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Business Sense Plus Faith Transforms At-Risk Youth



Rudy Carrasco is the associate director of the Harambee Christian Family Center, which offers faith-based enrichment programs for African-American and Latino youth in Pasadena, California. In 1996 he was selected by Christianity Today as one of "Fifty Leaders under Forty to Watch." He also serves as an assistant pastor at Northwest Fellowship Church. Harambee was recently named an "Exemplary Technology Program for Community Centers" by the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute.

R&L: *Much of your work at Harambee involves training young people from your Pasadena neighborhood to design Internet Web pages. How did you become involved in this work, and why?*

Carrasco: I came to Harambee in 1990 because I was seeking to live out Matthew 25, the parable of the sheep and the goats. All my life that vision of how Christ wants us to treat others had gripped my heart. I became a Christian at age ten after hearing the story of the wall of Jericho falling down. I thought, "If God is so powerful that he can do something about the wall at Jericho, then God can do something about East Los Angeles." It was a heavy thought for a ten-year-old, but, by that time, I had already lost my father and mother, and my sister had high-tailed it out of a rough, poor neighborhood in El Sereno. Yet that was where I spent the first seven years of my life. East L.A., a synonym for Mexican and Mexican-American culture, is in me, is me. And the com-

munity we left was a community in struggle and pain. I wanted God to care about the community, and, in the Jericho story and others, I learned that God did care about groups and places, not just individuals. So I held God's love for communities deep in my heart, hoping to go to college and get a degree so that I might return to East L.A. and lift up the community.

In the course of my growth and Christian discipleship, I came across little that combined an evangelistic mentality with social action. What I saw was either one or the other. However, John Perkins, Harambee's founder, demonstrated to me a holistic approach that did not sacrifice faith for good works. One week from finishing my last class at Stanford, John came by and invited me to work with him in Pasadena. We negotiated a two-year internship where I would serve as his personal assistant. I imagined that at the end of the two years I would be ready to return to East L.A. Well, I am still at Harambee ten years later. What happened is that East L.A. came to Pasadena. My community is half Latinos, principally immigrant Mexicans, and anything I thought I was going to confront in East L.A. needs to be confronted in my neighborhood in Pasadena.

R&L: *What has been the impact of your teaching business and technical skills to at-risk youth?*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE ☉ **Articles:** "The Liberty to Know, to Utter, and to Argue" by John E. Alvis, and "Christian Leadership Books' Great Cloud of Unknowing" by Steven Hayward ☉ **Review Essay:** "Calvin and Locke Fight for Lincoln's Soul" by Lucas E. Morel ☉ **In the Liberal Tradition:** John Milton ☉ **Column:** "Do unto Cuba as We Do unto China" by Rev. Robert A. Sirico ☉ **Plus Book News.**

Carrasco: We have raised an awareness of how technology may practically and immediately increase individual and community fortunes. Some youth have excelled. One former Harambee student is now working at Earthlink and recently was promoted to their highest level of technical support. She just turned twenty-two and has only one year of college under her belt. She served on Harambee's teen jobs program for six years. And at least fifteen other young people have made money doing Web pages, and one of our high school students was this past summer selected for a prestigious summer tech academy here in Pasadena.

I am not a business person by nature or inclination, but my need to get my urban young people into the technology future, plus the financial needs of the students, drove me to consider entrepreneurial endeavors. In the course of responding to these needs, I have learned a great deal about economics and business.

An area of learning, or failure, in our Internet program involves access. Much is said about how young people, poor people, and minority at-risk youth do not have access to computers and the Internet—the so-called digital divide. In response, we created a policy whereby we allowed our young people lots of time on the Internet. What we learned is that, yes, students want to be on computers, but what most want to do is e-mail their friends and visit Web sites where they

can make personal contacts. The computers were really an extension of their entertainment options, and we did not think that was good, so we began taking steps to restrict Internet access to program hours. Harambee remains committed to providing computers, but the great need that we see in the computing world is technical support. Rather than allocating Harambee resources to keeping a computer lab open all night for community use, we are training students and interested adults in the community to the ins and outs of tech support. Think of Harambee as a neighborhood-based technical support and training institute—an Andersen Consulting in the 'hood, so to speak. This approach sustains the immersion model that we began with, whereby a student who responsibly and successfully maintains his Internet connection will be able to spend as much time as he chooses on the net and learn as much as he wishes.

R&L: *In your Internet training program, some of your clients are businesses, large and small. In light of this, what message would you have for business people who want to serve their communities in constructive ways?*

Carrasco: There is something to be said about business people offering real opportunities. In my context, though, we need more than just opportunities. There are many young men and women who are not able to take advantage of or follow through on such opportunities, so there needs to be an additional layer of training that is coupled with a healthy dose of grace. For example, say you run a small Internet Service Provider and want to provide an opportunity for a worthy at-risk kid. Well, that kid, as bright as he may be, does not have the skill set you require, so he needs to be trained. During this training, other issues arise. He does not come to work consistently, because no one in his life is consistent or on time. He does not read well because he fell back in third grade, and the public schools just passed him along. He has emotional problems. In dealing with at-risk youth, that is the kind of stuff you come upon.

The fact is that the kid needs to be able to do the job, but he or she needs extra support. Business people can partner with groups such as Harambee, with churches, or with nonprofits that are seeking to provide opportunities. Use your entrepreneurial profits as well as your raw cash. Make strategic investments in programs and people that have a chance to turn a kid around. Work closely with churches and religious groups that have a moral component. We are often the groups that can bring about the necessary character and ethics changes that at-risk youth need, and at the same time we often have our heads in the sand about what it takes to turn that good kid into a good worker. Your incentive as a busi-

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ness person is that you are accountable to our Heavenly Father for what you do. “To whom much is given, much is required.” The task for anyone working with at-risk youth is that much more than a good training program is involved. At-risk youth act like at-risk youth, and they tend to have big, generations-in-the-making types of problems. A holistic approach that takes their skills, emotions, and soul into consideration has the best chance of being effective.

R&L: *In your view, what are the most important issues to keep in mind when thinking about how to serve the poor?*

Carrasco: The poor are people just like us, with one additional, critical component: chaos. One of the hardest things for we who minister to the poor is to be close to them, because then our orderly lives become enmeshed in others’ chaos. Loving the poor does not mean giving in to chaos,

John Milton (1608–1674)

“None can love freedom heartily, but good men; the rest love not freedom, but license.”

