

RELIGION & LIBERTY

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Current Government Policies are Hurting Our Families



Interview: Dr. James Dobson

Dr. James Dobson is founder and president of *Focus on the Family*, a nonprofit organization that produces his nationally syndicated radio program heard daily on more than 1,450 stations. For 14 years he was an Associate Clinical Professor of Pediatrics at the *University of Southern California School of Medicine*, and he served for 17 years on the Attending Staff of *Children's Hospital of Los Angeles* in the Divisions of Child Development and

Medical Genetics. His many bestselling books include *Parenting Isn't for Cowards*, *Hide or Seek*, *Love Must Be Tough*, and *Love for a Lifetime*.

R&L: *Many Christians are not comfortable with Capitalism as an economic system, often blaming the "system" for such things as poverty and social ills. Often this fear of Capitalism leads many to endorse forms of Socialism as more Christian. What are your views concerning Capitalism?*

Dobson: On the world stage of varying economic philosophies, I believe that Capitalism has been shown to be the best economic system for improving the living conditions of mankind. It is not perfect, just like Democracy is not a perfect system of government, but they are by far the best systems given the

nature of man. The main reason for the overwhelming success of Capitalism is that hard work and personal discipline are rewarded in many ways. The weakness of Socialism is that the reward mechanism for hard work is missing. It offers no incentive for creativity and "sweat equity." Communism and Socialism destroy the God-given motivation of man because they penalize creativity and effort. Instead, they reward mediocrity, slovenliness and apathy. By contrast, free-enterprise works hand in hand with human nature.

R&L: *You have been quoted as saying that the family is one of the last surviving institutions of our society.*

Clearly you see the family as being foundational to the social order. Could you elaborate on this for us?

Dobson: As I understand the Scriptures, there are three primary social institutions that are ordained by God: the government, the church and the family. The family is the foundation on which everything else rests. The United States is engaged in a culture war in which the family is under assault.

If we weaken the family, we weaken all of society. The family provides the basis in a culture for social order and stability, and you either have those benefits or you have chaos and anarchy. That is why I feel so strongly that we must support and defend the family against those who would rip it to pieces. If you undermine it, if you tamper with those underpinnings, you threaten the entire superstructure.

R&L: *"Family Values" is now a popular rhetorical theme, but there seems to be little content to it. How do you define the term?*

Dobson: First, I prefer the phrase *traditional family values*. Everybody

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likes to talk about this phrase, especially at election time. Every politician will tell you that he or she is in favor of traditional family values, but very few stop to define it or even tell you what they mean by this phrase. I list four components for understanding traditional family values:

First, is the value of bearing and raising children. I believe that it is worth a man and woman's time to invest themselves in the next generation; to inculcate them, to teach them the principles we hold so strongly, and to introduce them to Jesus Christ. I think that it is not a waste of time to invest yourself in your children's lives. Many today seem to feel that chil-

dren are a drain on our natural resources; that they are part of the over-population problem, and that we really ought to severely limit the number of children we bring into the world. Children are what families are really all about. Not everybody is blessed with them, but I feel that they are a tremendous blessing.

The second component is the permanence of the marital union. It doesn't always work this way, but marriage was intended as a lifetime contract. This is the way it works best. Families are meant to be permanent.

The third component is essential: the sanctity of all human life and the worth of the individual. I don't believe that there are some people who are more valuable in the sight of God than others. We are all endowed by the Creator with certain basic rights. This means we have a level playing field. So, the child who is retarded, the child who won't produce, the child who is not particularly gifted,

If we weaken the family, we weaken all of society. The family provides the basis in a culture for the social order and stability, and you either have those benefits or you have chaos and anarchy.

the blind child, the handicapped—all of us, regardless of the circumstances in which we are born, are of equal worth and should be treated that way. This includes the value of the unborn child. He or she is one of us too. We need to cultivate a true reverence for human life.

Fourth, are the spiritual underpinnings from which everything else flows. For my family it is the Christian understanding of who we are, and why we are here. It is a faith that there is a God of love and that we have certain responsibilities to Him and each other. This wisdom is com-

municated from one generation to the next through the family.

R&L: Does the government have a role in supporting and strengthening traditional family values? In what ways do you see government helping or hurting families today?

Dobson: There is so much that government can do to strengthen or weaken the family. In general, I would say that most current government policies are harming American families.

Our current tax system has a major impact on the family. My mother died not too long ago and while sorting through her things I came across records from

1949. My father was a college professor then, and the family was at the median income. In 1949 my dad paid \$2.49 every two weeks for federal tax.

This low tax burden allowed my mother to stay home and devote all her time to her family. Today, people at the median income will pay anywhere from 20% to 30% of their income, perhaps 40% by the time you add in state taxes, local taxes and other costs. This has a tremendous impact on the family. It has served to undermine the financial stability of the family.

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Second, I would have to point to no-fault divorce laws which came in the early 1970's. The divorce rate has doubled. Families are being split-up at an incredible rate.

Third, there exists a government bias against the stay-at-home mom. I think this has weakened the culture. I have never felt that it is my responsibility to tell mothers that they should not have a career, or that they ought to stay home. I never tried to do that. My concern is that if they want to stay home they simply cannot afford to do so given the

present economic climate. When Congress makes no provision for tax shelters and other incentives for stay-at-home moms, they are showing a bias against those who would chose to do that.

R&L: What about the current welfare system and its impact on the family?

Dobson: I am convinced that the welfare state has been a disaster; that Congress has created a monster. To be honest I don't know exactly

where we ought to go from here. I have done a lot of thinking about it. We have created such a problem that there is no easy way to straighten it out. We can't stop feeding children who come into the world.

Take the recent decision in Congress regarding the provision of daycare. As I understand it, it will force mothers to go work for the minimum wage, and then turn around and pay someone else to care for their children. This doesn't make sense to me. I feel very strongly, as does George Gilder, who has spoken

William Wilberforce 1759-1833

"God has put before me two great objects: the abolition of the slave trade and the reformation of manners."

Born in the great northern seaport of Hull in 1759, William Wilberforce would one day lead the cause for the abolition of slavery in the United Kingdom. The early death of his father forced young William to live with his uncle and aunt who had been influenced by both George Whitefield, an early Evangelical revivalist, and John Newton, an ex-slave trader and Evangelical convert.

