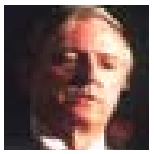
Acton Institute

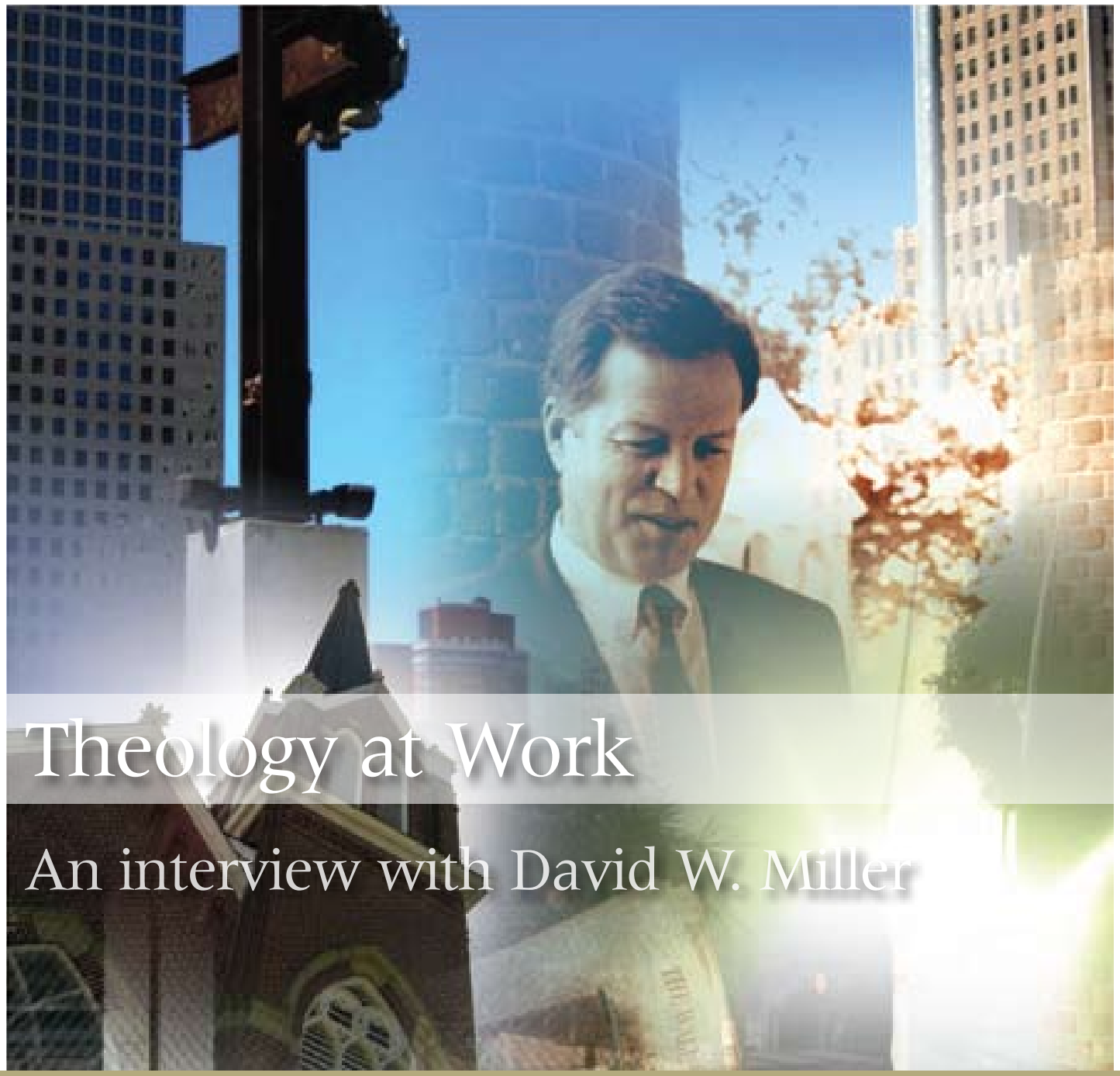
Religion & Liberty

Winter 2008 | Volume 18 | Number 1

Inside this issue







Theology at Work

An interview with David W. Miller

A Journal of Religion, Economics, and Culture

Editor's Note

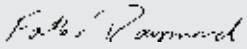
This issue of *Religion & Liberty* in many ways personifies Christ in culture. The lead interview is an analysis of the faith at work movement from one of its leaders, David W. Miller. Miller reminds us of how the Church has lagged behind in integrating faith with work, and quite often many pastoral and church leaders have failed in articulating a strong theology of work. As you will see, some of these reasons are ideological, while some may simply arise from practical reasons. At the same time, faith at work has a significant grassroots following that has decisively shaped various sectors of the business and corporate arena.

Joseph M. Knippenberg offers a different analysis of the much discussed findings by the Pew Forum on Religion and & Public Life "on the American religious landscape." Knippenberg's analysis is far less dour than what has been reported in some nationwide headlines, which has often emphasized a movement towards secularization. Knippenberg is a professor of politics at Oglethorpe University in Atlanta, Georgia, and is an accomplished writer, widely sought out in academic and popular publications.

Acton's Ray Nothstine reviews *The Scandal of Evangelical Politics* by Ronald J. Sider, and gives the author some credit for his evolution to a more balanced political and economic understanding in comparison to his earlier works like *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*. Sider's understanding that limited state power is advantageous to religious and political freedom is significant, given his enormous influence in the evangelical Protestant community, especially among those who often identify with the evangelical left.

Thomas C. Oden is an important theological scholar who has greatly contributed to the interest and study of the early Church. Oden is a leader of "paleo-orthodoxy," which is influencing Protestants to embrace the early Church over more modern biblical scholarship; modern theology is at times overly influenced by contemporary political and cultural agendas. Oden is providing the tools and thoughts to make this possible for many who have little or no exposure to the Church Fathers. Our executive editor John Couretas reviews Oden's *Deeds Not Words: The Good Works Reader*.

Finally, it's highly appropriate that William F. Buckley is the featured figure for the recurrent "In the Liberal Tradition" this issue. Buckley, who passed away at the end of February, was well known as a prolific leader in the modern conservative movement. Buckley was a faithful Catholic, who wrote an autobiography of his faith titled *Nearer, My God*. We are honored to highlight his own views about his faith, which meant so much to him.



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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The views of the authors expressed in *Religion & Liberty* are not necessarily those of the Acton Institute.

