

GOD AND THE MONEY GODDESS

A self-driven philosophy about money causes spiritual damage.

Ayn Rand, author most notably of *Atlas Shrugged*, may be the most influential economic philosopher you've never heard of. Jennifer Burns called Rand the "goddess of the market." The market has certainly been a powerful engine for good in the world. However, Rand was an outspoken advocate of a form of capitalism that puts the individual in the driver's seat, unchecked by Christian considerations of compassion and responsibility to others.

Christian financial counselor Gary Moore has a searching critique of the money goddess in an article for *CHRISTIANITY TODAY*: "Though dead for nearly three decades, Rand's philosophy is deeply embedded in large sectors of the American economy, as well as among some Christian financial advisers and religious leaders. So we are wise to discern what tune Rand is singing for future generations."

This study will help you take a look not at what Rand says about money and our financial and moral responsibilities, but at what the Bible says, both in the Old and New Testaments.

Scripture: Genesis 1:1–31; 2:15; Deuteronomy 8; Matthew 25:13–30; Acts 4:32–37

Based on: "Ayn Rand: Goddess of the Great Recession," by Gary Moore, *CHRISTIANITY TODAY*, September 2010



HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE FOR A GROUP STUDY



This Bible study can be used for an individual or a group. If you intend to lead a group study, follow these simple suggestions.

- 1** Make enough copies of the article for everyone in the group. If you would like your group to have more information, feel free to copy the leader's guide for them as well.
- 2** Don't feel that you have to use all the material in the study. Almost all of our studies have more information than you can get through in one session, so feel free to pick and choose the teaching information and questions that will meet the needs of your group. Use the teaching content of the study in any of these ways: for your own background and information; to read aloud (or summarize) to the group; for the group to read silently.
- 3** Make sure your group agrees to complete confidentiality. This is essential to getting people to open up.
- 4** When working through the questions, be willing to make yourself vulnerable. It's important for your group to know that others share their experiences. Make honesty and openness a priority in your group.
- 5** Begin and end the session in prayer.

Part 1 IDENTIFY THE CURRENT ISSUE

Note to leader: Provide each person with "Ayn Rand: Goddess of the Great Recession" from CHRISTIANITY TODAY, included at the end of this study.

The 1987 movie *Wall Street* popularized character Gordon Gecko's saying: "Greed is good." Some economists and social commentators say that the way to prosper the most people is to get out of the way and allow the market to work its magic—to allow enlightened self-interest to propel economic prosperity for all. Ayn Rand was one such advocate, according to Gary Moore, who says not only that greed isn't good, but that Rand wasn't a conservative, at least in the traditional sense; she was, instead, a radical intent on changing the social contract that allowed America to be a prosperous and generous society.

Moore quotes author Jennifer Burns as saying, "Whereas traditional conservatism emphasized duties, responsibilities, and social interconnectedness, at the core of the right-wing ideology that Rand spearheaded was a rejection of moral obligations to others." In a time when our financial foundations are being shaken, perhaps it's time to re-examine our moral and biblical foundations—especially when it comes to issues of money.

Discussion Starters:

- [Q] What do you see as the individual, social, and political causes underlying downturns in the economy, such as the Great Recession?
- [Q] Do you think of yourself as more of an economic liberal or conservative? Why?
- [Q] How have your views about finances changed over the years?

Part 2 DISCOVER THE ETERNAL PRINCIPLES**Teaching Point One: God owns it all.**

Ayn Rand is thoroughly modern in her economic philosophy, with man—or humanity—as her ultimate measuring stick. Moore quotes *The Economist's Good Guru Guide*: "Ayn Rand—the heroine of America's libertarian right—described her philosophy as 'the concept of man as a noble being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute.'" Yet Scripture, while affirming man's intrinsic dignity, has a completely different starting point and therefore a different moral purpose.

Read Genesis 1:1–27.



[Q] What, according to Genesis 1:1, did God create? Why is this fact significant in a discussion about money and how we value it?