John Milton is generally regarded, next to William Shakespeare, as the greatest English poet, and his magnificent *Paradise Lost* is considered one of the finest epic poems in the English language. Educated at Saint Paul’s School in London and Christ’s College in Cambridge, Milton was versed in Latin, Greek, French, and Italian. Unsatisfied with the rote memorization that was the basis for the university education of his time, he decided to give himself a liberal education. Through extensive reading, he sought to digest the mass of history, literature, and philosophy so as to gain the “insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs” that he felt was needful for those who aspired, like himself, to be leaders and teachers.



Despite the fact that some of his religious beliefs defied the official Puritan stance, Milton was nonetheless a Puritan, and, as such, supported Oliver Cromwell and the parliamentary cause against Charles I in the English Civil War of 1642–1651. His support for the new Commonwealth was such that in 1649 he was appointed Secretary for Foreign Languages in Cromwell’s Council of State.

Milton argued that the true nature of a monarch’s power lay in the popular sovereignty that grants him that power. Thus, the people have the right to overthrow a monarch who abuses his power. Importantly, the people derive this sovereignty from God. Insisting fervently on humanity’s rational freedom and responsible power of choice, Milton believed that liberty is best safeguarded by the strong moral character of a nation’s citizens. While he was a member of Cromwell’s Council of State, Milton pushed for “a better provision for the education and morals of youth,” deeming such a provision necessary for preserving Christian liberty, upon which all other liberties depend. He devoted his life, often to the scorn of his contemporaries, to the idea of a free commonwealth wherein citizens could pursue knowledge and exercise the freedom given by God.

In his *Second Defense of the People of England*, Milton articulated his notion of true liberty: “Unless your liberty be of that kind, which can neither be gotten, nor taken away by arms; and that alone is such, which, springing from piety, justice, temperance, in fine, from real virtue, shall take deep and intimate root in your minds; you may be assured, there will not be wanting one, who, even without arms, will speedily deprive you of what it is your boast to have gained by force of arms.”

Sources: That Grand Whig, Milton by George F. Sensabaugh (Stanford University Press, 1952), and History of Political Philosophy, third edition, edited by Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey (University of Chicago Press, 1987).

however. It does no good to drop the values that keep you sane and successful just to walk alongside someone. What it does take is long-suffering. This virtue does not get much press, but it is what you need. Otherwise, the fifth time a kid misses an important appointment, you will be so frustrated that you will take it out on him. I hear it all the time from our volunteers. They do not think I hear it, but I am just around the corner, listening. Demeaning things are said, value judgments are made, the kid is made to feel stupid and ignorant. There are ways to discipline a kid and not make him feel like the scum of the earth, but that requires long-suffering.

R&L: *The Old Testament commands the people of God to do justice to the widow, the orphan, and the foreigner; how do you try to obey this commandment in your day-to-day work?*

Carrasco: The Old Testament injunctions are exactly what drive our entire ministry. There is a retirement-age woman in our community who is single and is helping to raise her grandchild. We provided her with a computer and DSL access, and now she does a lot of Harambee volunteer work from home. She has health problems and is frequently confined to her home, but she can do the computing work from there. There are many Mexican immigrants in our community who are proverbially poor. One family has eleven children and the kids often come to Harambee hungry. We have made a place where kids with one or no parents can grow and excel.

We demand excellence from the orphan who failed every class of ninth grade, but we understand if he continues to struggle for a while and is obstinate in receiving our help. The widow confined to her home needs lots of technical support and lots of training. She was not raised in the Internet age, and technological concepts come slowly. We have to be gentle and loving to her; it is easy otherwise to make her feel dumb or unwanted just because she is not fast on her feet in understanding technology. It is a long, patient road with the foreigner. The fourth grader who cannot read needs to learn before he can go on to other things.


R&L: *One criticism of welfare reform is that the private sector—especially churches and other faith-based organizations—does not have the resources to bear the burden of cases dropped from the welfare system. Do you think the church is up to the task of providing social services for the needy?*

Carrasco: The church has the resources. Replacing what the state provides will involve a massive redeployment of those resources. Whether the church will do so is an important question.

My church's philosophy is that our obligation is to take care of those in the household of faith. When people who are not Christians ask us for help, we invite them to church. If they are Christians, we tell them they should be asking their church. When we do that, sometimes we get excuses such as "My pastor would never do that" or "My church is a very poor church." This tells us that they are not in relationship with others in a way that they can get their needs met. It also usually means that they do not want to be held accountable for their actions or that they are having friction with others and do not want to resolve it. It is really tough to tell people that we will not help them unless they come to church, but accountability is important. And that is one of the tough dilemmas that I face. Some people just do not want to come to church or make changes in their lives, and watching them pay the price for their pride and hard-headedness is painful, especially when their children suffer.

R&L: *In light of your experience in the inner city, what counsel would you give to middle- and upper-class Christians in terms of their economic choices?*

Carrasco: Say you made a large profit last year, and you chose to invest it in ways that provide jobs in needy, urban areas. It also would be really cool if, like a venture capitalist, you aided the management there. But that means you will have to enter a chaotic environment. Turning an urban venture into a profit-making venture requires a tremendous amount of business education. A typical venture capitalist assembles a great management team—people out of Wharton and Stanford—and "does it right," but in the inner city you most likely will not have that option. In my community, many people have not graduated from college or even high school, so they will have to learn as they go. It would be an odd venture, the sort that any right-minded business person would back away from. But educating people who are far behind in the business and technology game is exactly what is needed.

Good business and economic sense is not usually in abundant supply in the inner city, and I count myself in that needy group. My challenge to business people is that the need for economic training is not met simply by offering classes. Jesus relocated to earth from heaven for over thirty years. Could not a good business person relocate his life, home, and family to an area of need and live out good economics there? Our children learn by what we do and say, not by what we command. The same applies here. It is one thing to be taught how to write a business plan in a seminar; it is quite another to write a business plan with the student and then let him watch you pitch it. It is what we do with our children. They learn as they go, and, after a while, they catch on. 

“The Liberty to Know, to Utter, and to Argue”

John E. Alvis

Lord Acton, the great historian of freedom, understood that “liberty is the delicate fruit of a mature civilization.” The liberty of which he spoke embraced a broad scope of human freedom, including dimensions political, intellectual, economic, and, especially, religious. The civilization of which he spoke was the West, whose heritage of Greek philosophy, Roman law, and Christian faith indelibly marked it and inexorably pushed it toward the full panoply of liberties we enjoy today and to which the rest of the world looks. And the history he sought to express was the unfolding witness to the expansion, refinement, and richer application of the principles of liberty.