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An Interview with David W. Miller

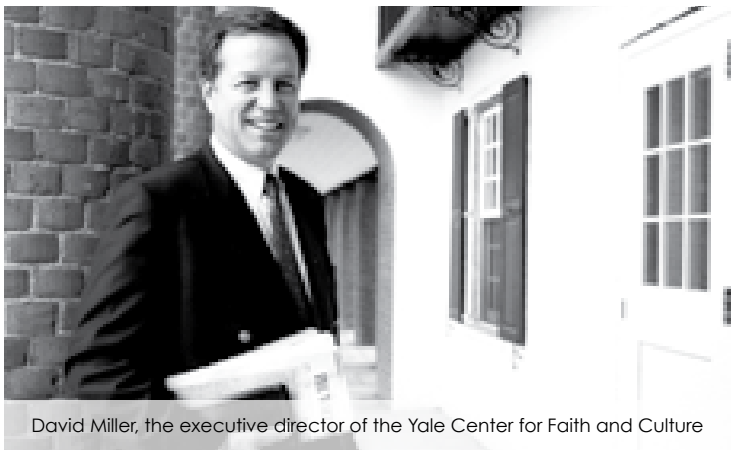
David W. Miller is the executive director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture at Yale Divinity School, and asst. professor (adj) of business ethics at Yale School of Management. Miller brings an unusual "bilingual" perspective to the academic world, having also spent sixteen years in senior executive positions in international business and finance.

Miller received his Master of Divinity and Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary. While studying there, he co-founded the Avodah Institute in 1999 and still serves as its president. Avodah's mission is to help leaders integrate the claims of their faith with the demands of their work. Miller is also an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA). Miller serves as an advisor to several corporate CEOs and senior executives on questions relating to faith and work. His book God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement *was published in 2007 by Oxford University Press. Miller recently spoke with* R&L *managing editor Ray Nothstine.*

"The Church, by and large, both Catholic and Protestant, has not done a good job of being attentive to questions of faith-at-work."

Your book, God at Work, *was published last year. Tell us about the faith-at-work movement, and what are some of the reasons for its rise in society?*

Broadly speaking, it's a loosely networked collection of individuals and groups throughout the country who are all seeking to integrate faith and work. Some of the groups are comprised of people from a particular company who come together in the cafeteria or in someone's conference room and have a half hour of prayer and Bible study. But many of the groups meet outside of work, and attendees come from a variety of companies, instead of just from, let's say, Citibank or from J.P. Morgan.


David Miller, the executive director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture

These gatherings of people to discuss how to integrate faith and work is part of a broader societal trend where people want to live a holistic life and to be who they are. They want their work self to be aligned with their home self or their private self. They don't want to live a bifurcated life. They want their faith to matter Monday through Friday, and not just on their Sabbath.

How has the church at large responded to faith-at-work, and what are some of your conclusions?

Now I want to be polite here. I love the Church. I'm a member of the Church. I'm now an ordained pastor in the Presbyterian denomination. We need and love the Church, and whether Catholic or Protestant, it plays a huge role, and ought to play a huge role in every Christian's daily walk and discipleship. That said, the evidence that I found in researching my book, *God at Work*, is rather compelling that the Church is largely missing the boat on the issue of faith-at-work. The Church, by and large, both Catholic and Protestant, has not done a good job of being attentive to questions of faith-at-work. There are a variety of reasons for that. Many of my divinity school students (future clergy), who have not worked before seminary, go into their parish or congregation with no sense of the experience of what it means to work in the for-profit world. Moreover, at seminary they're often exposed to a weak theology of work (if they're exposed to any

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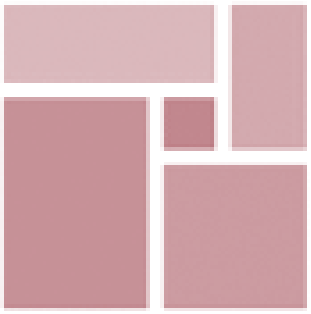

"Brand Loyalty" in the American Religious Marketplace

by Joseph M. Knippenberg

Earlier this year, the Pew Forum for Religion and Public Life released the first installment of a truly impressive study based upon a massive survey of more than 35,000 Americans. Its portrait of "the American religious landscape" attracted a great deal of media attention, typically focusing on three or four principal themes. If you were to read only the press accounts, here's what you would know:

- While Americans are still overwhelmingly -- at least nominally -- Christian (78.4 percent of the respondents identified themselves that way), only a bare majority (51.3 percent) call themselves Protestant. Our once dominant majority religion is headed toward being a minority religion -- still the largest single bloc of adherents, to be sure, but home only to a plurality of our country, rather than to a majority.

- The most rapidly growing precinct in our religious landscape is the "unaffiliated," who now comprise roughly 16 percent of the population.

- There's a great deal of fluidity in our religious life; more than one quarter of the respondents have left behind the tradition in which they were raised, and if you count movement within Protestantism, that proportion rises over 40 percent.

- While the proportion of Americans calling themselves Roman Catholic has remained roughly constant over the past three decades, that constancy masks a decline in native born Catholics and a substantial rise among immigrants. Roman Catholic losses from childhood to adulthood rival or exceed those of the most "troubled" mainline Protestant denominations, but the parish rolls are replenished by immigrants, mostly from south of the border.

The picture, in other words, is one of general denominational fluidity and gradual decline. If America were ever a "Christian nation" (culturally, if not necessarily politically), that day is rapidly passing, with no group of denominations possessing the institutional self-confidence and resources to be the arbiters of a broad national cultural consensus. We can perhaps look wistfully back toward a time when there was such a consensus, but that time is gone and it's not coming back. The secularization associated with modernity has arrived late on our shores, but its irresistible tendency is now in place. Our great-grandchildren will only lament that America's erstwhile religious energy wasn't accompanied with the grand architectural taste of our European forebears.

Well, perhaps, but it's possible to read the evidence contained in the report a little differently. Allow me to explain.

In the first place, the portions of the survey that have been released don't tell us much about the devoutness or religious practices of those who identify with a particular denomination. Most surveys find that 40 percent or less of the respondents attend religious services weekly, so it's inevitable that a substantial proportion of the religious identifiers in this survey are relatively casual about their faith. Someone may call himself or herself a Methodist, Episcopalian, or Catholic because that's the church the family attended (or attends) on Christmas Eve.

