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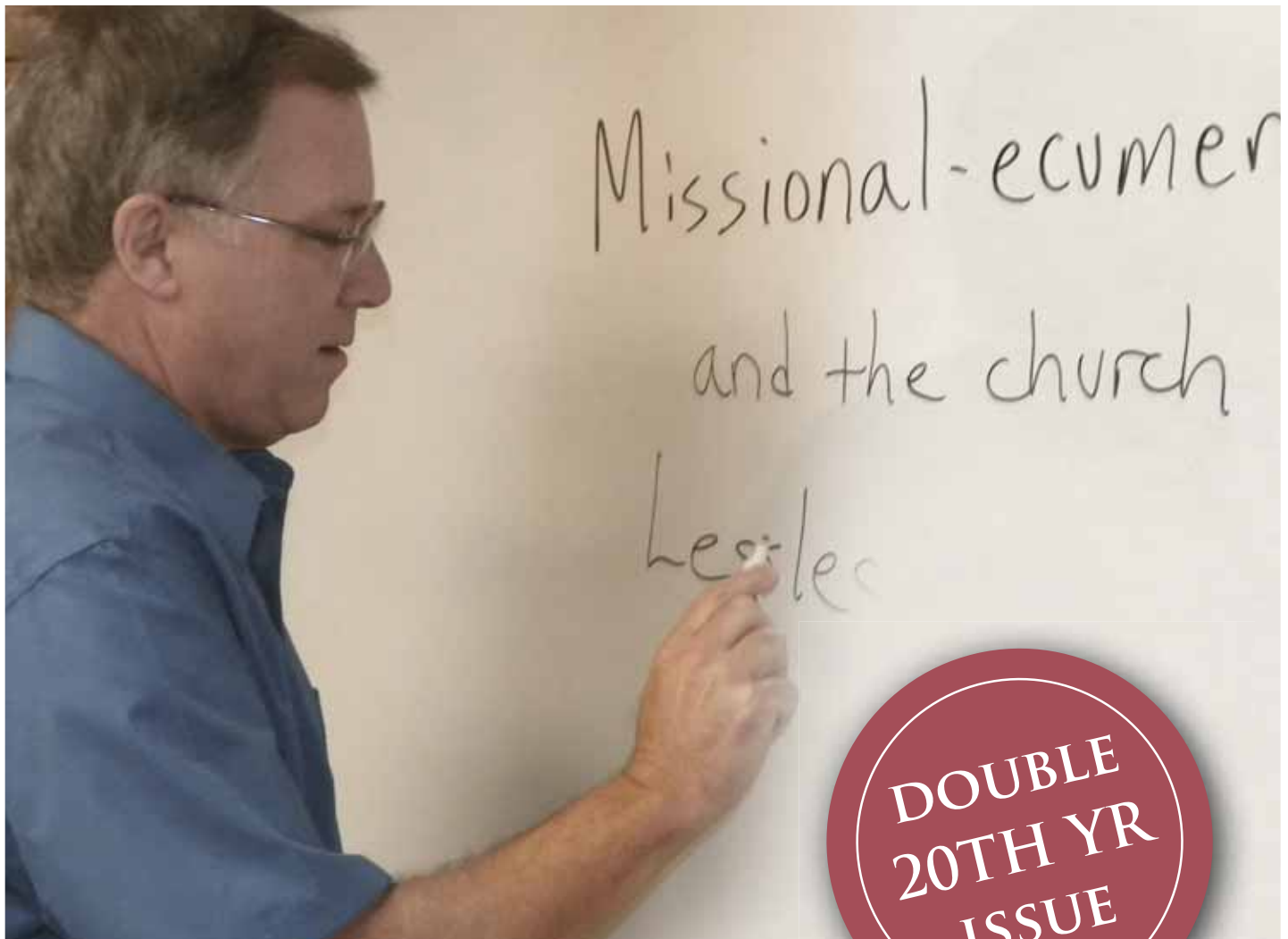
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Religion & Liberty

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Faithful Presence

An Interview with the Founder of ACT 3
John H. Armstrong

A Journal of Religion, Economics, and Culture

Editor's Note



The success of Acton primarily springs from the power of its ideas. We think this issue pays tribute to some of the best of those ideas. This double issue of *Religion & Liberty* is a tribute to the 20th anniversary of Acton's founding. There is plenty of new content within these pages and we also have highlighted some of our best pieces from the past. *R&L* has interviewed many notable public figures and scholars over the years and some of the interviews highlighted in this issue include those with former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Chuck Colson, the economist Walter Williams, and the late William F. Buckley, Jr. And we've added more from leading authors, evangelists, his-

torians, clergy, and a Roman Catholic Cardinal. We were intentional about selecting excerpts from interviews that point to higher truths and remain relevant today.

The lead interview for this double issue features ACT 3 president John H. Armstrong. If you are not familiar with Armstrong, we are glad you will have a chance to learn about him here. He has tremendous credibility in ecumenical circles and is well respected among Christian conservatives and leaders of the Evangelical left. He even delves into his experience working with Acton and how that relates to his ministry.

This double issue also features reviews of three new books. *R&L* Managing editor Ray Nothstine reviews Richard Reinsch's *Whittaker Chambers: The Spirit of a Counterrevolutionary*. Acton Research Fellow Jordan Ballor examines Carl Trueman's book *Republocrat: Confessions of a Liberal Conservative* and Bruce Edward Walker reviews Paul Cantor's and Stephen Cox's *Literature & the Economics of Liberty: Spontaneous Order in Culture*.

Walker is a Michigan based writer who writes frequently on cultural news.

Dipping back into the archives, we are including here an article about Lord Acton by James C. Holland. We believed that this 20th anniversary issue needed a piece on Lord Acton, and this one is among the best. Another piece from the archives is "Views of Wealth in the Bible and the Ancient World" by Scott Rae. The author takes us through the similarities and differences between wealth, economics, and the economy from the Biblical period and today. Also included is a very good excerpt from Lester DeKoster's *Work: The Meaning of Your Life—A Christian Perspective*, newly made available in the second edition by Christian's Library Press.

Finally, "In the Liberal Tradition" features Manuel Ayau (1925-2010). Ayau was a Guatemalan and the founder and former rector and teacher of economics at Universidad Francisco Marroquin. He was also a successful entrepreneur and ardent defender of liberty.

Robert A. Sirico

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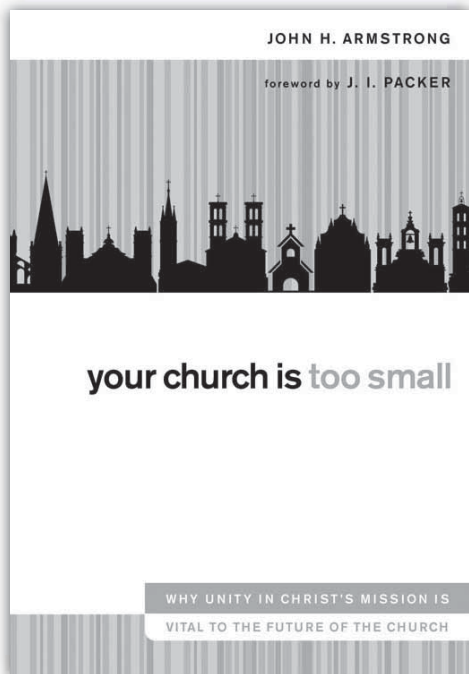
Faithful Presence

An Interview with the Founder of ACT 3

John H. Armstrong

John H. Armstrong is founder and president of ACT 3, a ministry for “equipping leaders for unity in Christ’s mission.” He is also an adjunct professor of evangelism at Wheaton Graduate School. Armstrong served as a pastor for more than 20 years and he is a widely sought teacher at conferences and seminars in the United States and abroad. He earned the D. Min degree at Luther Rice Seminary, Atlanta, Georgia. His latest book, Your Church is too Small, was published by Zondervan in 2010 and his website can be accessed at www.act3online.com.

R&L: *What does the small mean in that title of your new book, “Your Church is too Small?”*



Armstrong: It doesn’t mean small as in the size of the church. So it’s not a church growth book. It’s a book about the vision of the Church, and the mission of the Church and Church unity. It’s a book that develops John 17 and Jesus’ prayer for the unity of all his disciples. It’s about Ephesians 4, that there’s one Lord, one faith, one God and Father of us all, and one baptism.

There are not two, three, or four churches, but there’s one Church. And when local churches as congregations or denominations begin to think of themselves as the whole Church, they’ve thought too small. They have conceived of a church in a small and narrow way that has kept them from seeing the greatness and the largeness of Christ’s heart for His Church and of his people.

The political climate and debate is extremely polarizing right now. Is there a way for Christians to be an example on repairing that divide? Or have we moved beyond that point?

I think, in many ways, we have moved beyond that point. In the last three presidential administrations, very conservative Christians were extremely negative towards President Clinton, more positive toward President Bush, and now negative against President Obama. Progressive and more liberal Christians were just the opposite. And I think there are a lot of younger Christians—say under 40—who have lived long enough to see that shifting pendulum. Honestly, they’re looking for something else from the Church in terms of the political climate and how the

Church responds.

Probably the most positive contribution I have read on this question is found in the recent book, *To Change the World*, by James Davison Hunter. Hunter suggests in part three of that very significant book that the church’s role ought to be not one of polarizing and positioning on partisan political issues, but what he calls faithful presence. That may sound passive, but he doesn’t mean it in a passive way. He means it in a very active way. The Church’s faithful presence in a society, in a political culture, is its greatest contribution. I believe there’s evidence that there’s a deeper understanding of this and this is growing.

What are some problems you find especially frustrating with the religious right and religious left regarding the political debate?

I think the greatest problem for the left and right both is that we have developed a political theology that is disconnected from ethical and moral theology. For that matter, it’s disconnected from basic doctrinal Christianity. And as a result, we have accepted ideologies in place of Christian theology—truly ethical and moral theology—and its contribution to decision-making, both publicly and privately.

