RELIGION & LIBERTY

May and June • 2003 A Publication of the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty Volume 13 • Number 3

The Natural Law Is What We Naturally Know

J. Budziszewski *is a Professor of Government and Philosophy at the University of Texas, Austin. His new book* What We Can't Not Know: A Guide *focuses on natural moral knowledge and what happens when we repress it—on what goes wrong individually and culturally when we try to convince ourselves that we do not know what we really do. He is a frequent contributor to* First Things *and winner of a* Christianity Today *book award for his 1997 work* Written on the Heart: The Case for Natural Law. *He is a theologically orthodox Christian of the Anglican communion. With his family, he gathers for worship at St. Luke's on the Lake in Austin, Texas.*

R&L: *The concept of natural law underpins the analysis in your latest book* What We Can't Not Know: A Guide. *What is the natural law?*

Budziszewski: Our subject is called natural *law* because it has the qualities of all law. Law has rightly been defined as an ordinance of reason, for the common good, made by the one who has care of the community, and promulgated. Consider the natural law against murder. It is not an arbitrary whim, but a rule that the mind can grasp as right. It serves not some special interest, but the universal good. Its author has care of the universe, for he (God) created it. And it is not a secret rule, for God has so arranged his creation that every rational being knows about it.

Our subject is called *natural* law because it is built into the design of human nature and woven into the fabric of the normal human mind. Another reason for calling it natural is that we rightly take it to be about what really is—a rule like the prohibition of murder reflects not a mere illusion or projection, but genuine knowledge. It expresses the actual moral character of a certain kind of act.

R&L: *Why is the natural law something that "we can't not know?"*

Budziszewski: Mainly because we have been endowed by God with conscience. I am referring to "deep conscience," which used to be called *synderesis*—the interior witness to the foundational principles of morality. We must distinguish it from "surface conscience," which used to be called *conscientia*—what we derive *from* the foundational principles, whether correctly or incorrectly, whether by means honest or dishonest. Deep conscience can be suppressed and denied, but it can never be erased. Surface conscience, unfortunately, can be erased and distorted in numerous ways—one of several reasons why moral education and discipline remain necessary.

In fact there are at least four ways in which we know the natural law. Deep conscience, the First Witness, is the one primarily responsible for "what we can't not know." The others concern "what we can't help learning." The Second Witness is our recognition of the designedness of things in general, which not only draws our attention to the Designer, but also assures us that the other witnesses are not meaning-

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ful. The Third Witness is the particulars of our own design—for example, the interdependence and complementarity of the sexes. The Fourth Witness is the natural consequences of our behavior. All four work together.

R&L: *What are the promises and perils of advancing a natural-law argument in the context of public policy disputes?*

Budziszewski: The natural-law tradition maintains that the foundational principles of morality are "the same for all, both as to rectitude and as to knowledge"—in other words, they are not only right for everyone, but at some level known to everyone. If this is true, then the task of debate about morality is not so much teaching people what they have no clue about, but bringing to the surface the latent moral knowledge or suppressed moral knowledge that they have already. There is an art to this; people often have strong motives *not* to allow that knowledge to come to the surface, and they may feel defensive. One has to get past evasions and self-deceptions, and it is more difficult to do this in the public square than in private conversation. Even so, certain basic moral knowledge is "down there," and our public statements can make contact with it. When this is done well, the defensiveness of the listeners is disarmed, and they reflect, "Of course. I never thought of that before, but somehow I knew it all along."

R&L: *Do you agree that large sections of the evangelical Protestant community have rejected natural-law ethics? If so, why do you think they have rejected it?*

Budziszewski: Evangelicals ought to believe in the natural law. Many are coming to realize this. However, some say that the only place to find moral truth is in the word of God, and that natural-law tradition denies this. They argue that the natural-law tradition puts much too much confidence in the capacity of fallen man to know the moral truth. They worry that the first people to use the expression "natural law" were the Stoics, who were pagans. Finally, they suspect that the God of natural law is not the God of the Bible, but the God of Deism—a distant Creator who designed the universe, wound it up, set it running, then went away. The answer to the first objection is that the Bible itself testifies to the reality of the natural law; though it does not use the term *natural law*, it alludes to all four of the Witnesses. The answer to the second objection is also biblical. The Apostle Paul did not blame the pagans for not having the truth about God and his moral requirements, but for suppressing and neglecting it. In the Proverbs, the main complaint about "fools" is not that they lack knowledge but that they despise it. As to the third objection, it is true that the first philosophers to use the term *natural law* were pagans, but the biblical testimony to its reality came earlier still. Besides, if God *has* made some things plain to all human beings through the Four Witnesses, should we not have expected some pagan thinkers to have admitted some of them? As to the fourth objection, the God of natural law is not different from the God of scripture—it is an incomplete picture of the same one. Nature proclaims its Creator; scripture tells us who he is. Nature shows us the results of his deeds in creation; scripture tells us the results of his deeds in history. Nature manifests to us his moral requirements; scripture tells us what to do about the fact that we do not measure up to them.

RELIGION & LIBERTY
A Publication of the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty
Volume 13 • Number 3

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The Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty was founded in 1990 to promote a free society characterized by individual liberty and sustained by religious principles. The Institute is supported by donations from foundations, corporations, and individuals and maintains a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status.

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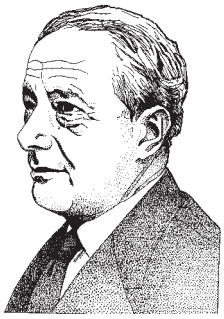
R&L: *What theological concerns do you have, if any, with respect to an ethic that ostensibly relies quite heavily on reason as its foundation?*

Budziszewski: I wish you had not put it that way! Too many people think that acknowledging the claims of reason means denying the claims of revelation. I do not see it that way at all. Think of the matter like this. God has made some things known to all human beings; these are general revelation. He has also made additional things known to the community of faith; these are special revelation. Natural law is about general revelation, not special revelation. However, a *Christian* natural-law thinker will make use of special revelation to *illuminate* general revelation—and will use God-given reasoning powers to understand them both.

IN THE LIBERAL TRADITION

Michael Polanyi (1891–1976)

"In this view of a free society, both its liberties and its servitudes are determined by its striving for self-improvement, which in its turn is determined by the intimations of truths yet to be revealed, calling on men to reveal them."



