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Inside this issue



A Powerful Consequence:

An Interview with Francisco Flores

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In the last twelve years, El Salvador has seen unprecedented prosperity: the poverty rate has dropped from 60 percent to 30 percent; infant mortality rates have plummeted; unemployment rates have halved; school and health care availability has increased dramatically. From 1999 to 2004, this reconstruction was overseen by President Francisco Flores. After finishing his term as president, Flores continued his work for freedom by founding the America Libre Institute in Washington, D.C. He spoke with *Religion & Liberty* in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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A Journal of Religion, Economics, and Culture

Editor's Note

Our first two issues of the new *Religion & Liberty* were focused on particular themes—an innovation for us. This issue returns to familiar terrain with a broader selection of pieces. Nevertheless, I might suggest that there is something of a connection between the principal articles we have in this issue.

The Acton Institute is about promoting a "free and virtuous society." Perhaps in this issue there is a little more emphasis on the "virtuous" rather than the "free."

Michael R. Stevens's article on Wendell Berry will strike some readers as a surprising inclusion here. Mr. Berry is no cheerleader for the free market, and his concern for agricultural communities leads him to be suspicious even of technological advances. But Mr. Berry's concern is about the human ecology of the economy: What effect does our economic life have on the life of community and the cultural norms that encourage the discipline of virtue? Those who promote the efficiency and prosperity of economic liberty cannot neglect such questions, even if they come to different conclusions than Mr. Berry. An economic system is not an end in itself—the good of the human person remains always the end of all systems.

Peter Schakel's article on the imagination of C. S. Lewis is timely given the attention paid to Lewis with the recent Narnia film. Schakel draws attention to Lewis's interest in the education of virtue—the inculcation of good habits. The work of the "free and virtuous" society is more difficult on the virtue end—freedom is easier to grant than virtue is to teach. Schakel reminds us that Lewis has some timeless wisdom on that subject.

And we lead this issue with a fascinating interview with Francisco Flores, former president of El Salvador. In the wake of last year's hurricanes, his comments on disaster relief alone are worth reading. As a Catholic priest, it was difficult to read about his own distance from the Catholic Church, but his experience highlights the danger of the Church substituting political or economic policies for the Gospel. Churches have an indispensable role in promoting the virtue upon which a free society depends; that task ought not to be subordinated to political questions.

Finally, I would draw your attention to our own Samuel Gregg's article. Though a publication like *R&L* cannot contain the vast amount of work published by Acton staff, it's a pleasure to give you a glimpse of that fine work.

Father Raymond

Editorial Board

The Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty promotes a free society characterized by individual liberty and sustained by religious principles.

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What a change El Salvador has gone through. What a challenge. How do individuals deal with that challenge, especially with regard to their faith?

I think that in normal conditions, in peaceful, prosperous conditions, your core identity can be clothed in many layers. But to the degree that you suffer, and that you face yourself with crisis, you face yourself with the possibility of death, that you face yourself with the loss of family members, you are left only with your faith. And in the end, that is what pulls a country forward. In the end, it's the strength of an individual people that decides to pull forward, stagnate, or stay. So I think that in El Salvador, faith played a fundamental role in the decision people took of facing the challenge.

And I think it's important to tell you what my faith is. I lost faith in the Catholic Church when I was very young—an adolescent—because of what happened with liberation theology. I tried to find a sense of purpose through philosophy later on. Through it, I found some answers. Now, I have come to a different understanding. I have come to separate the organization from its teachings. So now I can feel comfortable with the teachings of the Catholic Church, though I don't feel comfortable with some of its representatives.

You have said that essential to freedom is the ability to choose our path. If choice is freedom, what is the standard to make the correct choices, right choices?

I think that I was using the word in the sense of self discovery, in the sense that as you question yourself as to what is your purpose in life, then you're faced with two paths. Either you take what the crowd or what the circumstance pulls you to, which is the most comfortable choice, or you are honest with your inner calling, with your inner voice that tells you this is right. You know, this is what you should be doing. This is the one thing that, later on in life when you go back and see yourself, you will say I'm proud of you for taking that choice. So I was talking of choice in that sense, in the sense of choice as the process of self conscious, self discovery, that allows you to discover what your mission is. And your mission always has to do with doing something good for others.

Part of that is honesty, being honest with yourself about what you feel is right?

Yes. And I think an even better word would be integrity, being true to your character, your inner voice.

You have also said that one of the reasons for El Salvador's success is that it stopped blaming others. How do you engender a sense of responsibility among an entire people?

Again, [when] you are faced with the responsibility of guiding, then you have two choices. An easy choice, which is to tell people that nothing is their fault; it is somebody else's fault and I will take it upon myself to fight that person or that circumstance that is making people ill at ease. This is the populist message. That is what most populist leaders do when they're faced with their country. They say, "Oh, this is the fault of the United States, or it's the fault of the multi-national corporations, or it's a historical fault." And then you have the tougher choice of saying the truth, saying, "Listen, we are responsible for this; we are the ones who have made all these mistakes, so we better correct them." Now, this message is, of course, very difficult at the beginning, but it has a very powerful consequence, which is that people feel immediately empowered. Immediately. Once you're able to communicate that you have to accept responsibility and stop blaming others, then people start to feel that they can do it. It's the responsibility of a leader to say, not only it's our responsibility, but this is the path. So that people say, "okay, then we'll take these decisions and we'll take these sacrifices, but we'll pull through in the end."

"And then you have the tougher choice of saying ... 'Listen, we are responsible for this' ... Now, this message is ... very difficult at the beginning, but it has a very powerful consequence, which is that people feel immediately empowered."

Does the government have a moral obligation to ease the transition to freer markets and a more responsible society?

The best metaphor—it's not a pretty one, but it's the best metaphor to explain it—is as if you had broken your leg and it had been operated on improperly. And that's the way

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Photo: Getty Images

C.S. Lewis

Irrigating Deserts with Moral Imagination

by Peter J. Schakel

Except for salvation, imagination is the most important matter in the thought and life of C. S. Lewis. He believed the imagination was a crucial contributor to the moral life, as well as an important source of pleasure in life and a vital evangelistic tool (much of Lewis's effectiveness as an apologist lies in his ability to illuminate difficult concepts through apt analogies). Without the imagination, morality remains ethics—abstract reflections on principles that we might never put into practice. The imagination enables us to connect abstract principles to everyday life, and to relate to the injustices faced by others as we imagine what they experience and feel. Though Lewis did not use the term "moral imagination" and recent writers on moral imagination rarely cite or draw upon him, he presented a clear, accessible, and powerful delineation of the concept long before it became popularized in the 1980s and 1990s.