In celebration of the Acton Institute’s tenth anniversary and in the spirit of Lord Acton, Religion & Liberty is publishing a series of essays tracing the history of, as Edmund Burke put it, “this fierce spirit of liberty.” We shall look at several watershed documents from the past thousand years (continuing this issue with John Milton’s Areopagitica), each of which displays one facet of the nature of liberty. We do so to remember our origins and to know our aim. And we do so because, in the words of Winston Churchill, “We must never cease to proclaim in fearless tones the great principles of freedom.” — the Editor

Milton’s teaching on freedom of the press lies between Plato’s rigorous censorship and John Stuart Mill’s unlimited freedom; *Areopagitica* argues for freedom with conditions and limits. Further, for Milton, the issue of the scope of freedom in publication falls within his wider concern for the purity of the Christian religion. Milton’s view of the liberty and responsibilities proper to authors and their publishers is inseparable from and subordinate to his understanding of the liberties and responsibilities proper to a Christian. Consequently, to understand *Areopagitica*, one should see this writing as an episode in Milton’s lifelong effort to grasp for himself and to make known to others the nature and implications of that volatile blessing of Christian liberty.

The Liberty of the Christian

The freedom won for humankind by Christ fulfills the

liberty that God bestowed on man at the Creation. Human beings join angels as creatures unique for their ability to accept or reject divine commands. The God of *Paradise Lost* says he created man “sufficient to stand though free to fall.” This original freedom we might think of as natural liberty, innate to the nature of the species as it comes from the hands of God. Milton identifies three other species of liberty: freedom from coercion in domestic life (especially in marriage), freedom of conscience in belief and worship, and freedom in political life. Christian liberty is not another species but a reorientation, by perfection, of all the species. Christian liberty makes possible obedience to God, rendered in a radically voluntary act of love.

In the political realm, Milton detected the chief opponent to Christian liberty in tyrants, especially autocrats. Early on, he inveighed against monarchs who falsely claimed to rule by divine right. Subsequently, toward the end of his career, he came to identify despotism with monarchs of almost any sort, pretenders to divine right or otherwise. Milton located the means of advancing Christian liberation in the progress of the Protestant Reformation and in the defeat of divine-right monarchy by republicanism, accompanied by the rise of congregational church government replacing rule by bishops. Further, England appeared to Milton to be a nation providentially placed in the van of this general blessing of light and grace.

Under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell, Milton’s Parliamentary party of the 1640s had prevailed against the Royalists in the Civil War, and at the time of the publication of *Areopagitica*, the victorious republicans were deliberating how far they should go in remodeling national life. Milton intended to influence their counsels by urging changes in the regulation of the press, but the changes he had in mind were carefully selected to be those policies, and only those policies, that would encourage a continued reformation. Freedom of the press or, more generally, of speech, for Milton was by no means an end in itself but was an important expedient for enlarging a yet more important liberty. He considered freedom of the press an instrumental good, the application and scope of which had to be determined by the

one decisive goal of realizing the independence that Christ had made available to all. Keeping that end in mind positions a reader to understand the arguments of *Areopagitica*, their metaphysical and theological basis, and their perhaps unexpected curtailments.

Milton's Argument

Unlike his previously published divorce tracts (*Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* in 1643, *The Judgment of Martin Bucer* in 1644), writings that had subjected Milton to some notoriety, *Areopagitica* provoked little response. An unconvinced Parliament went forward with its restraints upon what it deemed offensive publication. The interest of Milton's essay lies, therefore, not in its effects—evidently it had none—but in its intrinsic merits of reasoning upon the scope and limits of political speech.

Milton conducts operations on several fronts. To his Protestant audience he seeks to undermine censorship by claiming to discover its origins in the Inquisition. Parliament, Milton contends, should shun this association and choose instead for its model the ancient Athenian senate, the Areopagus, a liberal aristocratic institution that allowed wide freedom with regard to political discussion and theological speculation. Plato's support of censorship in the *Republic*

no man of learning can make his public appearance except in the company of a governmental official imposing his imprimatur. Censorship is equally insulting to the reading public. In particular, it insults an English populace that has earned the right to choose for itself by resisting the paternalism of kings and episcopacy. Besides, one should weigh the impracticality of the new ordinance. If the purpose is to suppress licentiousness and sedition, censoring publications will not suffice unless one goes on to suppress offending songs, dances, puppet shows, and other public amusements—indeed any and every form of communication down to the food Englishmen eat and the clothes they wear. Universal supervision of manners would be intolerable, but anything less would be ineffectual. Add to these reductions to absurdity the likelihood of inadvertently kindling enthusiasm for forbidden writings, and the unwisdom of screening the press becomes manifest, so Milton maintains.

The strongest argument against censors, however, lies in a consideration of the precedent set by God himself. Scripture teaches us the difficulty of separating the wholesome grain from the tares. What holds for souls holds also for their works. God has given us an earnest of his providence in his way with Adam, setting before the first man abundant variety of pleasures to test his judgment and temperance. Adam's

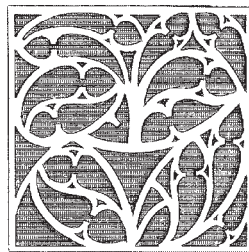
integrity lay not in being cloistered away from temptation but in having been left free to prove himself against temptation. Before, at, and after the first fall, human existence continually presents us with trial by what is "contrary." Christ, too, had to encounter temptation and, although his death purchased our salvation, it did not remove us from the necessity of having our virtue tried by Satan's as well as nature's various baits. We should not be more protective of innocence than the Father who permitted

temptation, trial, and, ultimately, the death of his Son. Sheltered innocence has little merit and remains more vulnerable to evil than frequently tested experience. "Try all things," Saint Paul commands. Strength and purification, Milton adds, come by trial.

Finally, the career iconoclast appeals to the example set by image-breaking prophets. Truth must come by siftings applied to contending claimants. The myth of Isis searching the world for the scattered remains of Osiris expresses poignantly the human predicament. In his original Edenic condition, Adam had the truth before him and had it whole. Yet he fell nonetheless, and his ever-fallible descendants must work out their salvation, employing intellects more feeble

Milton argues that censorship offends the dignity of thought by subjecting authors to humiliating treks between licenser and proofreader.

— John E. Alvis



and *Laws* Milton dismisses, attributing this illiberalism to the improbable utopian assumptions entertained in those two dialogues. In any event, Parliament ought to display more magnanimity than the pagan philosopher because Englishmen must respond to God's invitation that they assume leadership of the Reformation. What animates Protestantism, Milton asks, if not the Reformers' trust in the capacity of individual readers to interpret Scripture without monitors interposed between God's Word and his people?

