

Praxeology and the Biblical View of Action and Purpose

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Over the past 25 years, there has been a growing literature by Christian scholars who have sought to develop a uniquely Christian economics (Tiemstra, 1993). Much of this literature, however, works to undermine the very notion of economics as a social science. At the very least, while attempting to provide a critique of economics from a Christian point of view, many, if not most, contributors attack one or more of the fundamental principles of the discipline. Economists have been criticized for both their ethics and their methods. In a review of the Christian economic literature, John Tiemstra identified a three-fold methodological critique where he argues that economics is not really a value free science; that excessive use of logical rigor cuts economists off from reality, making their discipline irrelevant to the real world; and that by focusing on self-interested *homo oeconomicus* economists cut themselves off from important information such as introspective reports concerning motives and values (Tiemstra, 1993, pp. 236-37). Contributors site as the foundation of this methodological critique principles found in the chief source of authority for Christians: the Scriptures as contained in the Old and New Testaments.

This paper offers a critique of the critics on their own terms. The author seeks to provide a biblical view of action and purpose, arguing that economics as developed in the Austrian School is that most compatible with the biblical view of man and his action. Obviously this paper will be most relevant to Christian believers who are economists. However, it is hoped that it also will be of interest to those non-believers who find it noteworthy that economics can be defended against its critics from the Christian Left on their own terms.

THE METHODOLOGICAL CRITIQUE

A point of contention that much of the Christian economics literature has with modern economists is their claim to be pursuing a value free science. This claim is rejected for several reasons. It is argued straightforwardly that a value free economics is impossible. It has been cleverly noted that the ideal of a value-free science is itself a value (Daly and Cobb, 1994, pp. 130-34). Additionally, if economics is to be of any use at all, economists must have some values. They must have some reason for wanting to pursue their science (Daly and Cobb, 1994, pp. 130-34). Most economists, it is argued, pursue values such as efficiency, economic growth, and individual freedom (McKee, 1987, p. 127; Daly and Cobb, 1994, pp. 130-34). Because economics studies the actions of human beings, economics necessarily encounters values (McKee, 1987, p. 128).

Additionally, it is noted that even if the analysis is value-free, the values of economists still determine much regarding the analysis. Values determine what questions are important, what data is relevant, what method is used, and how theory is validated (Tiemstra, 1993, p. 236).

Another criticism faced by contemporary economists is that they cut themselves off from reality using excessive logical rigor, including mathematics. Within the spectrum of economists within the profession, it is interesting to note that Austrian economists are viewed as “the worst of the lot” as far as excessive logic is concerned (Tiemstra, 1993, p. 237). Abstract methodological individualism, it is argued, leads us astray because it fails to balance the community (as a separate entity, not as merely the sum of the people who make up the community) and the individual person. In fact it is alleged that by focusing on the choices of individual actors, economics ignores the community altogether. This makes no sense, according

to the critics, because it is a truism that the actions of each individual are affected by those of others (McKee, 1987, p. 133).

The more important failing of logical rigor occurs when economists forget or ignore that their conclusions follow from abstractions from reality and the particular assumptions and method chosen by the economist. This dehumanizes economics by focusing our attention on a creature called *homo oeconomicus* (Daly and Cobb, 1994, pp. 34-41).

This leads us to the criticism that attacks the very core of economics. It is forcefully argued that economists are too restrictive when they begin their analysis with humans that are self-interested. Such an economic man used by economists as their conception of a human actor, only gives a partial view of man (Richardson, 1981, p. 52). Economic man is self-centered, materialistic and greedy, but no matter how many goods he accumulates, this will not ultimately make man happy.

It is further argued that the concept of humans acting to increase their utility is empty of operational meaning. Such a concept, it is claimed, assumes that pleasure is all there is to life. Further, utility itself is seen as a useless concept. It is argued that, if the word *utility* means merely anything that leads to action, it does not mean anything. If, however, it means something, it must mean pleasure, in which case the concept fatally abstracts from reality (Cramp 1983, Chapter III)

What people actually see in their interest depends on values and the process of validation, so this economic method becomes artificial. It assumes that each person is an island. Hence, economists should not begin with the *a priori* nature of rational action (Tiemstra, 1990, p. 39)

Finally, the definition of action as choosing means to attain ends also breaks down. People have multiple ends and multiple criteria for ranking goods, so, it is argued, that

transitivity breaks down. Such a method also ignores the fact that means often have human value in and of themselves. It has thus been argued, “the means/end scheme is a methodological lie” (Tiemstra, 1990, p. 45).

