

ACTONINSTITUTE

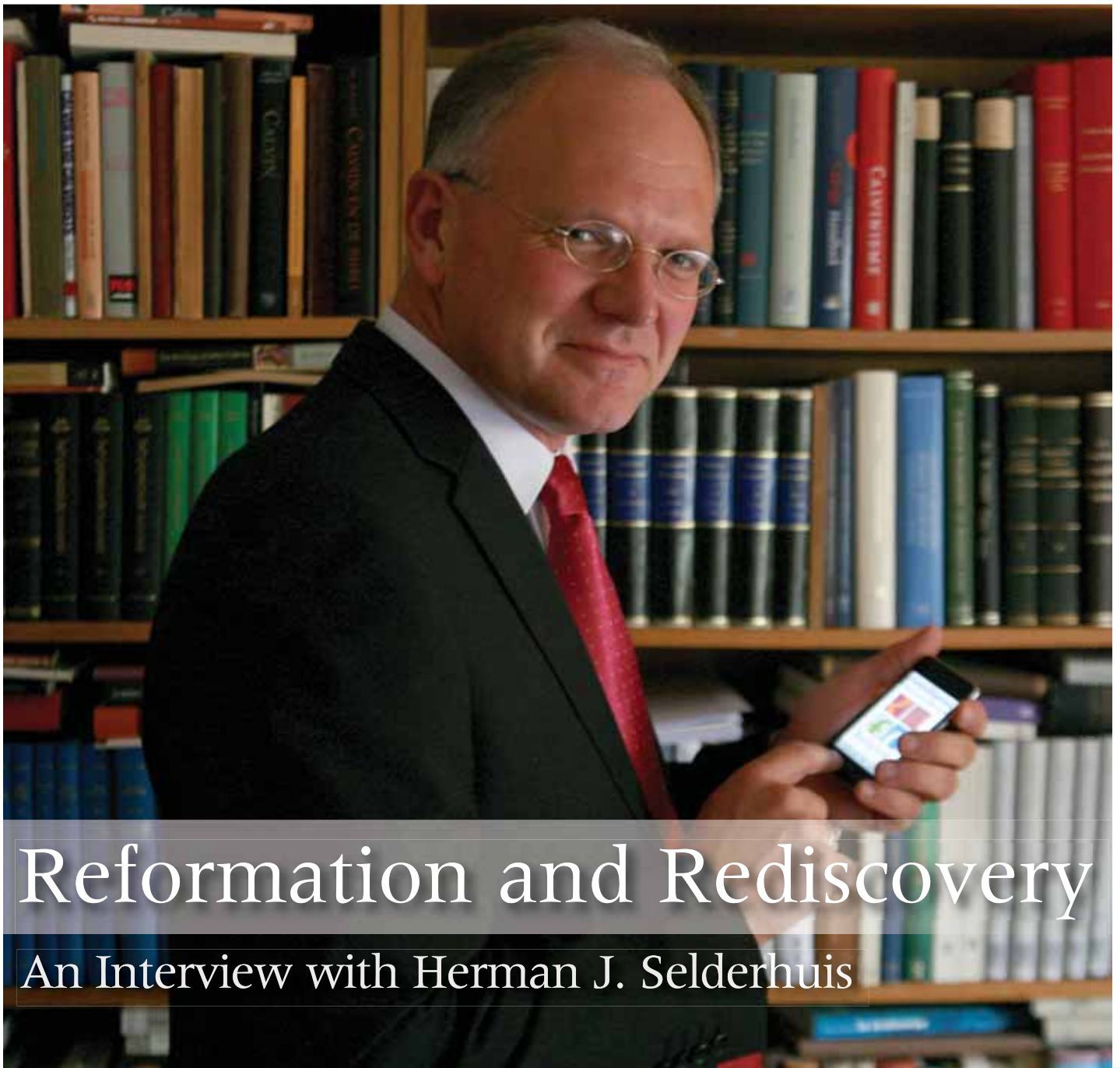
Winter 2012 | Volume 22 | Number 1

# Religion & Liberty

Inside this issue



**Reinsch** Two Faiths: The Witness of Whittaker Chambers • **Nothstine** A Receding Voice: A Century of Methodist Political Pronouncements • **Franko** A Case for Limiting Caesar • **Liberal Tradition** Francis Hutcheson • **Sirico** Globalization and Culture



## Reformation and Rediscovery

An Interview with Herman J. Selderhuis

A Journal of Religion, Economics, and Culture

# Editor's Note



"My conscience is captive to the Word of God," declared Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms in 1521. The Protestant Reformation transformed not just the theology of much of the Church but also heavily influenced the thought of civil and religious liberty. Today about 670 million Protestants span the globe. We are approaching the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, kicked off by Luther's posting of his 95 theses in 1517.

Herman Selderhuis is the director of Refo500, the organization that wishes to draw attention to the Reformation and its continuing relevance. In the interview, Selderhuis revisits Reformation history and the myriad ways it has had a lasting impact on social structures, government,

the Church, and Europe's future.

Also marking a memorable moment in time, this year is the 60th anniversary of the publication of *Witness* by Whittaker Chambers. Richard Reinsch, a program officer at Liberty Fund and author of *Whittaker Chambers: The Spirit of a Counterrevolutionary*, contributes a piece on the enduring significance of his witness. "From his conversion, Chambers grasped that revolutionary ideology lied about the nature of man and the source of his being," says Reinsch.