Michael Polanyi (1891–1976) was the younger brother of the famous Karl Polanyi, one of the staunchest critics historically of Western society and capitalist values. Trained as a physician, Polanyi undertook a career as a chemist. Polanyi, a native of Hungary with a Jewish heritage, immigrated first to Germany, where he proved his brilliance as a scientist. When the Nazis hijacked German politics in 1933, Polanyi ventured to Great Britain. There his interest shifted from physical to social sciences. The concept of spontaneous order, on which F. A. Hayek would later build his theory of cultural evolution, stems partially from Michael Polanyi's writings.

Polanyi anticipated the starting point of Hayek's analysis by opposing the general contemporary view that where order exists somebody must have been consciously ordering it. In intricately complex social systems, an ordering appropriate to the requirements of a permanently changing environment is possible only by leaving sufficient room for self-determination and voluntary, mutual adaptation to the members of these societies. Polanyi calls the orders resulting from the voluntary and mutual adjustments between free individuals "spontaneous" or "polycentric." Maintaining order in a complex society then depends on allowing people to have the freedom "to interact with each other on their own initiative—subject only to laws which uniformly apply to all of them." General restrictions that apply broadly to each member of a society emerge without the directive of a centralized authority. This spontaneous order concept is the fruit of Polanyi's cross of science with the market process.

When Polanyi shifted his focus from scientific investigation to social and philosophical questions, he also became interested in religion's role in society and in a modern individual's life. At the request of his friend J. H. Oldham, a British ecumenical leader, religious intellectual, and editor of the *Christian News Letter*, Polanyi participated in several discussion groups over a sixteen-year period with other British intellectuals preoccupied with the relationship between Christianity and contemporary culture and politics. In his last book, *Meaning*, Polanyi tries to extend the epistemological model that he developed in his magnum opus *Personal Knowledge* to describe the nature of human knowledge found in art, myth, and religion. Using his theory of tacit knowing, Polanyi describes the differences between ordinary perceptual and conceptual knowledge and that which is found in the class of special artifacts available in art and religion. Along side of his insistence for allowing people enough freedom to enable them to order society through their own self-determination, Polanyi stresses the importance of the collective meaning in art, myth, and religion in the contemporary world.

Source: Phil Mullins, "Gospel & Culture: M. Polanyi 1891–1976" (May 12, 2003), www.deepsight.org/articles/polanyi.htm

R&L: *What should business executives know about natural law? How does or should the natural law affect the day-to-day routine of the average business executive?*

Budziszewski: Natural law is moral reality. It affects the day-to-day routine of the average business executive the same way that it affects everyone else. Like others, then, business executives need to know that if they say "I am doing the best I can, but everything is shades of gray," they are lying to themselves. Most of the time the right thing to do is quite plain. Like others, they also need to face up to the fact that some moral rules hold without exception. Figuring out a way to outwit or outrun the usual bad consequences does not make a basic wrong right.

The correlation of liberties and duties may seem nothing more than common sense, but that is what natural law is: Common moral sense, cleansed of evasions, elevated and brought into systematic order. Unfortunately, the contemporary way of thinking about liberty denies common moral sense.

R&L: *What do you consider to be the top threats to engaging in ethical business practices?*

Budziszewski: The moment lying is accepted instead of condemned, it has to be required. Once it comes to be viewed as just another way to win, then in refusing to lie for the party, the company, or the cause, a person is not doing his or her job. Dishonoring truth is perversely regarded as a kind of duty.

R&L: *Are these threats more significant than the threats facing past generations? Why or why not?*

Budziszewski: Yes, I think so. We are passing through an eerie phase of history in which the things that everyone really knows are treated as unheard-of doctrines, a time in which the elements of common decency are themselves attacked as indecent. Nothing quite like this has ever happened before. Although our civilization has passed through quite a few troughs of immorality, never before has vice held the high *moral* ground.

R&L: *What role, if any, does natural law play in determining the substance of the laws that govern a particular society? What happens if natural law is banished from the legal process?*

Budziszewski: Try to think of a law that is not based on a moral idea; you will not be able to do it. The law requiring taxes is based on the moral idea that people should be made to pay for the benefits that they receive. The law punishing violations of contract is based on the moral idea that people should keep their promises. The law punishing murder is based on the moral ideas that innocent blood should not be shed, that private individuals should not take the law into their own hands, and that individuals should be held responsible for their deeds. If we refuse to allow discussion of morality when making laws, laws will still be based on moral ideas, but they will be more likely to be based on false ones.

R&L: *How does individual liberty function under the natural law?*

Budziszewski: Natural law and natural rights work together. I have a duty not to murder you; you have a right to your life. I have a duty not to steal from you; you have a right to use the property that results from the productive use of your gifts. If we all have a duty to seek God, then we must all have the liberty to seek him.

The correlation of liberties and duties may seem nothing more than common sense, but that is what natural law is: Common moral sense, cleansed of evasions, elevated and brought into systematic order. Unfortunately, the contemporary way of thinking about liberty denies common moral sense. For example in 1992, when the United States Supreme Court declared that "[a]t the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life," it was propounding a universal moral right *not* to recognize the universal moral laws on which all rights depend. Such so-called liberty has infinite breadth but zero depth. A right is a power to make a moral claim upon me. If I could "define" your claims into nonexistence—as the Court said I could "define" the unborn child's—that power would be destroyed, and true liberty would be destroyed along with it.

R&L: *You begin* What We Can't Not Know *with an explicit statement that your point of view is Christian. Why do you explicitly alert the reader to this?*

Budziszewski: I am writing not only for Christians, but also for Jews, and not only for Jews, but for all sorts of theists

and would-be theists. Why then do I explicitly declare that my point of view is Christian? Because it is; I do it for honesty. Even when we speak about the things shared by all, we do so from within traditions that are not shared by all. This fact does not mean that we cannot talk together; it would be more accurate to say that recognizing it is a prerequisite for talking together. So in remarking that the book is Christian I do not mean to exclude non-Christians from the discussion, but to invite them in.

A conceit of contemporary liberal thought is that we have no business raising our voices in the public square unless we abstract ourselves from our traditions, suspend judgment about whether there is a God, and adopt a posture of neutrality among competing ideas of what is good for human beings. This is a facade—a concealed authoritarianism. Neutralism is a method of ramming a particular moral judgment into law without having to go to the trouble of justifying it, all by pretending that it is not a moral judgment.