Lewis's slender but very important book *The Abolition of Man* contains the Riddell Memorial Lectures, delivered at the University of Durham in February 1943. Although the word "imagination" does not appear in the lectures, this is Lewis's fullest articulation of the importance of moral imagination. Addressing educators (but also by implication parents, who are a child's first educators), he raises the problem of imaginative impoverishment. The educational system of the 1940s, he believes, has misread the need of the moment: fearing that young people will be swept away by emotional propaganda, educators have decided the best thing they can do for children is to fortify their minds against imagination and emotion by teaching them to dissect all things by rigorous intellectual analysis. Lewis says in reply, "My own experience as a teacher tells an opposite tale. For every one pupil who needs to be guarded from a weak excess of sensibility there are three who need to be awakened from the slumber of cold vulgarity. The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles but to irrigate deserts." Children's and adolescents' imaginations need to be fed, not starved.

The central argument of the book propounds "the doctrine of objective value, the belief that certain attitudes are really true, and others really false, to the kind of thing the universe is and the kind of things we are." *Mere Christianity* refers to these attitudes as "the Law of Human Nature" and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* depicts them imaginatively as "Deep Magic from the Dawn of Time." The Law of Human Nature, Lewis believes, is like language, both innate (as emphasized in *Mere Christianity*) and something that has to be learned, absorbed from parents and society, nurtured by example and precept.

Such nurturing is the central theme of *The Abolition of Man*. The role and approach of education are totally different for parents and educators who accept objective norms and values and for those who do not. For those who accept objectivity, "the task is to train in the pupil those responses which are in themselves appropriate, whether anyone is making them or not, and in making which the very nature of man consists." The child must be guided "to feel pleasure, liking, disgust, and hatred at those things which really are pleasant, likeable, disgusting, and hateful." Those who do not accept objectivity must decide either "to remove all sentiments, as far as possible, from the pupil's mind: or else to encourage some sentiments for reasons that have nothing to do with their intrinsic 'justness' or 'ordinacy'."

"For every one pupil who needs to be guarded from a weak excess of sensibility there are three who need to be awakened from the slumber of cold vulgarity."

Crucial to such nurturing is the child's internalization of the standards and the appropriate response. Intellectual apprehension of abstract principles is not enough. When a child is tempted to steal a sweater that appeals to him or her greatly, the goal is not to have the child intellectually weigh the moral issues at stake; the child must "feel" that stealing is not only wrong but repugnant, feel it through trained emotions: "Without the aid of trained emotions

Irrigating Deserts with Moral Imagination

the intellect is powerless against the animal organism." A person possessing trained emotions—the equivalent of practical reason—relies not on the abstract reflections of the head, but on the properly nurtured judgments of the heart: "The Chest-Magnanimity-Sentiment—these are the indispensable liaison officers between cerebral man and visceral man."

Lewis goes even further and calls this the defining quality of the human species: "It may even be said that it is by this middle element that man is man: for by his intellect he is mere spirit and by his appetite mere animal." Education, whether at home or school, that is aimed only at developing knowledge and intellect produces children who are emotionally and imaginatively impoverished and who grow up to be "Men without Chests" (the title of the first lecture). The loss of belief in moral law and its implementation through practical reason will ultimately, inevitably, Lewis believes, lead to the abolition of man, to the loss of the qualities that define the human species.

Practical reason needs to be nurtured first by the direct moral guidance of parents, teachers, and society, through instruction in accepted attitudes and mores. It is such practical nurturing, not abstract ethical study, that builds a life-long foundation for sound moral behavior. The faculty of reason is important in perceiving and articulating principles of morality, but in one sense it remains subservient to imagination because until those principles are internalized by a person and connected to life situations, they do not become meaningful and affect behavior. As Lewis expresses it (using his imagination to create images and invent a memorable analogy), "I had sooner play cards against a man who was quite sceptical about ethics, but bred to believe that 'a gentleman does not cheat,' than against an irreproachable moral philosopher who had been brought up among sharpers."

That initial grounding in practical reason can be further nurtured through reading and responding to literature. The imaginativeness of stories enables children to form and internalize "sentiments," those complex combinations of feelings and opinions which provide a basis for action or judgment. They are helped to learn and live out "magnanimity," the nobleness of mind and generosity that enable one to overlook injury and rise above meanness. In "On Three Ways of Writing for Children," Lewis wrote that a writer should not impose a moral lesson upon a story: "Let the pictures [i.e., verbal images] tell you their own moral." Here, in sum, is Lewis on the moral imagination: the moral of the story must be embodied in the images and the images can be perceived only through the imagination.

Lewis derived enormous pleasures, probably daily pleasures, from the imagination. Without it, his life would have been diminished in many ways—dimmer, more constricted, and less rich and rewarding. But he also recognized its importance for faith and moral development. His own moral attitudes were shaped by his early reading and his imaginative writings later were intended—like those of medieval and early modern writers he admired greatly: Dante, Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, for example—not just to entertain but to nurture. He did not want the civilized values of the past to be lost or dismissed as no longer relevant. Through the use of moral imagination in his writings, Lewis was attempting to preserve and pass on the traditional values of earlier ages to the modern world.

Peter J. Schakel is a professor of English at Hope College in Holland, Michigan. In addition to many other works on Lewis, he has written The Way into Narnia: A Reader's Guide, *published by W. B. Eerdmans in 2005.*

T*his article is excerpted from Peter J. Schakel, "Irrigating Deserts with Moral Imagination,"* Inklings of Glory, *volume 11 of* Christian Reflection: A Series in Faith and Ethics *(The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University, 2004), 21–29. Reprinted by permission of the publisher. For a free subscription to* Christian Reflection, *please see the center's Web site,* www.ChristianEthics.ws.

