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Globalization and the Christian's Response



Father Piero Gheddo, a leading voice in the debate on globalization in Italy, has been a missionary of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME) since 1953. For many years, he has been the editor for magazines on world missions, such as Mondo e missione, Asia News, and Italia Missionaria e Missionari del PIME. He is presently the director of the Office of History of PIME in Rome. He has written many books, including his most recent, David and Goliath: Catholics and the Challenge of Globalization, written in collaboration with Roberto Beretta,

a journalist for Avvenire, the daily newspaper of the Italian Bishops' Conference. The following interview was conducted for Religion & Liberty by Alberto Mingardi; the translation is by Fr. Robert A. Sirico.

R&L: Do you believe that there is widespread ignorance among religious leaders with regard to economic reasoning?

Gheddo: No, I do not believe that the majority of Roman Catholic religious leaders have a great prejudice against liberalism or, more precisely, against capitalism. It is certainly true that we have seen a certain development in the church's social doctrine. In the last century, documents such as *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno* and the discourses of Pius XII and John XII advanced a certain orientation that condemned a "savage capitalism." With Pope John Paul II, the church has arrived at a more balanced judgment. *Centesimus Annus*, like *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, clearly recognizes the legitimacy of the free market and the fact that only the market creates wealth.

What is more, *Centesimus Annus* recognizes that the free market embodies the fundamental human value of liberty. So-called political liberty is not enough for man; he also needs to be able to experiment in the area of economics, to vent his creativity, to have space for his need to build something. All of this Pope John Paul II has expressed beautifully, especially in this historical moment in which statism has begun to collapse.

R&L: In your book, you seem critical of those forms of protection that are typical of the welfare state in Europe. "The absolute guarantees of the state," you write, "have brought about a passivity in people toward economic growth and poverty." Do you believe that the existence of the welfare state has had some effect on the general irresponsibility of individuals?

Gheddo: If, on the one hand, we must speak of solidarity, of establishing rules to help those worse off than we are, then, on the other hand, we cannot ignore the two values of responsibility and liberty. To think, as happens more frequently, "I pay my taxes, so the state can do it," is a tremendous mistake. It is not the state that must deal with our neighbors; we all must do it. There is one thing I never tire of repeating in public meetings everywhere in Italy: We ourselves must carry the burden for our brothers who are ill. We ourselves as per-

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sons and individuals must feel the responsibility over and above the United Nations, the government, and the multinationals. It is very true that all this runs counter to human egoism.

R&L: *In other words, it is more comfortable to pay taxes and thereby mentally whitewash our consciences than to look within and concretely undertake something for others.*

Gheddo: In the same way, it is easier to protest, to march, or to take on the multinationals; the fault is always someone else's. Look at the ideology of the anti-globalization movement, which I radically condemn. The anti-globalists owe their success to a series of lies, the first of which is that the poor nations are poor because the rich nations are rich. That is a colossal lie. The poor countries are poor due to their historical delay. They "awakened" much later than we did, for many reasons, not the least of which is the fact that they have not had the fortune of the Mediterranean countries, which have for a long time exchanged information and ideas by means of the trade routes. Of course, inequalities exist, and it is our responsibility as persons and as individuals to help those who are in need. And here we come to the real problem: How?

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R&L: *All right. How?*

Gheddo: My experience has taught me that money—that is, help in the form of foreign aid—is not necessarily the best way. Foreign aid, in the end, drains money from rich countries to the political élites of poor countries. This, for example, in Africa, is very dangerous. African governments do not work for the people but, rather, seize power for their own interests. And since these situations, in which the political elite are parasites on the population, are so common throughout the Third World, in my estimation the prophetic question must be asked: Why?

R&L: *Why?*

Gheddo: All of my analysis of underdevelopment is drawn from my missionary friends and colleagues, and our experience says this: The people in those countries are not educated. Before they are economically poor, they are culturally poor. And the two things go hand in hand. When I speak of the necessity to educate people, I am not speaking only of the importance of literacy. Surely, without that, such men and women are desperately in need. But I am saying that, above all, it is important to teach them production. The countries of the Third World are poor because they do not know how to create wealth. Wealth is a pie that you produce, not a pie that you distribute. This needs to be said forcefully and clearly.

R&L: *So you do not believe that the solution to the problems of the Third World can be solved by foreign aid.*

Gheddo: No. What I am saying is that help does not have to be given from state to state. I was recently in Potenza (a small city in the south of Italy) where a parish established itself as a sister city to one in Albania. It is impressive to see how they are able to do it. They do not merely send money, but, more importantly, they personally go to help. They have sent their young people. They have built and have taught how to build. They have opened a school and a hospital. Here is what I mean when I speak of help from people to people: to serve in order to educate and build bridges of understanding. Meanwhile, help from state to state produces little or nothing—or worse, useless cathedrals in the desert. An example comes to mind: In the capital of Guinea, the Italian government has built a very modern, enormous rice mill. It was built twenty years ago. It has never functioned; it has not produced one gram of rice. Why? Because the farmers themselves have never thought of using it. Instead, they bring the rice home and make work for their wives, who grind it. Of

what use is a mill without a culture to use it? In Vercelli, where I come from, we produce seventy-five quintals of rice per hectare of land. In Africa, they barely produce four. The gap between four and seventy-five is the gap between poverty and wealth. Our history has taught this to us. If we are rich, it is because we know how to produce; we know how to create wealth. The key to helping the poor countries consists of time and education. But education needs, above all, people

to go and to educate. The appeal to the First World should not be to send more money to the Third World but to teach, to feel responsible for the future of our poorer brothers and sisters, to become educators, keeping in mind that the experiments in those places will be a mutual education, not a unilateral one. The Third World will also have something to teach us. The problem is that, in order to realize this project, it will be necessary to examine our own way of life.

William Penn (1644–1718)

“Governments, like clocks, go from the motion men give them, and as governments are made and moved by men, so by them they are ruined too. Wherefore governments rather depend upon men than men upon governments.”