[Q] List all the things God made by his Spirit (vv. 2–27). What responses does this knowledge evoke in you?

[Q] What was the result of God's creative activity? (Hint: See God's evaluation in verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25.)

[Q] How should this evaluation color our own understanding of creation?

[Q] What areas of God's creation do you feel especially called to care for?

Optional Activity: *Pass out some old copies of National Geographic (or a similar magazine) and highlighting pens to each member of the group. Have each go through their magazine(s) and highlight the different aspects of creation as described in Genesis 1: geology (vv. 1–2, 6–10a), astronomy (vv. 3–5, 14–18), oceanography (vv. 10b, 20a, 21a), agriculture and botany (vv. 11–12), ornithology (vv. 20b, 21b), zoology (vv. 24–25), and anthropology (vv. 26–27). Compare and contrast the magazine's implied or stated worldview with that of Genesis.*

Teaching Point Two: We are stewards of God's creation.

Ayn Rand had contempt for a religious understanding of life and money, according to Gary Moore: "In talking to a reporter once, I suggested that Rand and Milton Freidman's teaching that the 'only social responsibility of a business is to make money' had played a major role in demoralizing American business. The reporter also interviewed a Randian professor of business ethics at Duke University who flatly stated, 'Religion is incompatible with business.'"

Perhaps this professor had never read the short but highly significant coda to Genesis 1. This secular worldview says our highest duty is to ourselves—not to God or to others. This approach says that by all economic actors selfishly looking to their own interests, the most people will be helped. It also assumes creation is ours to exploit. Read Genesis 1:28–31 and 2:15, which say otherwise.

[Q] God does two things in verse 28: He blesses the man and the woman, and he gives them a command. (This is the first instance in the Bible of God blessing his people so that they can be a blessing to others and to his creation; see also Gen. 12:2.) How has God blessed you, and what responsibilities do you sense he is calling you to?

[Q] List the elements of God's command in verse 28. Which still apply today? Why do you think so?

[Q] Look at the local application of God's command in Genesis 2:15. Look up the verbs translated as "work" and "keep" in a concordance. How does this verse clarify the command in 1:28? Does this verse imply a selfish raping of the environment, or a careful tending of God's resources? Explain.

[Q] List the elements of God's provision in verses 29–30. How do they help us understand money and economics?

[Q] What does God say about all his creation and his stewards in verse 31? What does that mean for us?

Teaching Point Three: God gives us the ability to create wealth.

Moore says Rand puts humanity in the driver's seat when it comes to wealth creation and financial priorities. As we noted before, Ayn Rand described her philosophy as "the concept of man as a noble being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute." The Bible, however, notes that while men and women are indeed noble beings, our productivity comes not from self but from God. And because God is the source of our wealth, he should also be its proper end.

Read Deuteronomy 8.

[Q] God reminds his people to keep his commands and to recall how he has led them (vv. 1–10). How do these two elements of the Christian life reinforce one another?

[Q] Then he warns his people not to forget him (vv. 11–16). How and why are we tempted to forget God in the economic system in which we find ourselves?

[Q] God warns his people to remember God and the fact that God has given them the power to obtain wealth (vv. 17–18). How does this fact temper and refine our natural inclination to selfishness?

[Q] What warnings does God offer for those who forget him (v. 20)? How do these warnings apply in our society? How can we avoid forgetting God?

Teaching Point Four: Faith and generosity go together.

In the article, Moore writes, "Lutheran historian Martin Marty has observed, 'Every line of the Bible is challenged, countered, and dismissed by the 1,168 pages of *Atlas Shrugged*.'"

Charles Colson once noted Rand's 'inversion of biblical norms,' how she 'exalts selfishness and condemns altruism.'" Biblical moral standards regarding our personal and social responsibilities are usually given lip service in the culture, even if we fall short of or ignore them. Sadly, this occurs even in our churches when we exalt the Bible's money standards but fail to live accordingly.

