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Literature and the Realm of Moral Values

An Interview with Solzhenitsyn scholar
Edward E. Ericson Jr.

A Journal of Religion, Economics, and Culture

Editor's Note



For those of us who believe in both religion and liberty, Solzhenitsyn is a champion. Solzhenitsyn's thoughts and writing have at times been greatly misunderstood in the West. At Acton and in the pages of *Religion & Liberty*, we are proud to contribute to the holistic understanding of a deeply religious man. Scholar Edward E. Ericson Jr. edited the new restored edition of Solzhenitsyn's novel, *In the First Circle*. In "Solzhenitsyn & the Modern World," an essay published by Acton in 1994, Ericson predicted that Solzhenitsyn's influence would continue to expand. This interview helps achieve that, thanks to Ericson. Ericson is truly dedicated when it comes to expanding the work and

thought of Solzhenitsyn.

Dr. John Pinheiro's lectures for Acton have been so popular, it seemed fitting to ask him to contribute a feature piece on the American Founding. Dr. Pinheiro, a historian at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, offers his take on the importance of the anti-federalists in the development of this nation. He suggests that their work is essential reading "if Americans hope to restore a sane balance between state and federal power."

Two excellent books are reviewed in this issue. One is a biography of another great friend of liberty and the other is written by one of the best economists and social critics of his generation. Managing editor Ray Nothstine reviews *William F. Buckley Jr.: The Maker of a Movement*. Author Lee Edwards calls Buckley "The St. Paul of the conservative movement." In an age where many popular conservative leaders are entertainers and reactionaries first, Buckley is a reminder of how important intelligent arguments are for the long term success of the conservative movement. Bruce

Edward Walker reviews Thomas Sowell's *Intellectuals and Society*. Sowell says there is one class of intellectuals that believe "humanity is perfectible and the world is one large Petri dish where superior intellects can craft an earthly paradise through bold experiments." We are reminded of the consequences of this line of thought daily.

We also offer a selection from Jordan Ballor's new book *Ecumenical Babel*. Ballor, an Acton Research Fellow and a Bonhoeffer expert, discusses Bonhoeffer's views on the ecumenical movement. Bonhoeffer is always a popular theologian to study and there is an even greater renewal of popular interest in him this year with the publication of Eric Metaxas's new biography.

This issue's "In The Liberal Tradition" features Benjamin Banneker. Banneker was a free black who was an almanac author, surveyor, astronomer, and farmer. Most importantly, he was committed to the Scriptures and was an early defender of human liberty in this country's history.

Father Raymond

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Literature and the Realm of Moral Values

An Interview with Solzhenitsyn scholar
Edward E. Ericson Jr.

In the opening chapter of Aleksander Solzhenitsyn's novel, In the First Circle, the character Innokenty Volodin is faced with a moral dilemma over whether or not to share secret Soviet information with the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. In the end, his decision is made when he asks himself: "If we live in a state of constant fear, can we remain human?" The question is one that Solzhenitsyn asked of the Soviet government right up to the day he was arrested and exiled in 1974. His parting shot to the Soviet powers was the publication in Russia of the essay, "Live Not by Lies."

A new "restored" edition of In the First Circle was published in late 2009 by Harper Perennial in a translation by Harry T. Willetts. The new edition includes the missing chapters that Solzhenitsyn had excised to get the book past Soviet censors. Religion & Liberty Executive Editor John Couretas recently sat down with Solzhenitsyn scholar Edward E. Ericson Jr. to talk about the book and what he has described, in the forward to the novel, as Solzhenitsyn's "sense of continuity between literary art and the realm of moral values."

R&L: *The expurgated version of 'In the First Circle' was originally published in the West in 1968. How was it received at the time?*

Ericson Jr.: Very well. We didn't know at all that this 87-chapter version was an abbreviated version, and it was received with great acclaim. The book got out in a circuitous way while Solzhenitsyn was still in the Soviet Union. He had no hand in how it was edited. All this is before the conflict over Solzhenitsyn's ideas that

came into focus after he was exiled to the West in 1974. Western intellectuals had seen this person as a champion of freedom, but it turned out that he had a somewhat different basis for believing in freedom, a basis that the typical intellectual couldn't relate to. Well, a person of religious understanding would see right away that Solzhenitsyn's basis for human freedom is the human dignity that comes from a person's bearing the image of God in creation. That, of course, is not a vision available to secular people, who dominate the culture in the West. So, having praised him to the skies for some years, all of a sudden the secular critics felt as if, when he came out and talked in what they saw as the retrograde language of a religious believer, he was letting them down. They felt that Solzhenitsyn led them on. Well, he didn't lead anybody on. They had simply misinterpreted him. They applied to him, as they did to everything, their favorite categories of thought, which were political categories. Everything is politics. I heard it all around me in the 60s, when I was already a young college teacher. Everything is politics.

R&L: *'In the First Circle: The First Uncensored Edition,' is the first Solzhenitsyn work published in English since his death in August 2008. It now has a total of 96 chapters with the missing material added back in. How has it been received?*

It sells all right, but not the way the incomplete version did in 1968. Certainly far from the way Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* has sold here.

And I wondered all the way through preparing this uncensored volume for publication, how it would sell, because it is, after all, not an entirely new book and that was going to hold it back. Also, interest in Solzhenitsyn had waned. There's been a bit of an upturn in interest that came with his death. Even so, the obituaries showed great ignorance of Solzhenitsyn. They show that the very people who have the authority to write obituaries for our main outlets of opinion—newspapers and magazines—have clearly not read him since the 1970s. Almost nobody mentioned *November 1916*, a thousand-page-long novel that came out in 1999. But where *In the First Circle* has been reviewed, it's gotten some really grand reviews.

When this book was published here in 1968, did Solzhenitsyn have a collaborator outside Russia?

No, not really. Persons involved in transmitting it were intellectuals, Manhattan types. They cared about culture, and they did the best they could by him. They were friends of the man who translated it, Thomas Whitney, a good translator, good person, but not somebody who understood Solzhenitsyn from the inside. When Solzhenitsyn and I got to know each other a little bit, he made clear to me that the reason he allowed me to abridge *The Gulag Archipelago* was, well, that he and I shared a common Christian faith. Outside of that, I was missing all sorts of qualifications, and maybe he even thought I had some disqualifications. I didn't know Russian, had never done an abridgement. He knew

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Assessing the Anti-Federalists

By John C. Pinheiro

A free society needs both liberty and order. As Russell Kirk once put it, “order is the first need for any society—only then can liberty and justice be reasonably secure.” From September 1787 through July 1788, this principle of ordered liberty shaped Federalist arguments for, and anti-Federalist arguments against, the ratification of the Constitution. Contemporary Americans might be tempted to assume that the opposition does not deserve to be counted among the Founding Fathers and Framers. But not only do many anti-Federalists belong in both categories, their works need to be read alongside the more famous *Federalist Papers* and James Wilson’s oratory, if Americans hope to restore a sane balance between state and federal power.