THE TRUTH OF ECONOMICS

While, as with most thoughtful critiques of the economics discipline, there are grains of truth in the above documented complaint, there is much more error. As a whole the literature cited reveals a marked ignorance of Austrian economics in particular, which is all the more noteworthy following the claim that “Austrians are the worst of the lot.” On the contrary, it is precisely economics in the Misesian tradition that have best dealt with the issues of the positive/normative distinction, the abuse of scientism and the fable of *homo oeconomicus*. Far from being “the worst of the lot,” Austrian economics is the only school that places the actions of real humans beings at the center.

Throughout the above noted methodological critique, those Christian economists, while having important insights, all seem to suffer from a severe case of overstatement. It is true, for instance, that, in a sense, economics (and no other science for that matter) is not unaffected by the values of its practitioners. However, this does not mean what the critics think it means.

Of course economists have their own values which affect what questions are worth examining and which economic policies should be pursued. A Christian economist more friendly to the Austrian School has also recognized this. When discussing the effects of christian values on economics, Gary North writes,

[E]conomic analysis will be applied to a different series of questions, and practical recommendations that flow from economic analysis will be different. Technical skills can be applied to many tasks and many questions. I would assume that Christian economics would not be concerned with questions relating to the better way of debasing the monetary unit, whether by a central fractional reserve bank or by the government's treasury department. Christian economics will be concerned with examining the best ways of organizing an economy in which no inflation of the money supply can be practiced, either by the State or by a quasi-governmental central bank (North, 1976, xi-xii).

Murray Rothbard has explicitly pointed out that, instead of resting on the allegedly scientific notion of efficiency, "all political policy recommendations necessarily involve value judgements" (Rothbard, 1997, p. 255). Mises himself makes value judgements when he defends the market economy against socialists, providing his view of the mission of the economists.

Mises argues,

Socialism cannot be realized because it is beyond human power to establish it as a social system. The choice is between capitalism and chaos. A man who chooses between drinking a glass of milk and a glass of a solution of potassium cyanide does not choose between two beverages; he chooses between life and death. A society that chooses between capitalism and socialism does not choose between two social systems; it chooses between social cooperation and the disintegration of society. Socialism is not an alternative to capitalism; it is an alternative to any system under which men can live as *human* beings. To stress this point is the task of economics as it is the task of biology and chemistry to teach that potassium cyanide is not a nutriment but a deadly poison (Mises, 1998, p. 676).

Mises obviously implies, that he prefers life, social cooperation, and humane living to death, social disintegration, and barbarism. Additionally, he makes a claim regarding what an economist *should* do.

Affirming all this, however, does not necessarily affect the analysis itself. It is not clear that the choice of the proper method depends on value judgement. It most likely depends on

economists' opinion regarding the nature of reality. The belief that humans act is not a value judgement, but an opinion regarding the nature of man. The fact that *ceteris paribus*, if the demand for a good rises, its price will follow suit does not depend on the values of the economist. It is a deduction from the axiom that humans act purposely. Rothbard is correct, then, when he states that, "the unquestioned fact that values and ethics are important in guiding the attention of scientists to specific problems is irrelevant to the fact that the laws and disciplines of the science itself are value-free." Putting it another way, Rothbard might have said, "Truth is truth, no matter what the values of the discoverer of that truth are."

Christian critics also make a noteworthy observation that much false rigor has been introduced into the profession in the name of scientific economics. This problem, however, is not one of logic as they argue, but of method. Any science must be logical. Even theology is a rational science. It is an effort to collect, arrange, and to present facts of Scripture in their logically coherent, internal relationship to each other (Henry, 1976, pp. 202-12; Hodge, pp. 1-22). To reject logic is to reject science, including theology. The real problem is the adoption of the mathematical equations of physics and applying them to the subject of human action. It is this abuse of method that has led to economic scientism (Hayek 1979).

In fact, it is the Austrians who best explain *why* mathematical economics leads to a dehumanized economics. Mathematical economics does not view society as the product of the voluntary choices of human beings, but as "the result of mechanical *quanta* subject to precise measurement and direction by an omniscient technical human intelligence" (Roepke, 1963, p. 224). Economics studies human action, however there is no action explained in a mathematical equation. As Mises points out,

It's [mathematical economics] equations and formula are limited to the description of states of equilibrium and nonacting. It cannot assert anything with regard to the formation of such states and their transformation into other states as long as it remains in the realm of mathematical procedures (Mises, 1998, pp. 251, 351-54).

