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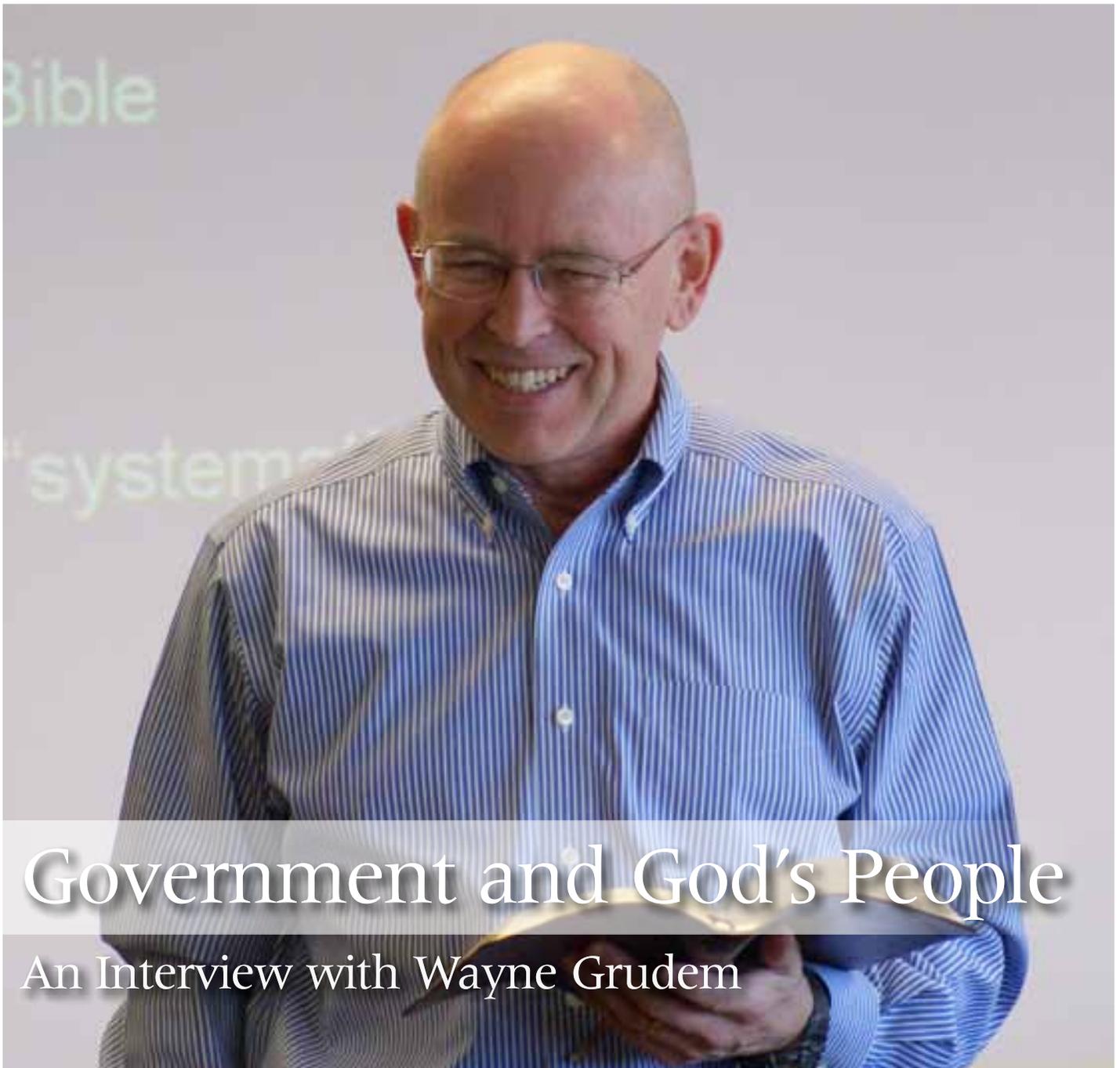
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Religion & Liberty

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Government and God's People

An Interview with Wayne Grudem

A Journal of Religion, Economics, and Culture

Editor's Note



The Spring 2011 issue of *Religion & Liberty* leads off with an interview with Wayne Grudem, author of the new book *Politics According to the Bible*. The author is a giant in the evangelical world. He helps all of us to think Biblically and while the book offers a political worldview, ultimately it helps us to focus on the Word made Man. That is exactly what Grudem intends. *Politics According to the Bible* is a superb resource for believers to think about man's relationship to the state and his Creator. It is also a handy resource for a Christian writer to have on his or her bookshelf. Grudem is the author of another book that many of us at Acton have been edified by since it was first published in

2003, *Business for the Glory of God*. His solid insight is educational and inspirational, and we are thankful he joined us in conversation about some pressing events and concerns.

R&L's managing editor Ray Nothstine contributes a fine piece covering the tornado relief efforts by Christian ministries in the American South and Midwest. His focus is on telling the stories of a few of the churches and people involved. He also contributes valuable theological insight, touching on the problem of evil and the "suffering servant." Nothstine is grateful to Tuscaloosa resident Jeff Bell and Joplin pastor Randy Gariss. They both generously offered their time for interviews even though they are extremely busy with the recovery.

David Paul Deaval contributes a review of *The Conservative Foundations of the Liberal Order* by Daniel J. Mahoney. Acton Research Director Samuel Gregg offers a piece for the issue titled "Debt, Finance, and Catholics." The debt crisis is so prodigious, that Indiana Governor Mitch

Daniels aptly referred to the debt as the "new red menace."

We profiled Richard John Neuhaus in this issue for "In the Liberal Tradition." It is said, "In all things, he had the heart of a pastor." He was always gracious and always committed to teaching and edifying God's people. It was not only his mind that made him such a powerful force in the public square but his compassion and his ability to value personal relationships. We interviewed him for *R&L* in 1993 about the role of faith in public life. On that issue, perhaps there was no greater voice of his generation.

I should add that Fr. Neuhaus was well known for his influence in the public square and for his insights into the moral foundations of the American experiment. But he should be just as famous for his theological command and for books like *As I Lay Dying: Meditations Upon Returning*.

Father Raymond

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Government and God's People

An Interview with Wayne Grudem

Wayne Grudem is the research professor of theology and biblical studies at Phoenix Seminary in Arizona. He previously taught at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School for 20 years. He has served as the President of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, as President of the Evangelical Theological Society (1999), and as a member of the translation oversight committee for the English Standard Version of the Bible. He also served as the general editor for the ESV Study Bible (Crossway Bibles, 2008). Grudem's latest book is *Politics According to the Bible* (Zondervan, 2010). He recently spoke with Religion & Liberty's managing editor Ray Nothstine.