Recent experience with tyranny shaped the Articles of Confederation, the United States’ constitution from 1781-1787. In an effort to avoid everything that had become instruments of tyranny in British hands, the Articles contained no national army, no executive branch, no national judiciary, and States had to vote unanimously for any tax. A unicameral Congress, with members elected by State legislatures and in which each State had one collective vote, oversaw all national matters via committees. In this highly decentralized Union, ensuring State sovereignty trumped concerns about individual liberty. Almost immediately, restrictions in the Articles, along with regionalism and factionalism, hampered commerce, foreign trade, and debt repayment. In May 1787, 55 delegates

from every State but Rhode Island met in Philadelphia. Rather than amend the Articles, they instead began to draft a new constitution, starting with the Virginia Plan, co-authored by Edmund Randolph and James Madison. This plan was decidedly in favor of order through centralization. It called for proportional representation in a bicameral congress, and gave Congress a veto over State laws and the power to appoint the nation’s president and judges. By mid-September, delegates finally reached a compromise, which among other things, included equal representation for States in the upper house and proportional representation in the lower house. Madison opposed this, but was voted down. Following final approval of the Constitution on September 17, 1787, delegates presented it to the United States. Federalists and anti-Federalists went to work trying to influence the composition of the State ratifying conventions.

Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts summed up anti-Federalist concerns when he predicted that the new Constitution would “produce a monarchy, or a corrupt, tyrannical aristocracy.” Other prominent anti-Federalists included George Clinton of New York, Virginians Richard Henry Lee and Patrick Henry, and Luther Martin of Maryland. Yet for reasons that will become apparent, the less famous Robert Yates of Pennsylvania and Samuel Bryan of New York also deserve a place on this list of important anti-Federalists. Bryan attacked the Constitution’s checks and balances,

saying these would not protect liberty but only serve to obfuscate federal corruption. Bryan also argued that one representative in the House for 30,000 inhabitants was “too few to communicate the . . . local circumstances and sentiments of so extensive” a country. Like George Mason and other anti-Federalists, Bryan especially lamented the absence of a Bill of Rights. The people, Bryan said, had cried out for order amid the chaos of 1787 and the Confederation’s perceived “impotency.” The “wealthy and ambitious” had preyed on these fears, which Bryan thought were exaggerated, “not for the welfare of the country” but for “power and aggrandisement.” Bryan feared a congressional oligarchy more than a presidential monarchy: “a permanent aristocracy” unaccountable to “the great body of the people” because it was so far removed from them.

Although Bryan claimed that the United States’ size would produce tyranny while preventing Congress from understanding local needs, he still believed a decentralized republic could maintain the order needed to keep liberty secure. But New York Supreme Court judge Robert Yates disagreed, noting that only two countries in 1787 were as large as the United States: Russia and China. As Yates pointed out, autocrats ruled both. Historically, large territorial republics actually endangered liberty because there was no way other than coercion to balance their many regional and factional interests. “In so extensive a republic” as the United States, Yates

said, “the great officers of government would soon become above the control of the people and abuse their power for the purpose of aggrandizing themselves.”

Yates singled out Congress’ taxation power and the Supreme Court as the most likely avenues to despotism. Since Congress could approve taxes to “provide for the common safety, and the general welfare,” taxation would be unlimited. “The government,” warned Yates, “would always say their measures were designed and calculated to promote the public good; there being no judge between them and the people, the rulers themselves must, and would always, judge for themselves.” Meanwhile, the Supreme Court, as constructed, would not to be guided at all by Natural Law, precedent, or any other law, just by its own whims and whatever precedents it might set.

Federalists posed counter-arguments to all these accusations. They claimed the “general welfare” clause actually limited the government’s range of power. Where anti-Federalists saw a future consolidated nation-state inherent in the Constitution, Federalists beheld a firm grounding for a lasting federal union that balanced liberty with order. This is exactly what Madison argued in Federalist #10 and #51, in which he flipped on its head the maxim that factionalism in large republics breeds disorder, followed either by tyranny or disunion. In a nod to what G.K. Chesterton later called that most provable Christian dogma, Original Sin, Madison acknowledged that the “causes of faction are sown in the nature of man.” Since the causes of faction cannot be removed, Madison noted realistically, to be free Americans required a polity founded on the principle of ordered liberty to control its effects.

Federalists claimed the Constitution would restrain factionalism far better than had the Articles. How? Certainly not through coercion, Madison said. Nor would it depend on enlightened aristocrats, for “enlightened statesmen will not always be at the helm.” Madison predicted that the country’s diver-

sity would prevent any majority from stepping on minority rights even as it mitigated Congressional attempts to pass unwise laws. In the same way a representative government was superior to a purely democratic one because of its greater ability to field temperate, prudent leaders, so would a large republic be superior to a small one. The difficulty for Madison was that his acknowledgement of American plurality conceivably could *support* anti-Federalist warnings about heterogeneous republics. Yet how diverse really was the United States? John Jay in Federalist #2 had already given the answer for this: Not so much, in the way that multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-lingual Russia and China were. In an overstatement even for 1787 (although not too much of one), Jay described Americans as “one united people, a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in manners and customs.” Put simply, when it comes to republics, the Federalists seemed to be saying that as long as citizens share common foundational attributes, “bigger is better.” Faction would balance faction. The government’s primary role in such a system was to be little more than a “dispassionate umpire,” Madison privately told Washington.

The U.S. Constitution won ratification on June 21, 1788, mainly because of promises to anti-Federalists that a Bill of Rights would be added as soon as possible. (Federalists had opposed the addition of a Bill of Rights on the grounds that listing Americans’ liberties in amendments might unintentionally limit them.) Another comforting thought was that George Washington, who had proven trustworthy with power, would be the first president.

There would be no violent counter-revolution in America, only a working out of anti-Federalist principles under the new U.S. government. In the 1790s, Lee, Yates, and Henry even became Federalists: Yates ran as a Federalist for New York governor

against Clinton and Lee, as a senator from Virginia, fought to pass Hamilton’s economic program.

Having now taken into account both sides in the ratification debate, how should those who promote a free and virtuous society evaluate the anti-Federalists? Were their fears based on the Constitution *itself*, with its alleged inability to balance liberty and order and prevent the consolidation of power at the national level? They clearly believed this to be the case. Yet their fears about consolidated state power are those that anyone protective of liberty ought to have about *any* government, for they are rooted in an anthropology revealed both by Nature and by Revelation; namely, that the human person is fallible and capable of choosing evil over good. Given an analysis of past and present--the continued growth of the “nanny state” comes to mind--the likelihood is not small that some will choose safety, comfort, and a leveling equality over freedom and the life that is worth living. Still, anti-Federalists did correctly predict that the U.S. Constitution would become a much-abused instrument in the hands of those who wished to build a muscular, far-reaching government. They also foresaw that the judiciary might endanger liberty more than a quasi-monarchical president. Yates’ warnings about the Supreme Court and Congress certainly ring true today, as do Bryan’s predictions about politicians taking advantage of crises to pursue ideological or partisan ends. These processes tend to limit Americans’ liberties while chipping away at their virtue via government-constructed moral hazards. Indeed, as J. Budziszewski notes in *The Line through the Heart*, Yates’ “arguments seem even stronger today than they did at the time they were written.”

Does this mean, then, that the anti-Federalists ought to have succeeded in stopping the Constitution’s ratification? Far from it. The Federalists correctly criticized the Confederation for being unable to provide the minimum order needed so that Americans could flourish as a free people. Their

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arguments show they understood better than anti-Federalists the necessary balance between liberty and order. Had the anti-Federalists defeated the Constitution, the Union would have soon split into multiple confederations or divided into highly separate States. The consequences for liberty and human flourishing under these scenarios would have been worse than the most dismal anti-Federalist prediction about life under the Constitution.

