

Foreword: The 21st Century Slot Machine

Take a Chance on this Book!

Taking a look around the world today, it is not religious evangelists so much as politicians and financial wizards who made the slot machine sales pitch to a global society. Modern cultural values still strive for a big payoff for little productive work. Creative energy has focused on increasing the odds through risk manipulation strategies more akin to Ponzi schemes. Money is seen as the solution to all problems, and governments have direct and indirect control of the manufacture of money. This is the system of Mammon, which is the true slot machine god.

God is Not a Slot Machine, but many people live their lives as if he is.

Atheists, agnostics and those who only give lip service to God or the Bible, often focus their attention on other kinds of slot machines. People seem to naturally look for a source of material benefits that can supply their needs the easy way. In other words, they avoid the responsibilities for maintaining the garden that is earth left in our care and instead look for a jackpot god to serve who will one day pay off for them. Meanwhile, the daily losses mount as the environment is destroyed through pollution and genetic manipulation of the odds and the lives of the planet's inhabitants and keepers suffer increasing devaluation on the road to becoming throw away commodities.

Life is a Slot Machine

Regardless of what socioeconomic, financial program we choose, this is pretty much what humans do. We play different kinds of slot machines where we invest considerable energy, time and money in the hopes of an outsized, set-for-life return on our "investment." Human nature prefers the easy way of taking a chance to win big for the cost of a risked loss than risk the hard, sustained and often creative work required to produce something of enduring intrinsic value. It is true that losses can come in both paths, but the hidden psychospiritual costs of the slot machine are incomparably greater.

Most enduring success stories start with hard lessons and failures in business, but the entrepreneur learns and grows from them until he or she gets it right and wins in the marketplace. I advocate that each person's life offers opportunities for responsible entrepreneurship. It does not require massive amounts of capital but a surplus of humility – enough to admit and act on the naked truths found in the facts of one's situation and psychospiritual condition.

To be fair, choosing the slot machine road to wealth is not always a question of greed or laziness. Often there may be a valid perception that the system is unfair: hard honest work does not always pay off. Many believe that they cannot get ahead if they play by the rules because they tried that, and it did not work, so rather than turn to crime, they take a chance. While I can empathize with this sentiment, the consequences of slot machine behavior choices are still not justified by an unfair life context. Harder and smarter choices for a better way out of unfair economic traps exist within a mix of patience and modified expectations, which can gracefully result in a much happier, more eternally successful life.

Governments also take advantage of this human proclivity for slot machine outcomes – whatever the reason. They pander to the willingness to take high risks with acquired material wealth in the remote hope for an almost instantaneous and incredibly rich reward that fulfills dreams or satisfies cherished desires. Governments, entrepreneurs and crooks create and sell access to slot machine opportunities from legalized gambling casinos and sweepstakes promotions to illegal business and investment scams.

Americans (especially, though probably applicable to most every other nationality) as a society seem addicted to funding a steady stream of small losses in the hopes of a big

Foreword: The 21st Century Slot Machine

payoff. We are easily sold on opportunities to take almost any size of chance to advance our ego agendas of strongly desired reality pictures within the context of biological life needs. While most do so in hopes of receiving some kind of material abundance, millions give to acquire spiritual payoffs or "rewards in heaven."

The latter were my primary focus when originally writing this book in 1989, though even back then I realized that people have an innate struggle with issues of material hardship and reward that often manifests itself in some form of slot machine playing behavior. It just seems to be a part of human nature. During the brief moments of life in which we are completely honest with ourselves, we might admit that the true Creator God is not a the god of fate or chance – some slot machine whose sole purpose for existence is to make my life better the way I think it should be better. Being fallibly human, I am no exception.

In fact, I learned many of my observations about money and life the hard way through painful loss in (apparently necessary) trials or suffered consequences to my own unwise deeds. The slot machine playing mentality is a kind of conditional thinking that produces commodified lives instead of unconditional love. One might call it the Mother of All Idolatries.

It is another way of stating that money is a root of all kinds of evil, or as Jesus taught, a person either serves God or Mammon. There is no other option. There is no third way or combination of the two. Serving Mammon is living a materially oriented and based life, which by Jesus' definition excludes God; however, as you will read in the book, God promises to supply all material needs for those who serve him – as long as those material benefits do not undermined one's essential spiritual growth.

Updating Eternal Lessons to Present Context

Originally, I wrote the first edition of this book in response to the scriptural abuses I saw in how TV evangelists and other religious professionals persuaded the public to send in their sacrificial donations. In 1999, I wrote a bit on how day traders in the stock market exhibited the slot machine mentality. Since then, stories about the ruined lives of day traders that played the leveraged risks of the dotcom boom have been overwhelmed by a tsunami of global economic devastation derived from the dicey financial instruments of Wall Street's most prestigious investment bankers and brokerages.