When one recognizes that one of the defining characteristics of man is that he acts purposefully, it should be clear that the importation of mathematics into economics has, indeed, resulted in a dehumanized discipline. Note again, however, that this is the result of the abuse of mathematics, not of logic.

The concept of *homo oeconomicus* is truly an abuse, but, again, the critics of economics overstate their case. While recognizing the absurdity of the assumption that everyone is motivated only by material desires, the purveyors of the methodological critique wish to do away with a fundamental implication of action, that people act in accordance with their own value scales. Of course it is recognized that no one is exclusively motivated by greed or materialistic values (Mises, 1998, pp. 62-65). Austrians, more than anyone else, understand that economics deals with the actions of real man with all their strengths and weaknesses (Mises, 1998, pp. 646-47). It is recognized that even the most wealthy among us are not motivated solely by money. As Roepke noted,

The ordinary man is not such a *homo oeconomicus*, just as he is no hero or saint. The motives that drive people toward economic success are as varied as the human soul itself (Roepke, 1960, p. 121).

Austrians merely recognize that people act in accordance with their own value scale, regardless of whether their values are judged good or bad. In perhaps the best passage ever written distinguishing between the concept of action driven by greedy selfishness and that of action determined by one's subjective value scale, Mises explains,

What a man does is always aimed at an improvement of his own state of satisfaction. In this sense—and in no other—we are free to use the term selfishness and to emphasize that action is necessarily always selfish. Even an action directly aiming at the improvement of other people’s conditions is selfish. The actor considers it as more satisfactory for himself to make other people eat than to eat himself. His uneasiness is caused by the awareness of the fact that other people are in want (Mises, 1998, p. 243).

It should be clear, then, that when Austrian economists assert that people choose to do what is highest on their value scale, that is all they are saying. They are not assuming that their value scale is dominated by material goods and creature comforts. It may be dominated by the desire to serve God and man.

Perhaps the most destructive argument made by Christian critics of modern economics, Austrian economics in particular, is that economists should do away with the concept of the means-end framework. The fact that “means—whether our jobs, our mobility, our purchasing habits, or our economic environment—matters a great deal to us and are loaded with values” (Tiemstra, 1990, p. 45) does not change the truth that, conceptually, means and ends are not the same categories. It is, at least, conceivable that just as a person can be both an entrepreneur and a manager, a person’s job could be viewed as a means to pay the bills and as a moral end in itself. This hardly makes the distinction between ends and the means used to achieve those ends a “methodological lie” (Tiemstra, 1990, p. 45). When one recognizes that the end of any action is the removal of felt uneasiness, then anything used to remove that uneasiness is a means (Mises, 1998, p. 92).

Finally, contrary to the criticism leveled above, acting man *does* evaluate all things on one value scale. Even if people value different means and ends for different reasons and have different criteria for doing so, when undertaking action, humans necessarily must choose to do

one thing and leave another thing undone. This is decided by their respective ranks on a single value scale (Mises, 1998, p. 119). Of course people must establish priorities and choose. This is exactly what Austrian economics recognizes.

PRAXEOLOGY AND THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF ACTION AND PURPOSE

It should be clear from the preceding discussion that Austrian theorists have already sufficiently met the majority of criticisms leveled at modern economics by those Christian economists who seek to pursue a distinctly Christian economics. Christian critics of contemporary economics, however, self-consciously appeal to Scripture when deriving foundations for economic analysis (Tiemstra, 1993, pp. 227-28). A primary concern, then, is how compatible is a particular school of economics with the revealed Word of God? If it can be shown that Scripture indicates that praxeology is the best way to approach economics, that is, that its view of man and human action is an accurate reflection of biblical revelation, this should provide the ultimate refutation of the methodological critique made by some Christian economists. A study of the biblical view of man reveals that the nature of man as a purposeful actor as described in the Austrian literature is, indeed, in agreement with what the Bible reveals about the nature of man. Austrian economics begins with the idea of man as an actor that chooses according to his value scale. This is precisely the picture of man that one draws from Scripture.

One's view of man will determine how he approaches economics. The Christian view of man begins with the fact that man is created by God in His image (Genesis 1:27¹). We

¹ All Scripture verses are taken from the Authorized Version, unless otherwise noted.

understand more about the nature of man, then, as we understand more about the image of God. Christians understand the “image of God” to mean God’s likeness. In other words, man is God’s replica on earth (Waldron, 1995, pp. 83-84). God created man as “a reasonable soul,” in His own image, “in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness” (Waldron, 1995, p. 74). If man is God’s replica, then we can learn about the nature of man by examining the attributes of God.