This ideological message ends up denying or misusing traditional Christian categories, and as a result, it leads us to the place where, in matters of prudential judgment, we lack wisdom. Matters of prudential judgment are not the same thing as moral and ethical issues, and I think because we don’t understand that

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Literature & the Economics of Liberty: Spontaneous Order in Culture

Paul Cantor and Stephen Cox, (*Ludwig von Mises Institute*, 2010)

Reviewed by Bruce Edward Walker

In recent decades, literary criticism has championed several schools that disavow common-sense economics in favor of more private and personal agendas. The “personal is political” formulation long ago crept into English Departments, at the expense of more traditional understandings of the warp and weave of Western Civilization. Beginning in the mid- to late-twentieth century, students were subjected to successive waves of New Criticism, Marxist Theory, Queer Theory, Feminist Theory and Deconstructionism – all guilty of squeezing square pegs into round holes in order to further individual reputations and engineer social change rather than increase knowledge of the human condition through the arts.

The human condition is, no matter how much theorists would prefer to believe otherwise, economic as well as spiritual, sexual and political. After all, even atheist transsexual Marxists need to trade something for food, clothing and shelter, do they not?

A valid question for the creators and critics: What provides the best economic model to ensure the happiness of the seven billion inhabitants of this earth? And what of the billion or more characters inhabiting our planet’s literature?

This is the theme pursued by Paul A. Cantor and Stephen Cox in their collection of brilliant essays in the *Economics of Literature & Liberty*. The essays take free-

market economics as the basis for examining, for the most part, well-known literary works by the likes of Cervantes, Willa Cather, Joseph Conrad, Charles Dickens, H. G. Wells, Thomas Mann and others. One need not be conversant in any of the works under consideration to appreciate the depth of literary and economic knowledge displayed by these authors. Nor do readers require more than a perfunctory background in economics. All heavy lifting is provided by the critics involved in the project.



H. L. Mencken wrote that the *sine qua non* of all good criticism should be its ability to stand alone as a piece of art regardless the qualities inherent in the object of the criticism. Cantor, Cox and the other critics whose essays appear in *Economics of Literature & Liberty* attain this

goal effortlessly by providing insightful analyses and informed *explication du texte*, providing ripping good yarns in addition to artful criticism and sound economics.

In so doing, Cantor, Cox, *et al.*, rescue great works of art from the maw of most contemporary criticism by portraying art as the mimetic celebration of spontaneous order, marginal utility and creative destruction. While no work of great literature can be called rightly “spontaneous,” Cantor goes to great lengths to detail how the externalities – to use an economic term – of an author’s *zeitgeist* contribute to his or her inspiration and execution of art, as well the depiction of

“ The creative act is about as top-down as any human endeavor can get. Artists corral characters, devise plots, choose settings and themes.”

the triumphs and tribulations of the characters he or she creates.

The creative act is about as top-down as any human endeavor can get. Artists corral characters, devise plots, choose settings and themes. This fact could account for why so many artists favor cen-

tral planning. Some, for example Ezra Pound, advocated so enthusiastically for central planning as a gift to artists that they inflicted permanent injury on their artistic legacy. Others, notably Arthur Koestler, E. E. Cummings, Stephen Spender, John Dos Passos and a host of others subsequently recanted their former beliefs in “the God that failed.”

Cantor portrays artists – similar to the rest of us – as economic beings in terms that are familiar to readers of Mises and Hayek:

[F]or the Austrian School, the entrepreneur becomes a kind of artist. Indeed, the Austrians stress the creativity of the entrepreneur. Like an artist, he is a visionary, a risk-taker, and a pioneer, and if he is to be successful, he will generally be found running counter to the crowd, or at least ahead of it. Thus, with Austrian economics, one need not worry that linking artistic activity with economics will have a reductionist effect. Because the Austrian School views economic activity as creative in the first place, from its perspective, to show an artist implicated in the commercial world is perfectly compatible with asserting his freedom and individuality.

But the picture of artist as central planner, moving his created (fictional) beings around as he may from the commanding heights of Mount Parnassus, stands against the usual image of the artist as the hyper-individualist, listening to no voice but his own. Cantor, Cox and the other critics collected in *Economics of Literature & Liberty* recognize this, and stress the individuality of the artist. In a discussion of the serialized novels of the Victorian Era, Cantor writes:

What we have learned from economics and biology is that in spontaneous orders, which develop or evolve over time, some imperfections are compatible with an overall coherence. This insight can in turn show us a way out of the aporia into which the conflict between the New Criticism and Deconstruction threatened to

lead us.

And this:

Austrian economics, because of its methodological individualism, would suggest focusing on how those engaged in the [creative] process acted as individuals. It would look at how individual novelists approached serialization, how individual members of their audience reacted to their work, and finally at how novelists in turn reacted individually to these reactions. An Austrian economist would

not expect either all novelists or all members of the novel-reading public to act or react in the same way; he would instead expect individuality and even idiosyncrasy to come into play at all stages of the process.... Leaving room for elements of contingency and uncertainty leaves room for elements of creativity in the artistic process, even if it is no longer conceived as the achievement of purely solitary creators.

As such, the creative process involves both the artist and the active minds of his audience. Contrast this with another economic-based school of literary thought, Marxist theory, which assumes that reading a novel is something done by passive zombies narcotized and beaten down by capitalism.

Space doesn't permit an overview of the essays wherein Austrian theory is applied to individual literary works, but, rest assured, there is much to recommend. The socialist apologist H. G. Wells receives a critical comeuppance from Cantor in his remarkable essay, “The Invisible Man and the Invisible Hand: H. G. Wells’ Critique of Capitalism.”

I particularly enjoyed Stephen Cox’s examination of select works by Willa Cather, including *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, and only wished Cox had cast his brilliant critical net wider to encompass this particular novel more fully. That’s high praise indeed, praise easily extended to the entirety of this remarkable volume.

Bruce Edward Walker, a Michigan-based writer, writes frequently on the arts and other topics for the Acton Institute.





Thoughts on the Education of Lord Acton

By James C. Holland

Of the various influences that shaped Lord Acton's distinctive understanding of history, none was as decisive as his education. His intellectual formation was in fact unique, the product of social position, conditions within English and Continental Catholicism, revolutionary ideas in the Germanic world pertaining to the study and methods of history, and the epic debate in North America over the nature and future of the Union of the States. All of these developments converged in Acton's life during the decade of 1848-1858, at the end of which he entered an aggressive public life in journalism and scholarship that established his name in the pantheon of the great minds of the Western tradition.

“All of these developments converged in Acton's life during the decade of 1848-1858, at the end of which he entered an aggressive public life in journalism and scholarship that established his name in the pantheon of the great minds of the Western tradition.”

Born into a cosmopolitan family which was prominent in English, German and Italian life, a Catholic with easy access to the highest levels of Whig society by virtue of his mother's second marriage, the young Acton began life with all the blessings of privilege, both complicated and enriched by his religious legacy. At his mother's insistence, his early schooling occurred in a seminary setting, initially in Paris, then at Oscott, near Birmingham. Oscott had become an English Catholic entrepôt for a steady stream of prominent converts to Catholicism, including John Henry Newman. In 1848, Lord Granville, Acton's step-father, insisted that the boy receive two years intensive study in Edinburgh under private tutors in preparation for Cambridge or Oxford. Granville, a major Whig leader in Parliament (who served as foreign minister under Lord John Russell, 1851-2, and William E. Gladstone, 1870-4, and 1880-5), was also concerned that Acton's education should not be devoid of respectable familiarity with the foundations of the Whig Ascendancy. It was during this “polar exile”, as Acton later called it, that his interest in America was sparked by reading extensively in Burke's writings, notably the “Speech on American Taxation”, the “Speech on Moving Resolutions for Conciliation with America”, and the “Letter to the Hon. Charles James Fox, on the American War”. In addition, he immersed himself in Macaulay's books, including the recently published first two volumes

of the *History of England*. After being refused by the English universities because he was Catholic, Acton left Edinburgh for Munich in 1850, where other family contacts found an eminent scholar, Ignaz von Döllinger, to oversee his university studies. Acton departed from Scotland a thorough Whig—temporarily at least—which is to say that, however imperfectly, his mind was set on the theme of liberty.

Intellectually, the Munich of Professor Döllinger was an exciting place in 1850, part of the larger nineteenth century cultural exhilaration of the Germanic world. With regard to the study of history, new canons of “scientific” methodology in testing and weighing evidence, coupled with the opening of Europe's archival collections, created among scholars high expectations and an acute sense that the secrets of the ages were about to be divulged. Döllinger, ever after “the Professor” to Acton, had gained esteem for his church history; in addition, he enjoyed renown as University Librarian and bibliographer to Munich's Royal Library. Acton had access to all this and more, notably a celebrated faculty, several of whom—especially Peter Ernest von Lasaulx—showed him new vistas in historical understanding. The net result was a fervent belief in the existence of objective historical truth that can be known through free intellectual inquiry. This unshakable conviction became the hallmark of his intellectual life.

What was most remarkable about Acton as a student was the extraordinary energy of his efforts and his dauntless ambition. As a child, he once wrote to his mother from Oscott, "I am going to write a sort of compendium of the chief facts, in history, for my own occasional reference." An earlier letter was signed, "Caesar Agamemnon John Dalberg Acton." Already a serious reader, at Munich he became a prodigious one, achieving a life-long habit of reading a book a day, and demonstrating extraordinary powers of retention. He was an aggressive book buyer, eventually assembling a personal library of 60,000 volumes. He accompanied Döllinger to the homes and work places of the famous – clergy, intellectuals, politicians – from whom he

smallest corner of a subject. Acton mastered the colloquy quite early, becoming a formidable conversationalist. He attracted special attention from all of his teachers. He made a memorable presence and was soon thought of as the greatest student of the venerable Döllinger, the man to whom he would remain bound in affection, if not intellect, for the rest of his life.