Milton itemizes the costs to freedom of prior restraints upon publications by arguing that censorship offends the dignity of thought by subjecting authors to humiliating treks between licenser and proofreader. Under such constraints,

than Adam's. They suffer, moreover, from bad institutions that have interposed between the Christian and the light of Scripture. For the heirs of Christ's redemptive effort, then, Milton sees no better way to truth than by discussion and controversy. Only by a wide ventilation of debate can they overcome their ignorance and reassemble the whole of now-fragmented truth. Protestant Europe benefits from its great freedom to recover the light earned by Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Melancthon, and Knox. Their efforts reopened the Scriptures. But as access to Scripture has made possible the stand these reformers took against the fallacies sustained by Rome, a larger liberty to read all sorts of books will permit continuation of their work. A free press affords the chief engine of continued reform. To raise themselves to this height, Englishmen must continue the task of purifying church belief, government, and worship. And to prepare the national mind, England must ensure a press liberated from prior restraints.


Milton's Ambiguities

The last point—removal from prior restraint—alerts us to one difference distinguishing Milton's position on freedom of publication from that of subsequent proponents (such as Mill) of a still wider liberty. Milton does not believe that authors should be unaccountable for their published views, only that they should not be subject to state approval as a prior condition of seeing their work in print. After their writings have found their way to publication, authors may find themselves liable to scrutiny by civil authorities. Consequently, Milton recommends authors, or at least printers, be required to register their names. He would allow sanctions of some sort (what, precisely, he does not specify) against libellous, scandalous, and, evidently, even seditious publications. It is not clear whether punishment will lie in the hands of Parliament or with courts administering the common law in response to suits, or whether chastisement may be invested in persons outside government altogether, say, in adverse public opinion registering local disapproval by extralegal means. Whatever means he intends, Milton conveys in at least three passages his acknowledgment of society's right to enforce limits upon speech, provided these restraints apply subsequent to publication, not before. Milton's argument has provoked interesting speculation: What benefits would result by removing restraints before publication that would not also require relaxing censorship after publication? Additionally, one may wonder why summoning offensive books to account would not eventually exert the same repression as prior supervision.

A further impediment to viewing *Areopagitica* as a charter for an open society comes to sight when we note Milton's reservations regarding Roman Catholicism and paganism. He expressly excludes papist and heathen publications from even such conditional toleration as he wants to see promoted by a freer political discussion. One misunderstands *Areopagitica* if one does not perceive why Milton makes a special case of Catholicism. Milton can maintain this position without contradicting his appeal to remove all impediments to discussion in matters of religion because he denies that Catholicism is a religion at all. He argues that Catholicism is actually a political entity surviving an unholy alliance between priests and rulers perpetuated on the vestiges

Only by a wide ventilation of debate can people reassemble the whole of now-fragmented truth.

of the Roman Empire. Rome seeks to defy the liberty achieved by Christ through exploiting arrangements attributed to the fourth-century emperor Constantine—arrangements that are supposed to endow the Catholic ecclesiastical hierarchy with political power. Because the officers of the Roman church seek to compel conscience, it is not right to treat Catholics as though they constitute merely one among many Christian denominations. It would not be just, Milton thinks, to extend liberty of press to those who, by their preferred principles and manifest conduct, deny that and every other liberty to their Christian brethren. His reservation applies not only to Catholics but also to Anglicans and, indeed, to any national church establishment.

Present-day advocates of a less limited freedom of the press will judge Milton's effort incomplete, especially given his ambiguities with regard to censorship after publication and his refusal of freedom to Roman Catholics and pagans. Such judgments risk overlooking the lasting significance of *Areopagitica*, the cogency and importance of its arguments in favor of freedom in its several dimensions. For Milton, liberty of the press is an enabling act for other freedoms; it opens the way to an enlargement of opportunities for enjoying that freedom of thought and action won for all men by Christ. 

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Christian Leadership Books' Great Cloud of Unknowing

Steven Hayward

The church has always been susceptible to having the waves of secular enthusiasm wash over it. In the 1920s and 1930s we saw the emergence of the Social Gospel; in the 1970s and 1980s we saw the rise of liberation theology, which is essentially Marxism with salsa. On a less political plane, we have seen Christian aerobics programs at the height of the fitness craze and Christian punk-rock bands during the new wave era. To paraphrase Mark Twain's comment on the writing style of journalists, there is no cultural fad that the Christian subculture cannot appropriate and make worse.

Now, leadership studies are in vogue among Christians, and if you take the literature seriously, you would think that Jesus Christ was cut out to be a managing partner at McKinsey and Company. It probably should not have surprised us that Governor George W. Bush named Jesus Christ as his favorite philosopher or that Vice President Al Gore embraced the guiding slogan, "What would Jesus do?" (wwjd, for short). But Jesus as marketing manager or human relations consultant? Try out this sample: "It struck me," writes Laurie Beth Jones, author of *Jesus CEO*, "that Jesus had many feminine values in management and that his approach with his staff often ran counter to other management styles and techniques I had both witnessed and experienced." Or this, from Bob Briner and Ray Pritchard's *Leadership Lessons of Jesus*: "Jesus was both the greatest manager and the greatest leader of all time, and both His management skills and leadership abilities should be prized and emulated." But what about his goals? From most of these books, you would hardly know that Jesus is the Savior of man; he seems more like F. W. Woolworth instead. Can the salvation of mankind through incarnation and crucifixion really be appropriated for the purpose of selling widgets?

I am reminded of a competency hearing for a bumbling surgeon at a southern California hospital many years ago, where the surgeon in the dock explained that "Jesus guides my scalpel." To which the chairman of the board of inquiry replied, "I'm sorry; he's not a licensed practitioner in the state of California." So, too, we should wonder whether Jesus will really make his second coming at the Harvard Business School. The pabulum that appears in many of the Christian

leadership books makes me wonder if we have not mistranslated the New Testament passage in which Jesus overturns the tables in the temple. More likely, he was upending the tables at the Christian Booksellers Association convention.

Max Weber's Revenge

Before going further, I must pause and offer full disclosure along with some background. I am the author of a book in this genre, *Churchill on Leadership: Executive Success in the Face of Adversity*. As I confessed in my preface to that book, I first thought the idea of writing a leadership treatment of Winston Churchill was ludicrous, but then I changed my mind for two reasons. (Well, okay, three reasons—the financial blandishments of the publisher were not an inconsiderable factor.) First, Churchill was totally and surprisingly absent from the best-selling leadership literature. One book from Harvard University Press, for example, goes on about Hitler for seven pages, while Churchill is not mentioned at all. Second, it became clear to me in reading leadership literature that the example of Churchill stands in opposition to the current, popular understanding of leadership, which emphasizes a highly passive posture, whose most prized value is consensus.