For the purposes of the subject of economics it is sufficient to stress only a couple of characteristics of God as revealed in the Bible. One is that He thinks. Isaiah 55:8-10 tells us that God’s thoughts are higher than man’s thoughts. Note that the passage affirms that both God and man think. Not only does God think, but He plans. Ephesians 1:4, 5 tells us that God chose Christians before the foundation of the world. God plans.

Scripture likewise affirms that, not only does God think, but He acts as well. Within only the first four verses of Genesis, we learn that God created (v. 1), spoke (v. 3), and divided (v. 4). All of these are actions. Colossians 1:15-17 tells us that God is actively sustaining and holding together all that there is. The Bible describes the actions of God in the framework of choice. Isaiah 44:1 is only one verse among many that explains that God chose Israel as His people from all possible alternative races. Moreover, God specifically acts with a purpose (North, 1987, p.19). God created the sun, moon and stars in order to serve as signs, seasons, days, and years and to give light to the earth (Genesis 1:14-17). This passage tells us that God created these heavenly bodies with specific ends in mind.

Because God thinks, and acts with purpose and because man in the image of God, it is reasonable to conclude that man is able to think, and act with purpose. It can be inferred, then that a very important part of the image of God is reason: the ability to think rationally, in terms of cause and effect. In fact, one theologian has gone so far as to identify reason itself and *the*

image of God (Clark 1988, pp. 130-39) Although one could rest his case on such logic, one does not have to rely only on the knowledge of man being made in God's image. Rather, the Bible explicitly reveals man to be a creature who also thinks and acts with a purpose.

It is relevant to note that God deals with man in a rational manner. When calling to men that they should follow Him, God implores, "Come now, and let us reason together" (Isaiah 1:18). God appeals to our reason and expects us to make the reasonable choice based on the facts as God reveals them. Once when the disciples were puzzled over Jesus' warning concerning the "leaven of the Pharisees and Saducees," Jesus says to them "O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves...?" (Matthew 8:5-8). The Greek word translated as *reason*, *dialogizomai*, from which we get our English word *dialogue*, means "to reckon thoroughly, i. e. to deliberate (by reflection or discussion)" and is rendered elsewhere in Scripture as *consider*, *muse*, and *think* (Strong, No DateA, p. 22). Jesus, then, indicates that man is a being that uses his mind to rationally contemplate questions.

Not only does the Bible characterize man as one who thinks, but also as one who acts. Critics notwithstanding, Scripture indicates that in acting, man routinely applies means to achieve an end. The Apostle Paul wrote of humanity as "they that use this world" (I Corinthians 7:31). The Greek word translated as *used* is *chraomai*, and means "to employ" (Strong, No DateA, p. 78). Paul explicitly recognizes that things in this world are used by people as a means to achieve an end.

An example of this is King Solomon's importation of goods from various foreign countries. On one occasion he had his merchants buy linen yarn, a chariot, and horses shipped from Egypt. Scripture explicitly refers to the silver coins used to buy the merchandise as *means* (I Kings 10:28-29; 2 Chronicles 1:16-17). Here the word in the Hebrew is *yad*, which means

literally, “open hand” an idiom used to express the power by which one can achieve something (Strong, No DateB, p. 47). The silver of Solomon’s buyers were the means, the open hand to linen, a chariot, and horses.

Solomon, when he embarked on the construction of the Temple, needed to obtain materials allowing him to achieve his ends. He used his own unskilled labor and contracted with Hiram, the King of Tyre, for the use of Hiram’s skilled metal workers and for the purchase of cedars (II Chronicles 2:1-10). How does Solomon view these laborers and lumber if not as means to achieve the end of building the temple? Additionally, the Apostle Paul tells Timothy to “use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities” (I Timothy 5:23). Paul is here, obviously not calling for the drinking of wine as an end in itself, but explicitly as a means of treating Timothy’s illness.

Finally, earlier in the same letter to Timothy, in a most striking passage for the purposes of this paper, Paul reveals that even the very Law of God, which surely has intrinsic value as the objective standard by which we are commanded to live, can be used as a means to achieve an end. In I Timothy 1:8, Paul tells Timothy that “we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully.” Note that not only is the Law an end for man to strive to keep, but it is also a *means* to be used lawfully. Paul explains that the Law of God is used lawfully as a means to knowing what is sin, so that man might become convicted of his sin and turn to Christ for salvation (Romans 7:7-13).

