

# Man's Responsibility

The process of secularization arises not from the loss of faith but from the loss of social interest in the world of faith. It begins the moment men feel that religion is irrelevant to the common way of life and that society as such has nothing to do with the truths of faith.

Christopher Dawson

Experience is a hard teacher. She gives the test first and the lessons afterwards.

Anonymous

Cowards die many times before their deaths. The valiant never taste death but once.

William Shakespeare

Things turn out best for the people who make the best of the way things turn out.

John R. Wooden

Man victimizes himself in order to justify his sin.

Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology*, 2:910

Psalm 11, "To the choirmaster. Of David. In the LORD I take refuge; how can you say to my soul, 'Flee like a bird to your mountain, for behold, the wicked bend the bow; they have fitted their arrow to the string to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart; If the foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous do?' The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD's throne is in heaven; his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man. The LORD tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence. Let him rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup. For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face."

Those who justify the breaking of God's commandments construct a house of cards, founded in unrighteousness. Nothing, I repeat, nothing can fix the ensuing structural problems until the reason for the destroyed foundation is exposed. Counseling that deals with surface issues only (i.e., behavior patterns) will not fix the cracks in the foundation. Only a return to God in repentance and righteousness can repair destroyed foundations.

James Nickel

God's transcendent sovereignty never functions to eliminate or marginalize human accountability, or to transform God's image-bearers to the status of a robot, while human accountability and responsibility never make God absolutely contingent (e.g., Gen. 50:19-20; Isa. 10:5-19; John 6:35-40, 45-46; Acts 4:27-28; Rom. 9-10; Phil. 2:12-13). That there are extremely difficult philosophical questions associated with this outlook cannot be denied, but the solution cannot be to reduce the difficulty by adopting positions that outlaw half the evidence. It will not do, for example, to argue that God cannot know the future where the future brings decisions of free individuals. Not only do I not know exactly how "future" looks to a transcendent God (though at least some of the possibilities can be listed and explored), the "free individuals" are never so free as to make God absolutely contingent. In any case, the Bible dares to speak not only of God's knowledge of the future, but even of the future of our thoughts and choices (remember Proverbs! – Prov. 16:4, 9, 33; Prov. 21:1). The Psalmist understood this: "Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord .... Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain" (Ps. 139:4-6). The Bible even assumes God has "middle knowledge," i.e., that he knows not only what is, from our perspective, past, present, and future, but also what might have been under different circumstances (Matt. 11:20-24).

D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism*, pp. 235-236

*Advice to Kids:*

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Rule 1: Life is not fair-get used to it.

Rule 2: The world won't care about your self-esteem. The world will expect you to accomplish something *before* you feel good about yourself.

Rule 3: You will *not* make \$40,000 a year right out of high school. You won't be a vice-president with a car phone until you earn both.

Rule 4: If you think your teacher is tough, wait till you get a boss.

Rule 5: Flipping burgers is not beneath your dignity. Your grandparents had a different word for burger flipping—they called it opportunity.

Rule 6: If you mess up, it's not your parents' fault, so don't whine about your mistakes, learn from them.

Rule 7: Before you were born, your parents weren't as boring as they are now. They got that way from paying your bills, cleaning your clothes and listening to you talk about how cool you are. So before you save the rain forest from the parasites of your parents' generation, try delousing the closet in your own room.

Rule 8: Your school may have done away with winners and losers, but life has not. In some schools, they have abolished failing grades and they'll give you as many times as you want to get the right answer. This doesn't bear the slightest resemblance to *anything* in real life.

Rule 9: Life is not divided into semesters. You don't get summers off and very few employers are interested in helping you find yourself. Do that on your own time.

Rule 10: Television is *not* real life. In real life people actually have to leave the coffee shop and go to jobs.

Rule 11: Be nice to nerds. Chances are you'll end up working for one.

