

# RELIGION & LIBERTY

## Educational Freedom a Question of Social Justice



**Brother Bob Smith** is president of Messmer High School, an independent Roman Catholic school participating in Milwaukee's ten-year-old school-choice program. An active proponent of school choice, Br. Smith was appointed president in 1997 after serving as the school's principal for ten years. He has been a member of the Order of Friars Minor-Capuchin since 1979 and is currently stationed at Saint Conrad's Friary in Milwaukee.

**R&L:** What prompted your involvement in educational reform, especially the school-choice movement?

**Smith:** I really became involved in educational reform issues after working as a parole officer and, eventually, as a juvenile detention home chaplain in Detroit in the early 1980s. I found that many of the people who were incarcerated were not only poor and minorities but also, more startling for me, school dropouts. Working with these adults, I saw that over 80 percent had dropped out of high school and were barely literate. In 1985 I was stationed in Milwaukee to complete a graduate degree in educational administration. After learning the dismal statistics about what was happening in our public school system and seeing little response from educational leadership, I decided that I would do whatever I could to help bring relief to parents and kids.

**R&L:** How did you end up providing that relief?

**Smith:** I felt that by becoming an administrator, I was becoming part of the solution. Though I worked at a Roman Catholic school, over 60 percent of our students were not Catholic and were transfer students from public, non-sectarian schools. My goal was to prove that success for urban students was not a "Catholic thing" but an "attitude and expectation thing." We worked with the

same students as the public system did, but with drastically different results. Our graduation rate was high, most of our seniors went on to college, and our daily attendance rate was 97 percent. We showed that the same kids who were wallowing in hopelessness in public high schools were able to succeed here. The fact that the school was located in the central city was a clear sign of hope—that we could see success in the same neighborhoods that the kids lived in.

School choice opened doors for thousands of children in Milwaukee to attend private and religious schools that they and their parents would choose. In short, we were able to provide a lifeline for many who felt that there was no hope and no future.

**R&L:** What is the theological grounding for your position on school choice?

**Smith:** I am a firm believer that the school-choice issue is a

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE** © **Articles:** "Vindicating Their Ancient Rights and Liberties" by John Bolt, and "Letting the World Pass Us By" by Paul Marshall © **Review Essay:** "The Everyday Ethics of Work" by John R. Schneider © **Book Review:** D. Eric Schansberg on *The American Paradox: Spiritual Hunger in an Age of Plenty* © **In the Liberal Tradition:** John Locke © **Column:** "Capitalism Must Seize the High Ground" by Rev. Robert A. Sirico © **Plus Book News.**

justice issue. Throughout the Scriptures, Jesus not only asks but also demands that we take care of the poor. This means we are not only obligated to help in the area of food and shelter but are also compelled to give tools to the poor that will help them live as equals in our society.

I find it somewhat perplexing when people say that the church should not be involved in this issue. My response is, If we do not get involved in this issue—one that directly touches the lives of our future—then which issue should we be choosing?

**R&L:** *Can you offer any examples from your experience at Messmer High that illustrate how school choice advances social justice?*

**Smith:** Part of social justice means becoming a voice for the voiceless. Over the years, we have had many students who wanted to attend colleges—some very selective institutions—but had no alumni friend or parent to open doors for their application. One thing we have been able to do is enlist business leaders and alumni from Messmer to make calls, write letters, and help students get a fair hearing when applying for these schools.

I think another way that school choice has advocated social justice is that many people, including myself, have spo-

ken across the country about the dismal results of the public schools and how the poor and minorities are given dysfunctional academic skills for their future. These challenges are forcing the public to take a closer look at what is happening to the poor and, in many cases, have forced changes in the systems. These changes have made public schools more accountable to the poor, prompting them to make changes in order to provide higher-quality service to people who were previously ignored.

**R&L:** *What is at stake, both ethically and theologically, in the school-choice debate?*

**Smith:** The souls and lives of poor and minority people are at stake. We cannot ignore the fact that, in many cities, over 50 percent of the children in public schools drop out, but more alarming is the fact that the education many receive is far from adequate. These children will become the adults running our cities and states. Those who wake up and realize that they have been given dysfunctional skills will end up in the criminal justice system, the welfare system, or some other social service department.

**R&L:** *In your advocacy of school choice, what have you seen as the flash points of the debate?*

**Smith:** In debating opponents around the country I am appalled that the main things talked about are job security, separation of church and state, and some concocted conspiracy to privatize public education. Almost never do the opponents talk about the hundreds of thousands of children doomed to a life of mediocrity and failure. No ideas are offered, other than “give us more money, and leave us alone.”

**R&L:** *That attitude seems to indicate that the public school establishment is unconcerned about parents’ God-given right to and responsibility for the intellectual, moral, and spiritual education of their children. Do you see it that way?*

**Smith:** Yes. It is clear to me that the public school establishment too often forgets who employs them and what their main purpose is for existence. They forget that the students do not exist for the schools and their comfort but that the schools exist for the children. They forget that even though students live in a poor area or their parents do not pay tuition, the students should not be treated any differently from those who attend private schools. Mostly, they forget that all children are God’s children and that we should have the same high expectations for all kids and give them the same opportunities. I believe that it is a mistake for public schools and

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public school personnel to ignore the importance of a spiritual component to education. This wall of separation that has been constructed is not only poorly intentioned but also, in my opinion, wrong.

**R&L:** *Many opponents of school-choice programs argue that enacting such proposals would dissolve the separation of church and state. How do you respond to such criticisms?*


**Smith:** I do not believe that school choice will affect the separation of church and state. We have myriad examples from around the country that demonstrate how the two can work together without compromising independent principles. The facts that our currency says, “In God We Trust,” that the Congress has a chaplain, and that many state legislatures around the country begin sessions with prayer have not eroded this historical wall. In fact, my greater concern is that we

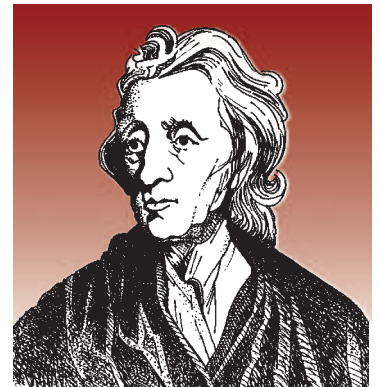
## John Locke (1632–1704)

*“The care of souls cannot belong to the civil magistrate, because his power consists only in outward force; but true and saving religion consists in the inward persuasion of the mind, without which nothing can be acceptable to God.”*

Philosopher John Locke, along with thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes and Rene Descartes, is often blamed by Christian social ethicists for misappropriating the natural law tradition, articulating unbiblical views of human nature, and generally secularizing modern Western political reflection. Even in the face of these serious charges, Locke’s influence on modern views of liberty is profound, and his place in the classical liberal tradition is secure. With such a controversial legacy, his life and thought merit close attention.