William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, was the son of Sir William Penn, a distinguished English admiral. His boyhood was marked by a combination of pietism with a strong interest in athletics, and he was expelled from Oxford for nonconformity. After leaving the university, he traveled on the continent, served in the British navy, and studied law. In 1667 he became a Quaker, and in the next year he was imprisoned in the Tower of London for his nonconformist religious beliefs. During this time, he wrote his well-known treatise on self-sacrifice, *No Cross, No Crown*; after his release, he suffered, from time to time, renewed imprisonments. His experiences convinced him that the time was not ripe in England for religious toleration, and he turned his attention to the New World as a possible refuge for the persecuted religious believers.



In 1682 he obtained a charter from King Charles II, which established Penn as proprietor and governor of territory in the American colonies west of the Delaware River and north of Maryland. After drawing up a constitution for the colony on the basis of religious toleration, Penn sailed for his new province on the ship *Welcome*. After two years, during which the population of the colony grew rapidly through emigration from Germany, Holland, Scandinavia, and Great Britain, Penn returned to England, where his consultations with James II, whom he believed to be sincere in his professions of toleration, led to much misunderstanding of his motives and character. During the Revolution of 1688 he was treated as a Jacobite, but finally obtained the goodwill of William III, and resumed his preaching and writing. In 1699 he again came to America, this time with the intention of remaining, but two years later he went home to oppose the proposal to convert his province into a crown colony. Queen Anne received him favorably, and he remained in England until his death in 1718.

“William Penn was the first great hero of American liberty,” writes one commentator. “He gave Pennsylvania a written constitution that limited the power of government, provided a humane penal code, and guaranteed many fundamental liberties.” Among these liberties were private property, free enterprise, a free press, trial by jury, and religious toleration. In so doing, Penn’s “Holy Experiment” prefigured and influenced the American experiment in ordered liberty. ©

Sources: “William Penn, America’s First Great Champion for Liberty and Peace” by Jim Powell (www.quaker.org/wmpenn.html), and “Preface to the Frame of Government” by William Penn (press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch17s4.html).

R&L: *It seems that in addition to the problem of the cultivation of conscience, there is the connected problem of the structure of incentives. In Italy, and, more generally, in Europe, young people enter the labor market when they are thirty years old, and until then they have had an easy life in the womb of the family. It is a complete system (the axis of the welfare state) that discourages young people from assuming responsibility.*

Gheddo: From this point of view, I think that it is helpful to look at America; it is a country that I know and have traveled to and respect. There, families, including the wealthy, pay for their children's room and board at college, but the rest have to earn on their own. They go and work at McDonald's, they mow their neighbors' lawns, and they baby-sit. This is a good attitude that preserves the spirit of the frontier and has made America rich; wealth creates the conditions because it creates more wealth. In contrast, certain Italian and European attitudes represent a pessimistic model.

R&L: *What are the major obstacles that missionaries encounter in their educational work?*

Gheddo: I would say that there are two. In the first place, some governments are terrified at the possibility that missionaries will unmask their crimes, and so they invent controls upon controls, regulations with a totalitarian stamp, to obstruct our work. States can be mortal enemies of missions. And then, certainly, the traditional culture does not help. Above all, in certain parts of Africa, there is a culture of economic subsistence that impedes innovation and blocks the way to development. Often in the villages there emerges a kind of hatred toward those whose behavior dares to make more, toward those who seek to be inventive entrepreneurs. Since they are all cousins or relatives, there is a sense that whatever one produces must necessarily be redistributed to the others. It is a very bad idea; this is not the way that development is generated. Development requires accumulation, the creation of wealth and work—that is, it needs entrepreneurs. I would say, therefore, that the communal mentality can indeed be a formidable obstacle to the work of missionaries. In another way, missionaries are important and precious also because of the closed nature of those societies. A missionary is not a tourist; he goes to his post, learns the language, and then lives there twenty or thirty years or, perhaps, for the remainder of his life. In doing so, he succeeds in gaining the trust of the people; that is a condition that will bring about change.

R&L: *The Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto, in his book,*


The Mystery of Capital, underlines how, in his estimation, poor countries completely lack everything except a “capitalistic spirit.” He even says that they often have a willing “vocation to the market.” According to de Soto, the problem is that they have not been able to form capital. Additionally, the structures of regulation typical of Western countries are imported, but the need to look at how they developed there and how they applied to the right to property is not understood. Do you share de Soto's analysis?

Gheddo: Without a doubt, this is an interesting x-ray of underdevelopment. It seems to me that one could sum up the problem by concentrating on the historical delay of many people. They are “delayed” for one obvious reason: Development and progress were born in the West. To admit this does not mean being racist, nor does it mean preaching the “superiority” of our culture, but it does admit a historical fact. And why was development born in the West? Because the West, thanks to centuries of the Gospel, of Christianity, of preaching the importance of the concept of the person—all this has given birth to liberty, and with liberty comes industrialization and scientific discovery. Without liberty, it would not have been possible. It is not sufficient to import the Western model through laws alone; a mentality needs to be created that is fertile for development.

R&L: *In many cases we have succeeded in exporting culture—but the wrong one. Pol Pot studied at the Sorbonne.*

Gheddo: That is true. The problem is that we also, in our Western sense, so often forget that all of our development, all of our progress comes from biblical and evangelistic impulses.

R&L: *There is a striking affirmation toward the end of your book. You write, “I was in Chile in 1972 while the movement ‘Christians for Socialism’ was being born. I asked myself: Why must we Christians have to resort to socialism and to Marxism, condemned many times by the popes? We already have the Gospel and the social doctrine of the church.” Why do you think Marxism has had such success?*

Gheddo: Because Marxism represents a glimpse of justice. Of course, it has produced neither justice nor development. There were thirty-one Marxist regimes in the world, and they were all revealed as failures. They produced only death and corruption. But Marxism was a powerful temptation: Abolish private property, it said, and all of our problems will be resolved. It is a seductive mirage. 

Why Should Businessmen Read Great Literature?

Vigen Guroian

Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man.

—Sir Francis Bacon

Leisure without human letters amounts to death, the entombment of a living man.

—Saint William Fermat

Nothing makes a man more reverent than a library.

—Sir Winston Churchill

In every society, power must be humanized and used morally in order that free and civilized life might prosper. And in a money-based economy, businessmen and businesswomen wield great power and are frequently called into roles of civic and political leadership. This fact makes the question that heads this essay especially significant. A half-century ago, Russell Kirk, author of *The Conservative Mind*, penned an article titled “The Inhumane Businessman.” Kirk did not argue that businessmen were, as a lot, more inhumane, mean, or cruel than the average bank clerk, school teacher, or construction worker. But he was persuaded that businessmen were “deficient in the disciplines which nurture sound imagination and strong moral character,” and he argued that this is not good for America.