...the foundational principles of the natural law are not only right for all, but at some level known to all. This means that non-Christians know them too—even atheists. It does not follow from this that belief in God has nothing to do with the matter. The atheist has a conscience; atheists know as well as theists do that they ought not steal, ought not murder, and so on. The problem is that they cling to a worldview that cannot make sense *of this conscience.*

R&L: *Is being Christian a necessary prerequisite to accepting the natural-law argument? Can a secularist ever truly understand the natural law?*

Budziszewski: As I remarked earlier, the foundational principles of the natural law are not only right for all, but at some level known to all. This means that non-Christians know them too—even atheists. It does not follow from this that belief in God has nothing to do with the matter. The atheist has a conscience; atheists know as well as theists do that they ought not steal, ought not murder, and so on. The problem is that they cling to a worldview that *cannot make sense* of this conscience. If there is no moral Lawgiver, how can there be a moral Law? Worse yet, if it is really true that humans are the result of a meaningless and purposeless process that did not have them in mind, then how can our conscience be a Witness at all? It is just an accident; we might just as well have turned out like the guppies, which eat their young. For this and other reasons, I do not think we can be good without God.

R&L: *In* What We Can't Not Know*, you allude to the fact that you did not always subscribe to the natural law or believe in Christianity. What happened to change your mind?*

Budziszewski: That is correct; I denied Christianity, denied God, denied even the distinction between good and evil. What happened to me was what the Gospel of John calls the conviction of sin. I began to experience horror about myself: Not a feeling of guilt or shame or inadequacy—just an overpowering true intuition that my condition was objectively evil. I could not have told why my condition was horrible; I only perceived that it was. It was as though a man were to notice one afternoon that the sky had always been blue, though for years he had considered it red. Augustine argued that although evil is real, it is derivative; the concept of a "pure" evil makes no sense, because the only way to get a bad thing is to take a good thing and ruin it. I had always considered this a neat piece of reasoning with a defective premise. Yes, granted the horrible, there had to exist a wonderful of which the horrible was the perversion—but I did not grant the horrible. Now all that had changed. I had to grant the horrible, because it was right behind my eyes. But as Augustine had perceived, if there was evil then there must also be good. In letting this thought through, my mental censors blundered. I began to realize, not only that my errors had been total, but that they had not been honest errors at all, merely self-deceptions. Anything might be true, even the claims of Jesus Christ, which I had rejected some ten or twelve years earlier. A period of intense reading and searching followed. I cannot recall a moment at which I began to believe, but there came a moment of realization that I had believed for some time, without noticing.

The Possibility of Economic and Religious Liberties in Postwar Iraq

Richard C. Bayer

President George W. Bush has stated that the goal of the military campaign is to bring liberty to the people of Iraq. Although he is less specific about exactly which types of liberty, he would surely include economic and religious liberties. The president is a strong supporter of freedom in the marketplace, and he is strongly committed to freedom and vitality in matters of faith and religion. But some might wonder whether it is doable in Iraq, a country notably lacking in Western liberties.

The Iraqi population is about seventy-five percent Arab. Kurds, who live in northern Iraq, constitute about fifteen to twenty percent of the population. Smaller groups include Turkmens and Yazidis. In the rural areas of the country many of the people still live in tribal communities, leading a nomadic or semi-nomadic existence. There are about twenty-two million people in all, and ninety-seven percent of them are Muslim: Sunni Muslim in the north and Shiite elsewhere. The main Iraqi export is petroleum. Under these conditions, can free markets and Islam really coexist and work together in Iraq? Can Islam provide the moral-cultural (religious) underpinnings for democratic capitalism? Can the needed climate of toleration and peace take root? I do not purport to have definite answers, which only time can give us, but I hope to shed some light on these particular questions.

Calvinism Not Required

For illumination on questions about markets and their religious underpinnings, one can do no better than begin with Michael Novak. In 1993, Novak wrote *The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: The Free Press)[1] to assist those in Eastern Europe and Latin America, the newest frontiers of democratic capitalism at the time. Now President Bush is opening yet another front for democratic capitalism in the Middle East. This is truly historic.

Novak stated his thesis as follows, drawing on the thoughts of sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920): "Out of the crucible of a hundred-year debate within the Church came a fuller and more satisfying vision of the capitalist ethic than Max Weber's." For Novak, Max Weber was certainly correct in his understanding that capitalism requires certain moral and cultural underpinnings if it is to succeed as a system. However, Weber's two mistakes were, first, to limit these underpinnings to Calvinism and, second, to miss the positive moral aspects of these Calvinist underpinnings. For Novak, Catholicism can serve as a moral-cultural underpinning in Eastern Europe and Latin America. Most importantly for questions about Iraq's future, if Novak is correct in concluding that Calvinism is not a necessary condition, then we are able to consider here whether Islam might also stand in to provide the requisite cultural underpinnings necessary for capitalism to flourish.

The Protestant ethic in the United States of America, which derived largely from Calvinism, promoted honesty, sobriety, self-discipline, diligence, saving, toleration, and planning ahead. This ethic was erected upon the commitment to serve the Lord God Almighty who made and governed the heavens and the earth. Islam today need take no second seat to this American Protestant ethic with respect to its moral code. Sobriety, self-discipline, honesty, and diligence are generally required as Islamic religious duties. Indeed, retribution under Islamic law sometimes seems fantastically harsh (the punishment for stealing can be cutting off the offending limb in some cases). Furthermore, the doctrines of God, creation, humanity, and judgment are adequately similar in both the Calvinistic and Islamic traditions. A strong belief in a God (Allah) who will judge all humankind undergirds Islamic codes. Muslims fear Allah—both in the sense of awe and fright—who is the source of all that is. Hence, creation is "good," and what we do with it is very important. Foremost among God's creation is the human person, deserving of special respect.

The *Koran* as a holy book is unlike the Christian *Bible*. The *Koran* is replete with ethical doctrines whereas the Bible is more narrative. Central to the *Koran* are the Five Pillars of Islam. The First Pillar is to recite the creed that there is no God but God, and Muhammad is His Prophet. The Second Pillar entails praying five times each day while facing Mecca. The Third Pillar requires the giving of alms. The *Koran* specifies that annually two and a half percent of a person's income and wealth should be transferred to the poor. The Fourth

Pillar includes keeping the fast of Ramadan during the ninth month of the Muslim year. Consumption of pork and alcohol, as well as usury, slander, and fraud, are prohibited at any time. The Fifth Pillar prescribes making a pilgrimage at least once to Mecca, if possible. This is the only Pillar with an optional characteristic to it. The closest biblical equivalent to Islam's Five Pillars would probably be the Decalogue, which is hardly an equivalent at all. Additionally, the Decalogue does not occupy a position as central to Christian theology as the Five Pillars do in Islamic theology. Even so, these pillars reinforce rather than undermine the main point here. Calvinists still emphasized a spirituality and ethics that existed not only in a spiritual, supernatural realm, but also here on this earth. Belief had to show in everyday action. Thus both Calvinism and Islam share an emphasis on being accountable through physical action, and the prescribed actions in both traditions are founded in similar conceptions of service to God.