Attributed to Bill Gates, but from a book by Charles J. Sykes

... we have been made in the image of God. We are not mere mammals. We are persons. If we really believed that we are nothing more than accidental collections of atoms, moral outrage over anything would be irrational. But we want to live, even while our hubris means we have been cut off from him who alone gives life. That we are mammals means that our death has a physical side; that we are not merely mammals means that our death is God's determination to limit our arrogance.

D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, p. 99

The Bible as a whole, and sometimes in specific texts, presupposes or teaches that both of the following propositions are true:

1. God is absolutely sovereign, but his sovereignty never functions in such a way that human responsibility is curtailed, minimized, or mitigated.
2. Human beings are morally responsible creatures—they significantly choose, rebel, obey, believe, defy, make decisions, and so forth, and they are rightly held accountable for such actions; but this characteristic never functions so as to make God absolutely contingent.

D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, p. 179

God stands behind evil in such a way that not even evil takes place outside the bounds of his sovereignty; yet evil is not morally chargeable to him: it is always chargeable to secondary agents, to secondary causes. On the other hand, God stands behind good in such a way that it not only takes place within the bounds of his sovereignty, but it is always chargeable to him, and only derivatively to secondary agents.

In other words, if I sin, I cannot possibly do so outside the bounds of God's sovereignty ..., but I alone am responsible for that sin—or perhaps I and those who tempted me, led me astray, and the like. God is not to be blamed. But if I do good, it is God working in me both to will and to act according to his good

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pleasure. God's grace has been manifest in my case, and he is to be praised.

D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, p. 189

... human freedom cannot involve absolute power to the contrary; that is, it cannot include such liberal power that God himself becomes contingent ... that freedom (sometimes called "free agency") should be related not to absolute power to the contrary, but to voluntarism: that is, we do what we want to do, and that is why we are held accountable for what we do.

D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, p. 190

Of all tyrannies, a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It would be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies. The robber baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated; but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end for they do so with the approval of their own conscience.

C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, p. 292

We shall not grow wiser before we learn that much that we have done was very foolish.

F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*

Half the harm that is done in this world is due to people who want to feel important. They don't mean to do harm—but the harm does not interest them. Or they do not see it, or they justify it because they are absorbed in the endless struggle to think well of themselves.

T. S. Elliot, *The Cocktail Party*, p. 111

Making something up is a confession of both intellectual and moral bankruptcy.

Thomas Sowell, *An Internet Fraud* ([www.jewishworldreview.com](http://www.jewishworldreview.com)), 10 July 2008

The reason so many people misunderstand so many issues is not that these issues are so complex, but that people do not want a factual or analytical explanation that leaves them emotionally unsatisfied. They want villains to hate and heroes to cheer—and they don't want explanations that do not give them that.

Thomas Sowell, *Random Thoughts* ([www.jewishworldreview.com](http://www.jewishworldreview.com)), 25 August 2008

At one time, it was said "The truth will make you free." Today, there seem to be those who think that rhetoric and hype will make you free. It might even be called the audacity of hype.

Thomas Sowell, *Random Thoughts* ([www.jewishworldreview.com](http://www.jewishworldreview.com)), 25 August 2008

What is more scary than any particular candidate or policy is the gullibility of the public and their willingness to be satisfied with talking points, rather than serious arguments.

Thomas Sowell, *Random Thoughts* ([www.jewishworldreview.com](http://www.jewishworldreview.com)), 8 April 2008

The way to get people's votes is to say that all their problems are caused by other people, and that you will stop those other people from giving them trouble. But if you really want to help, then you can tell them the truth and risk losing their votes.

Thomas Sowell, *Random Thoughts* ([www.jewishworldreview.com](http://www.jewishworldreview.com)), 8 April 2008

We all believe that people are innocent until proven guilty. Some on the left believe that they are innocent even after being proven guilty.

Thomas Sowell, *Random Thoughts* ([www.jewishworldreview.com](http://www.jewishworldreview.com)), 5 September 2007

Despite years of getting a steady diet of "non-judgmental" attitudes from our educational system and the media, we have not yet lost all sense of right and wrong.