Kirk lamented the turn to business education in our colleges and universities, which, he argued, was contributing to the cultural illiteracy of the business class. That trend has accelerated through the concluding decades of the twentieth century, leaving fewer and fewer of those engaged in business educated in the liberal arts. This is significant, and it is a determining factor as to why businessmen so often do not read great literature. So this is where I shall also begin.

Imagining Larger Possibilities and Purposes

Kirk was right. By the 1950s, higher education in North America had begun to buy into business education (pun intended) and replace liberal arts studies with this glamorized version of vocational training. Colleges certainly did not heed C. S. Lewis’s admonition that “if education is beaten by train-

ing, civilization dies.” Even earlier in the century, G. K. Chesterton published an article in the *London Illustrated Times*, titled simply enough “On Business Education,” in which, in his acerbic manner, he sums up the scandal and hints at its consequences: “Modern educators begin by stuffing the child, not with the sense of justice by which he can judge the world, but with the sense of inevitable doom or dedication by which he must accept that particular very worldly aspect of the world.”

I teach core curriculum courses in ethics, literature, and theology at a college in which a third of the students are business majors. And I have seen over the past twenty years how business “training” sucks these students dry of idealism and replaces it with the crudest forms of pragmatism, utilitarianism, and fatalism. The light in their eyes has already begun to dim before they have finished four years. This is a dreadful thing to witness. Despite the efforts of myself and other teachers in the humanities, many men and women depart Loyola College with no sense of the meaning or value of a liberal arts education. Nor have they acquired the habits of reading that are historically associated with such an education.

This lack is debilitating in ways that appear wholly overlooked by much of society, including the parents of my students. For if these young men and women had learned the meaning and value of the liberal arts, they would leave college with the answers to two questions that, as it turns out, they hardly know how to ask—let alone answer. First, “Why should I read great literature through the rest of my life?” Second, “Why am I choosing to spend my life in business?”

They cannot answer the second question satisfactorily because they were not encouraged in college (or even permitted, in many cases) to read and to love the great literary masters. Aristotle, Dante, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, and Eliot teach us to imagine larger possibilities and purposes for our lives. They test our decisions with the moral wisdom of humankind. They ask us to move through the world with discernment. They show us that we possess the freedom to make of our lives what we will and not what others choose for us, what the fates decide, or what historical forces dictate.

Robert Louis Stevenson wrote an essay titled “On the Choice of a Profession” that gets to the crux of these concerns. The essay is composed in the form of a letter to a young man who is seeking advice on a career. It has a sharp satirical edge worthy of Pope or Swift. At one point, Stevenson introduces an imaginary conversation with a banker friend.

“My good fellow,” I say, “give me a moment.”
“I have not a moment to spare,” says he.
“Why?” I enquire.
“I must be banking,” he replies....
“And what,” I continue my interrogatory, “is banking?”
“Sir,” says he, “it is my business.”
“Your business?” I repeat. “And what is a man’s business?”

The great literary masters test our decisions with the moral wisdom of humankind and ask us to move through the world with discernment.

“Why,” cries the banker, “a man’s business is his duty.”

Stevenson then offers these observations about the conversation:

But this is a sort of answer that provokes reflection. Is a man’s business his duty? Or perhaps should not his duty be his business? If it is not my duty to conduct a bank (and I contend that it is not) is it the duty of my friend the banker? Who told him it was? Is it in the Bible? Is he sure that banks are a good thing? Might it not be his duty to stand aside and let some one else conduct the bank? Or perhaps ought he not to have been a ship-captain instead? All these perplexing queries may be summed up under one head: the grave problem which my friend offers to the world: Why is he a Banker?

The Loss of Leisure and the Dragon of Despair

Through the back door, Stevenson introduces the ancient tradition of the man of virtuous character. This tradition says that the virtues are not the same as the skills needed to perform work—and further, that duty, which is most certainly related to the virtues, carries moral weight. Duty is related to conscience and a higher law. To say that “business is my duty” ignores this and displays ignorance of what duty and virtue really are. That is why Stevenson quips: “Who told him it was [his duty]? Is it in the Bible?” Of course the Bible did not instruct his friend (nor does it instruct anyone else) that it is one’s duty to be a banker. Banking may be a man’s choice of work, but duty impinges upon work as the tran-

scendent obligation to do what is morally right in every location or vocation.

Duty is the “business” of being a virtuous human being. Doing business is not a duty, although it may be one’s duty to behave virtuously in business. This is why Stevenson wonders: “Is he sure that banks are a good thing?” For never can it be one’s duty to do evil. A contractual agreement or a compelling love for making financial transactions may persuade a person to be a banker, but it may be a person’s duty to foreswear an unscrupulous bank dealing or even to leave one’s position in the bank altogether. Yet nothing in the friend’s statements suggests that he has thought through these matters or that he knows how to begin to evaluate his position

morally. He is a man with a shrunken moral imagination, though we do not know how precisely he got that way.

Finally, Stevenson’s friend does not even know why he is a banker. The principal reason for this, Stevenson speculates, is that he “was trapped” by a form of education that “harnesses a fellow”

with the best of intentions but makes him a slave before he has had a chance to become a free man. The fellow was kept in the shadows of Plato’s cave—kept in the dark, as we say. He chose to become a banker because, presumably, he could not imagine doing any other work. He had been fed innumerable facts about how to conduct the business of banking but was not challenged to ask the “why” questions about how to conduct one’s life. Stevenson continues:

The fellow was hardly in trousers before they whipped him into school; hardly done with school before they smuggled him into an office ... and all this before he has had time so much as to imagine that there may be any other practical course. Drum, drum, drum ... The trick is performed ...; the wild ass’s colt is broken in; and now sits diligently scribing. Thus it is, that out of men, we make bankers.