Midway through his Munich years, Acton interrupted his studies to visit the United States. Again it was Granville who made the decision in 1853. Acton was to accompany the British delegation to the New York Exhibition, itself a consequence of the great Crystal Palace Exhibition in London two years prior. Elaborate plans were made for Acton, then 19, to travel extensively in the North and South, but an outbreak of malaria forced cancellation of plans to visit a South Carolina plantation. This was especially disappointing to Acton, who had developed intense interest in the great sectional conflict in America; he was quite familiar with the complex issues and multiple com-

promises fashioned to preserve the nation. Since it was the specter of slavery that threatened to ruin the republic, Acton wanted to examine it firsthand, but the southernmost point reached was Emmitsburg, Maryland, barely south of Mason's and Dixon's Line.

What he did experience in some depth was life and culture in the Northeast, between New York and Boston, where he conversed with many lights of the intellectual and political establishment: Orestes Brownson, Richard Henry Dana, Horace Greeley, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, William H. Prescott, Charles Sumner, George Ticknor, and James Walker, among others. He was not at all impressed with the condition of learning at

Harvard College, where he sat in on oral examinations and visited with several professors. On June 25th, he sat with Dana in a session of the Massachusetts constitutional convention and found the proceedings uninspiring. Interestingly, he wrote to the Professor that he worshipped John C. Calhoun above all Americans, no doubt reflecting the depth of his interest in the sectional crisis and his admiration for the originality of Calhoun's political philosophy.

Acton returned to his studies in Munich where he continued to engage in activities vitally important in defining his intellectual outlook. He and the Professor resumed their travels to universities, libraries, and the homes of noted scholars and others in high ecclesiastical and political circles; through discussions with scholars and archivists, together with extensive work in major archival collections, they made dramatic discoveries, some of them quite sobering. One of the most disturbing revelations came in Rome, in 1857, where they were shocked to discover a deplorable state of learning regarding the use and care of archives. Among the happiest times was when he and Döllinger visited with Newman at Birmingham in the spring of 1851. *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* was already 5 years old, and Newman was now quite preoccupied with his idea of a university for Ireland. One can imagine with much delight the range of that three-way conversation.

When, finally, the time came for Acton to return to England to prepare for a public life in journalism, his mind was filled to the brim with enthusiasm for the new learning. Excited by the promise and prospect that he could impart to his contemporaries the vast treasure built up in his mind during his years of formal education, he set out to accomplish his ends in the pages of *The Rambler*. That story is the stuff of greatness.

This article first appeared in the 1996 January – February issue of Religion & Liberty.



Acton (far right) in Tegernsee in 1879. Acton died there in 1902.

gained much in specific knowledge, and even more in understanding the workings of power and the course of history. He came away from Munich with the belief that one must "get behind" the historian, that the history of history – including the history of archives – is the key that unlocks the secrets of the past.

Acton's university education was tutorial in nature. Though he attended the lecture hall on numerous occasions, the crux of his academic work involved direct, close, and frequent dealings with his respective professors. There were seemingly endless lists of books to be read in several languages, frequent papers to be written and defended in person, and, above all, countless hours of questions and answers exploring the



Whittaker Chambers

Reviewed by Ray Nothstine

Whittaker Chambers began *Witness*, the classic account of his time in the American Communist underground, with the declaration: “In 1937, I began, like Lazarus, the impossible return.” The line was, most of all, a deep recognition of the power of God to redeem what was once dead. *Witness* was a landmark account of the evils of Communism but, most importantly, a description of the bankruptcy of freedom outside of the sacred. “For Chambers, God was always the prime mover in the war between Communism and freedom. If God exists then Communism cannot,” says Richard Reinsch II. It is Reinsch who reintroduces us to Chambers, the brilliant intellectual, anti-communist, and man of faith in *Whittaker Chambers: The Spirit of a Counterrevolutionary*.

After his exodus from the Soviet Communist spy network in Washington, Chambers then outed U.S. State Department official Alger Hiss as a communist, setting up a dramatic espionage trial played out before the nation. Chambers became a household name, thanks to a trial that was wrapped in intrigue, treachery, and Cold War drama. Chambers would become a hero for many in the conservative movement. William F. Buckley, Jr. called him the greatest figure who defected out of communism. But Chambers’ pessimism about the future of the West led him to be dismissed by many others, conservatives too.

This pessimist view of the survival of the West against Marxism stems from Cham-

bers’ understanding that the West was abandoning its sacred heritage of Christian thought, and within it, the proper understanding of man. A supposedly free but rampant secular and materialistic society still leads to the same ending as Marxism, outside of God, and unable to explain its reason and purpose for life.

One of the chief takeaways from this book is that there must be more to conservatism than free-markets and limited government. For liberty to be prosperous, it must be oriented toward greater truths. Reinsch points out that Chambers understood that the “West must reject Communism in the name of something other than modern liberalism and its foundation in the principles of Enlightenment rationalism.”

Reinsch delves into Chambers’ prediction of the eventual collapse of the West and his belief that there was a lack of moral fortitude to combat the communist surge. The apparent unwillingness of the free world to sacrifice and suffer for freedom troubled Chambers. He also surmised that the intellectual class possessed a waning ability to articulate a meaningful defense of the ideas and value of the free society.

The United States did indeed emerge as the leader of the free world after the Second World War, rebuilding its former enemies with the Marshall Plan and other programs. Early on, the United States and Western Europe showed a stoic and moral resistance throughout the Berlin Airlift of

1948 and 1949. Future presidential administrations would pledge support for free people who toiled anywhere across the globe. President Ronald Reagan emerged in the latter half of the 20th Century, unveiling his own crusade against communism, making many of the deeper spiritual contrasts with the Soviet system first articulated by Chambers.

Reinsch also notes that while Chambers perhaps underestimated some of the spiritual will and capital to resist and overcome the Marxist onslaught, most of Chambers’ identification of the sickness of the West remained true. Reinsch declares of an America in the 1960s and 1970s:

Racked by mindless violence, strikes, rampant inflation, economic torpidity, and the rapid unfolding of sexual liberation, liberal democracy seemed to display, in acute form, the crisis of a material progress that had been severed from faith and freedom. Thus, the spirit of Chambers’ brooding over the fate of the West retained relevance.

This is evidenced in part by the immense suffering of Hanoi Hilton POWs like Admiral Jeremiah Denton, who in his captivity memoir *When Hell Was in Session*, described the disconnect of a man who sacrificed so much for freedom and who came out of the dark night with a deep sense of spiritual renewal only to come home to unearth an increasingly secular nation that was also retreating in its ability to defend and define its greatness.

Reinsch even points to further evidence that Chambers was right about the dangerous trajectory of the West when he cites the victory of the Cold War and how that surge of freedom did not posit any great change or realization of a higher transcendent understanding and purpose. While the superiority of markets was temporarily buoyed by the events, socialism has shown a staying power in the West.

Reinsch has crafted an important and essential book for anybody fatigued with the daily grind of hyper-partisan politics. By reintroducing conservatives to a deep thinker like Chambers, he reminds us of the limits of politics as well as the frustrating shallowness it can embody.

Just as markets and small government offer little ability in offering peace and happiness, though they certainly create greater space for a working towards that end, this account is a reminder that the best of conservatism is, at its core, within the ancient truths that tower above the vain materialism and individualism of secular Western democracy.

Believers can see this clearly when they look at the vanity of a society that prods, primps, and chases after meaning outside of God. Thus, as Reinsch adds, Chambers so wholly understood that “man’s problem was the problem of understanding himself in light of his fundamental incompleteness.” That problem exists under communism just as it does in democratic capitalism, with its temptations to consumerism and selfishness.

The Marxist Utopian dream was man’s attempt at trying to fulfill its incompleteness with all the wonders and technology of modernity and materialism. The free world still is unable to relocate itself in the proper order. And, as Reinsch declares, this is a great warning to us all. Chambers so thoroughly understood and knew that “man was never more beastly than in his attempts to organize his life, individually and collectively, without God.”

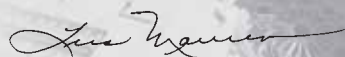
What sets the Acton Institute apart from other free-market think tanks and organizations?

The Acton Institute’s unique position in the free-market movement is that its advocacy and education on economic issues is integrated with Judeo-Christian teachings about the dignity and inestimable worth of the human person. The Acton Institute has always understood the human person as a co-creator, producer, and innovator, not as a greedy materialist or consumer.

The first words that God spoke to the created family are words that declare that humanity is created for a moral purpose, with human dominion over the earth, and to embrace our vocational calling. That calling is a living out of the dignity we have inherited by virtue of our very nature and creation. Indeed, God Himself was at work at the creation. Christian authors Gerard Berghoef and Lester DeKoster in *Work: The Meaning of Your Life-A Christian Perspective*, republished by Christian’s Library Press, declares that “God so arranges work that it develops the soul.”

Acton President and co-founder Rev. Robert A. Sirico reminded those gathered at Acton’s 20th Anniversary Dinner that we must get Christian anthropology correct if we are going to get anything correct at all. That begins with the human person as the image and likeness of the Creator. This is essential for encouraging a moral culture, which is necessary for a truly free society to flourish.

That will remain the mission of and goal of the Acton Institute: always advancing a free and virtuous society. Those who have generously supported our work for two decades recognize how essential this work has been. Unlike other organizations, we are not involved in partisan politics nor lobbying efforts on policy issues. Acton’s real effectiveness lies in the power of its ideas. The Institute is a truth-seeking organization that is concerned about limits being placed on humans to flourish towards the greatest truth, which is man’s relationship and destiny with his Creator.



Kris Alan Mauren
Executive Director



Views of Wealth in the Bible and the Ancient World

By Scott B. Rae

Think back to the last time you heard someone from the pulpit in your church talk about money, the Bible, and your spiritual life. On those occasions when pastors venture into this area, the focus is often, and rightly, on matters of the heart and one's attitude toward money and possessions. But in that emphasis often lies an unexamined assumption that goes something like this: Given that the Bible focuses on attitude, not accumulation *per se*, that materialism is fundamentally about attitude, not amount, and that the human heart has not changed since the Bible was written, little significant difference exists between people in biblical times and people today when it comes to money. Hidden in that assumption is the notion that the ancient world and the world of today are also similar when it comes to money, wealth, and possessions. Though it is true that the fundamental nature of the human heart has not changed since biblical times, it does not follow that the financial world of the Bible and that of today have limited significant difference between them. In fact, it would be difficult to imagine two worlds that are more different from each other.