Born in Somerset, England, on August 29, 1632, Locke studied at Oxford, eventually receiving a degree in medicine. His medical practice led to his association with Lord Ashley, later the first Earl of Shaftesbury. Locke later retired to France, but when his patron fell into disrepute with the English government, Locke fled to Holland, living in secret and under assumed names. This clandestine life was fateful, for he became involved in the plans to place the silent Dutchman William of Orange on the English throne, in what came to be known as the Glorious Revolution. This watershed moment in English constitutional history generated Locke’s most famous work, *Two Treatises of Government*, which provided a theoretical framework for the revolution’s political events.

In addition to his contributions in *Two Treatises* to the ideas of the rule of law, separation of powers, and limited government, Locke’s arguments in favor of religious toleration, expressed most clearly in his *Letters Concerning Toleration*, likewise have been foundational. As one commentator summarized Locke’s view, “We have a right to religious freedom because the nature of faith itself is contradicted by compulsion.” Locke correctly observed that the mind “cannot be compelled to the belief of anything by outward force,” but laws, ultimately, are upheld by force. However, such coercion is not reconcilable with authentic religious belief. As Locke concludes, “The magistrate’s power extends not to the establishing of any articles of faith, or forms of worship, by the force of his laws. For laws are of no force at all without penalties, and penalties in this case are absolutely impertinent, because they are not proper to convince the mind.” *Letters Concerning Toleration* would come to be, in the American colonies, the primary inspiration for the more wide-reaching religious freedoms (embracing Jews and Roman Catholics, which Locke’s view denied) of the Virginia Declaration of Religious Freedom. 



*Sources:* John Locke: A Letter Concerning Toleration edited by James H. Tully (Hackett Publishing, 1983), and The Triumph of Liberty by Jim Powell (The Free Press, 2000).

have treated the church as if it is alien to the Framers of our Constitution. Anyone who carefully studies what happened during the drafting of the Constitution realizes that most of the Founding Fathers were believers and men of prayer.

**R&L:** *Based on your experience with Messmer High School, how would you respond to the common perception that non-public schools discriminate against minorities and the poor?*

**Smith:** People who have said that non-public schools discriminate against minorities and the poor are either misinformed or lying. The Catholic Church was one of the first groups that intentionally moved into inner cities to offer religious services and education to minorities and the poor. Even today, in cities across the country, the church still clearly maintains a significant presence.

What opponents of non-public schools forget is that the church has saved the country billions of dollars by educating students for far less than public schools and by subsidizing tuition for families who could not otherwise afford it. Expecting families to participate in school fund raising and volunteer work, then, was not a punishment but a way to break the bond of dependence that the public system places on people—a dependence that says, “You cannot make intelligent decisions without us, so we will take care of that for you.”

**R&L:** *The Catholic Church runs the largest system of private schools in the country; consequently, what has been the*

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*reaction of Catholics to the choice program in Milwaukee? What sorts of debates has it prompted within Catholic circles?*

**Smith:** Catholics in Milwaukee have been overwhelmingly supportive of school choice. Most Catholics who have attended Catholic schools know that, even if they paid full tuition, the schools and their benefactors helped subsidize their education. Also, our tradition compels us to reach out to the poor and to be a voice for the voiceless. What has helped the conversation in Milwaukee is the fact that Messmer and other Catholic schools have made it crystal clear that our Catholicity is nonnegotiable and that we will not tolerate interference for any amount of state money. We are who we are!

**R&L:** *On the basis of your experience in Milwaukee, what advice would you give to Christians in other regions who are now advocating greater educational choice?*

**Smith:** I believe that Christians everywhere have an obligation to advocate for more and varied educational options for the poor. The fact that things are well in our particular area does not exempt us from looking out for our other brothers and sisters. Martin Luther King, Jr., said, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” This warning really puts it all together for me.

**R&L:** *Some argue that religious education ill-prepares students for life in a society of diverse values. What is your reply to such a position?*

**Smith:** I respectfully disagree. In many Catholic schools and other schools run by particular faiths, many of the students are from different traditions. That fact alone demonstrates a significant commitment to diversity. But, on a practical level, we also teach students to value people from different faiths, cultures, and economic backgrounds. It is the people who like to neuter everyone and pretend that “all is equal” who do damage and should be treated with suspicion.

**R&L:** *What do you see as the greatest educational challenges facing Christians today? How do you envision religious schools addressing these challenges?*

**Smith:** I believe that the greatest educational challenge facing Christians today is standing up for Christ and modeling him every day in all that we do. Our secular society has pushed people of faith into a defensive mode, which keeps us fighting for our right to exist. In some places, the press is hostile

to religion, and people are, at best, lukewarm to remembering that there is a higher power than themselves. For this reason, it is imperative that the church continues to speak out loudly. We must teach the young that there is a way besides violence, and that way is Christ. There is an obligation for believers to remind leaders in government that they, too, must answer to a higher call and that, no matter how much power they have, it has been given to them from someone greater than all of us. Religious schools have such a great opportunity to lead the country and the world in this important time. Schools and school personnel must accept this challenge and use their classrooms, athletic fields, and chapels to share the Gospel with all who have ears to hear. ☺

# “Vindicating Their Ancient Rights and Liberties”

*John Bolt*

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

*In celebration of the Acton Institute’s tenth anniversary and in the spirit of Lord Acton, Religion & Liberty is publishing a series of essays tracing the history of, as Edmund Burke put it, “this fierce spirit of liberty.” We shall look at several watershed documents from the past thousand years (continuing this issue with the 1689 English Bill of Rights and Act of Toleration), each of which displays one facet of the nature of liberty. We do so to remember our origins and to know our aim. And we do so because, in the words of Winston Churchill, “We must never cease to proclaim in fearless tones the great principles of freedom.” — the Editor*

Conservatives are committed to the political ideal of ordered liberty, constitutionally framed and guaranteed—in other words, to the rule of law in contrast to that of persons or, even, abstract ideals. Even in a constitutional monarchy, the regent’s authority is limited by the law of the land. This principle developed at key historical moments and through accompanying documents that restrained and limited royal absolutism and, thus, enlarged liberty. One of those key moments was the English “Glorious” or “Bloodless” Revolution of 1688, which replaced Stuart King James II with his Dutch nephew and son-in-law Stadholder-King William III of the House of Orange, producing in its wake the 1689 Bill of Rights and Act of Toleration.

