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## Gleanings

### Who Is Right—Conservatives or Liberals?



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The worldwide economic malaise continues with no end in sight. In an attempt to stimulate their respective economies, central banks in both Japan and the United States plan to purchase distressed debt in the coming months. Europe continues to struggle under massive sovereign debt. And even one of the most vibrant economies of the world, China, is experiencing an economic slowdown. It appears that the worldwide economic conundrum will continue, at least for the foreseeable future.

In the United States, this is a presidential election year—something that happens every four years. The economy is a major election issue, and, more specifically, jobs. Domestic unemployment is unusually high. Many people are out of work and looking for employment. Others would like to find employment but, after a protracted unsuccessful effort, have given up.

The United States has a two party political tradition, which means there are typically two options for president—a conservative and a liberal.

Conservatives say the solution to our languishing economic condition is lower taxes and less regulation. Liberals say the solution is higher taxes to fund more government control. Who is right? Or better yet, what is the truth?

Both conservatives and liberals make assumptions about the nature of reality, God, and man. Some of the assumptions are the same and some are different. For example, with regard to the nature of reality, both conservatives and liberals commonly believe in either naturalism or deism. Naturalism is an atheistic philosophy; deism is a theistic philosophy. Naturalism assumes the only reality is tangible reality. Since in their view there is no God, there is no spiritual reality and therefore all phenomena must be explained by natural causes. Deism assumes there is a God, but deists do not believe God is engaged in his creation and, therefore, as in naturalism, all phenomena must be explained by natural causes. For all practical purposes, deism and naturalism are philosophically identical. Though liberals and conservatives may have differing views of God, both assume answers to all life's issues are found exclusively in the natural or tangible world.

Regarding the nature of man, both conservatives and liberals believe in human potency. Human potency means humans have the power to do as they wish, that is, humans can freely choose to do good or evil. It is assumed there is no bias in human nature to prefer one over the other—good versus evil.

Conservatives believe that humans will typically choose good over evil and therefore do not need extensive regulatory oversight.

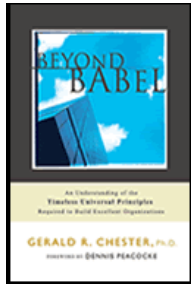
Liberals agree with the assumption of human potency, but they do not believe humans will typically choose good over evil. They believe that given the opportunity, humans will choose to be greedy and self-serving. Liberals believe that to protect people from sin, government must regulate human beings. In other words, liberals believe their responsibility is to manage the sin in the workplace—particularly the sin of business leaders.

The challenge of the liberal-conservative debate is that neither position is built on biblically sound assumptions. Biblically, God is the sovereign creator of the universe, which means he is engaged in his creation. A correct view of reality must reflect both the existence of God and his sovereign control over creation. This means naturalism and deism are not correct philosophies since, a priori, naturalism and deism reject any idea of a sovereign creator who is engaged with his creation.

Regarding the nature of man, the atheistic and deistic assumption of human potency is inconsistent with Christianity, which holds to human impotency or human depravity. This means that, in and of himself, man is not able to make good choices (Romans 3:23). The only

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way man can choose good over evil is through divine empowerment. Divine empowerment comes in two forms—common grace and the grace of Christ. Common grace is the ability God grants each person to obey some of God's principles, albeit on a limited basis. Common grace is why even the most pagan people can survive in God's universe, but common grace is not sufficient for salvation from the penalty of human sin. The grace of Christ is the divinely granted empowerment through the Holy Spirit that is both efficacious for salvation and enables Christians to obey the will and ways of God. It is this grace—Christ's grace—that enables a person to reach his or her full potential by finding and fulfilling his or her God-ordained life purpose.

The liberal view of man's nature is closer to truth than the conservative view. But the liberals' solution is flawed. They assume government regulators can be good enough to manage sin in the business world. The problem is that regulators are sinners too. If the regulators are only empowered by common grace, then their ability to perform well will be extremely limited.

Both the conservatives and liberals approach economic problems with flawed thinking based on partial truth. Without Christ, the conservative approach will lead to abuse and greed. Without Christ, the liberal approach is simply sin management, which is inefficient and largely ineffective.

The only real solution to our economic malaise is Christ.

A biblical view of Jesus Christ leads to a profound understanding of the nature of reality, God, and man. The sovereign God of the universe—who most fully reveals himself through his Son, Jesus Christ—created reality. By nature man is depraved and needs more divine empowerment than common grace provides. Man needs divine empowerment to transform man's heart and enable him to obey God's will according to God's ways. Left to himself man chooses to do his will according to his ways. But transformed man has the ability to choose God's will and ways, which lead to success in God's universe (Psalms 1).

The real solution for the current economic malaise—or any economic malaise—is to help people experience the transforming power of God through Christ. This means the real role of management is to pastor and disciple people into the will and ways of God.

Neither conservatives nor liberals have a profound response to the economic malaise because neither group understands the root issues. The root issues of life are always spiritual in nature. The only way to solve spiritual problems is with spiritual solutions. Christ being formed in us is the profound spiritual solution to all problems in life.

May Christ be so profoundly formed in us that we no longer live to do our will according to our ways but are transformed to do God's will according to God's ways (Romans 12:1–2). When we live this way, we will be able to solve the world's economic problems at the root and will therefore prosper in God's creation.

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