Even as the real estate bubble deflates, the United States government and privately owned Federal Reserve Bank have decided to take God's place as the slot machine for huge corporations desperate to delay or avoid the natural consequences of poor strategies and missed execution of appropriate response to a rapidly changing global economic and financial system. Evidence mounts in the media that the real motivations behind elitist bailouts is to preserve the lifestyles of the rich and connected, though sacrificing publicly the lives and reputations of a few famous villains in order to distract from the continuing massive destruction of the middle class.

Though not expressed in the same words, this observation is not uniquely my own. It is the opinion of an increasing number of thoughtful people. Some of these people are intellectuals, economists or financial analysts. Some are the more regular, everyday variety of folks who perhaps have participated a little in the rising tide of investment roulette or in the supposedly fun excitement advertised by the gaming resort industry that has become increasingly available and popular as a form of entertainment in our ever more materialistic North American society.

Day trading on the stock market once grabbed a lot of headlines. It is but one of the more glamorous ways of pushing the envelope of human consciousness, of riding the wave of adrenaline charged excitement in order to give life some meaningful zest - a challenge or

Foreword: The 21st Century Slot Machine

reason to justify another day's existence. In 2008, day trading was all but forgotten being replaced by the massive global collapse of the real estate bubble inflated by a financial industry that added little to real productivity but garnered great gain by re-packaging risk.

Losing hundreds of thousands of dollars day trading and the immoral excesses of allegedly greedy executives and brokers strikes us as all as a bit whacko, but isn't there almost a universal desire to avoid or minimize risk? Wouldn't anyone like to win millions from the lottery or a TV game show?

Why should it be so strange that those with access to the executive suite would like to win the legalized lotteries found in the global games of mega-business chance? Bigger stakes inspire bigger appetites for risk and the adrenaline highs they generate in executive players.

"That could never happen to me!" we think. Try to be objective about yourself. I know that this is next to impossible, but it is also essential. We all need to identify the potential or actively played slot machines in our lives. The hope to win the lottery attitude lives at some depth, in some original-to-ourselves manner. The danger lies in denial. It is too easy to distance ourselves by comparing our own modest behaviors favorably against the exaggerated, almost surreal news headlines denouncing today's extreme examples of greed and fraud. The massive scale of financial wrongs makes it much easier for us to personally avoid any introspective evaluation of our personal values, life goals and behaviors. The headline examples of speculative abuse can sometimes grab national attention with the human events surrounding their bizarrely tragic conclusions, but they rarely lead us to ask ourselves, "Is there some lesson for me in this?"

My answer is that there is. Read the better analyzed or researched stories, and you will realize that these tragedies did not start out in headline fashion. No, they all began rather normally, within the range of seeming sensibility. This is because the root causes of the dramatic tragedies of lives and economies wasted begin in the vainly empty pursuits for self purpose or life meaning. The big stories represent the values found in the everyday lives of most members of our modern, technologically advanced, secular society.

For example, the impression is that when North Americans aren't gambling, we are working ourselves to the bone for what we define as our essential necessities to fulfill media driven definitions of what it takes for a person or a family to survive and succeed in America. Modern US history has documented the inexorable transition from a rather smallish federal government serving a largely independent and economically autonomous, commercially interdependent population to a nation of taxpayers who have steadily surrendered their liberties in an attempt to avoid moral responsibilities and economic risks, only to realize the certainty of feeding the bottomless pit of the massive tax vacuum surrounding our ever expanding governments with an ever increasing percentage of our earned income.

Governments as Slot Machines

Surprise, surprise - even with billions of tax dollars rolling in, federal, state and local governments find themselves looking to the humble slot machine to help cover up their inefficiencies of operation, failed public policy strategies as well as to fund their retirement pensions. The politicians' answer always seems to be, "We need more money to throw at this or that problem."

Since taxation is beyond pushing the border of excessive, politicians simply encourage our own fascinations with "gaming" to generate the income they tell us they need to address, and possibly solve, the many social and economic problems we face today. Depressed economic region? High unemployment? Low levels of education? Are you working too hard and enjoying it less at a job no one really wants? Give gambling a chance! Just let Lady Luck rule your chambers of commerce! Become your own mini-Las Vegas! Really?

Foreword: The 21st Century Slot Machine

Yes indeed, take a look at the recent economic collapse of Las Vegas, that is for the full time residents who live there. It seems like the promise to solving almost all of the world's problems through legalized lottery, pari-mutuel or other form of odds taking may not be such a good idea. Perhaps gambling with everyone's future through a government bailout is better?

How about counting the real costs of the very real obligations incurred to fund an imagined prosperity boom to come. The politicians and corporate elite will win just as big as the TV evangelists used to do so, and in both cases it is the average citizen who is sold on the chance to win one of the big prosperity payouts (get a job) as the means of being duped to choose or accept voluntary financial servitude.

Too many people let these subversive sweepstakes sweep them off their feet. Logic flies out the door with common sense in tow because there seems to be no other way to get what one wants out of life except through the power of money, and money still does not seem to grow on trees in spite of the internet billions being made in the media headlines. But the reality is that the psychospiritual and social costs are enormous. Furthermore, they are hidden away from easy objectivity by our human penchant to cover up losses and mistakes even as we proclaim our winnings to the heavens. It is a self perpetuated delusion that money is the solution to most problems. This is as true on an individual or familial level as it is on the political or societal perspective.