Conservatives thus oppose revolutions. Change must be orderly, coming through means that uphold law itself. The notion of a conservative revolution is, then, an oxymoron.

No conservative can, with integrity, advocate a revolutionary strategy that challenges the foundation of civil authority itself, yet even such noted anti-revolutionary conservatives as Edmund Burke and Abraham Kuyper praised the “Revolution” of 1688. What is going on here?

## **One Hundred Years of Controversy**

To understand the events of 1688–89, we need to go back to the first Stuart King, James I, who reigned from 1603–25. James—whose convictions about the divine right of kings, buttressed by the Anglican establishment, were summed up by his insistence on the principle of “no bishop, no king”—was succeeded by his son, Charles I. Needing money for his wars, Charles taxed without parliamentary assent and imposed martial law that enabled him to billet soldiers and to imprison opponents without warrant and trial. In 1628 Charles was presented with Parliament’s Petition of Right, a document that did not challenge his office or authority but called on him to stop encroaching on rights long established in English common law. Though Charles reluctantly accepted the petition, in effect promising not to do these things anymore, tension between the monarchy and Parliament remained. The outcome was a decade-long civil war (1639–49) that introduced into English history and language such colorful terms as *Rump Parliament*, *Roundheads*, *Levellers*, and *Diggers*.

Charles I was beheaded in January 1649, and the military protectorate of Puritan leader Oliver Cromwell took power, initiating a “rule of saints.” On Cromwell’s death, the protectorate collapsed; with the return of Charles II, son of the beheaded king, the Stuart royal house and the Anglican establishment were restored in 1660. However, conflicts about religious freedom and royal power, going back to the Elizabethan settlement of the previous century, were not resolved but only intensified during the next three decades. Specifically, what were the legal status and consequent legal rights of Protestant and Roman Catholic dissenters to the Anglican establishment? One of Charles’s first regal acts (the 1660 Declaration of Breda) was to grant a general pardon to all who claimed it within forty days—a pardon that covered all crimes including those “committed against us or our royal

father.” In the same decree the King declared “a liberty to tender consciences, and that no man shall be disquieted or called in question for differences of opinion in matter of religion, which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom.” Nonetheless, the Corporation Act of 1661 required of all “mayors and other magistrates” an “oath of allegiance and supremacy” and denied all public offices to those who had not “taken the Lord’s Supper, according to the rites of the Church of England.” In addition, two Conventicle Acts (in 1664 and 1670) forbade religious services in homes where five or more people sixteen years of age or over and not of the same family were present. Finally, the Test Act of 1673 (the Popish Recusants Act) added to the allegiance oaths and sacramental practice an explicit denial of transubstantiation. Catholics were thus barred from all public offices.

### Constitutional Crisis and Resolution

The undercurrent in the seventeenth-century English debates about religious freedom and dynastic succession was a fear of royal return to Catholicism. Ever since the tragically short reign of Mary Tudor (1553–58), the Protestant majority in England feared another “popish” monarch. The fear was heightened by broader European anxieties about the threatened hegemony of Catholic France under Louis XIV.

*We cannot overlook the “revolutionary” character of the events of 1688–89. From then on, Parliament was supreme, not the king.*

— John Bolt



Even Catholic Spain allied itself with William of Orange, Europe’s foremost Protestant champion, against the French. In England, Protestant dissenters and Catholics were marginalized from public life because their religion made their loyalty to the crown suspect. Oddly enough, the political fortunes of hyper-Protestant dissenters and their arch-foes were thus linked. This was illustrated clearly when, upon the death of Charles II in 1685, his Catholic brother, James II, assumed the English throne. In 1687 James proclaimed a Declaration of Indulgence that granted full religious liberty to all—Protestants and Catholics alike. Still, Protestant and Parliamentary nervousness grew as England feared that James was paving the way for a Catholic dynasty.

These concerns were not imaginary. Whether seventeenth-century Protestant fears about Catholics and liberty were warranted is not the issue here; our interest is only with the dynastic question. Only two days after James’s daughter Mary wed William of Orange on November 4, 1677, James’s second wife, Mary Beatrice, Duchess of York, gave birth to their first son. He died of smallpox only a month later, leaving Mary first in succession after her father. Upon succeeding to the throne, James disregarded the Test Act and appointed Catholics to public office and as military officers. In a second Declaration of Indulgence in 1688, James added the sinister line that he had dismissed from civil and military service all who refused to knuckle under his policy. He also insisted, to little effect, that the decree be read in all Protestant churches. Seven Anglican bishops who refused were thrown into the Tower on charges of sedition. In addition, as Louis XIV made public his intention to expand French sovereignty northward into Germany, James’s “grand design” for restoring the Catholic faith and “destroying heresy everywhere” led him to pursue an alliance with France to attack Protestant Holland and effectively remove William and Mary from the line of succession. It is also worth recalling that the Edict of Nantes was revoked by Louis in 1685, unleashing a new orgy of Huguenot persecution in France. It was in this climate that England, on June 10, 1688,

received word that James’s Queen, Mary Beatrice, had given birth to another son, the new heir to the throne—or did she? The circumstances of the child’s birth gave rise to many rumors that the baby was not James’s and Mary’s son but a changeling smuggled into the royal residence by Jesuits.

This, in brief, is the context within which seven leading Protestant nobles issued an invitation to William to come over and save England’s state and

church. The invitation was the culmination of protracted secret negotiations between English Protestant leaders and the Prince of Orange. The “invasion” was launched on November 14. With James offering little resistance, preferring flight to fight, William entered London on December 18, and within a month, peace and order were restored. Parliament was recalled, and, on February 6, 1689, it offered the crown to William and Mary jointly. Stuart royal absolutism had come to an end. For the first time Parliament had appointed the king and set as a condition the requirement that the king reign *with* Parliament. A Bill of Rights was drawn up, accepted by William and Mary and adopted by Parliament that same year.