The Bible's teaching on wealth and economics was set in an ancient economic system that was quite unlike the system of today. That does not mean that the Bible has nothing of relevance for today's economic world, only that we must use the Bible carefully when applying its general principles of economic life to current

times. As many biblical scholars have suggested, a direct application of many biblical commands relating to economic life would be impossible today, because the system to which those commands were addressed has dramatically changed. Rather, we are seeking from Scripture general principles or norms that govern economic life and can be applied to different economic arrangements. Of course, some commands apply directly, for which the differences between the ancient world and today's society do not affect the application of the text. For example, the repeated admonitions of Scripture to take care of the poor remain directly applicable, even though the means by which that is done may have changed. By contrast, the Old Testament commands the people of God to keep the Sabbatical year, in which the land was to lie fallow for one year in seven (Lev. 25:1-7), the year of Jubilee, in which on the 50th year, all land was returned to its original owners (Lev. 25:10-17), and the right of redemption, in which property had to be returned to an impoverished family member in order to give him or her the opportunity to make a living (Lev. 25:47-55). These principles cannot be directly applied today, because they were written to a society that revolved around subsistence agriculture, not a modern information age economy in which very few people are tied to the land to make their living. Rather, we must glean a general principle from each of these commands that can be applied to the different setting of today.

At first glance, the Bible appears to condemn the accumulation of wealth. Classic passages of Scripture such as "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven" (Luke 18:25) and "blessed are the poor" (Luke 6:20) suggest that possession of wealth is suspect while poverty is virtuous. These texts should be balanced by others that present wealth in a different perspective. These include the sayings of the Old Testament wisdom literature that regard wealth as God's blessing to be enjoyed (Eccl. 5:18-20) and a result of one's diligence (Prov. 10:4-5). Similarly, in the New Testament, while Paul counsels Timothy to keep wealth in proper perspective (1 Tim. 6:6-19), Paul acknowledges that God gives liberally to his people for their enjoyment (1 Tim. 6:17). Yet this acknowledgment is balanced by admonitions not to trust in one's wealth because of the temptation to arrogance and of the uncertainty involved in retaining wealth (see also Eccl. 5:8-6:12), and thus, conversely, to be content with one's economic station in life.

The Bible distinguishes between possession of wealth and love of wealth. Only the latter is condemned (1 Tim. 6:10). The love of wealth and desire to become wealthy bring a variety of temptations and have the potential to shipwreck one's spiritual life (1 Tim. 6:9). Yet the members of the early church and the crowds who followed Jesus entailed the socio-economic spectrum from the poor to the

wealthy. From what we know of Jesus' background and his trade as a carpenter, it would appear that he lived a modest middle class lifestyle in contrast to many portrayals of him in poverty. It does not appear that the possession of wealth per se is problematic in Scripture, but hoarding one's wealth when surrounded by poverty is a sign of selfishness and greed. Throughout Scripture, the wealthy are condemned for their callousness to the needs of the poor (Amos 4:1-4; James 2:1-7). The early days of the church were characterized by an extraordinary generosity toward the poor, many of whom constituted the majority of the membership in the early church (Acts 2:43-47). Though the pattern of the early church did not involve a socialistic style of holding property in common, it did involve heightened sensitivity to the needs of the poor. Though the Bible affirms the right to private property, this right is not absolute. It is tempered by the reality that all property belongs to God and that we are trustees or stewards of God's property. God has entrusted his property to us, both for our personal needs and enjoyment and for use to achieve God's purposes (such as meeting the needs of the poor).

The pursuit of wealth in the ancient world was fraught with potential problems, which made it easy to view those who possessed wealth with moral and spiritual skepticism. Though the temptations facing the pursuit of wealth today should not be minimized, some important differences exist between the modern and ancient economic systems that may partially account for the strong cautions about wealth. For example, in the ancient world, as a general rule, people became wealthy differently than in today's market system. The ancient economic system was largely centered around subsistence agriculture with limited commerce and trade. Real estate was the predominant productive asset. The ancient economy is best described as what is called a "zero sum game." The pool of economic resources was relatively

fixed, so that when one person became wealthy, it was usually at the expense of someone else. Stated differently, the economy was like a pie. When someone took a larger piece, someone else received a smaller piece. This set up numerous opportunities to attain wealth abusively by theft, taxation, or extortion. One of the most common instances of this abuse was for those who had resources to loan money to the poor at terms they could not repay, requiring what little land the poor owned as collateral. Then when the debtors inevitably defaulted, the lender appropriated their land. The debtors became tenant farmers or slaves or were reduced to dependence on charity. This form of taking advantage of the poor occurred regularly in the ancient world and

"Today's market economy makes it far easier to be wealthy and virtuous than did the agricultural subsistence economy of the ancient world."

is one of the reasons why the Bible so frequently condemns exploitation of the poor. In these cases, literally, the rich became richer at the expense of the poor, and when someone was wealthy, more often than not, they had acquired it through some immoral means. Thus, the wealthy were viewed with suspicion and great emphasis was placed on the potential temptations of becoming wealthy, because the ancient world had so few morally legitimate avenues to acquire great wealth.

Though it is certainly true that the poor continue to be exploited, in the market system, the zero sum game type of economic system no longer exists. The market system is in various stages of development in different parts of the world, but in

more mature market systems, the economy is anything but a zero-sum game. In modern industrial economies, the economic pie itself is constantly increasing. Wealth is being created instead of simply being transferred. In fact, every time a company makes a profit, wealth is created and the size of the pie grows larger. For this reason, the rich can become wealthy, while at the same time, the poor can also be better off. That is why the incomes of the poor can and have increased at the same time as the wealth of the rich accumulates, though admittedly at very different rates. Someone like Bill Gates or Warren Buffet simply having extraordinary wealth does not mean that the poor are necessarily worse off. Nor does it necessarily follow that Gates' or Buffet's wealth was gained at the expense of someone else. In a modern market economy, wealth is constantly being created, so that it is possible for someone to become wealthy without necessarily succumbing to the temptations about which Scripture warned. Today's market economy makes it far easier to be wealthy and virtuous than did the agricultural subsistence economy of the ancient world.

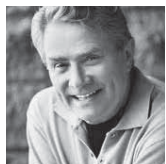
Of course, the same admonitions about not succumbing to the temptations that accompany the pursuit of wealth directly apply today, as do the commands to share generously with those in need. One's attitude toward and generosity with one's wealth are fundamentally conditions of the heart that have not changed since the ancient world. Regardless of one's level of wealth, one is still expected to depend on God, not on money for one's hope, to share God's heart for the poor, and to be generous toward those in need.

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The Interview: A Collection

We thought it would be appropriate to highlight some of our past interviews in the 20th Anniversary issue of Religion & Liberty. The responses selected represent a range of timeless truths of the Gospel, the importance of human liberty, and the importance of religion and moral formation in society.

R&L: *In some Christian circles, social action has taken precedence over evangelism. I am here thinking of the way that the pursuit of social justice has taken the place of the proclamation of the Gospel. What are your thoughts on this trend?*



Luis Palau: My view is this: Evangelism, proclamation of the Gospel, is social action. It is social

action because it changes the core of the problem, which is, the individual out of control from God. Conversion brings the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, and His life into the picture and changes people who, in turn, become salt and light by living their lives without necessarily acting politically or in terms of "social action." So I put Gospel proclamation first, because you have nothing to work with unless you have people who have been converted.

R&L: *Would you comment on the temptation to identify virtue with collectivism?*



Margaret Thatcher: Liberty is an individual quality and a moral quality. It does not exist in the abstract, but only

in a civilized state with a rule of law. Without that, the strong would oppress the weak. The collective law is what makes individual freedom work. I remember a famous quotation of George Bernard Shaw, "Freedom incurs respon-

sibility; that's why men fear it." Too many people try to cast their personal responsibility on to the state. It is so much easier to parade with banners demanding that government do something to remedy a wrong than it is to take action oneself. But it will build neither character nor independence.

The ultimate collectivist was, of course, the communist state. It operated the most total tyranny the world has ever known. It had all of the brutal, evil characteristics of other tyrannies, with its secret police, absence of remedy, and no opposition. In addition to that, it confiscated everyone's private property and took away everyone's job, so they became totally dependent upon the state.

The danger is that the more you turn to the state, the more you are diminishing the sense of freedom and the responsibility of the individual, and the more difficult it is to re-establish when the Communist system has gone.

R&L: *What is the most positive role religious leaders can play in bringing about a lasting moral, economic and political social order?*



John Marks Templeton: Religious leaders have the most powerful tools on earth – love and prayer. Religious leaders are needed to help themselves and others to grow in the knowledge

and love of God. They can help both students and adults to learn the basic laws of life which lead to usefulness, happiness and freedom for individuals. The reputation of religious leaders has been diminished when they pretend to be knowledgeable in economics and politics rather than in spiritual growth and the spiritual laws of life. When a religious leader can help his people to be overwhelmingly grateful every day for their multiplying multitudes of blessings then those people will work in economics and politics to bring more and more blessings for others in terms of productivity, freedom, happiness and spiritual growth. Some say a major reason why older church denominations have been losing in members, resources and reputation is that some leaders, especially in headquarters, began over 50 years ago to place their ultimate trust in humanism as expressed in force and government; whereas many newer churches are spirit filled and wholeheartedly place their trust in God as expressed in prayer and love.