Churchill would have called the leadership precepts of our time "mush, slush, and gush." In fact, one total-quality-management instructor told a person who brought my book to class that Churchill exemplified the unacceptable trait of "linear dichotomous absolutism," or "I da." When unpacked, this cloying flotsam of jargon means that Churchill believed in objective reasoning ("linear"), that good could be distinguished from evil ("dichotomous"), and that evil should be opposed ("absolutism"). Seems to me the world could stand a bit more I da.

In short, I came to realize that a genre of literature that included Attila the Hun and Mafia dons would sooner or later get around to considering Churchill—and would probably get him all wrong. Rather than let some nitwit write about Churchill, I decided I had better do it myself.

The second observation that should be made is that there is a positive side to the popular fascination with leadership.

The growing interest in leadership represents an implicit rejection of bureaucracy and of the Progressive Era theory of administration, both public and private, that sought to reduce management decision making to a scientific process that does not require the personal characteristics or insight that we ordinarily associate with leadership. In this organizational scheme, managers are as interchangeable as any other moving part. Think of it as the logical extension of Frederick Taylor's famous time-and-motion methods: Not only are workers reduced to robots but so are executives. In other words, the impersonal forces of matter, rather than the personal forces of individuals, were thought to determine the shape and direction of progress in the modern world.

The coming of systems analysis and other sophisticated quantitative methods seemed to complete the repertoire of scientific management, and its slow undoing probably can be traced to the first instance of its use in running a war—Vietnam. But that is a story for another day. Suffice it to say that the revived interest in the importance of personal leadership for organizational success represents Max Weber's revenge. Weber, the theorist of bureaucracy *par excellence*, nonetheless had misgivings about his project, warning that bureaucratic rule would turn into "mechanized petrification" and that bureaucrats would turn out to be "specialists without spirit or vision and voluptuaries without heart." Weber's provisional solution—charismatic leadership—did not work out very well for Germany (despite what Harvard University Press authors think), but his basic judgment may still be right: "Man would not have attained the possible unless time and again he had reached out for the impossible. But to do that, a man must be a leader, and not only a leader but a hero as well."

The (Incomplete) Escape from Bureaucracy

On the surface, much of the leadership literature can be criticized as simplistic or merely obvious—driven more by the hucksterism of the American publishing industry than by any real intellectual insight. (I think it was Woody Allen who quipped that if Immanuel Kant had been American, he would have written *The Categorical Imperative—And Six Ways to Make It Work for You!*) There is very little in most leadership books that an executive would not learn in a basic human relations or organizational behavior course. Leadership books, and especially the circuit-riding gurus who take up an entire day of your time instructing you on time management, have been rightly dismissed—as John Micklethwait

and Adrian Woolridge do in *The Witch Doctors: Making Sense of the Management Gurus*—as little more than faddism, clichés, one-part motivation, one-part plain common sense, one-hit wonders, and less. G. K. Chesterton remarked that there is but an inch of difference between the cushioned chamber and the padded cell, and the difference between Tony Robbins and Tom Peters often seems slight indeed.

This is the least of the problem. The trouble with most of the contemporary literature about leadership is that it still partakes of the viewpoint of value-free social science that is the very heart of bureaucratic theory. In other words, the escape from bureaucracy is incomplete. Instead of leadership based first and foremost on moral character and clarity of purpose, the most highly prized trait of leadership today is the ability to forge consensus through "non-coercive models of interaction." In this model, "hierarchy is out, and loosely coupled organic networks are in." One of the most popular definitions of "consensus leadership" is "an influence relationship between leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes." Such definitions make it possible to go on at length about Hitler's leadership abilities. They raise new possibilities for a sequel to my *Churchill on Leadership*, such as *Stalin on Leadership: The Complete Guide for the Command-and-Control Executive*.



The trouble with most of the contemporary literature about leadership is that it partakes of the viewpoint of value-free social science.

— Steven Hayward

You would hope that the sub-genre of Christian leadership treatises would eschew the value-free approach to the subject precisely because of the centrality of moral and ethical character at the heart of Christian teaching. But you will be disappointed. "Jesus had a plan and adhered to it unflinchingly," Bob Briner writes in *The Management Methods of Jesus*. "He knew where he was going, and he went there.... Whatever the consequences, he would go to Jerusalem and carry out his plan." Nothing about what "the plan" entailed (i.e., the salvation of mankind); it might just as easily be a Super Bowl coach's game plan. Nothing about the fact that being God incarnate might provide you with a little more foresight about how the plan will unfold—a benefit none of

us has today. Laurie Beth Jones (*Jesus CEO*) even has a chapter with the lesson that “He Knew That No One Could Ruin His Plans.” Of course, it helps to be omnipotent.

Nothing is more important than hiring quality employees, but these books tend to elide over what a personnel manager would doubtless call the “Judas problem.” Judas is understandably a cause for some embarrassment in these chirpy books, but, thankfully, none offers a chapter on “Surviving the Judas Employee.” “True,” Briner writes, “one of the twelve betrayed him, but I wish I had been successful in selecting the right employee eleven out of twelve times.” Jones writes of Judas’s betrayal: “This experience is common to many of us in business, in friendship, and in romance.”

To make a genuine contribution, leadership literature should impart something of the substance of the person in question as well as how that substance affected his character, thought process, and decisions.

Just as Jesus himself might have put it in a sales meeting.

This could go on, as could a roster of titles that we might expect from the publishing industry. With two thousand years of church history with which to work, the permutations are nearly unlimited. The Reformation? A mere proxy fight for control of the church. The Crusades? An inspiration for traveling salespeople. Gothic cathedrals? The Wal-Marts of their time. How about *Martin Luther on Leadership: How to Wage a Proxy Fight and Win*, or *The Jesuit Mode of Leadership: How to Fend Off a Proxy Fight and Win*, or *Venture Capital Lessons of the Council of Trent*, or *The Thirty-Years War as a Model for the Coke-Pepsi Rivalry*, or *Saint Benedict on Business: The Quiet Way to Climb the Corporate Ladder*, or *Savonarola on Leadership: How to Fire Up Your Stakeholders*, or *How to Profit from the Prophets: Putting Predestination to Work in the Commodity Futures Market*? When Dietrich Bonhoeffer warned about cheap grace, he had no inkling of the possibilities in the world of publishing.