A World of Kindness: Morality and Private Property in the Torah

by Rabbi Aryeh Spero

One would think that a seminal religious document such as the Torah—the five books of Moses, the Old Testament—would limit itself to purely spiritual themes. Yet many economic socialists and redistributionists find Torah scripture unnerving because among its greatest offerings is the motif of private property. Private property and the outgrowth from it that results in the well-ordered, predictable society are necessary conditions for an enduring civilization. And it is civilized society that the Torah wishes, through its precepts, to create.

Being created in the image of God means that a human, like God, must be responsible, accountable, mature, and merciful. None of this comes about except within a construct where the individual, not the state or collective, bears the burden of human creativity. Genesis is replete with injunctions upon man to be an autoresponsible individual.

For there can be no personal growth unless someone has a personal stake in a particular enterprise. There can be no maturity absent the habits learned in tending to one's own responsibilities. Work, the Torah says, is a fundamental virtue. Leviticus tells us that "six days shall ye work" and also that virtue is manifest by an owner paying his employees on time. These and many other virtues result from a direct relationship with personal enterprises.

Certainly, a God who loves humans wants each human to excel and be the best he can be. History and sociology have shown that the human's full potential is reached in societies that are free. History's great men, be they scientists, industrialists, inventors or men of letters, have come almost exclusively from private property societies.

"For there can be no personal growth unless someone has a personal stake in a particular enterprise. There can be no maturity absent the habits learned in tending to one's own responsibilities. Work, the Torah says, is a fundamental virtue."

There has never been a free society apart from a law of enforceable contracts and private property. "Each man under his fig tree, each man under his vineyard, each family under its banner." This is a recurring phrase throughout the Bible. Man's rootedness—his willingness to defer today's gratification in sacrifice to tomorrow's promise—comes from his attachment to that which is his today and will still be his tomorrow: his vineyard, his orchard. An individual works with a greater sense of purpose, better, knowing that after death loved ones will inherit what he produced because it is his to bequeath. The consequence: the world is a more resplendent place.

So as to keep one's holdings, the Bible kept taxation on property and land below fifteen percent. (By the way, when talking of property, the Torah uses the singular you as opposed to the collective you.) Deuteronomy calls it a severe sin when one encroaches upon the boundary of another's field. Private space has integrity. There is no warrant for the nationalizing of family land—it amounts to stealing.

"Proclaim liberty throughout the land," says Leviticus. But there can be no political freedom without, first, economic freedom. People cannot freely express their feelings about government or policies unless their source of income is independent of state rulers they wish to criticize or oust. To the degree private property is limited, so is freedom of speech and assembly.

Also, without private property, there can be no concept of charity. "A world of Kindness builded the Lord," says the psalmist, meaning that it is up to us, not a theoretical entity, to do acts of kindness from that which is ours. True kindness can only come from giving from that which is one's own. The gleanings of the fields that were left to the poor during Biblical times were a demonstration that true giving comes not from the state but individual enterprise. In fact, it is the direct acts of

kindness that better our souls as opposed to those done through surrogates. Torah chooses the benefactor/benefactee relationship over collectivism. Exodus expresses the gratification the individual imbibes seeing success from the fruits of his labor, one of which is charity. In short, charity is personal.

Many would want us to believe that the Almighty deems unwholesome and selfish the love that one has for that which he owns. Torah says differently. When discussing the exemption of those not required for military conscription, the Torah in Deuteronomy exempts a man who has "built a new home, planted a new vineyard, and recently married." Such a man is too preoccupied to fight in the army. Torah continues by saying that it is unnatural for man to forfeit that which has recently become his. God realizes these cravings and bonds as valid. Therefore, it is not selfish to rejoice in accomplishment; rather, as God says, it is natural.

Today's liberalism, a variant of classic socialism, is built upon the politics of envy. There are those who cannot abide that others have that which they do not. The Ten Commandments explicitly warns against this sentiment: "Thou shalt not envy your friend's field, his house, his livestock, that which belongs to him." Torah says that if someone wants those things, he should put his mind to earning and acquiring them. If after all that, he still does not have all the possessions his friend has, then let him be happy with the other fulfilling aspects of life—study, purpose, family, friendship, the arts, or nature.

Private property provides stability to people and society, the impetus for work, sacrifice, hope, reciprocity—all being emotions that matriculate and develop into a noble value system. Unlike sloth, it brings prosperity and health. And by following the Bible, this prosperity will not degenerate into decadence.

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Acton FAQ

What is the extent of Acton's international activities?

The Acton Institute has long had an international presence, most commonly in the conferences it has hosted around the world. These gatherings include our standard Toward a Free and Virtuous Society conferences as well as two Catholic Bishops' conferences. Acton scholars also speak regularly at other conferences around the world, from Hungary to Guatemala.

But in recent years, Acton has expanded its international efforts, most notably with the founding of an office in Rome. This post has allowed the institute to host a number of additional conferences and lectures that expose a greater number of European leaders to the intersection of freedom, faith, and the public sector. For example, the Acton Institute has recently started a series of ten lectures (nine in Rome and one in Poland) in honor of the fifteenth anniversary of the papal encyclical *Centesimus Annus*. This series will take place through 2007 and will feature world renowned experts in economics, philosophy, and theology. The first of this series was held in October 2005.

But perhaps the greatest and most exciting example of Acton's international influence has been our work with our international affiliates. This past summer, Acton hosted a group of like-minded educators and entrepreneurs from around the world for a week of intense, specialized training. Equipped with a solid understanding of our core principles, these affiliates now carry on Acton's work in their home countries on the grassroots level. This work has resulted in the founding of institutes in Austria and Argentina, the support of a third in Brazil, and the beginnings of one in Zambia. By hosting conferences, pursuing research, and translating texts, Acton affiliates are reaching Europe, Africa, and South America in ways we could not have hoped for in the past.

As we continue with our educational efforts, we look forward to even more relationships with partners around the world. It is personal contacts like these that encourage the Acton Institute to plow ahead with its message of freedom and responsibility, whether that be in Paradise, Texas, or Lima, Peru.