The costs to a society and to the individual lives focused on gambling as an entertaining way of enjoying posh surroundings with the hidden hopes of easy and sudden wealth are truly high. They are real. These costs are in lost dollars and sense, hours, days and weeks of time spent in hard work are thrown away wages, and for what?

For a chance to really be someone for a change, for a chance to not have to get up every *dang* morning and go to work year after year until one's too old to enjoy the goodies life offers?

The money thrown away in some glitzy, smoke filled and liquor fuzed entertainment facility is just the beginning. This is only the most easily identifiable cost - that which can be counted. The intangible costs are even greater: self-worth trampled upon, lives stuffed down a rat hole of deceitful allure instead of being invested in creative happiness and productive joy for personal starters. Then there are the others involved - families strained or destroyed, a child's whole potential twisted due to neglect of both material support and psychospiritual nurture from loving care and decent role modeling provided by parents.

This is one way how the government's policies are counter productive: our tax supported social services become unnecessarily burdened with the victims of gambling's diseased consumption of life. The social worker's laudable efforts to mend the lives of the ill and their affected dependents are unnecessarily impeded by the holistically hypocritical ethics of a government's total policy package.

Because the bureaucrats think they can finance a government's social debts by the license of and participation in the lottery's illusory loot, in effect they are actually covering up the structural faults of its self contradictory policy by funding professionally designed public assistance programs to solve the problems it has itself permitted, promoted and profited from. This is morally and logically indefensible. Reasonable remedies are available for quick implementation such as banning all electronic and public advertisement of lotteries where the licensing government is a partner or beneficiary in the operation's proceeds.

Gambling is Big Money

Resorts funded by games of chance are glitzy and sometimes elegantly classy. This is not a surprise because the profit margins are huge and nearly guaranteed by the laws of

Foreword: The 21st Century Slot Machine

probability and by the law of the land. Governments like gambling because they go through tons of money quickly. Money is the lifeblood of the modern political state, the oil that lubricates the machines of legislature, administration, law and justice. Too often political power is directly related to the amount of money controlled by those seeking office through elections, or by other means.

There are few true leaders in politics. I would hazard still that many are sincerely trying to do their jobs and that some fewer believe in what they are doing. Admittedly, government is a relatively thankless job for anyone not driven to exercise power over others. Of course, some people are so driven due to their own flavor of soul deprivation and slow death sickness that for them the accrual and exercise of power over others is the soul solution to the absence of eternity in his or her heart. The form of power may either be in the form of money, or in the mass media status and power impact of political position.

However, just as modern society needs money, it also needs good constitutional government, for enough people are yet unruly to require it. Government imposes order on human societies, although the kind of order imposed varies greatly as to the quality of its liberating benefits for the governed. Good government promotes growth through the guaranty of the freedom to think, speak and do responsibly. There must be consequence to our interactions with others that discourages harm, intended or not, which is suffered by one or more at the hands of another or others.

Governments should fairly regulate markets and settlement, protect the environment, and shelter spiritual growth with a hands-off policy that nevertheless opens society to free spiritual expression. Government should neither establish, nor should it hinder, religion unless that religion materially harms another against his or her will. Judging what constitutes "material harm" is where the devil can get into the details, but I intend such obvious things as theft, other forms of property damage, bodily attack, torture or murder.

Good Citizenship is Spiritually Sourced

Separation of church and state does not require the promotion of secular materialism or some other social agenda as the only official rule of social standards. To do so is to promote a religion, for the definition of religion does not require the role of a god in order to be a religion. Religion is a pattern of behavior linked to a philosophical system. Secular materialism satisfies that definition. To preclude the concept that human beings are spiritually dimensioned, or souled, and not strictly biological phenomena of chance is wrong and harmful to the governmental organization itself. No government can legislate good citizenship. It is bred through the education of life and formal training into its citizens. Motivation to being a good neighbors and good citizens is not found in the passing of incomprehensible legal gibberish recorded in pages and pages of detailia.

Good citizenship is born of the spirit and must be spiritually nourished. Love is learned through experience and service. We are first loved (at least we should be first loved) by our parents even as God has first loved us in the psychospiritual dimension of existence. From this experience we can grow to love others through the life education of a stable home that teaches us responsibility, care, consequence, and discipline by the doing, receiving, and being of life so that a balanced awareness of self and others dawns. Consciousness arises, and enlightenment will be born in a home spiritually oriented towards God, respectful of others, and loyal to one's community, state and nation. Most religions that have passed the test of time provide these benefits at a level beneficent to secular government.

From the perspective of the individual, I believe that Christianity is the only complete solution of the identity for eternity dilemma of the human condition, but I do not believe in, nor do I propose or support, a government sponsored religion of any sort - not secular materialism, nor Christianity.