Thomas Sowell, *Random Thoughts* ([www.jewishworldreview.com](http://www.jewishworldreview.com)), 4 December 2006

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The people who are scariest to me are the people who don't even know enough to realize how little they know.

Thomas Sowell, *Random Thoughts* ([www.jewishworldreview.com](http://www.jewishworldreview.com)), 1 May 2007

A reader wrote: "Have you ever noticed that opinion polls ask the opinions of people who have no expertise in the subject on which they are being polled and publish these opinions as if they were gospel truth instead of group ignorance?"

Thomas Sowell, *Random Thoughts* ([www.jewishworldreview.com](http://www.jewishworldreview.com)), 1 May 2007

A reader writes: "Liberals hold us individually responsible for nothing but collectively responsible for everything."

Thomas Sowell, *Random Thoughts* ([www.jewishworldreview.com](http://www.jewishworldreview.com)), 1 May 2007

It is hard to think of any word that has confused more issues than the word "rights." Nowadays, almost anything that anybody wants is called a "right" — a magic word that does away with the need for evidence, logic or even common sense.

Thomas Sowell, *Random Thoughts* ([www.jewishworldreview.com](http://www.jewishworldreview.com)), 9 January 2007

What is especially disturbing about the political left is that they seem to have no sense of the tragedy of the human condition. Instead, they tend to see the problems of the world as due to other people not being as wise or as noble as themselves.

Thomas Sowell, *Random Thoughts* ([www.jewishworldreview.com](http://www.jewishworldreview.com)), 9 January 2007

We all enter the world knowing nothing but, by the time we are teenagers, we know it all. Sometimes it is decades later before we know enough to realize how little we know.

Thomas Sowell, *Random Thoughts* ([www.jewishworldreview.com](http://www.jewishworldreview.com)), 9 January 2007

Doing 90 percent of what is required is one of the biggest wastes because you have nothing to show for all your efforts. But doing 110 percent of what is expected is one of the smartest investments because it can pay off with a big reputation for just a little more effort.

Thomas Sowell, *Random Thoughts* ([www.jewishworldreview.com](http://www.jewishworldreview.com)), 29 August 2006

Some people are so busy being clever that they don't have time to be intelligent.

Thomas Sowell, *Random Thoughts* ([www.jewishworldreview.com](http://www.jewishworldreview.com)), 29 August 2006

Someone said that good judgment comes from experience — which in turn comes from bad judgment.

Thomas Sowell, *Random Thoughts* ([www.jewishworldreview.com](http://www.jewishworldreview.com)), 29 August 2006

Parents who are both conscientious and realistic discover sooner or later that they cannot do the job to their own complete satisfaction, much less to their children's complete satisfaction.

Thomas Sowell, *Random Thoughts* ([www.jewishworldreview.com](http://www.jewishworldreview.com)), 2 May 2006

Some people think they have bad luck when the real problem is that they took bad chances.

Thomas Sowell, *Random Thoughts* ([www.jewishworldreview.com](http://www.jewishworldreview.com)), 2 May 2006

Whenever socialism has been tried, it has failed.

If I were asked the difference between Socialism and Communism, I could only reply that the Socialist tries to lead us to disaster by foolish words and the Communist could try to drive us there by violent deeds.

Socialism is inseparably interwoven with totalitarianism and the abject worship of the State .... This state is to be the arch-employer, the arch-planner, the arch-administrator and ruler, and the arch-caucus-boss.

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[Socialism is] government of the duds, by the duds and for the duds.

The Socialist dream is no longer Utopia but Queue-topia!

It is not alone that property, in all its forms, is struck at, but that liberty, in all its forms is challenged by the fundamental conceptions of Socialism.

Socialism is the philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance and the gospel of envy.

“All men are created equal” says the Declaration of Independence. “All men shall be kept equal” say the Socialists.