R&L: *Why did you write Politics According to the Bible and how will it help Christians engage the political culture?*

Grudem: I found that there were many Christians concerned about the direction of our nation. But they were unsure what the Bible taught about various political topics. I had taught ethics for nearly 30 years at the seminary level, and I realized that many of the topics that I was teaching had direct implications for political questions. I taught material related to abortion, euthanasia, just war theory, capital punishment, the rich and the poor, the role of government, and environmental stewardship. The more I thought about these things, the more I realized that there were very sound biblical principles that had direct implications for political questions.

Another reason is that I realized that many Christians thought it was unspiritual to get involved in politics and government. However, I found that in the Bible there were many examples of God's people influencing secular governments. I am arguing in the book that it is a spiritually good thing and it is pleasing to God when Christians can influence government for good.

What do you think are the biggest mistakes many evangelicals make when it comes to their approach to policy debates in the public square?

I actually list five mistakes that people make about Christian influence on government in the first chapter of my book. The first one is that government should compel religion. But I argue that government power should not be used to try to force people to support a particular religious viewpoint. I don't think very many evangelicals hold that first wrong view today, but in past history, both Catholic and Protestant believers have fallen prey to the temptation of trying to use the immense power of government to force compliance with certain beliefs. The mistake there is a failure to understand that genuine religious faith cannot be forced.

The second mistake is that government should exclude religion, and that is of course seen in many of the decisions of secular courts today, where they're trying to keep Christians out of the public square and keep Christians from expressing their faith publicly or influencing government at all. That denies freedom of religion.

The third mistake is the pacifist tradition that says government use of power is evil and demonic, and Christians should not have any part in it. They should not participate in military or police forces, using superior force to restrain and punish evil, because that is the work of Satan. I do not think the New Testament views government that way. Romans 13:4 says the government authority is "God's servant for your good." When the government authority carries the sword to punish wrongdoing, it is acting as God's servant, as the agent of God to execute His wrath on the wrongdoer.

The fourth mistake is very common today. It tends to be held by more conservative Christians, and that is the idea that Christians should do evangelism and not politics.

I have to say first that the center of the gospel, of course, is belief in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. It salutes the gospel of salvation by faith alone, in Christ alone. Nevertheless, there are broader implications of the gospel, because the gospel, when it is truly proclaimed, will result in changed lives. And I think Jesus wants us to have changed marriages and changed ideas of parenting and changed schools and changed neighborhoods and changed businesses and workplaces, and certainly, that would include changed governments as well.

I think that pastors have an obligation to explain to their congregations how Biblical teachings impact the government. In

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Damage in Bay, St. Louis, Miss., following Hurricane Katrina.

The Church and Disaster Relief: Shelter from the Stormy Blast

By Ray Nothstine

Christianity proclaims the future regeneration of a disordered world. The Church is an earthly reminder of that day of restoration. The Body of Christ, gathered together on Sunday but committed to the work of regeneration at all times, offers a refuge and comforting place for questions of “Why?” especially during disasters and trial. Through the ages, it has held to the hope of a brighter day. After springtime tornadoes tore through Alabama, the Rev. Kelvin Croom at College Hill Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa put it this way as he surveyed his devastated city:

Even in the days we were living with segregation, we all had a hope for a better day. And right now, that’s what we’re doing in Tuscaloosa: We’re hoping for a better day, hoping we come from the ashes of destruction and into a beautiful, more livable American city.

Many families and individuals understandably ask “Why?” after tornadoes wreaked havoc across the South in late April and in Joplin, Missouri, the following month. The 2011 death toll from tornadoes in the United States has topped 520, making it the deadliest tornado season since 1953. The 2011 death toll has almost matched the prior number of the last ten years combined.

During these disasters, concerns about continued government spending and a recession has given increased attention to the role of private charities. The sto-

ries, in many cases, are not just inspirational, but provide models of effective disaster relief.

With government assistance often bureaucratic and slow to respond, Christian charity and church organizations are a vital source of relief and comfort. “Pastors usually know their community better than government officials . . . While the government talks about systems and infrastructure problems, faith-based organizations are able to provide immediate assistance thanks to established rela-

“ I was amazed at the quickness Southern Baptist Disaster Relief cut through the rubble to meet immediate needs.”

tionships with churches on the ground,” said Franklin Graham, CEO and president of Samaritan’s Purse.

In Shoal Creek, Ala., a frustrated Carl Brownfield called the federal response “all red tape.” *The Birmingham News* ran a story on May 10 reporting that a “low number” of Alabama residents had applied for federal assistance for various reasons including being “leery of government help.”

After the experience of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, many church agencies and religious groups are now seasoned veterans when it comes to disaster response. They have learned from their own mistakes and built networks to empower their efforts. Along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, Christian agencies and churches rushed out with chainsaws to clear private properties and roads so that hot food tents could be up and running the next day. “I was amazed at the quickness Southern Baptist Disaster Relief cut through the rubble to meet immediate needs,” said one Katrina survivor. The Southern Baptists’ North American Mission Board raised a total of \$25 million to assist Hurricane Katrina victims. An American Red Cross representative in Alabama said, “I don’t believe the Red Cross could do what it does in terms of feeding people without the Southern Baptists.” She described the Southern Baptist food delivery system as a “well-oiled machine.”

Many church groups have their own state of the art field kitchens that can easily feed 25,000 a day. But perhaps the greatest faith witness to effectiveness is the long-term commitment churches and faith groups have made to rebuild the Gulf Coast. Six years after Katrina, in towns like Grand Isle, and Grand Bayou, La., volunteers are still getting up before the sun, attracting little fanfare as they give of their time and labor. They call this a “blessing” and a “form of worship.”

After Katrina, an army of Mennonite, Amish, and evangelical volunteers from Lancaster County, Pa., showed up to lend a hand at a church in Pass Christian, Miss. A conservative dollar estimate of their labor contribution was \$1.3 million. The volunteers donated just over \$1 million in equipment and supplies. Business leaders

ery that he calls “relational.” He sees the focus moving from initial response to empowering parishioners to distribute services and money through the ties and relationships that are already established in the community.

In a meeting with President Barack

major and she came to the scene to help. I am telling you, I saw the face of God in this girl and she is a born leader. She showed up and helped calm a traumatized woman. This girl was very poised and compassionate.

Bell, who lost his job because of the devastation, said the business community has been very active in the response. “Small business owners who have lost everything are finding ways to help their employees,” he said. Larger companies entrenched in the community have pledged sizeable financial gifts. Hyundai Motor Company has already pledged \$1.5 million to the relief effort in Alabama. In Joplin, Walmart and Home Depot have each pledged \$1 million to recovery efforts. Tamko Building Products, Inc., based in Joplin, has also pledged a gift of \$1 million for those affected by the tornado in Missouri. Coincidentally, the company had just finished rebuilding a plant in Tuscaloosa that was devastated by the storm.



On May 22, 2011, Joplin, Missouri was struck by a tornado resulting in at least 151 deaths.

pitched in as well, as the employer of a construction company from that Pennsylvania community paid his workers during the relief effort. These stories were common all along the Gulf Coast.

