> *"Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need." -1 Thessalonians 4:9-12*

The May-June 2018 issue of *The Austrian* features an interview with physician, author and retired U.S. representative Dr. Ron Paul. Below is a brief excerpt followed by some disjointed but perhaps helpful observations pertaining to Christianity and liberty:

> *"…During [my] Air Force period, I had a lot more time to read and that's when the Randians were very active and it was at that time, I subscribed to The Objectivist Newsletter and remember specifically reading "Gold and Economic Freedom" by Alan Greenspan, which I kept a copy of all those years. That's the activity I was involved with. I'm not a Randian, and I'm not an Objectivist. I have my critique of that, but it was sort of inspiring reading.*
>
> *Even today, I don't read hardly any novels, but I read hers [Ayn Rand's] because they were sort of inspirational and yet, she forced me to sort things out because she was so negative on Christianity and generosity, at least she came across that way with her attack on altruism and compared it to communism and that didn't make sense to me. I had to figure that out, that there was a difference, that they weren't identical."[1]*

Firstly, it may be of interest to note that despite Greenspan's close association to Rand and apparent agreement with objectivism's tenets, he seemed to be less than forthright about gold and fiat currency while he was serving as chairman of the Federal Reserve.[2] In 1997, Franklin Sanders recounted that

> *"Almost 30 years ago, just a few weeks before I got married, on a drugstore bookstand I found a strange book: Capitalism, the Unknown Ideal. It was a collection of essays about a philosophy of freedom. Two dealt with the American*

> *monetary system. The author explained that nothing—no gold or silver—backed our currency. He argued that sooner or later, this fiat money system would lead to disaster, and that only a money backed by real value—gold—could last.*
>
> *That author was Alan Greenspan. Since then our careers—Alan's and mine—have taken very different paths.*
>
> *In 1967, Alan Greenspan was already a fairly well known economic consultant. In the 1970s, President Ford appointed him to his Council of Economic Advisors. In 1987, Alan Greenspan was appointed Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors.*
>
> *Funny, he doesn't talk much about gold anymore."[3]*

Secondly, libertarianism is often regarded by Christians as more of an anarchical libertinism rooted in the atheism of Ayn Rand and therefore inimical to Christianity. This common assumption is less than accurate. Ron Paul, for example, is probably the best known libertarian public figure in America, and he tells us in the above interview that his own views are incompatible with those of Ayn Rand. He declares, "I'm not a Randian, and I'm not an Objectivist."

Further evidence that neither Ron Paul's philosophy nor libertarianism generally depend upon Ayn Rand's objectivism is that Paul's own former chief of staff wrote a detailed critique of Rand's philosophy—*Without a Prayer: Ayn Rand and the Close of Her System*—featuring an endorsement by Paul himself:

> *"John Robbins is as stalwart defender of a free society as I have known. His love of freedom—religious, political, and economic—motivated him to write Without a Prayer, a brilliantly insightful analysis of Ayn Rand's influential philosophy. Without a Prayer deserves to be read by everyone who loves freedom—everyone who wants to advocate freedom with arguments that cannot be refuted. Robbins furnishes the indispensable ideas—the intellectual ammunition—required to defend freedom successfully."[4]*

Speaking of the relationship between Ron Paul and John Robbins and their common opposition to Rand's philosophy, it is reported that Robbins even ghost wrote Paul's *The Case for Gold* (1982)[5], a book which makes important references to biblical morality:

> *"The rule of moral law must replace the power of man in order for sound money to circulate once again. Ignoring morality in attempts to stop inflation and restore the country's economic health guarantees failure. A moral commitment to honest money guarantees success.…*
>
> *Biblical law, which informs the common law and has shaped the legal institutions of Western Europe and North America, regards money as a weight, either of silver or gold, and stern commands against dishonest weights and measures were enforced with severe punishments. The prophet Isaiah condemned Israel because 'your silver is become your dross, wine mixed with water.' Debasement of the money was very severely condemned. In his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Martin Luther wrote, 'Today we may apply the Apostle's words [Romans 2:2-3] first to those [rulers] who without cogent cause inflict exorbitant taxes upon the people, or by changing and devaluating the currency, to rob them, while at the same time they accuse their subjects of being greedy and avaricious.'*
>
> *It is not surprising then, given this background, that the Congress of 1792 imposed the death penalty on anyone convicted of debasing the coinage. Debasement, depreciation, devaluation, inflation—all stand condemned by the moral law."[6]*

Ron Paul goes on in the interview to criticize Rand's system because it compared generosity with communism. "…She was so negative on Christianity and generosity, at least she came across that way with her attack on altruism and compared it to communism and that didn't make sense to me. I had to figure that out, that there was a difference, that they weren't identical."

