

Who Makes the Rules?

We live in a time when the reigning presupposition or belief is that business operates by a set of rules that has nothing to do with our Creator. The worldview embraced by most people, even professing Christians, is pragmatism. The tag line of pragmatism is “whatever works.” Pragmatism embraces as truth whatever principles or practices are needed to achieve our goals and objectives. For example, if your goal as a pragmatist is to make money, the true pragmatist will focus and align every action to accomplish that task with few boundaries. This means that lying, cheating, and stealing are okay if the goal of making money is accomplished. Now suppose that you knew someone who was a true pragmatist, whose goal was to make money. Would you want to do business with or work for that person knowing that he or she had no scruples against lying, stealing, or cheating? I doubt you would.

What if the true pragmatist modified his or her goal by embracing limits? For example, suppose the true pragmatist embraced making money as an objective, but was not willing to lie, steal, or cheat to do so. Would you do business with or work for this person? Probably, you would. Most of us are willing to do business with or work for someone who treats us honestly and fairly.

This begs the following questions: Where did the true pragmatist get his or her values? Why are these values efficacious for encouraging business and employment? Could it be that the Creator of the universe made these rules; hence, they work? Isn't it logical that if God created the universe, He created the rules of all the “games”—family, business, government, education, and so forth?

The problem is that there is an underlying presupposition that many people accept called evolution. I realize that some people contend that evolution is a fact, but I contend that it is a theory and a belief system. One of the primary goals of the theory of evolution is to provide an explanation for the existence of the universe apart from a creator. By doing so, the rules of creation are bifurcated from God. Of course, the theory only posits to explain the evolutionary development of biological life. The theory offers no explanation as to the origin of the universe, but because many people are so desperate to remove God from creation, they embrace it with gusto, despite its obvious logical flaw.

Just as evolution is man's attempt to rid himself of God, the separation of church and state movement is an attempt to remove all vestiges of God from public education and public policy. The presupposition is that man can learn and govern independent of the Creator, which means that the Creator did not make the rules of the games of education or government. This presupposition is a big leap of faith. Why would a creator form a universe and then endorse his own rejection? This is illogical.

Would a better presupposition be that if God created the universe, then God created the rules for all the games? It seems logical to believe that a creator who is concerned enough to create the laws of science that enable life to exist would also create the laws of relationships, business, education, and government.

If one accepts that the Creator makes the rules of all the games, what are the rules of, say, the business game? Since the ultimate source of all knowledge is God, the rules must come from divine revelation. This reality does not minimize the role of our mind, senses, and intuition in gaining knowledge. But it recognizes that these are simply tools. Without revelation, our minds, senses, and intuition would be useless as vehicles to acquire knowledge.

There are three sources of revelation, namely, the Bible, creation, and specific guidance. Theologians call the Bible “special revelation” and creation “general revelation.” And for discussion purposes, I have labeled specific guidance specific revelation.

Special revelation is “special” because it is written revelation with the special purpose of explaining why man was created, what man is to do, what impairs man, and what is God’s solution for this impairment (see II Timothy 3:16-17).

General revelation is the testimony about God in creation that is revealed to all without exception (see Romans 1).

Specific revelation is guidance for a specific person in a specific situation at a specific time. An example of this is answered prayer (see II Samuel 5:22-25).

General revelation and specific revelation are assumed to be subordinate to special revelation since the latter has more specific information about the Creator and the creation. Hermeneutically, it is assumed that for revelation gleaned from general and/or specific revelation to be valid, it must be consistent with special revelation.

Given the supremacy of the revelation of the Bible, the Bible should be viewed as the Creator’s handbook for business.

If the Bible is the Creator’s handbook for business, what are the principles by which humans are to conduct business? There are many, but let’s take one for an example—the principle of firstfruits given in Proverbs 3:9–10 (NIV):

Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

The flip side of this principle is judgment. When a person doesn’t obey the principles established by the Creator, then he or she is cursed. Consider Proverbs 3:33 (NIV):

The LORD’s curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous.