Ultimately, A Question of Character

It is not impossible to derive from Scripture some edifying insights into the world of commerce. To make a genuine contribution, however, leadership literature should impart something of the substance of the person in question as well as how that substance affected his character, thought process, and decisions. (This is the value, for example, of Donald Phillips’s *Lincoln on Leadership*.) So it is important to single

out the two books that stand above the typical tripe of the Jesus-as-manager genre of books. Richard Phillips, who has an mba from Wharton, chose King David as the subject of *The Heart of an Executive: Lessons on Leadership from the Life of King David*. The first thing you notice is that, at 272 pages of small type, this is a real book. And, of course, since King David was an actual political sovereign, his life and actions bear some reasonable resemblance to the real world that we can see or imagine. From this book, a reader will learn a coherent account of King David’s life, as well as lessons that can be applied in a serious manner.

James C. Hunter’s *The Servant: A Simple Story about the True Essence of Leadership* is also a welcome departure.

Hunter is a real live senior executive rather than a consultant of some kind (as most of the authors of the other books discussed here are), and *The Servant* is a straightforward narrative of what he learned by retreating to a monastery when his life and career were at low ebb. Nothing here about what depreciation method Jesus would use. It is, however, a moving affirmation of the

value of contemplation, and its focus on Christian virtues makes it an oasis amidst the desert of Christian leadership studies.

Hunter’s book confirms the final judgment that questions of leadership are ultimately questions of character. Adapting the Jesus of the Gospels for the purpose of restating basic maxims of personnel management and human relations not only trivializes the Savior but also makes a hash of leadership properly understood. If we had genuine truth-in-advertising laws, most of these books would be called *The Cloud of Unknowing*. But that title is already taken. ☺

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Calvin and Locke Fight for Lincoln's Soul

A Review Essay by Lucas E. Morel

When it comes to beliefs about Abraham Lincoln's religion, there are no agnostics. Scholars and laypersons alike conclude one way or another on his Christianity. The best scholarship interprets Lincoln's religious rhetoric neither as mere political savvy nor as evangelical fervor but as a sincere expression of a practical Christianity of sorts—certainly not doctrinaire, orthodox, or conventional for his day. These works include William E. Barton's classic, *The Soul of Lincoln* (1920); Richard N. Current, *The Lincoln Nobody Knows* (1958); William J. Wolf, *The Religion of Abraham Lincoln* (1963); Mark A. Noll, *One Nation under God? Christian Faith and Political Action in America* (1988); and Richard V. Pierard and Robert D. Linder, *Civil Religion and the Presidency* (1988). But where can one find a credible account of the connection between Lincoln's faith and his politics?

Allen C. Guelzo, dean of the Templeton Honors College and Grace F. Kea Professor of American History at Eastern College in Pennsylvania, answers this and other important questions in *Abraham Lincoln: Redeemer President*. A Jonathan Edwards scholar and "late-comer" to Lincoln and Civil War studies, Guelzo lost no time in producing several monographs and books, including *The Crisis of the American Republic: A History of the Civil War and Reconstruction Era* (1995) and an edition of *Holland's Life of Abraham Lincoln* (1998). The good news is that *Redeemer President* deserves its share of the Lincoln Prize awarded earlier this year (along with John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, co-authors of *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation*) for recovering the literary, political, religious, philosophical, and economic ethos of antebellum America that formed the crucible of Lincoln's political thought.

It must be noted that to unfold Lincoln's mind, Guelzo the historian emphasizes America's intellectual hothouse to the detriment of exploring Lincoln's speeches and writings.

Nevertheless, in its judicious use of "reminiscence material"; its robust presentation of Lincoln's law practice, religious development, and Whig politics; and its insightful commentary on the evolution of Lincoln biographies (in the bibliographical notes), *Redeemer President* gets my vote for runner-up as the best biography of Lincoln to date.

The Crucible of a Mind

Despite the book's subtitle, borrowed from an 1856 editorial by Walt Whitman, Guelzo's Lincoln is not an orthodox Christian but, rather, a Victorian doubter along the lines of Herman Melville (a sketch artist for *Harpers Weekly* during the Civil War) and Emily Dickinson—unsettled by their professed lack of faith rather than triumphantly liberated as today's postmodern mindset would have it. More specifically, where Lincoln's heart was stamped by his father's "hard-shell" predestinarian Calvinism, his mind found guidance in the rationalistic Enlightenment.

The book's premise is that "liberal political economics" is the key interpretive lens through which to view Lincoln's public life. In a trenchant epilogue, however, Guelzo argues that Lincoln "did concede that religion might be an important factor in providing the self-restraint and moral discipline needed to keep liberal societies from disintegrating into mere hedonism." In keeping with his economic focus, Guelzo views Lincoln's understanding of human equality as primarily economic rather than political or moral: The opportunity provided by a cash-based economy reigns as the operative principle behind Lincoln's commitment to the Declaration of Independence. It is no wonder Guelzo dedicated this biography to Jack Kemp.

Guelzo argues that Lincoln's explication of self-government as a natural, moral right came to light only in response to the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act, which threatened to open federal territories to slavery in contravention of the 1820

***Abraham Lincoln:
Redeemer President***
by Allen C. Guelzo

Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
461 pp. Hardcover: \$29.00

Missouri Compromise. For Guelzo, this serves as a milestone in Lincoln's political maturation. As a youth in Indiana, Lincoln shared his father's Jacksonian politics, but he soon outgrew it after moving to the frontier town of New Salem, Illinois, in 1831. There he joined the Whig Party in its commitment not only to "internal improvements" (road, canal, railroad, and bridge building) but also to a federal bank to regulate the national currency, and tariffs to fund the national government and to protect domestic industry.

Lincoln would remain an "old-line Whig" until the mid-1850s, when slavery agitation exploded the party. He then followed a Whig remnant that joined anti-Nebraska "free-soilers" to form the fusionist Republican Party. The Illinois presidential delegation nominated Lincoln for the Republican vice-presidency in 1856, which he lost in an informal ballot to another former Whig (William Dayton of New Jersey), but he became the party's standard-bearer following his magisterial 1858 debates with United States Senator Stephen A. Douglas, which culminated in his 1860 election as the nation's first Republican president.

Guelzo parlays "reminiscence material"—testimonials about Lincoln most famously associated with the interviews conducted by Lincoln's Springfield law partner of fourteen years, William Herndon—into a sophisticated and persua-

Emancipation Proclamation—its content, extent, and timing—is perhaps the best example of a stumbling block for those who first come to know Lincoln as the Great Emancipator but find fault in his apparent tardiness in declaring the freedom of slaves in rebellious portions of the Union. Guelzo comments that Lincoln's "self-control showed even in his prose," and the Emancipation Proclamation is but one example of Lincoln's devotion to the rule of law and constitutional self-government in principle and practice.