Certainly, personal, volitional generosity has nothing at all to do with communism, but Rand's attack on altruism may not have been far off, depending how you define the term. Robbins offers some clarity in *Freedom and Capitalism*:

> *"The attempt to impose politicized charity subverts genuine charity.…*

> *An important part of the process of replacing personal charity with so-called social justice involved changing the meaning of charity. Before the twentieth-century, altruism, the notion that the poor were somehow entitled to the property of others, had no place in America. This was as it should be, for the Bible itself teaches no unconditional duty to help others simply because they need help.*
>
> *For example, there is Paul's command, already alluded to, that he who does not work, neither shall he eat. Paul makes no mention of adverse economic conditions as an excuse for joblessness. As a good economist, Paul knew that there is always plenty of work to be done. Paul says that there is no duty to support anyone who can work and does not. The Bible knows nothing of either legal or moral entitlements to the property of another, simply because one needs help.*
>
> *Paul's command, if obeyed, would mean the immediate end of the welfare state….*
>
> *Anyone who advocates legal or moral entitlements, anyone who advocates promiscuous political or private giving, anyone who asserts that some people deserve help simply because they are human beings is disobeying God. Paul says: 'Do not feed….' 'Do not let a widow….' 'Refuse younger widows….'*
>
> *Since charity is a private responsibility, government has no role in providing it.[7]*

In other words, true charity is not politicized, coerced, indiscriminate, unconditional or universal. Notice that Robbins' appeal is to the Scriptures, not Rand's objectivism, in his criticism of altruism. Rand's opposition to altruism may have been motivated by her hatred of communism, but her opposition to personal generosity—and/or its conflation with state-sponsored altruism—surely was driven both by her hatred of Christianity and embrace of a social Darwinian worldview. Michael Yang notes that

> *"Many of Rand's insights into the workings of collectivism and altruism—at least what she meant by altruism—are quite right. Collectivism does deny the rights of the individual and sacrifices them in the name of society. However, Rand goes a step further by including Christianity under the banner of altruism. According to her, Christianity, like all altruistic philosophies, strikes at man's individuality and self-worth for the purpose of controlling and manipulating him. Therefore, any*

> *differences between Christianity and collectivism are ultimately unimportant and incidental. The two ideologies are merely different sides of the same coin."[8]*

Yang's comment that "many of Rand's insights into the workings of collectivism…are quite right" speaks to the fact that one need not have a biblical worldview in order to employ the rules of logic. Indeed, in Alan Greenspan's 1966 essay noted earlier we find the following remarks:

> *"…The gold standard is incompatible with chronic deficit spending (the hallmark of the welfare state). Stripped of its academic jargon, the welfare state is nothing more than a mechanism by which governments confiscate the wealth of the productive members of a society to support a wide variety of welfare schemes….*
>
> *This is the shabby secret of the welfare statists' tirades against gold. Deficit spending is simply a scheme for the 'hidden' confiscation of wealth. Gold stands in the way of this insidious process. It stands as a protector of property rights. If one grasps this, one has no difficulty in understanding the statists' antagonism toward the gold standard."[9]*

Rand's criticism of altruism, while inapplicable to true Christian ethics and individual generosity and selflessness, may be valid as it pertains to Romanism's social teaching or its doctrine of the "universal destination of goods". Even before the inauguration of the Jesuit social justice warrior pope, Francis' predecessor, Benedict XVI, had this to say about the Roman Catholic's political and social responsibilities:

> *"The prayer which we repeat at ever Mass: 'Give us this day our daily bread,' obliges us to do everything possible, in cooperation with international, state and private institutions, to end or at least reduce the scandal of hunger and malnutrition afflicting so many millions of people in our world…. In a particular way, the Christian laity, formed at the school of the Eucharist, are called to assume their specific political and social responsibilities. To do so, they need to be adequately prepared through practical education in charity and justice. To this end, the Synod considered it necessary for Dioceses and Christian communities to teach and promote the Church's social doctrine."[10]*

Finally, Rand even made it a point to distance herself from the label “libertarianism” and even attacked key economists in the Austrian tradition. Lee Penn reports that

> *“Rand considered the pioneering Austrian economist Friedrich Hayek, author of The Road to Serfdom, to be ‘real poison’ who did ‘more good to the communist cause than ours;’ she also came to disdain the economists Ludwig von Mises and Henry Hazlitt for their utilitarianism.…*
>
> *Although many active libertarians credit Rand as ‘integral to their intellectual and ideological development,’ and although Rand is the libertarian writer who is best-known to the general public, she told anyone who asked her that she was not a libertarian, and that libertarians were her ‘avowed enemies.’ She was sure that the movement’s leaders ‘had stolen her ideas while failing even to try to master her complete philosophy.’”[11]*

Bob Murphy is another austro-libertarian economist recently interviewed by Jeff Deist for *The Austrian*. Bob, quite unlike Rand, identifies himself as a Protestant, regularly posts commentary on Scripture and doctrine at his blog and finds support for free market capitalism, limited government, and non-interventionism not by appealing to Ayn Rand but to her sworn enemies, Scripture and the Austrian economists.