After tornadoes struck Alabama, large churches like Frazier United Methodist Church in Montgomery were teaching volunteers how to use chainsaws the next day. It was a testament to the network, skills, and expertise found in many churches when it comes to disaster response.

“The churches are far better about getting out of their buildings now,” said Randy Gariss, pastor of College Heights Church in Joplin. “Before it was more of a bunker mentality with some churches because of the cultural wars, but so many more churches are building relationships with the whole community.” College Heights Church is heavily involved in the recovery effort.

Using the tremendous resources of the church, Gariss is helping to lead a recov-

Obama in Joplin, Gariss shared something the president whispered into his ear after he finished speaking. “The president told me it would be the faith community and not the government that will make this [rebuilding and restoration] happen.”

University of Alabama professor David T. Beito called the relief efforts in Tuscaloosa “extremely decentralized” and added, “I don’t know if a more secular city would fare nearly as well.” In an interview, Tuscaloosa resident Jeff Bell declared of the recovery, “What I am seeing is spiritually amazing. Black and white churches are forming a bond as well as all different denominations.” Bell, who took shelter in the basement of a Baptist Church, prayed what he thought would be his final prayer. After the storm, he ran over to assist those injured in a nearby barbecue restaurant that was demolished by the winds. Bell said:

I met a young University of Alabama student who is a nursing

Social networking sites have been instrumental in relief efforts after the tornadoes, modeling spontaneous order. Much of the relief effort is not top to bottom but grassroots driven.

Toomer’s for Tuscaloosa, which has partnered with the Christian Service Mission, is a group of Auburn University sports fans who have united on Facebook to reach out to their in-state rivals. Their network has surpassed 86,000 people. Fans post a need and somebody responds nearly instantaneously to address the situation or share updates. Their reach, which has grown tremendously, is allowing them to assist Mississippi River flood victims, the tornado-ravaged community of Smithville, Miss., and Joplin. In a letter thanking the governor of Alabama for his leadership during the crisis, Toomer’s declared:

In one way or another, none of this would have been possible had you not minimized the red tape for this faith-based volunteer support initia-

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tive, our ability to get to affected areas was largely due to a lack of resistance from a governor who truly believes in the citizens of his state.

In Joplin, Gregory Mech, who pastors Immanuel Lutheran Church, says they had to hire a person full time just to answer phones. “One of the first calls we had from people who wanted to help came from Cameroon [Africa],” he said. Like many churches in the area that still have a structurally sound building, their church is open for food, medical care, and supplies. They even have a pharmacy on their church grounds complete with doctors and nurses. A parishioner at the church recalled:

mighty wind swept in from the desert and killed all of his sons and daughters. As we know from the story, it was just

“ The Apostle Paul declared in his letter to the Philippians that he wanted to know Christ more by participating in his ‘sufferings.’ ”

the beginning of Job’s suffering and laments. God, however, was not silent in Job’s suffering and spoke out of the

But it’s clear that a God that called his own Son to suffer to restore humanity, likewise promises that his followers won’t be free from suffering on earth. The agony of Christ allowed for the restoration of humanity. Christianity proclaims that adversity has brought abundant life. The Apostle Paul declared in his letter to the Philippians that he wanted to know Christ more by participating in his “sufferings.”

Lee and Sharon Sandifer of Slidell, La., lost everything after a 15-foot storm surge during Katrina washed through their residence. They simply hauled all their possessions out to the street and marked it with a sign: “This pile of stuff



A tree lies uprooted near graves and tombstones after a tornado left a path of destruction in the cemetery on April 16, 2011 in Raleigh, NC.

The word about our facility has spread and many tired, hungry families and rescue workers are getting hot meals, medical care, and supplies. When they walk in our gym, you should see their faces. They are overwhelmed by the love of Christ that is being lavished on them. Thank you for standing with us through this incredibly tough time. The Body of Christ is beautiful!

In the Old Testament account of Job, a

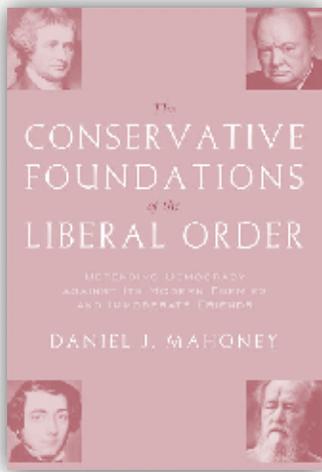
whirlwind (Job 38:1).

The old Isaac Watts hymn “Our God, Our Help in Ages Past” calls the Lord a “shelter from the stormy blast.” The Psalmist declares, “We went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance.”

The Church has debated and discussed the problem of evil from its earliest days.

was not our life; our life is hid in Christ.”

It is of little wonder that a faith that believes that all healing flows from Christ is leading the restoration of communities, no matter how broken or barren these communities may appear from plain sight. It is, after all, simply a model of the Incarnation.



Saving Liberalism from Itself

Review by David Paul Deavel

Review of: Daniel J. Mahoney, *The Conservative Foundations of the Liberal Order* (ISI, 2010), ISBN: 978-1935191001. Hardback, 208 pages; \$26.95.

When asked why he remained a liberal, albeit a conservative one, the late Richard John Neuhaus typically responded that liberalism, despite its flaws, offered the only decent politics in the modern world. *First Things*, the journal he founded, was dedicated to the proposition that while liberalism was a good, neither it nor any other politics was really one of the “first things.” In *The Conservative Foundations of the Liberal Order*, Daniel J. Mahoney, a political philosopher at Assumption College, follows in this tradition of qualified approval of a non-dogmatic “conservative liberalism” combined with a healthy awareness that it is not a self-sustaining project.

Part warning and part prescription, Mahoney’s book, which bears the subtitle “Defending Democracy Against its Modern Enemies and Immoderate Friends,” attempts to diagnose what has gone wrong, as too many ostensibly liberal Western nations have gently floated into what Tocqueville called “tutelary” or “soft” despotism while some, like France in 1968, nearly lurched into hard despotism. Under modernity, Mahoney argues, liberty is too often reduced to “a vague and empty affirmation of equality and individual and collective autonomy” that “is inevitably destructive of those ‘contents of life’—religion, patriotism,

philosophical reflection, family ties or bonds, prudent statesmanship—that enrich human existence and give meaning and purpose to human freedom.” The result of pursuing the reductive notion of liberty without the “contents of life,”

“ Mahoney defends the democratic instinct not simply because he believes it an unstoppable force over the last five centuries, but because it bears within it an important truth.”

including a healthy appreciation for legitimate authority, is liberty’s opposite. Radical individualism puts men at the mercy of the impersonal “schoolmaster state.” Mahoney is not ready to say, even of France’s “excessively administered state and society,” that tutelary despotism has arrived. But the implication is that it pushes hard at the gates—and not just those of Paris. In his chapter on the events of 1968, Mahoney spells out the warning signs present in all the western nations:

The relentless assault on the principle of authority proceeds apace. This process is so regularized that we have ceased to notice or appreciate its

truly revolutionary character. Our political orders are bereft of statesmanship, the family is a shell of its former self, and influential currents within the churches no longer know how to differentiate between the sublime demands of Christian charity and demagogic appeals to democratic humanitarianism.