Before I drew any grand conclusions about, or proffered any responses to, the decline of religion, Christianity, or Protestantism in America, I'd want to know something more about the churches from which or toward which people were moving. Are frequent church attenders more or less likely to move than their nodding acquaintances who show up only on Christmas and Easter, or for funerals and weddings? Are children who grow up in these families more or less likely to leave the churches of their childhood behind than kids whose parents don't know the words to the hymns or when to stand, sit, or kneel? Do doctrinally or spiritually demanding congregations and denominations do a better or worse job of holding onto adherents?

Beyond reaffirming the now commonplace observation that mainline Protestant denominations aren't doing particularly well, the study doesn't (yet) offer us much help in answering these questions. There are, however, a few hints worth pursuing. For example, the study provides some interesting data regarding the persistence of denominational adherence from childhood to adulthood. Looking at the "big

picture," Hindus offer a kind of gold standard of religious persistence: 84 percent of those raised Hindu remain so into adulthood. By contrast, 76 percent of those raised Jewish, 73 percent of those raised Orthodox, 68 percent of those raised Catholic, and 37 percent of those raised as Jehovah's Witnesses persist into adulthood. At first glance, the Protestant performance looks unimpressive: only 52 percent didn't change denominations from childhood to adulthood, ranging from a high of 60 percent for Baptists to lows of 32 percent for Holiness adherents and 37 percent for Congregationalists. But if you also consider those who remained Protestant, albeit in a different denomination, the picture changes in a seemingly more impressive direction: overall, 80 percent of Protestants continued to identify as such in adulthood, ranging from 91 percent among Anabaptists to 68 percent of those raised as Episcopalians. In all but a few cases, the largest proportion of movers switched from their childhood denomination to an evangelical church. While it's tempting to say that these new churches were more spiritually satisfying and morally demanding than those they left behind, the data doesn't permit me to draw that conclusion. For all I know, it could be the excellent preschools, good sports programs, convenient location and parking, or the "charismatic" (yet therapeutic) preaching.

My preliminary bottom line is this: in terms at least of nominal adherents, American Protestantism is doing well, better than any other faith tradition except Hinduism, which has the "advantage" of being a culturally distinctive religion closely identified with a particular community of relatively new immigrants. What's more, Protestants who leave their childhood denominations are much more likely to move to another Protestant denomination than they are to leave religion behind altogether. Indeed, they are for the most part more likely to move to an *evangelical* denomination or church than they are to leave religion behind. For our hitherto dominant American religious tradition, the flow toward evangelicalism is stronger than the flow out of religion altogether. I haven't seen *that* headline yet.

Another interesting feature of the data about religious change has to do with those who were raised in a religiously unaffiliated home. (Recall that this is the most rapidly growing proportion of the American religious landscape.) It turns out that *more than half* of those who grew up in such a household defect from the secularism of their parents, finding at least a nominal home in some faith somewhere. Considering that those who are unaffiliated tend to marry less and to have fewer children, I'm tempted to conclude that the religiously unaffiliated are at a substantial disadvantage when it comes to social reproduction. They don't have many children and they don't do a good job of holding onto those they do have. In effect, they rely on "converts" from other traditions for their numbers. Right now, they're growing because of the relatively large size of the affiliated pool from which their "converts" are disaffiliating. But their continued growth depends upon a continuing decline of traditional (and untraditional) American religion, a decline that looks foreordained only if America is essentially like Europe. But the resiliency of American religion and its openness to immigrants should at least give us cause for pause in assuming that the trajectory of religion is downward and of secularism is upward.

Stated another way, there are two—shall I say "human"—causes for being hopeful about America's religious future. First, it's not as if smart, thoughtful, and pious human beings can't take stock of their circumstances and figure out new and better ways of transmitting the faith from one generation to the next, not to mention of reaching out to the unchurched. The secularization argument presupposes the triumph of impersonal social and historical forces. Our Christian—or, if you will, Judeo-Christian—faith insists that individuals matter. It's at least as reasonable to raise doubts about the former as about the latter.

Second, to the degree that there's a migration from less vital and vibrant denominations to those that seem to be more so, there's reason to expect that the trend toward greater disaffiliation will slow down, if not stop. After all, the denominations that are better at holding onto their members are also those whose adherents tend to have larger families. Simply stated, the less mainline and more evangelical American Protestantism becomes, the relatively more resistant to secularization it becomes.

But, someone might respond, look at the age, income, and education distributions of people inside and outside the sanctuaries. The young are least likely to be churched (68 percent Christian, 6 percent other, and 25 percent unaffiliated). And Protestants look comparatively *old*, with, for example, more than 50 percent (and, in some cases, upwards of 60 percent) of the folks in the pews above the age of fifty. If the young are our future, isn't our future decisively less religious than our present, let alone our past? (My answer: it depends, but more on that later.)

What's more, the religiously unaffiliated tend to be better educated than Protestants or Catholics, with roughly 30 percent holding college or even post-graduate degrees, compared with 24 percent among Protestants and 26 percent among Catholics. (To be sure, these aggregate numbers mask some important differences, with, for example, mainline Protestant educational achievement pulling up the Protestant proportion and the "religious unaffiliated"—often recent immigrants—pulling down the unaffiliated proportion.) If our "best and brightest," as measured by educational attainment, are least likely to be religiously affiliated, isn't our leadership likely to lead us away from religion? If our future is better educated than our present or past, isn't our future more secular?

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(My answer, once again, is that it depends.)

Roughly the same argument can be made for income distributions, with the secular unaffiliated outperforming their religious peers (except for Jews, Hindus, and adherents of Orthodox faiths, though mainline Protestants aren't far behind). If our economically successful are among our least religious citizens, isn't this evidence of some connection between prosperity and "faithlessness," of a secularist work ethic, so to speak? And if a society rewards a complex of "secular" characteristics and attitudes with money and recognition, won't that provide incentives for others to follow in their footsteps? (You know my answer already.)

Let me start with our youthful non-believers. One of the questions I would ask is whether the young, when they grow a little older, get married, and start thinking about raising a family, begin to consider the positive benefits of finding a church home, if they don't already have one. I have it on good authority that, fairly often, they do. Perhaps this is one of the things that explains the migration of young unaffiliated people toward churches as they grow older. Of course, churches and denominations have to be "family-friendly" to facilitate this movement, if and when it occurs. Most at least try to be, but when the folks in the pews are older than average and have already been there and done that, they may have to be asked to remember the assistance they received from their fellow congregants or parishioners when they were raising their own families.

I feel compelled, however, to offer this caveat. To the degree that both marriage and child-bearing are declining, this incentive for finding a church home is diminishing. Both these behaviors can be influenced by various government policies (which, needless to say, haven't been as friendly to child-bearing and rearing as they could have been and which could become very unfriendly, or at least coldly indifferent, to marriage, religious or otherwise). The future of religion in America unfortunately can't be separated from family policy, and, on that ground, I'm less hopeful than I would otherwise be.

