just the thought of doing harm to another person. Here is dialogue between the prison warden and an Anglican clergyman after a demonstration

of the therapy's effectiveness.

Clergyman: *"Choice! The boy has no real choice! Has he? Self interest! The fear of physical pain drove him to that grotesque act of self-abasement! Its insincerity was clearly to be seen. He ceases to be a wrongdoer. He ceases also to be a creature capable of moral choice."*

Warden: *"Padre, these are subtleties! We're not concerned with motives for the higher ethics. We are concerned only with cutting down crime! (Crowd Applause) And with relieving the ghastly congestion in our prisons! He will be your true Christian. Ready to turn the other cheek! Ready to be crucified rather than crucify! Sick to the very heart at the thought even of killing a fly! Reclamation! Joy before the angels of God! The point is that it works!"*[{12}](#)

Stanley Kubrick denounced this shallow view of human nature with this film, yet Skinner's behaviorism actually allows for more human flexibility than does the sociobiology of E. O. Wilson, another Harvard professor. Wilson argues that human emotions and ethics, in a general sense, have been programmed to a "substantial degree" by our evolutionary experience.[{13}](#) In other words, human beings are hard coded to respond to conditions by their evolutionary history. Good and evil seem to be beside the point.

Jean-Paul Sartre, another naturalist, rejected the limited view of the sociobiologist, believing that humans, if anything, are choosing machines. We are completely free to decide who we shall be, whether a drunk in the gutter or a ruler of nations. However, our choice is meaningless. Being a drunk is no better or worse than being a ruler. Since there is no ultimate meaning to the universe, there can be no moral value ascribed to a given set of behaviors.[{14}](#)

Pantheists also have a difficult time with this notion of good and evil. Dr. Brugh Joy has written,

In the totality of Beingness there is no absolute anything—no rights or wrongs, no higher or lower aspects—only the infinite interaction of forces, subtle and gross, that have meaning only in relationship to one another.(15)

The Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh wrote,

I am totally passive. Whatsoever happens, happens. I never question why, because there is no one to be asked.{16}

Christianity teaches that the universe was created by a personal, moral Creator God, and that it was created good. This includes humanity. But now creation is in a fallen state due to rebellion against God. This means that humans are inclined to sin, and indeed are born in a state of sinfulness. This explains both mankind's potential goodness and internal sense of justice, as well as its inclination towards evil.

What Happens at Death?

Bertrand Russell wrote over seventy books on everything from geometry to marriage. Historian Paul Johnson says of Russell that no intellectual in history offered advice to humanity over so long a period as Bertrand Russell. Holding to naturalist assumptions caused an obvious tension in Russell regarding human nature. He wrote that people are “tiny lumps of impure carbon and water dividing their time between labor to postpone their normal dissolution and frantic struggle to hasten it for others.”{17} Yet Russell also wrote shortly before his death, “Three passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind.”{18} One has to ask why he would pity these self-centered lumps of impure carbon and water?

Most people over forty begin to question the nature and consequence of death. Some become obsessed with it. A recent

movie called *Flatliners* focused on what death might hold for us. It involved a number of young doctors willing to die temporarily, to find out what was on the other side.

Young Doctor #1: *"Wait a minute! Wait! Quite simply, why are you doing this?"*

Young Doctor #2: *"Quite simply to see if there is anything out there beyond death. Philosophy failed! Religion failed! Now it's up to the physical sciences. I think mankind deserves to know!"* [{19}](#)

Philosophy has failed, religion has failed, now it's science's turn to find the answers. But what can naturalism offer us? Whether we accept the sociobiology of Wilson or the existentialism of Sartre, death means extinction. If nothing exists beyond the natural, material universe, our death is final and complete.

Pantheists, on the other hand, find death to be a minor inconvenience on the road to nirvana. Reincarnation happens to all living things, either towards nirvana or further from it depending on the Karma one accrues in the current life. Although Karma may include ethical components, it focuses on one's realization of his oneness with the universe as expressed in his actions and thoughts. Depending on the particular view held, attaining nirvana is likened to a drop of water being placed in an ocean. All identity is lost; only a radical oneness exists.

Christianity denies the possibility of reincarnation and rejects naturalism's material-only universe. Hebrews 9:27 states, "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment..." It has always held to a linear view of history, allowing for each person to live a single life, experience death, and then be judged by God. Revelation 20:11-12 records John's vision of the final judgment.

"Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on

it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.”

All three versions of what happens at death may be wrong, but they certainly can't all be right! We believe that based on the historical evidence for Christ's life and the dealings of God with the nation of Israel, the Biblical account is trustworthy. We believe that those who have placed their faith in the redemptive work of Christ on the cross will spend eternity in glorified bodies worshiping and fellowshiping with their Creator God.

Evaluation & Summary

In his autobiography, entomologist E. O. Wilson writes that as a young man he accepted Christ as his savior, but because of what he perceived to be hypocrisy in the pulpit he walked away from the church shortly after being baptized. Later at Harvard University he sat through a sermon by Dr. Martin Luther King Sr. and then a series of gospel songs sung by students from the campus. He writes that he silently wept while the songs were being sung and said to himself, “These are my people.”[\[20\]](#) Wilson claims to be a naturalist, arguing that God doesn't exist, yet he has feelings that he can't explain and desires that do not fit his sociobiological paradigm. Even the staunchly atheistic Jean-Paul Sartre, on his death bed, had doubts about the existence of God and human significance. Naturalism is a hard worldview to live by.

In 1991 Dr. L. D. Rue addressed the American Association for The Advancement of Science and he advocated that we deceive ourselves with “A Noble Lie.” A lie that deceives us, tricks us, compels us beyond self-interest, beyond ego, beyond family, nation, [and] race. “It is a lie, because it tells us

that the universe is infused with value (which is a great fiction), because it makes a claim to universal truth (when there is none), and because it tells us not to live for self-interest (which is evidently false). `But without such lies, we cannot live.'"[{21}](#) This is the predicament of modern man; either he lives honestly without hope of significance, or he creates a lie that gives a veneer of meaning. As William Lane Craig writes in his book *Reasonable Faith*,

Man cannot live consistently and happily as though life were ultimately without meaning, value or purpose. If we try to live consistently within the atheistic worldview, we shall find ourselves profoundly unhappy. If instead we manage to live happily, it is only by giving the lie to our worldview.[{22}](#)

The pantheist is little better off. Although pantheism claims a spiritual reality, it does so by denying our personhood. We become just another impersonal force field in an unending field of forces. Life is neither going anywhere nor is there hope that evil will be judged. Everything just is, let it be.

Neither system can speak out against the injustices of the world because neither see humankind as significant. Justice implies moral laws, and a lawgiver, something that both systems deny exist. One cannot have justice without moral truth. Of the three systems, only Judeo-Christian thought provides the foundation for combating the oppression of other humans.

In J.I. Packer's *Knowing God*, Packer argues that humans beings were created to function spiritually as well as physically. Just as we need food, water, exercise, and rest for our bodies to thrive, we need to experience worship, praise, and godly obedience to live spiritually. The result of ignoring these needs will be the de-humanizing of the soul, the development of a brutish rather than saintly demeanor. Our culture is experiencing this brutishness, this destruction of the soul,

on a massive scale. Only revival, which brings about personal devotion to Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, will reverse this trend. Since we are truly made in God's image, we will find peace and fulfillment only when we are rightly related to Him.

Notes

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21. William L. Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 71.
22. Ibid., p. 70.

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