While it is impossible to state definitively whether Islam can provide the moral and cultural underpinnings for a democratic capitalist system in Iraq, this abbreviated analysis offers a couple reasons to be outright hopeful that it can.

Primary Positive Moral Aspect: Reverence For The Human Person

The second point Weber overlooked in his analysis of democratic capitalism was some positive aspects of the system as informed by the American Protestant ethic. The collapse of socialism revealed several facts. The system of democratic capitalism, not socialism, responds to the natural human aspiration to exercise freedom. This is freedom not in a libertarian sense, but in the sense of being guided by a higher (natural) law. Creation, as judged by the impact on the environment, has also been better respected under democratic capitalism. The Eastern Block created an ecological catastrophe, and it has become apparent that the middle class of the Eastern Block fared no better than the poor of the West.

Yet for Novak, from the moral perspective, the primary advantage of capitalism over socialist and traditional political economies is not that it serves liberty better, nor its relative superiority in caring for the environment, nor its demonstrated ability to raise the lot of the poor. Capitalism's primary moral advantage is brought out by John Paul II, who in recent documents speaks most clearly in favor of an anthropologically sound form of capitalism that recognizes the creative potential of active subjects.

As Novak interprets John Paul II in *Centisimus Annus*, the free market is the best system today to give reasonable expression to the anthropological truth that the human person is made in the image of God the Creator. Of course, the market must be appropriately guided, informed, and constrained by political and cultural forces (thereby excluding libertarianism). It is ethically wrong and (as the spectacular collapse of socialism demonstrates) disastrously inexpedient to deny human creativity its appropriate expression. No economic blueprint materializes here, but this is a vision broad enough to include political economies on the left (Sweden for example) and right (such as the United States).

...I am confident that Islam in Iraq offers much promise in its ability to support a democratic capitalist system.

It is unclear if this vision is broad enough to include a postwar Iraq rid of Saddam Hussein. Of course, this depends on the evolution of events in Iraq, but Islam itself need pose no obstacle. When we combine the Islamic doctrines about the holiness of Creation, which was made by Allah, with its understanding of individual human responsibility, then we come close to what Novak has taken from Catholic Social Thought about the importance of the creativity of the human person. Because humans have been created in the likeness and image of God, human activity by its very nature can participate in the activity of God the Creator. This general perspective, a central underpinning for virtuous and successful democratic capitalism, is common to both the Islamic and Calvinistic tradition. While this may be true, we still need to consider whether Islam is inherently radical, opposed to modern ideals of toleration, and ill-equipped to deal with modern processes.

Toleration: Islamic Radicalism, The World Trade Center, and Other Events

The event now succinctly called "nine-eleven" was the worst attack ever on United States soil by a foreign force. More than that, this attack included other countries as well. Among the dead were citizens of Canada, Mexico, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, France, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, Italy, Egypt, Israel, Turkey, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan, China, South Korea, Japan, Indonesia, and Australia. About three thousand people were killed at the World Trade Center, in-

cluding more than two hundred Muslims.

Why did they do it? Why would anyone kill so many innocent people living and working on American soil? The reason most commonly offered—and I think we can accept it—is that the Muslim terrorists hate Western democracy, as represented most pointedly by the United States of America. They oppose what we consider the great and good things about this country: its freedom, democracy, free markets, and so forth. They have also denounced Western consumerism, sexual license, secularism, greed, and materialism. Whatever their reasons, their actions are a horrible offense against all humanity.

Fortunately, this highly radical form of Islam does not represent the faith of most Muslims. Anwar Sadat, president of Egypt in the 1970s and a devout Muslim man of peace, comes to mind. He was *Time* magazine man of the year in 1977 and winner of the Nobel peace prize in 1978 (he gave the money to the poor over the objections of his wife!). Sadat, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, and President Carter signed the Camp David peace agreement on March 26, 1979. What a breathtaking sight that was: the most prominent political representatives of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity together signing a peace agreement.

In 1996 Madame Jehan Sadat, Sadat's widow, described her husband and Islam this way:

> Islam has been judged by images ever since some (radical) Iranian students held American diplomats hostage. Yet Islam is a religion based upon peace, love, and compassion. A religion that abhors violence and killing; upholding the sanctity of life is an obligation of all Muslims. Forgiveness for personal injuries is enjoined. Therefore, revenge and blood feuding are serious sins. And killing is one of the greatest sins. My husband was a devout Muslim who followed the teaching of Islam and lived by the words of the prophet Mohammed. One point I wish to stress is that Islam is not just a religion as religion is commonly understood in the West. It is a total way of life encompassing the entirety of man's existence; not separating the spiritual from the material, the religious from the secular. It is a divine system governing man's life by setting the rules and the standards for living.[2]

Hence it should be clear that Muslim terrorists who kill and maim people are no more representative of Islam than those involved in the Spanish Inquisition are representative of Christianity. Islam, Judaism, and Christianity all have in common great respect for human dignity. The Muslim population in the United States of America has climbed to 6.5 million, and many of them are the most patriotic of Americans. A profound understanding of this truth can only lead to greater mutual understanding and, one would hope, to a more peaceful world.

I believe that Islam actually is not inherently radical, not opposed to modern ideals of toleration, and not ill-equipped to deal with the modern processes. True, scholars and imams must retrieve the authentic tradition of Islam so that it can effectively manage itself in the modern world. This is an ambitious agenda, but I am confident that Islam in Iraq offers much promise in its ability to support a democratic capitalist system. It is a fascinating possibility for the Middle East as a whole. A democratic capitalist system in an Islamic environment will likely exist somewhat tangentially to the Sweden-United States spectrum given the way in which religion still embraces all of life under Islam. We will surely see a system that understands that freedom must be guided and that freedom cannot be understood as unrestricted license. The moral codes from the religious underpinnings will impinge much more strongly on daily economic activity for the reason given by Madame Jehan Sadat: Religion must encompass the entirety of a human's existence if Islam is to be true to itself. The West might learn much from such a system, because it will surely be less decadent and will become remarkable in its own ways.