With respect to education, I have to concede that it has been a great tool of secularization, both through our public schools, shorn of their erstwhile non-denominational Protestantism, and through the skepticism and relativism that all too often are the coin of the realm in higher education. But there are also reasons to hope: homeschooling is growing, religious schools are at least holding their own, and enrollment at religiously affiliated colleges and universities is expanding. Books like Naomi Schaefer Riley's *God on the Quad* and D.

Michael Lindsay's *Faith in the Halls of Power* document the growing intellectual success, sophistication, and self-confidence of those who have been religiously educated. Where once one could speak with some authority about "the scandal of the evangelical mind," and assume that denominational schools necessarily had to be second-rate, there is ample reason to believe that those truths are no longer self-evident.

It's also worth noting that the religiously unaffiliated don't have a monopoly on high educational achievement. Indeed, they rank lower than Hindus (74 percent of whom have undergraduate or graduate degrees), Jews (59 percent), Buddhists (48 percent) and Orthodox Christians (46 percent). The educational success of the religiously persistent Orthodox seems to suggest that strong faith can coexist quite nicely with high achievement. And since educational success often begets economic and vocational success, there's reason also to be hopeful about the future economic profiles of religious adherents. There is "faith in the halls of power."

But I would hasten to add that one of the lessons people learn in church is that success shouldn't simply be measured according to worldly yardsticks. Churches can and ought to be countercultural, teaching that a happy family life and a healthy spiritual life are more important than bringing home the largest possible paycheck. There's also plenty of evidence that people hear that message. It's what's led some to wonder "what's the matter with Kansas" and others to observe that, in many churches, leadership roles don't simply follow from secular social and economic status. To the degree that churches esteem and reward piety, uprightness, and learning, they can, at least in part, immunize their members against a culture where wealth confers social status and incites emulation.

In the end, I'm led to conclude that the religious landscape sketched by the Pew survey is only bleak if we insist on making it so. There's some evidence in the survey and ample evidence elsewhere that more distinctive and demanding denominations and churches actually do better in the "religious marketplace" than do their more accommodating counterparts. That has long been an article of faith for some. This survey ought to boost their confidence at least a little.

Joseph M. Knippenberg, Ph.D., is professor of politics at Oglethorpe University in Atlanta.

The Scandal of Evangelical Politics

Review by Ray Nothstine

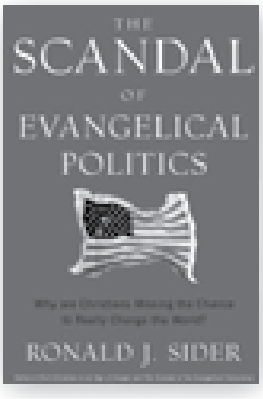
In *The Scandal of Evangelical Politics*, Ronald J. Sider attempts to construct a methodology for evangelical Christians to participate faithfully in the political process. His construct is a backlash—to a degree—of the political monopolization of the religious right and its influence in politics. The book is a response to past evangelical involvement, which Sider sees as largely being a failure and highly contradictory. And while his methodology does not necessarily contradict any political goals of Christian conservatives, and is in fact in agreement with many, he wants to encourage greater biblical integrity and sound thinking.

Sider, for example, cites former senator Jesse Helms as an example of someone who brings faith into politics with improper or little theological reflection. Sider praises Helms for standing up for the unborn, then admonishes him by wondering how he supported the interests of tobacco. Sider then proceeds to say that Helms was not really a friend of the pro-life movement after all. Conservative figures are generally the ones cited in the book as examples of straying from a biblically faithful mandate. Sider quotes prominent Christian author Tim LaHaye, who declared, "The only way to have genuine spiritual revival is to have legislative reform." But ironically one of the book's endorsers, Jim Wallis of Sojourners, likens his own call for big government to a spiritual revival.

One of the strengths of Sider's book is that he draws from a deep and diverse well of Christian tradition. Sider cites and discusses the importance of Catholic social teaching, the Reformed tradition, Lutherans, Wesleyans, and Anabaptists. Part of the design of his book is to construct a methodology that is unique to evangelicals. Sider says evangelicals have not developed anything that rivals the depth of Catholic social thinking, or the writings of Reinhold Niebuhr, which have been so influential for mainline Protestants.

There is certainly a great understanding that freedom, both religious and political, is much more pronounced in market economies. "On balance, a market economy respects human freedom better, creates wealth more efficiently, and tends to be better at reducing poverty," says Sider. There is also a balance in his praise of free markets with a warning that "market economies tend to produce a consumeristic materialism that promotes devastating cultural decay," and cites the United States, United Kingdom, and China as countries that are becoming more unequal in the distribution of wealth. If there is one critique here it may be an overly optimistic belief that government intervention and regulation of the economy can fairly correct injustices.

Another key quality stressed by Sider is the importance of limiting the power of the state and the emphasis on space for



The Scandal of Evangelical Politics

Author: Ronald J. Sider
Publisher: Baker Books (2008)
275 pp., Softcover $11.00, ISBN13: 978-0801068-37-9

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human freedom to flourish as God intended. He even quotes Lord Acton's popular dictum, "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Sider understands that family and church are the proper segments to serve and assist those in need. "Any policy or political philosophy that immediately seeks state solutions for problems that could be solved just as well or better at the level of family violates the biblical framework that stresses the central societal role of the family," says Sider. At the same time, he argues that sin and other variables call for state involvement and a repairing of community to correct injustices. And although Sider supports measures like state involvement for minimum wage laws, he thoroughly stresses limiting state power. "Only if the power of the state is significantly limited is there hope of avoiding gross evil on the part of the state," says Sider.

The Scandal of Evangelical Politics also articulates the importance of traditional Christian teaching on marriage and human sexuality. Additionally, there is continued emphasis on parenthood and the family as being responsible for the love and care of children. Tax policies that favor marriage and discourage divorce are preferred.

Sider's critique of Christian conservatives at times calls for more distinguished thought. Ultimately, Sider's methodological construct is a valuable source material for evangelically minded Christians. The book's call for a "biblically balanced political agenda" over and against narrow understandings committed solely to single issues is a worthy calling. The understanding that political involvement or action will never build a utopia and the additional emphasis of the need for limited state power is highly beneficial.

Acton FAQ

Why Did The Acton Institute Produce "The Birth of Freedom?"