In isolation, a quotation such as the preceding might place Mahoney too much within the hell-in-a-handbasket school of analysis. Yet a particular delight of Mahoney’s work is his attempt to fulfill Raymond Aron’s goal of “equity” which is “a truly balanced approach to political and historical understanding.” Mahoney defends the democratic instinct not simply because he believes it an unstoppable force over the last five centuries, but because it bears within it an important truth. Liberty is a good that is necessary for the full thriving of humans. Even the imbalanced notion of liberty as an ideological “liberation” or “equality” has brought some good to the western nations. But without a richer notion of what Tocqueville called “the art of liberty,” liberalism cannot be saved from itself: the goods it brought will perish with it.

While Mahoney uses “democracy” and “liberal order” somewhat interchangeably, he is clear that what should be emphasized are “constitutionalism and the rule of law” which remain “the indispensable foundations . . . of a free and civilized political order.” The art of lib-

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erty cannot be reduced to electoral democracy. In this light, one reads the fine chapter, “Conservatism, Democracy, and Foreign Policy,” which manages to evaluate the foreign policy doctrine and practice of President Bush from a perspective neither partisan nor infected by Bush derangement syndrome.

Mahoney acknowledges that Bush’s immediate and long-term response to 9/11 showed a “tough-mindedness” that was rooted in a “clear-sighted recognition of

It is clear from such treatments of doctrine, rhetoric, and action that Mahoney values statesmanship as something a democratic age needs, but often pretends to be able to forego. Mahoney thus devotes an entire chapter to the question of statesmanship, singling out Charles de Gaulle (to whom Mahoney has devoted a previous book) and Winston Churchill as preeminent modern friends of democracy “precisely because they were willing to confront its limitations, and to do what is possible to address them within

nalistic humanism” in which the keys of “self-limitation” (personal and political) and deference to “the Creator of the universe” are necessary if the modern west is not to spawn even more destructive and totalitarian regimes than before.

Mahoney’s long second chapter, “Beyond Nihilism: Religion, Liberty, and the Art of Mediation,” is the most important chapter of the book. In it, Mahoney notes, following Pierre Manent, that modern philosophical liberalism has “next to nothing to say about weaving community and liberty together.” Even the American founders had a weak conception of what they were doing, working with a “hodge-podge anthropology” that drew unevenly upon classical and Christian wisdom . . . and Enlightenment presuppositions.” This mixture, though making a “fruitful tension” was also “an unstable mixture likely to decay as time went on.” (One is reminded of Neuhaus’s assessment of Leo Strauss’ claim that the American founders’ principles were “low but solid”: “Perhaps too low, not solid enough.”) No, what made the American foundation strong was the fact that, as Tocqueville put it, Americans understood that self-government “under God and the law” was very different from the “monstrous illusion that humans have the right ‘to deify and worship themselves.’”

Perhaps it is merely an irony, or perhaps a strategy, but many of Mahoney’s model statesmen and political philosophers, like Churchill (“a pagan through and through”), Tocqueville (a rather skeptical Christian), and Raymond Aron (a secular Jew) were not religious in any orthodox sense. Their bare-bones approaches to conserving what is best in Western history may not be adequate, but they are certainly helpful. Though he uses some of them frequently (like Pierre Manent and Solzhenitsyn), Mahoney might have covered more seriously religious figures. In his review of the book in *National Review*, Anthony



The Statue of Liberty located in New York Harbor.

Good and Evil” and issued in an “overall project [that] is informed by a strong dose of realism and contains no small elements of daring and moral nobility.” Yet the enunciations of the Bush doctrine, particularly in the 2005 second inaugural address, tended toward a notion of liberty that seemed to involve only democratic processes and ignored the “cultural prerequisites of democratic self-government.” While the policy instincts of the administration showed greater prudence than did the rhetoric, Mahoney clearly scores Bush rhetoric for its advocacy of democracy and not a fuller concept of constitutional government. Such advocacy is dangerous in a world in which “fledgling democracies” have more often been the conduits for totalitarianism than have authoritarian regimes like the Islamic states and territories that are currently challenging the West.

the bounds of prudence and decency.” Societies need not only reminders of the greatness possible for all human beings, but leadership which will “sustain” them in crises which reveal democracy’s weakness in inspiring greatness to surmount difficulties. Yet the statesman can only do so much if the ingredients needed for the art of liberty are lacking. And here we come to the heart of Mahoney’s book, which is ultimately religious.

Churchill is a great statesman not only because he defended the need for military strength and constitutional law, but because Churchill defended the “dual patrimony” of liberal democracy and Christian ethics. Without Jewish and Christian roots, modern constitutional governments would not have taken the shape they did. Without living religion, it is not clear that the art of liberty can survive. Mahoney endorses Solzhenitsyn’s diagnosis of the modern crisis as one of “ratio-

Daniels noted that great-souled secular men who limit themselves are rarities, and, that absent a religious revival, it seems difficult to see any way out of our cultural fix. Yet I think Mahoney hints at some answers.

First, Mahoney appeals to the strength of a Catholic “analogical” approach to theology with a strong defense of natural law. In the United States at least, such a broad approach has increasingly drawn adherents not just among Catholics themselves, but from the Evangelical and Orthodox, and even Jewish, worlds in the arena of political philosophy and advocacy. (Some might say more from those worlds than from the Catholic.) While many commentators want to declare the culture wars over, Mahoney, though clear-eyed, doesn’t see traditional believers as defeated.

Second, Mahoney calls for a healthy dose of Augustinianism among Christian citizens and thinkers. Though Catholic, he notes that Catholic thinkers from Jacques Maritain to Pope John Paul II have been sometimes “too eager to argue for the essential compatibility of Christianity and democracy rather than putting the stress on the need for a prudential accommodation between the Church and liberal order.” Mahoney sees in Benedict XVI’s Augustinian approach to Christianity and democracy a healthier approach that is, one notes, also ecumenically attractive.

Mahoney does not provide a list of “solutions” to our crises. But no permanent political or cultural solutions exist; Mahoney’s “plan” to save liberalism is the perennial one: we all must cultivate the art of liberty.

David Paul Deavel is associate editor of Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture and adjunct professor of Catholic Studies at the University of St. Thomas (St. Paul, MN).