While our non-Christian neighbors may see little difference between how we and they handle money, the fact is that we have less excuse for our selfishness than they do. The famous passage we will look at in Acts 4 may not be a command for all believers in all times to follow. But it is a powerful reminder of the truth that biblical faith and biblical generosity must go together.

Read Acts 4:32–37.

[Q] The new Jerusalem church was united both spiritually and materially (v. 32). Have you ever been part of a Christian community that lived this way? Do you find this profile common or uncommon? Why?

[Q] Preaching the gospel was a major part of this grace-filled church (v. 33). What does this tell us about word and works going together in ministry?

[Q] Rich church members took care of poor ones (vv. 34–35). Have you been either on the giving or receiving end of such ministry? Is such generosity possible today? Why or why not?

[Q] Barnabas is held up as an encourager in the realm of money (36–37). Would anyone describe you in this way? How can you make sure they do?

Teaching Point Five: Our use of temporal resources has eternal consequences.

Moore points to his mentor: "Sir John Templeton ... said, 'My counsel to a school of business management is to teach the business person to give unlimited love, and he or she will be more successful.'" Moore says the essence of capitalism is how much you can give, and that current distortions have morphed it into how much you can take. The focus, he intimates, needs to go from self to others. God's blessings flow into the lives of those who put others first—in this life and the next. But if we do not open our hearts to others in material things, we have reason to doubt our own standing with God.

Read Matthew 25:13–30 (see also Luke 19:11–27).

[Q] Drawing an analogy to the end times (v. 13), Jesus tells the parable of the talents (vv. 14–30). Three servants receive differing amounts of money to put to work for their master (v. 15). Growth is expected. The results of the three servants vary widely (vv. 16–18). How do we find balance between actively working to increase the resources the Lord has put at our disposal and greed?

[Q] The master both rewards industry and punishes sloth, indicating that the latter stems from a bad appraisal of God (v. 26). How would you describe your own efforts?

[Q] Generosity will be rewarded with generosity and stinginess with ultimate loss. How can we keep an eternal perspective in our day-to-day financial lives?

Part 3 **APPLY YOUR FINDINGS**

Gary Moore points to Ayn Rand as a leading teacher of economic selfishness. The really sad thing, he says, is not that the culture has imbibed this philosophy, but that the church has done so: “Our financial gurus continue to sing in Rand’s temple, using quasi-biblical principles to obtain wealth but disposing of God’s principles if the investment doesn’t lead to ‘productive achievement.’”

Whatever we believe about Rand and her disciples today, the fact is that we cannot afford to overlook God’s teaching on money. This study reminds us that God owns it all; we are his stewards; God gives us the power to create wealth; faith and generosity go together; and our use of temporal resources has eternal consequences. May the Lord give us the grace and the will to live this way.


Action Point: *Look at a concordance and note all the scriptural verses dealing with money. Resolve to read through one passage a day on the topic until all the verses have been digested. Then write down how the exercise has changed your thinking about money.*


— *Stan Guthrie is author of the forthcoming All That Jesus Asks: How His Questions Can Teach and Transform Us (Baker). A CT editor at large, he writes a monthly column for BreakPoint.org and blogs at stanguthrie.com.*

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES


ChristianBibleStudies.com

- **Money Issues:** This 6-session Bible study on how Christians should view finances.
- **Money & the Christian:** This 6-session study will challenge the way you see money.
- **Money Matters 101:** This 12-session course will help you, your small group, or your Sunday school class begin to face the hold that money has on us and find joy in amassing heavenly wealth instead.

 **Faithful Finances 101: From the Poverty of Fear and Greed to the Riches of Spiritual Investing**, by Gary Moore (Templeton, 2003). A resource for integrating faith and finances, this is a first-person narrative by an outspoken advocate of faith-based investing. Financial counselor Gary Moore strips the veneer from evangelical views of the illusions that dominated much of the economic scene of the last two decades and offers, with “hopeful realism,” a guide to true riches based on a biblical worldview.