Creative and Challenging Interpretive Leaps

Billed as the first "intellectual biography" of Abraham Lincoln, *Redeemer President* is not afraid to take a few risks in its interpretation of America's foremost political icon. To mention just a few, Guelzo argues that in dismissing General George McClellan, "Lincoln was taking the greatest political risk of his life, and perhaps in the history of the republic." Rumors had spread of a contemplated coup by McClellan to lead the Army of the Potomac in a march on Washington, to be followed by a peace process more amenable to the Confederacy. Guelzo also invests great interpretive capital in the Emancipation Proclamation as a sign of a shift in Lincoln's understanding of God—no longer a remote, impersonal force of providence but a personal caretaker of America and the plight of its enslaved blacks.

He takes a whopper of an interpretive leap, however, by making the real American Civil War an intellectual one between Lincoln and, not Jefferson Davis, but Thomas Jefferson. Guelzo heightens the anti-Jefferson animus of Lincoln's Whig politics to a fever pitch at the outset by citing an apocryphal 1844 speech in which Lincoln was reported to have lambasted Jefferson's character as a slave owner. Guelzo

quotes William Herndon to the effect that Lincoln hated Jefferson the man and politician but kept this opinion to himself when Jefferson assumed iconic status in the 1850s.

Leaving aside this spurious reference to a speech Lincoln never gave, Guelzo does give a plausible interpretation of Lincoln as a hard-line Whig and, therewith, Jefferson's nemesis. In contrast to Jefferson—"the anti-Federalist, the critic of Washington and avowed enemy of Alexander Hamilton, the patrician republican and slaveholder, the agrarian opponent of cities, of industry, of any form of wealth not tied to land"—Lincoln "glorified progress, middle-class individualism, and the opportunities for economic self-improvement which the new capitalist networks of the nine-

We need Lincoln to help us know who we are, what we stand for, and how we should act as citizens to perpetuate a republican way of life.

— *Lucas E. Morel*



sive presentation of Lincoln as "a man of ideas." This is definitely a plus, though a somewhat obtrusive one, given the copious citations he inserts in almost every paragraph. (The book lacks endnotes, but the chapter annotations contain most primary and some secondary sources.) Herndon's Herculean efforts to interview any and all persons associated with Lincoln have given us a testimonial record that any serious student of Lincoln must consult to fill out the man, and, with Guelzo's use of this record, we finally have the "unvarnished" portrait of Lincoln that Herndon long sought to produce.

As for Lincoln's presidential politics, Guelzo pays due attention to southern unionism, without which much of Lincoln's war strategy becomes incomprehensible. The 1863

teenth century were opening up across the Atlantic world.” Well put, but how does one reconcile this with the man who rendered “all honor to Jefferson” and declared that “the principles of Jefferson are the definitions and axioms of a free society”? Without a more extensive look at what Lincoln actually said or wrote about Thomas Jefferson and that most famous of American public documents, the Declaration of Independence, Guelzo is able to turn Lincoln’s muse into a ghost that haunts rather than inspires him.

Neglect of Lincoln as a Political Thinker

Guelzo’s portrait of Lincoln as a man of his times, only more so, is close enough to the truth, but without considered reflection on his speeches and writings, Lincoln’s soul remains somewhat veiled. It is as if Guelzo wrote a biography with the assumption that his readers know the great Lincoln speeches by heart and therefore need no further elaboration of their meaning. However, in an intellectual biography, what Lincoln actually wrote should take precedence over the various and disparate intellectual currents shaping America and, presumably, Lincoln’s mind.

Moreover, not much is made of Lincoln as a political or constitutional thinker in his own right, or at least as an interpreter of the American founding: to wit, Lincoln had “no constitutional theory as such.” Lord Charnwood, who wrote a 1916 biography of Lincoln that, for this reviewer, sets the gold standard for Lincoln biographies, later remarked that his own biography did not sufficiently acknowledge Lincoln’s *bona fides* as a political philosopher: “I think I hardly emphasized enough his claims to what may be called a philosophic statesman.” But Charnwood’s *Abraham Lincoln* belied this statement with ample references to Lincoln’s own words that make his political thought clear to the reader. Given that Lincoln’s claim to fame is a political philosophy beholden to the constitutional touchstones of the American founding, more of Lincoln’s own thinking—as opposed to those who influenced his thinking—should have been showcased by Guelzo.

For example, Guelzo offers little discussion of Lincoln’s first inaugural address, which soberly and methodically lays out his view of his presidential powers and intentions in the face of seven states already “seceded” from the Union. Moreover, Guelzo finds more of Lincoln’s contemporaries in his thinking than the Founders. And for a book that emphasizes Lincoln’s belief in “the doctrine of necessity,” *Redeemer President* gives only a passing reference to his 1842 temperance address, which discusses human nature as governed by “interest” as opposed to merely religious or moral appeals.

In Frederick Douglass’s 1876 “Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln,” the escaped slave and abolitionist orator

observed of Lincoln that “those who only knew him through his public utterance obtained a tolerably clear idea of his character and personality.” I would add that they knew his philosophy as well. Unlike most other countries, America is a nation founded not on tradition or mere force of arms but on an idea. And so we cannot help but take our bearings from repeated reflection on the principles that informed this *novus ordo seclorum* that constituted the American experiment in self-government. We need Lincoln, and statesmen like Lincoln, to help us know who we are, what we stand for, and how we should act as citizens to perpetuate a republican way of life. For this, there is no better place to start than with Lincoln’s own reflections on the American regime.

Two Towering Biographical Achievements

This last half-century saw three landmark studies of Abraham Lincoln’s life that stood, for their time, as the biography to read: Benjamin Thomas’s *Abraham Lincoln: A Biography* (1952), Stephen B. Oates’s *With Malice toward None: A Life of Abraham Lincoln* (1977), and, most recently, David Herbert Donald’s *Lincoln* (1995). Today’s reader can be thankful that Guelzo has not produced a Lincoln biography “for our time”; he has done something better and grander. We now have a chronicle of Lincoln’s life that, by recovering a lost age of intellectual disputation and fervor, instructs and challenges us to understand Lincoln as the most faithful and profound interpreter of the American founding and regime. If Charnwood’s biography presents the life of Lincoln as an American civics lesson, Guelzo’s biography offers a much overdue American history lesson.

As one-volume treatments of Father Abraham go, *Redeemer President* is a welcome complement to Lord Charnwood’s more constitutionally astute biography. For those interested not only in the intellectual crucible of Lincoln’s political thought but also in an interpretation of the thought itself, consider these two works the k-2 and Mount Everest of Lincoln biographies. Of course, Lincoln’s speeches and writings serve as the best introduction to the man we have most to thank for preserving what he called “a system of political institutions, conducting more essentially to the ends of civil and religious liberty, than any of which the history of former times tells us.”