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



Jay Budziszewski: Our subject is called natural law because it has the qualities of all law. Law has rightly been defined

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

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

R&L: *What has Christianity given to society that is most often overlooked by Christianity's critics?*



Chuck Colson: I think the critics of Christianity are looking at the modern ideas of liberalism and believing that freedom from all restraints and the desire to do anything you desire to do is sort of the *summum bonum*, the element of virtue and life. And what they're missing is that that undermines the very protection they themselves enjoy the most. It is like somebody sitting on a branch and sawing off the branch they're sitting on. The ideas that you can determine for yourself the meaning of life, that there are no restraints, that you have absolute autonomous control over yourself, that all of the world revolves around you, [these ideas] leave you vulnerable to all the various scientific assaults upon human life, whether it's abortion, assisted suicide, genetic engineering, or cloning. You yourself become vulnerable. The price of your freedom is human vulnerability. I

don't think the postmodernist has figured out yet how self-refuting his own belief system is.

I was with a bunch of newspaper reporters once and the publisher was bragging he had taken the Ten Commandments off the classroom walls in his city. And then about five minutes later, he is complaining about all the stealing in the classrooms. It's like putting a sign up, "Someone Steal!" I'm very optimistic that postmodernism is running its course because it's not intellectually sustainable and it's built on internal contradictions that will ultimately cause it to crumble.

R&L: *Would you agree that there is a general lack of appreciation for liberty, particularly economic liberty, among the clergy?*



William F. Buckley, Jr.: Yes, I think that there has been a massive neglect in education into the inter-relationship between liberty and productivity, and of course productivity and surplus, and therefore surplus and philanthropy and charity. There is no way in which one can look after one's neighbor until one has looked after oneself. And therefore, one needs the liberty to have that surplus in order to respond to the commandment to concern ourselves with one's neighbor. I would hardly be the first commentator to say that the social teachers of the church very seldom have concerned themselves at all with the problem of production. They are always talking about distribution. But there can't be any distribution until there is production. And the key to production is, of course, liberty—economic liberty.

R&L: *Let's talk about your study of population movement. Do you think immigration undermines prosperity or encourages a free market?*



Paul Johnson: Oh, very much the second. I think immigration was a reason why capitalism took root in certain

countries and not in others. Britain in the 16th and 17th centuries received repeated waves of persecuted Protestants, such as the French Huguenots, many people from the low counties and so on, who played a key role in establishing an entrepreneurial climate. Furthermore, it was immigration that gave America such a tremendous start in the economic race. I think that whenever families are able to uproot themselves from their traditional homes and establish themselves in a new one, they always seem to do better, provided they are given a chance by the openness of the political society they find there. They seem to throw off the inert conservatism of the old society and do new things which they wouldn't have done in their original domicile. They are much more active and original and creative; this has always happened. Therefore, I would say that in general, immigration tends to stimulate economies rather than stifle them.

Let's talk about the market and capitalism and particularly the sources of the Judeo-Christian hostility toward capitalism.

There are two forms of hostility towards capitalism. One is the anti-materialism of some forms of monotheistic religion. Secondly, there is the case of usury.

First of all, with regard to this anti-materialism, I think this is more true of Christianity than of Judaism. The Jews derive from the Old Testament the notion that the world is a good place, that God made it to be enjoyed by his creatures. Thus, it was necessary for all people to carry out God's will to play their part in that scheme. And therefore, growing crops, making and enjoying goods, eating the produce of the earth, drinking wine and so on, were not only reputable activities, but in some way necessary activities. So the Jewish religion was not in conflict with the world as such.

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Now Christianity was rather different. In the first place, it was a much bigger religion because it embraced many more people who necessarily held differing attitudes toward life. So there were always a large amount of Christians, what I would call a significant minority, who rejected the world or many aspects of it. That Christian minority provided for many forms of religious life, such as the monastic ideal, which would not have been accepted by Judaism, but were highly regarded in Christianity. So, the rejection of materialism was much more emphatic among Christians than among Jews.

In the case of usury, both the orthodox Jews and the Christians rejected it to a greater or lesser extent. And what one saw in the 14th, 15th and 16th century was a progressive wiggling out of this rejection by cunning or clever or, you may want to call them, altruistic theologians who realized that many forms of usury were perfectly acceptable in terms of natural morality and were absolutely necessary for the growth of the economy.

R&L: *What does prosperity do to religious sensibilities?*



Richard John Neuhaus: Prosperity can be a great temptation to pride and smugness and complacency, but I am not sure that prosperity is any greater a spiritual temptation than is poverty, which is a temptation to despair and lethargy and indifference. The Christian ethic is not anti-prosperity. Certainly within the Christian community, voluntary poverty that is chosen for the sake of the kingdom of God is elevated spiritually and is something that is held up to be emulated by those who are called to that vocation and as a critical reference for all Christians. But there is nothing in the Christian ethic which says it is better to be poor than to be rich. Even the Beatitudes are premised

upon the promise that those who are now poor will be rich—that being rich is good. At the same time, the church relentlessly challenges every Christian not to become consumed by prosperity. 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.

And therefore, they should be justified by moral theology.

R&L: *You have been long involved in the late-twentieth-century revival of the freedom philosophy, especially with your involvement in the Foundation for Economic Education (fee). In addition, you are a Congregationalist minister. Why do you think it is important for ministers to be grounded in sound economic thinking?*



Edmund A. Opitz: Ministers today are learned and dedicated men and women. They buy books and subscribe

to serious journals, striving to keep abreast of trends that affect religion and the church. They are involved in civic affairs; they are liked and respected, even by those who never go near a church. They are good company and have friends in the other professions, especially businessmen. It therefore would not hurt if they improved their understanding of business and the free economy. The discipline of economics, after all, does not dangle somewhere in outer space but is an integral and essential part of this God-created planet. Sound economics has a religious dimension, and the Acton Institute is bringing this truth home to a growing number of clergy.

Monotheism, as opposed to every brand of polytheism, implies a *uni*-verse, a cosmos of law and order with working rules in every sector—including the economic

sector. Perhaps the most primary economic postulate is scarcity. Human wants are virtually limitless, but the means for satisfying our wants and needs are scarce. The discipline of economics emerged in response to the awkward fact that, struggle as we may, we will always desperately be trying to cope with our unfulfilled desires. Economics teaches us how to act responsibly and non-wastefully when dealing with the planet's limited resources of human energy, raw materials, and time. "Why do we work?" asked Francis Bacon, and answered his own question: "For the glory of God and the improvement of Man's estate." And Jesus warned that "If you are not faithful in your use of worldly wealth, who will entrust you with true riches?"

R&L: *Would you say, then, that freedom is not freedom from, but freedom for?*



Os Guinness: Paraphrasing Lord Acton, "Freedom is not the permission to do what we like, it is the power to

do what we ought." The trouble is that, today, freedom is purely negative: freedom from parents, from teachers, from the police, and so on. We have lost sight of it as freedom to be that which we can be or ought to be. We need to recover the idea that, as Lord Acton stressed wisely and as the present pope has written of so well, freedom is the power to do what we ought. That assumes, however, we know the truth of who we are and what we ought to do. That is the freedom the modern secular liberal tends to forget.

R&L: *There is a great deal of confusion today about the meaning of human freedom. What misunderstandings lie at the heart of this confusion?*



Avery Dulles: In Western societies, freedom is often defined in political terms, as immunity from the coercive power of the state. In Marxist societies, the emphasis instead has been on economic freedom, or protection from manipulation by the forces of industry and capital. These concepts of freedom, though not invalid, are incomplete.

In current popular thinking, freedom is understood to mean the capacity to do whatever one pleases, without moral or physical restraints. This arbitrary view of freedom points the way to uninhibited individualism, social chaos, and defiance of moral standards. Many people imagine that entering into firm commitments, such as a vocation or a family relationship, will impair their freedom. They therefore go through life unattached, guided by passing whims rather than firm convictions. Such lives quickly become empty and meaningless, moving toward suicidal despair.

Lord Acton and other wise thinkers have taught us that true freedom is not the same as license. It is not the power to do whatever we like but to choose what is good. Morality is not a barrier to our freedom but a condition of authentic self-realization. To make responsible commitments is not to negate our freedom but to fulfill its purpose.

R&L: *You are one of the pre-eminent Acton scholars in the world, some of your earliest work dealt with Acton's intellectual contribution to the ideas of liberty and religion. I know this is a difficult question, but what would Acton say about re-moralizing society? How would he approach this question?*



Gertrude Himmelfarb: I think he would have been as distressed as many of us are today

by the condition of our society. He was very religious and very liberal, and very much a moralist, and for all these reasons he would have been appalled by our present state of demoralization and acutely aware of the need for some kind of remoralization. Like all of us, he would have preferred that it come about not by the efforts of government, but by the cultivation of an ethos that would encourage both private and public virtues. Acton was not a libertarian; he was not opposed to social legislation in principle. He had too much respect for the complexities of history and society to be a strict libertarian. I think he would have agreed that there was a role for both the law and the state in the process of remoralization. But above all, he would have looked to religion as the inspiration for moral reformation.

R&L: *You spent your life advancing the free market on two levels: the academic and the popular. Where have you been most effective and why?*



Walter Williams: One of the shortcomings of economists is their inability to make their subject understandable to the ordinary layman. For years, one of my challenges has been to explain potentially complex economic ideas to ordinary people. When asked what I do, I say, "I seek to sell my fellow Americans on the moral superiority of liberty." This is an extremely important job. One has to write economic journal articles to get promoted, so you go through the hoops and do them. However, I think the more important job is to talk to the common man.

R&L: *Elaborate on the importance of religion and the maintenance of Western civilization and in the free market in general.*



George Gilder: Religion is primary. Unless a culture is aspiring toward the good, the true, and the beautiful, wants the good and the true, and really worships God, it readily worships Satan. If we turn away from God, our culture becomes dominated by "Real Crime Stories" and rap music and other spew. This is the most fundamental point. When the culture becomes corrupt, then the businesses that serve the culture also become corrupt.