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

Philippians 3:21

Who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

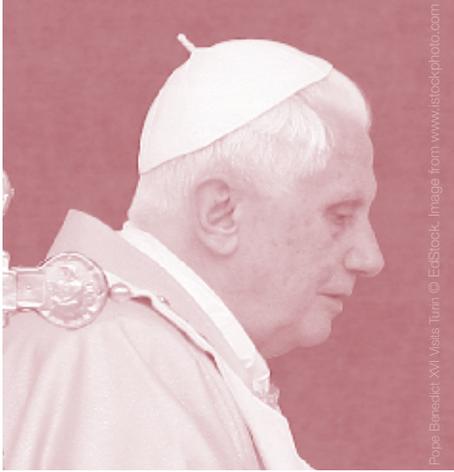
For many, the greatest trial of life comes in the form of broken bodies, the aging process, and disabilities. Sometimes a tragic event or disease can drastically change somebody’s quality of life. Through the ages, many saints have used their suffering to bring glory to God and call attention to the value of life. But many others have suffered in silence and been overtaken by despair and loneliness because of their affliction. It is why the old adage “health is more important than wealth” survives. It will not always be like that though.

Thomas Aquinas called the Transfiguration “the greatest miracle” because it showed the perfection of life in heaven. It also gives us insight into the kind of body we will have after our resurrection. During the Transfiguration, the body of Christ was radiant and he was adorned with clothes of gleaming white. The 18th century Reformed theologian John Gill noted that our bodies will be even greater than the body of the uncorrupted Adam. Gill stated, “It will be like the glory of the second Adam, which is the Lord Jesus Christ himself.”

It is often hard for many to prepare themselves for death, but death is all around us. People want complete control over their lives, but the aging process, health, and death are ultimately out of our control. The breakdown of our bodies is a reminder that life on earth is fleeting.

Every time we go to sleep and wake up again, it is a rehearsal for the day we will ultimately awake to sleep no more. Everything is under the control of the Lord. It is often a hard truth to grasp in our modern context. However, the reality of our frailty and death is a reminder of that truth daily. We all want to live forever. The Lord has put into our hearts the desire of eternity. John Paul II said it well: “The goal and target of our life is He, the Christ who awaits us -- each one singly and altogether -- to lead us across the boundaries of time to the eternal embrace of the God who loves us.”

Our fleeting life and the breakdown of our bodies is most importantly a reminder of our need for redemption. It is the physical evidence of our decay and mortality. God loves us so much he created us for relationship and with a desire to be with Him. On that day we wake to sleep no more, it will be glorious indeed.



Debt, Finance, and Catholics

By Samuel Gregg

Debt and deficits seem to be on everyone's minds these days. Whether it be worries about the American government's fiscal woes, Europe's fragile banking system, or the debt-as-a-way-of-life culture that disfigures so many lives, many people are seeking guidance about how to release ourselves from this mess with our souls intact.

In this regard, Catholics instinctively turn to Catholic social teaching for direction. Unfortunately, modern Catholic social encyclicals have relatively little to say about financial questions. Even the 2004 *Compendium of Catholic Social Doctrine* confines itself to very broad statements about finance and foreign debt, and it never really addresses the moral dimension of private and public debt.

This absence of sustained contemporary Catholic reflection on financial questions is puzzling. Once we get past the Dark Ages propaganda and Black Legend mythology that distorts so many people's vision of the Middle Ages and Catholicism more generally, we discover most of the practices of finance and banking took form in a medieval Christian world — one shaped and nourished by the Catholic Church.

Indeed, for many centuries, Catholic bishops and theologians invested considerable energy in understanding the world of money because of the usury question. Catholic thinkers were consequently among the first to identify mon-

ey's primary functions, illustrate how money in the conditions of economic freedom could assume the form of capital, demonstrate the moral legitimacy of charging interest on money-as-capital, and assess the moral status of different debts in different contexts.

Here it's worth noting that early-modern Catholic theologians assailed governments who tried to escape their debts by measures such as inflating the currency or borrowing more money to pay for interest payments on existing public debt, or who spent large portions of the taxes they raised on servicing debt or on activities that were either morally evil or simply did not fall within the core functions of constitutionally limited governments.

Sound familiar?

Today, one looks in vain for Catholic thinkers studying our debt and deficit problems from standpoints equally well-informed by economics and sound Catholic moral reflection. We don't, for instance, hear many Catholic voices speaking publicly about the moral virtues essential for the management of finances such as prudent risk-taking, thrift, promise-keeping, and assuming responsibility for our debts — private or public.

Instead, one finds broad admonitions such as "put the interests of the poor first" in an age of budget-cutting. The desire to watch out for the poor's well being in an environment of fiscal re-

straint is laudable. But that's not a reason to remain silent about the often morally-questionable choices and policies that helped create our personal and public debt dilemmas in the first place.

One Catholic who has proved willing to engage these issues is none other than Pope Benedict XVI. In his 2010 interview book *Light of the World*, Benedict pointed to a deeper moral disorder associated with the running-up of high levels of private and public debt. The willingness on the part of many people and governments to do so means, Benedict wrote, "we are living at the expense of future generations."

In other words, someone has to pay for all this debt. Clearly, many Western Europeans and Americans seem quite happy for their children to pick up the bill. That's a rather flagrant violation of intergenerational solidarity.

But Benedict then sharpened the argument. This willingness on the part of governments, communities, and individuals to live off debt means that people are "living in untruth." "We live," Benedict stated, "on the basis of appearances, and the huge debts are meanwhile treated as something that we are simply entitled to."

In fact, it's possible to go further and argue such attitudes reflect a mindset of practical atheism: living and acting as if God does not exist, as if the only life is

this life, as if the future does not matter. Only people who have no hope — no hope in God, no hope in redemption, no hope for the future — will think and act this way.

The economist John Maynard Keynes once famously wrote, “In the long run, we are all dead.” To be fair to Keynes, he was making a specific point about monetary theory. But his words are evocative of a mindset that should trouble Catholics and other Christians.

For if we choose to live our lives according to a perspective dominated by immediate gratification or pursue economic policies forever focused on the short term (which is, more or less, Keynesianism’s Achilles’ heel), then living off debt is entirely rational. But what does that say about our priorities and conception of human flourishing?

“ Taking on debt is not intrinsically evil. In many circumstances, it’s an entirely reasonable decision.”

Taking on debt is not intrinsically evil. In many circumstances, it’s an entirely reasonable decision. Nevertheless, a situation of inexorably increasing debt and a failure to confront its moral and economic causes can slowly corrode our personal sense of responsibility for our freely undertaken obligations and severely tempt us to live in a fantasy world of moral and fiscal unreality.

Such attitudes don’t just weaken economies. The damage to our personal moral well being, not to mention entire societies’ moral ecology, is immeasurable.

This commentary first appeared in Crisis Magazine.

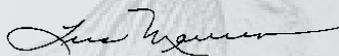
Why is Acton taking on a project like the translation of Abraham Kuyper’s Common Grace into English?