 **Spiritual Investments: Wall Street Wisdom from the Career of Sir John Templeton**, by Gary Moore (Templeton). In this accessible and inspiring book, investment counselor Gary Moore summarizes Sir John’s wisdom, revealing the financial acumen and spiritual vision that have enabled Templeton to achieve his staggering successes. Many people look to speculative ventures and high-risk investments as vehicles to obtain riches; instead, Sir John’s life and example indicate just the opposite. These principles offer insightful guidance—sound rules for handling financial endeavors. The surprising fact is that these same guidelines work for other areas of our lives. By being both patient and daring, trusting and wary, bold yet thorough, we can live lives that are financially and spiritually rewarding.

 **How to Manage Your Money**, by Larry Burkett (Moody, 2000). The personal investing handbook used by many Christians.

 Crown Financial Ministries offers lots of practical advice and Christian insight; crown.org.



AYN RAND: Goddess of the Great Recession

“Whereas traditional conservatism emphasized duties, responsibilities, and social interconnectedness, at the core of the right-wing ideology that Rand spearheaded was a rejection of moral obligations to others.”

JENNIFER BURNS,
in *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right*

Why Christians should be wary of the late pop philosopher and her disciples. By Gary Moore

THIS PAST SPRING, the Financial Industry Inquiry Commission held hearings on the world’s recent financial crisis. The star witness was Alan Greenspan. *Wall Street Journal* columnist Peggy Noonan translated Greenspan’s typically elusive testimony this way: “I didn’t do anything wrong, and neither did Ayn Rand by the way, but next time you might try more regulation.”

There were obviously many reasons for the Great Recession. But I believe Noonan got to the root of one particular evil.

Fortune magazine once labeled Greenspan “America’s most famous libertarian, an Ayn Rand acolyte.” (While Rand formally rejected libertarianism, libertarians nonetheless admire her.) But today, both libertarians and Randians are disassociating themselves from Greenspan as quickly as Wall Street. This is the Wall Street that worshiped the former Federal Reserve chairman when *Worth* ran a cover story describing how he was “playing God at the Fed.” *Fortune* detailed Greenspan’s “love of free markets, suspicion of do-gooders, and righteous hatred of the state apparatus,” evidenced by his previous deregulation of the savings and loan industry for Charles Keating and such. Few of us Reaganomics supporters understood his role in that fiasco, so history was bound to repeat itself with the recent subprime mortgage scandal.

About the time *Fortune* was extolling Greenspan, I was putting the finishing touches on a book about finances for a major evangelical publisher. I included a chapter on Rand’s quasi-religious philosophies, and another that encouraged Wall Street to embrace a traditional Judeo-Christian ethic. I wrote, “Ayn Rand, like Karl Marx, was one more self-proclaimed prophet who denied the existence of a loving God.” I added this comment from a leading political commentator: “Libertarians have replaced Marxists as the world’s leading utopia builders.” I concluded that we would one day apologize to our children for what Rand had done to our souls, as well as to the political economy.

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Illustration by Amanda Duffy

My junior editor removed the chapter on Rand. “No one has heard of Ayn Rand,” she said. But my senior editor reinserted it. He said he had never understood his family until reading it. It made him realize that they had mixed Rand’s strongly anti-government, unquestioningly pro-business, and individualistic worldview with biblical Christianity. Theologians call this “syncretism”—which George Barna calls America’s favorite religion. It’s a religion too many Christians have bent the knee to.

By the end of 2008, “Maestro” Greenspan was booed off the stage. Yet there are at least three reasons we should stay aware of Rand and her remaining disciples.

In 1998, the Modern Library and Random House each conducted surveys to determine the “top” or “best” books of the 20th century. The top book on both popular lists was *Atlas Shrugged*. In the wake of the recent recession, *The Economist* reported that sales of the 52-year-old novel had sharply increased.

Second, Rand still has influential financial disciples like junk-bond king Michael Milken, Chris Cox, head of the Securities and Exchange Commission for the Bush administration leading up to the crash, as well as cultural influencers like *Playboy* founder Hugh Hefner, media mogul Ted Turner, and pundits John Stossel, Rush Limbaugh, and Glenn Beck, who recently advised Christians to leave any church that speaks of social justice.