R&L: *You suggest that these executives face creative tensions involving their faith and their business practices. What was considered to be the most significant tension in terms of its potential to cause a businessperson to compromise his or her faith?*



Laura Nash: The one they felt most strongly was the obligation to bear witness. They defined witnessing as a literal professing of their faith—explicitly attributing responsibility for every decision to Jesus and implying that anyone who disagreed was wrong. Their common sense would caution them that these explicit statements were probably going to be counterproductive and they searched for other witnessing strategies. But that was a great tension for them. Some tried to resolve this tension by concluding that witnessing does not have to be in explicitly talking about Jesus, but it can also be in living out faith in Jesus. Then if somebody asks them who they are and where they come from, they use that occasion as the opportunity to talk about their faith. Another huge tension they felt was the business emphasis on short-term thinking. A religious worldview stretches to infinity. They felt that to be pressured so sharply within an economic system for quarterly results

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was really working against the cosmic harmony that they were seeking in their business lives.

R&L: *What do you like most about America? Are you optimistic about its future?*



Amity Shlaes: Resilience is our abiding characteristic. We don't get mired and we change a lot. We're proud in a good

way. You can think of market recovery in terms of rock climbing. Equities people always say of the stock market "the market climbs a wall of worry." But you can also say that "the market wants to go up, and the only question is, what is stopping it"? The economy wants to recover now. It's our job now to figure out what is stopping it and reduce the scale of that obstacle. So we don't know what America will be like. We don't know what kind of inventions will come. Also, the forgiving quality of the United States is crucial. You can make an error and start over and that is represented in our bankruptcy law. In the olden days when people went into debt on the East Coast, they'd head west. Did they drop the keys in the mailbox of the bank? They did the equivalent. Was it right? Not particularly but it also reflected energy. There's always a trade-off between risk-taking and prudence, and honoring the law and the contract. Anyhow, this idea that people are throwing keys into the mailbox or dropping them off at the bank and leaving, this idea that that will mean the ruin of the United States is, perhaps, exaggerated. It's happened before and we've still had prosperity. The prosperity can only happen if property rights over the longer term do get honored.



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

John 8:12

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'

Martin Luther called this announcement by Christ, "The language of presumption that stops all mouths." Luther is right. One must stop and take heed of the word of Christ here and the authority of his teaching. The theologian Thomas C. Oden says of the "I am" statements in John's Gospel:

Jesus did not teach as the prophets taught when they pointed beyond themselves to the source of divine revelation. Rather he taught and spoke in the first person, as Yawheh had spoken in the form of "I am" in the Exodus account of deliverance.

Some simple points from this passage declare the divine nature of Jesus and his ability to save and lead his people out of destruction. Simply put, Jesus is God with us. Light is a symbol of his presence, but also his truth.

The command in this verse is clear. Do you want to feed off of spiritual darkness, death, and decay or would you rather live in the light and life of Christ? The prophet Micah announced, "When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me" (Mic 7:8).

The testimony of the saints and martyrs prove that following Christ is not easy. But for those who are looking for their circumstances and condition to change, there is nothing better than knowing and being transformed by Christ. If you need transformation, peace, and salvation, where are you looking in your life today? This passage makes this a critical question in anybody's life.

"I am the light of the world" is a claim that God has come in human form to reveal the true purpose of humanity, and to lift humanity up in glory. Christ is transforming and restoring creation into his image. His light, life, sacrifice, and his resurrection from the grave point to his power and authority. There is a gospel song titled "Gloryland" that comes from the book of Revelation that explains just how bright the light of Christ shines.

In the eternal, the book of Revelation declares that there will be no need for a sun or moon because the Lord's glory is the light that illuminates all. The old gospel song "Gloryland" says it well:

*We'll need no sun in Gloryland
The moon and stars won't shine
For Christ Himself is light up there
He reigns of love divine.*



The Work of Culture and Civilization

By Lester DeKoster

This article is excerpted from Lester DeKoster's Work: The Meaning of Your Life—A Christian Perspective, newly made available in a second edition.

The Power

We know, as soon as reminded, that work spins the wheels of the world.

No work? Then nothing else either. Culture and civilization don't just happen. They are made to happen and to keep happening—by God the Holy Spirit, *through our work*.

Imagine that everyone quits working, right now! What happens? Civilized life quickly melts away. Food vanishes from the store shelves, gas pumps dry up, streets are no longer patrolled, and fires burn themselves out. Communication and transportation services end and utilities go dead. Those who survive at all are soon huddled around campfires, sleeping in tents, and clothed in rags.

The difference between barbarism and culture is, simply, work. One of the mystifying facts of history is why certain people create progressive cultures while others lag behind. Whatever that explanation, the power lies in work.

Another interesting thing is that if all workers did quit, it would not make too much difference which workers quit first—front office, boardroom, assembly line, or custodial staff. Civilized living is so closely knit that when any pieces drop

out, the whole fabric begins to crumple. Let city sanitation workers go out this week, and by next week streets are smothered in garbage. Give homemaking mothers leave, and many of us suddenly go hungry and see our kids running wild. Civilization is so fragile that we either all hang together or, as Ben Franklin warned during the American Revolution, “we shall all hang separately.”

Incidentally, let's not make the mistake, if ever we are tempted, of estimating the importance of our work, or of any kind of work, by the public esteem it enjoys. Upfront types make news, but only workers create civilized life. The mosaic of culture, like all mosaics, derives its beauty from the contribution of each tiny bit.

The Harvest

As seeds multiply themselves into harvest, so work flowers into civilization. The second harvest parallels the first: Civilization, like the fertile fields, yields far more in return on our efforts than our particular jobs put in.

Verify that a moment by taking a casual look around the room in which you are now sitting. Just how long would it have taken you to make, piece by piece, the things you can lay eyes on?

Let's look together.

That chair you are lounging in? Could you have made it for yourself? Well, I suppose so, *if we mean just the chair!*

Perhaps you did in fact go out to buy the wood, the nails, the glue, the stuffing, the springs—and put it all together. But if by making the chair we mean assembling each part *from scratch*, that's quite another matter. How do we get, say, the wood? Go and fell a tree? But only after first making the tools for that, and putting together some kind of vehicle to haul the wood, and constructing a mill to do the lumber, and roads to drive on from place to place? In short, a lifetime or two to make one chair! We are physically unable, it is obvious, to provide ourselves from scratch with the household goods we can now see from wherever you and I are sitting—to say nothing of building and furnishing the whole house.

“Work is the form in which we make ourselves useful to others; civilization is the form in which others make themselves useful to us.”

Consider everything else that we can use every day and never really see. Who builds and maintains the roads and streets we take for granted? Who polices them so we can move about in comparative safety? Who erects the stores, landscapes the parks, builds the freeways? Who provides

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the services that keep things going in good weather and bad?

Well, civilization blends work into doing all that. It's what we mean by civilization, really—goods and services to hand when we need them. There are countless workers, just like ourselves – including ourselves – whose work creates the harvest that provides each of us with far more than we could ever provide for ourselves.

Going shopping? Someone's work has already stocked the aisles with food, stuffed the racks with clothing, crowded counters with goods—for you!

Going traveling? Someone's work has already paved the highways, built the airports, designed and fueled the

ready—for you!

So everywhere and at all times, there are countless hands moving all the wheels of civilization—for you!

Work plants the seed; civilization reaps the harvest. Work is the form in which we make ourselves useful to others; civilization is the form in which others make themselves useful to us. We plant; God gives the increase to unify the human race.

Forgotten Something?

Oh, I know, you think I've forgotten something, and before you take a look around, you want to be sure it's counted in.

You're thinking that what I've been saying

you think I've ignored? No paycheck, nothing else?

Well, no, I thought of that—and read quite a few books on economics, from old Adam Smith to Karl Marx to Kenneth Galbraith to discover just how my paycheck does relate to all those things I own and use.

Funny thing, though, these experts didn't help much.

It's too simple for the experts, probably.

As I see it now, things stand like this: Our paychecks represent our working efforts in, say, 40 hours per week. Some bring in far more dollars than others, but just say that on the average each should in fact buy only what you or I could make for ourselves in the same 40 hours a week. (Economics is not that simple? Maybe not, but for now let it pass—because when you start looking seriously at the meaning of civilization, my way is how you will see it, too, I think).

At least we can agree that if we both worked not only forty but, say, one hundred and forty hours a week, we ourselves couldn't make from scratch even a fraction of all the goods and services that we call our own. A funny thing happens, as they used to say, to a paycheck on its way to the bank. That paycheck turns out to buy us the use of far more than we could possibly make for ourselves in the time it takes us to earn the check. Money is the key that opens the storehouse of civilization, but a whole lot more comes flooding out through that door than we could make for ourselves in the time it takes to earn the key.

And that's true, no matter how big the check becomes.

The experts, I say, don't seem to explain that exactly.

But that's the way it is.



planes— for you!

Going abroad? Someone's work has already raised the cathedrals, painted the pictures, laid out the cities—for you!

Staying home? Someone's work enlivens TV channels, prints the daily paper, keeps social order—for you!

In trouble? Someone's work defies emergencies, defeats the storms, and has repairs

is sentimental, as if some celestial Santa Claus dropped everything into my living room by way of the chimney. In fact, nothing is free in this old world? Pay for whatever you want, or do without it? No two ways about that!

So, then, I'm forgetting that I've *paid* for whatever it is that I own and pay my share in taxes and profits for all the public and private services I enjoy? This is what



On the Place of Profits and Politics

Reviewed by Jordan J. Ballor

Review of: Carl R. Trueman, *Republocrat: Confessions of a Liberal Conservative* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2010), ISBN: 978-1-59638-183-4.

Carl R. Trueman is academic dean of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and an academic historian of the first-order. In this brief book, however, Trueman brings his considerable analytical powers to bear on the contemporary situation of the evangelical church in North America. Specifically, Trueman's accessible work is an outgrowth of his "belief that the evangelical church in America is in danger of alienating a significant section of its people, particularly younger people, through too tight a connection between conservative party politics and Christian fidelity." Depending on one's own context, of course, this claim may have more or less merit and existential pull. That is, a mainline Protestant churchgoer is far less likely than an evangelical to be concerned with the identification of conservative politics and the Christian faith.