To gain one's way is no escape from the responsibility of an inferior solution.

Winston Churchill, cited in James C. Humes, *The Wit and Wisdom of Winston Churchill*, pp. 87-89

Envy is always referred to by its political alias, “social justice.”

Thomas Sowell

Perhaps the scariest aspect of our times is how many people think in talking points, rather than in terms of real world consequences.

Thomas Sowell

We seem to be moving steadily in the direction of a society where no one is responsible for what he himself did but we are all responsible for what somebody else did, either in the present or in the past.

Thomas Sowell

Because of this anti-natalism (anti-birth) and our inner meagerness, all the anti-life people, such as homosexuals and abortionists, have come out of the closet, and too many Christians have gone in.

Rousas J. Rushdoony, *In His Service: The Christian Calling to Charity*, p. 4

Welfarism is a means of buying off potentially troublesome peoples. Its goals are not for the good of the people but for the good of the state and its elite leaders. As a result, statism is anti-charity. The Soviet Union regarded charity as counter-revolutionary because it made Christianity and its charity the hope of the people.

Rousas J. Rushdoony, *In His Service: The Christian Calling to Charity*, p. 173

It is important to remember that at one time Christians, through a variety of organizations, confraternities, foundations, and orders provided for health, education, charity, the arts, and more, while the state limited itself to warfare and justice. In the 1990s, after a lecture in one state, a legislator commented privately about observations made in a closed committee meeting. All recognized that the state's financial survival was being threatened by welfarism. It was actually stated, with *unofficial* assent, that perhaps welfare recipients should be parceled to all the churches, with a summons to resume their historic role of charity. Most churches would be shocked if told that this was once their duty under the Lord. They read the Bible with a veil over their eyes.

Rousas J. Rushdoony, *In His Service: The Christian Calling to Charity*, pp. 198-199

Rebellion is always due to one thing—rejecting God's Word because our own way appeals to us so much more.

Roger Oakland, *Faith Undone*, p. 16

It takes a certain amount of knowledge just to understand the extent of one's own ignorance.

Thomas Sowell

People willing to trade their freedom for temporary security deserve neither and will lose both.

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

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Even though some people say we are living in a 'knowledge economy,' we are living in a political atmosphere in which ignorance has more power than ever. Washington politicians who have never run any business are telling all kinds of businesses--from automobile companies and banks to hospitals and insurance companies--how they have to run their businesses. This is the golden age of ignorance in power.

Thomas Sowell

The great escape of our times is escape from personal responsibility for the consequences of one's own behavior.

Thomas Sowell

In a sense, politicians don't know what they are talking about. But, in another sense, they know exactly what they are talking about. They may not have a clue about the issue they are discussing and yet be experts on how to get you to think they know.

Thomas Sowell

Folly becomes apparent over time; in the long run, stupidity never works because God governs the world and God is not mocked ... what a man sows, he will reap.

Douglas Wilson

Sound bites are usually not very sound, and they are an irresponsible way to discuss serious issues.

Thomas Sowell

One of the problems with politicians who are "purists" is that they will never vote for something unless the bill meets their "untainted" standards. Too many Christians, in their political views, follow the same line of thinking. We fail to recognize that to get something done constructively, we move things "brick by brick." Because we live in a fallen world, we have to develop consensus and sometimes we must accept incremental changes. One of the reasons why Hitler gained power and wasn't stopped dead in his tracks in the 1930s was that there were too many political "purists" in the crowd (e.g., Neville Chamberlain, Charles Lindbergh). Evil reigned (and 50 million people died) in part because of political purism.

James Nickel

Sin is not weakness, finiteness, selfishness, sickness, or making mistakes; sin is "want of conformity to the law-word of God" ... it is defiance of the God of that word ... it is high treason against the King of the universe.