Third, after the crash, the chairman of BB&T Bank told *The New York Times* that he believed Rand would be the lead director of our political economy in 25 years. The article mentioned that BB&T had spent millions putting Rand’s books in U.S. schools.

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The Economist’s Good Guru Guide says, “Ayn Rand—the heroine of America’s libertarian right—described her philosophy as ‘the concept of man as a noble being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute.’”

Let’s divide that into stanzas.

REASON AS THE ONLY ABSOLUTE

Like *The Economist*, most observers see Rand as a political and economic philosopher. I believe she was first and foremost an anti-Christian philosopher. She didn’t understand the faith. But she knew that Moses was a lawgiver, that Christ told us to “render unto Caesar,” and that Paul told us to pay taxes and to “honor and respect” government leaders (Rom. 13). So she had to get rid of Christianity in order to get rid of government.

Rand once declared, “I want to be known as the greatest champion of reason and the greatest enemy of religion.” Randian evangelist Leonard Peikoff preached that “every argument for God and every attribute ascribed to him rests on a false metaphysical principle.”

In 1941, Rand wrote to a friend that she would “give people a faith—a positive, clear, and consistent system of belief.” Perhaps

this is what prompted Jennifer Burns, professor of history at the University of Virginia, to use the word *goddess* to describe her in her aforementioned book title. Clearly Rand was a false goddess. Lutheran historian Martin Marty has observed, “Every line of the Bible is challenged, countered, and dismissed by the 1,168 pages of *Atlas Shrugged*.” Charles Colson once noted Rand’s “inversion of biblical norms,” how she “exalts selfishness and condemns altruism.”

In talking to a reporter once, I suggested that Rand and Milton Freidman’s teaching that the “only social responsibility of a business is to make money” had played a major role in demoralizing

American business. The reporter also interviewed a Randian professor of business ethics at Duke University who flatly stated, “Religion is incompatible with business.” (His statement was not a little ironic. I had served on a Christian board of directors with entrepreneur J. B. Fuqua. Fuqua’s personal wealth from chairing several stock exchange-listed companies enabled him to give Duke millions of

dollars for the Fuqua School of Business. Yet this professor was teaching that Fuqua couldn’t do what he did. I was reminded of President Reagan’s remark that economists are people who wonder if what works in reality can also work in theory.)

I’m certain the Randian professor wasn’t aware of the counsel of Sir John Templeton. Templeton was my mentor, a Rhodes Scholar, and the one after whom Oxford University’s business school was named. He said, “My counsel to a school of business management is to teach the business person to give unlimited love, and he or she will be more successful.”

Templeton served as chair of Princeton Theological Seminary’s investment committee for years. And he pioneered global investing, believing that affluent North America had a moral responsibility to finance developing nations, just as Europe had financed America’s canals and railroads a hundred years earlier. He refused to speculatively invest in morally deficient industries.

PRODUCTIVE ACHIEVEMENT

Rand was born in Russia as Alisa Rosenbaum. Her father lost his prosperous business to the Bolsheviks, one likely source of her lifelong hatred of government and love of wealth creation. Rand saw herself and her disciples as superior to any category of human who had ever lived. She dismissed even libertarian economists, such as Nobel laureate F. A. Hayek, if they suggested government might play even a small role in the economy during the worst of times.

Ever focused on her own achievements, Rand always made time to cultivate elites who might help her, all the while oblivious to anyone, including her family, who could or would not. She explained in a famous *Playboy* interview that “charity is not a moral duty,” and took to wearing a dollar-sign brooch on her coats. A six-foot wreath of the dollar sign was at the head of her casket—the same symbol the character John Galt made over the world in the last sentence of *Atlas Shrugged*. Galt was her CEO-type savior. The dollar sign was a symbol of selfishness and material productivity that was to replace the cross, a symbol of sacrifice and eternal concerns. Rand would rejoice that

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our companies and the affluent are sitting on unprecedented wealth while our government and nonprofits are struggling financially.