Newton became a hero to Wilberforce and instilled in him a desire for Christ and a repulsion of the slave trade. William's mother, alarmed by her son's developing "Methodist leanings" rushed him off to boarding school and Cambridge University in an attempt to undermine his faith. Cambridge would enlighten his mind, but not entirely destroy his faith.

Wilberforce, who from an early age desired a career in politics, entered the House of Commons in 1780, at the age of twenty-one. Although young, he was a good parliamentary speaker with an exceptionally attractive voice that thrilled his listeners. While on a journey to the South of France, William underwent a second conversion, one which enlivened the faith of his youth. He sought out his old friend John Newton. Newton advised him to remain in politics, believing that God might have raised him up for that purpose.

Within two years Wilberforce became convinced that he must take up the cause of the slaves. Outraged at his nation's slave trade, he proposed a bill to Parliament in 1787, to abolish it. It first looked as if the bill would pass with out significant opposition. However, the pro-slavery forces rallied support and defeated Wilberforce's motion. Although dejected, Wilberforce continued his campaign despite the personal sacrifices it involved. Finally in 1807, William witnessed Parliament pass his bill of abolition by 267 votes. His triumph brought him immense prestige and enabled him to pursue other plans for improving the quality and morality of life in Great Britain. His efforts made goodness fashionable once again in England, and laid the foundations for the great moral revival of the Victorian period.

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Source: *Great Leaders of the Christian Church* edited by John D. Woodbridge (Moody Press, 1988).

on the impact of the welfare state, that the Great Society programs have greatly weakened American families. Social liberals have imposed governmental action, supposedly for the best of motives, but it has had a devastating effect.

R&L: Focus on the Family and its subsidiary organization The Family Research Council are becoming more and more active in politics and political issues. In your opinion, what is the theological and scriptural basis for Christian political activism?

The theological basis for Christian political activism is well founded in Scripture. We are called to be salt and light; we are called to influence and confront the culture.

Dobson: We have firm convictions about this issue. Some people have said that we have become more political. That's not really true. We are doing exactly what we were doing ten years ago. We spend about 4% of our budget on all aspects of all public policy involvement. We have been at this a long time. The reason we appear to be more involved now than in the past is due to our increased visibility.

The theological basis for Christian political activism is well founded in Scripture. We are called to be salt and light; we are called to influence and confront the culture. Jesus did not tell us to retreat from the real world, nor did he tell us to hide our light under a bushel.

As Lincoln said, this is a government *of the people, for the people, and by the people*, it is not a tyranny, it is a representative government. If Christians do not engage in the public policy debate and actively engage in the running of their own country, then they default, by their own absence, they yield the political process

to those who hold very different views.

I regret the fact that many Protestant churches have disengaged from the public policy arena. This was most evident at the recent Beijing Conference on Women. Many churches are so afraid of being political that they have allowed the march of human events to go on without them. This is a great mistake.

R&L: The United Nations Conference on Women's Rights held at Beijing has received much attention.

Your organization has sent observers. What is your assessment of the conference?

Dobson: We are extremely concerned about what took place in Beijing. I don't know anytime in history when 185 nations sent 50,000 people to speak about feminist dogma and radically redesigning the way men and women relate to one another. The reports out of Beijing have confirmed our worst fears about it. There was a plan of action that has come out of it that is going to be implemented, apparently by the executive branch of the U.S. government without going through Congress. The conference endorsed many things we oppose—abortion, homosexual rights, and other anti-family measures. We are very grateful to the Vatican for keeping it from being any worse than it was. They fought a valiant battle there.

R&L: Many believe that the decline of our culture is due, to a large degree, to moral decay. In your opin-

ion what measures are necessary to bring about a moral revival?

Dobson: I wish I knew the exact answer to that. I know if a revival comes it will start at the bottom; it cannot be imposed from the top. Spiritual renewal virtually never starts with the government. Ultimately it starts in the hearts of men and women.

I do know that if our people do not begin to re-assert their Judeo-Christian roots and go before God in true repentance and appreciation to Him, I do not see any hope for where we are going as a nation.

It is extremely important for the church to lead in this regard. The church must not lose its nerve. We must not water down the message. Whether it is popular or not, there are certain truths in the Scriptures to which I believe people will respond.

R&L: In addition to the Bible, what sources do you personally rely on to help shape your views on family, politics and social issues?

Dobson: I try to think of myself as a student of history. I draw much of my understanding of human nature and our present culture from past human experience. Throughout human history the exact circumstances may change, but basic human nature remains the same. Indeed, many of the issues we are dealing with today are not unique.

In addition, I am often inspired by the people I come in contact with through my ministry at *Focus on the Family*. Some of the most interesting and insightful Christian leaders have come through this ministry at one time or another. I am stimulated by the thoughts of people like Chuck Colson, Bill Bennet and Gary Bauer. I thought when I started this ministry it would be all giving, but as it turned out, it has been a great help to me personally. A

Marriage and Economic Liberty: A Wedded Fate

David Murray

During the Middle Ages, children born out of wedlock were often abandoned to the church or left to the streets and the kindness of strangers. In Latin they were termed *expositi*—the exposed ones. The skyrocketing rate of illegitimate births in America today, unprecedented in human history, has vastly deepened many of our social problems. The kindness of strangers must still be insisted upon, but is no solution. Government subsidy has proven to be an illusory measure as well.

Our remaining choices seem stark—abortion, or marriage. And here the debate divides. One action sacrifices the child on behalf of the mother's freedom. The other limits the mother's freedom, but saves the child. Here we should examine the matter most carefully. The aborted child is truly dead. We should look more closely at the institution of marriage as the solution to our woes.

Politicians are committed to reforming welfare, since most now perceive the injury that it does to society. But many insist that any attempt to "fix" welfare without confronting illegitimacy is either a fool's errand or a retreat from cold facts. Illegitimate birth to young, unwed females is the driving force behind American social decay. It is the engine that powers a system of reproduction—the reproduction of crime, school failure, drug and sexual abuse, and tenacious poverty. The rejection of marriage impairs the mother's future, the child's well being, and the community's moral and economic fabric.