Trueman is sensitive to this, though, and defends his choice of focus on conservative politics, since "the USA is my adopted context and the Religious Right is where I see the most immediate problem. But hard-and-fast identification of gospel faithfulness with the Left, or even with the center, can be just as problematic. The gospel cannot and must not be identified with partisan political posturing." Under-scoring this commitment to unraveling

any easy identification of particular political views with the Christian faith, Trueman proceeds, in six brisk chapters, to excoriate the New Left, secularism and American civil religion, Fox News and political reportage in general, free-market capitalism and Christianity, contemporary democracy in America, and the simplification of politics. Trueman is at his best when smashing these various idols, the many different ways that Christians all too easily accommodate the dominant worldly culture. His analysis of the transition from concerns of the Old Left (primarily economic and objective) to the New Left (primarily psychological and subjective) is particularly penetrating.

Readers of *Religion & Liberty* will be most interested, however, in Trueman's critical engagement of capitalism (chapter 4) and politics (running throughout, although particularly in chapters 5 and 6). With regard to economics, Trueman reiterates his basic theme: the Christian faith cannot be simply and unequivocally identified with any particular economic system. He focuses especially on capitalism because, as in the case of conservative politics, that is the system most likely to be idolized in his proximate context. Some readers will be put off by his rather stark portrayal of capitalism as a system that "has no morality other than what is generated by the need to turn a profit." Indeed, this rather broad-brush characterization of "the morality of the market" (or the lack thereof), rings a little out-of-tune

for a project that is trying to do justice to the *complexity* of contemporary life, in all its economic, political, and social variety. Trueman's attempt to raise the level of discourse and to show how life is not simply "black-and-white" sometimes risks being undermined by his "either/or" juxtaposition (in this case of "untrammelled" capitalism and Christianity). To use Trueman's phrase, the relationship between morality and markets is one that, in Christian perspective, must do justice to "the complexity of reality."

A better way to read Trueman, however, is to see that his project is not about demonizing capitalism, wealth, or profits on the one hand, or political power on the other. It is about putting the pursuit of profit and power in its proper place. Thus what he writes about the market applies equally well to the government: "no economic system, least of all perhaps capitalism, can long survive without some kind of larger moral underpinning that stands prior to and independent of the kinds of values the market itself generates." It is in this larger and prior system of belief and action, the Christian faith, that we are to seek our primary identity and unity, and in pursuit of this, Trueman's book is a bracing and worthwhile effort.

Jordan J. Ballor is a research fellow at the Acton Institute, executive editor of the Journal of Markets & Morality, and author of Ecu-menical Babel: Confusing Economic Ideology and the Church's Social Witness (Christian's Library Press, 2010).

distinction, there is failure in the public square. We turn matters of judgment, prudential judgment into ethical, moral positions. The left does this, for example, in how it responds to the Middle East and the Palestinian issue. The right does it in the way it responds to the very same issue by supporting various forms of Zionism almost uncritically. That's one illustration, at least in terms of international practice.

There are, of course, a plethora of different arguments about helping the poor, something we are called to do as Christians. What do you see as some of the best ways for assisting those in need, and why has there been so much failure in Washington and even the Church?

There certainly are a number of arguments about helping the poor. They've grown out of a frustration over the last two generations, especially among Protestants. I think this is less true among Catholics. But among Protestants, there's a growing concern about how to help the poor because there's a recognition that we have done very little about this. Part of my academic training is in missiology. I find it interesting that in the rise of modern missions, both Protestant and Catholic, there was a transcendent and deep commitment to the poor and to what we might call social issues. But that was lost in the 20th Century. One can speculate why it was lost, but certainly in Protestantism the debate between mainline and progressive Christians and fundamentalist Christians cemented that divide.

I think the Church needs to regain what I call a holistic stewardship, and with that, what I call in my book a missional theology. A missional theology is a kingdom-seeking theology that sees the whole Church as the mission of God. And it sees the Church and the congregation as the light of the Spirit in the community of God's people, as an impulse towards the world in all of its brokenness and all of its weakness, to heal the world.

And that, of course, leads us to the question of the how. How do we help the

poor? I think what we have discovered is that Washington has had a part in addressing the issue of poverty, especially outside of America, that has at times been effective. But on the whole, we have not seen any kind of dramatic decrease of worldwide poverty unless it's accompanied by versions of the free market that empower people to actually create businesses, make money, provide jobs and create economic stability as a result. So when the government simply funds concerns for poverty and doesn't actually help build proper economic structures that will support people, it fails.

The relationship between religious freedom and liberty is so important in this nation. Do you see it being threatened in any way?

Yes, I do. I think it's threatened both from the left and the right politically. It's threatened from the left by ideas such as hate speech. Hate speech has already been used in Canada, a Western nation that has celebrated freedom and the separation of church and state, as a means of attacking religious freedom. Applications of hate speech have been applied against Christian churches and ministers for standing against homosexual practice and homosexual marriage. I think there's a growing danger of that happening in America in the coming decades.

By the same token, there's a denial of religious liberty on the other side when people, unwittingly or otherwise, desire for the state to actually interfere in the enforcement of personal morality. This leads us to a lot of other questions, such as the life question, which I think is not first a question of personal choice, but a question of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, as the Constitution says. If we deny the right to life to the most helpless among us, then we're violating the first principles not only of moral law, but also of American constitutional law.

But when the right wants to force its views of personal morality on the culture by actually using the law to accomplish that, there's a great danger that religious

liberty will actually be threatened. So I think there is a threat from both the left and right, and that threat extends both to the conscience of individuals and the fact that we have legally respected this freedom so long as people do not violate civil law. But it is threatened by various ideologies right now that want to implement the force of their ideas through the law.

We hear a lot today about young people who are beholden and affected by religious pluralism. What are some positive trends about young people today in the life of the church?

Well, we have heard a lot about the negatives, and for good reason, because we have a generation of young people that have not been nurtured in family life. They're the product of broken and dysfunctional homes. They're the product of an educational system that has increasingly detached itself from all categories of moral law and the idea of divine revelation. So the result of that is an increasingly secular culture, much as we see in Europe. It's just that America is not as far along as what we see in Germany and France and England, etc.

I could talk about a number of churches that have sprung up or been replanted, mainline churches as well as evangelical churches, that have been replanted or established in center cities across America that are growing. They're growing principally with people that are young who want to worship in a way that reflects ancient Christian values rather than contemporary values. They want to be more creedal. They want to be more liturgical. They want to engage in their cities and neighborhoods. And from that, I'm actually seeing and witnessing a great recovery of vibrant, thoughtful Christianity among these young people, especially in the cities and near universities.

You have a unique perspective because of your ecumenical work and you command respect from those across the political divide. Can you give us some insight into what motivates opposition to the market economy for many leaders within the church?

I think what motivates it is a false understanding of the free market. I think many Christian leaders, both in my Baby Boom Generation, as well as younger Christians, believe that market forces are forces that are absolute and unaccountable to moral principles. When they hear about a free market system, they think this is short hand for greed. And if that's their understanding of the market, then I understand why they oppose it. I think much of the opposition to the market among Christians, in terms of their own traditions, is rooted in a very poor understanding of the market itself. When I listen to them talk about the market, I hear them saying things that I once said. And I tell them, "Well, if that's what I thought it was, I would agree with you." So I think the work that we have cut out for us is to explain the connection between markets and Christian morality and to show how markets are really rooted in Christian morality and how they really do work for the good of most people.

This year is the 20th anniversary of the Acton Institute. Can you give an example of how Acton has assisted in your ministry and helped others?

The Acton Institute, in my first exposure to it about 10 years ago, helped me personally to discover the holistic witness of the Church, especially as it pertains to economics, freedom and morality. I was very uneasy about markets, very uneasy about economics. I felt that there wasn't a Christian way to think about these subjects, and to have integrity as I read the New Testament. And Acton changed that for me—powerfully changed that for me—because it introduced me, not only to some teachers and voices and materials that helped me as a Christian leader, but it also gave me a network of friends, people who have become important in my own

life and journey, who I can discuss these ideas with. I can ask questions, and I can do so in what I would call a kind of community of faithful and diverse Christians. It's Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox, and for me personally, that was very important to hear the witness of the whole Christian church, not just one part of it.

Where does Acton fit within the mold of Christian ecumenism? What does the Acton Institute offer for people of faith who might not have heard of the organization and their mission?

I think Acton fits into the category of Christian ecumenism because it is a generously orthodox think tank. But it's a think tank that draws, as I said earlier, from the

Acton. Not only do I see the importance of the concept of subsidiarity now, but it has helped me understand a whole host of other issues. The idea of subsidiarity, of course, is that matters ought to be handled by the smallest, lowest or least centralized competent authority. And this is why Acton does not oppose the idea that the federal government may have a role in solving a problem, but it will always properly question, with this principle of subsidiarity, what is that role? Because the more centralized the authority becomes at the highest level, the more removed it is from the people that are actually trying to solve the problem. And when that clicked for me in my first

exposure to Acton, it just made a host of things make sense to me in a new way.

And finally, through Acton, not only did I discover some of the depth of Catholic encyclicals and Catholic social theology, which helped me as a Protestant immensely. This

also forced me to go back into my own Protestant theology and see that there were traditions in the Lutheran tradition, in the Reformed tradition and others that were saying similar things.

So again, there is a common ecumenism in this thinking. One of the most recent encyclicals of the Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas In Veritate*, says that charity must always be at the heart of the Church. I think that it's right to recognize that charity, understood as *caritas*, is true Christian love (love of neighbor) must always be at the heart of what the Church is. Not political ideology, not political struggles, but true Christian love which is expressed and properly understood as charity. That must remain at the very heart of the Christian church. And that's where we bear our most faithful witness in the wider culture. Acton has helped me to see that.



John Armstrong in front of Wheaton College, where he serves as adjunct professor of evangelism.

whole Christian tradition. It helps to show us how to intellectually and morally think critically about the history and moral theology of the whole Christian Church. There are a couple of ways in which it has fit into my Christian ecumenism. One is very practical. By attending Acton University, by attending Acton seminars, conferences, events and discussions, I have personally met and developed relationships with Christians from all over the world, from many nationalities and ethnic backgrounds—Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox Christians. So it really has personally engaged me in my journey of ecumenism through people I've met and how those people have become my friends and become my associates and people who encourage and help me.