ONE'S OWN HAPPINESS

Greenspan once testified before Congress that investment firms should be “unburdened of the perceived need” to consider investors’ interests. The Randian did not succeed in turning that into policy, but too many CEOs, mortgage traders, and regulators obviously found the spirit of Rand appealing, even if investors didn’t find it quite as enriching. Years ago, Southern Methodist University economics professor Ravi Batra wrote on the first page of *Greenspan’s Fraud*, “The picture that emerges is one of an intelligent man centered on the self. More than anything else, Mr. Greenspan seems to take care of Mr. Greenspan. His life and accomplishments turn out to be a fitting monument to Ayn Rand’s philosophy of rational selfishness.”

Perhaps imitating Greenspan as he imitated Rand, few Washington and Wall Street players have accepted responsibility for what has recently happened in our society. After Goldman Sachs was brought before the Senate, the *Financial Times* noted the most surprising development, that “three executives danced around the question” of whether Wall Street “had a duty to act in the interests of clients.”

Ironically, Rand’s philosophy did not serve Rand herself. According to the historian Burns, Rand was “a lonely, alienated child” whose wealthy mother openly complained that she “had never wanted children.” Both are likely reasons Rand “was never able to maintain a steady friendship.” The goddess therefore sought to create mankind in her own image with her philosophy of radical individualism. By the time she died, Rand had alienated most of her friends and was deeply depressed.

MAN AS A NOBLE BEING

Burns also notes in *Goddess of the Market* that Rand pathologically thought even William Hickman, a mass murderer, to be a noble being for defying social conventions. So Rand would surely have approved of Wall Street’s hubristic CEOs. After all, they simply acted in imitation of Galt, doing their own thing without concern for social norms. Rand would have believed the world just fine if these “noble” CEOs were in charge and took care of us by managing our wealth.

The one mistake Greenspan has acknowledged before Congress was thinking that our noble CEOs would govern themselves. In Rand’s utopia, demons exist almost exclusively in government and religion. Her one-eyed perspective could not see Adam Smith’s insight that people of the same trade rarely get together without conspiring against the public. So she, and Greenspan, would never have imagined the CEOs of mortgage companies marketing liar loans to selfish but naïve homebuyers, while the CEOs of investment firms and irresponsible ratings agencies packaged these junk mortgages as AAA-rated

securities to dump into our pension funds. She would blame that entirely on “bureaucrats and do-gooders.” Had she and Greenspan only understood what fallen humans will do for 30 pieces of silver.

Later in life, Rand claimed Aristotle as the only thinker she needed to credit. Yet Burns makes it clear that “Friedrich Nietzsche was the philosopher who quickly became her favorite” when Rand first fantasized about playing God: “Nietzsche’s elitism fortified her own.” Of course, Nietzsche famously proclaimed the death of God; he left it to others to develop an alternative morality. Rand volunteered for the job.

Those who spend a lot of time and money on books and videos speculating about the antichrist can devote themselves to more immediate concerns. As I have explained elsewhere repeatedly, key candidates for the job have been running the American economy the past 30 years with our unwitting assistance.

HERO OF THE LIBERTARIAN RIGHT

Here is where this lifelong conservative Republican has to stop preaching and start meddling. As apologist Ravi Zacharias observed in *Jesus Among Other Gods*, “Wealth and enterprise have so woven themselves around the message of Jesus that popular models of Christianity appear as nothing more than self and greed at the center, with strands of Christian thought at the periphery.”

For example, Pat Robertson tooted Rand’s horn in *The New Millennium* with these words: “The aim of free people everywhere is to limit the power and scope of the government in any way they can,” a sentiment that could inspire many Christian militia handbooks. Ralph Reed, darling of the Religious Right for many years, once wrote in *The Wall Street Journal*, “Traditionalist ends can be advanced through libertarian means.”