The bill listed James’s numerous violations of English

law and judged that “the said late King James II having abdicated the government, and the throne thereby being vacant” it had been necessary to call together a new parliament with responsibility to act in such a way “that their religion, laws, and liberties might not again be in danger of being subverted.” The first task was to make a declaration “for the vindicating and asserting [of] ancient rights and liberties.” At the heart of the thirteen articles was the denial that royal authority could on its own make or dispense with laws, levy taxes, deny petitions, keep a standing army, abridge free speech, restrict election to Parliament, and limit Parliamentary assemblies, without the express assent of Parliament itself. Then, having been persuaded that William and Mary would fully abide by the terms of this Bill of Rights, Parliament resolved “that William and Mary, prince and princess of Orange, be, and be declared, King and Queen of England, France, and Ireland, and the dominions thereunto belonging.” William and Mary were crowned in Westminster Abbey on April 11, 1689. The revolution was complete.


### **Revolution in England and Abroad**

Or was it really a revolution? Some historians have suggested that the entry of William and Mary on the scene was, in Edmund Burke’s words, “a revolution not made, but prevented.” The course on which James II had so stubbornly set his face, the “grand design” to recapture not only England but all of Europe for the Catholic faith, and the steps he had already undertaken to fulfill this dream, represented a significant and clear abridgment of legal rights that had been won by Englishmen at hard cost, enshrined in royal charters, and enjoyed for a considerable time. Arguably, James himself was the revolutionary, and his actions created the conditions in which a civil war was likely. A good case can be made that the invitation to William and Mary, legitimate claimants to the throne, represented an upholding of constitutional law and not its revolutionary overthrow. Numerous conservative commentators, including Burke and Kuyper, have argued thus.

At the same time, we cannot overlook the “revolutionary” character of the events of 1688–89. From then on, Parliament was supreme, not the king. Though it did not use the language of “contract,” the Bill of Rights clearly established a social and legal compact between the monarchy and “the people.” Sovereignty was finally “to the people,” not as in the abstract democratic-anarchic and bloody ideology of the French Revolution but in constitutionally framed order. It must be noted here that the American colonies, now fully under British control, grew to maturity in the eighteenth century taking the Bill of Rights and its provisions for granted. The American Bill of Rights takes over much of the lan-

guage of its English antecedent, and the roots of the American polity cannot be understood apart from 1688–89.

The American experiment in ordered liberty, however, moved well beyond the settlement of 1689. Nothing underscores this point as clearly as the Act of Toleration that accompanied the Bill of Rights and was passed by Parliament on May 24, 1689. This decree provided full religious freedom for Protestant dissenters and pardoned all who had been penalized by old restrictive laws. Conventicles and other assemblies for worship were permitted, provided the doors were not barred or locked, and provision was made for those reluctant to swear oaths of allegiance, provided they promised loyalty to the crown, professed belief in the Trinity, and acknowledged biblical inspiration. All of this was intended to provide “ease to scrupulous consciences in the exercise of religion” with the goal that such toleration “may be an effectual means to unite their majesties’ Protestant subjects in interest and affection.” The same legal toleration, however, was not granted Catholics. (Historians have observed, however, that the Act of Toleration did nurture a climate of religious freedom that also benefited Catholics.) The 1689 settlement was a major step in the development of religious freedom, but we are still a long ways from the First Amendment in the American Bill of Rights. Dissent was not legally proscribed, but the Anglican church remained established by law. Still, thanks to 1688–89, the British crown never attempted to dictate the consciences of the American colonists, and one hundred years of religious freedom helped make the First Amendment possible, if not likely.

And what of “conservative revolutions”? The events of 1688–89 confirm the conservative bias against revolution. If drastic measures are called for in certain instances of constitutional crisis, it is imperative that such measures fully honor the legal framework and process. To preserve a constitutional order, it is necessary to honor the legal processes that the constitution itself calls for. Thus, the remedy against wicked and unjust rulers is impeachment and not assassination; a conservative does not participate in a coup d’etat. A conservative protest against civil authority should never include actions that could undermine it. Civil authority should be resisted only as Martin Luther King, Jr., did—in the name of law and with a willingness to honor the law by accepting its penalties for disobedience. That attitude is relevant for our day as well, as we face the increasing delegitimation of civil authority in America. 

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# Letting the World Pass Us By

## *Paul Marshall*

Resting is no small matter. It is not simply collapsing when everything else is done. In fact, it is at the heart of our relationship with God, and is a fundamental reflection of our faith. Rest is close to the heart of faith. Under God, we find our ultimate fulfillment not in what we achieve but in freely receiving what God has given.

The Bible certainly teaches the goodness and importance of work. This teaching stands out like a beacon against the ancient degradation of work as a less-than-human activity. Christians need to overcome any slighting of work. But we are strange creatures. Most of us manage to have problems with work and, at the same time, to have problems with rest—usually both at the same time. We not only downplay the place of work in God’s kingdom; we downplay rest as well.

We sometimes forget that though work is a good thing, it is not the only thing, nor even the greatest thing. We are not saved by work any more than we are saved by works. At the heart of the Gospel lies the teaching that we are not saved by our work. Work is not the mediator between God and humankind. It cannot eradicate sin. Of itself, it cannot produce a new creation.

### **Grace Is God’s Gift, Not Work’s Product**

Since our relationship with God is what ultimately shapes our lives and the world itself, we cannot achieve genuine wealth or happiness or security or peace simply through our work. Jesus lavishly praised work, but he also sharply limited it. The parable of the two sons (often called the parable of the “prodigal son”) teaches how we are accepted by God’s love, not by our own diligence or lack thereof (Luke 15:11–32). The parable is about, but not only about, the younger son, the prodigal, who grasped at his inheritance, then wasted it on parties and hookers, and yet was received back with joy by his father. It is also about the older brother. This other son never demanded his inheritance. He had stayed home and faithfully worked, obeyed, and been a dutiful son.

All the thanks he seemed to get for these years of service was to be ignored while everyone else had a big feast for his wastrel brother. Nobody even told him about the party: He was simply left out in the field and learned about the cel-

ebration only when he came back to the house after a long, laborious day. He was then so angry that he would not even go into the house. His father had to come out and plead with him to join them.

The elder son complained (with real justification, as far as I can see), “Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf” (Luke 15:29–30).