R. G. LeTourneau experienced the results of failing to honor the Lord with his firstfruits. In 1930 while the country was experiencing economic depression, R. G.’s fledgling business was blessed with sales of \$110,808.60 and a net profit of \$34,794.92. In those days, this was stellar. Emboldened with confidence about the future, R. G. decided to do God a favor and make up his own rules for honoring God similar to what Saul did in I Samuel 15. R. G. decided that he could invest God’s money in his growing business, so that the next year he could really give God a “share to be proud of.”¹ The next year started with much hope and anticipation. R. G. had a new factory and a big contract to build a road from Boulder City to the site of the new Boulder Dam. Things were looking so good that he expected sales to exceed \$500,000 with a net profit in excess of \$100,000 that year.

Before entering into the contract to build the road, R. G. asked his engineers to conduct a series of test bores to see what was under the surface of the ground along the route of the road. Every test bore indicated soft rock conditions. Unbeknownst to anyone, however, between the test bores lay some of the hardest rock imaginable. It wasn’t long after beginning the project that R. G. realized he was in serious trouble. As he encountered the hard unforeseen subsurface conditions, he was faced with a much more costly project than he had imagined. It seemed that every effort he made to deal with difficult conditions was thwarted. At one point he was reduced to men chipping rock by hand, which is terribly expensive. Finally at great cost he finished the road, but it far exceeded his estimated cost. His accounting was not exact enough to determine the loss with precision, but he knew from looking at his unpaid bills that his loss was great. He estimated it at \$100,000, which in 2002 dollars would be more than \$1 million.

1. R. G. LeTourneau, *R. G. LeTourneau: Mover of Men and Mountains* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1967), 173.

His next project was an earth dam in Orange County, California. As is true of most state projects, R. G. was required to carry a bond. His fragile financial condition made the bonding company very uncomfortable, so they sent a person to oversee R. G., which annoyed him enormously. The project was completed on time and barely on budget, so little was left to pay off the \$100,000 debt from the Boulder project. The creditors began to complain. The next contract was a very difficult road project in Carmel similar to the one at Boulder. This made the creditors even more nervous. With the support of the bonding company, however, R. G. was able to buy some time. As an added comfort for the creditors, the bonding company sent their best accountant to help R. G. put his books in order.

Despite this momentary success, R. G. had a major problem. He couldn't make payroll and the bank was about to foreclose on his factory. So what to do? He decided to go to church.

R. G. was a strongly committed Christian and going to church was a regular activity for him. He even sang bass in the choir—actually, he was the entire bass section. This particular night was missions' night. Annually, the church sought pledges for missions for the following year. The previous year, R. G. had pledged a large sum of money for the current year, but had failed to deliver because of his Boulder job problems. Now he was faced with making a pledge for the next year. How could he make a pledge when he couldn't even make payroll? He certainly didn't want to repeat what happened last year and fail to honor his commitment. During this conversation with himself, he remembered what he had done last year when he told the Lord that he would invest His money. Suddenly conviction seized him. He realized that he had disobeyed the Lord's command about firstfruits. Instead, he had made up his own rules about how to honor God. He knew that if he wanted God to bless him, he would have to align his practices with God's principles. He also knew that he was to make the same pledge to missions for the coming year that he had made last year, but this time he was going to honor the commitment.

The next day he told his accountant that he had made a big mistake last year by not honoring the Lord with the firstfruits from his business and he was resolved to make it right. R. G. decided the appropriate thing to do was to pay what he should have paid last year plus keep his mission pledge for the coming year. He directed the accountant to write the checks every time payroll checks were written. The accountant was dumbfounded. He exclaimed that R. G. couldn't even make payroll. R. G. replied that he didn't care—when payroll was written, a check was to be written to the church and missions. The accountant indicated that he was not accustomed to using the Bible in cold-cash accounting. When R. G. asked if he was going to leave, the accountant said no, he was going to stick around to see "how the show ended." Within a month the company was making payroll, paying the church and the missions' pledge.

R. G. never looked back. He had learned that prosperity and blessing is the fruit of obedience to his Creator because his Creator made the rules for the game of business.

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