Fiscal reformers and social critics might well find common ground on this issue. Illegitimacy has many im-

plications—for property and authority, for social capital and community formation, and for moral commitment. The marital union, the premier contract of civil society and the elementary builder of community, is the precise point where two realms coincide and reinforce—the economic sphere of prosperity and the cultural sphere of values. Where better do children encounter citizenship enacted than in marriage?

To deny state aid to unwed mothers, some argue, is to infringe upon a woman's "reproductive freedom." But from the point of view of my discipline, social anthropology, this is an error. Through this error both mother and child are made dependent and vulnerable, and too often condemned to reproduce their tragedy down the generations. A cross-cultural examination of the function of marriage in human societies establishes a hard

worth of the child that is being challenged, but rather the failure of the parents to ensure the child's rights to a social estate in life. And when illegitimacy spreads, the orderliness of society is threatened.

In fact, what appears on the surface to be an expression of moral license—to bear offspring as the result of individual preference—produces in practice a ratchet for the disruption of freedom. Illegitimacy results in the state paternity of every "unit" born, and therefore inclines towards the nationalizing of the most private of industries, human reproduction.

These are the structural features of the practice. But what about the well-being of the parties involved—the human facts of unwed, single parenthood? The dismal outcome may be seen first in economic terms. According to the most recent Census Bureau report on poverty, the median house-

The skyrocketing rate of illegitimate births in America today, unprecedented in human history, has vastly deepened many of our social problems.

fact: illegitimacy makes a mockery of both reproduction and freedom. Illegitimacy produces injustice for those who must live it, and for those expected to subsidize it.

Much confusion exists about the term illegitimacy, which has more than sexual implications. A regime, for instance, may be illegitimate if its power is wielded without the sanction of law. So likewise is reproduction illegitimate if it falls outside the structure of marriage. It is not the human

hold income for women householders with no husband present is \$19,872, making this the majority structural arrangement found in poverty. For black Americans, the situation is worse, with the median single parent household, now 48 percent of all black families, receiving less than \$12,000 per year. Married white family households, in contrast, have a median income of \$45,041, while married black households stand at \$44,987. These data show compelling

evidence that race is not the central factor in poverty.

And what are the social costs? According to data from *The Fatherhood Initiative*, the impact of illegitimacy is staggering. Over 60% of rapists, 72% of adolescent murderers, and 70% of long-term prison inmates grew up without fathers. A full 70% of juveniles in state reform institutions come from single parent homes. Of those who went on to become adult criminals, 80% grew up in single parent families. School performance is likewise affected. Only 4.4% of children who live with both parents are expelled or suspended from school, but 15.5% of children of a single mother will be expelled or suspended.

Most disturbing of all is the striking correlation between single-parent-hood and high American infant mortality, which may be taken as an index of the multiple failures and challenges facing the child of illegitimacy. Recent data show an instructive pattern.

Infant mortality rates are not comparable across racial groups. In 1994, the mortality rate for black infants was 16.5 per 1,000 births, contrasted with 6.9 per 1,000 for whites. The standard response is to note the role of poverty and racism in accounting for this disparity. But they are inadequate as variables. Chinese-American infant mortality, for instance, is only 4.8 per 1,000, demonstrating that racial minority status is not the principle social determinant. Even more striking, however, are poverty statistics, where we find an impact on mortality that is counter-intuitive. And the evidence is increasing that the most important variable affecting a child's well-being is the presence of a marital bond. Harvard demographer Nicholas Eberstadt has shown that the mother, whether black or white, who is well-off economically but unwed, exposes her child to greater risk of early death than does the poor, uneducated, but married mother.

When these facts were presented at the *American Enterprise Institute*, the

conservative economist Herbert Stein expressed doubt. How, he wondered, could the simple matter of having a husband in the house possibly affect so many fundamental facts, especially a child's life-expectancy? The answer lies in understanding what in my discipline is termed the "domestic cycle of reproductive groups"—that is, we must see families across the generations, and not at just one point in time. Domestic groups must be seen as forming, maturing, breaking up, and then reforming in a ceaseless process down the generations. Marriage, a crucial component in the reproduction of domestic groups, is a linchpin in the well-being of the unit formed.

The key to Herbert Stein's puzzle is to grasp the model of social reproduction created by illegitimacy. The single mother, with or without boy-friends and state support, bears children, male and female. For the boys, too readily the absent father is replaced by the authority of the gang,

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and they enter the self-socializing society of the *Lord of the Flies*. For the girls, at earliest nubility comes predation by older males, undeterred by a resident father who would protect her honor and her safety. This reality has received recent corroboration from an *Alan Guttmacher Institute* report on teenage sexuality, which showed that large numbers of teenage pregnancies result from coercive relationships with adult, unwanted male partners.

The girl may likely become pregnant at an early age, for complex motives that rarely involve her "reproductive freedom." At this point several negative chains begin to link. Obviously, her schooling may be dis-

rupted. This has a doubly negative aspect, since mother's education has been shown to be factor in a child's prenatal care and later health. Interrupted schooling also makes the mother less employable, trapping her in poverty and dependency.

For the baby that she now carries, the risks begin to accelerate. Since a young mother is still physically developing, the child may suffer low birth-weight, the strongest factor in early mortality. Being an adolescent, she is unlikely to nurse and nurture the infant sufficiently. Being sexually vulnerable, she may once again bear another child in quick succession. Both birth spacing and breast-feeding feature significantly in infant mortality. Further, being unsupervised, she may abuse drugs and alcohol while carrying the child, and may be inattentive or uninformed concerning infant vaccination or educational enrichment. Finally, the burden of being solitary produces exhaustion and frustration, which may strain emotional ties.

For the child who survives, there is now a greater risk of mental and physical impairment in later life. For the child of illegitimacy, thus hobbled from the start, the challenge of life is daunting. The illegitimate child is deeply at risk, susceptible to school and employment failure, and the early criminality and alienation they predispose.