The elder brother is a favorite whipping boy in sermons and commentaries. He is treated as selfish and conceited. But did he not have a valid complaint? What would we have done in the same circumstance? We have worked faithfully while our brother has wasted everything, yet he gets a party, and we get nothing. I would complain, and you would, too. The elder son represents all of us, and all too well.

What do we think of people who slack off while we slave away? “He’s on welfare. We are decent hard-working people who never asked for a dime.” “He hangs around with prostitutes. We are faithful.” “He blew his money. We saved carefully.” Of course we say in our theology that works do not bring God’s grace. We say with our mouths that we are all equally sinners and all equally undeserving in the eyes of God. But in our hearts we often believe that work is really what it is all about.

Jesus demolishes this view in his parable of the vineyard laborers (Matt. 20:1–16). In this vineyard, some started working “early in the morning” (probably at about six o’clock in the morning). Others were hired at the third hour, then the sixth hour, and then the ninth hour. Some were even hired at the eleventh hour (about five o’clock in the afternoon). All of them stopped work at exactly the same time, but they all were paid exactly the same. The people who had worked in the heat all day understandably complained that the others had only worked for an hour—and in the cool of the evening, no less. We would complain, too, if this happened to us.

These parables do not tell us how we should treat our relatives or how we should pay people. Nor are they meant



to denigrate work. Instead, Jesus' words are focused on pounding home to us the fact that God's grace is given freely, which means *it is not earned*. This is the point. It is not work that brings grace, nor even the fruits of grace: *They are God's gifts*. We need to know this deeply in our hearts before we can ever begin to rest.

### Work, Pride, and Idolatry

The Scriptures not only reject salvation by works; they also condemn excessive pride in work. The sin of Adam and Eve—that they wished to be gods—was replayed in the construction of the tower of Babel “with its top in the heavens.” Babel expresses a lust for achievement and greatness that rejects God's limits and so only ends up driving people apart from each other (Gen. 11:1–9). Isaiah repeats this theme. “For the Lord of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up and high ... against every high tower, and against every fortified wall.... And the haughtiness of man shall be humbled, and the pride of men shall be brought low; and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day” (Isa. 2:12–17).

Excessive pride in our own achievements becomes idolatry, which is placing final trust in anything within the creation itself and, especially, final trust in the work of our own hands. “*The workman trusts in his own creation when he makes dumb idols*” (Hab. 2:18–19). As Paul warns the people of Athens, God is not like the idols, which are only “like gold, or silver, or stone, *a representation by the art and imagination of man*” (Acts 17:29; see also Rom. 1:24). As the psalmist says, “The idols of the nations are silver and gold, *the work of men's hands*” (Ps. 135:15–18).

As with many idols, our responsibilities may involve good and honest causes, and even “Christian” or “ministry” jobs. Priests and pastors are often the worst workaholics. Whatever our work, good or bad, the key is that workaholics are *addicted* to their work. And addiction is a form of idolatry. It can keep us at a remote distance from a genuine relationship with God.

As Paul Stevens says in *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity*, “Workaholics do not work because they have a desire to be gainfully employed; they work to prove something to themselves. Though they keep trying by working harder, working better, or trying to find the perfect job, they can never do enough to give full meaning to their lives.”

Because we must worship God rather than idols, we must find our true end in what God has given, not in what we can

achieve—not in work but in grace. Our eyes are always meant to be on him, the one who provides all things for us.

Of course, many women and men struggle to survive financially and are burdened with heavy fiscal responsibilities. They are forced to work long and hard. But it does not add to our financial burdens to remember that Jesus has called us to absolute dependence upon him. This does not mean that we stop working, stop trying, stop caring. But it does mean that we must entrust our financial concerns to him and not immerse ourselves in work simply because we are obsessively afraid of humiliation or financial disaster.

### The Prayerful Path of Obedience

Rather than being guided by goals to be achieved, we should be guided by ways to be followed. No matter what our circumstances, we should pay heed to Jesus' admonitions in the Sermon on the Mount: “So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matt. 6:31–34).



*We sometimes forget that though work is a good thing, it is not the only thing. We are not saved by work any more than we are saved by works.*

— Paul Marshall

The things that Jesus tells us not to be anxious about are not bad things. They are good things. They are things we need and ought to have. But he says that being anxious for them, or striving for them, will not help. Instead, we are told to seek first the kingdom of God, and these other things will follow.

Jesus' words are a direct rebuke to every kind of idolatry. He does not set forth new goals but describes a way to be followed—a way that daily seeks his will—and he promises that God's blessing will flow from our diligence. Blessing is not the result of work. It is the fruit of obedience. Our lives are not guaranteed of success. They are not even to be oriented to success. Instead, they are taking up a prayerful path

of obedience to God in the problems that confront us hour by hour, and decade by decade.

As creatures made in the image of God, we are called to do many things other than our jobs. We are called to be responsible in all our relationships—to be good husbands, wives, parents, children, neighbors, friends, and citizens. Our calling is to image God in every dimension of our existence, including worship, intimacy, play, and rest. While rest, meditation, and contemplation do not constitute a higher kind of life, they are an essential part of our lives. Our work has, per se, no prior claim to our time. As Thomas Aquinas says, “The essence of virtue consists in the good rather than in the difficult” (*Summa Theologica*, ii.2.9,7).

One part of our calling is the calling to rest. Even God rested after creating the world. The commandment not to labor on the Sabbath carries as much weight as the commandments not to kill or steal. During the time in the wilderness and the exile, Israel was promised rest in the land (Deut. 3:20; Jer. 46:27). Israel’s life was ordained as a rhythm of work and rest. Each seventh day, each seventh year, and each seven of seven years was to be a Sabbath for people, for animals, and for the land itself.

### **To Rest Is, Fundamentally, to Trust**

This ordained cycle of work and rest was intimately tied to Israel’s trust in God. If Israel rested in the seventh year, they would not plant, and they would have no crops. Hence they needed to trust God’s promise that the land would produce a surplus to see them through (Lev. 25:18–24). In the

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*Rest means letting the world pass us by for a time. It is a moment of celebration when we acknowledge that blessing comes only from the hand of God.*

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fiftieth year, the year of Jubilee, Israel’s faith was tested even more. As they celebrated the Day of Atonement, they needed to put aside planting, the work of their hands, *for two whole years*: They would have to live off the gifts of God (Lev. 25:8–12). If God was not faithful, they might starve or have to sell themselves back into Egypt. Rest was always an act of trust, of faith. In the same vein, the New Testament often pictures salvation as entering into rest, as trusting and receiving God’s gifts (Heb. 3–4). And Jesus himself promises the freedom of rest to those who come to him.