Lucas E. Morel, Ph.D., is assistant professor of politics at Washington and Lee University, author of Lincoln’s Sacred Effort: Defining Religion’s Role in American Self-Government (Lexington Books), and a contributing editor to Religion & Liberty.

Book News

Public Morality, Civic Virtue, and the Problem of Modern Liberalism

T. William Boxx and Gary M. Quinlivan, editors
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing
xii+233 pp. Paperback: \$18.00

According to its editors, this book's central purpose is to discover in what ways "the virtue and moral character upon which our liberal democratic society depends and which seems in short supply is to be rejuvenated and sustained." The liberalism to which these authors refer is not contemporary American liberalism but the older classical liberal tradition that advocates the principles and institutions of "human freedom and equality and the natural rights of individuals that government exists to protect." The crux of the problem, though, is that many of these principles and institutions require an additional culture of religious and moral reflection that is apparently somewhat alien to liberalism. In their words, "the relationship between virtue and politics in liberal philosophy is a strained one." Hence the need for this book's inquiry into "an accommodation ... between liberty and moral-cultural tradition." Each of the eleven contributors makes a thoughtful contribution to this inquiry.

If It Ain't Got That Swing: The Rebirth of Grown-Up Culture

Mark Gauvreau Judge
Spence Publishing
xii+122 pp. Cloth: \$22.95

Judge offers sprightly written, conservative cultural criticism that encompasses a diverse panorama of issues, such as the principles of the New Urbanism movement, reflection on the social importance of "third places" (such as coffee shops, taverns, and dance halls), the decline of cities and the rise of the suburbs, the development and nature of popular music, and, above all, the "Lindy Hop," a.k.a., swing dancing. In truth, these diverse elements are all brought to bear on Judge's provocative plea for the reinvigoration of adult culture—a culture that, in his view, is represented by swing dancing, with its emphasis on style, elegance, and skill.

In Judge's view, over the past thirty-odd years, America has lost the kind of popular culture and popular spaces that are oriented toward and conducive to adult behavior. Rather,

American culture has become progressively adolescent in its outlook and, consequently, increasingly unstable. Judge, who explains that he "arrived at young adulthood a radical leftist," underwent an ideological conversion of

sorts due to a combination of reading social critic Christopher Lasch and learning swing dancing. For Judge, swing dancing and all it represents may just be the way to cultural renewal. In his words, "It starts with a nice suit and a steady beat."


Religion and the New Republic: Faith in the Founding of America

James H. Hutson, editor
Rowman and Littlefield
viii+213 pp. Paperback: \$22.95

Michael Novak, one of this book's seven contributors, tersely posits the central question in this collection as, "Can an atheist be a good American?" Or, as he puts a finer point on it, "Can American liberties survive if most of our nation is atheist?" To answer such questions regarding the connection between American religious faith and political practice, each essay looks back to America's Founding. The conclusions represent a broad spectrum of opinions on religion's relationship to politics during the American Founding. No attempt is made to harmonize the diverse conclusions, but, all told, *Religion and the New Republic* is a quite helpful and scholarly presentation of various ways to answer this important historical question.

The Triumph of Liberty: A Two-Thousand-Year History, Told through the Lives of Its Greatest Champions

Jim Powell
The Free Press
xvi+574 pp. Hardcover: \$35.00

If "liberty is a rare and precious thing," as Powell rightfully reminds us at the start of this book, then how did it become so ubiquitous in the West as to become a byword for it? To answer this question, Powell explores "the lives of remarkable individuals who made crucial contributions to liberty during the past two thousand years." And it is a delightfully motley crew, including such obvious defenders of liberty as Adam Smith, Lord Acton, and Frederic Bastiat, as well as dozens of others—some well-known, some obscure, some surprising. *The Triumph of Liberty* expertly weaves these different threads into the boisterous tapestry that is the history of freedom. 

Do unto Cuba as We Do unto China




Earlier this summer the White House and Congress agreed on legislation that would permit sales of American food and medicine to Cuba for the first time in twenty-eight years. Some conservatives have opposed this deal because they think it will prop up one of the last remaining communist regimes. In reality, however, this legislation is a moral victory that should help achieve Pope John Paul II's desire for Cuba to "open itself up to the world, and ... the world to open itself up to Cuba."

Everyone, except perhaps the National Council of Churches, knows it is true that Cuba has a terrible human-rights record. Americans are reluctant to appear to "reward" Fidel Castro, especially as it is also true that Mr. Castro's communist policies have done more to harm his country's economic situation than have United States sanctions. However, the recent and intellectually productive debate over trade with another country—China—has driven home the point that human-rights problems in totalitarian countries are not best addressed through sanctions and protectionism. Open trade and cultural exchange create greater opportunities for the monitoring of such societies by outsiders, even as increased prosperity empowers the victims of oppressive governments to stand up for their rights.

The hypocrisy in treating Cuba and China differently should be apparent. People on the left have argued against trade with China, while saying that trade with Cuba is a moral necessity. Those on the right contend that trade with China is crucial to improving human rights there, yet they refuse to contemplate the loosening of sanctions against Cuba. Any linkage of morality and economics requires a consistent application of the principle that trade and human rights reinforce each other. Sanctions are not only economically damaging, they are also politically counterproductive and morally dubious.

In my visits to both China and Cuba, I never encountered a citizen who hoped for less—as opposed to more—contact with the United States. No one ever came up to me and whispered, "Please retain sanctions against us. They help us fight against the human-rights violations of our government." On the contrary, most victims of these harsh governments believe that dealing with United States companies, as well as having them set up shop in their countries, will actually have a liberating influence on the lives of ordinary people. Cubans and Chinese fervently desire to have more exchange with Americans at every level, whether it takes the form of tourism, trade, or technology.

While some politicians predict that trade with Cuba will make life worse for ordinary Cubans, it is hard to take such predictions too seriously. The Cuban people have endured great hardship for four decades, both from the oppressive policies of the Castro regime and from the effects of external sanctions. Opening trade relations—or, at the very least, permitting an inflow of food and medicine—actually holds out the prospect of breaking a long-running impasse. There are many issues to be worked out, of course. However, the fact remains that in Cuba, as in China, free trade gives hope to the people who suffer the most from governments that violate human rights. 

The hypocrisy in treating Cuba and China differently should be apparent.

Rev. Robert A. Sirico is a Roman Catholic priest and the president of the Acton Institute. This essay is adapted from the July 5, 2000, Wall Street Journal.

“We should be wary therefore what persecution we raise against the living labours of public men, how we spill that seasoned life of man, preserved and stored up in books; since we see a kind of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdom, and if it extend to the whole impression, a kind of massacre.”

—John Milton—