What is the link, then, between illegitimacy and infant mortality? It is not that marriage is some magic talisman, but rather that it shapes the behaviors of reproduction across generations. It is the behavior of the young mother that, in the most complete analysis, is the critical variable, more important than race or poverty in the future of the child. What matter most are two things—what she does, and what is done to her by others, at critical moments in her reproductive life. Marriage produces patterns of protection for her and her infant that, while not flawless, are superior to unwed reproduction. Worldwide, millennia

of successful human reproduction at test to this fact.

The moral dimension of the child's life is also affected. Having never learned marital commitment, nor the daily tasks and rewards of husband and wife, the child of illegitimacy acquires no model for their later enactment. They are themselves likely to produce children out of wedlock. Having experienced over the generations an exponential collapse of the legitimate kinship network, households of the illegitimate accumulate no "dowry" of skills and potential with which to contract future stable unions. Thus, the cycle is condemned to repeat, and the pattern begins to colonize the wider society.

With a marriage, however, comes the uniting of families, the sanctioning pressures of in-laws, and the opportunities for jobs and loans and simple succor provided by the network of kinsmen. In fact, the sociologist William Julius Wilson has shown the striking importance of kinship networks in acquiring jobs and economic opportunities, particularly for the underclass.

With marriage comes fathers, who differ in momentous ways from boyfriends. For instance, men who marry are significantly less likely to abuse children or their domestic partners than are boyfriends. No father is perfect, but their job is to discipline and watch over their inheritors, and instruct them by example how to meet life's duties. Married fathers may become, and produce, males invested in the successes and hopes of their sons and daughters.

Boys from these families marry the girls with whom they mate, and girls from these families have husbands when they bear children. Married mothers are commonly more mature and better educated, and, reinforced by female relatives, are generally better able to carry, nourish, and enrich their child.

Males who marry and males who get and keep jobs, which are circum-

stances of clear advantage for child rearing, share a common foundation—they keep commitments. Such men come from common environments—they had fathers who wed their mothers.

and moral, and therefore at the exact intersection of church and state. Several domains meet here in a nexus of sexuality, sacredness, companionship, and economic contract. Through marriage these domains are ordered and

... children from marriages are stronger and healthier, are enmeshed in networks of support and opportunity, and being legitimate — that is, inheritors in law of their parent's identity — receive an estate as they begin their lives.



The result is that children from marriages are stronger and healthier, are enmeshed in networks of support and opportunity, and being legitimate—that is, inheritors in law of their parent's identity—receive an estate as they begin their lives. That estate is both financial, in the form of property and fiscal obligations on the parent's part, and social, in that a "trust fund" of kinship embraces them.

Lastly, their estate is moral, in that children of legitimacy inherit the values and promises of ceremony, commitment, reciprocity and compassion which form the core of civil life. They may in early life learn these patterns and performances, which thereby enable them to enact and reenact commitments in their own experience. With marriage a social engine of destruction is halted, and the cycle of restoration is restarted.

Illegitimacy brings forth children into the welfare state without fathers, without protectors, and without the human web of covenanted public commitment. It is the antithesis of marriage and community, rending our social life, and offering up the child as fodder for predators, criminal and sexual.

Marriage, in contrast, is an institutional arrangement that is both legal

legitimated, as are the children who enter society through this choreographed arrangement. The social patterns found in marriage grow out of preexisting moral feelings of the actors who join. But at the same time, the patterns enacted through this institution harbor and nourish just those moral sentiments which ensure its replication.

We should no longer ignore the lesson of history. In our quest for "reproductive freedom" we dissolved the legal constraints of marriage. In the absence of marriage, many things have unraveled. Economic liberty for the parties involved is the first to be compromised. The moral sentiments of civic life are next. And finally, we should ask, how long will political liberty itself remain intact? Women, and their children, are not more free today than they were under the institution of marriage. They have only traded the apparent constraint of duty for the real shackles of despair. How much longer will we deny that they suffer from exposure?

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Free the Farms

Deanna Dyksterhuis

Most people are taught to believe free markets are a form of social Darwinism; the theory that everyone fights for what they get and only the strongest survive. In our American system of free markets, cooperation is the key. This means voluntary exchanges are made between consenting parties. You can only do something in a market system that other people want. This maximizes the efficiency of resource use. As farmers this means we take care of our land, our animals, our water and our families to produce what consumers want to eat and at a price they are willing to pay. Free markets do work. We have made a successful living as farmers for 33 years doing just that.

We chose as a matter of principle not to participate in any government farm programs. We made that decision years ago and have never regretted it. We have never accepted a subsidy payment (and we do grow wheat) a crop disaster payment (we lost our berry field to frost damage one year) and have spent our own money protecting our riverbottom land from being washed away during winter floods.

One of the agricultural groups to which we belong defines a family farm as “a form of business enterprise in which the entrepreneurial decisions (what shall we produce? how much? for whom?) are made by a family engaged in the production of food, feed, fiber, forest products and/or flora for profit which provides a major source of income and capital for reinvestment”. This is an important distinction compared to

the Five Year Farm Bills that are routinely passed by Congress.

Most people assume all farmers are subsidized by the federal government. Variations of government “solutions” to guarantee farmers “a fair price in the market place” involve only 10 commodities. However, they happen to be the largest and involve the majority of farmers so everyone is thrown into the same barrel. These

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10 commodities include feed grains, wheat, field corn, soybeans, rice, tobacco, sugar, peanuts, cotton and dairy. This means over 200 other crops do not receive direct government support. Family farms growing fruits, vegetables, essential oils, herbs, meats, poultry, grass seed, Christmas trees, flowers, and so forth, are busy taking care of their resources of land, water and labor. They don't have time nor do they think about traveling to Washington to ask for special favors and privileges.

Government programs tend to create far more problems than they “solve”, or, as Ludwig von Mises says: “Government intervention always breeds economic dislocations that necessitate more government

intervention”. For example, the government guarantees dairy farmers a price for their milk. Consequently, stockpiles of milk and cheese during the early 1980's were creating huge storage costs to taxpayers. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) implemented a dairy herd buy-out program to decrease the amount of milk produced. They bought entire dairy herds and sold them for meat in direct competition with livestock producers. This flooded the market; meat prices dropped below the cost of production; and many livestock producers went out of business.