Get Governments Out of Gambling

Governments should be a-religious, which then opens its participants to be fully religious, moral and mature in the ethical execution of their legally mandated roles in governing their fellow citizens. This concept presumes no violation of the inalienable rights of man such as alluded to in the Declaration of Independence, for example, nor does it censure public expression of faith in God. In this manner, the spirit of man may be nourished and productive spiritual growth is possible. When government takes its hands off the inner soul of man, then God is more free to impart and nourish us, one by one, along the paths of life we follow in returning to His dimension of being.

Consequently, it is antithetical to government for it to prosper from the destruction of the souls of its citizens. For when the soul implodes, there is no gain for the government, no taxes to be gleaned off of positive economic activity, no non-material benefit to the moral functioning of society either. Rather, those suffering from imploding souls are incapable of handling who they are. These people contribute to many of our modern social problems, draining public budgets and injuring the social welfare through the direct and indirect costs of crime and other mental and moral sicknesses. The social consequences of fostering and abetting moral decline in our citizenry are inescapable. They can not be fudged or papered over with facile prosperity, for we all impact one another through one another, by child or neighbor, by friend or by stranger.

Money spent on games of chance is not invested but wasted, cast away down the vacant hole in the soul of an identity starved person to no good purpose or activity of economic abundance generation for either the gambler or others. Besides the rather general drag on the economy that gambling engenders, there is also the creation of a population dependent on government social welfare programs from prisoners to public funded support groups. Tax revenues are spent on these programs in the hopes of reformed lives that at some point will no longer burden the public financially. Therefore, governments should not seek to prosper from the enhanced advertisement of official lotteries and/or sanctioned gambling operations for the real, but hidden, costs are greater than the obvious or direct gains.

Then there is the matter of principle: no government is ethically sound when it seeks to, or in fact does, gain revenue from the demise of its citizens, from their sorrow or misfortune, from their illness or death. Yes, there are transaction costs to be covered as part of the legal consequences of what happens to us in life, but those costs can be apportioned between the individual and us all reasonably and without the promotion of policies that encourage unhealthy dependence on the state or one another. Policy should encourage economic autonomy and spiritual health capable of extension beyond one's self to aid another in time of need, for we are all needy to one extent or another most every day.

Government plays an inexorably formative role in our modern lives, whether we recognize it or not. Its influence is nearly omnipresent. Just how is reflected in the old saying, "Nothing is sure in life but death and taxes." The implication is that in everything else you take your chances, or "In life there are no guarantees."

There is the wisdom of this world in both of these sayings, but don't be so sure of even these constants because God is totally against death and immortally opposed to unfair and unreasonably high taxes. His recommendations and guarantees are found in the Christian Bible, which combines the constitution of Israel with the promise to the Church as its enabling fulfillment. Consequently, the Bible helps us to understand why the world is the way it is today, what we can reasonably expect to modify or change in this life, the best direction we should work the change towards, and what our rewards are for doing so both now and forever.

Foreword: The 21st Century Slot Machine

Many Preachers not much Better than the Politicians

I think the desire to be someone is the key to understanding the almost universal attraction of gambling. That understanding can also unlock the spiritual solution to our desperate drives to gamble. Even though I begin to talk of the spiritual dimension of gambling's infectious sickness, I will make it plain that religion does not escape our culture's current affair with the allures of chance either.

We have become a culture lost in the pursuit of money instead of liberated to the pursuit of happiness. This book is not presented to condemn people who hope for a better life. It is written to help such people to begin to live better now by unlocking a little understanding, the common sense of consciousness given a little context of broader human experience.

Instead of inheriting the abundant life of joy God guaranteed he would provide for us, we have become enslaved by our insatiable appetites for more. Instead of living in the dynamic security of God's purpose for our lives, we hopelessly pursue the elusive odds of winning lottery-like quixotic illusions of instant wealth. Too many haplessly surrender to the concept that winning against the great odds of the big risk is the only way one can break out of the chains of the daily grind and to finally live life as it should be enjoyed.

Too many preachers aren't much better than the government. I originally wrote this book to expose the religious misrepresentation of God's nature in regards to giving (offerings or tithes) as well as to explain a bit about how He expresses His love for us. I believe that it is spiritually harmful to live by the attitude (in varying degrees of subtlety) that if you put your money in the preacher's pocket, it will pay off. The false message is that your faith in the preacher's "gospel promises" as evidenced by the works of your donations sent to him, will earn you material reward. The result of following this unbiblical religious practice actually cheapens His estimation of our value to Him as unique persons.

Listening to some who call themselves ministers of God or evangelists, you might get the functional impression that God was a slot machine, though that term is not used in the pitch for donations and faith investments. "Just send me your ten or hundred dollars, and 'God' will open his storehouse of the entire world's wealth and bless you," they proclaim. Some even bellow, "He'll bless you ten-, an hundred-, or a thousand-fold!" Such claims pander to the same sickness of the soul rather than humbly help to cure it.