But I do not want to appear to be overly optimistic. The vision that I have described cannot happen overnight. Arab and non-Arab, Kurds, Turkmens, Yazidis, Sunni Muslims, and Shiite Muslims will have to live, work, and trade together in peace. They are richly blessed with natural resources (in this case oil), which cannot substitute for a smoothly working economic system, but can be a great asset to it.

1. The work is an important update from a previous work *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*. By his own account, Novak has gained a greater appreciation for the links between capitalism and creativity. He also writes in light of recent "groundbreaking" papal encyclicals that allow a certain reinterpretation of the entire tradition of Catholic Social Thought. Thirdly, the stunning collapse of communism in 1989 offers important data for reflection. For Novak, theology and (market) economics can and should achieve reconciliation because both sciences deal with the questions of incentives, private property, psychology of value, creative potential, and, most especially, human choice. In the case of Catholic Social Thought, Leo XIII began a course in this direction when he recommended the writings of St. Thomas, who achieved a synthesis of church and culture, as an important source for theology.

2. Madame Jehan Sadat, Presentation: "Religion and World Peace: A Muslim's View," Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, New York City, April 18, 1996.

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Conservatism, Socratically and Succinctly

Jana Novak

In his latest book, Dinesh D'Souza offers a glimpse into a one-sided dialogue on both the merits of and the ideas behind conservatism. He does this by publishing his letters to a curious and interested college student named Chris—who is questioning his own politics and starting to form his own beliefs. These letters each cover one specific topic, many of the so-called "hot" ones—for instance, conservative as opposed to liberal, libertarian, political correctness, feminism, education, abortion, and everything in between.

While the book itself is "one sided"—we never see the "young conservative's" letters—the dialogue is not. This is because the book prompts thoughts, opinions, questions, and concerns both by Chris and by the reader. It is, unquestionably, a much more interactive book than it appears at first glance.

As someone who both professionally and personally has a preference for the Socratic method of teaching, this book was intriguing from the outset. It offered a method of teaching about conservatism that I hoped would answer every conceivable question that I could come up with, and, even more important, that someone who was anti-conservative could come up with. Does it succeed? Mostly it does.

Letters to a Young Conservative

by Dinesh D'Souza

Basic Books
224 pp. Paperback: $22.00

D'Souza does his best to leave no stone unturned. In fact, he offers his own background as illustration as well, not fearing to break down the barriers of personal privacy to make the logic of conservatism clear. As he points out, he did not start out as a conservative, which would make sense on the surface considering his own background. In truth, his first year on board he was considered a "moderating influence" on the conservative school paper, the *Dartmouth Review*.

Born in India, D'Souza arrived in the United States in 1978 as a Rotary Exchange student. His host family convinced him to apply to Dartmouth as one of the top schools, and the following fall he found himself about to discover snow. He spent a typical freshman year, planning to major in economics with a goal for further study in business. Since he enjoyed writing, he joined the campus newspaper, the *Dartmouth*. This decision ended up having a major impact on his life, for, toward the end of that first year, the editor came out of the closet—as a conservative. A major schism erupted, and when the editor was fired, he turned around and created a conservative rival, the newborn *Dartmouth Review*, modeled after William F. Buckley's *National Review*.

Having practiced a liberal "go-with-the-flow" of unformed and uninformed opinions, D'Souza notes that his decision to join the *Review* was driven not by politics but by two other reasons: esthetics and intellectualism. He found a "style and a joie de vivre" that he had not found previously associated with conservatism, and he was greatly impressed by the "seriousness" of the conservative students, and their determination to debate the finer points—all night if need be. From this book, it is clear that D'Souza has not forgotten either of those two points himself.

In fact, that is what makes this book such a pleasure. Many people have tried to defend their political views before, both in spoken and in written words, but usually such attempts come off as sanctimonious and dogmatic. Rarely is it enjoyable, or even tolerable, to sit through such a lecture, except when earnestly trying to learn more about the person. In this case, though, D'Souza remembers that this book is ultimately not about him. It is about explaining an idea, a belief system. He remembers the first rule of mentoring—that to be a mentor is not to create a younger version of one's self, but to nurture the young in their own potential. He practices this carefully, employing pragmatism, logic, and a subtle sense of humor. In the end, he ensures that the word *conservative* does not become obscured by the word *I*.

Unfortunately, though, D'Souza's effort is not spotless. In the quest for brevity, he is often too brief. He does not take the time to explain some issues, particularly the complicated, multi-faceted issues, in the kind of detail they re-

quire. For example, he centers most of his argument against feminism on two points: the fact that the bell curve of female IQ is higher and taller than the male IQ bell curve (meaning that there are less female geniuses than male ones—and less idiots as well), and that feminism has turned against work from the home. He writes: "The feminist error was to embrace the value of the workplace as greater than the value of the home. Feminism has endorsed the public sphere as inherently more constitutive of women's worth than the private sphere. Feminists have established as their criterion of success and self-worth an equal representation with men at the top of the career ladder. The consequence of this feminist scale of values is a terrible and unjust devaluation of women who work at home. This has been recognized. Less noticed has been the other equally unfair outcome: Women are now competing with men in a domain where, at the very top level, they are likely to lose" (105–106).

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As a woman who also believes that contemporary feminism has wandered away its original mission, D'Souza's chapter on feminism is unfortunately too short and likely to cause controversy. He does indeed have several good points. He is right that feminism has placed a higher value on careers in the workplace than careers in the home. The fact is that many of the women of my generation recognize this and have fought against it. We believe the key to feminism is empowering women to have the freedom to make any working choice—to work, to work part-time, or to stay at home. Many of the women in my generation do not see the "glass ceiling"; they do not even have one over their heads at all. If I may use anecdotal evidence, all of my female friends who work make more than my male friends of the same age.

But the most important point may be about the IQ bell curve. While IQ tests have shown to accurately predict academic achievement, they do not necessarily predict achievement in the real world. Just look at leadership experience and at D'Souza's own commentary on our former president Ronald Reagan. As D'Souza points out, Reagan himself used to joke about his lack of intellectual prowess. Leadership is simply not something that can be accurately measured and it does not have any true ties to IQ, but leadership is something that has a very critical role to play in the business and political worlds. As a generation of women rises up through the ranks in business and politics, they are already succeeding and even more will succeed on a par with men. Their IQs simply do not matter. Leadership matters. That is why, in an area as complicated as feminism, in which many younger women call themselves "anti-feminists" or simply a new breed of feminists because they do not like to be associated with the old guard, D'Souza should have spent more time making his case before dismissing feminism so quickly.