This biblical picture of rest can be contrasted with the industrialized world’s drive to forget and escape from work. We manufacture distractions and entertainment. We live for

Friday and Saturday nights. We count days to vacations. These activities simply try to ignore and negate work and, hence, are actually controlled by it. Our most characteristic “leisure activity” is consumption—buying things—an activity that, through the manufacture of “life styles,” has become ever more hectic and more akin to work.

And our society finds itself ever more distant from real rest. Its manufactured “holidays” (including “Labor Day”) are becoming mere excuses for novel forms of consumption. It is the malls that tell us when the holidays are. The notion of a Sabbath rest, or even of Sunday, is shouldered aside not only as an affront to the secular belief that God is irrelevant to social life but also—in what amounts to perhaps the same thing—as an obstruction to the drive to consume more.

Biblically, rest is far more than recuperation from and preparation for work, though certainly we do need to recuperate. It is a God-given human response in its own right. As Josef Pieper says in his classic *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*, “It is not simply the result of external factors, it is not the inevitable result of spare time, a holiday, a week-end or a vacation. It is ... a condition of the soul.”

Indeed, rest and work may involve similar activities done in a different spirit. For me, reading is a part of work and a part of rest. The question is not about the activity itself but about the orientation of our hearts. Resting is tied intimately to faith. This is why medieval Christendom so often pictured it as a higher way. The Scriptures also frequently relate lack of rest to unbelief (Ps. 95:8–11; Heb. 3:7–4:10).

When we rest, we acknowledge that all our striving, of itself, will do nothing. Rest means letting the world pass us by for a time. Genuine rest requires acknowledgment that God, and our brothers and sisters, can survive without us. It requires recognition of our own insufficiency and a handing over of responsibility. It is a real surrender to the ways of God. It is a moment of celebration when we acknowledge that blessing comes only from the hand of God. This is why rest requires faith. It is also why salvation can be pictured as rest. When we rest, we accept God’s grace. We do not seek to earn; we receive. We do not justify; we are justified. ❤️

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# The Everyday Ethics of Work

## *A Review Essay by John R. Schneider*

**W**orking: *Its Meaning and Its Limits* is the latest to come out in an emerging series that carries the title, *The Ethics of Everyday Life*. In the preface, the editors describe it innocently enough as having been “produced by a group of friends [they are Timothy Fuller, Amy A. Kass, Leon R. Kass, Richard John Neuhaus, Mark Schwehn, and Meilaender], united by a desire to revive public interest in and attention to these matters [everyday ethical ones], now sadly neglected.” This benign description, however, barely conveys the seriousness of the editors’ purpose, for it is nothing less than to issue a challenge to professional teachers of ethics to reform their entire discipline from the ground up.

The series’ editors believe that contemporary ethicists have mainly abandoned the classical notion that ethics is about what it used to be about and what it (ethically) ought to be about—showing the way to live “the good life.” Unlike great moral thinkers such as Aristotle, Erasmus, and Adam Smith, today’s ethicists, the editors complain, ignore everyday topics—being born, growing up, marrying, eating, drinking, talking, aging, dying. Instead, they write in that tedious academic’s mode, one that is “highly abstract, analytically philosophic, interested only in principles or arguments, often remote from life as lived, divorced from the way most people face and make moral decisions, largely deaf to questions of character and moral feeling or how they are acquired, unduly influenced by the sensational or extreme case, hostile to insights from religious traditions, friendly to fashionable opinion but deaf to deeper sources of wisdom, heavily tilted toward questions of law and public policy, and all too frequently marked by an unwillingness to take a moral stand.”

The larger purpose of the series, then, is linked with this serious accusation that—irony of ironies—the art of moral wisdom has been lost and replaced by something absurdly immoral and unwise. For readers who instinctively agree,

the series (and Meilaender’s volume) will get the initial benefit of a welcome.

Meilaender’s volume fits well with the larger purpose of the series. He has pieced together a collection of short readings (seventy-five in all) that is superb for its diversity and engagement of the subject. Some readers may object to the parochial scope of the selections, for they all come from the classical stream of the West. We hear a lot from the Bible, for instance, but not from the Koran or the Upanishads. The voices are nearly all male, the theologians all Christian, and

the Christians almost all Protestants (nothing from papal encyclicals such as *Rerum Novarum*, *Laborem Exercens*, or *Centesimus Annus*). Someone might judge, with a little justification, that the failure to give a philosophical defense of what seems quite a consequential philosophical claim (the anti-relativism) comes to the sort of (albeit implied) moral fideism that has made so many people into relativists in the first place. But

for readers who accept the assumptions that the book’s scope suggests, this sort of complaint will seem misplaced.

### **A Typology of Approaches**

As for the logical arrangement of the selections, Meilaender does give a detailed account of his thinking on some of it. In his introduction, Meilaender explains that the book provides “a typology of approaches.” The book comprises three main parts: “The Meanings of Work,” “The Limits of Work,” and “Rest.” Meilaender is well aware of conceptual overlap between the classifications. Although he does not put it this way, at bottom, the first is really a heading for them all. The truth is that only the first part includes a true typology, for it contains the writings that “typify” the several relevant views of what, in the end, work means. We may rightly wonder just what sorts of “views” these are, since they do not break down into philosophical, religious, or even distinctly theological frames of reference for ethics.

***Working:  
Its Meaning and Its Limits***  
edited by Gilbert C. Meilaender

University of Notre Dame Press  
288 pp. Cloth: \$25.00

Dorothy Sayers and Karl Marx, for instance, appear under the same banner, “Work as Co-Creation.” As Meilaender describes this view, the human person is “created in the image of God” and “made priest of the creation, given ‘dominion’ over it by God”; consequently, “to be in God’s image is to work with and under God to care for creation.” The next grouping is the more instrumental approach, “Work as Necessary for Leisure.” Its members range from Aristotle and Hesiod to Witold Rybczynski (a writing architect); for this view, the good life is not found in work (as necessary as it may be) but in leisure, “the cultivation of the mind through activities that are intrinsically worthwhile”—provided such activities do not include undignified menial toil.