This does not mean, however, that Federalists believed any governmental formula could, of itself, maintain a polity in which liberty and justice would be secure. They, like their anti-Federalist opponents, recognized the need for virtue in a free society. But while both acknowledged virtue as a precondition for republican government, Federalists were far less likely to expect it. “The few . . . who act upon principles of disinterestedness,” wrote Washington, “are, comparatively speaking, no more than a drop in the Ocean.” A rational Constitution, prudently drawing on Enlightenment liberalism and based on Americans’ own experience as a free people, would help bridge the gaps.

The anti-Federalists, though perceptive when identifying problems, tended to permit the perfect to be the enemy of the good. There was nothing inherent in the Constitution relative to a penchant for disorder and illiberality that is not present in the human person. The Federalists realized this; the anti-Federalists did not. Yet to understand the degree to which the American founders understood the balance between liberty and order necessary for a free people, one must not neglect the anti-Federalists. They were responsible for modifying what would have been a highly centralized government from the very beginning, had the Virginia Plan succeeded in toto, and had anti-Federalists like George Mason failed to secure a Bill of Rights.

Dr. Pinheiro is associate professor of history at Aquinas College in Michigan, and author of Manifest Ambition: James K. Polk and Civil-Military Relations during the Mexican War.

Double-Edged Sword: *The Power of the Word*

1 Peter 5:6

Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.

“Show me a hundred stuck up folks and I’ll show you a hundred fools” is a line from a song by the legendary country duo, The Louvin Brothers. Sometimes it seems that humility is an old fashioned and dated virtue, especially with the rise of mass entertainment and celebrity culture. We are inundated with countless people self-servingly and shamelessly seeking fame for the sake of fame alone. Their agenda is to advance themselves regardless of the lives they destroy, or the pain and embarrassment they inflict on others. Too often this lifestyle is celebrated and cheered by our culture.

It is often the saddest affair when a lack of humility infects churches, the very place meant to offer a transforming message to the world. Pride is not only the greatest purveyor of church divisions, but that is true too for divisions among family and other relationships. The Gospels always offers a radical alternative to the destruction and desires of man. Christ himself said, “The greatest among you will be your servant.”

Humility doesn’t just show class and a level of security about one’s self, but it is also evidence of an authentic relationship with God. 1 Peter 5:5 says “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” People who have been transformed by grace understand the value of humility. They received a free gift and know it is through no merit or toiling of their own. Their deep dependence on God is evident in how they behave and especially by how they treat others.

The character and servanthood of Christ is the perfect model of humility. The possessor and creator of all creation chose a life of poverty. He was born in a stable among animals and their waste. Christ was not tempted by worldly glory and fame. He reached out and loved the despised, crippled, the sickest, and most marginalized. He was broken, beaten, bloodied, rejected, spit upon and nailed to a cross. Isaiah called him “A man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.” Christ was even betrayed for 30 pieces of silver.

God, of course, was faithful to his plan to save humanity and Christ was exalted. The world did not understand and much of the world still does not understand because that is not how a king is supposed to live and die. It’s abhorrent to a “me first” society, who finds their worth in material goods and seeks applause from men. Christ says in Matthew, “For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” Psalm 138:6 says, “Though the LORD is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar.” Another reminder to us to heed the notable saying: “Don’t sell your soul for one bowl of pottage.”



Review: William F. Buckley Jr.

By Ray Nothstine

Lee Edwards calls William F. Buckley Jr. “The St. Paul of the conservative movement.” No other twentieth century figure made such a vast contribution to the intellectual force of political conservatism. He paved the way for the likes of Ronald Reagan and all of those political children of Reagan who credit the former president for bringing them into politics. He achieved what no other had done and that was his ability to bring traditional conservatives, libertarians, and anti-communists together under the same umbrella. Late in life, when asked why he continued working so hard despite fame and wealth, a surprised Buckley said, “My Father taught me that I owe it to my country. It’s how I pay my debt.”

Lee Edwards offers an excellent story of Buckley’s founding and overseeing of the modern conservative crusade in *William F. Buckley Jr.: The Maker of a Movement*. Edwards traces the roots of those who influenced Buckley, from libertarian author Albert Jay Nock, conservative political scientist Willmoore Kendall, the anti-communist Whittaker Chambers, and political theorist James Burnham. Buckley fused together these right of center factions that were often feuding with each other more than with their common foes, the statist. Kendall, Burnham, and Chambers were all closely associated with *National Review*, launched by Buckley in 1955. Russell Kirk was also an essential conservative voice in the mix who agreed to become a contributor to the magazine.

Buckley purged Ayn Rand and her anti-Christian and morally bankrupt philosophy of Objectivism from mainstream conservatism. He dismissed anti-semitism from the movement by dismissing it from his publication. The conservative historian George Nash simply said, “Much of the history of American conservatism after 1955 is the history of the individuals associated with the magazine William F. Buckley Jr. founded.”

A significant aspect of this book, and one that has received more attention since the death of Buckley, was his magnanimous personality and financial generosity. It is estimated that since he was paid a nominal salary by *National Review*, he diverted \$10 million to the magazine because he forwarded speaking fees, lecture fees and other fees to *National Review’s* coffers. He waived his speaking fee for the Acton Institute in 1992 because according to Edwards, “He was taken with the idea of an organization dedicated to explaining the relationship between free market capitalism and Christian morality.” Edwards offers other points of generosity:

He once visited a young man in a Texas hospital recovering from wounds in Vietnam. The soldier’s doctors had told him he would never see again. Buckley paid for his flight to New York City, where after an eye examination by one of the world’s leading eye surgeons and three operations, the young veteran’s eyesight was restored.

Buckley’s wit, sunny personality, and charm was infectious. Edwards tells a story about how Buckley was wildly cheered by Harvard students at a debate because of his biting wit and intellectual prowess. It became apparent that Buckley was cut from a far different mold than the stereotypical angry or dour faced conservative.

The weight of his commitments to *National Review*, *Firing Line*, his column and book writing, lecture schedule, and assisting other conservative organizations was staggering. He even found time to run for mayor of New York City in 1965. Buckley wanted to raise national awareness of conservative and libertarian ideas and when asked what he would do if he won, he famously quipped, “Demand a recount.” He called for welfare reform in the campaign, saying recipients should work for assistance, outlining the ideas future Republican lawmakers would embrace in their own calls for reform. He supported free enterprise zones in ethnic minority neighborhoods long before Jack Kemp would popularize the idea. Buckley shocked many pundits with a respectable showing in the race, garnering support from many ethnic, Catholic Democrats and middle class Republicans. These, of course, were the same groups Ronald Reagan would later tap into in his presidential campaigns.

Buckley’s Roman Catholic faith was intricately tied to his conservative views. He believed in human liberty but understood that liberty itself could not lead to an

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earthly utopia. He penned a meditative account of his Catholic faith in *Nearer, My God*. Edwards reminds us his anti-communist views stemmed “not just because it was tyrannical but also because it was heresy.” When he was asked by *Playboy Magazine* what he wanted as an epitaph, he replied, “I know that my Redeemer liveth.”

Buckley’s friendship with Ronald Reagan was deep and abiding, even among the occasional political disagreements. Both men shared a passion for not merely containing communism but defeating it. Buckley called Lech Walesa, Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, and Andrei Sakharov the great heroes of the 1980s and they had earned their places in “freedom’s House of Lords.” But the political leader was Ronald Reagan, with his strategic vision.