I don’t know much about the banker of Stevenson’s day. But I am familiar with his counterparts of our day. I see them already “broken in” in college. I see them riding on the East Coast Metroliner. On the Metroliner, I have watched young men and women who not only exhibit all the signs of not knowing the difference between duty and work, but also of not knowing how to leave work behind for genuine leisure. Not that these well-suited men and women don’t change into sports clothes and take vacations. They pursue recreation with a vengeance and make sure to dress in the best recreational attire. They *work* hard at taking a “break” from *work*, at getting good R&R, so that they are ready to go back to *work*. But this is a state of mind that never *leaves* work. These busi-

nessmen and businesswomen, young and old, are overcome by what the philosopher Josef Pieper has called *acedia*, a form of lethargy not to be confused with idleness. (*Acedia*, you will remember, is another name for sloth, traditionally reckoned among the seven capital sins.) At the bottom of *acedia*'s pit is the dragon of despair and anxiousness that renders its captives unable to be alone with themselves. In other words, the lethargy of *acedia* is a loss of the capacity to be with oneself and to live reflectively rather than reflexively. Ironically, this incapacitation is manifested as unceasing restlessness and a flight from freedom and self to business and work.

One need not follow these businessmen and businesswomen to their beach vacations at the Hamptons or ski weekends in the Poconos to reach this diagnosis. Watch them in their extra-roomy Metroliner seats with no work to do and no one to be with but themselves. Instead of embracing this freedom as true leisure or the opportunity to read a good book, they turn on their cell phones and feverishly dial up anyone they might have the slightest excuse to call.

I have often been tempted to call across the aisle, "Good fellow (or 'Hey, guy,' to be up to date): 'think of the wonderful tales that have been told and will be told, which you will never know' (as Winston Churchill has reminded us). Read Eliot and Auden, Henry James and Graham Greene. They will help you get a grip on the life that is being sapped from you minute by minute by the dragon. I am sorry my colleagues did not assign them to you to read in college or inspire a love for them so that you would return to them often. And I am sorry that they never cultivated within you those habits of reading and reflection that make a person a free and full human being."

The Only Amateur Animal

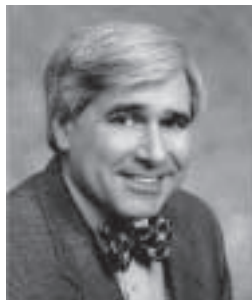
In a masterful defense of liberal learning titled "Our English Syllabus," C. S. Lewis emphasizes that we are distinguished from the rest of God's creatures not by our capacity for work—all animals are workers and professionals at what they do—but that we alone may be amateurs in an infinite variety of activities at our leisure. He writes:

You have noticed, I hope, that man is the only amateur animal; all the others are professionals. They have no leisure and do not desire it. When the cow has finished eating she chews the cud; when she has finished chewing she sleeps; when she has finished sleeping she eats again. She is a ma-

chine for turning grass into calves and milk—in other words, for producing more cows. The lion cannot stop hunting, nor the beaver building dams, nor the bee making honey. When God made the beasts dumb he saved the world from infinite boredom, for if they could speak they would all of them, all day, talk nothing but shop.

Yet I have seen that business education treats young men and women precisely as if they were destined to be at shop and to talk shop all day. Even the liberal arts have been influenced by this slavish and utilitarian view of human nature. We prepare young people to become cows and mules rather than men and women. We expend great energy and dedicate vast sums of money toward directing all of youth's energy into the pursuit of a career. We accord professionalism and careerism a standing that far outshadows learning the human condition and cultivating the moral imagination. My guild has sent out into society far too many souls whose imaginations are starved, who do not know what to do with themselves when they are not at work other than to feed appetites that will never be satisfied and to pursue pleasures that will never bring happiness.

This year one young fellow, a senior who had "escaped the business school," as he put it, to pursue a political science major, came to my office early in the spring to tell me



But it is never too late to become a free man, to become "a full man," as Bacon said, by reading the masters.

— *Vigen Guroian*

that lots of his friends who were graduating as business majors were gloomy and listless because they were leaving Loyola College without jobs. Most had become business majors solely because they were told that they *would* have a job when it was all over. Few really enjoyed their studies. "Now they haven't the foggiest notion of why they spent four years of their life in college or what to do with themselves after graduation," he said. "It's grim, really depressing, to be around them."

But it is never too late to become a free man, to become "a full man," as Bacon said, by reading the masters. Read them, and the desire for perfection will take hold of you, love and not lust will rule your life, confidence in living to-

day and not anxiety for finishing tomorrow's work will punctuate your every day, and you will attract good company.

One evening last week, my son, now a year out of college, got together with three of his high school classmates, another young man and two young women, at a singles' establishment in Baltimore. My son works in the brave new world of computer technologies, in which he does technical tasks, teaches, and writes for computer gaming magazines. I




What to Read?

"If we take literature in the widest sense, so as to include the literature of both knowledge and power, the question 'What is the good of reading what anyone writes?' is very like the question 'What is the good of listening to what anyone says?'," writes C. S. Lewis. "Unless you contain in yourself sources that can supply all the information, entertainment, advice, rebuke, and merriment you want, the answer is obvious." There are myriad such sources. Here are just a few.

Working: Its Meaning and Its Limits (University of Notre Dame Press) is an excellent and eclectic anthology of brief readings edited by Gilbert Meilaender. Witold Rybczynski's *Waiting for the Weekend* (Penguin) tracks leisure's historical development and transformation by modern commercial culture. *Leisure the Basis of Culture* (Liberty Fund) by Josef Pieper is a recognized classic, presenting an apologia for the practice of contemplation in the midst of activity.


So-called leadership studies is a popular genre, but it is better to read actual stories about real leaders. Martin Gilbert's *Churchill: A Life* (Henry Holt) is the best one-volume biography of one of the greatest leaders of the twentieth century; Lord Charnwood's *Abraham Lincoln: A Biography* (Madison Books), of the nineteenth; and David McCullough's *John Adams* (Simon and Schuster), of the eighteenth.

"To ask and then to answer these questions as far as one can, one needs above all a priceless and taxing involvement with truth and beauty," the novelist Mark Helprin writes. "Nowhere do they run together with such complexity and power as in the gracefully written word." Some novels of particular interest to those engaged in the active life include Walker Percy's *Moviegoer*, William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom*, William Shakespeare's *Tempest*, Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamozov*. There are, of course, many others; *Invitation to the Classics* (Baker Book House), edited by Louise Cowan and Os Guinness, forms one indispensable (and lifelong) reading list. 

did not ask what kind of work his friends are doing. What is of much greater importance is that all of them majored in English, so that when this opportunity arrived to spend some leisure time together, all four brought something to share and talk about other than shop or the season finale of *Friends*. They talked about the great authors whom in college they read and learned to love—especially, in this instance, Charles Dickens. This real-life scene, more real than any "real-life" television show, is a microcosm of the birth and rebirth of genuine culture. This is where leisure lends meaning to all the rest of one's life, including work. This is as it should be for that one creature that God made to be an amateur (Latin: *amare, amator*) rather than a professional. We are created to be principally lovers, not laborers.