The third is the more ethically or duty-bound “Work as Dignified but Irsome,” which includes not just the Apostle Paul, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Jaques Ellul, and George Orwell, among some others, but also the Little Red Hen. For such thinkers, “the worker may achieve considerable dignity in work that, although necessary, cannot be fulfilling or satisfying.” The last is the more religiously shaped approach, “Work as Vocation.” Its members include John Calvin, along with Charles Wesley, William Perkins, and Michael Novak. Under the influence of this view (which, Meilaender notes, has had a profound impact on Western culture), “daily work

creation, and I would love to hear Wesley and Calvin conversing on the notion of *calling*.)

Another risk of typologies is that, when confronted with them, readers almost instinctively begin thinking of them as logically exclusive alternatives (even though the author discourages them from doing so). In the right hands, this mistake can be avoided, but from the arrangement it is not obvious that, say, for Novak (“Work as Vocation,” in Meilaender’s scheme), what shapes the very (for him, biblical) notion of calling is just that God has ordered the world so that proper work is co-creation, among other things. Indeed, in Novak’s complete view, the two notions of work are dialectically related and inseparable.

Still another peril of typologies (one thinks of H. Richard Niebuhr’s famous *Christ and Culture*) is that they almost inevitably foster abstract theories (which is obviously not consistent with Meilaender’s purpose). The problem is that *work* refers to such vastly varying circumstances and kinds of action that no general theory can possibly hold for all of them. Someone working as a college professor in modern-day America can certainly learn from Aristotle, Hesiod, and Marx on what her own sort of work means, but she will most certainly need to hear from wise thinkers who have immersed themselves in the realities of advanced modern economic

life in the unique way that she has done. And that is not to mention the innumerable different forms and circumstances of work that keep emerging in our advanced market economies. If, say, we add the term *some* to the assertions that the group headings abbreviate, we get four pretty obviously true statements. In that light, however, a typology such as Meilaender’s can serve very well the interest of people in discovering a more complete and (for them) fitting vision of whatever work it is that they do.

To conclude, in the right hands, and for readers (most likely in the college classroom) who accept the limiting scope of its assumptions, this volume provides a fine resource for serious reflection—in the context of our Western moral heritage—on how the working life might become a more integral part of the good life. 

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*Unlike great moral thinkers such as Aristotle, Erasmus, and Adam Smith, today’s ethicists, the editors complain, ignore everyday topics.*

— *John R. Schneider*



became a vocation, a calling from God” through which “one sought not the vision of God but the transformation of the world in accordance with God’s will.”

### Finding a Fitting Vision of Work

From the assertions these headings embody, it seems that the “views,” then, are “types” of what are distinctly different psychological or existential responses to work. I do not think one should object very much to Meilaender’s using this sort of measurement, but it does make it harder to sort out the metaphysical and larger worldview matters that give shape to people’s responses. (On these deeper levels, for instance, Sayers and Marx hardly meant the same thing by co-

# *The American Paradox: Spiritual Hunger in an Age of Plenty*

by David G. Myers

Yale University Press. 384 pp. Hardcover: \$29.95

Review by D. Eric Schansberg

In one sense, this is a book that would make any economist happy. In describing the material and spiritual “state of the union,” Myers uses a framework of “on one hand...” and “on the other hand...” Harry Truman once remarked that he wanted a one-armed economist to avoid hearing that combination. But here, it is a pleasing characteristic, as Myers provides a thorough and mostly balanced survey of the relevant research on an array of topics that are crucial to the health of our country.

Myers opens with a question to frame the dilemma: Are we better off than we were forty years ago? In brief, he answers “yes” in terms of material well-being and “no” in terms of moral and emotional well-being—what he describes as a seeming paradox. “Never has a culture experienced such physical comfort combined with such psychological misery,” he writes. Even casual observers of current events can see the combination Myers documents—most people are experiencing increasing wealth and opportunity, while some are stuck in economic poverty and many have descended into spiritual poverty.

Christians will find reason to enjoy and respect Myers’s book, given that his religious faith informs his worldview. This is most evident in his passion for the vulnerable in our society, paired with his unwillingness to downplay personal responsibility—sadly, a rare combination. Both optimists and pessimists will find anecdotal and statistical fodder to bolster their views. (Myers is guardedly optimistic in view of what he sees as improvements since the early 1990s and an increase in efforts to address society’s social problems.) Careful thinkers will be impressed by the way he understands and explains statistics (carefully distinguishing between correlation and causation) and the attempts of social scientists to determine cause and effect.

Myers’s topics are widely varied—sexuality, marriage and family, crime, materialism, individualism, entertainment and the media, education and its impact on values, and the role of faith. He documents familiar and not-so-familiar indicators, and he quotes a wide range of people. The book is eminently readable and scrupulously documented.

But all that said, Myers’s effort is unnecessarily annoying at times, especially when the author submits to the common fallacy that everyone is an economist. His understanding of cause and effect outside of his discipline is standard but limited—much as if I were to write a book on some aspect of social psychology after reading a few books on the topic. The result: At times, the economic analysis is lacking, and

the political analysis is naive or too hopeful. Of course, it would be difficult for him to write well about this subject without passionate personal views, but, unfortunately, those views are not as well informed as his understanding of the academic literature.


The book is sprinkled with examples of this lack of economic analysis, but in this context, a brief list will have to suffice. From the realm of economics, he exhibits common confusions about CEO salaries; the impact of the minimum wage and other mandated benefits; firms looking for the cheapest labor independently of productivity concerns; spread-the-work proposals; and overpopulation and natural resource depletion. From the realm of political economy, he assumes that taxes typically “advance the common good”; he ignores the possibility that government can destroy community by taking the place of local and voluntary arrangements; and he argues that a deficiency of virtue is a greater problem for democracy and capitalism than it is for statism, when, in fact, the lack of virtue is surely more problematic when larger governments dictate that some people have more power over others.

There are also a few notable omissions, especially for such a comprehensive book. For example, he ignores the budding school-choice movement, although those reforms would solve the problems he cites and avoid other problems likely to follow from his proposals for curricula change. More generally, he calls for an end to “politics without principle,” but then does not discuss the contexts under which government is a legitimate means even to agreed-upon ends. The most egregious example of this is his apology for China’s one-child policy, where he concludes that “where there is cultural will, there is a way.”