Kris Mauren
Executive Director

Some of Acton's international affiliate members—from Argentina, Braz
Kenya, Zambia, and at an Acton conference in Grand Rapids, Michiga

Private Property and Public Good

by Samuel Gregg

From the beginning of human history, humans have exercised dominion over the material world. All components of nature (other than persons themselves) are resources that can be rightly used, and in some instances used up, for the benefit of persons. Through their use of things, people cause much of the material world to become property: that is, material morally tied in a special way to a particular person or persons.

However, the human dominion over the subhuman world is more basic than property. This does not mean, however, that things should be owned in common. The point of associations and other common enterprises is the flourishing of each of its individual members—that is what constitutes the flourishing of the group. Moreover, if people are to flourish, then they need to make choices and to act. This includes their choices and actions concerning the use of things. For this reason, in those fields of human activity where individuals or groups can facilitate human flourishing through the private possession and use of things, then it is just for them to do so. This includes economic activity.

The question of how earth's resources are to be used for the benefit of all is left to people to work out rationally together. The principle of common use means that any arrangement of the possession of things by individuals is to be seen as a means of ensuring common use. For this reason, in using those goods people should consider the exterior things that they legitimately possess not only as their own, but as common in the sense that their possessions should benefit not only themselves but others as well. We can say, then, that any person's earthly good is his in the sense that he owns it, but not in the sense that he alone may use it; for insofar as he does not need it to satisfy his own needs, others should be able to use it to satisfy theirs.

Private ownership of property is the normative means by which the principle of common use is realized. For one thing, private property is essential for the development of self-reliance. Secondly, private property helps us express and develop our personalities. When we own things, we can choose to use them to express our concern for others, be it by giving people gifts or by investing in productive, job-creating industries. Thirdly, private ownership or the prospect of private ownership creates incentives for people to contribute in a wider way to the society around them. It encourages people to work, to be entrepreneurial, and to create wealth for themselves and others. Lastly, private property allows people to give direct expression of their genuine responsibility for themselves and for others.

To these moral justifications for private property, we may add the three reasons given by Aquinas to explain why appropriation of property to particular owners is morally licit and even necessary. First, individuals tend to shirk responsibilities that are nobody's in particular, and people tend to take better care of what is theirs than of what is common to everyone. Second, if everyone were responsible for everything, the result would be confusion. Third, dividing things up generally produces a more peaceful state of affairs, whilst sharing common things often results in tension. Individual ownership—understood as the power to manage and dispose of things—is then justified.

Aquinas did, however, insist that the use of things is a different matter. In regard to use, one is not justified in holding things as exclusively one's own (*ut proprias*) but should rather hold them as common, in the sense that, after one has satisfied one's own needs and those of one's families, one ought to use the surplus in ways that benefit others.

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Sometimes this can mean literally giving something we own to people in need, the use of which results in the consumption of the good. But to share the use of one's goods with others does not necessarily presuppose that the giver discontinues his own use or ownership of that good. A person's use of his house, for example, to shelter someone in need may not actually be a case of assisting with his superfluous goods. Rather, this is an instance of a person sharing a good essential for one's own well being without giving up one's ownership of the good.

Of course, there are virtually no individuals who, having satisfied their basic needs, bury their extra wealth in the ground. Invariably, they choose to invest it. This investment is sometimes in businesses that employ people and create more wealth, which is then further invested. Sometimes it is in banks, which give others access to the capital resources they need as the material basis for their own flourishing.

To this extent, banks are one of those associations that allow people to judiciously fulfill their obligations to use their surplus wealth for the common good and thus, the flourishing of other people. As noted by Antoine de Salins and François Villeroy de Galhau, "the savings of some are used to finance the investment needs of others, in the hope that this financial circuit will play its part in attaining an optimal financial growth."

Samuel Gregg is director of research at the Acton Institute.

Double-Edged Sword:
The Power of the Word

1 Thessalonians 4:9–12

On the subject of mutual charity you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another. Indeed, you do this for all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Nevertheless we urge you, brothers, to progress even more, and to aspire to live a tranquil life, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your [own] hands, as we instructed you, that you may conduct yourselves properly toward outsiders and not depend on anyone.

What is God's purpose for his children? In one sense, we can say it is dependence, complete dependence on His grace to sustain and to save us: "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Jesus said "ask and it will be given to you," (Matthew 7:7) and James said "you do not possess because you do not ask" (James 4:3). A good example of this trusting dependence is St. Francis of Assisi, who radically redefined the nature of voluntary poverty and faith by asking for everything he needed. He did not grow rich, but his joy is a thing of legend.

In order to give, we must cultivate. We are not called simply to receive grace, but to be a grace to others....

But how does one reconcile this notion of dependence—obviously so necessary to the complete Christian life—with St. Paul's exhortation to "not depend on anyone"? It would seem that St. Paul is advocating for that worldview best described in the popular maxim "God helps those who help themselves."

But notice what St. Paul says at the end of this passage: "that you may conduct yourselves properly toward outsiders." The term *properly* is revealing here. This word implies that there is a correct relation between ourselves and others. This correct relation is one exhorted by Christ, who practiced it himself; our correct posture toward others is self-giving. The human person is designed to be a gift, and only in giving of oneself does one become fully human.

But giving of oneself is an active thing, not a passive thing. In order to give, we must cultivate. We are not called simply to receive grace, but to be a grace to others; or more properly, the vessel through which God pours his grace. Thus St. Paul tells us to work with our own hands, to mind our affairs, and to aspire to live a tranquil life. All of these activities are those that cultivate ourselves so that we may be more perfect gifts to one another. In this "independence," we manifest and make present the grace on which we are all dependent. Glory be to God.

Wendell Berry

Health within Limits: A Reading of Wendell Berry

by Michael R. Stevens

A few months ago a friend and I drove to Indianapolis on a pilgrimage to see and hear Wendell Berry. I was struck by the difference between my own heroic construct and the reality before me. Here in Indianapolis stood an elderly man, albeit a sharp, irascible, very tall and vigorous personage. He reflected on the limitless demiurge of consumerism that has come to blight our culture, on the anachronistic vigor with which he seeks to guard over his own money, and on the exercise of that rare and ephemeral notion called "thrift." Beneath his anecdotes and off-the-cuff remarks, I sensed anew that profound theme that permeates all of Berry's work, one that serves not only as an agricultural trope but also as a guiding image for most human endeavors: we are limited creatures, and we find health most readily when our manner is one of humility.