What's more (this pitch goes) it's more sure than the lottery because "God" has promised: it's in the Bible! Furthermore, it is for a good cause - the Lord's work. We all know that "It's more blessed to give than to receive"; therefore, it is relatively more righteous and easier for some to justify taking a chance with God. Surely it will pay off! But in this case the guarantee is not given by the messenger. His odds can't be measured or regulated like a secular lottery or one-armed bandit, but his or her pecuniary profit is covered by a spiritual promise supposedly tendered and guaranteed by an old and often misunderstood book. These donations are further extracted from us with a more or less subtle promise of spiritual as well as material payoff - just in case the material benefits fail to actually materialize meaningfully.

It's an easy trap to fall into. Many sincere people do. The worst cases are those who may have actually experienced some kind of monetary blessing shortly after giving to one ministry or another. It may have been chance, or it may be that God did bless that person for giving in a stumbling act of faith worthy of encouragement.

What's important to understand is that when wrong motives inspire charitable giving, even if accompanied by altruistic intentions, the state of mind at work is one of *conditional* love. It is a giving to get. It is not a worship of the God of Israel as revealed by Jesus Christ. It is slavery to the god of mammon, the god of this world, the buck "that makes the world go 'round." It is an act motivated by a subconscious fear for physical survival and not one of

Foreword: The 21st Century Slot Machine

faith in the Creator. God revealed in His Son who walked the earth with us, that the heavenly Father knows all of our needs - both material and spiritual - before we ask and is indeed amply able to supply them all.

So who is God? What is Love?

God is not chance. He is purpose, and His purpose is unconditional love. Unconditional love encourages and nourishes the positive growth of another without need or hint of a desire for reciprocity in the material dimension. By material dimension I obviously intend monetary or other pecuniary payoff, but I also intend the material ego, the nurture of one's mortal identity, in which it is reaffirmed, established, justified or expressed. Unconditional love both gives and receives without expected condition, without the psychological or spiritual obligation which requires some kind of proof expressed in or delivered by follow up evidence. This evidence is the sign of acceptance sought, a confirming miracle of monetary windfall, or the entrapping emotional font of codependency.

By its very nature unconditional love creates living growth for everyone touched by its exercise. This happens without human plan, intention or strategy. One who gives to others as Jesus gives to us, enters the spiritual dimension of grace, which is the Kingdom of God at hand and interactive with the material existence of our personal now. Love's purpose is constant and ever present: it always builds creatively, beautifully, truthfully, and kindly in peace, joy, hope, and faithful promise. God is faithful, and He can be trusted with one's life implicitly. It's just that God has greater things in mind for us than we might want or desire for ourselves in the story of our future.

Unconditional love does not demand, require, or evidence even one person's loss that someone else should gain. Chance so demands: many must lose at least a little in order for a few to be enriched. In the middle vast profits are to be made, and I am quite sure that those who profit from running games of chance rarely if ever participate in them - unless it is to entice customers to do so at their statistical surety of eventual loss. Not so with true godly love. Everyone must take part, and there are never any losers among its participants.

This is the big difference between love and chance. Love is creation personified, deified. It produces abundant well being from nothing, while chance redistributes what there is and loses substance in the process. For chance demands a winner, many losers, and system depletion or waste in the entropic process of wealth's strategic redistribution. It is strategic because it is advertised, and there must be a big winner in order to entice the many losers.

However, the process of paying off that big winner with the receipts from the multitudinous losers is inefficient and costly. There are many costs of operation to be paid from advertisers, to owners and regulators - not to mention the potential for graft, corruption, or other illegal degradation.

Risk is the mother of human economic systems. Risk differs from chance because there is always some risk to life, but chance demands a winner at the expense of losers. Chance is the devil in the details of capitalism, for its inspiration is greed. To profit at another's expense is a very different kind of motivation than to seek compensation or profit for a good idea executed effectively or in payment for a service well rendered. Chance and greed feed off of each other in an anti-virtuous cycle of mutual reinforcement.

There is a great difference between the risk taken on purpose to achieve a worthy goal and the chance taken in the heartless mechanism of numeric or arithmetic randomness found in the equations of probability. It is the difference between abundance and destitution, blessing and cursing, and ultimately between life and death. But neither risk nor chance is to be confused with the provision of free will which requires mankind to constantly choose between the alternatives that life presents to us.

Foreword: The 21st Century Slot Machine

I recognize that no one can reform humankind by setting out to reform laws or social norms, for laws and norms must freely flow from the heart of a people, a culture; therefore, the focus of this book is to encourage personal growth and reformation towards a more perfect love and the peaceful purpose of life which comes from God alone.

The Issues Summarized

Money is power concentrated. Like every form of power, it needs to be harnessed and used appropriately or harm results - harm to people. People means individuals, communities and societies. This principle of harnessed power is why electricity is transmitted through insulated wires and is carefully managed with transducers, transmitters, and resistors to safely step up, step down, or otherwise release and direct its inherent power for profitable work. The story is similar for all forms of physical energy - gas, steam, water, or radioactive materials.