To the contrary, I have found it more enriching to achieve traditionalist ends with the traditional means of Christian love. As a political science graduate, I understand the power of libertarian anger to motivate couch potatoes to vote. But as an investment counselor, I have probably seen more financial opportunities missed by clients due to libertarianism than any other thought system.

This is particularly true regarding the federal debt, which libertarians find abhorrent. Deceased financial commentator Larry Burkett, a one-time friend, was once heard on over a thousand evangelical radio stations. He often published newsletters with headlines describing America as “a nation under siege by its government” at about the time Newt Gingrich was attempting his revolution. Burkett’s faulty theological worldview that “every reference to debt in Scripture is a warning” helped stir “the angry white man.” But of course the Sermon on the Mount, whose messenger borrowed a donkey, an upper room, and a tomb during Holy Week alone, suggests that we are to lend to anyone in true need. That obviously means someone is *borrowing*.

And Burkett had obviously not read the 1992 book *The Seven Fat Years*, by Robert Bartley, the legendary, solidly conservative (and obviously biblically literate) former editor of *The Wall Street Journal*. Bartley called the federal debt a “great national myth” that



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libertarian politicians had concocted to manipulate voters. He knew that we true conservatives once considered it patriotic to let the government borrow from us when we bought war bonds. God bless his soul, but Larry was so focused on the federal debt, he never saw the massive buildup of debt in Wall Street firms that actually ignited the recent crash.

And, in the spirit of Randian elitism, Larry once wrote, “As cruel as it may sound, from the long-term perspective of the economy, it would be better to raise taxes on the poor than on the wealthy.” I once publicly challenged that theology. Larry wrote me that he didn’t mean what I thought he did. But he never explained what he had meant.

In 2001, this magazine published an article about socially responsible investing. Among other things, it noted that the investment firm founded by evangelical financial planner Ron Blue actually discouraged the integration of ethics toward our neighbors and investing.

Similarly, Austin Pryor, publisher of *Sound Mind Investing*, the most popular evangelical financial newsletter (endorsed by both Burkett and Blue), once confessed: “I receive more questions asking for suggestions on ethical investments than any other topic. . . . Unfortunately, I must tell them I can be of no help. Why not? Because I know of no investments that are guaranteed to meet their criteria.”

Of course, Pryor might have noted that this is true of nearly all financial criteria. But he concluded by saying, “I want to encourage you to shift your thinking away from ethics when investing.” Despite promoting biblical fidelity, Dave Ramsey’s website says much the same today.

I’ve come to believe there’s a connection between Barna’s statement that only 10 percent of Christians integrate our beliefs with our lives, and the fact that the Social Investment Forum says only 10 percent of institutional money under management is integrated with a traditional Christian ethic. We apparently have surrendered to Rand’s ethic of seeking maximum personal gain—in the hope, I suppose, that charity can repair the damage. Unfortunately, the fate of Ken Lay of Enron, a generous giver with whom I served on a Christian board, disproved that human reasoning to millions of employees and shareholders.

As a Christian, I believe we have a moral responsibility to act in a socially responsible manner toward the poor and fellow taxpayers who are now on the hook for Wall Street’s greed. So I was startled to discover that one outspoken evangelical money manager who claims to “invest as Jesus would”—by which he means focusing on sexual issues—was invested in AIG and Goldman Sachs. Evidently, homosexuality and promiscuity have replaced greed as the root of all evil.

Our financial gurus continue to sing in Rand’s temple, using quasi-biblical principles to obtain wealth but disposing of God’s principles if the investment doesn’t lead to “productive achievement.” I’ve long believed that leaders of the Religious Right and our more popular financial advisers, who have attempted to harmonize their philosophies with economic libertarianism the past three decades, have been naïve. Libertarians usually despise Christian social values, advocating the legalization of abortion, illicit drugs, and pornography while worshiping wealth. The biblical discouragement

of unholy alliances should have named that tune as syncretism. But the angry white man of 1994 sings on at today’s tea parties. And his anger is still primarily over economic issues.