This is not new ground Berry is breaking. For the past forty years, he has been sounding forth in essays, fiction, and poetry the call to local commitments and local communities. Berry's work as a farmer (a vocation which he chose after a decade as a graduate student at Stanford and literature professor at NYU and the University of Kentucky) has profoundly shaped his understanding of human systems and human beings. This can and does lead to awkward and hasty judgments of economic systems that Berry sees as marginalizing local communities; certainly free-market economists who read his work will find much with which to quarrel. As an apologist for a particular way of life, he can and does miss some other helpful possibilities. Within this tension, I'd like to open up some of Berry's very helpful ideas, in order to clarify better both his limitations and his substantial thoughtfulness. More than anything else, Berry seems concerned with a recovery, a revivifying of the human connection to place and people, finite in scale and yet rich in embodiment. This has been well-articulated by Berry in scores of essays, only a few of which I can cite here. One of the best lengthier accounts of this is from an early collection, *A Continuous Harmony: Essays Cultural and Agricultural*. The main essay from this volume is entitled "Discipline and Hope," in which he posits the twin poles of his title as the guides for our work. It is in reinstituting disciplines into our lives—technical disciplines and, more importantly, communal disciplines and disciplines of faith—that we find hope emerging out of dissatisfaction. In limiting our selves, we fulfill our selves: "Community discipline imposes upon our personal behavior an ecological question: What is the effect, on our neighbors and on our place in the world, of what we do?" This comes at a cost, ultimately, of easy answers to the difficulties of lived community, for "all such disciplines reach their limit of comprehensibility and at that point enter mystery. Thus an essential part of a discipline is that relinquishment or abandonment by which we acknowledge and accept its limits." Far from some existential leap into the void, this relinquishment is, for Berry, an essential element of recognizing ourselves as part of God's vast Creation—a loved and privileged part since we are made in His image, but also a limited part. We will never be whole except within the boundaries of His order.

The implications of striving to live within proper limits, and the terrifying human consequences of our steadfast refusals to do so, provide the subject matter for most of Berry's fourteen or so volumes of essays. Although the plight of agriculture in the wake of boundless scale and boundless manipulation of land, crop, and livestock is his enduring central theme, he has noted the effects also in the realms of education, politics, and economics, in ways often controversial but always provocative. His constant pull back to the local concerns that lie behind global projections, and to the human faces behind abstract declarations, is a check on our flight not so much outward toward a world community as in-

"More than anything else, Berry seems concerned with a recovery, a revivifying of the human connection to place and people, finite in scale and yet rich in embodiment."

ward toward a kind of autonomy that is not freedom. Instead, it is an imprisonment within the diseased, self-imposed boundary of personal pleasure and empowerment. In another essay, titled "Solving for Pattern" (collected in *The Gift of the Good Land* North Point Press, 1982), Berry is clear in stating that human enterprise and ingenuity are at the root of culture—he recognizes that when we say "organic" we only use an analogy, since humans can't make organic things, only "artifacts." But we can control to some extent the clarity of our analogies. Berry argues that "Our ability to make such artifacts depends on virtues that are specifically human: accurate memory, observation, insight, imagination, inventiveness, reverence, devotion, fidelity, restraint. Restraint—for us, now—above all: the ability to accept and live within limits; to resist changes that are merely novel or fashionable; to resist greed and pride; to resist the temptation to 'solve' problems by ignoring them, accepting them as 'trade-offs,' or bequeathing them to posterity. A good solution, then, must be in harmony with good character, cultural value, and moral law." Here, we return to the proper understanding of the human, and the connection of proper limits to true freedom is the foundation.

This notion of limit and humility in human endeavor is also present in Berry's poetry, probably most notably in his Sabbath poems. Gathered in the volume *A Timbered Choir* (Counterpoint, 1998), these poems offer an elegant testimony both to the inextinguishable mysteries of creation, and also to the limited nature of life after the Fall. In many of the Sabbath poems, Berry seeks and locates the appropriate tone of accepting our limits gratefully. For instance, in Poem IV from 1979, Berry speaks of "A tale of evil twined/With good, serpent and vine,/And innocence as evil's stratagem." But he shows that we can and should continue good work in this breach: "I let that go a while,/ For it is hopeless to correct/ By generations' toil,/ And I let go my hopes and plans/ That no toil can perfect./ There is no vision here but what is seen:/ White bloom nothing explains/ But a mute blessedness/ Exceeding all distress,/ The fresh light stained a hundred shades of green." Here is finitude that sharpens our sense of hope. But it is not simple, not a limit without its toll, because we are fallen creatures and must seek our hope within pain. Nowhere does Berry better capture this bittersweet reality than in his superb poem "Marriage" from the 1968 collection *Openings*, where he articulates that closest human bond: "It is to be broken. It is to be/ torn open. It is not to be/ reached and come to rest in/ ever. I turn against you,/ I break from you, I turn to you./ We hurt, and are hurt,/ and have each other for healing./ It is healing. It is never whole."

"This notion of limit and humility in human endeavor is also present in Berry's poetry ..."

The acceptance that we are imperfect and all our institutions, from household to market to nation-state, are likewise flawed is not to condemn or surrender, but to see our task as humans in culture as it should be seen: whereby all of us, not just the farmers, are cultivators.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the thorough embodying that Berry has made of these ideas over the years in his fiction (his seven novels and a few dozen stories). Berry often reflects upon the human struggle with limits and satisfactions, and there are many failures and tragedies that he has outlined over the century of history, patchwork and interwoven, that he offers. The limits of the rural life and the small farm chafe on each rising generation, and many of Berry's literary figures can never rest in the confines of the 'too-ordered' life offered them.

Perhaps the most endearing character in the stories is a figure who lives, loves, and dies within limits that he has chosen, and that leave him room to affect many people with his grace. Hence, in the short story "A Consent," we read of Ptolemy Proudfoot, who "was not an ambitious farmer—he did not propose to own a large acreage or to become rich—but merely a good and gifted one. By the time he was twenty-five, he had managed, in spite of the hard times of the 1890s, to make a down payment on the little farm that he husbanded and improved all his life. It was a farm of ninety-eight acres, and Tol never longed even for the two more that would have made it a hundred." Here is a life well-lived, one we can learn from as we each navigate in a world of prodigious choice and little contentment.