Another example (and there are many!) of this economic dislocation are the target prices government sets for feed grain and wheat farmers. This target price is what “farm policy experts” say is necessary to cover production costs. If market prices drop below the government target price, the government pays the difference in a direct subsidy (cash payment). Instead of cutting back production, these farmers plow and plant every available acre of land. What happened? They produced a surplus. Too much wheat! What to do? The government then created a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) similar to the Soil Bank years ago to take land (which should not and probably would not have been plowed) out of production. The government pays these farmers “rent” for CRP land. This created additional economic dislocations. Many younger farmers looking for land to rent couldn't find it because it was enrolled in this “set-aside”.

Many dairy farmers justify the government guaranteed price for milk they produce is necessary because of the large investment they have in cows and dairy equipment. If this were true, then berry growers, orchardists and vintners would have the same argument. And, in some cases, these growers wait five years before they can harvest a crop. A dairy cow will produce milk the

fortunately, farmers who grow these crops have been “protected” from direct competition for so long they have no understanding of, appreciation for, or confidence in a market economy.

When Jerry and I started farming in 1961, everyone told us we were crazy (in much nicer words of course) and that we would never make it. Neither one of us came from

part of our family. We started with 10 acres of strawberries on rented ground and now own and farm 1500 acres of riverbottom land along the Willamette River. We have grown green beans, carrots, cauliflower, table beets, blackberries, alfalfa, barley, sweet corn, wheat and peppermint for oil. We have made our entire living farming; we have been successful and appreciate the challenge of farming for the market.

We are a minority in the farm community and not popular with those who do participate and stubbornly justify these farm programs. We have decided it is time to speak up. Government payments, no matter how they are justified, are welfare checks. They eliminate the responsibility on the part of the receiver to be efficient, to be accountable, to be flexible and to make the management choices necessary in a market economy. It eliminates the voluntary exchanges between consenting parties. A free market is more chaotic and it is more of a personal risk (we can always fail) but the rewards of self-determination and self-respect are worth it.

Farm families who work together and worship together develop a dignity that is born of honesty, self-respect, determination and hard work. Government programs do not support or encourage these values. Generations of farm families have cared for their land, their crops, their animals and each other. They have accomplished this without the “help” of government farm programs or mandates from well-intentioned, uninformed activist groups. These values founded a nation, guided its growth and, if given a chance, will determine its future. A

Jerry and Deanna Dyksterhuis operate a family farm in Corvallis, Oregon. A shorter version of this article appeared in The Freedom Daily, June, 1995.

Farm families who work together and worship together develop a dignity that is born of honesty, self-respect, determination and hard work. Government programs do not support or encourage these values.

first year. The government does not guarantee these farmers a price for their berries, their fruits and nuts or their grapes. Why continue subsidies for dairy?

One of the crops we grow is an excellent example of market competition. We grow peppermint for oil. We harvest the leaves and stems and distill the oil. We have competition from other areas within Oregon, other states and foreign countries. We compete with artificial flavorings. The price of peppermint oil is not guaranteed by the government. Because price determines supply and demand, the price will vary from \$8.00 to \$20.00 a pound for oil. When prices are low, we produce less; when prices are high, we produce more. The key to our success in growing peppermint for the market (and we have been doing so for 21 years) is QUALITY and our ability to grow above average yields per acre for less cost. As soon as we sell our oil, it is delivered to the buyer and we receive our money. Many fruit, vegetable, seed and specialty crops and livestock are grown the same way.

This would work for dairy, wheat, tobacco, peanuts, and so on. Unfor-

farm families. Jerry's dad worked in the woods and plywood mills in Cottage Grove; my dad was an optician in an *Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat Clinic* in Salem. We didn't have any experience nor were we enrolled in any *ag* courses in school. We did have a strong work ethic. We understood the difference between “spending money” and “working capital” (money that was invested back into the farm). We had an excellent banker (we have always borrowed our money from a commercial bank as opposed to a government lending institution) who gave us sound advice and insisted on a detailed budget. We had good neighbors who gave us lots of help and advice. And, we learned from our mistakes. We decided from the beginning we wanted to be flexible, take advantage of market opportunities and not be locked into a static, government mandated farm program. We raised two children and provided jobs for many other family and friends' children during the summers hoeing weeds, changing irrigation pipe and picking berries. It was an opportunity to teach our children a work ethic, to be responsible, and know they were an important

The Crayfish Syndrome

Ralph R. Reiland

What are the chances for upward mobility for a group of poor, black church people—96% on welfare—in rural Mississippi, the poorest state in the nation?

What's their prospect for economic success if they don't get a dime from the Rockefellers or the Ford Foundation. What if they get no government set-aside contracts, and no assistance from Housing and Urban Development or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission? What if they get nothing from the Fortune 500, and nothing from rich and famous celebrities and athletes?

That was the situation of the Greater Christ Temple in Meridian, Mississippi. The church, started in 1959, initiated its REACH program for economic independence in 1977. It began with peanuts—literally. Church members bought peanuts with their food stamps and resold them in the church basement. Now they own 1,000 head of cattle, a gas station, two motels, three restaurants, two chicken farms, a steel fabricating plant, 4,000 acres of farmland, a housing development, two supermarkets, a hog operation, a construction company, a 55 acre Holyland community, a school, a clinic, a nursery, and two meat processing plants.

"We stopped the 'Crayfish Syndrome'—when you put all the crayfish into a pail, one starts out, and all the others reach up and pull him down," says Bishop Luke Edwards, the pastor of the church. "There's no welfare or food stamps

now. We're saving the federal government \$300,000. Still, blacks come out here and look around and say, 'Some white man must be behind all this.' "

Green Acres is the congregation's new 54 acre housing subdivision in Utaw, Alabama, with 132 homes being built for sale to the public. Heritage Construction, a business owned and operated by congregation members, supplies the heavy equipment—18 wheelers, backhoes, dump trucks. Last year, the church also acquired two motels in Alabama, in Utaw and Livingston, and started chicken farms in Decatur, Missis-

There have been setbacks along the way. "There's no easy road to success," says Edwards. The local government delivers costly mandates and investigations, not subsidies. "The investigations and regulations by the welfare department and the Department of Human Services have forced us spend a tremendous amount of money," says Eleanor Walker, Office Administrator at REACH. "Things like restroom changes and more fire equipment. Some of it seems like harassment."

