

The New Testament Church
BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW TEACHINGS

09 – A Biblical View of Human Rights

Paul Jehle – May 15, 2024

I The Origin of God-given Rights

- A. The definition of “rights” – word #4941 in Strong’s - *Mishpat*
 - 1. “*judgment, right, that which is just, lawful, according to law.*” It can mean *to do justice or decide a case, bringing equity (punishment that fits the crime).*
 - 2. Webster’s 1828 Dictionary “right” – *In morals and religion, just; equitable; accordant to the standard of truth and justice or the will of God. That alone is right in the sight of God, which is consonant to his will or law; this being the only perfect standard of truth and justice. In social and political affairs, that is right which is consonant to the laws and customs of a country, provided these laws and customs are not repugnant to the laws of God.... **Just claim**... All men have a right to the secure enjoyment of life, personal safety, liberty and property. We deem the right of trial by jury invaluable, particularly in the case of crimes. Rights are natural, civil, political, religious, personal, and public.*
 - 3. Biblical rights are objective (regulated by law) and subjective (a part of human nature)
 - 4. As Creator, God gave rights to individuals (Adam) – (see **chart** in PP)
- B. God is the source of all rights and responsibilities (“the duty we owe our Creator”)
 - 1. God gave rights to mankind in the context of duties or responsibilities we owe Him
 - 2. The rights God gives are **inalienable** (cannot be separated) since we are in His image
 - 3. Responsibility comes with accountability – God issues a just claim upon us due to the fact that He created us – a Creator demands duty from those He created! (see Amos **quotes**)

II The three great Rights and Responsibilities given by God to all Humans – Genesis 1:26

...God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it...”

- A. The right to LIFE – *be fruitful and multiply*
 - 1. God has a positive view about having children... (no over-population)
 - 2. Life begins at conception – Psalm 51:5 (see Rus Walton **quote**)
 - 3. All human beings are given the same rights (equality) – yet we can give it away
- B. The right to LIBERTY – *replenish the earth*
 - 1. The Hebrew word here is *mala* meaning *to be full or to fill* (see Lexicon **definition**)
 - 2. It is used literally and figuratively (with sin, wisdom, violence or peace)
 - 3. Since we are made in His image, we are creative, producing from His resources.
 - 4. In essence, we refill the earth with technology, a different form than we found it.
 - 5. This can be beneficial in accountability to God, or making us dependent (tyranny)
 - 6. It is a *law of liberty*, Adam and Eve could eat of every tree but one (choice under law)
 - 7. See Noah Webster’s **definition** of liberty...
- C. The right to PROPERTY – *subdue it* (Hebrew *kabash* “to bring in bondage” – stewardship)
 - 1. The Hebrew *rahdah* is dominion, Latin dominium, meaning property (**quote** Amos)
 - 2. Ps. 24:1 - God owns the earth, yet empowers men and women to be stewards of the earth
 - 3. The first private property the Garden of Eden – *to till and manage* (Ge. 2:15) before sin
 - 4. The 6th Commandment (theft) is meaningless without the premise of ownership
 - 5. The 10th Commandment (covet) is meaningless unless conscience exists

6. Property is thus internal (conscience) and external – (see Madison **quote on PP**)
7. The purest form of private ownership is *allodial* property rights (see **definitions**)

III The Unique Nature of Biblical, God-given Rights defined by the Bible

- A. God-given rights are “self-evident” – Romans 1:18-20
 1. General revelation of God – law of nature - “truths known intuitively” - Romans 1:18-20 – *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them (phaneros en autois – evident in themselves), for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made (tois poemasin nooumena kathoratai – by means of things that are made), even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.*
 2. The Latin phrase *per se notum* – “self-evident” is derived from Scripture!
- B. Thomas Aquinas, in 1274 in his *Summa Theologica*, delineated self-evident truths (see **quote**)
- C. Special revelation comes by way of Scripture alone – law of God – (see Blackstone **quote**)
- D. God-given rights are distributed equally – equality of individuals before God and the Law
 1. Each individual is made in the image of God, though marred by sin...
 2. Man’s reason is a gift from God, and can discern the law of nature and rights minimally
- E. All other nations saw rights as alienable, or Government-granted privileges
 1. Israel and the Ancient Empires
 - a. Israel saw rights as God-given, primarily life, liberty and property (as seen above)
 - b. Hammurabi’s Code – **quote** Durant assessment in Eidsmoe, Vol. 1 – pgs. 53-61
 - c. Hammurabi was the height of pagan law – natural law – yet government-granted rights
 2. The Greeks and Romans
 - a. Since Greeks had no belief in a Creator, “*In the Greek view all rights are alienable because all rights are politically given rather than God-given.*” (Amos, p. 113)
 - b. Romans had State granted “rights”; “*The Roman Law of Twelve Tables (Leges Duodecim Tabularum), which may date in its earliest form to the fifth century BC, required fathers to put to death any child who was deformed. One of these laws reads: ‘A notably deformed child shall be killed immediately.’*” (Johnston, p. 57)
 3. Medieval Christian Rights theories and the Renaissance (see Tierney **quote** in Amos)
 - a. Rights are government granted, and not self-evident to the individual, only the State
 - b. The Enlightenment taught external equality by the State as an “equalizer.”

IV The Challenges of Today

- A. Rights vs. Privileges
 1. Today when “rights” are often listed, the definition is really one of privilege (exception).
 2. Webster’s 1828 - *A privilege may be a particular right granted by law or held by custom (done away with in U.S. Constitution in both Congress and States – Art I.9.8 and I.10.1), or it may be an exemption from some burden to which others are subject.*
 3. The normal slide away from unalienable rights is first to redefine them as “civil rights” (coming from government), then exceptions or exemptions, then eliminate them...
- B. Rights vs. Toleration
 1. Rights today are often equivocated as toleration – (see Philip Schaff **quote**)
 2. Defining the root of issues is critical if we are to restore God-given rights in our day