Great pains have been taken to demonstrate that, far from rejecting the means-end framework at the center of Austrian economics, the Bible affirms it again and again. Instead of the “means-end schema” being “a methodological lie” as argued by Tiemstra (1990, p. 45), using

means to achieve an end is the very epitome of action by human beings as described by the Bible, the written revelation of the God who made man, and, therefore, who should know.

Scripture, not only characterizes action as the purposeful employment of means to achieve an end, but also characterizes action as necessarily involving choice. When engaging in action, each actor has a number of ends he can serve, but the means available to serve his plethora of ends is scarce. Also, most ends have several possible means that can be used to serve that end. Action, then, necessitates choice. Action is the choosing to satisfy one end while leaving the other end unsatisfied. It is choosing one means of satisfying an end while setting aside an alternative means that could be used.

Throughout the Scriptures, man is shown as having to make repeated choices between competing ends and the means to achieve those ends. Moses appeals to the Israelites to “choose life” instead of the death associated with disobedience to God (Deuteronomy 30:19). Later Joshua, when exhorting the Israelites to remain true to the covenant between God and them, concluded by saying, “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve” (Joshua 24:15). A similar decision is set before the Israelites by the prophet Elijah when he demands that they choose between worshiping God or worshiping Baal (I Kings 18:21). The Psalmist indicates that man will make choices regarding the path he takes in life and that God promises good instruction if man makes choices that are good (Psalms 25:12). Indeed, the ways of the oppressor are the result of choices made by him (Proverbs 3:31).

The Bible additionally reveals that at the heart of choosing is preferring one thing over another. The prophet Isaiah (7:15-16) foretold that the Christ would “refuse the evil, and choose the good.” The Apostle Paul tells the Philippians that he had a hard time choosing which he would prefer, to remain alive on earth or die and depart to be with Our Lord. He says, “what

shall I choose? I do not know²” (Philippians 1:22). Clearly, then, the Bible characterizes choice as the act of preferring one thing to another, of choosing one alternative and forgoing another. Choosing involves preferences. Surely, J. Gresham Machen was correct when he characterized the Christian view of human action as the manifestation of choice. When discussing the freedom of God as being analogous to the freedom of man, he writes:

Does the freedom of a man’s will mean that a man acts independently of his motives? Does it mean that when a man chooses to do one thing rather than another thing his choice is determined by nothing at all except that just that it is his choice?...Surely the actions of a person, just because they are free actions, and not mere meaningless vagaries of chance, are determined by motives. When a man is placed before some important turning-point in his life, he sets before himself the considerations on one side and then the considerations on the other side, and then in the light of those considerations, of the preponderance on the one side or on the other, he acts. It is just that operation of motives in determining the man’s action that make the action a truly personal action and so makes it in the right sense of the word a ‘free’ action (Machen, 1965, pp. 27-28).

The Christian view of action as expressed in Scripture is exactly the same as the human action described by Austrian economists.

As Machen indicated above, choice involves comparing two or more alternatives and choosing that which is considered preferable. Hence, in choosing, man necessarily evaluates alternatives. The Bible tells us that in choosing, man imputes value to economic goods according to his personal value scale (Rose, 1996, pp. 99-100). The Bible tells us that God imputed value to creation when he declared it “very good” from His viewpoint (Genesis 1:31), and He imputes righteousness to believers in Christ (Romans 4:24).

² The New International Version

Not surprisingly, the Bible also affirms that man, who is created in God's image, also imputes value to economic goods according to his value scale. The Hebrew word most often translated as *value* in the Old Testament is *arak*, which means literally "to set in a row, i.e. arrange, put in order" and has been translated also as *esteem* and *estimate* (Strong, No DateB, p. 92). Note that according to Scripture value entails an ordinal ranking. At the end of Leviticus, the priests are instructed to set redemption prices, as given by God, for individuals making singular vows of service in the tabernacle for God. If a person making such a vow was considered poor by the priest, then the priest himself was to set the price according to the *value* or *arak* he imputed to the person (Leviticus 27:8, 12, 14). When a field of land was to be sanctified to the Lord, the priest was to determine the redemption price according to what he thought it was worth (Leviticus 27:23). The word translated *worth* is the Hebrew word *mickah* which literally means "enumeration" with the implication "valuation" (Strong, No DateB, p. 66). In a verse commenting on Jesus' betrayal for thirty pieces of silver, Matthew states that the Israelites who paid for Jesus' betrayal subjectively valued how much it was worth to them (Matthew 27:9). Twice it refers to "value" placed on Jesus. The Greek word translated as *value* is *timao* which means to prize, i.e. fix a valuation upon; by implication to revere" (Strong, No DateA, p. 72). Again the notion is that value is imputed to something or someone.