"A big disappointment," says Walker, "is the tension with some of the leaders in the local NAACP.

What's working in Meridian, Mississippi and Utaw, Alabama is the basic belief that every person is created in the image of God, a bottom line conviction that values both the Ten Commandments and the "3-R's".

issippi and Gainesville, Alabama.

In addition to math and reading, students at the congregation's K-12 school learn how to run a hog farm and operate restaurants. These students regularly outscore the state schools, and the local juvenile courts have ordered 26 kids to enroll this term for a straight dose of rehabilitation. The school's rules aren't complex: no drinking, no smoking, no drugs, no weapons, no TV, and no dating. And it's lights out at 8:30 p.m.—midnight basketball isn't needed here.

We're trying to do something positive here, helping our people, and they make charges of mind control and brainwashing, nothing they could ever prove. There's no gate at Holyland. It's an ideological split. Bishop Edwards believes that self-reliance comes from a conservative approach, self-help, and less dependence on government. The NAACP is totally the opposite."

"We haven't allowed anything to diminish our efforts," says Edwards. "Black people can be just as successful as anyone else, but

our leaders have entrapped us in government handouts. I lived in those neighborhoods. Welfare broke up the families, put the father out of the home, and let another man lay up there all he wanted. Handouts robbed our people, robbed them of self-respect."

As Edwards views it, the bottom line is to focus more on opportunities than on obstacles. "Racism is an excuse. It's a song. No, the playing field isn't even, but we make it even. We proved we can make it in Mississippi, the poorest state in the nation, and Alabama isn't far behind. Think what we can do in New York or Chicago. Look at the Cubans out in the ocean coming here. It is the land of opportunity."

What's working in Meridian, Mississippi and Utaw, Alabama is the basic belief that every person is created in the image of God, a bottom line conviction that values both the Ten Commandments and the "3-R's"—starting with people's spiritual values before their skills, and emphasizing less dependence and more plain business sense. Maybe it's a prescription to reverse the deadly diseases gripping America's inner cities.

A black bishop who doesn't look beyond the poor community itself for salvation, who sees potential business success in the faces of his flock, may seem naively out-of-step. To those watching from the ground, any bird that's out of formation risks being seen as misguided, perhaps even a joke, but maybe it's the rest of the flock that's off track. A

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An American in London

A Review Essay by Stephen M. Krason

This was one of the last books by the late Dr. Russell Kirk, who was perhaps America's foremost intellectual conservative, an eminent scholar in the social sciences and humane letters, and a member of the Board of Advisors of the Society of Catholic Social Scientists. It might be said to be both a defense of the traditional European-American culture so much under attack by intellectuals and activists today, and a summary of the major cultural contributions of Britain to America.

Kirk spends the first few pages defining "culture." Drawing on Dawson, Eliot and others, he concludes that it is a common way of life shaped by common beliefs, something characteristically human which, in its highest sense, involves a commendable pattern of manners and noteworthy aesthetic and intellectual attainment.

Britain influenced the shaping of American culture in four major areas or, as anthropologists and sociologists might say, "folkways": 1) the English language and literature; 2) the rule of law, which resulted in the greatest degree of protection of the individual under law of any country; 3) the tradition and practice of representative government, which took root in the England of medieval times; and 4) mores, or "moral habits and beliefs and conventions and customs, joined to cer-

tain intellectual disciplines." The latter have also been called "habits of the heart," and comprised an ethical heritage for Anglo-American life. Most of the book is devoted to examining each of these aspects of the British contribution. The legal and political heritage, and to a lesser extent, mores were also treated in Kirk's incomparable 1974 book, *The*

Roots of American Order. Kirk's reflections on the language here get substantial treatment in one of his books for the first time, however.

He presents many interesting points, not com-

monly known, about the English language. Most noteworthy are the discussion of its evolution and his argument about why its character made possible so many timeless literary accomplishments and its increased usage throughout the world. Regarding the latter, he says that its great virtues are its simplicity, its ability to easily convey abstract notions, its greater number of words than any other language, and its abundant synonyms. He contends that the language evolved to the point it did because of the high British culture it was a part of.

Most of the book is devoted to examining each of the British contributions. The legal and political heritage to a lesser extent, mores were also treated in Kirk's literature it spawned, is that it "still instructs us

America's British Culture by Russell Kirk

Transaction Publishers,
1993. 122 pp. Cloth: \$29.95

in what it is to be fully human, the reason restraining will and appetite.”

Kirk’s explanation of the common law and how Blackstone was the key figure in its enduring implantation here are largely repeated from *The Roots of American Order*; but his brief discussion of A.V. Dicey’s thinking about the nature of the rule of law is new. Similarly, half of Kirk’s chapter on the heritage of representative government is borrowed from the latter tome, but his discussion of the Burkean notion of representation, American federalism, and the character of American national government institutions are not (although they are not unfamiliar in political science literature). A most striking point is Kirk’s observation, following Edward S. Corwin and Sir Henry Maine, the latter of whom he quotes that the American Founding Fathers viewed the presidential office as a kind of elected kingship with sweeping executive power.

Kirk’s discussion of mores is an elaboration of his discussion in the above volume on Tocqueville’s thought on the subject. Kirk stresses that American mores were shaped by Christianity, and included marital fidelity and the integrity of the family, “high courage” when facing adversity, willingness to sacrifice in the present for the future, an independent spirit but a hospitableness toward newcomers, a “shrewd practical intelligence,” a desire for “fair dealings and commercial efficiency,” and respect for the laws. American mores were buttressed by early American education, which also was fashioned by British culture. The early American colleges all emulated English institutions, with their “aim of developing a class of gentleman leaders, clerical and lay, through the systematic imparting of a measure of wisdom and virtue”—carried out by “close study of certain great writings.”