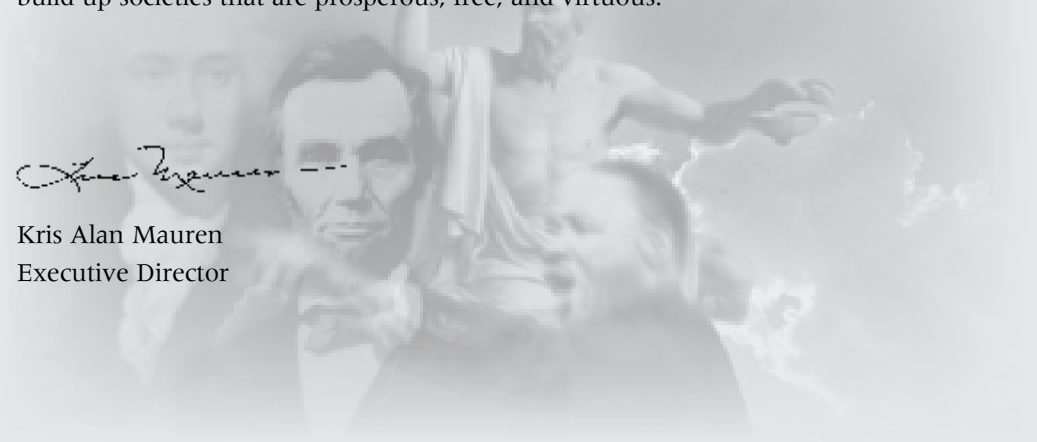
We produced "The Birth of Freedom" to keep alive the knowledge of the role religion has played historically in the "birth," growth and securing of freedom. While this historic reality would have been at one time a commonly held understanding, today it is not. We want to suggest something else through this film, namely that freedom cannot long prosper outside of morality—that not only did the Judeo-Christian tradition bring liberty to fruition, it must remain vibrant to sustain it.

This understanding of the symbiotic relationship between religion and liberty was a core foundation of the American experiment. But today, secularists are keen to excise religion, religious symbols and all religious influences from the public square. To think liberty can survive such a mutilation is akin to thinking a beautiful flower can come into being and continue to exist without its roots and the soil in which it is grounded.

Alexis de Tocqueville certainly recognized this relationship between religion and liberty when he observed: "Despotism may govern without faith, but liberty cannot. How is it possible that society should escape destruction if the moral tie is not strengthened in proportion as the political tie is relaxed?"

Many educational and public policy groups who believe in markets focus on "relaxing the political tie" in society. And this is right and critical to do, especially in the face of the growing state. The larger the government in society, the more society is politicized and crowds out private and religious intermediary institutions so necessary for the proper functioning of freedom. However, few organizations emphasize the necessary proportional "strengthening of the moral tie" while advocating for smaller government.

"The Birth of Freedom" is one more tool the Acton Institute has developed to better equip thoughtful people to understand and appreciate the moral basis of liberty, and the positive obligation to right action in the use of our individual freedom. It is only through this understanding throughout the world, we can build up societies that are prosperous, free, and virtuous.



Kris Alan Mauren
Executive Director

$19.50, Paperback, 360 pages
ISBN 978-0802840318

Deeds Not Words

The Good Works Reader by Thomas C. Oden

Review by John Couretas

In a time of blockbuster television specials about the discovery of "lost" gospels, Jesus seminars, and a steady stream of theological fads designed to make celebrities out of seminary professors, the thought of compiling a collection of patristic writings on the practice of good works seems slightly out of the mainstream, if not countercultural. But that is exactly what Thomas C. Oden has done with *The Good Works Reader*, a book that succeeds as an introduction, a guide, and a refresher course in the daunting task of living out the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the here and now.

Oden, who has led the Protestant "paleo-orthodox" movement toward deeper appreciation of the early church, is the Henry Anton Buttz Professor Emeritus of Theology at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, and general editor of the multivolume Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. *The Good Works Reader* serves as a companion to Oden's *The Justification Reader* (Eerdmans, 2002), which was, as he described it, "an effort to show a worldwide consensus on salvation teaching among two thousand years of Christians of extremely varied historical and cultural memories." Read together, the readers aim to "give balance in the correction of a single error: the displacement of faith by works or works by faith. This balance is expressed in the scriptural teaching of *faith active in love*."

Oden is convinced that the Fathers are "profoundly in accord" with core Lutheran and Reformed teachings on good works from Luther to Calvin and beyond. "The Protestant fantasy that patristic writers paid little attention to scripture is easily corrected simply by reading their probing scriptural exposition. Every issue classically contested was settled by appeal to scripture. Every pertinent passage of scripture received careful critical examination on philological, linguistic, moral, philosophical, and liturgical grounds."

The Good Works Reader, Oden hopes, should also remind those Catholics who may be fixated on modern post-Vatican II teachings to return to a deeper appreciation of the Fathers. And Orthodox Christians, who historically have paid little heed to the Latin Fathers, will expand their horizons.

The goal of *The Good Works Reader* is to "allow the ancients to speak for themselves, and let their relevance be judged by those who wish to put their vision into actual practice. The aim of this exercise is changed behavior, not theoretical insight alone." Indeed, the Fathers were not strictly speaking "theologians" as we would understand that narrow professional path today. They were also preachers, bishops (many but not all of them clergy), saints, tireless evangelists of the Gospel who in many cases gave their lives for the faith.

"A wide consensus on moral teaching emerges in the central stream of ancient Christian teaching," Oden asserts. This consensus "was well established a thousand years before modernity" and was visible in the work of the ecumenical councils that relied on these Fathers in settling the great questions of the faith. Most familiar to readers will be the eight great doctors of the church: Athanasius, Basil, Gregory Nazianzus, and John Chrysostom in the east, and Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory in the west. There are many here who will be new to the reader first approaching the Fathers—from Egiria, a fourth century nun living in what is today Spain to the sixth century Bede the Venerable (the Father of English History) to Theophylact of Ohrid, the eleventh century Bulgarian exegete.

Oden broadly, and rightly, covers the span of the undivided church in the first millenium to include the Apostolic Fathers (those in closest contact with the apostles of Jesus Christ), through the Desert Fathers and beyond, and ranges from Britain to North Africa, from Gaul to Syria. (The Eastern Orthodox would add Gregory Palamas, the fourteenth century champion of hesychastic prayer, to this list). The church was also gifted with great teachers who might be termed "Church Mothers" but whose works were regrettably and too often lost to posterity.