Despite the occasional misstep resulting from trying to be too brief, this book is a truly valuable resource. I keep it nearby to remind myself of certain well-formulated arguments. It is a treasure of arguments and counter-arguments, including some useful information not only for those who are trying to evaluate conservatism, but also for those who are already conservative and even for those who are annoyed by their conservative cohorts. I know from personal experience that political beliefs are challenged and questioned by others every day, so it is a good idea to keep questioning one's own self in order to stay sharp. After all, someone who knew something about the Socratic method did say that "an unexamined life is not worth living." On the subject of conservatism, I have not found a better and equally succinct set of arguments.

Jana Novak is a senior policy advisor to a United States Senator and co-author of Tell Me Why: A Father Answers His Daughter's Questions About God, *a dialogue about faith.*

A First Amendment Primer

Michael Lee

In 1789, with the War of Independence well behind them and the prodigious task of writing a constitution for the new United States of America also completed, the Founding Fathers turned their attention to the individual rights of the citizenry. Thomas Jefferson, in particular, thought that the constitution was incomplete for failing to address the primary freedom of religion. Following the successful passage of his Bill of Religious Freedom in the Virginia Legislature, he brought the issue before the larger Constitutional Convention. With James Madison's sponsorship, the first of ten amendments were written into the constitution to protect what he called our "indispensable democratic freedoms."

Transaction Publishers has released a new edition of Professor Milton Konvitz's classic history of First Amendment rights under the United States Constitution, *Fundamental Liberties of a Free People*, featuring a new introduction and a new afterward by the author.

Fundamental Liberties of a Free People: Religion, Speech, Press, Assembly

by Milton Ridvas Konvitz

Transaction Publishers
452 pp. Paperback: $29.95

There can be no question that a full understanding of the most basic American liberties and their history is essential to any modern political or legal discussion of human rights. In this 1957 classic, Professor Konvitz does the near impossible: He makes the complexities of historical legal wranglings accessible to a secular readership.

Professor Konvitz, Professor Emeritus of Law and Industrial Relations at Cornell University, examines the legal and historical evolution of our modern freedoms of religion, speech, press, and assembly. *Fundamental Liberties of a Free People* effectively enunciates the hard fought battles over the interpretive nuances of the mere forty-five words that constitute the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

What becomes quickly apparent from Professor Konvitz's elucidations of the component liberties of the First Amendment is how good it is to have so much to haggle over. For instance, in part one, which focuses on freedom of religion, Professor Konvitz is careful to discuss both the principle of separation of church and state ("Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, …") along with the free exercise of religion, the issue so dear to Jefferson and Madison ("… or prohibiting the free exercise thereof").

The importance of this latter clause cannot be overstated, as it explicitly recognizes a human liberty so basic and yet so denied to so many throughout the course of history. Thus, even the "humbug" religion of the "I Am" movement as described in the seminal *Ballard* case of 1945 must be protected. Basic, of course, but magnificent nevertheless because it implicitly recognizes that the law among humans must be subordinate to the relationship of God and humans (although whatever or whoever God may be remains unspecified). Citizens of the United States are therefore fortunate for "in the United States, every church is a free church."

Also in part one is an excellent short history of religious freedoms leading up to the events of the 1789 Constitutional Convention.

In part two, Professor Konvitz turns his attention to the combined freedoms of speech, press, and assembly. Here he examines the fine gradations of understanding when those rights of expression are exercised in public life. Familiar issues such as fighting words, obscenity, and picketing are examined in legal context in their own chapters. The longest chapter is reserved for "The Right to Be Let Alone," which is a compelling discussion of privacy and slander. Never before had I considered this right to be quite so paramount as when I read the opening sentence of this chapter quoting Justice Douglas thus: "The right to be let alone is indeed the beginning of all freedom." Quite a wake up call.

The book's third part addresses the Clear and Present Danger Doctrine's limitations to the freedoms of expression. These necessary abridgements to these freedoms seem to have found first champion in, of all people, Thomas Jefferson. In the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom, Jefferson, its drafter, both established the freedom of religion in Virginia

while simultaneously reserving the right for the officers of civil government to "interfere when principles break out into overt acts against peace and good order." This part dedicates much attention to one seminal case, *Dennis v. the United States* (in which statements made by Communists regarding the overthrow of the government were at issue), and illustrates how even the treasured freedom of speech is not without parameters.

The fundamental thrust of the book is thus very well established. Unfortunately, Professor Konvitz's new introduction and afterward may well raise eyebrows for his blatant display of ideological partisanship. For instance, in the new introduction, he admonishes that "Americans must be vigilant that their constitutional ideology (i.e., of Justice Clarence Thomas and Justice Antonin Scalia) does not win out in the end." It looks like we are off to a bad start.

Professor Konvitz's excoriation of Justice Scalia unfortunately finds place in the concluding sentence of his afterward as well when he decries that "Justice Scalia … may rightly be cited as a classic case of conservative judicial activism, alongside the notorious *Lochner* case of 1905."

The *Lochner* case of 1905 was the one in which the Supreme Court held as unconstitutional the New York Bakeshop Act, which limited the legal hours of labor per day. Professor Konvitz considers it "notorious" because "… the only ones who felt adversely affected were the owners of the bakeries." The only ones? Have property rights become some unimportant category? Professor Konvitz seems to think so.

Elsewhere, a parenthetical aside is directed at Justice James Clark McReynolds, characterizing him as a staunch constitutional conservative and then referring to his "rudeness and his openly shown anti-Semitism." True or not, it is hard not to think that comment unnecessary.

Finally, he makes the exact nuance of his ideology clear in the last paragraph of his introduction by asserting that "a static tradition may satisfy the believers in a static religion, but it has no place in a living constitution." With those final two words of that sentence, Professor Konvitz essentially issues fair warning to those who do not subscribe to the modern definition of a living constitution as one that adapts to a society's ever-changing standards.