Finally, a few modest complaints about some of Myers’s terminology. He refers to the moral crisis as a “social recession”—a nice label, except it implies the need for national and governmental solutions. Elsewhere, he takes issue with “libertarian values,” but he is referring only to an individualism that is often libertine, rather than to libertarianism as a

political philosophy. In fact, the individualism he decries, when manifested in political markets, is one of the chief reasons our economy deviates so significantly from the libertarian ideal. He argues instead for communitarianism as a “third way,” but even this is left fuzzy, since communitarians disagree over the extent to which “community” should be sought through coercive versus voluntary means.

My hope would be that Myers’s principal concerns are not with the freedom of individualism per se but, rather, with what is done with that freedom. Further, I would hope that he is not as enthusiastic about communitarianism (however defined) as he is with what it proxies—love, respect, and

concern for others. In the end, we are all individuals created uniquely by God and designed for freedom. As Paul writes, “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works.... It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.... You were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love” (Eph. 2:10; Gal. 5:1,13). 

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## ***Book News***

### **Gig: Americans Talk about Their Jobs at the Turn of the Millennium**

*John Bowe, Marisa Bowe, and Sabin Streeter, editors*  
*Crown Publishers*  
*xii + 548 pp. Hardcover: \$25.00*

Explicitly emulating Studs Terkel’s classic 1972 book, *Working*, the editors of the funky e-zine *Word.com* conducted these short interviews of American workers with the goal “to document whatever we found, without imposing any sort of theme upon categories of workers or work as a whole.” Rather, they attempted to present a picture of what people do for a living and what they think about it. They have succeeded. The result, *Gig*, is regularly fascinating, often funny, and occasionally poignant.

Interestingly, the majority claim to enjoy their work; “I love my job,” seems to be said more often than not. Notably, almost all strive to place the day-to-day within a larger landscape of meaning: some through their environment (the train engineer: “I get to see the countryside”), and some through their craft (the construction foreman: “just building something, creating something, and actually seeing your work”), but many through their service (the florist: “what I do brings beauty into people’s lives”). The flight attendant summarizes this last point well: “In any job, somebody is serving somebody. That’s just the bottom line.”

This hunt for meaning suggests the presence of the transcendent in the world of work. Though religion plays no explicit role in how most of those interviewed think about what they do (with the exception of the Lutheran minister, whose

sure sense of calling still trumps his burnout), certain theological themes rise from the hundred-plus accounts. (For instance, it becomes clear that we are created for work and, moreover, that our work is tainted by the Fall.) In this way,

*Gig* is more than a snapshot of American life; it challenges us to think theologically about work in God’s world.

### **Time for Truth: Living Free in a World of Lies, Hype, and Spin**

*Os Guinness*  
*Baker Book House*  
*128 pp. Hardcover: \$14.99*

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Vaclav Havel are twin lodestars for Guinness’s deft defense of truth for our postmodern moment. Havel’s conviction that “truth prevails for those who live in truth” and Solzhenitsyn’s belief that “one word of truth outweighs the entire world” both point toward Guinness’s robust and biblical view of truth: “We know that our intellectual powers and our very disposition as truth-seekers are underwritten by the truthfulness of the Creator of the universe.” Guinness admits that his is “a small book on a large topic,” but this is intentional. He seeks a wide audience, for the stakes are high.

In Guinness’s view, postmodern relativism “sounds the death knell of Western civilization in general and the American experiment in particular” because the continued freedom of the West depends upon its citizens’ commitment to truth. For Guinness, “Liberty requires virtue, virtue requires faith, and faith requires liberty,” but “without truth there is no freedom.” Hence Guinness’s prescription for our times: “If we would live free, we must not just know the truth, we must live in truth and we must become people of truth.”

—Gregory Dunn

## Capitalism Must Seize the High Ground



If economic liberty is valued today, it is rarely because it is considered more just or more proper than any alternative. It is valued primarily on managerial and technical grounds.

We feel free to argue about how many jobs this or that piece of legislation creates, but we remain squeamish about asking whose property will be used to create these jobs. An argument over whether there ought to be ceilings on corporate remuneration centers on whether high salaries are economically justifiable, but not on whether government ought to have a say over such matters.

We might dispute a proposal to force another function on private business on grounds of cost, but not on grounds of the right and wrong uses of private enterprise.

A secure liberty must be based on a firm moral foundation, and yet the moral terminology of contemporary political debate is often secretly at war with liberty. Advocates of capitalism and economic liberty can and must assume the moral high ground. So long as economic liberty—and its requisite institutions of private property, free exchange, capital accumulation, and contract enforcement—is not backed by a generally held set of norms by which it can be defended, it cannot be sustained long-term. Into the moral vacuum left by capitalism's defenders rush notions hostile to economic liberty— notions drawn largely from the values and vocabularies of interventionism and socialism.

The link between economic liberty and public morality is more than suggestive; it is direct. A historian would be hard pressed to identify a society with a deep and unyielding respect for the sanctity of private property that did not also have a relatively intact culture. Similarly, cultural decline, family collapse, and widespread secularization have historically corresponded with statism and socialism.

The moral defense of liberty must make a series of distinctions between rights and privileges, between society and government, between community and the collective. Rights, society, and community are all part of the natural order of liberty. Privileges, government, and the collective are not entirely separate, but they are essentially different in that they rest on preemptive coercion. In the terminology of the public philosopher Albert Jay Nock, what is done by political means should not be confused with what is done by social means.

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*A secure liberty must be based on a firm moral foundation.*

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Further, a moral argument for economic liberty should not shrink from its own logical implications, however politically unfashionable. An imperative against theft and in favor of the security of private property must also suggest caution about taxes above the minimum necessary for the rule of law. Freedom of contract must include the freedom not to contract.

Finally, it is sometimes said that no one dreams of capitalism. This, too, must change. Rightly understood, capitalism is the name for the economic component of the natural order of liberty. It means wide ownership of property, fair and equal rules for all, strict adherence to the boundaries of ownership, opportunity for charity, and wise use of resources. Further, it means creativity, growth, prosperity, abundance, and, most of all, the economic application of the principle that every human person has dignity and should have that dignity respected. It is a dream worthy of our spiritual imaginations. ☺

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*Rev. Robert A. Sirico is a Roman Catholic priest and president of the Acton Institute. The essay is adapted from the August 9, 1994, Financial Times.*

The members of Parliament “declare that the pretended power of suspending the laws or the execution of laws by regal authority without consent of Parliament is illegal.”

—1689 Bill of Rights—