No less praising is the truth Edwards articulates when he says Buckley, who was born into wealth, could have simply been a playboy of the Western world. But Buckley ferociously served and sacrificed in order to raise up the conservative cause and place it into the mainstream of American politics. He uplifted the intellectual debate of conservatives and the country, and always asked probing questions of the direction of the movement, most recently questioning the continued conflict in Iraq before his death. But never a quitter, his last public comment on the war was “stick it out,” despite his skepticism of nation building in the Middle East, which he called “Wilsonian.”

William F. Buckley Jr. was a conservative icon. Generations of young conservatives grew up learning from him and tried to emulate his ideas and values. One of the greatest losses to conservatism with his death is the power of his ideas in times such as these. Many conservatives are reminded of this when we hear or read the anti-intellectualism and lack of critical thinking echoing from talk radio or the blogosphere. Buckley was the one who not only made conservatism respectable and mainstream, but reminded us too that it could tower over the liberals of the academy.


What is Christian’s Library Press?

In June of 2010, the Acton Institute acquired the Grand Rapids-based book imprint, Christian’s Library Press. CLP was founded in 1979 by Gerard Berghoef and Lester DeKoster as a publishing resource for Christian leadership, theology, and stewardship. Berghoef was president of the John Widdicomb Company of Grand Rapids and was an elder in the Christian Reformed Church for many years. DeKoster was a Calvin College professor and a former editor of *The Banner*, a publication of the Christian Reformed Church. With the death of DeKoster in 2009, Acton was given an opportunity to build upon their respected work.

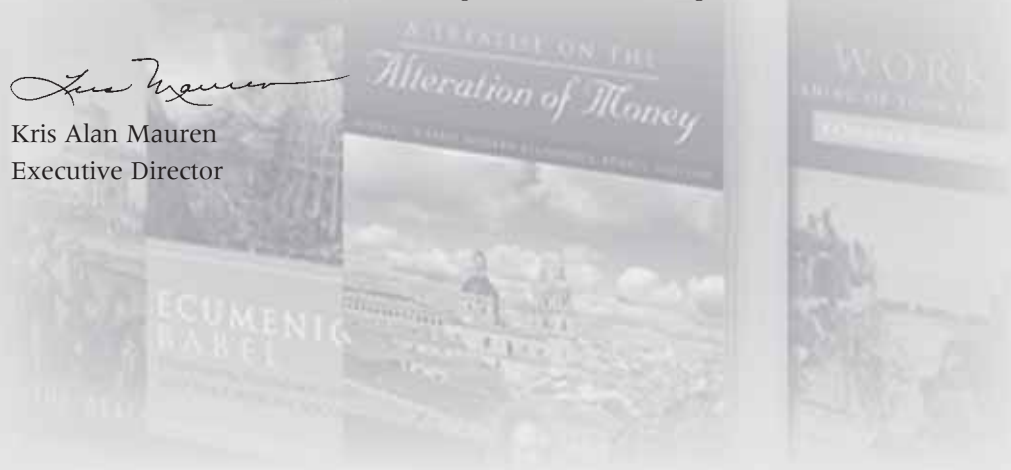
Acton Institute is committed to publishing new books and building on the rich theological heritage that has characterized CLP. Acquiring CLP was a natural fit given all the work Acton has done to become a leading source in the area of Christian stewardship. Acton’s partnership with the Stewardship Council also strengthens our ability to take full advantage of this opportunity with Christian’s Library Press.

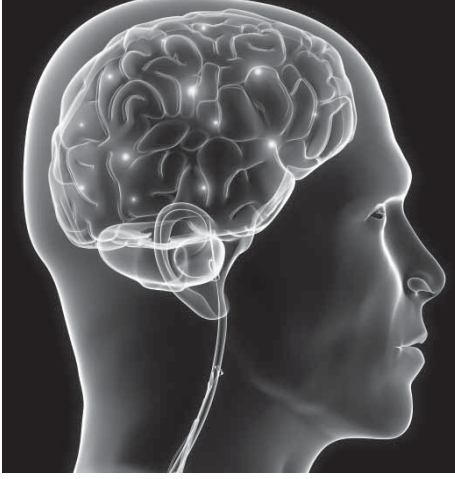
This is also an important endeavor for the Acton Institute in continuing to expand its outreach to evangelicals across the country and world. In June, CLP released Jordan Ballor’s new book *Ecumenical Babel*, a critical engagement of the ecumenical movement’s approach to ethical and economic issues, including important arguments for continued dialogue within the life of the Church. With the help of staff and interns, the Acton Institute has now published through Amazon’s Kindle device, a second digital edition of *Work: The Meaning of your Life—A Christian Perspective*, by Lester DeKoster. *Ecumenical Babel* is also available electronically for the Kindle.

With the resources the Acton Institute has at its disposal, new content will continue to be published under the CLP imprint electronically, including previous print editions and updated out-of-print books. Christian’s Library Press will only continue to add to the image of Acton as a trusted and leading voice in the area of stewardship, theology, Christian witness, and ecumenism. For more information on Christian’s Library Press, visit www.clpress.com.



Kris Alan Mauren
Executive Director





Review: Thomas Sowell's Field Guide to Intellectuals

By Bruce Edward Walker

Arguments about ideas are the bread and butter of the academic, journalism and think tank worlds. That is as it should be. Honest intellectual debate benefits any society where its practice is allowed. The key element is honesty.

Today, someone is always looking to take out the fastest gun, and in the battles over the hearts and minds of the public, many weapons are brought to bear. Unfortunately, and too often, among the artillery deployed by both sides in an argument are rhetorical deception, misleading statistics and an air of authority, which can immediately bury facts in the Boot Hill of honest debate.

Seldom held accountable for the violence brought to bear on the verifiable when their ideas lead to long-lasting negative effects, many of these intellectual gunslingers head into battle confident that their wits will save the world from another perceived plight.

Fortunately, Thomas Sowell is one of the fastest intellectual guns in the proverbial corral. His latest, *Intellectuals and Society*, finds the erudite economist turning his guns on the so-called intellectuals who attempt and too often succeed in swaying public opinion and political policy, where the arrogance of intellect too often is the smart bomb dropped squarely on empirical evidence.

Indeed, intellectual folly knows no ideological parameters. However, Sowell di-

vides intellectuals into two classes, where ideological divides are readily identifiable. The first is comprised of those with a constrained, or tragic, view of the world. To a conservative sympathetic to writers such as Russell Kirk and T.S. Eliot, there is an understanding that humankind is fallen and that there can be no heaven on Earth. Eliot and Kirk held that a worldview is only viable inasmuch as it reflects what Edmund Burke called the moral imagination, which he defined as, "the power of ethical perception which strides beyond the barriers of private experience and events of the moment ..."