The Acton Institute has a strong desire to build on the significant role we are playing in contributing to the intellectual capital in evangelicalism. That is why we are collaborating with Kuyper College in Grand Rapids to produce the first-ever English translation of Abraham Kuyper’s seminal three-volume *Common Grace*. That is why Acton also acquired the Grand Rapids-based book imprint Christian’s Library Press in June of 2010 and created the *NIV Stewardship Study Bible* with the Stewardship Council and Zondervan in 2009. We want to be a trusted and leading voice for evangelicals when it comes to developing the very best intellectual resources. Christian’s Library Press will publish the translation, with the first volume scheduled to appear in the fall of 2012.

Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) was a Dutch theologian and statesman and his work *Common Grace* is based on a series of newspaper editorials intended to equip common citizens and laypersons with the tools they needed to effectively enter public life. The doctrine of common grace is, as Kuyper puts it, “the root conviction for all Reformed people.” It is a fitting source to complement the mission of the Acton Institute while simultaneously edifying the life of the believer. For Kuyper College, the translation is instrumental in providing a theological framework for their new business leadership program.

Acton’s director of programs Dr. Stephen Grabill will serve as the general editor of the project. Dr. John Bolt, a theology professor at Calvin Theological Seminary, will serve as a theological advisor. Dr. Nelson Kloosterman of Worldview Resources International, and translator of numerous Dutch works, will translate the texts.

This Acton project, especially in Reformed Protestant circles, will also serve as a valuable resource to draw evangelicals back to first principles and assist in the orientation of Protestant social thought. Kuyper declared, “If the believer’s God is at work in this world, then in this world the believer’s hand must take hold of the plow, and the name of the Lord must be glorified in that activity as well.” Expounding and distributing Kuyper’s holistic approach to declaring God’s dominion over the world, the human person, business, and the church will be a rewarding and fruitful endeavor for Acton.



Kris Alan Mauren
Executive Director

addition to that, there are many passages in the Bible that talk about God's purpose for government. Another answer to this view that says we should do evangelism and not politics is that it fails to understand the great influence that Christians have had on governments since the early history of the Church. Early in the Roman Empire, it was Christian influence that led to outlawing infanticide, child abandonment and abortion in the Roman Empire. Christian influence led to outlawing the gladiatorial contests in 404 A.D. Christian influence led to granting property rights and other protections to women at various times through history. Christian influence led to a law prohibiting the burning alive of widows with their dead husbands in India in 1829. Moreover, Christian influence led to the outlawing of the cruel practice of binding young women's feet in China in 1912. One can also look to the heroic campaigns of England's William Wilberforce or the Christian abolitionists in our own history. Alvin Schmidt in *How Christianity Changed the World* points this out very well.

All of those changes happened because Christians realized that if they could influence laws and governments for good, they would be loving their neighbors as themselves, and they would be doing what Jesus said in Matthew 5:16 when He said, "Let your light so shine before others, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in Heaven."

The last mistake, the fifth one, is that Christians should do politics, not evangelism. My book seeks to warn Christians away from the temptation of thinking if we just elect the right leaders and pass the right laws, we will have a good nation. That fails to understand that a genuine transformation of a nation will not come about unless peoples' hearts are changed so that they have a desire to do what is right and live in obedience to good laws.

What is the single greatest challenge today for those in business who are striving to live out

their faith in their professional lives?

The anti-business sentiment that is a significant part of our general culture would certainly qualify. I think our university system, the media, and some segments of our political culture foster a deep suspicion of business activity. They think that people who make a profit in business or become wealthy in business must be doing something morally wrong, and that they are taking money that does not belong to them and so forth. I think ultimately that viewpoint stems from Marxist thought that remains floating around in the intellectual atmosphere in our universities, implicitly, if not explicitly.

It is Marxist theory that believes all ownership of private property is wrong, and that when owners of large businesses make a large profit, they are simply ex-



ploting their workers. Marxist theory is opposed to any significant inequalities in income or possession. However, all of those Marxist views are contrary to the Bible's teaching that private property is good and it is a gift from God. The people of Israel, in the Jubilee, were to return to their own property. Property, when people died, was passed onto a person's family. There is no indication in the Bible that government should become the default owner of property, as in a communist system.

Even the commandment, "You shall not steal," implies that individuals own property, and so I should not steal your ox or donkey or your laptop computer, *because it belongs to you*, it does not belong to me. Of course, in Acts 4, there was abundant sharing of possessions with the early Christians but in Acts 5, Peter reaffirms to Ananias that his property was his own. After he sold it, the money from the proceeds of the sale still belonged to him. After Acts 5, we have many examples in the rest of the New Testament about Christians meeting in people's homes for church. People still owned homes. The New Testament emphasizes the value of private property and I think that has implications for the moral goodness of business activity as well.

The question is, how much do people deserve? How much income do people deserve to make? What is fair? What is right? My response is that people deserve to earn what they have legally earned, but without violating the law. The government does not have any right to sit over the top of the nation and decide how much money each person should have.

I argue in *Business for the Glory of God* that the fundamental components of business, which are producing goods and services, employing other people, buying and selling things, making a profit, competing in the marketplace and using money, that all of these components of business are not morally evil things. They are not morally neutral things. They are morally good things, which can

be used in evil or sinful ways.

People in the business world should in general think they are doing things that are pleasing to God and morally good, and they should enjoy it and do the best job they can.

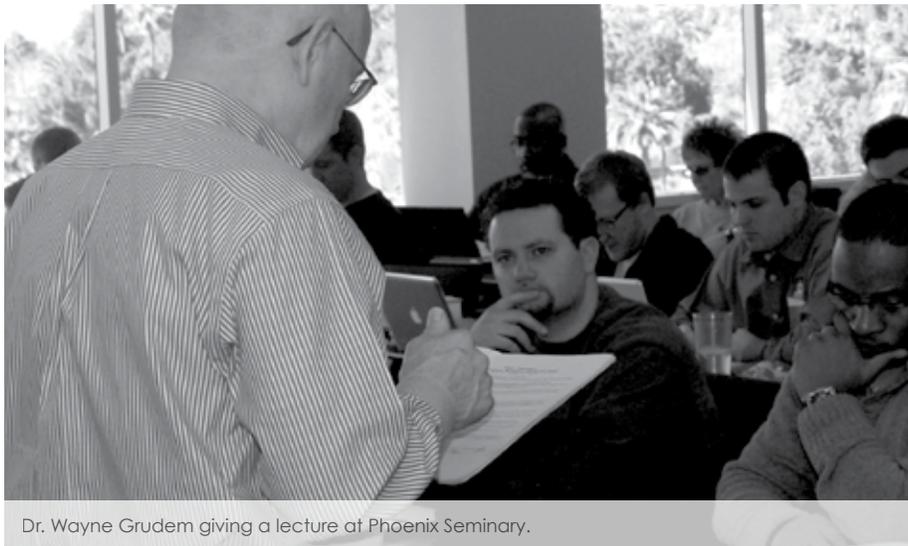
How do you approach specific policy debates from Scripture, such as the current debate in states and at the federal level about continually extending unemployment benefits? Can Scripture give us any insight into a policy measure of that nature?