The sayings of the Fathers in *The Good Works Reader* are arranged topically: the poor; food and hospitality; reaching out for the outcast; the imprisoned and the persecuted; the least of these; philanthropy; and deeds not words.

When the Fathers speak out of the *depositum fidei* (deposit of faith) of the early church, they speak clearly:

> God never asks his servants to do what is

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impossible. The love and goodness of his Godhead is revealed as richly available. It is poured out like water upon all. God furnishes to each person according to his will the ability to do something good (Gregory of Nyssa, On the Christian Mode of Life; Mark 9:41).

Grace is given not because we have done good works but in order that we may have power to do them, not because we have fulfilled the law but in order that we may be able to fulfill it (Augustine, The Spirit and the Letter 16, Rom. 11:6)

And, consistent with Scripture (Ephesians 2:8–10), the Fathers avoided a false opposition of faith and works. Instead, they understood faith and works as a unity, enabled by grace through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Care should be taken in reading the Fathers (although not in the selections provided by Oden in the *Reader*) not to approach them uncritically and toss around their sayings as "proof texts" for one position or another. Many of the works of the best known Fathers were marred by error or outright heresy and in this the consensus of the church on what is good in them, and should be preserved, is to be followed.

Orthodox theologian Georges Florovsky wrote: "It is a dangerous habit 'to quote' the Fathers, that is, their isolated sayings and phrases, outside of that concrete setting in which only they have their full and proper meaning, and are truly alive." That "concrete setting" was the active life of faith, he said, one guided by the "simple message" once delivered and deposited by the apostles.

Oden tells us that the aim of *The Good Works Reader* "is changed behavior, not theoretical insight alone." And that is, indeed, the difficult path. "The heart of the Gospel is God's good work for us," Oden writes. "What we do in response is a story every believer lives out. It is the story of *faith becoming active in love*."

Double-Edged Sword:
The Power of the Word

Romans 8:38–39

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

One of the great truths and victories of Christianity is that it removes for all time the divine-human alienation. In many religions it's the people who make offerings and sacrifices to the divine. Communities and individuals try to atone for their guilt and unworthiness, and their sacrificial efforts continue to this day. In Christianity it is God who approaches humanity through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus. Christ is the very embodiment of sacrifice, love, and intercession. Even now he sits at the right hand of the Father interceding for us. "He prays for us, as our Priest; He prays in us, as our Head, He is prayed to, by us, as our God," says Augustine.

The Apostle Paul speaks of persuasion in this well-known passage from Romans. One reason Paul is persuaded is because he knows the significance of human love for Christ, considering his own encounter with the risen Lord. Paul beautifully speaks of the power of Christ in rich Trinitarian fashion as well. Additionally, we do not have to be reminded about God's love for his son. Our love and faith in Jesus and God's love for his son is a great meeting place that crushes the divine-human alienation. The truth of our adoption into the special relationship Jesus shares with the Father is why we can't be separated from divine love and adoration. We are heirs to the Kingdom of God through that supernatural special love that allows us to transcend all obstacles.

The sufficiency of Christ is a great characteristic of our risen Lord. We should always be keenly aware to receive his grace and power in a humbling manner. At the same time, we stand confidently empowered by his vast love. The witnesses of the Saints testify to the great power of Christ. The Apostolic Father Polycarp was sentenced to be burned at the stake because he would not renounce Christ. "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and he never did me any injury; how then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior," said Polycarp. Polycarp and so many others speak to the great peace and assurance we find in Christ. Polycarp before his death warned the crowd that there would be a great separation from God for those not united with Christ and not confessing his supremacy and Lordship. But as Paul so wonderfully reminds us in Romans, there is never a separation, or any condemnation, or any obstacles of time or space, nor height nor depth for those who believe in the supremacy and saving power of Christ Jesus.

theology of work). Typically, there is an undertone of hostility toward the marketplace. So clergy preach and teach little on faith at work, and when they do, it is grounded in a pejorative or insufficient theology of work. Sadly, the church has

failed people in the marketplace in this regard. But in fairness to all our clergy, I point upstream in the training process for responsibility for this problem. It's really a little unfair to blame the clergy; they just learned what they learned in seminary. We need to go to the seminaries and say, "How are we training these people? What are we teaching them about the problems and possibilities of the workplace? What is a healthy theology of and for life at work? What understanding of creation and stewardship are we giving them?"

Why do you think so many seminary graduates and church leaders have a negative view of corporate America and the free market?

For many, it's a theological question, as hinted at above. At seminary, based on the theological accent of the school, they might have drunk heavily from the wells of Christian socialism or early forms of liberation theology. From the latter part of the last century and still today in many schools, liberation theology, which in broad terms asks and poses many good and pointed questions that Christians need to come to terms with, often has a reductionistic approach toward the marketplace and analyzes it in materialist categories. This tends, in its more simplistic form, to view the world in a category of "oppressor and victim." Those who have power are oppressors and those who don't are the victims. This worldview gets overlaid onto the corporate world, and the corporate world, of course, has power and it is deemed to be the oppressor. And those who are outside of the corporate world are deemed victims. This simplistic and insufficient theological view of the marketplace has many negative ramifications for the church. There are also less theologically sophisticated ways of expressing anti-marketplace sentiments, taking selective passages from the Bible as proof texts to critique those who have power and affluence and influence. So there are some theological reasons that some clergy will either have a lack of knowledge about the marketplace or, indeed, a theology that's rather hostile to the marketplace, offering little guidance on how to reform and redeem it.

Amsterdam Market © Henk Jan Kwant, www.sxc.hu

Marketplace in Amsterdam

There are also some practical and non-theological reasons for the problem you ask about. Many clergy have never worked in the world. They don't necessarily understand the kinds of issues, challenges, and problems workers (of all levels) face daily. And the media usually provides just the negative face of business—headlines about the scandal of Enron and others, excessive pay packages for many CEOs, and corporate greed or misconduct. The business stories we see portrayed in movies like *Wall Street* usually are of some corporate failure. If someone's not been in the business world, their only social exposure will be to negative caricatures. So then they go from the particular to the general and make unfair or inaccurate generalizations. Not having worked in the corporate world, they don't know that, in fact, it could be very different.

> "It's really a little unfair to blame the clergy; they just learned what they learned in seminary."

Would you say that the faith-at-work movement has led to any specific changes in corporate policies that stress moral or ethical

> "The marketplace is running at such an extraordinary speed and pace today, more so than many other organizations."

continued on pg 12

reforms inside businesses?