James Nickel

Early Calvinism was a vigorous and socially determinative force; today, Calvinism, or those who bear the name, is a quietistic, pietistic, and retreatist movement which is irrelevant to our world. Why? The Scripture both insists on the absolute predestination of God of all things, and on man's responsibility. All *primary freedom* is God's, and belongs to God alone; man's responsibility and liberty is a *secondary freedom*, established by God Himself.

Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 298

Command what you give and give what you command.

Augustine

God chooses us, not because we believe, but that we may believe.

Augustine

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me; It was not I that

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found, O Saviour true, no, I was found of Thee.

Anonymous

We pursue God because, and only because, He has first put an urge within us that spurs us to the pursuit.

A. W. Tozer

There are two great truths which from this platform I have proclaimed for many years. The first is that salvation is free to every man who will have it; the second is that God gives salvation to a people whom He has chosen; and these truths are not in conflict with each other in the least degree.

Charles Spurgeon

We say Christ so died that he infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that no man can number, who through Christ's death not only may be saved, but are saved, must be saved, and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything but saved.

Charles Spurgeon

First, all of Scripture teaches God's sovereignty in election and predestination. Second, all of Scripture teaches man's accountability. How can this be reconciled? (1) It cannot be for to grasp the meaning and workings of God's mind and decree would require a mind equal to God's mind. (2) We are forbidden by God to raise the questions which come to us at this point (Rom. 9:18-21). By faith, we understand the glory of God's ways and our place therein (Rom. 8:28-30).

Rousas J. Rushdoony

If in His absolute freedom God has willed to give man limited freedom, who is there to stay his hand or say, "What doest thou?" Man's will is free because God is sovereign. A God less than sovereign could not bestow moral freedom upon his creatures. He would be afraid to do so.

A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

The Bible does not teach that man has an autonomous free-will; it teaches that man is a responsible creation of the Almighty Sovereign Creator.

Glenn R. Martin

Moreover, to speak then of free will is wrong on several accounts. ... first, ... men ... insist on viewing man's freedom in an absolute sense. But man is a creature, and his freedom is a creaturely and limited freedom. Man does not choose his own nature, time and place of birth, sex, aptitudes, or anything else in this direction. Because he is a creature, not God, and not the first cause, man's freedom is a limited, derivative, and secondary freedom. Man's freedom is the freedom to be the man God created him to be, not the freedom to be a god. Moreover, his creaturely freedom differs in terms of his estate, i.e., the states of innocence, the fall, grace, and glory each gives man a differing form of creaturely freedom.

Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 75

Even those with a strong belief in predestination still look both ways before crossing the street.

Kitty Ferguson, *Fire in the Equations*, p. 32

Duty is ours; consequences are God's.

General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson

We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms

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- to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances ...

Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search of Meaning*, p. 75

There are only two kinds of people in the end; those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says in the end, "Thy will be done." All that are in Hell choose it. Without that self choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it.

C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*

While man is free to do anything, he must not do everything he is urged by his instincts to do. Revolt as man may, ignore moral constraints as he may, those constraints reassert themselves with fearful endurance. The more man tries to shake off those constraints, the more tightly they will close in on him. Or in plan, idiomatic language, it is to invite the constraints of destructive anarchy to think that one can get away with murder.

Stanley L. Jaki

Gehenna is merely the ultimate and eternal form of anarchy.

Stanley L. Jaki

By centering our lives on timeless, unchanging principles, we create a fundamental paradigm of effective living. It is the center that puts all other centers in perspective.

Stephen R. Covey

Maturity begins when we take responsibility for our actions.

James Nickel

Out of adversity is the call to greatness. Out of luxury is the call to apathy.

Anonymous

Paul was a better man for this thorn.

A. W. Tozer, *Of God and Men*

Sow a thought, reap an act. Sow an act, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny.

Samuel Smiles

You cannot motivate anyone with the reverse of what they want.

Anonymous

Instead of griping, try praising. Instead of cynicism, try optimism. Instead of being unhelpfully critical, try being constructively helpful.

Anonymous