I want to be careful not to make policy pronouncements on specific issues that the Bible does not address. I think sometimes Christians simply have to make decisions based on the results of one policy or another. People can evaluate the factual data in the world in different ways; evaluating the results of different tax policies and things like that. However, on unemployment, there are at least two principles that come into play. One is that we are to care for the poor and those in need, and the Bible frequently talks about the need to care for the poor. I think government has a legitimate role in providing a safety net for those who are in genuine need of food, clothing and shelter.

There is also a strong strand of biblical teaching that emphasizes the importance of work to earn a living. Paul commands people to work with their own hands and gain the respect of outsiders, be dependent on no one. He says if anyone will not work, he should not eat. In the book of Proverbs, it says a worker's appetite works for him. The longer that unemployment benefits are continued, the more we contribute to the idea that some people should not have to work in

order to earn a living, but we should just continue to have government support them. That creates a culture of dependency, which is unhealthy for the nation and unhealthy for the people who are dependent, year after year, on government handouts.

In the book *The Battle*, Arthur Brooks says that what people need is not money, but "earned success." The example that comes to my mind is a student at the seminary here who told me that a number of years ago, he had been in jail. He was arrested for the sale of drugs and other crimes, and his life was just a mess. Later, he finally got a job at a fast food



Dr. Wayne Grudem giving a lecture at Phoenix Seminary.

restaurant and one day his manager told him he was doing a good job of keeping the French fries hot. All of a sudden, this young man had a sense of "earned success." That is, he was doing well at something and he felt great about it and it spurred him on to work harder, to seek to receive more managerial responsibility at the fast food restaurant, and now he is a straight-A student at the seminary and has had a number of years of successful Christian ministry already.

So we need to be asking the important questions about how we can get the economy growing so that more jobs are available.

There's understandably a lot of economic fear and uncertainty now. What parallels in

Scripture can provide insight and instruction for this season?

Christians need to remember that God Himself rules over the nations. Psalm 22:28 says, "Kingship belongs to the Lord, and He rules over the nations." Psalm 66:7 declares, "God's eyes keep watch on the nations." Psalm 103:19, "The Lord has established His throne in the Heavens, and His kingdom rules over all." Daniel 4:17, "The Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom He will and sets over it the lowliest of men." And Job 12:23, "He makes nations great, and He destroys them. He enlarges nations and leads them away."

These and many other passages remind us that God is sovereign over the course of history and the affairs of nations. It is important for Christians to settle in their hearts that God is in control over history, and His purposes will be accomplished.

The last chapter of my book has to do with combining

work to bring good influence to government, coupled with faith in God and prayer that God's good purposes will reign in earthly governments. I think we have to do both things, because God hears prayers, and He also works through the efforts and actions of human beings who are seeking to influence government for good.

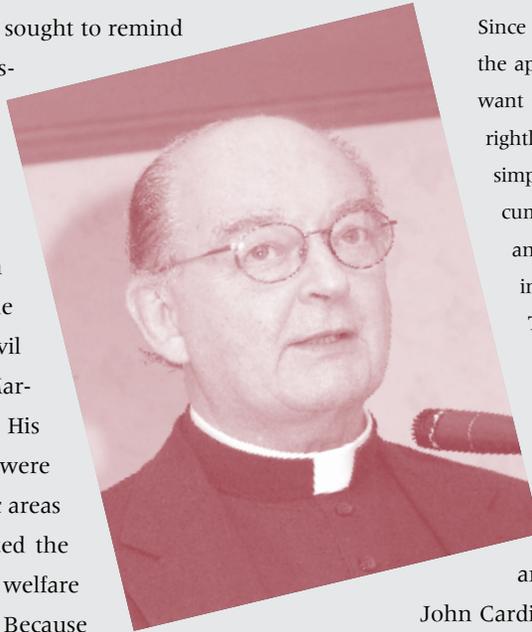


Richard John Neuhaus [1936-2009]

Consumerism is not simply the state of being well off, it is the spiritual disposition of being controlled by what one consumes, of living in order to consume, of living in order to have things. This, of course, is a great spiritual danger for rich and poor alike.

Father Richard John Neuhaus sought to remind people that they are, at their essence, a child of God. Neuhaus, who was born in Pembroke, Ontario, Canada, was the son of a Lutheran minister. Ordained a Lutheran minister himself in 1960, he was active in the American civil rights movement, counting Martin Luther King, Jr. as a friend. His initial parishes as a Lutheran were in the poor black and Hispanic areas of Brooklyn. He never accepted the Great Society programs or welfare state as a solution to poverty. Because of the ongoing secular drift in America, Neuhaus committed himself to forcefully arguing against efforts to strip America from its moral foundations and voice.

While criticizing the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches for excessive political pronouncements, Neuhaus penned the founding document for the Institute on Religion & Democracy, a Washington based think-tank committed to reforming the church's social witness by calling it back to biblical and historic Christian teachings. In 1984, he published his most notable book, *The Naked Public Square*. Neuhaus argued the interpretation of the separation of church and state by the contemporary courts were deemphasizing America's greatest strength, a vibrant religious tradition that allowed it to be a pillar of virtue, freedom, and economic opportunity.



Neuhaus, a defender of democratic capitalism, was critical of collectivist aims and those who were dismissive of the importance of economic liberty, especially among the clergy. In an interview with *Religion & Liberty* in 1993, he declared:

Since no society short of the kingdom of God can meet the appropriate criteria of justice, it follows that people want some kind of power, some kind of authority, to rightly order a society that is not rightly ordered by the simple exercise of individual liberty. This creates a circumstance which makes socialism, in one form or another, a very strong temptation for the moral imagination of politically engaged religious leaders. This is an endemic problem in religion and in America that found its most extravagant (some would say admirable) expression in the social gospel movement among Protestants in the late 19th and early 20th-centuries.

Neuhaus converted to Catholicism in 1990 and was ordained as a Roman Catholic priest by John Cardinal O'Connor a year later. He remained active in ecumenical circles and was named by *Time Magazine* as one of the "25 most influential evangelicals in America" in 2005. Neuhaus founded *First Things* in 1990, an ecumenical journal whose purpose is to "advance a religiously informed public philosophy for the ordering of society." The journal was essential for linking conservative Protestants and Catholics together to share their thoughts and pool their resources in the public square.

Neuhaus was not just a popular figure for advocates of a robust religion in the public square, but he was a giant among orthodox Catholics because of his articulate defense of traditional theology. In all things, he had the heart of a pastor. This was evident in the graciousness with which he treated opponents and how he inspired followers of faith to look beyond this world.