Sowell, however, forgoes the transcendent definition in favor of a quotidian, earth-bound understanding:

In the tragic vision, social contrivances seek to restrict behavior that leads to unhappiness, even though these restrictions themselves cause a certain amount of unhappiness. It is a vision of trade-offs, rather than solutions, and a vision of wisdom distilled from the experiences of the many, rather than the brilliance of a few. ... In the constrained vision, there are especially severe limits on how much any given individual can know and truly understand, which is why this vision puts such emphasis on systemic processes whose economic and social transactions draw upon the knowledge and experience of millions, past and present. (p. 78)

The other class of intellectual, according to Sowell, possesses an *anointed* vision, which

is a belief that humanity is perfectible and the world is one large Petri dish where

"Fortunately, Thomas Sowell is one of the fastest intellectual guns in the proverbial corral."

superior intellects can craft an earthly paradise through bold experiments:

[S]ocial contrivances are the root cause of human unhappiness and explain the fact that the world we see around us differs so greatly from the world we would like to see. In this vision, oppression, poverty, injustice and war are all products of existing institutions—problems whose solutions require changing these institutions, which in turn require changing the ideas behind those institutions. In short, the ills of society are seen as ultimately an intellectual and moral problem, for which intellectuals are especially equipped to provide answers, by virtue of their greater knowledge and insight, as well as their not having vested economic interests to bias them in favor of the existing order and still the voice of conscience. ... This vision of society, in which there are many 'problems' to be 'solved' by applying the ideas of morally anointed intellectual elites is by no means the only vision, however much that vision may be prevalent among today's intellectuals. (pp. 76, 77)

continued on pg 10

Sowell presents specific examples of the anointed urge throughout several chapters respectively dedicated to media and academia; economics; law; social planning; and war. His rogues' gallery includes twentieth century leaders and thinkers such as Woodrow Wilson, Bertrand Russell, Thomas Dewey, Neville Chamberlain, John Maynard Keynes and Rachel Carson. Wilson's academic background is credited by Sowell as providing him with the intellectual arrogance to allow American shipping in German blockaded water, giving him an easy excuse to seek war against Germany when those ships inevitably were attacked. Russell, Dewey and Chamberlain are all taken to task for their ill-timed and irresolute pacifism at a time when stern diplomacy and a big stick approach would've yielded better results prior to World War II. The furor against the pesticide DDT caused by Carson's research is credited by Sowell (and many others) as causing the subsequent deaths of millions from malaria and dengue fever.

Rather than engage in simple character assassination, however, Sowell gives his devils their respective dues. No one doubts, for instance, Carson's correct conclusion that unchecked application of DDT was causing softening of shells for eagles and other raptors. What is questionable is the subsequent overstatement that all levels of pesticides had detrimental impacts on all wildlife. Likewise, Sowell praises the linguistic work of Noam Chomsky while lamenting Chomsky's straying from the fields of language to the swamps of political debate, where his ideas provide succor to other intellectual elites.

While characterizing the anointed as individuals besotted with their own intellect, Sowell argues that their ideas would not gain traction without the use of rhetorical parlor tricks. Here, Sowell shines as he offers his own "guide to talking to intellectuals." Often the first shot over the bow of a constrained thinker's argument is the anointed's charge that it is "simplistic." Sowell explains why this dismissal is, more

often than not, dishonest as it expands the original "question to unanswerable dimensions" and derides "the now inadequate answer as simplistic."

Sowell is perhaps more convincing when he identifies the demonization of opponents as the favorite rebuttal of the anointed. The refusal to accept the goodwill of one's opponents — as a starting point for honest debate — is an all too common device employed by the anointed, according to Sowell and this writer's personal experience. This often leads right away to personal attacks. From John Stuart Mills' admonition of Conservatives as the Party of Stupid to pacifist J.B. Priestley's assertion that the British public favored war only out of ennui and the desire for patriotic displays, Sowell portrays the *ad*

" His defense of common sense and empirical facts over intellectual arrogance and rhetorical sleight-of-hand should serve as a handbook for anyone interested in engaging in honest debate."

hominem as a first line of attack.

Should insults fail, the assumption of the moral high ground is the second wave of attack: How can one defeat an opponent who presents him or herself as more compassionate toward fellow humans or presents themselves as more caring about the beauty of nature and the state of the environment? As Sowell aptly puts it:

While the conflicts between the tragic vision and the vision of the anointed can lead to innumerable arguments on a wide range of issues, these can also lead to presentations of views that take the outward form of an argument without the inner sub-

stance of facts or analysis — in other words, arguments without arguments.

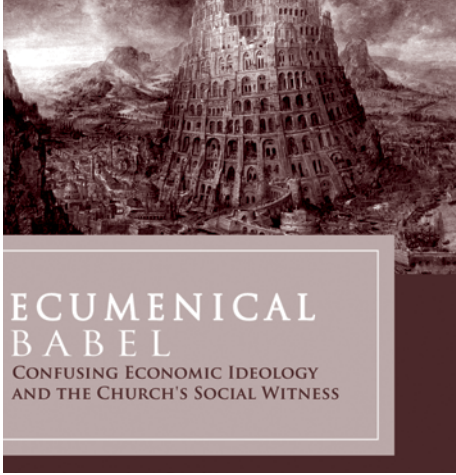
Elsewhere, Sowell's prodigious knowledge is brought to bear on his discussion of intellectual claims for rights where none exist, including the supposed "rights" to affordable health care, living wages and other social justice issues. In each instance, he concisely eviscerates the intellectual arguments for the necessity to enact change. And he does so in a fresh way, without a hint that he might be simply rehashing his weekly columns.

Sowell's book is a handy compendium of point/counterpoints. For every John Dewey who claims, "Having the knowledge we may set hopefully at work upon a course of social invention and experimental engineering," Sowell quotes the wisdom of a Friedrich Hayek:

Not all knowledge in this sense is part of our intellect, nor is our intellect the whole of our knowledge. Our habits and skills, our emotional attitudes, our tools, and our institutions—all are in this sense adaptations to past experience which have grown up by selective elimination of less suitable conduct. They are as much an indispensable foundation of successful action as is our conscious knowledge. (p. 14)

Intellectuals and Society is a great read for those who increasingly engage in debate on the polarizing issues of today. Had Sowell not finished writing the book prior to the recent release of the Climategate emails, one can imagine the firepower he would've brought to bear on that topic. His defense of common sense and empirical facts over intellectual arrogance and rhetorical sleight-of-hand should serve as a handbook for anyone interested in engaging in honest debate.

Bruce Edward Walker is managing editor of The Heartland Institute's InfoTech & Telecom News. He has written widely on books, music, and film.



Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Challenge to the Ecumenical Movement

By Jordan Ballor

This article is excerpted from Jordan Ballor's new book Ecumenical Babel: Confusing Economic Ideology and the Church's Social Witness.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945) was a theologian and pastor intimately involved in the German church struggle (*Kirchenkampf*)—the attempt by the Third Reich to consolidate control under a central Reich bishop and promote pro-Nazi sentiment in the German church. Bonhoeffer issues his critique of the ecumenical movement in the form of an essay, “The Confessing Church and the Ecumenical Movement.” The challenging question articulated in 1935, “Is the ecumenical movement, in its visible representation, a church?” echoes throughout the history of the movement. This is, he realizes, “the question of the authority with which the ecumenical movement speaks and acts.”

If the ecumenical movement is a church, then its existence is not ultimately founded on human work but instead is based upon the work of the Spirit of God. In this way, “If the ecumenical movement claims to be the church of Christ, it is as imperishable as the church of Christ itself; in that case, its work has ultimate importance and ultimate authority.” An affirmative answer to the question of the ecumenical movement’s status as church articulates the highest possible view of the importance of the movement and its place in the Christian church and the larger world.