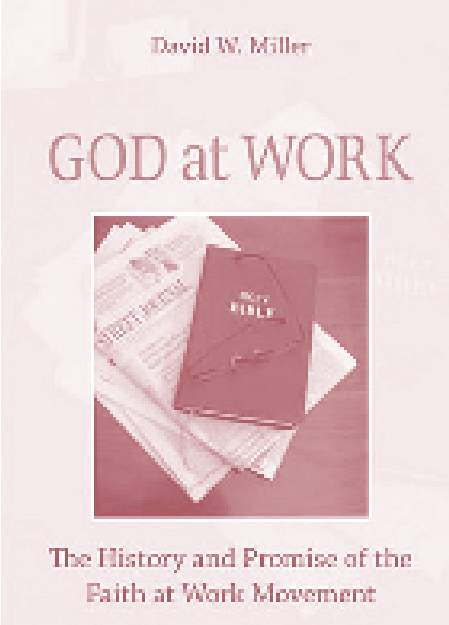
Yes, absoultely. I'm part of a couple different faith-at-work groups for CEOs and some other groups for a variety of levels of business folks where they meet with regularity. They often function as accountability groups. They raise and discuss issues of ethics and how to apply biblical admonitions for justice and fairness in a modern context. At a more personal level, they also ask each other, "what are some of your great temptations that we can pray for you about." So there's this sense of being real and being honest and not putting on our plastic Sunday smile. They get down and dirty with the difficult issues of life. These faith-at-work groups help keep a lot of people anchored.

Why or how might a spiritual void or emptiness in the corporate world differ or maybe manifest itself in a different way than it would in people totally outside of this industry that are plagued with many of the same feelings of emptiness or alienation?

The marketplace is running at such an extraordinary speed and pace today, more so than many other organizations. People find they're having to work longer hours, do more, and retool and reskill every few years just to break even, let alone to get ahead. There's pressure to perform well 100 percent of the time. This is compounded by higher levels of international competition. It seems every time we turn around there's another country that's developed a product that's faster, quicker, and cheaper than the one we make. Well, how do you respond to that? There's pressure to perform, pressure to survive that you wouldn't find, let's say, in a teaching job. If you teach, you have pressures, to be sure, but it's unlikely that your teaching job is going to be outsourced to Bangalore tomorrow.

Another difference about the work world is that there is a clear emphasis on materiality; on the products, goods, and services produced, and on money as the measuring stick of how well you perform. It's very easy to get caught up in the temptations of having exceptional amounts of money and power. Let's say, using the teaching world as the example again, usually money is not as big a factor. While teachers tend to be underpaid, they can still have ambitions for power. You can have power even in modest economic circumstances. The temptation in the corporate world to love money and the exceptional power it can bring is, for many Christians, a challenge. How do you responsibly deal with money as opposed to becoming beholden to money and power and having it change your character? Many in the faith-at-work movement wrestle with this challenge.

> "...perhaps the most obvious area of concern, has to do with the overzealous proselytizer, who obnoxiously and relentlessly is trying to convert people."



Many have noticed a surge in faith in the workplace, in the Armed Forces, and maybe even, government agencies as well. There's certainly been a rise in media coverage. Is the faith-at-work movement as strong in the public sector as the private sector? Are there different rules in regards to diversity?

Yes, I think there is an increase of faith at work in the public sector. That government workers have come to realize they actually have more latitude to, in appropriate and legal ways, live out their faith at work or somehow address topics of integrating faith and work. They have more legal rights than they realized.

That doesn't mean people of faith working for the government or public sector can swing the pendulum the other way. Some try to do that, and they rightly get their wrists slapped and lawsuits sometime occur. But done rightly, folks are starting to come to the recognition and wanting to find appropriate ways, even in the government sector, to be able to express their faith at work.

What would characterize some examples of an unhealthy model or counterproductive examples in the faith-at-work movement?

That's a good and really important question. As much as I'm a scholar of this movement and I'm persuaded by its many benefits, like any good idea, there are formulations of it that are unhealthy or problematic or that can cause more injury than good. I'd say there are three main areas of caution for the faith-at-work movement.

The first is a general one. If a company says, "We want you to bring your faith to work. We think that's great. Go ahead and do it, as long as you're respectful of everybody else." Some people will think, "Well that means the company has become a church." No! It's still a business. It's a place of business with business goals and objectives, and that's the primary reason you go. So someone shouldn't try [to] turn the corporation or the workplace into a house of worship. That's a conceptual misuse of the faith-at-work movement.

Another, and perhaps the most obvious

area of concern, has to do with the overzealous proselytizer, who obnoxiously and relentlessly is trying to convert people. This is disruptive to the work environment, and in some cases can even be considered harassment. So the overzealous proselytizer needs to be reigned in and prevented from inappropriate behavior.

The third area has to do with the question of Christian communities' attitudes toward the gay community. As we know, there are a variety of Christian responses, ranging from finding gay lifestyles sinful, to others who think it's perfectly fine, and others who really couldn't care less, they just don't want to be bothered by it. Within this context, regardless of where one stands on the issue of homosexuality, it is inappropriate for a faith-at-work group to be hostile to or discriminate against gay coworkers on the basis of their sexual orientation.

Do you think many people in business view industry as a service to other humans, and do you do think the faith-at-work movement has contributed to a more pronounced theology of work or servant-type leadership?

I wish more people did think that way. And the faith-at-work movement is certainly helping this view become more common. But sadly, I think most people still don't think of their work that way. They think that callings belong to those in the priesthood, and that daily work is simply a necessary part of life with little redeeming or theological value.

> "There are still many parts of the country or career paths or industry sectors where someone might be a little bit afraid to let it be known that they're a person of faith."

In your book you talk about how businesses and corporations are becoming friendlier to their workers who want to express or implement their faith. What do you see as obstacles that are still out there?

There are still many parts of the country or career paths or industry sectors where someone might be a little bit afraid to let it be known that they're a person of faith. Or they're afraid that someone might mock them or tease them or laugh about it or think, "How can you be expected to run this multi million-dollar division if you're a Christian? That means you're going to be a wimp. You're not going to be able to make hard decisions." Sadly, there are some negative stereotypes of Christians in the marketplace.