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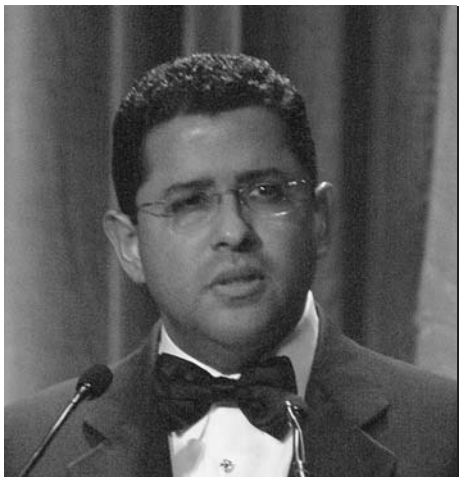


most countries are. They have a wound and that wound has been fixed improperly. So to correct it, you have to operate again and it's painful. And, of course, many times it takes many operations. And I think one of the things that is very important in this process is to know how much you can do at a certain period of time. You can transform the educational system. You can transform the monetary system. You can transform this other system. And each one of them is going to be a painful process. You can't do them all at once, but you have to choose the most important ones and measure correctly the right timing to do it. It is very important to pace yourself.

What is the greatest threat to freedom in El Salvador?

I think there will be two or three threats. In El Salvador, the political system is a system born out of the war, out of the conflict, out of the Peace Accord. So the major parties are the incorporation of the main combatants during the war. So this means that El Salvador does not have a choice between a conservative party and a moderate left or center party. It has a choice between a conservative party and a communist party. So [in] every election, El Salvador takes a risk upon its destiny. If the [communist party] FMLN would win an election, then the FMLN would make El Salvador another Cuba. So this is, I think, the most important threat. The second most important threat is the tendency in Latin America for leaders to support the populist message. Presidents don't want to take risks because they feel that the atmosphere is against them, against reform, against free-market policy, against opening the economy, and against transferring responsibility. And so the second greatest threat is for the leaders of the country to take the easy choice. That is another threat. And the third most important threat, is that El Salvador's success has been the continuous reform-oriented leadership in the past fifteen years. Every past administration has made an important reform, and these reforms, even though they are in varied fields, have one thing in common: they have limited the role of government. They have made transparent the costs of the old system. They have reduced bureaucracy. They have transferred responsibility to the Salvadoran people. And I think one of the threats is to stop doing it, because if you stop doing it, you'll start paying consequences. Because then the old system is very hard to support. And there are many institutions that need to be reformed, and if they are not reformed, then it is so easy for political opponents to say, "you see, what they claim to be such a success as a model is not a success. It's a failure. Look at how we are. Inflation is rising. The unemployment rate is rising. El Salvador is not growing. The systems are not working." So that is another threat, stagnation. Stagnation in public policy is like a swimmer with a rock on his back. He is either swimming or he's sinking. You have to push forward, because if not, you go down.

Some criticize free trade because they fear that the United States will somehow export some sort of "cultural corruption" in addition to goods and services. How do you respond to these critics?

Well, I think there are two important arguments against free trade. One is the cultural corruption argument. And the other one is the job loss argument—people who say, "why should we give American jobs, U.S. jobs, to other countries?" To the cultural corruption argument, I would say the following: All cultures have positive and negative aspects, and what a culture assimilates from another is that culture's choice. In France, for example, you can assimilate the values of liberty from the French Revolution, or you can assimilate its socialist tendency in social services. Now, the United States has a core set of values that I think is universal in application: democracy and individual rights. Those two values, the pillars of the United States' system, are values that I share as a Salvadoran, and most Salvadorans share with all Americans. So, I find that if we are able to emulate what is best in U.S. culture, it will be a very positive thing. Now, some people say that they're against trade because they will be losing jobs. What these critics don't realize is that the choice is not between giving a job to a Salvadoran or giving it to an American citizen. That's not the choice. The choice is whether you will allow your enterprises to survive or not. If you allow your enterprises to create a more efficient division of labor and become more competitive by creating alliances throughout the world, then your corporations will survive. If you keep them closed in, then what will happen is that other corporations throughout the world will construct these alliances, you will lose the competitive edge you have, and you will not only lose jobs, you will lose the companies. So I find that that choice is not a correctly thought out choice.

In a country where national disasters are frequent, is there a need for a strong central government, or can the needs of such emergencies be handled otherwise?

You know, I think that the secret of being effective in dealing with major crises of this type is first to be flexible. I'll explain that be-

"Presidents don't want to take risks because they feel that the atmosphere is against them, against reform, [and] against free-market policy.... And so the second greatest threat [to freedom] is for the leaders of the country to take the easy choice. "

> "El Salvador has undergone one of the most dramatic religious reformations that I have seen in any society."

cause I think that that is a very important part of it. And second, to understand that you can face a challenge of that magnitude only by making one team of all the population with its leadership. I say flexible, first, because everybody thinks that you can develop an organization that has the capacity to face a major natural disaster. I think that is, by definition, wrong. Because the one thing that you need to know to structure an organization is its objective. What is it going to face? And you don't know that. You can prepare an organization for floods. It will be a totally different organization if you would be getting ready for a major earthquake. You don't know what the natural disaster will be, so the only way you can prepare is to save. Have funds to be able to face the issue and follow a certain set of very basic rules.

The first is that there has to be one person in charge, and that person has to bear the full responsibility of dealing with that. I think if there is a diversity of organizations working with this effort, that's another disaster. It has to be one; one person. This person, whether he be the president or whoever is named to do this, has to first gather enough information so he has a clear picture of what he is facing, and don't make any decisions at first. This is something that can be done in the first two or three hours of a disaster.

After that, he has to have a brutal priority as to what he does, and the first priority is to save lives. After that, he is to protect lives that are vulnerable. And after that comes the reconstruction process. But these are very basic rules that allow you to really focus on what you have to do.