In the end, I may disagree with Professor Konvitz over his ideology and certainly over his opinion of Justice Antonin Scalia, but we share a common interest in the promotion of liberty. *Fundamental Liberties of a Free People* effectively reminds us how important the existence of First Amendment rights are to the promotion of personal freedom in the United States. This work is also a necessary reminder of the tremendous legacy bestowed to all citizens of the United States by the Founding Fathers and many others over the course of American history. Such is the enormity of this heritage that liberals of both classical and modern convention cannot fail to appreciate it.

Perhaps the most poignant quote from this book speaks directly to the American moral tradition: "Religious leaders … want the American people to live in a moral and spiritual atmosphere which will give them the wisdom and the will not to be satisfied with mere bigness but to seek greatness." Combined with the totality of arguments enunciated to define the articulated freedoms in the United States, one cannot help but ponder the profound and unique character of liberty in the United States of America.

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Book News

Faith, Freedom, and the Future: Religion in American Political Culture
Charles W. Dunn, Editor
Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
144 pp. Hardcover: $24.95

The atheistic naturalism that prevails in the contemporary academy often obscures from vision and memory the role devout Christians and orthodox Christian faith has played in the formation and development of Western civilization, especially the United States of America. When addressing Christianity at all, most secularist intellectuals publish books that blame Christianity for many of the current societal ills, displaying the shortcomings of the Church in bright neon lights. Rarely do intellectual secularists recognize any of the good effects Christianity has had—and could continue to have—on the development of culture. These secularists leave the impression that Christians have been vinegar and darkness within society rather than salt and light. The collection of essays assembled by editor Charles W. Dunn in *Faith, Freedom, and the Future: Religion in American Political Culture* expresses the common purpose of reminding us that some Christians have indeed been salt and light within culture. These essays look to the past and future, articulating the im-

pact that Christianity has made and must make in scholarship, jurisprudence, and politics to properly preserve the unique freedoms—now taken for granted by many—historically available to citizens of the United States. In his introduction "The Kaleidoscopic Dynamics of Faith and Freedom," Dunn reiterates the reciprocal relationship of freedom and faith in the United States. While freedom from direct government intervention has made the United States an arable field for faith, it has also sown the seeds for the pluralism and materialistic naturalism that tends to isolate people of faith from public discussion. Either in terms of fortifying the underlying process or of strategizing for direct participation, preventing the isolation of the Christian voice from the public policy process is of central concern to those contributing essays to this book. These distinguished contributors are (in the order their essays appear in the book) James H. Billington ("Christianity and History"), Mark A. Noll ("How the Religious Past Frames America's Future"), Marvin Olasky ("Christophobia and the American Future"), Goerge Marsden ("Ideas That Bring Down Empires: An Evangelical Case for Scholarship"), Jean Bethke Elshtain ("When Faith Meets Politics: What Does It Mean to Take Washington, D.C., Seriously?"), Robert P. George ("Reason, Freedom, and the Rule of Law: The Political Significance of Man's Spiritual Powers"), Michael J. Behe ("Darwin's Black Box"), and George Weigel ("And the Wall Came Tumbling Down: Pope John Paul II and the Collapse of Communism"). Behe's "Darwin's Black Box" is the only article that seems somewhat tangental to the collective theme of this volume, because it narrowly critiques Darwinian theory with scant engagement of this issue with religion or public policy. Nevertheless, this collection is an excellent primer for jogging important discussion about how Christians should endeavor to retain or reclaim their position as prominent, competent, and credible critics of the contemporary culture. Only in that position will Christians be able to allay the criticisms of naturalistic secularists while simultaneously keeping their saltiness within contemporary American society.

The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America
By Frank Lambert
Princeton University Press
344 pp. Hardcover: $29.95

The place of religion in society occupies not a small front in the culture war that rages in the United States of America today. On one side of this front, the conservative forces argue that the United States was founded as a Christian Nation. They lament the movement of American society away from its original moorings of orthodox Christian faith and morality. The contemporary liberal camp counters with the conviction that the colonial settlers and statesmen considered religion primarily a private matter. Endorsing the Jeffersonian "wall of separation" between church and state, contemporary liberals conclude that neither the government nor society in America was ever even remotely informed by a Christian worldview. In *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America,* Frank Lambert engages in a noncombative analysis of what the Founding Fathers believed regarding the place of religion within American politics and society. Lambert aligns his analysis with neither the conservative nor liberal agenda, carefully maintaining enough distance from the issues involved to provide a balanced and scholarly analysis of the subject. He suggests that the historical evidence indicates that the Founding Fathers endorsed a free marketplace approach for religion in the New Republic. Lambert tracks through the Colonial Period the efforts of both intolerant Protestant sectarians (particularly those having settled in Massachusetts Bay area) to establish a country governed exclusively by the "one true Christian faith" and the more tolerant Protestant leaders (such as Roger Williams in Rhode Island) who advocated the importance of allowing all different Christian sects the ability to express their faith without facing adverse consequences at the hands of the state. To avoid the political quagmire engulfing this sectarian conflict, the Founding Fathers opted for a country that allowed religion to develop without hindrance or support from the state. In contrast to virtually every other Western country up to that date, religious affiliation became completely voluntary. The Founding Fathers believed that giving the American people choice would force churches to compete for membership and that this competition would ultimately improve the quality of religion. Lambert finds the best ariculation of the Founding Fathers' free market approach to religion in America in—not surprisingly—Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (published in the same year as the Declaration of Independence). Although Lambert does not comment on whether the market model has effected the development of religion in the United States of America for good or ill, *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America* is a responsible, clearly written analysis of the currently disputed mindset of the Founding Fathers regarding the role of religion in American society. Numerous quotations from the personal and professional writings of the Founding Fathers themselves bring a refreshing vitality to Lambert's work while simultaneously dispelling the absolutized assumptions of contemporary conservatives and liberals alike.