But it's also helped me intellectually. I did not know what subsidiarity was until

Manuel Ayau [1925- 2010]

One of the most significant and courageous contributors to the cause of liberty and individual responsibility in Latin America, Manuel F. Ayau was a classic example of someone who made a difference. From an early age, Ayau, affectionately known as “Muso” to his many friends, decided that he would do whatever he could to create the conditions that promote liberty and therefore, the opportunity for authentic human flourishing.

Born in Guatemala City, Ayau undertook his university studies in the United States. An engineer by training, he had one of those intellectually curious minds that are forever seeking to know the truth of things. Hence, alongside a successful career as an entrepreneur, businessman, company director, commercial banker, and member of the Central Bank of Guatemala, Ayau never ceased to be a pioneer in promoting the life of the mind. On the virtues of the market economy, he wrote this memorable line: “In a very real sense, we all compete to enrich others.”

In the late 1950s, Ayau founded the Center for Economic and Social Studies (CEES) in Guatemala. Its purpose was simple: to study and develop wider understanding of the preconditions of societies that were both free and prosperous. In the conditions of 1950s Guatemala, most would have viewed such an enterprise as worthy of Don Quixote himself. But to Ayau’s mind, ideas mattered, and unless people were willing to invest in good ideas, then bad ideas would surely prevail.

Eventually his determination to spread the ideas of liberty in

his own impoverished, fractured country led Ayau to found what will surely be his most lasting legacy, the Universidad Francisco Marroquín in Guatemala, which today is widely recognized as one of the best universities in Latin America.

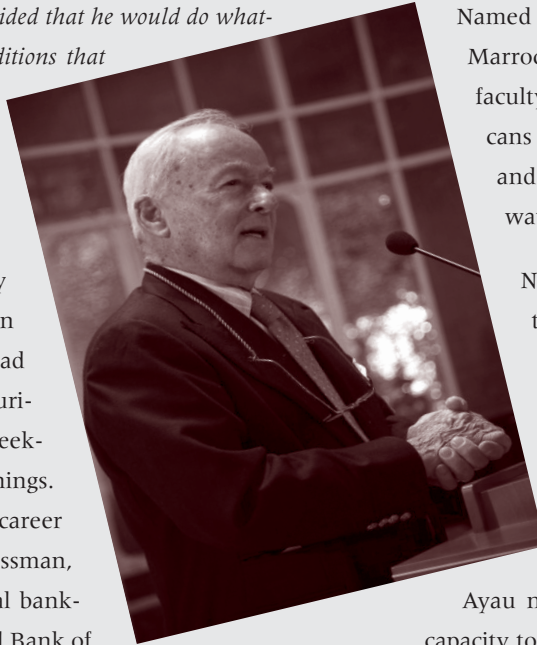
Named after an early bishop of Guatemala, Francisco Marroquín, this university and its exceptionally talented faculty has educated thousands of young Latin Americans in the foundations of freedom and responsibility, and alerted them to the importance and virtue of always seeking after the truth.

Nor was Ayau afraid to take his ideas directly into the public square. He served, for instance, as a member of Guatemala’s Congress and even stood for president in 1990. Ayau was no stranger to threats, including against his own life, yet he was never intimidated by those who prefer violence to reason. In the face of political pressures that most would find unbearable,

Ayau never lost hope in the cause of freedom and its capacity to contribute to the common good of his country.

He also worked tirelessly for liberty at the international level. As a reflection of the esteem in which others held him, Ayau served a term as President of the Mont Pèlerin Society and was a long time member of the board of directors of the Liberty Fund as well as a trustee of the Foundation for Economic Education—organizations that have all worked tirelessly over many decades in often difficult circumstances to explain and develop the ideas of freedom and the virtues needed to sustain them to several generations of students and scholars.

Those who knew Ayau best marveled at his quiet confidence that, no matter how difficult the odds, truth would prevail over error, not least because he believed that human beings were made for freedom—in the fullest and richest sense of that word—rather than slavery and ignorance.





Reading Centesimus Annus

Grasping the authentic significance of *Centesimus Annus* requires two approaches. First, one must read the encyclical on its own merits, independently of previous papal teaching. As objectively as possible, one

can exegete its various passages to discern its thrust and priorities. Then one must read the document in the context of previous social pronouncements by the magisterium over the past 100 years and see what new themes, developments, and directions the present encyclical initiates.

When read for its own sake, *Centesimus Annus* emerges as an uncompromising rejection of collectivism in its Marxist, communist, socialist, and even welfare-statist manifestations. While the encyclical allows for a certain amount of intervention by the state in such areas as wage levels, social security, unemployment insurance, and the like (always according to subsidiarity and only for the sake of the common good), *Centesimus Annus* also expresses repeated concern for observing the principle of subsidiarity and warns against the effects of intervention on both the economic prosperity of a nation and the dignity and rights of each person.

Centesimus Annus, then, indicates a decided preference for what it calls the business economy, market economy, or free economy, rooted in a legal, ethical, and religious framework. While it rejects the notion that such a free economic system meets all human needs, it distinguishes the economic system

from the ethical and cultural context in which it exists. In this way, *Centesimus Annus* can criticize the excesses of materialism and consumerism and still endorse a free economy as being essentially in accord with Christianity.

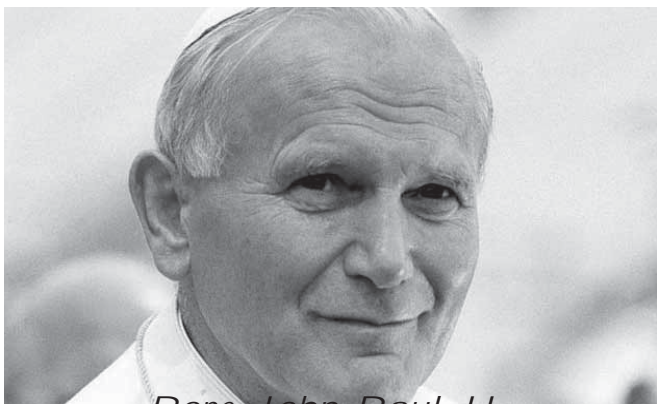
A second way of reading this encyclical reveals it as an even more dramatic document. When it is read with an awareness of modern Roman Catholic social thought, beginning with Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, its historical import surfaces. *Centesimus Annus* demonstrates the greatest depth of economic understanding and the most deliberate (and least critical) embrace of the system of free exchange on the part of Catholic teaching authority in 100 years, and possibly since the Reformation period. Moreover, it contains a modern appreciation for the dynamic nature of free exchange and the way in which wealth is produced.

When seen in this way, *Centesimus Annus* represents the beginning of a shift away from the static, zero-sum economic worldview that led the church to be suspicious of the system of free exchange and to argue for wealth distribution as the only moral response to poverty. Clearly, John Paul II has incorporated the developments in economic science since the time of Keynes. Not only does the encyclical synthesize advances in economics with Catholic normative principles, but it also reaffirms the autonomy of economics as a legitimate and positive discipline.

Centesimus Annus indicates a turn toward authentic human liberty as a principle for social organization on the part of the Catholic Church. Thus a new dialogue has begun. *Centesimus Annus* has opened the church to a vigorous dialogue with the idea of economic liberty. It is an idea that began with Catholic scholarship as seen in the Scholastics; it is fitting that this pope should retrieve it.

This column first appeared in the 2001 May – June issue of Religion & Liberty.

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

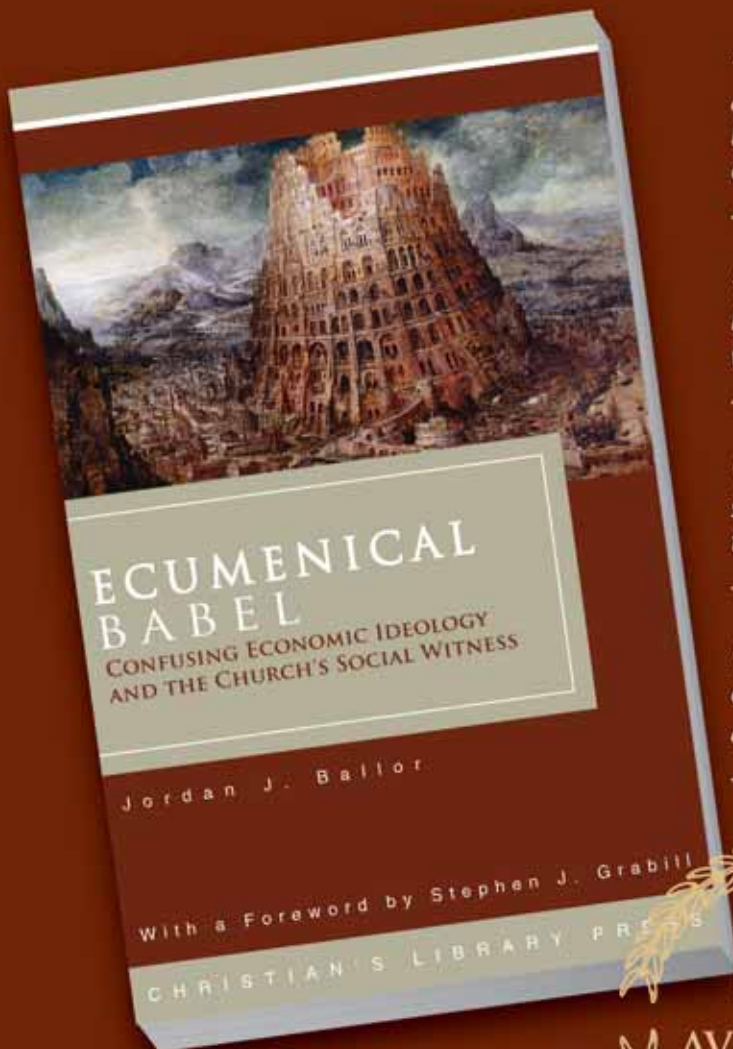


Pope John Paul II

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