Unlike electricity which needs its material wires or printed circuits in nonconductive boards, money is bounded by intangible values and our choice to recognize and use them. Money relates to human nature and moral character. It is the medium of open market exchange which facilitates human commerce, and money can be the golden handcuffs of greed's bondage. It is a bondage to mortality, enslaving many to the vain pursuit of an illusory quest for the mythological beast of happiness which is suggested to exist by the ubiquitous promotion of mercantile mania. It is the concept that our personal happiness requires the purchase of the advertiser's merchandise.

The commodification of life's worth and meaning is the lying deceit represented in the Bible's prophetic metaphor of Babylon's allure and failing, the "wine" upon which so many have become "drunk" in Revelation 18:3. It is a false salvation which offers mankind the false hope that a very few can live the dreams of economic wealth and power at the expense, the daily sacrifice of many. Contrast this philosophy of human degradation with the Christian message about the sacrifice of one Jesus that all may live the reality of eternity in the true joy and abundance of the Kingdom of God.

The promise of God is more than the life beyond death, it is for now. "The Kingdom of God is at hand," taught Jesus two thousand years ago. Certainly this gospel is even for now as it was promised back then, and will be forever. This is a certainty and a power beyond that found in the scientifically described universe, although even science begins to touch the borders of the spiritual dimension beyond light speed, the realm of the Almighty, the King of Loving Purpose, our Creator.

Life is full of chance as well as circumstance. Jesus said so Himself in teaching His disciples. In Luke 13:4-5 he stated that those killed in the collapse of the Tower of Siloam (located in the lower City of David section of Jerusalem) were no more sinful than those who were spared. Chance itself is not evil, nor is it a judgment of God. Rather, chance is itself a naturally chaotic force in the "ordering" of the universe by God's design. It is a fact of life. We find it even in the very smallest building blocks of the atomic fundamentals of matter and power.

And Pragmatically Applied

Therefore, it is not my purpose to fight against the elemental principles of creation; rather it is to reveal their abuse. As in most aspects of life, God's blessings and laws are twisted by Satan out of divine balance into diabolical distortion. The lying distortion of what is good and true becomes the tool of corruption, usually self imposed by humanity, but wielded unto inescapable destruction and death by the master destroyer. The Devil and its devices are let loose in our lives by our own choices which are often made in ignorance through a self seeking autonomy from the guidance of God. Since the expulsion of Adam and Eve from

Foreword: The 21st Century Slot Machine

the Garden of Eden, the paradise which provided all abundance from the fruits of trees untended, slavery has been and remains the rule of mortal life. One can but choose his or her master: the merciful Lord Jesus or by the default of birth, we all inherit a bondage to the all consuming Lord Lucifer. It is only by accepting the indwelling life of Christ through His sacrifice that the hopeless bondage of mortality's futility can be broken.

Distortion is often found in the extremes of the natural world, both social and biological. So it is also with money and chance: both too little and too much are burdens to spiritual health. This is not to say that remarkable individuals can in fact and in God's judgment be men and women of spiritual maturity and graceful balance while living in the splendors of wealth or in the squalors of poverty. Neither should one man or government or social entity judge another person's conscience in these matters. It is even more wrong for one person to determine how much is enough or too little for another, but the fact of general human experience is that each of us have sets of parameters outside of which either too little or too much of a good thing tempts its very goodness to warp human decisions and behavior towards expanded indenture. Excess at either extreme steals life by destroying growth instead of promoting it through a movement towards that which engenders, protects, and liberates the life force in our lives and environments.

In considering Christian interface with societal economic activity and government, the objective should be to maximize individual freedom within the context of societal consideration for the gross excesses of human nature. For example, gambling may be legal, but its advertisement should be restricted, where legal, in order to protect those who are too weak to overcome its lure without some professional help. The state should choose to restrict the advertising of its own lotteries. It is in society's interest to do so because the cost of these persons' weakness is borne by all, and there is an ethical question of whether a state of the people, by the people, and for the people should profit from any of its citizens' psychological or moral illnesses.

Final Word on Legalized Gambling

I am not advocating legal prohibition of gambling or shutting down state licensed operations run by Indian tribes or other business entities. If a state legally permits gambling, then the rights of free speech and free advertising cannot be restricted beyond commonsense guidelines on content to clearly state the rules or odds of losing or winning. But, it is counterproductive, counterintuitive and hypocritical for a state to use a lottery to raise money for education and then allocate large portions of its revenues to educate the populace in the wasteful misuse of their financial resources through mass media advertising. Rather, it is in the state's best interests to reduce expenses in social services due to an economically sound citizenry and to increase tax revenues generated from wise citizen use and investment of their savings from earnings. The state steals from its own future to finance an irresponsible approach to the present when it actively promotes gambling through electronic media.

So what is sensible? Perhaps a ban of all media advertising which create an image of fun and empty wishes of economic salvation through the purchase of lottery tickets or scratch off cards. The results of lotteries should be published or announced without fanfare, and the media will continue to cover winners as news. This can not be avoided, nor should one try to ban it. Official state lottery outlets should be able to advertise that they offer the service without promoting the potential winnings from purchase nor describing the wide variety of gambling options available. Outlet locations should be permitted to display signs announcing the various gaming options as well as the rules and odds of losing and winning. The posting of winning numbers is also logical. Beyond that, the state should not push its lottery operations.