Thirdly, it is very important that you communicate to people what is happening, what you're doing, why you're doing [it], and what you ask of them, constantly. I don't know if you've been in a car accident or any type of crisis situation. The problem is people trying to help without any direction. So, you have to make sure that everybody has a role to play and everybody has a job to do so that things become effective.

So I think that these are very, very basic rules. First, a consciousness that is not "papa government." It is something you do together. Secondly, that you're flexible enough to understand that you can't predict these things and you have to have the flexibility of making the changes that need to be made in order to face a crisis. And thirdly, of course, to have these priorities I'm talking about. And fourth, to have everybody involved. And fifth, to have everybody informed.

What role do you think religion will play in creating a free and virtuous society in El Salvador?

El Salvador has undergone one of the most dramatic religious reformations that I have seen in any society. It was principally triggered by the war, but the real reason is the fact that people felt that the Catholic Church had become part of the conflict. Catholic priests, led by liberation theologians, really became part of the same team [as] the guerrilla movement. So this left a society that was really vulnerable, and in such need of spiritual comfort, that they decided to look elsewhere. So, El Salvador has become one of the most thriving evangelic Protestant situations in all of Latin America. You know, you find churches of all denominations—Presbyterians and what you will—have become the most important growth in terms of people's choice. Because that is the consequence of war, a complete loss of all values; and after peace—as in the case of my country—[it] creates a need for values. And you find parents now looking for schools that have a strong ethic or religious bent to them. So I think this is a really important part of El Salvador today.

To read the text of President Flores's speech at the Acton Institute fifteenth anniversary dinner, please visit www.acton.org.

Photo:MIKE THEILER/AFP/Getty Images

El Salvador President Francisco Flores spoke at the International Democrat Union (IDU) Party Leaders Meeting in Washington, D.C., in June 2002. More than forty high-ranking party leaders from around the world gathered for meetings on the topics of compassionate conservatism, the importance of free markets, and combating terrorism.

Rafael Termes [1918–2005]

> It is true that democracy is the best of the political systems, in that it guarantees, through universal suffrage, a peaceful changeover of power. But democracy and its instrument, majority rule, is not a method to investigate the truth. Truth can be acquired with evidence, conclusive demonstration, or another's trustworthy testimony; but it must not be subject to a vote. There may be laws hereof which, although passed democratically, are ... not laws, but corruptions of the law, because they are not inspired by right reason. Instead, they are inspired by the pure will of the majority. (*Of Elections and Bishops*)

As a scholar, a researcher, a businessman, and a professor, Rafael Termes had a tremendous influence on the economic thinking in Spain.

He was an integral developer of the IESE Business School in Spain since its founding in 1958, and served as director of its Madrid campus. Termes served on the board of Banco Poplular, and from 1977 to 1990, he led the Spanish Banking Association. He was also a member of the Royal Academy of Economic and Financial Sciences and the Royal Academy of Moral Sciences and Politics. Among the many awards Don Termes was awarded in his life are the Spanish government's Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor and the French government's Knight of the Legion of Honor.

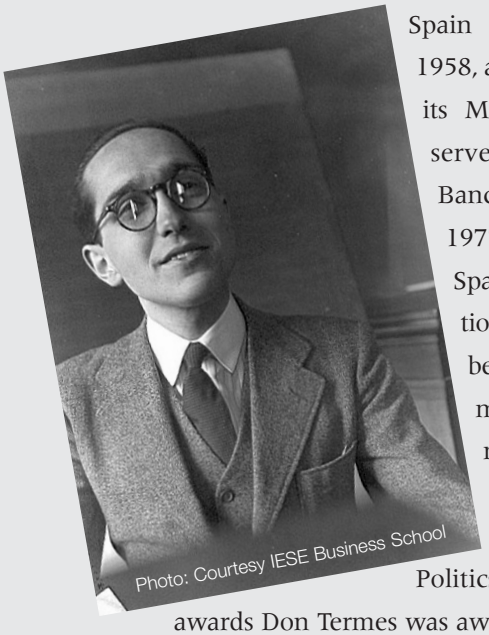


Photo: Courtesy IESE Business School

Termes was among the first members of the prelature Opus Dei in Barcelona. Inspired by his Catholic faith, Termes published on a number of matters regarding the freedom and responsibilities of the human person, not only those regarding economics.

"For the market economy to work, agents in the capitalist system must, when choosing between alternatives, make decisions that are not based exclusively on immediate economic value."

With regard to economics, Termes was a champion of free-market thinking. He proclaimed the "spirit of service inherent in capitalism" and explained how the free market encourages important virtues like "diligence, hard work, prudence in taking on reasonable risks, trustworthiness, loyalty in interpersonal relations, [and] resolution in making and carrying out difficult and painful decisions."

In a time and place where free-market principles were not en vogue, Termes was a voice of prudence and faithfulness, always careful to balance economic efficiency with the ethical action:

> For the market economy to work, agents in the capitalist system must, when choosing between alternatives, make decisions that are not based exclusively on immediate economic value. Above all, such decisions must also take into account the impact that alternatives will have on people (in terms of value), including both the decision-maker and others. If decisions are made in this manner, the market system, thanks to the effect of the invariant core of economic laws, will lead to the best possible results in economic and ethical terms. *(Church History Annual,* June 2002*)*

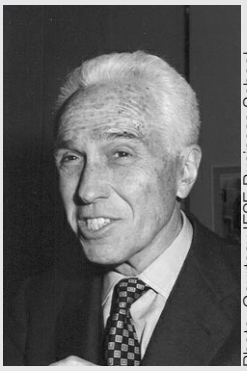


Photo: Courtesy IESE Business School

Professor Termes is pictured in1941 at left and more recently at right

Be Wary of Power

Some people imagine that there is a third way between the market economy and socialism, and in a sense they are right. But the way to it does not lie with government programs. Before I explain that, let us consider the unseen effects of substituting government means for voluntary human energies.

We often use the word voluntary to identify charitable actions taken in society that do not result in profit. But consider that profit in a market economy also results from voluntary actions. They involve willing buyers and willing sellers, willing workers and willing capital owners. All "capitalist" acts result from volitional choice, a decision by individuals to make exchange based on the forecast that doing so will improve their lots in life. A better term for charitable activities, as distinct from commercial ones, would be non-pecuniary activities.