WTC, New York City © Robert Linder, www.sxc.hu

Another may be more of a structural thing. Many general counsel offices give the CEO this guidance, "You don't want to get involved in this religion thing. That is just a mess. All we're going to get is lawsuits. The last thing you want is a bunch of people coming and using the conference room for prayer groups. Heaven forbid, let's not do it." However, I argue, and the evidence seems to bear it out, that just trying to squelch the movement is a sign of poor leadership. Ducking a thorny issue is not a sign of great leadership. Moreover, the evidence seems to show that there are not a flood of lawsuits due to overzealous proselytizers or people shoving the Bible down somebody's throat. Rather, the lawsuits are coming because companies are not accommodating the sincerely held beliefs and legitimate requests of their employees. There are often sensible, reasonable accommodations that could [be], and by law often should be, provided.

I conclude by offering this advice to corporate leaders. In the same way that companies developed family-friendly policies, recognizing the importance of family life in an employee's well-being at work, and recognizing the variety of kinds and configurations of families, so too should companies recognize the importance of and variety of kinds of faith. I've coined the phrase "faith-friendly" as a way to capture this vision. Companies should strive to be faith-friendly (not faith-based), which means being respectful and welcoming of all religious traditions at work. A faith-friendly company is a natural extension of treating employees holistically, with dignity and respect, and acknowledging that an employee's spiritual identity is a central part of what makes them tick.

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William F. Buckley [1925-2008]

"The best defense against usurpatory government is an assertive citizenry."

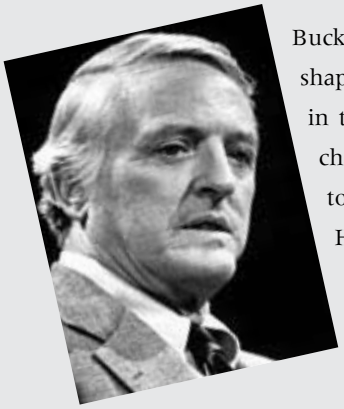
William F. Buckley, Jr., grew up in an era that was embracing the ascendancy of government expansion under President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. Buckley's heroic battle against modern liberalism was so pronounced and effective because of the seriousness of his ideas and the intellectual weight they carried. His 1951 book *God and Man at Yale: The Superstitions of Academic Freedom*, which highlighted the efforts of professors to indoctrinate students in liberal ideology and to cultivate a contempt for religious faith, served to establish Buckley as the founding father of the modern American conservative movement. Four years later Buckley created *National Review Magazine*, a publication that championed human liberty and the conservative cause. Buckley was often quoted as saying, "I would rather be governed by the first two thousand people in the Boston telephone directory than by the two thousand people on the faculty of Harvard University." His profile rose with his many books, famed vocabulary, and especially as host of the popular debate show *Firing Line*.

Never shy about hiding his beliefs, Buckley was also a committed Catholic. His Christianity was the foundation of his beliefs. In his autobiography of faith titled *Nearer, My God*, Buckley declared:

> It is of course obvious that it is mostly features of this world from which we take our satisfactions. The love of our family, the company of our friends, the feel of wind on the face, the excitement of the printed page, the delights of color and form and sound; food, wine, sex. But there is that other life that only human beings can experience, and in that life, and from that life, other pulsations are felt. They press upon us, in the Christian vision, one thing again and again, which is that God loves us. The best way to put it is that God would give His life for us and, in Christ, did.

Perhaps one of Buckley's greatest achievements was his ability to bring traditional conservatives, free-market advocates, and anti-communists together into a political movement. Not only did Buckley exorcize the American Right of its anti-Semitic elements, but he also popularized the once moribund conservative movement and elevated it to the center of American political life. He was essential in laying the intellectual foundations that brought America the likes of Ronald Reagan. "You didn't just part the Red Sea — you rolled it back, dried it up and left exposed, for all the world to see, the naked desert that is statism. And then, as if that weren't enough, you gave the world something different, something in its weariness it desperately needed, the sound of laughter and the sight of the rich, green uplands of freedom," Reagan said of Buckley.

"Buckley played an integral role in shaping American political culture in the twentieth century, and in challenging the West to live up to its higher ideals and purpose."



Buckley played an integral role in shaping American political culture in the twentieth century, and in challenging the West to live up to its higher ideals and purpose. He will always be remembered as one who had a deep faith, an infectious joy, and as a lover of freedom.

Ethics and the Job Market

The job market has come under pressure of late as the economic shake-up continues. We are reminded that the world of the past, in which workers held one job their entire lives and slowly ascended the corporate ladder until retiring with complete security, no longer exists. This is probably a good thing to the extent that it represents a new economic vibrancy. In the world of economics, another name for complete security is economic stagnation.

Still, changing jobs can introduce great challenges in a person's life. Internal family pressures increase, and there are many opportunities for despair and recrimination. This is where economics and ethics meet. So let's examine the nature of the wage contract to see what it is that people owe each other.

For an employee to force an employer to continue in a contract is not morally different from an employer who forces an employee to work against his or her will. We rightly look at the latter case as a form of servitude. Slave labor is something condemned by everyone all over the world. Well, the other side of the coin is that it is equally a form of slavery to demand that employers be forced to pay employees who are not contributing requisite value to the firm. Like dancing the tango, the employment contract takes two parties to make it happen in a way that is profitable for everyone.

> "Like dancing the tango, the employment contract takes two parties to make it happen in a way that is profitable for everyone."

There are good and bad ways to go about reducing the size of a firm's work force, just like there are good and bad ways to quit your job. It is customary to give two weeks notice, for example, and it makes good sense to prepare the way for your successor. Contracts must be kept. This is not only the decent thing to do; it is also good for the reputation of the employee for the future.

It is the same with employers. Wholesale firings do not take into account the well-being of the employees raise ethical concerns. They also hurt the reputation of the business firm. No one wants to work for a business that treats its employees callously. The forces for reputation are so powerful here that there is not a need for government regulation. Government regulations only end up reducing the flexibility of all parties and raise their own ethical issues.

What needs to be avoided is precisely what the law seems to encourage these days: acts of vengeance by the employee against the former employer. These can take the form of lawsuits, smears, attacks, and other attempts to somehow punish the employer for failing to continue the contract. These are not only counterproductive; they feed an inappropriate form of resentment that can be spiritually and psychologically injurious. We must remember that the work contract is one of mutual agreement. Both parties are benefactors of the other. In Dante's vision of hell, the people who are treated worst are those who betray their benefactors. This applies equally to the employer who betrays the employee, and the worker who would seek reprisal against the employer who trusted the worker to pursue the best interests of the firm.

Tight labor markets are more than a macroeconomic phenomenon. They profoundly affect human lives. Sadly, the conditions tempt people to impose coercive interventions to affect certain results. But we all have an interest in keeping labor markets fluid and free. This is what is best for everyone in the long run.

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

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