TIME TO LOOK UP

How might more of us be found joyfully working in God’s harvest rather than angrily wasting time, talent, and treasure drowning tea?

The *Financial Times* recently published an article titled, “A social vision for the world after socialism.” It concluded, “Active empathy is not socialism, but it is social. It does not assume that a statist economy will replace capitalism, but it does point to stewardship replacing ownership.” Stewardship is about far more than raising enough money to keep our institutional lights on. Economics without the sense of other, without social responsibility, is what I call “casino capitalism.” We insert coins into the machine with no thought other than the payout to ourselves and the house’s take. But what I’ve long called “stewardism” looks inside the machine through loving lenses.

Socially responsible investing has long looked inside our mutual, pension, and endowment funds to ensure our treasures are where our mouths are and where our hearts should be. Community development banking looks inside our banks to see if our deposits are funding affordable housing or speculation, job creation or consumer spending. And micro-enterprise lending, fair trade, and social entrepreneurship look inside developing nations to see if our loans, purchases, and investments are honoring God by enriching our neighbors, particularly the poor.

The paradox is that by looking deeper, we might be as likely to enrich ourselves, as academic studies and anecdotal evidence suggest.

The yearning for a more ethical, prudent approach has been marked by recent books such as *God Is Back*, by the senior editors of *The Economist*, and *The Fourth Great Awakening and the Future of Egalitarianism*, by Nobel laureate Robert William Fogel. Two of these authors are agnostics, but they still see America returning to the Promised Land. Bailouts and layoffs have taught even the most individualistic business leaders that Rand and her disciples were wrong to think any of us can ever be financially independent.

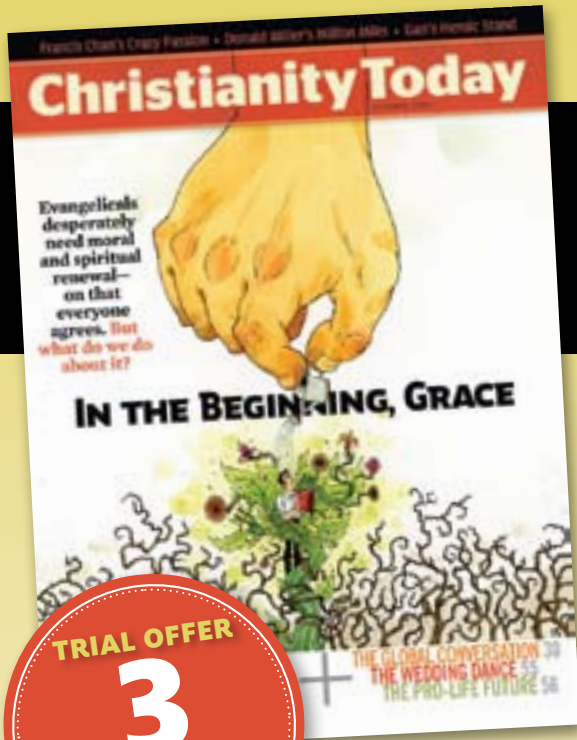
The Economist recently put it this way: “Business is a remarkable exercise in cooperation. For all the talk of competition ‘red in tooth and claw,’ companies in fact depend on persuading large numbers of people—workers and bosses, shareholders and suppliers—to work together to a common end. This involves getting lots of strangers to trust each other. It also increasingly involves stretching trust across borders . . . the word *company* is derived from the Latin words *cum* and *pane*, meaning ‘breaking bread together.’”

Let us do so on our knees. Not with the pride of the Pharisees, by claiming that we invest as Jesus would, but with the humility to remember that Moses may invest ethically, but it’s still Jesus who saves. ☩

Gary Moore has worked on Wall Street for three decades, and is the founder of The Financial Seminary (FinancialSeminary.org).

Go to ChristianBibleStudies.com for “God and the Money Goddess,” a Bible study based on this article.

Nietzsche famously proclaimed the death of God; he left it to others to develop an alternative morality. Rand volunteered for the job.



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