Nevertheless, notes Bonhoeffer, “There is



evidently the possibility of not understanding the ecumenical movement in its present visible form as a church.” This alternative would be what, in the Reformed view, is distinguished from the church as institution, that is, the church as organism. As Bonhoeffer puts it, the ecumenical movement “could indeed be an association of Christian men, of whom each was rooted in his own church and who now assemble either for common tactical and practical action or for unauthoritative theological conversation with one another.” In this case, however, the ecumenical movement would lose any special claims to theological or moral authority.

It would instead become a worldly institution like any other, one that happens to be made up of professing Christians that would rely on worldly criteria for expertise, judgment, and authority. Any action by such a group “might have only a neutral character, not involving any confes-

sion, and this conversation might only have the informative character of a discussion, without including a judgement or even a decision on this or that doctrine, or even church.” It would be a place for discussion but not decision, dialogue but not determination.

For Bonhoeffer, the confession is a key characteristic of the ecumenical movement as church rather than as association. Bonhoeffer calls “the living confession” the “only weapon” of the church, a weapon that “does not shatter.” It is within the context of this call to confession that Bonhoeffer emphasizes the importance of truth claims, for “where one church by itself seeks unity with another church, leaving aside any claim to truth, the truth is denied and the church has surrendered itself.” In order for the ecumenical movement to truly be a church, it must confess itself to be sinful and broken, completely dependent on Christ, committed to him and opposed to his enemies.

What this confession requires concretely will differ in each particular context. In our contemporary setting, the contrast is between a church that relies on its confession and an activist group that relies on its expertise or simply provides a forum for open-ended dialogue. For Bonhoeffer, the choice is clear. Either the ecumenical movement is an institutional form of the Christian church, or it abandons any special claims to authority, and, in so doing, undermines its own validity.

Ericson Jr. interview continued from page 3

from my early scholarly work the way I developed the significance of the Christian faith for life in our times, and this fit with his understandings. So I was on the inside of his vision, just because of who I was and what I believed.

Are there new Solzhenitsyn works scheduled for publication in the near term?

Soon, possibly even in late 2010, we'll see from ISI Books a memoir-like work of his

quite good, and he put some of this material into experimental stories called "binary tales," which should be forthcoming soon. One part of a binary tale tells a story—stops. The other part tells a story—stops. And you should be able to see how the two parts are related. There are other things of his, speeches and the like. I just got a copy of a book that wasn't by him, though the introduction is, called "Voices from the Gulag." Not a very imaginative title, but the volume consists of memoirs

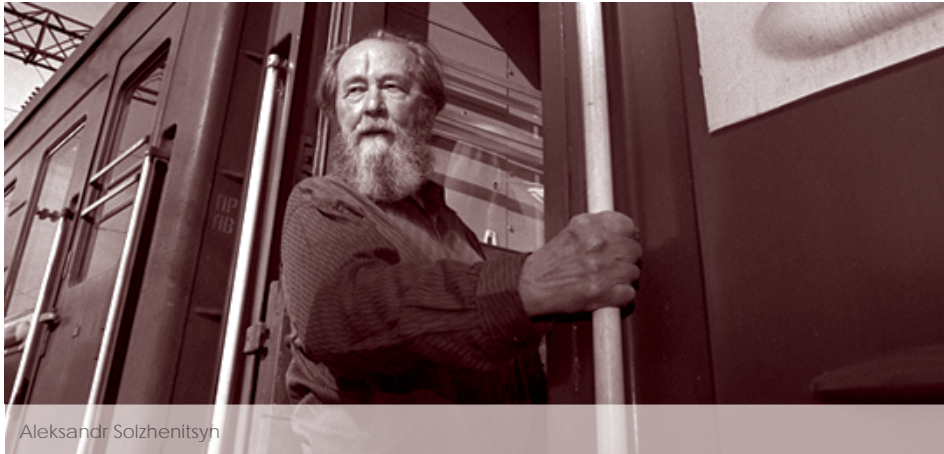
point of having asked me if I would collect and edit and introduce western essays on Solzhenitsyn about his worldview, of the sort that a few westerners write. And so I did that, and that book will soon be out, but it will be out only in Russian. All these essays have now been translated into Russian, as my introductory essay has been, and will be published by a Russian publishing house. It's compiled for the rising generation of Solzhenitsyn critics and any general readers who share that interest.

Will they see him any more clearly than did the Western literary mandarins here in the 1970s?

Well, Mrs. Solzhenitsyn says, just as in the West, literary critics don't usually write the sort of essays that examine foundational moral ideas underlying the literary works. In the new Russia, there's no experience in that direction. They need to get a sense of even how one goes about constructing such essays. Also, Mrs. Solzhenitsyn is in the process right now of abridging *The Gulag Archipelago* for Russian schoolchildren, to be included in the Russian required curriculum. My abridgment will help her a little bit as a model, but hers is going to have to be shorter. It's also going to have a Russian focus beyond what my abridgment had. You can't really take the "Russianness" out of the book, but I was emphasizing its universal themes and appeal. Already, in the required curriculum, Russia has "Matryona's Home," his best short story, and *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*.

Solzhenitsyn is a writer for whom the term "moral imagination" seems to have been coined.

I wrote an article comparing Solzhenitsyn and Russell Kirk, and the term moral imagination is prominent in it. I talk about the two of them together, because they were, for me, the two great illuminators of all sorts of things cultural, and I could see their connection. Kirk speaks about Solzhenitsyn in very much the terms that I do. I didn't need Russell to tell me about Solzhenitsyn, but I did need him to tell me about the moral imagination.



Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

20 years in the West, 18 of which were in the United States. It's called *The Little Grain Managed to Land Between Two Millstones*. The two great millstones are the Soviet Union and the West, and they grind as they turn. The little grain, which here is Solzhenitsyn's image for himself, is not a grain of wheat; it's a grain of sand. It's something that grates, that irritates; he rubs people in both places the wrong way. Back in the 1970s, the Soviet leaders said, as it were, let's send Solzhenitsyn to the West. He's a prickly fellow. Let him be a burr under someone else's saddle. They knew their man.

And fiction?

Yes, when Solzhenitsyn went back home to Russia in 1994, he had the leisure, finally, to pull together materials he'd had sitting around, of short-story length—stories, for instance, set in World War II that didn't make it into other books like *The Red Wheel*. The material itself is really

by other people about their experiences in the Gulag. He'd sent out a broad message, in a variety of forms, asking people to send him anything that their family had that was written in the Gulag, and he established a memorial center in Moscow. These are works that come out of that. So there's going to be more action in the West with volumes of his coming out.

What is Solzhenitsyn's future in his homeland?

In literary terms, the big action will be where it ought to be, and that's in Russia, where he is now studied, as he could not be before. Remember, we're less than two decades into the time when people can say things freely. We don't have too many people yet who went through the university and studied Solzhenitsyn thoroughly as preparation for writing about him. But such attentiveness is really growing. Very soon, Russians will lead the way in commentary on Solzhenitsyn. Mrs. (Natalia) Solzhenitsyn is concerned about that, to the

tion and how it illuminates the moral vision of life and literature. I used the term moral universe independently to focus my studies of Solzhenitsyn. What a confirmation or reinforcement it was, then, to circle back and see that Kirk used the term moral imagination to say much the same sort of thing about Solzhenitsyn. Indeed, I may have adopted as my own some points I had learned along the way from Kirk. Solzhenitsyn himself says in his magisterial *Gulag Archipelago*, "The line dividing good and evil cuts through every human heart." To get Solzhenitsyn right means to see him as a moral writer, and the moral vision comes out of a religious context. So to get him really right means to understand the religious context, which for him is Russian Orthodoxy.