We have come full circle. Why should businessmen and businesswomen read the classics? The answer is simple: to be free, and in that freedom to grow into fuller, more complete, virtuous, and interesting human beings who share with each other a living and life-giving culture. If Stevenson's imaginary banker friend had understood this, he would not have called business his duty and would have been able to give a quite sufficient explanation as to why he was a banker—such as to earn an adequate income to support a family, or perhaps for another reason.

Vital Moral Maps of This World

Great literature, whether it is history, biography, humane letters, poetry, or fiction, "cannot substitute for native shrewdness and familiarity with worldly wisdom, but it can [and does] supplement and elevate such worldly wisdom," says Russell Kirk wisely. Great literature has the power to ennoble our lives by showing us how and inspiring us to put ourselves in the other person's shoes. It teaches us much about the hopes and motivations of our fellow human beings that our everyday experience may not provide. And it draws for us vital moral maps of this world with its exemplary stories of evil and good character tested and forged in the furnace of the human comedy. The result ought to be "the cultivation," as Kirk says, "of tastes ... [and] disciplines ... that enable the pleasures of humane consciousness to make their way naturally and gracefully into even the busiest career." In his estimate and also mine, this should lead not only to greater longevity, but, more importantly, to a life better lived. 

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George Orwell: A Study in Trans-Political Truth-Speaking

Michael R. Stevens

No writer of the twentieth century has touched popular political sensibilities with as broad an effect as George Orwell. There is enduring interest in his two antitotalitarian novels, *Animal Farm* and *1984*, which together set forth a sort of intellectual prophetic ground for the Cold War that Orwell only just glimpsed, dying as he did in 1950 of tuberculosis. But the popularity of these novels has tended to mask the rich variety and clarity of Orwell's other writings, especially the journalism and essays wherein he builds his case for a politics of conscience, a strange brand of socialism that criticized communist deceit just as readily as capitalist malaise and that had, at its center, a defense of the integrity of language. His is a voice that, if we listen closely, has much to teach us about the urgency of speaking the truth and the necessity of devotion to justice in a world gone awry. In his relentless defense of the economically and politically oppressed (and he sees not only people but language itself threatened), he has provided us with the last century's salient model for intellectual honesty.

The general conservative take on Orwell is that he is a valuable, if limited, prophet, having offered up a startlingly shrewd exposure of Stalin's maniac state in *Animal Farm* (the publication of which was prevented until 1946 so as not to offend Britain's wartime alliance with Russia) and having suggested the darkness of a future haunted by totalitarian governance in *1984* (published in 1949 on the eve of Orwell's death). But there is always the rather embarrassing issue that Orwell was an outspoken socialist throughout his entire adult life. Such a fact can be creatively marginalized, but it always remains. Nor can we simply lump Orwell in with the naivete of British socialism between the wars, since *naive* is an adjective that could never be applied to him. Indeed, the hard-bitten clairvoyance with which he viewed the world in his later novels was not a departure from but, rather, a development out of the earlier arguments. We may criticize the end product of his socialism, but it would be difficult to criticize the integrity of the route he took to get there and impossible to criticize the vitality and power with which he expressed his convictions.

Orwell (his given name was Eric Blair, which he dropped

when he began to write) was born in 1903 at his father's outpost in colonial India and was educated at various English prep schools and, finally, at Eton. His ties with the empire continued after Eton, when he returned to serve in the Imperial Indian Police in Burma from 1922–1927. In the fine essay "Shooting an Elephant," Orwell reveals that, during his service there, he had "made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing and the sooner I chucked up my job and got out of it the better." His formative responses against the fabric of British society and its notions of the propriety of class and empire gave Orwell's socialism its practical moorings. More striking, though, even from the start of his writing career, is the sharpness of the prose, the realism that also tells a deeper tale. It is journalism of the highest order. One tends to trust the voice that admits, "afterwards I was very glad that the coolie had been killed; it put me legally in the right and it gave me a sufficient pretext for shooting the elephant," as Orwell concludes unabashedly at the end of the essay. "I often wondered whether any of the others grasped that I had done it solely to avoid looking a fool." If the admission is troubling and callous, it is, at the very least, not the work of an equivocator.

Insights of an Immersion Journalist

For the decade after he left the Imperial Police in 1927 and returned to England, Orwell decided to test the realities of his view of life among the "poor and outcast" of urban Europe, with the undeniable effect of compromising his already frail health. (Signs of tuberculosis had been apparent since childhood, but he was not officially diagnosed until 1947.) In *Down and Out in Paris and London*, published in 1933, Orwell offers a witty and informative account of his sojourn among the impoverished restaurant laborers of Paris and, subsequently, among the wandering tramps of greater London. Though clearly driven more by curiosity and circumstance than altruistic nobility, Orwell begins in this account to formulate his empathetic relationship with the disenfranchised. He observes,

It is altogether curious, your first contact with poverty. You

have thought so much about poverty—it is the thing you have feared all your life, the thing you knew would happen to you sooner or later; and it is so utterly and prosaically different. You thought it would be quite simple; it is extraordinarily complicated. You thought it would be terrible; it is merely squalid and boring. It is the peculiar lowness of poverty that you discover first; the shifts that it puts you to, the complicated meanness, the crust-wiping.

In many ways, *Down and Out* sets the pattern for Orwell's political, as well as stylistic, development. Tangible, at times grimly realistic, and always tinged with human compassion, Orwell's work seems from the beginning to have transcended political ranting and to have pressed forward the indispensable role of public truth-speaking.