The Church's Social Teaching is One Consistent Body of Thought

The debate over the application of the core teachings of the Christian faith began when Jesus was presented with a Roman coin containing Caesar's image. In that moment, the Lord drew both a limitation to

the legitimate power of the state, and a distinction between it and the supreme authority of Almighty God. What would unfold over the years following was a highly balanced and well thought-out hierarchy of values rooted in a core understanding of the dignity of the human person. Yet it was not so abstract a set of principles as to be incapable of providing guidance for concrete policy recommendations that nonetheless do not collapse dogmatic and unchangeable doctrine into the dynamic stuff of politics and policies.

Some Catholic commentators reject this point, offering in defense a quotation from *Caritas in Veritate*: "Clarity is not served by certain abstract subdivisions of the Church's social doctrine, which apply categories to Papal social teaching that are extraneous to it ... *There is a single teaching, consistent and at the same time, ever new.*"

Benedict's point here is that the Church's teaching in the moral realm is one consistent body of thought. It is not a hodgepodge of policy concerns, among which Catholics may pick and choose along the lines of the fashionable Cafeteria Catholicism. The Church's solicitude for the poor, the marginalized, the unborn, and the elderly is all of a piece. In that sense, the critique is correct: A Catholic cannot subordinate "justice issues" to "life issues"; he must embrace the Church's teaching as a whole, because life issues *are* justice issues.

When it comes to *doing good*, which is what addressing poverty entails, the Church does not stipulate exactly how such good is to be done. Helping the poor requires a different sort of moral analysis — not because I (or the Church's teaching) am "dualist," as some critics suggest, nor because assisting the poor is "less important" than protecting the unborn, but because the two issues possess different characteristics and

therefore require different sorts of moral analysis.

It is possible to argue that cutting welfare programs is consistent with Catholic social teaching, because we may choose from the various options available to us to do good by evaluating them in the hierarchy of goods. It will not do to fling citations of social encyclicals at each other on this point. Certainly there are passages that could be found to support increased government activity in the economy and provision of social services — when necessary to serve the common good.

At the root of the incredulity and exasperation of some Catholics who mix fair arguments with vitriol is an incapacity to recognize that we really believe that many government programs *aggravate* rather than ameliorate poverty and other social ills. Rather than debating the prudence of the policies at hand, detractors resort to *ad hominem* attacks and pronounce anathemas selectively. Yet there is by this time a vast literature on the damage wrought by the war on poverty and its failure to achieve its goals. Such critics can continue to believe that shoveling government money into welfare programs discharges Catholic social teaching's obligation to assist the poor if they wish, but their inability to see other views as reasonable, at least, is distressingly myopic.

A Catholic may not disregard the Church's teaching to assist the poor and vulnerable; to do so would be to neglect the words and example of Christ Himself. It would be, in effect, to deny the Faith. But on the question of *how* best to fulfill that obligation, Catholics will indeed disagree, and the Church does not teach that it must be otherwise. The same kind of latitude is not permitted when it comes to legal protection of the unborn. I do not believe that this is "my view" of the matter; it is the mind of the Church, to which I hope my own mind is conformed.

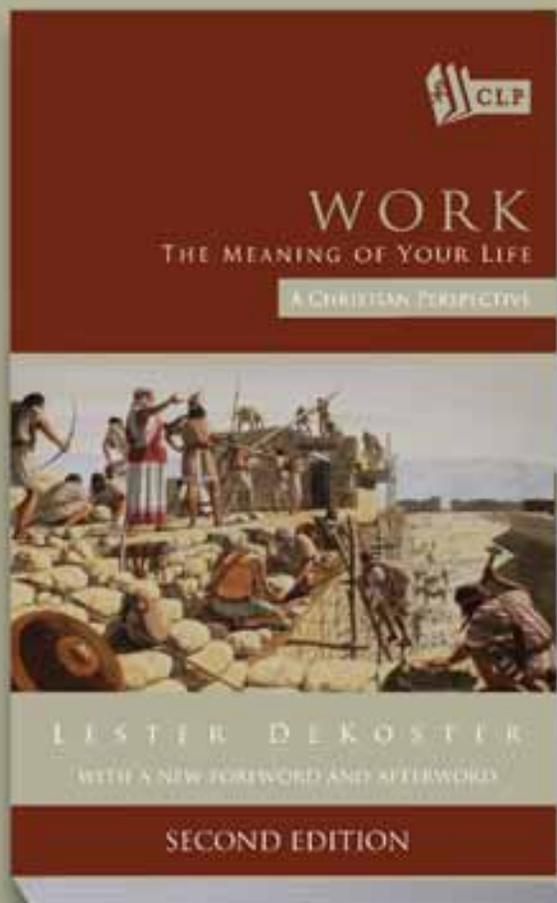
Rev. Robert A. Sirico is president of the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty, in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

WORK

THE MEANING OF YOUR LIFE

A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

WHERE DO WE FIND THE CORE OF LIFE'S MEANING? RIGHT ON THE JOB! AT WHATEVER WORK WE DO – WITH HEAD OR HAND, FROM KITCHEN TO EXECUTIVE SUITE, FROM YOUR HOUSE TO THE WHITE HOUSE! "WORK IS THE GREAT EQUALIZER – EVERYONE HAS TO COME TO IT IN ORDER TO FIND MEANING IN LIVING: NO SHORT CUTS, NO DETOURS, NO BARGAIN RATES."



Lester DeKoster (1916–2009) became director of the library at Calvin College and Seminary, affiliated with the Christian Reformed Church in North America, in 1951. He earned his doctorate from the University of Michigan in 1964, after completing a dissertation on "Living Themes in the Thought of John Calvin: A Bibliographical Study." During his tenure at the college, DeKoster was influential in expanding the holdings of what would become the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies, one of the preeminent collections of Calvinist and Reformed texts in the world. DeKoster also amassed an impressive personal library of some ten thousand books, which includes a wide array of sources testifying to both the breadth and depth of his intellectual vigor. DeKoster was a professor of speech at the college and enjoyed taking up the part of historic Christianity and confessional Reformed theology in debates on doctrinal and social issues that pressed the church throughout the following decades. Both his public debates and private correspondence were marked by a spirit of charity that tempered and directed the needed words of rebuke. After his retirement from Calvin College in 1969, DeKoster labored for a decade as the editor of *The Banner*, the denominational magazine of the Christian Reformed Church. This position provided him with another platform from which to critically engage the life of the church and the world. During this time DeKoster also launched, in collaboration with Gerard Berghoef (a longtime elder in the church) and their families, the Christian's Library Press, a publishing endeavor intended to provide timely resources both for the church's laity and its leadership.



Includes an excerpt of:
The Oikonomia Network's longer Manifesto ("Whatever You Do: Why Discipleship Is Withering—and What We Can Do About It")

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