Foreword: The 21st Century Slot Machine

I recognize that one cannot reform a society by consciously crafting and enforcing laws or social norms, for the laws and norms flow from the heart of a people, a culture. They exist to define what is already valued and considered acceptable behavior by a society as well as to reign in what are considered behavioral excesses or violations of a perceived decency or understood morality. To reform a society, one must begin by transforming the hearts of individuals, one by one, person by person. When enough people share a value or a norm of what is acceptable behavior, social pressure will enhance conformity and perhaps lead to expression in legal code.

The promotion of human growth or the positive modification of behavior can and should be approached philosophically from a strategy of education and logical communication of sound moral conviction, but we must also realize that its success lies only in the miraculous, in love. There is no reason or justification for love, because love is founded on unmerited pardon or grace, which is the forgiveness of evil states of mind and the deeds engendered thereby without any compensation, penance, accepted in its exchange except for the destruction of ego. We can not, nor are we able to purchase it. True Godly love can only be given and accepted without compensatory thought, desire, or motive, or what happens is not love. However, love does require faith through the lover's acts of sacrifice and the beloved's humble acceptance of the reality of love's presence and power in the relationship. These are the means of ego destruction employed by the Creator in the renovation and reconstruction of an individual's life and purpose.

Personal Lessons

Love is the gift of life twice given. It is that which renders the consciousness of a person alive, creative, aware and compassionate. Love is the essence of immortality, of unconquerable invincibility which can never be defeated because it's dependent on nothing but the autonomous grace of the giver. The giver him/herself is enabled and victoriously empowered from having received the ultimate gift of immortal grace and acceptance in full totality from the Creator God Himself through and in Savior-Messiah Jesus. In Christ, a believer is able and will exercise love in faith without the hope, need or desire for a stated or implied material benefit in return because he or she knows God's promise and love as the foundation of personal worth and meaningful purpose in life.

I realize that this is an idealized goal and that people who are great spiritual lovers do not love perfectly, but this is their trajectory - towards a more perfect love with the joyous power of the eternal now fused from willing self sacrifice. They live a four dimensional consciousness of God's full acceptance of imperfect selves. They humbly seek and accept His guidance of their lives in conformance with His purpose, a purpose that is beyond the dreams and conceptual ability of human possibility thinking.

This is how we live the Kingdom of God in its "at hand" state, as Jesus proclaimed, "Now is the acceptable day of salvation, for the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel." (I write about this real fusion power of the universe extensively in my book, **The Mission of One, Unleashing the Power of God for the Twenty-first Century.**)

The Dangers of Slot Machine Living

Gambling for the sake of buying a self-worth measured in material wealth is greed. Gambling is a kind of greed founded in the hopes of getting great reward for the great risk of little loss; it is an addiction of the soul which sickens and corrupts everyone it touches. To play games of chance for no care of their outcome than for a game well played as an excuse for social exchange is a neutral occurrence of life. I am not condemning games of chance for entertainment alone or for the sake of social conviviality. Such activities are in almost all cases harmless to the mentally healthy.

Foreword: The 21st Century Slot Machine

To bet one's skill against another in a fair match is understandably normal, as long as the risks undertaken are reasonable and safe. If the bet is too high or the risk too chancy to the life and limb of the competitors, then there is something else at work in their hearts, and usually it is more than simple foolishness. These cases approach being, or in actuality are, signs of a troubled mind. They may even perhaps be signs of a very troubled soul slipping of the steep descents of ego implosion. For such people seek the proof of their worth through the unlikely validation of winning steep odds. It's as if one becomes special in the eyes of all that counts when "Lady Luck" smiles upon them with notable winnings.

It is the roulette of chance, the hell of determined self damnation to destruction abrogated by the chance probability of gaining victory through which the desolate and vacant soul seeks fullness. Yet, it is a false promise at best, the materialistic mirage of adrenaline rushed through the sad state of a personness empty of purpose, value, creative consciousness, or love. For these sufferers gambling, the lottery, the sweepstakes of commercialism are but delusions of fulfillment for a purpose missed. It is a purpose unknown yet sensed as an emptiness unfilled, a worth unworthy and vacant. A point is reached where the afflicted will sacrifice any and all things, or people, in the extreme effort to fill this void of their own being with the smiling fortunes of chance selecting them for its beneficence.

Such is the end of secular God-blindness: one seeks the purpose of probability mathematically guaranteed to be against them, against all the odds. And so it seems all the more potently reaffirming to win at least likely of odds - of multiple millions to one. Indeed it seems more realistic, logical and scientific to believe in Lady Luck than to believe in God, to believe that God loves them and sent Himself as His Son to save them. It is more divine to win the "big one" than to accept the grace of God provided by Jesus' sacrifice. We would rather be worthy of winning the lottery than to be the unworthy graced with eternal life in God, filled today with a life born anew within us, filling our voids with His loving purpose and power through the Holy Spirit.