In *The Road to Wigan Pier*, Orwell's account of his 1936 investigation of unemployment and the working conditions among the coal-mining people of England's northern industrial regions, the sense of outrage, not only at British capitalism but also at feckless British socialism, emerges most clearly. After building overwhelming documentary evidence that the situation for working-class people in the coal district is untenable, he moves toward a sermonic finale. He laments that "many people who are not repelled by socialism are repelled by socialists," and then tries out his own

PUOM), in which he served for the first half of 1937. Orwell is characteristically candid about the ineptitude of the Republican citizen-armies and the deprivations of the front, but he refers to those few months in the combat line as "a kind of interregnum in my life, quite different from anything that had gone before and perhaps from anything that is to come" and marvels that "I had dropped more or less by chance into the only community of any size in Western Europe where political consciousness and disbelief in capitalism were more normal than their opposites ... where hope was more normal than apathy or cynicism." Ultimately, Orwell's account of the Spanish Civil War holds out Stalinism, rather than capitalism, as the chief enemy of humanity. Here the seeds of Orwell's antitotalitarian understanding were sown, as he witnessed the Soviet "advisors" vilify, then ruthlessly purge, the Spanish socialist ranks. Yet Orwell is not content to criticize the deaf tyrant, when his own people need chastising as well. Hence, it is to England that Orwell offers his final warning in *Homage*, as he mixes nostalgia with shrewd prophecy on the fate of "the huge peaceful wilderness of outer London, the barges on the miry river, the familiar streets, the posters telling of cricket matches and Royal weddings, the men in bowler hats, the pigeons in Trafalgar Square, the red buses, the blue policemen—all sleeping the deep, deep sleep

of England, from which I sometimes fear that we shall never wake till we are jerked out of it by the roar of bombs." One cannot help but recall the realities of the Blitz on London just a few years later and the grim punctuations of narrative in *1984* when the random rocket-bombs drop onto London and ravage without purpose. His lessons in Spain lead to the possibility of speaking a truth that, if not heard and heeded, will at least be registered in the collective psyche of his listeners.

Orwell, if we listen closely, has much to teach us about the urgency of speaking the truth and the necessity of devotion to justice in a world gone awry.

— Michael R. Stevens



understanding of socialism, with striking phrasing: "We've got to fight for justice and liberty. And socialism does mean justice and liberty, when the nonsense is stripped off it." He further declares that "the real socialist is one who wishes—not merely conceives it as desirable but actively wishes—to see tyranny overthrown." One senses here that the point is not the ultimate triumph of a particular doctrine or party, but the triumph of human dignity.

Orwell's highest achievement in this sort of "immersion journalism" is found in his account of his participation in the Spanish Civil War, *Homage to Catalonia*. A distinctly religious tone attaches itself to his descriptions of life as a common soldier in the militia of the Spanish socialist party (the

The Audacity of Precise Language

The rich imagery of Orwell's eulogy for England points us, not inadvertently, to the very core of his achievement: the need to preserve the integrity of language, both its primal power and what he elsewhere refers to as its "demotic," public quality. Behind all of his criticisms of political and economic injustice, there lies a troubling sense that the real threat is to human language and, thus, to human reason and the human soul. Certainly, the harrowing implications of Newspeak in *1984* point out this central theme. But Orwell also deals with the threat outright in several of his postwar essays, including two of the most famous—"Politics and the

English Language” and “Why I Write”—and one less known but worthy of close attention, “The Prevention of Literature.” The crisis is simply expressed at the outset of “Politics and the English Language,” when Orwell shows that

A man may take to drink because he feels himself to be a failure, and then fail all the more completely because he drinks. It is rather the same thing that is happening to the English language. It becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts.

In political language, always bursting with catch phrases and slogans, Orwell sees the particular threat that such phrases

will construct your sentences for you—even think your thoughts for you, to a certain extent—and at need they will perform the important service of partially concealing your meaning even from yourself.... A speaker who uses that kind of phraseology has gone some distance toward turning himself into a machine.


The implication of men becoming “machines,” losing their essential humanness through a failure to express thought clearly, serves as Orwell’s darkest forecast, quite illuminating in our technology-obsessed culture.

The manifesto “Why I Write” brings an autobiographical turn to the critique. Orwell elaborates on his theme that all writing is inherently political—“The opinion that art should have nothing to do with politics is itself a political attitude”—and makes an incisive claim about his own work and, by extension, the work of all others who seek to be truth-speakers. “When I sit down to write a book, I do not say to myself, ‘I am going to produce a work of art,’” he reveals. “I write it because there is some lie that I want to expose, some fact to which I want to draw attention, and my initial concern is to get a hearing.” One senses in this bluntness and simplicity of motive something akin to Socrates’ reasoning in starting conversations in the agora at Athens. It might just as well be Orwell insisting upon the point that “opinion” is not a valid substitute for “knowledge.”

The essay “The Prevention of Literature” seems to me one of Orwell’s most eloquent articulations of his essential belief in decency. It is ostensibly a response to a set of speeches that collectively struck Orwell because “moral liberty—the liberty to discuss sex questions frankly in print—seemed to be generally approved, but political liberty was not mentioned.” This reflection leads to a general lament on the acceptance of lying and suppression of intellectual liberty in the modern state, and though the USSR receives much of the censure, Orwell is typically expansive with his criticism. He puts the onus fully upon intellectuals to stand their

ground, but he seems pessimistic regarding whether intellectuals are up to the task, since his standards are very high: “To write in plain, vigorous language one has to think fearlessly, and if one thinks fearlessly one cannot be politically orthodox.” The situation of the contemporary American academy comes to mind in his lament that “the direct, conscious attack on intellectual decency comes from the intellectuals themselves.” The public’s apathy toward such matters is equally troubling, because “they do not see that any attack on intellectual liberty, and on the concept of objective truth, threatens in the long run every department of thought.” Again, we return to the specters that Orwell brought to life in *1984* and *Animal Farm*. The paradox in Big Brother’s primary tenets—“WAR IS PEACE FREEDOM IS SLAVERY IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH”—is less fantastical a deception than we might think, and the leap required to believe the final commandment in *Animal Farm*—“ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS”—doesn’t seem so wide a chasm. The warnings of the later novels are themselves a testament that Orwell did his part to prevent the “prevention of literature.” That his protest has been unheeded, or, rather, left in the realm of allegory would likely not have surprised him. There is no doubt that it would have pained him.