But in his religious context, he avoids polemics and sectarianism. Again, the universal view.

That's right. There's plenty of exclusivism in Russian Orthodoxy, historically, as there is in various religious quarters of the West. Certainly that was so with the fundamentalist Protestantism that I grew up in. Solzhenitsyn always avoids such exclusivism in his writings.

Do you see Solzhenitsyn writing in the same literary spirit informed by a deep sense of sympathy, or even brotherhood, for Russian humanity

that, say, comes out of Dostoevsky or Tolstoy?

Very much so. All three of these writers belong to the Russian realistic tradition. Solzhenitsyn is a realist to the point that very little in his novels is based on entirely imagined episodes and characters. He writes almost always with real events and true human prototypes in mind. Sometimes these characters are a composition of several prototypes. That's what we see in Alyoshka the Baptist in *Denisovich*. Solzhenitsyn draws freely on the people he lived with in prison, and he typically sets his stories in prison. He allows himself to take a little poetic license with his characters, but he doesn't invent characters out of nothing—or nothing but his imagination. We can also make useful distinctions between Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. There's a pretty old book by George Steiner called *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky*. The operational word is *or*. Steiner says, essentially, that you can like both Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, but you can love only one. You are either a Tolstoyan or Dostoevskian in the deepest part of your imagination. And in those terms, most critics of Solzhenitsyn say he is a Tolstoyan. I am sure they are wrong, and I'm not the only one who thinks they are wrong. The line dividing good and evil that cuts through every human heart is what Dostoevsky writes about. It's Dostoevsky that Solzhenitsyn quotes when he is writing his literary theory in his Nobel Lecture. It's Tolstoy he cites when he describes a false philosophy of history. He argues against Tolstoy. He recognizes Tolstoy as a great master and recognizes that he borrows things from him. So I don't want to have some sharp antithesis between him and Tolstoy, but I am just confident that the deeper alliance of spirit is with Dostoevsky, and in fact, people who write about the moral character of Solzhenitsyn, the moral vision of Solzhenitsyn, emphasize the Dostoevskian connection. Secular admirers of Solzhenitsyn tend to emphasize the Tolstoy connection.

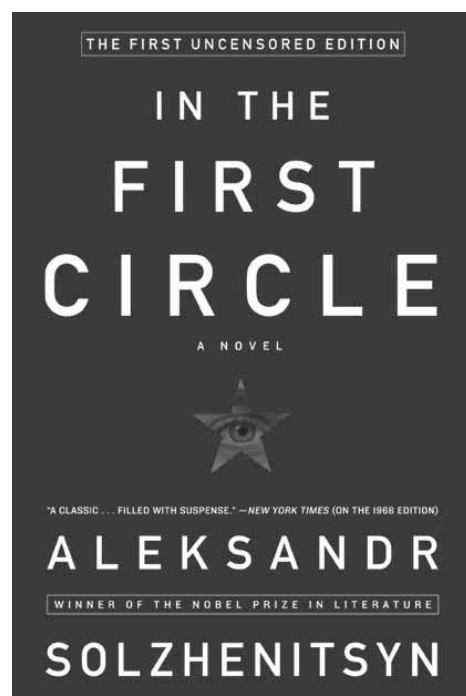
Outside of the literary community, what about popular appeal?

Some years back, I heard somebody say,

"The time will come when Russians will name streets and parks and schools after Solzhenitsyn." When I was in Moscow for a Solzhenitsyn conference in December 2008, Stephan Solzhenitsyn drove me, as we were on our way to the cemetery where his father was buried, down Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn Street, a wide street in the heart of Moscow that had been changed to his name. It used to be called The Great Communists Street, or something like that—a plural term for Soviet higher-ups. How's that for a great change? It is a sort of short street because it costs so much to change a street name—signs, business stationery, and all that—but it's a significant street. And I thought, there it is, prophecy fulfilled. There's also a school in France named for him. France, of all places, because of something he wrote about that part of France. And the last thing I'll mention is that a Russian television network filmed, in 2006, new versions of a handful of the great classics of Russian literature. Dostoevsky got two—*The Idiot* and *The Brothers Karamazov*. Tolstoy got *War and Peace*. Pasternak got *Dr. Zhivago*. Bulgakov got *The Master and Margarita*. There was only one from a living writer, and it was Solzhenitsyn's *In the First Circle*. This was considered by the people at the network to be already of such classic status that it could be included with those other books as a sample of the best that Russia has produced.

Sounds like Solzhenitsyn is being added to the literary canon in Russia.

That's right. I usually try to avoid that word, but that's a perfect way to describe it, and with my approval. He's part of the literary canon right now, already. And I would say that there's hope for his future standing because the controversies of the 70s have really died down; Solzhenitsyn has outlived the controversy about him, just as he has outlived the state that vilified him as its enemy. There is a future for Solzhenitsyn in Russia, no question about it.



Benjamin Banneker [1731-1806]

It is the indispensable duty of those who maintain for themselves the rights of human nature, and who possess the obligations of Christianity, to extend their power and influence to the relief of every part of the human race from whatever burden or oppression they may unjustly labor under.

Benjamin Banneker is best known for his work in surveying the District of Columbia, but it is just one of many achievements. Banneker's father, Robert, was a slave who was granted his freedom and converted to Christianity. His mother, Mary, along with the help of Robert, owned and managed a successful tobacco farm west of Baltimore, Maryland. Born a free black, Banneker had very little formal education because of the tasks required of him for farm life. His grandmother, Molly Welsh, taught him to read and write.

In a prelude to his scientific achievements, at the age of 22, Banneker borrowed a pocket watch and built a wooden clock from scratch, a major technical feat in the colonial era. The clock kept precise time his entire life and chimed every hour for more than 50 years.

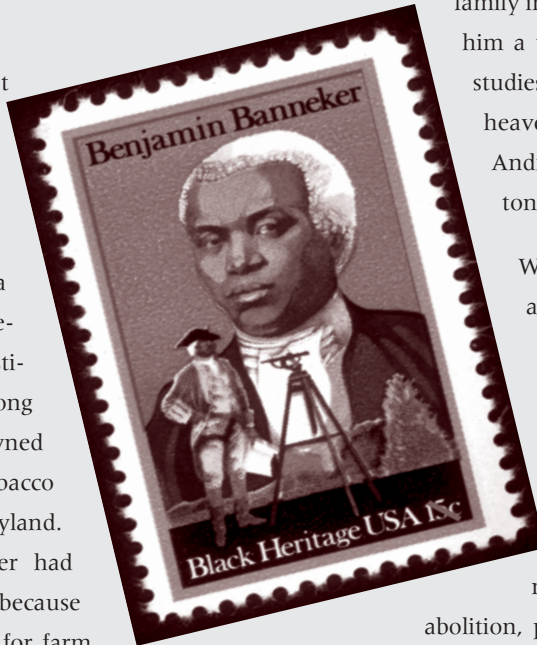
Banneker revealed himself to be a capable laborer, manager, and owner of his tobacco farm. His biographer, Silvio Bedini, described him as a loner but because of the fame that followed the invention of his clock, neighbors in the community sought out Banneker's counsel. Bedini declared he was admired for his "dignity, reticence, and gentlemanly qualities." The first book he purchased was a copy of the Bible. Banneker's 1806

obituary in the *Baltimore Daily Advertiser* declared there was "no book he was more attached to than the Scriptures."