Kirk closes his book by returning to the present serious challenge to America’s British culture. It presents itself as much in public apathy and indifference as in the assaults of multiculturalists, and its specific manifestations include the secularization of religion, pragmatism in law and politics, theoretical illiteracy and a decline of appreciation for truly great literature, and a corruption of social science. He also attacks today’s multiculturalists as duplicitous, “intellectually puny,” and a sham. As with all his books, however, Kirk ends on a note of hope as he contends that “America’s British culture ... [can] be reinvigorated.” The group that must bear the heaviest burden in this effort are those who are “tolerably educated.” Again taking material from *The Roots*

of *American Order*, he includes both an appendix on what America inherited from the ancient Greeks and Romans and a chronology of events in British and American history that were especially important in shaping our culture.

Kirk will be missed, but it is perhaps through books like this, which undergraduates will here and there discover on a library shelf, that they will become introduced to him and to the truths about the American cultural heritage which he worked so hard to uphold but which their education passes over. A

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Bargaining With The State by Richard A. Epstein

Princeton University Press, 1993. 322 pp. Cloth: \$24.00

Review by Ronald Nash

Richard Epstein, Professor of Law at the University of Chicago, is intrigued in this book by the ways in which important liberties are threatened by legislative actions designed to distribute various benefits and favors to selected groups of people. As Epstein notes, “The conventional wisdom has it that government is subject to extensive limitation when it regulates and none when it contracts” (p.312). But, Epstein warns, this simplistic attitude badly ignores the importance of limiting all of government’s activities. It is just as important to monitor bargaining by the state as it

is the traditional forms of governmental power such as governmental takings, regulation and taxation.

When Epstein talks about “bargaining with the state,” he has in mind instances where the state distributes benefits through contracts, grants, licenses, tax exemptions and access to public property. His central thesis regarding such actions is that “The power to contract and to grant, when lodged in the hands of government may well prove to be as dangerous as the power to take and to regulate. A government that can tax, and hence take, at will should never be totally free in choosing the

parties with whom it contracts and to whom it makes grants. And a government that has any level of monopoly power cannot be trusted to impose whatever conditions it wants on these same parties “ (312). Epstein argues through analyses of specific instances of case-law how the government’s indirect use of its monopolistic power can be as injurious to liberty as its more direct use of such powers of taxation and regulation. Every time individuals can preserve their liberty against the contractual power of government, advantages accrue both to the short-term interest of those individuals and to the long-term welfare of society as a whole.

When the benefits that the state awards to some people come with strings attached, red flags ought to be raised all over the land. Americans need to be more conscious of the ease with which they can be hanged by the strings that so often accompany government benefits.

In the early parts of his book, Epstein lays the necessary conceptual foundation for the legal analysis that follows. His analysis of bargains proceeds in a utilitarian way, since their supposed function is the advancement of some test of social welfare. He submits bargaining to two tests: does the bargain produce benefits for the contracting parties and does it respect the interests of persons who are not parties to the bargain? In these pages, the reader will find interesting treatments of such topics as competition, monopoly, forced exchanges and just compensation. Many readers will regrettably rush through these early philosophical discussions in order to get to Parts Three and Four where he covers such issues as public roads and highways, land use restrictions and the police power, licenses and permits, labor and employment contracts, and the complicated problems that arise from tax exemptions

and unemployment, welfare and educational benefits. His discussions of the dangers implicit in the four types of benefits just identified often touch on issues that will be of interest to religious persons. For example, the infamous *Bob Jones University* case is an instance where government sought control over the in-

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ternal operations of a religious institution by denying the college’s tax-exempt status because its religious convictions led it to reject interracial dating and marriage among its students. A sample of Epstein’s analysis of the Bob Jones case can serve as an illustration of the way he approaches other issues in the second half of his book.

“It is often said,” he writes, “that the general public should not be forced to subsidize institutions like Bob Jones University in their religious beliefs. But the argument has the subsidy claim backwards. Under *Bob Jones*, the University and its supporters are forced to bankroll in part the subsidies provided for other institutions, without receiving any parallel benefits of their own, thereby skewing the relative power of the two sets of institutions from what it would be in the tax-free world “ (251).

When government uses selective grounds like this in matters that impinge on religious beliefs and practice, we see government power at its most dangerous, Epstein contends. In such a context, “it becomes idle to say that the greater power to with-

hold tax exemptions includes the lesser power to condition an exemption on the sacrifice of the prospective recipient’s own religious convictions” (251). Regardless of what people think of Bob Jones’s beliefs and actions in the matter at hand, the University is nonetheless entitled, Epstein contends, to the same degree of constitutional protection as everyone else.

Epstein pursues similar concerns in his treatment of unemployment benefits, considering in the process the cases of a Seventh-Day Adventist who seeks unemployment benefits because he is fired for not working on Saturday and of a native American who loses a job for using peyote in a religious ceremony.

And then there is *Roe V. Wade* that creates the very real possibilities of a clash between the Supreme Court’s mandated right of women to an abortion and the religious convictions of people who believe that governmentally-funded abortions under Medicaid would coerce them into paying for an action that they regard as the murder of an unborn child. Epstein pursues the consequences of *Roe V. Wade* even further when he demonstrates how an outrageously bad law such as this produces equally pernicious repercussions through many subsequent laws.

Epstein’s book is clearly not for everyone. Its target audience is people in the legal profession and others interested in the philosophy of law, especially as reflection about legal philosophy interrelates with moral and religious concerns. But it ought also to be of interest to anyone concerned about the continued aggrandizement of state power. **A**

Dr. Ronald Nash, is Professor of Philosophy at Reformed Theological Seminary-Orlando and the author of *Freedom, Justice and the State* (University Press of America).



Book News



Confusions in Christian Social Ethics

Ronald H. Preston
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994
215 pp. Paper: \$17.00

Ronald H. Preston begins his book, *Confusions in Christian Social Ethics: Problems for Geneva and Rome*, by acknowledging that “there is a certain worldly wisdom” to those who claim that “the Ecumenical Movement” is dead (12). As a remedy for this problem, he offers a “history of the Ecumenical Movement, including the advent of the Roman Catholic Church in it” which leads to an outline of a new synthesis of Christian social ethics based on an invigorated idea of “love-inspired justice”.