> *“DEIST: …You have been outspoken on your personal blog and otherwise about your own Christian beliefs. Why have you chosen to be outspoken about this and do you think that this has in any way helped or hindered you career wise?*
>
> *MURPHY: It’s a great question. I’m outspoken on it just for the obvious reason that if you’re a Christian, that’s the most important thing, period. And so, why you would be focusing on other things and not talking about that is problematic if you really are a Christian. If you believe that the state of people’s souls are resting on an issue, that’s far more important than the heterogeneity of the capitalist structure.…*
>
> *I used to think I was one of the few Christian libertarians. Now I realize that’s not the case.”[12]*

Finally, the moral and spiritual foundations of economic and political freedom were emphasized by Edmund Opitz, author of *The Libertarian Theology of Freedom* (1999). In a 1958 essay for *The Freeman*, Opitz emphasized the idea that the American concept of limited government can only be sustained by appealing to a foundation deeper than Rand's "unknown ideal":

> *"In our present situation, the most immediately oppressive things seem to emanate from an overgrown, bureaucratic government. Merely to remove these restrains and directives is of little use, however, if we leave intact the concept of omnipotent government—or the seeds of this concept—to spawn more restrictions. An erroneous idea of government must be replaced by a correct idea. But when we seek to refurbish the American idea of limited government, we find that originally the concept stemmed from a spiritual foundation which is itself badly in need of rehabilitation. It is at this fundamental level that the most intensive work needs to be done. But because so few people are aware of the importance of this level, almost no one is working at it. Unless this spiritual foundation is rehabilitated, work at the less profound levels cannot endure, touching as it does only the margins of the problem."[13]*

I will not vouch for the theology of Ron Paul, Jeff Deist, Bob Murphy or Edmund Opitz. Nor can a revelational epistemology and biblical worldview accommodate the rationalism or empiricism of unregenerate free market economists, right as they may be at certain points. My assertion here is simply this: The libertarian concepts of limited government, non-interventionism and economic freedom are not the product of the atheistic philosophy of Ayn Rand or the anti-Protestant epistemologies of certain Austrian economists.[14] The concept of liberty finds its origination in Scripture, and the fruit of its presence in Western society—rapidly rotting away before our eyes—is the product of the theology of the Protestant Reformation.

[1] Deist, J., Ron Paul on war, gold and his years in congress, *The Austrian* 4(3):7, 2018.

[2] "[Greenspan] has come under criticism from Harry Binswanger, who believes his actions while at work for the Federal Reserve and his publicly expressed opinions on other issues show abandonment of Objectivist and free market principles. When questioned in relation to this, however, he has said that in a democratic society individuals have to make

compromises with each other over conflicting ideas of how money should be handled." source

[3] Sanders, F., The most dangerous man in the mid-south: Who is Franklin Sanders, a.k.a. 'The Moneychanger'? *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture*, Jan-Feb, 1997.

[4] Robbins, J.W., *Without a Prayer: Ayn Rand and the Close of Her System*, The Trinity Foundation, Unicoi, TN, 2006, endorsement page.

[5] https://luxlucet.me/2010/11/19/the-case-for-gold/

[6] Paul, R. and Lehrman, L., *The Case for Gold* (1982), Stellar Editions (reprint), 2016, p. 176.

[7] Robbins, J.W., *Freedom and Capitalism: Essays on Christian Politics and Economics*, The Trinity Foundation, Unicoi, TN, 2006, pp. 284—288.

[8] Yang, M.B., *Reconsidering Ayn Rand*, WinePress Publishing, Enumclaw, WA, 2000, p. 49.

[9] Greenspan, A. "Gold and economic freedom", in Rand, A., *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*, Penguin Group, New York, 1967, pp. 106—107.

[10] Pope Benedict XVI, *The Sacrament of Charity: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Sacramentum Caritatis of the Holy Father Benedict XVI to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful on the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church's Life and Mission*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, The Word Among Us Press, Ijamsville, MD, 2007, p. 119 (para 91).

[11] Penn, L., Ayn Rand: The Janus face of libertarianism, *Spiritual Counterfeits Project Journal* 35:2-35:3, 2011, pp. 32, 34.

[12] Deist, J., Bob Murphy on universities, Krugman, and the state of Austrian economics, *The Austrian* 4(1):14, 2018.

[13] Opitz, E.A., "Capitalism and our culture", in Hendrickson, M.W. (ed.), *The Morality of*

Capitalism (2nd ed.), The Foundation for Economic Education, Irvington-on-Hudson, NY, 1996, p. 15.

[14] See Steve Matthews' post concerning Lew Rockwell and Murray Rothbard here.

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