He was befriended by The Society of Friends and a wealthy family in the area named the Ellicotts. George Ellicott lent him a telescope and other equipment for astronomical studies, thus cultivating his lifelong fascination with the heavens. He later worked with George's cousin, Major Andrew Ellicott, on the team that surveyed Washington D.C. in 1791.

With the help of abolitionists, he published his first almanac in 1792 which included astronomical calculations for the setting and rising of the moon and sun, tide tables, and weather forecasts. Banneker's work not only received commercial success but his mathematic calculations were endorsed by some of the most prominent American astronomers. He published almanacs up to 1797 and they often included essays on abolition, poems, and works related to Christian devotion and virtue. In his 1793 edition, Banneker included correspondence between himself and Thomas Jefferson on issues of human liberty and slavery. Banneker's work allowed for him to retain a level of financial independence and he was able to devote his time more fully to astronomy.

He is admired by many black Americans for his achievements, but his life also serves as an example that it is never too late to learn. He started his formal self-education in mathematics and astronomy in his late 50s. Banneker was lauded by notable English parliamentarian William Wilberforce on the floor of the House of Commons for his scientific contributions. Despite the many obstacles Banneker faced in life, his witness points to the possibilities of human flourishing in a society that promotes freedom and virtue.





Don't Devalue Christian Heritage

A week or so ago, I struck up a friendly conversation with a clean-lady upon entering a hotel.

She right away asked me, "Did you hear the news of the statue of Christ being struck with lightning in Ohio?"

How could I avoid it? For some inexplicable reason, the news of this "act of God" had attracted a great deal of attention. Why, I began to wonder, did this relatively marginal story gain so much press attention?

"Do you think it was a sign?" the lady asked. "A sign of what?" I replied.

I thought of our conversation for the rest of the morning. I am not one given to "signs and wonders" to discern some kind of mystical revelation, though I grant there is plenty of historical precedent for such epiphanies. Yet, I could not get the image out of my mind and the fascination it held for so many. It does not take the training of a professional sociologist to realize that a major cultural shift regarding faith, morals and the place of Christianity is under way in Western Civilization. And this has nothing, really, to do with some haphazard lightning strike in Ohio.

Consider the following, which is a mere sampling of recent efforts to undermine the place of faith in the public life of Western democracies:

- The European Union's insistence that neither God nor the Christian Church be mentioned in its Constitution, despite the clear historical role that belief in the form and the institution of the latter played in the formation of Europe.
- The litany (if you will excuse the pun) of coarse jokes, cheap shots and outright viciousness directed specifically at the person of Christ or the Christian faith on TV and which are passed over by the same people who would readily file hate crime charges against their promoters if addressed to any other religion.
- The subtle but clear shift in language away from "freedom

of religion" to "freedom of worship" on the part of the current administration, retaining only one dimension of religion (worship) while setting the stage to curtail its public witness. It is freedom of religion, not merely worship that has been venerated since the American founding.

This is not mere paranoia. Numerous other examples exist, but these should be sufficient evidence of a trend that is attempting to foster an entire cultural shift which would reject Christian revelation's role in the forming of American and Western civilization. For secularists and some non-Christians, this might seem a worthy undertaking. After all, they might reason, why do we need a religion to be telling us how to live our lives, much less a religion that makes a claim to truth? And what is truth anyway, they might ask, not even realizing they are echoing Pilate's own question to Jesus on the eve of his crucifixion?

Yet, aside from the historical amnesia this would represent, there are several significant ramifications which might well ensue, were a complete repudiation of Christianity achieved.

The very idea of limited government and hence tolerance (yes, tolerance, which is not to be confused with the relativism offered as a substitute) emerge from the Judeo-Christian view of the sovereignty of God in personal and social life, rather than the sovereignty of political elites. The very juridical systems we have grown accustomed to -- and have been the envy of the world -- did not just appear; they unfolded from the logic of the biblical faith. So, too, with the scientific method which followed from the knowledge that, if things are ordered by a divine plan and we are made in the image of God, then the truth of the physical world is knowable to reason.

Christianity has endowed Western Civilization with a priceless heritage. To lose this to a mass amnesia in the culture would be an inestimable loss to the sense of who we are as a people and to any real hope we might have of building a just and tolerant future.

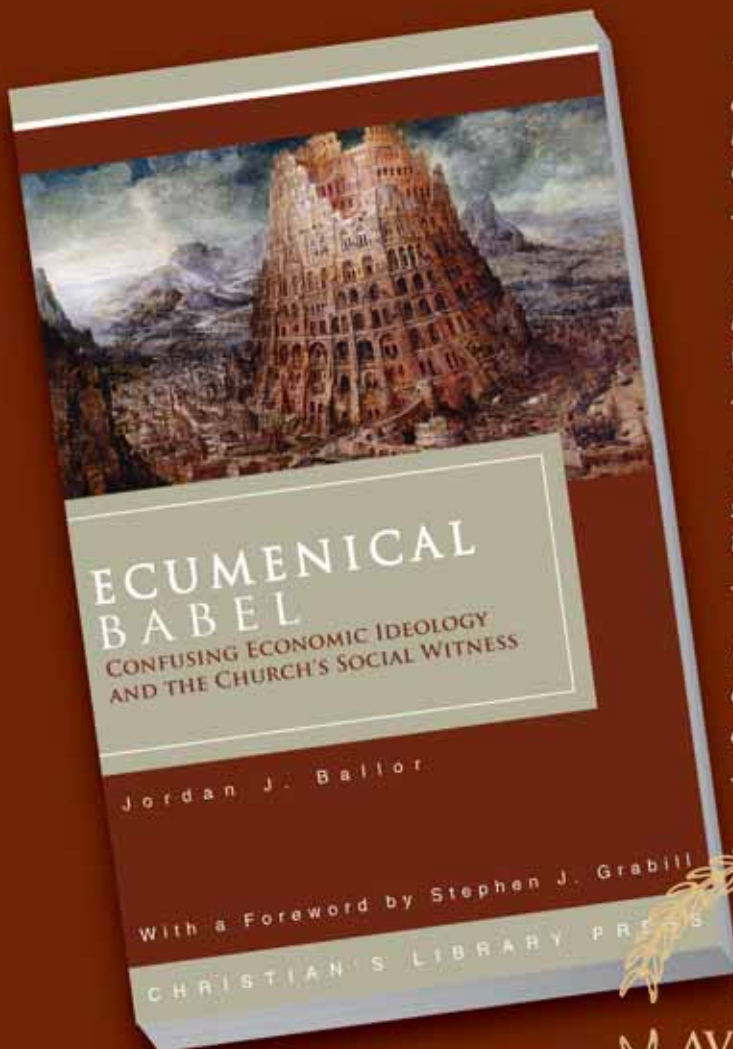
This column first appeared in The Detroit News.

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ECUMENICAL BABEL

CONFUSING ECONOMIC IDEOLOGY
AND THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL WITNESS

A CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT OF THE
ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT'S APPROACH
TO ETHICAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES,
ECUMENICAL BABEL IS A VOICE FOR
SUSTAINED ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE,
VITAL ECCLESIASTICAL WITNESS, AND
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