How Much Is Enough?: Hungering for God in an Affluent Culture
By Arthur Simon
Brazos Press, Baker Book House Company
192 pp. Paperback: $11.99

How Much is Enough?: Hungering for God in an Affluent Culture by Arthur Simon is not the type of book that would usually find its way into the *Book News* section of *Religion & Liberty*. Simon is a Lutheran pastor who has served in a church in the lower east side of New York City and founded the organization Bread for Life to combat world hunger. Whatever political critique can be made of Simon's endeavors, his heart for those who struggle to provide themselves and their families with the basic necessities of food, clothing, and shelter beats openly across each page of this book. All of us should aspire to Simon's standard of devotion toward meeting all basic human necessities regardless of where people live. Although such an impassioned sense of the mission to "the least of these" certainly has biblical foundations and is indisputably noble, this sense of mission does at times unfairly color Simon's portrayal of the free economy. While Simon perfunctorily dismisses a collectivist system as an inviable means to produce wealth, he still devotes much more of *How Much Is Enough?* to vilifying the American capitalistic economy for its vices than embracing it for its virtues. Nevertheless, those of us who spend a lot of time defending the moral potential of the free market would do well to put our knee jerk objections on hold long enough to skim through this short, easily readable book. Simon is at his best when he reminds us of the grave responsibility we as people of faith have to prevent ourselves from accumulating wealth solely for our own benefit. We should not promote the free market to become richer individually, but to allow prosperity to come to the entire human family. This reminder helps us to remain balanced in our defense of the free market, forcing on us the occasion to discern between legitimate self-interest and immoral selfishness in our business and professional dealings. To temper Simon's apparently begrudging acceptance of Western affluent culture, a good book to read in conjunction with *How Much Is Enough?* is John Schneider's *The Good of Affluence: Seeking God in a Culture of Wealth* published by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company (mentioned in *Book News* in the September/October 2002 issue of *Religion & Liberty*). Combining Simon's impassioned plea to respect our calling to use our wealth responsibly and Schneider's meticulously crafted arguments on the blessings and purpose of wealth can offer insightful guidance on how we should fulfill our moral obligations to the needy while living in a culture of affluence.

In God We Trust?: Religion & American Political Life
Corwin E. Smidt, Editor
Baker Academic, Baker Book House Company
330 pp. Paperback: $24.99

In God We Trust?: Religion & American Political Life contains the essays presented at the Conference of Christians in Political Science held at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on June 17–20, 1999. Virtually all of the contributing scholars are professors at Protestant Christian colleges. That these contributing scholars are used to teaching undergraduate courses is evident in their presentation of complex material in a way that is clear while remaining faithful to the subject matter. Their prose is easy to read and understand. These contributing scholars (in the order their essays appear in the book) are J. Christopher Soper ("Differing Perspectives on Politics among Religious Traditions"), John G. West, Jr. ("Religion and the Constitution"), Stacey Hunter Hecht ("Religion and American Political Culture"), Michelle Donaldson Deardorff ("Religion and the Bill of Rights"), Corwin E. Smidt ("Religion and American Public Opinion"), Daniel J. B. Hofrenning ("Religious Lobbying and American Politics: Religious Faith Meets the Real World of Politics"), Doug Koopman ("Religion and American Political Parties"), Peter Wielhouwer with Thomas Young ("Religion in American Elections and Campaigns"), Jeff Walz ("Religion and the American Presidency"), James L. Guth and Lyman A. Kellstedt ("Religion and Congress"), Frank Guliuzza ("Religion and the Judiciary"), and Stephen V. Monsma ("Christian Commitment and Political Life"). Overall, these essays speak to the indelible impact of the Christian religion on the American political environment, both historically and presently. None of these authors make the untenable claims that Christianity was the sole driving inspiration for the drafters of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, but they also shatter the assumption that these drafters were all thoroughgoing secularists. The emphasis on the enduring impact of the Christian religion on each of the three branches of the United States Federal Government also provides a perspective not readily available in the contemporary academy. In congruence with the concept of a free society regulated by religious faith and morals, West pointedly indicates that "there is plenty of evidence that the founding generation was acutely aware of the need for virtue among the citizenry to make its venture in self-government possible—and of the crucial role played by organized religion in cultivating this virtue" (48). Books like *In God We Trust?* will help us remember what the Founding Fathers knew long ago: Only when freedom and virtue work in synergy is a society a community of human beings rather than a prison of tyrants and serfs.

Liberty Legitimately Constrained

Rev. Robert A. Sirico

We devote *Religion & Liberty* to recognizing and discussing the delta that forms when faith, religion, liberty, economics, and culture come together. Depicting the exact contours of this entire delta is, of course, much too ambitious for this short column. Instead, I would like to consider just one of the tributaries pouring into it, namely, liberty.

Liberty should be understood as something that is not an end in itself. True liberty remains accountable to greater principles of faith and morality. Thus, freedom and moral responsibility wax and wane together. The Founding Founders of the United States of America, who were schooled in ancient and modern history, intended to keep the state in its proper sphere, to prevent it from invading domains better-suited to the church, family, and individual. But they also knew their institutional structure was not sufficient to sustain a free society. In their private correspondence and their public speeches, they frequently remind us that liberty cannot sustain itself outside of a moral framework. Liberty functions only as the freedom to operate in accordance with legitimate authority, namely the moral convictions that result from faith. Lord Acton, the great champion of individual liberty, would agree. The importance of human liberty arises in his writings on history in tandem with the importance of religion as the regulator of liberty. Lord Acton astutely recognized that religion must regulate liberty, because liberty itself provides no sound basis for a society's legal and cultural structures, thus allowing human dignity, the keystone of any just civilization, to become compromised. It is not liberty, but strong faith and moral commitment that preserves human beings from being treated like just another mundane nuisance to be overcome during our daily routine.

The sad thing is that at the end of a libertine's life all he or she will have are options, and these options amount to nothing after death ends the ability to choose any of them.

Tragically, today that commitment is not as strong as it once was. Many misunderstand (at best) or subvert (at worst) the ideal of liberty by advocating that liberty requires the denial of any moral responsibility of and authority over the individual. This error begets libertinism, in which liberty becomes unfettered, an end in itself. People who subscribe to libertinism tend to speak in terms of rights without acknowledging that those rights carry any corresponding obligations. A right unaccompanied by responsibility is not a right at all, but rather it is an entitlement. Libertine entitlement encourages the marginalization of human beings. Under this conception of a right as an entitlement, society tolerates levels of barbarism, of official and unofficial varieties, that would have seemed unthinkable only twenty or thirty years ago. Ignoring this barbarism that allows for the marginalization of entire classes of human beings (such as the poor, the elderly, and the unborn) helps some to find libertinism appealing on the surface. Libertinism allows them to keep all their options open. The sad thing is that at the end of a libertine's life all he or she will have are options, and these options amount to nothing after death ends the ability to choose any of them. Only in understanding liberty as limited by a moral framework, as the proper means to achieve virtue, will human dignity be preserved.

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

In Democracies there is a besetting disposition to make publick opinion stronger than the law. This is the particular form in which tyranny exhibits itself in a popular government; for wherever there is power, there will be found a disposition to abuse it.

—James Fenimore Cooper—