One could deduce, consequently, that if the Bible indicates that people make value judgements that are subjective, then when they choose alternatives based on their subjective evaluation, their action will be done according to their own value scales, or as it is often phrased, in their own self-interest. This is a very controversial notion among Christian economists, because they often quickly consider the concept of action motivated by one's value scale as the same thing as action motivated by the greed of *homo oeconomicus*. A lot of confusion could be

avoided if these critics recognized that acting in accordance with one's value scale is only that: acting in accordance with whatever motivates action, whether higher and nobler or lower and base.

Needless argument could also be avoided by recognizing that God's own Word describes man as acting according to his own value scale. Indeed, God often appeals to our own self-interest when persuading us to obey Him. In describing the era before the Israelites were given a king, the Bible reveals that "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6). When the Apostle Paul was waiting in Athens to be joined by his colleagues Silas and Timothy, he was moved in *his* spirit by the Athenians idolatry and disputed with the Jews and religious Gentiles, and then with the Epicureans and Stoics (Acts 17:16-18). Note that what drove Paul to debate Christianity with these groups was his own value scale.

One might argue that, while it is true that people can be motivated to do that which is right, this is not the same as acting in one's self-interest. The Bible, however, reveals that such a righteous vs. self-interest either/or dichotomy is a confusion that results from an erroneous view of sin. Samuel Waldron writes:

It is often said that sin may be spelled s – e – l – f...Such sentiments do, of course, have an element of truth in them, but they are so ambiguous and confusing that both logically and practically they form a very bad definition of sin...Our truest and highest self-interest is always consistent with the glory of God. Definitions of sin as self-love tend to drive a wedge between God's glory and our good and lead thereby to moral confusion in the lives of the people of God. They steal from the biblical motivations for doing right and serving God. The entire bible from beginning to end witnesses to the truth that it is normally in our temporal interest to serve God, and it is always in our highest interest and is thus an expression of true self-love (Waldron, 1995, pp. 100-01).

God tells us that a husband should love his wife, because in doing so, “he loveth himself” (Ephesians 5:28). God commands us to honor our father and mother so that our “days may be long” and that “it may go well” with us (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16). God promised the Israelites several blessings including bountiful fields and storehouses if they obeyed His commandments, and He promised severe curses if they disobeyed His commandments (Deuteronomy 28). Jesus calls those who “labor and are heavy laden” to come to Him and He will give them rest (Matthew 11:28).

Finally, in what is perhaps the most profound question ever posed to man, Jesus asked “What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his soul?” (Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:36). The obvious answer is nothing, with the implication being that a man’s profit will be much greater if he gains his soul by following God instead of the world. Note that Jesus poses this question in economic terms, explicitly appealing to man’s sense of self-interest. To claim that man does not act in accordance to his own value scale implies that God does not know what He is doing by repeatedly appealing to man’s self-interest in converting him.

CONCLUSION

The forgoing clearly demonstrates that Christian economists have nothing to fear from the praxeology of the Austrian School. In fact, they should embrace it as a Christian method. When one looks at Scripture for information regarding the nature of human action, he finds that God’s revealed Word tells the reader that man is created in God’s image with the ability to think and act purposefully, by making choices based on subjective evaluations determined by his own value scale. Instead of being the worst of the lot and falling prey to the methodological critique

argued by certain Christian economists, praxeology is affirmed by the Bible as being most reflective of reality. It is the methodological critique itself that withers under the scrutiny of reason and the light of God's Word.

Those Christian economists who cite the Scriptures as their chief authority behind their attack on Austrian economics, must reassess their opinion of Misesian theory if they want to develop a distinctly Christian economics. If not, they will end up producing, most likely, a string of mere assertions that has little claim as a viable social science. Additionally, the mostly interventionist public policy they will continue to prescribe will have disastrous consequences for the very individuals they are trying to help. More importantly, their attempt to glorify God as economists is bound to fail, because they dismiss the very information about man that God himself has provided. It makes more sense to accept what the Bible says about the nature of acting man and develop an economics that takes that into account. A Christian economist following the Misesian tradition can do exactly that.

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