The Integrity of a Courageous Questioner

Perhaps the best question we can ask ourselves about Orwell is not “What did he believe?” but, rather, “What didn’t he believe?” and, further, “What do his critiques reveal to us?” and maybe, finally, “Do we still have ears to hear?” We believe in liberty and justice, we believe in intellectual freedom, we believe in speaking the truth, we even attest to the truths of God’s revelation that Orwell himself could never accept, but do we really know what is at stake if those beliefs are bludgeoned by the manifold forms of oppression that endure in our generation? Orwell’s works serve as a splash of cold water on the face of our intellectual sensibilities. Even if we disagree with his answers, we would do well to attend closely to the integrity and courage of his questions. 

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Founding Faith

Lucas E. Morel

In *On Two Wings: Humble Faith and Common Sense at the American Founding*, Michael Novak amends the customary political history of the American founding to reinstate its religious underpinnings. Where most Americans do well in noting the Enlightenment elements of the American regime, they have been taught almost nothing about the religious—indeed, biblical—influence on the United States’ formation as a nation. Novak applies the corrective.

Author of numerous books dealing with freedom, religion, and business, including *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (1982), Novak situates the “rights talk” of the American founding within “God talk.” By showing how the founders understood rights and liberties to have a transcendent origin, Novak counters the postmodern attempt to hold onto rights without becoming beholden to what the Declaration of Independence calls “the laws of nature and of nature’s God.”

Despite the promise of its title (and subtitle), *On Two Wings* mostly focuses on faith as the neglected wing that gave flight to American independence. The wing of reason or “common sense” needs less attention because of the way in which Lockean rationalism has dominated contemporary discourse on the founding. In fact, Novak gives short shrift to Leo Strauss’s reading of the American founding precisely because of his emphasis upon the recovery of reason as a remedy for historicist interpretations of history.

Freedom within Moral Limits

Much like the American founders themselves, Novak gives a providential reading of the birth of the republic. His argument for a “biblical” or “Hebrew” metaphysics at work in the American founding, likely to be misread as merely reflecting the patriotic biases of a Jewish convert to Catholicism, gains credibility through a multitude of quotations and public actions drawn from the founding era. They demon-

strate the unmistakably religious self-understanding that informed the emerging American republic.

Novak links the founders’ emphasis on religion to a concern that virtue be fostered as a vital attribute of a free people. Without it, freedom would become license and lead to the anarchy that gives rise to tyranny. As John Adams observed, “Our Constitution is made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.” On this note, Novak argues that Adams, more than Thomas Jefferson and James Madison (who are more frequently cited as exemplars of the American founding), is more emblematic of the “national temper.”

But Novak also offers something of an anti-Federalist reading of the founders by reminding the reader that the target of the Bill of Rights was not government in general but the new national government of the 1787 Constitution. The local community plays an instrumental role in cultivating the good morals required of a people who allotted themselves greater freedom of thought and action than any nation in history. Novak argues that “in order to live

in liberty, individuals depend on strong moral communities.” And the early American history he seeks to reclaim shows that state governments allowed for what Novak calls “‘mild’ establishments of religion.”

Of course, the American people eventually withdrew state support for churches and religious education. In practice, the arguments of James Madison and Thomas Jefferson triumphed over those of Patrick Henry. This begs a question not answered sufficiently by *On Two Wings*: To what extent should state or federal governments endorse religion?

Nevertheless, *On Two Wings* returns the discussion of American self-government to its proper moral context. Modern readers of the American founding usually see the public rather than the personal practice of self-government. Novak reminds us of what was obvious to the founding generation:

*On Two Wings: Humble Faith
and Common Sense at the
American Founding*
by Michael Novak

Encounter Books
235 pp. Cloth: \$23.95

Self-government implies self-control. Religion serves a public function by alerting citizens to their need to control themselves by exercising their freedom within moral limits and not simply to any arbitrary end.

Religion's Preeminent Place


Mindful that his thesis and polemical style will invite objections, Novak devotes the last formal chapter to posing and answering ten likely questions arising from his religious account of the American founding. For example: Did the founders convey a personal or deistic concept of God in public utterances? Was the founding view of religion simply utilitarian? How did they define *reason* in political discourse? Does religion add or merely confirm what reason or common sense dictates in civic affairs?

Novak is not alone in recovering religion's influence on the American founding. An excellent and more scholarly treatment of the subject is John G. West's *The Politics of Revelation and Reason: Religion and Civic Life in the New Nation* (1996). But given contemporary quarrels over the role of religion in public life, as seen in recent court cases dealing with the constitutionality of the pledge of allegiance (for

its "under God" clause) and vouchers used for religious schools, recovering the biblical influence on America's founding deserves all the support it can get.

At bottom, Novak hopes to jump start a more extensive and thorough discussion of the principles and practices of

Given contemporary quarrels over the role of religion in public life, recovering the biblical influence on America's founding deserves all the support it can get.

self-government that each generation of Americans must understand in order for the republic to flourish. Here, religion has a preeminent place in the American Founding, and the least that subsequent generations can do is learn how and why it assumed this importance for the Founders. 

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Book News

Love Taking Shape:

Sermons on the Christian Life

Gilbert Meilaender

Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company
xii + 143 pp. Paperback: \$15.00

The tradition of Christian ethics has long held that the heart of human moral action is the double love of God and neighbor. Gilbert Meilaender, one of the preeminent Christian ethicists of our day, roots himself firmly in this tradition, and his past books and essays have been devoted to working out the parameters of this love.

His most recent book, *Love Taking Shape*, displays his ethical thinking in a different, homiletical mode. This collection of sermons is, in his words, "my effort to preach about what I also teach." As he continues, "These sermons are offered, then, as one kind of reflection—in what we may even

call a particular genre—about how love takes shape in the Christian life." For Meilaender, our love for God and for our neighbors cannot be understood fully in the abstract but, rather, must be seen in the concrete and particular shape

of individual lives ordered according to those two loves. In other words, the central ethical question for Christians is, What does a life shaped by love look like?

In pursuit of this answer, Meilaender looks at the significance of the cross and baptism, the Sermon on the Mount, the relation between time and eternity, the Decalogue, and the stages of human life. Among the many good sermons in this book, among the best are those under these last two headings.