So by voluntary human energies, I really intend to sum up the whole of economic affairs insofar as they do not involve forcing people to do things they would not otherwise do. This includes activities ranging from the small scale transactions of the peasant farmer to the complex financial transactions of Wall Street. All involve individuals choosing to trade to improve their standard of living.

We can contrast this with government means, which always involves an element of force. Whether it is taxation, regulation, or restrictions on consumption, all government programs are designed to thwart what would otherwise be voluntary decisions. Whether you believe some intervention is necessary, let us be clear that an increase in government management of the economy always means an increase in the use of force.

Of course the advocates of the "third way" don't think of it that way. They believe that they are advocating an increase in compassion for the poor, protection for workers and consumers, fairness to all classes in society, opportunity for those shut out, and security for the vulnerable. The problem here is not the goal—these are all valuable considerations in the formation of public policy—but the means, which always involve supplanting the role of human choice with force.

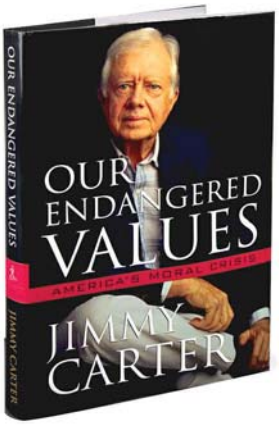
Over the years, I have found that the advocates of government intervention either do not understand this point or they choose not to think about it. If you think about the history of evil, the large-scale calamities that have variously been visited upon the human family, most of them have resulted from the uses of power, from famines to death camps. If we care about the fate of humanity, we should be very wary of advocating any policies that would enhance the uses of power in society.

The problem with advocating government programs is that, quite often, they produce results the opposite of what is intended. They rearrange the incentives people face to be productive. They subsidize vice, discourage goodness, hamper economic growth, and offer an occasion of sin to lawmakers and bureaucrats. But all of these considerations pale by comparison to the moral problem of enlisting the cause of power to do good. If we value freedom, we must have an intellectual resistance to any proposals that would override choice and replace it with regimentation by the state.

All of these considerations pale by comparison to the moral problem of enlisting the cause of power to do good.

I earlier mentioned that there is still merit to the idea of a third way: that is, a society that employs voluntary economic means and virtuous moral means to build the good society. That is a much greater challenge than some mythical in-between system that combines elements of both capitalism and socialism.

It is this good society to which the best of the social science and religious literature is directed.



Our Endangered Values: America's Moral Crisis

By Jimmy Carter • Simon & Schuster, New York, 2005
224 pp.• $25.00
Review by David Michael Phelps

In the presidential campaign of 1992, George H. W. Bush's family values platform collapsed under the weight of a recession, and to many, the political discussion of morality retreated, taking refuge under the so-called Religious Right. But since the second election of George W. Bush, open talk of faith and morals has reentered the political arena with gusto. This is due partly to the reactive emergence of a Religious Left, such as is advocated in Jim Wallis's bestselling book, *God's Politics*. The book encourages the political left to use the language of faith and morals to regain the hearts and minds (and votes) of religious Americans. The strategy seems to be "less P.C., more J.C." But the J.C. who answered the call was Jimmy Carter, whose new book, *Our Endangered Values: America's Moral Crisis*, fronts as an appeal to our corporate conscience. In effect, the book only masks Carter's public policies beneath religious language. To be fair, Carter is not a poseur, referencing his faith only when politically helpful; he is known to be a man of genuine faith and goodwill. Anyone out simply to baptize the talking points of the Democratic Party would not condemn homosexuality and abortion as Carter does in this book. But even a cursory glance at the rest of the work reveals that Carter is less interested in seriously discussing morality and more interested in propping up a political platform with pseudo-religious platitudes. In the end, the book actually undermines a serious discussion of moral issues.

The book is a case study in one of C .S. Lewis's favorite themes: when secondary goods are sought ahead of primary goods, both are corrupted. Moral prudence might be described as a primary good when compared to the power such prudence renders. We elect leaders because we hope they are qualified to lead. But to use "moral prudence" as a means to political power corrupts both the power and the prudence. There is a fine, but absolutely crucial, distinction to be made here: the discussion of morality most certainly has its place in politics (indeed, the ancients defined politics as social ethics), but this discussion must not be co-opted to serve political ends.

But sadly, it is all too clear that this is what is happening with Carter's book: the moral lexicon is being co-opted to gain votes. And while this phenomenon is not restricted to the political left, it seems that Carter's book is the best example (so far) of an attempt to implement Wallis's vote-getting strategy. In spite of its misleading subtitle, the book offers little substantive analysis of "America's moral crisis." It contains very few reasonable arguments, relying heavily on *non sequiturs* and convenient references to "traditional Christian faith." (Carter does little to unpack this portmanteau, perhaps frightened of what's inside.) Even when a sensible idea pops up—opening trade with Cuba, for example—it is not grounded on a solid ethical foundation. The book seems altogether uninterested in establishing the necessary premises of a reasonable, coherent, moral argument, opting instead to use the moral lexicon to denounce this or that policy of a certain sitting president. Here Carter's political motivations become clear, for it would seem that the sitting president is on the wrong side of almost all of America's "traditional" values: environmental protection, fair treatment of terror suspects, and nuclear disarmament, to name a few.

These and other politically relevant topics supposedly constitute "our endangered values," a phrase which contains another clue that this book is more political than didactic: the unquestioned use of the term our. This is a common rhetorical slight of hand: build your syllogisms on unstated or unquestioned premises, hoping your interlocutors will overlook any discrepancies contained therein. When Carter refers to our values, he simply takes for granted precisely what that term means (and apparently, things like environmental protection—not freedom, independence, or initiative—are the pillars of the American ideal). This excuses him from having to define clearly the terms *values*, *ethics*, and *moral crisis*. Carter carelessly tosses these concepts about to make his book appear as a serious discussion of the nation's moral fiber when in fact the discussion is threadbare, a cheap appeal to the morally inclined. As result, the subject of this book turns out to be not our endangered values but Carter's engendered ones.