Remember that it is only one who knows that he or she is unworthy who can accept the free offer of God's pardon and so accept with balanced, honest humility the life that God gives with its gifts as He decides to give them. Rather than fleeing from the edge of the void within to anything or anywhere but God, or rather than seeking to fill this personal void ourselves with the thrill of the bet given, the odds taken, and the enormous-to-deathly sacrifice risked, those to be spiritually blessed surrender to God's disposition. These who know themselves as unworthy are the only ones who have recognized the void within as the emptiness of their self spirituality, the death they must embrace in order to make room for the life of God in actuality, for eternity. It is the Kingdom of God at hand both now and forever. Glory to His Name!

Who is God?

So **God is Not a Slot Machine**, He is a loving father, mother, sister, brother: the congregation of the faithful on high and at hand among us. There is purpose in the life lived for God because it is His gift to us, and He is Creator. He is no other way, and He is love, so He can be no other way. In Him man finds peace and then joy, and finally the reality of heaven on earth which surpasses all understanding and overcomes all trials of the flesh even unto the martyred death of saints tortured by the small, empty men being gnawed at their souls by Satan itself - evil feasting on their own crumbling life force, wickedly spent for nothing.

A Summary of the Biblical Narrative

Foreword: The 21st Century Slot Machine

The Old Testament records the history of the first utopia ever established. As with all utopias, it failed - even though it had the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for its King. The reason it failed was not due to its incorruptible and omnipotent ruler, the impartial judge, author and enforcer of truth and love and benefactor of some of the most beautiful bounty beheld by man. No, it was us who failed, all of humanity - ourselves. The essence of the story of ancient Israel is our own; it only differs in the details of its context of time and place.

On the face of it, the New Testament does not offer a much more encouraging picture. Jesus, the King of Life, comes to earth and suffers death at the hands of His subjects, who seemingly prefer death. Overcoming death through His resurrection, He places His very life in the souls of all believers with the inheritance of the Holy Spirit, the earnest of the divine kingdom to come, the state where perfection just is that way by nature - good, joyous, peaceful, and abundant. Despite these new miracles of spirituality, the Church's history is one of corruption and oppression interrupted by cyclical fits of liberating light and life breaking forth through the chains of worldly darkness knitted by the knavish king of the night, Satan - previously known as Lucifer, "Light Bringer". Here the culprit of corruption appears to be power. The Constitution of the United States deals with the corrupting influence of power by dividing it at its political source and then balancing its exercise.

Wealth is one of the principal forms of power. The United States Constitution recognizes this fact when it assigns the government's initiation of taxation and the budgeting of its collection to the House of Representatives, the legislative body closest to the people. This is also why the study of money in the Bible can help. God does not leave us clueless as the Bible gives us a large number of insights and principles of working with wealth without becoming its slave.

From the most ancient of times Adam and Eve represented the gift of life lived autonomously from control or obligation to any other person but God. In fact God had intended a life of supplied power without end, free from corrupting influence. This life required faith and trust with a reliance on His rulership, His taking care of things. Man chose to learn for himself through the trial and error of experiencing both good and evil. Consequently, labor entered the picture of human survival. Endless labor subjected to vagaries of the natural universe, to the risks of natural cycles predictable and erratic. Nonetheless, these early men lived life free of government with their needs supplied by farming and herding.

Then Cain killed Abel and increased guilt and a need for sentencing judgment entered the earth. Cain was marked and banished from farming. Literally, the ground was cursed whenever he tried to farm it, and legend says, try he did. So Cain wandered the face of the earth scrounging off what he could find, which is rather a lot really. He hunted and gathered until this got too old, or he got too old. Then Cain decided to settle down. The problem was that, if he stayed one place, he would run out of food before too long because farming cursed ground does not yield food. So he came up with this idea of founding a city, being its king, and collecting taxes from all who would live there, including family members.

Since Cain could not farm the land himself without cursing it, he would let others do so instead. This strategy permitted the accumulation of population in one place supported by agriculture. Cain supported himself by taxing, or taking, a part of the land's bounty in exchange for his rulership and protection. This was the beginning of human civilization, urbanism, as we have come to know it today. The elemental principles remain where government made necessary by the faults and weaknesses of our own human nature is supported off of our labors through the payment of taxes. In other words as a society we are taxed by our moral evils, or we literally pay for our sins with taxes made necessary by the consequences of our self generated evil. The bottom line is that a nation with fewer

Foreword: The 21st Century Slot Machine

moral problems and greater spiritual strength requires less government and less taxation providing greater liberty. Prosperity and liberty cannot be separated from morality because the latter determines the possible extent of the former two.

This rather longer than I had planned foreword is done. Hopefully, it has given you sufficient connection between the biblical content that follows sufficiently enough to your daily life that you can apply lessons from the following chapters on your own.

Christopher J. Patton
February 3, 2009.