In looking at the Ten Commandments, Meilaender—following Karl Barth and, before him, Augustine—strives to see "the promise buried in the command: the promise that God will make of us what he demands of us." Further, Meilaender argues that much of the content of the Decalogue could "be known equally well through the light of reason." As he continues, "In that sense the Decalogue largely recapitulates the natural law." In this manner, the Ten Command-

ments represent, among other things, principles that must be followed in order for a society to flourish.

In his treatment of the Second Table of the Law, Meilaender helpfully introduces the idea that these commandments can be understood in terms of “bonds.” In this way, the command to honor one’s father and mother preserves the family bond. Similarly, the command forbidding adultery preserves the marriage bond; forbidding murder, the life bond; forbidding theft and covetousness, the property bond; and forbidding slander and lying, the speech bond. Such bonds, Meilaender concludes, “are always important in human life” and “any society and culture will have to attend to them.”

Far and away, the series of sermons on the aspects and stages of human life—gathered under the heading “Love Taking Shape in Time”—is Meilaender at his homiletical best. Here, he explores the theological meaning that saturates ordinary human life as it arises in the moments of birth, marriage, death, work, and sleep. In his words, “We may pray

“a new concept of total warfare was born, and alongside it grew other institutions: the secret police, large-scale professional espionage, government propaganda machines, and the faking of supposedly democratic movements, elections, and plebiscites.” In this way, the regime was the prototype, in Johnson’s view, for the bloody tyrannies of the following century. In Johnson’s words, “the totalitarian state of the twentieth century was the ultimate progeny of the Napoleonic reality and myth.” Johnson makes his case forcefully and clearly, while presenting an excellent overview of Napoleon’s notorious career.

The Seven Deadly Sins

Various authors

The Akadine Press

xii + 93 pp. Paperback: \$16.95


The tradition of the seven deadly (or capital) sins, while once a vibrant resource for moral theology, has since unfortunately been neglected. It is good news, then, that the Akadine Press has republished this series of essays, which originally ran in the *London Sunday Times* in the early 1960s. The seven authors—W. H. Auden and Evelyn Waugh among them—each present their sometimes idiosyncratic but always insightful views of the vice under consideration. There are likely more traditional and comprehensive expositions of the seven deadly sins, but few are as delightful reading as this collection is.

Dynamics of World History

Christopher Dawson

ISI Books

500 pp. Paperback: \$16.95

Christopher Dawson has long been recognized for the depth and breadth of his historical insight. According to Dermont Quinn’s introduction, Dawson’s central conviction is that “Christ entered history” and that “He enters it still.” Thus, he continues, “The central insight not only of *Dynamics of World History* but of all Dawson’s works” is that “the logic of history is not suspended by Him but acknowledged in the very act of His becoming historical.” Accordingly, this hefty volume gathers thirty-one of Dawson’s best essays, which together demonstrate his overall understanding of the unfolding of world history in light of his faith. 

“We may pray for all and wish well to all (though, if we are honest, this is hard enough), but we must live and work in particular places with particular people.”

for all and wish well to all (though, if we are honest, this is hard enough), but we must live and work in particular places with particular people.” Meilaender masterfully works out the implications of such particularities and, in so doing, makes good on his promise to preach here what elsewhere he teaches.

In short, these sermons are concise, devotional, and very wise. They engage both our hearts and minds with the crucial question of how love takes shape in time.

Napoleon

Paul Johnson

Viking Press

190 pp. Hardcover: \$19.95

For Paul Johnson, Napoleon was a tyrant, pure and simple, and his new biography (part of the fine “Penguin Lives” series) is a clear account of the origins, nature, and ultimate end of that tyranny. As Johnson describes his biographical project, “It is one of the contentions of this book that Bonaparte was not an ideologue but an opportunist who seized on the accident of the French Revolution to propel himself into supreme power.” Johnson further argues that among the consequences of the Napoleonic regime was that

Choice Brings Peace



The Supreme Court's ruling that it does not violate the First Amendment for parents to use school vouchers to send children to religious schools has set off a firestorm of debate over the establishment clause of the Constitution. For a society that is so overwhelmingly religious, as much now as ever before in American history, we seem to have grave difficulties reaching a balanced view of the relationship between faith and public life.

Those who would immediately dismiss this decision need to think again. In the voucher case, the Court points out that when the state grants a voucher to a child to attend school, the state is directing money to the child, not a religious institution as such. There are numerous uses for the voucher. The child can stay in public school. The parents may decide to send the child to a nonsectarian private school. Or the parents can select from a huge range of religious schools.

Wherever the money ends up, the Court majority argued, it is the parents and the child who make the decision, not the state. In no sense can it be said that the state is displaying favoritism toward any particular religion or even to religion in general. The argument is so obviously correct, one wonders why there was such controversy over it. But of course, we know why: Powerful interest groups, heavily invested in the existing educational structure, are anxious to stop voucher-related educational reforms.


This is where the Supreme Court's voucher decision points the way to resolution. In letting parents make choices concerning the faith content of their child's education, the problem of how and when to pray or acknowledge God falls to the parents and the schools themselves. The state does not have to be involved in any way, and so the conflict and acrimony that have accompanied the relationship between education and religion both vanish.

What needs to change here is the notion that schools are essentially governmental utilities in need of regulation, rather than fundamental institutions of civil society. While government needs to be neutral toward religion, citizens need not be. In allowing parents to choose a school—any school, religious or otherwise—the Supreme Court has recognized the reality that in civil society, the first consideration of most parents is not an abstract deliberation of church and state, but something far more pragmatic: Where can I get the best education for my child?

What needs to change is the notion that schools are governmental utilities.

Parents who choose to send their children to religious schools have been penalized for doing so by having to pay twice for their child's education: once in the form of school taxes and a second time in the tuition they pay to the religious schools themselves.

American culture is, and always has been, de facto, a religious culture. The entire concept of our laws and institutions emerged from religious reflection, and the vast majority of Americans claim that they believe in God. An integral part of society is the fact that this faith moves people to make choices.

It may well be the case that school vouchers are not the best possible way to solve this dilemma, especially if they open the doors to governmental regulation of religious schools. But it strikes me as at least a step in the right direction—toward an educational system that makes no law respecting an establishment of religion, but also does not prohibit the free exercise thereof. 

Rev. Robert A. Sirico is a Roman Catholic priest and president of the Acton Institute.

“Liberty is the essential basis,
the *sine qua non*, of morality.”

—Henry Hazlitt—