Unfortunately, in articulating this ethic, Preston fails to acknowledge fully the moral dimension of the market. For instance, while he rejects the economic statements of the World Council of Churches because of their hostility to the free market, he also attacks the Vatican for not “facing the pertinent questions” liberation theology raises on “the extent to which church structures are not geared towards a preferential option for the poor” (136). But this criticism ignores the Vatican’s argument that liberation theology is a bad way of “doing theology” precisely because liberation theology fails to see the role that the market can play in meeting the needs of the most disadvantaged.

Given Preston’s concern to establish a link between the social ethics espoused by the formal structures of the WCC and the Vatican, it is ironic that those Protestants and Catholics most opposed to such ecumenism have been the very ones working together to meet pressing social needs. Certainly, a common Christian social eth-

ics must continue to be investigated. But perhaps the best way to explore that possibility is not so much through formal pronouncements on justice-love as through the common experience of Christian charity.

Tensions of Order & Freedom

Béla Menczer
with an introduction by Russell Kirk
Transaction Publishers, 1994.
205 pp. Cloth: \$31.00

Béla Menczer’s reissued anthology of 19th century authors—*Tensions of Order and Freedom: Catholic Political Thought, 1789-1848* is noteworthy for its excellent essays and for its introduction written by the late Russell Kirk, who was considered one of the leading lights of American intellectual conservatism.

While only some of the names and events in this anthology may be familiar to Americans, the themes addressed should be well-known to us. Each of the nine authors develops part of Menczer’s introductory theme of the proper relationship between order and freedom. For example, the excerpt from Joseph de Maistre presents an argument familiar to Americans: that natural law—not majority declaration—is the true source of a justice which harmonizes social order and individual dignity.

While this book is an anthology of Catholic political thought, it should be of interest to people of all faiths who are concerned that liberty is being redefined in a way that threatens itself and our social order. As the works of Russell Kirk, Béla Menczer, and the 19th century writers illustrate, we can only be free and virtuous if our freedom is grounded in the truth which transcends history.

Consumer Rites

Leigh Eric Schmidt
Princeton University Press, 1995
363 pp. Cloth: \$24.95

Leigh Eric Schmidt’s book, *Consumer Rites: The Buying and Selling of American Holidays*, meticulously traces the historical rise of the “now taken-for-granted connections in American culture” between commerce and religious holidays such as St. Valentine’s Day, Easter, and Christmas (3).

Schmidt claims that in the 18th and 19th centuries “middle-class women were actively engaged in the reconstruction of celebration in ways that tamed the riotous, carnivalesque, and frequently misogynistic street versions of festival” (10). In effect, American women domesticated religious holidays.

Like “middle-class women”, American merchants saw great value in taking festivals off the street and putting them in the home. They viewed “home-centered festivities” as eliminating the interruption of business (not to mention the vandalism) associated with public festivities, and also as opening up new markets for merchandise (195). Given this more personal environment, merchants set about to create a new market for gifts and cards, “liberally borrowing from various folk traditions as well as freely devising new emblems” such as Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny (222).

Ultimately, Schmidt implies that sacred holidays became commercialized because American religious faith often takes the form of “commodified, middle-class” piety (p. 307). However true this may seem for some, only religion can say what the ultimate ends are that commerce must serve. **A**

– Jeffrey Sikkenga

The Market and the Manger

This November/December issue of *Religion & Liberty* coincides with the celebration of the feast of the Incarnation — Christmas. This holiday season, like every other, we will hear calls to take the commercialism out of Christmas. What are the connections between the market and the manger?

This past year we have witnessed discussions on issues of welfare reform, private charity, and the virtues of free-markets. At the heart of these topics is an incarnational theology — a manner of approach which understands implicitly that Christ became a man and thus redeemed the created order.

The meeting of God and humanity in the incarnation is the beautiful event which marks the beginning of our Lord's earthly life of redemption. Through this redemption, begun on Christmas morning, we come to realize the inherent worth of each human person, regardless of race, creed, gender, or social status.

The denunciations of commerce at Christmas are usually issued by the same people who castigate capitalism year 'round. In doing so they offer a gnosticism; the view that the material world is fundamentally suspect, even evil, and that the possession of material goods, beyond the "essentials", is in itself sinful.

The birth of Christ is the beginning of an eternal embrace which sanctifies all of the created order. The material world is therefore not evil or rank, but is rather the handi-work of God and given over to the stewardship of His creatures made in His likeness and image. A truly free and virtuous society is motivated by the fact that Christ redeemed not only the human race in the abstract, but also all individuals and human projects, including the market.

The incarnation has implications for business.

Jesus understood personally what it was to be in need, to be concerned about where the next meal was coming from, and how to cooperate with others to meet his own needs, as well as the needs of others. Entrepreneurship can be a vocation. Business people have a special role to play in the economy of salvation. They share in the task of furthering the faith when they use their talents in a way consistent with their religion. They have their

own assignment in the mission of the people of God. Everyone has talents, and God wants us to cultivate them and treat them as gifts. If the gift happens to be for business or stock trading or investment banking, its possessor should not be condemned because of his or her trade. In order to attend to the needs of the poor, we must

also recognize the blessing of the freedom to create wealth.

In addition to the creation of wealth, which benefits all of society through the improvements in standards of living, business professionals can also find Christ in the lives of those they serve everyday in the market. We have grown accustomed to looking for Christ in the faces of our family members, loved ones and associates. We need to also see Christ in the lives of those with whom we trade, buy and sell. Christ belongs in the market place, not as a commodity, but as the moral authority for all our economic actions.

There is nothing base or unworthy about market cooperation. The incarnation teaches us to look for, and expect to find, God in all places and things. Is there any reason to doubt that we cannot also find Him in our attempts to make a living and provide for our families? **A**

Rev. Robert A. Sirico, CSP, is President of the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty.

“Whereas it is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor. . . therefore I do recommend and assign Thursday the 26th day of November next to be devoted by the People of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be. That we may then all unite in rendering unto him our sincere and humble thanks. . . for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed, and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful knowledge and in general for all the great and various favors which he hath been pleased to confer upon us.”

—George Washington
Thanksgiving Proclamation
City of New York, October 3,
1789

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