James Franko contributes an essay on "A Case for Limiting Caesar." Written from a classically liberal perspective, he admonishes "compassionate conservative" thinking as well as contemporary progressive liberalism.

I've contributed a review of Mark Tooley's new book covering a century of Methodist political pronouncements. Tooley offers very little editorial views of his own and allows Methodism's social action to speak for itself. What emerges is a story of a denomination that bleeds membership. Their influence begins to wane in part

because of a saturated voice and the partisanship of their pronouncements.

The "In the Liberal Tradition" figure is Scottish Enlightenment philosopher Francis Hutcheson. Hutcheson and other thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment were instrumental in influencing the American Revolution and Declaration of Independence. Many of the American Founders studied under Scottish tutors that directly shaped their thinking from a young age.

Under Rev. Robert Sirico's usual column, we have added a little bit of space to run an excerpt from his forthcoming book, *Defending the Free Market: The Moral Case for a Free Economy*. The book will be available from Regnery in May of 2012.

Please check out our executive director's "Frequently Asked Questions" at the end of this issue. There are many exciting things happening at Acton, including a new building purchase. Kris Mauren addresses that and its long-term benefits for Acton.

## Editorial Board

**Publisher:** Rev. Robert A. Sirico

**Executive Editor:** John Couretas

**Editor:** Rev. Raymond J. de Souza

**Managing Editor:** Ray Nothstine

**Graphics Editor:** Peter Ho

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

Letters and requests should be directed to: *Religion & Liberty*; Acton Institute; 161 Ottawa Ave., NW, Suite 301; Grand Rapids, MI 49503. For archived issues or to subscribe, please visit [www.acton.org/publicat/landl](http://www.acton.org/publicat/landl).

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

© 2012 Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty.

Cover: Herman Selderhuis

## Contents

### Reformation and Rediscovery:

Interview with Herman J. Selderhuis ..... 3

### Two Faiths: The Witness of Whittaker Chambers:

Richard M. Reinsch ..... 4

### A Receding Voice: A Century of Methodist Political

Pronouncements: Ray Nothstine ..... 7

**A Case for Limiting Caesar:** James Franko ..... 9

**In the Liberal Tradition:** Francis Hutcheson ..... 13

**Column:** Rev. Robert A. Sirico ..... 14

**Acton FAQ** ..... 15



# Reformation and Rediscovery

An Interview with Herman J. Selderhuis

*Dr. Herman J. Selderhuis is professor of Church History at the Theological University Apeldoorn (the Netherlands) and director of Refo500, the international platform on projects relating to the 16th Century. He is the author and editor of several books, including John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life (2009). He is also president of the International Calvin Congress and Curator of Research at the Johannes a Lasco Library (Emden, Germany). Selderhuis recently spoke with Religion & Liberty managing editor Ray Nothstine.*

**R&L:** *In what way did the Reformation reshape education in the modern world?*

**Herman J. Selderhuis:** Fundamental was the insight that there was no distinction between nature and grace as a lower and an upper level. This means that theology is not seen any longer as higher and more important than other subject matters and faculties, which caused a re-evaluation of other fields of employment, and of other educational tracts.

The development of the universities, like the academy in Geneva, University of Leiden, and many other institutions focused on the broad spectrum of creation, natural science. That imparted an impulse by John Calvin with his view that God can be known also through nature. God reveals Himself in nature. So you could say, if you do biology, you in fact do theology as well.

The other side is the effect of reformation on the education to include boys and girls.

Research into the educational system has shown that in the 16th and 17th centuries, especially when compared to the Lutheran and the Catholic children, the Reformed children did better in school because theirs was more a word-oriented education. In church, there was nothing to see since reformed church interiors are rather empty, but there was a lot to read and so children were also trained in hearing. The focus at home and at school was also on the word and this resulted in training in reading, which gave an impulse to education as well.

These are just some of the aspects of the reformation of education that really gives us a glimpse into the world of that day, and its influence certainly continues today.

*Often the term Calvinist or Puritan is used pejoratively to refer to an attitude toward life that is seen as narrow, constricting, and disappointing. In what ways are these stereotypes mischaracterizations of the spirit of Calvinism?*

In about all the ways you just mentioned. The Reformed tradition is quite broad and when we talk about Calvinism as the world and life view based on Calvin's ideas, it's usually focused on the ethics of John Calvin. He is often seen as someone who just could not enjoy life, who was strict and sober and this attitude was taken up by the Puritans, so this Puritan lifestyle came in and took the fun out of ours. That's the idea.

Well, when you read the sources, you read in Calvin as well as in the Puritans, that they really could enjoy life. However,

in those days there was not as much to enjoy as there is today. Many of these people were refugees, so they had hard times living in places they were forced to live. They had to move on. Then there was a lot of poverty, many diseases, wars, a high rate of death in infancy. Yet, reformers did know to appreciate the blessings of this life. When you read John Calvin, for example, he even says that it's no sin at all to drink wine. Not that he was an advocate of alcoholism, but he says wine is a good gift of God and you may enjoy it. You may enjoy good food, although Calvin himself looks like someone who did not enjoy it at all. It all has to do with his physical state. Calvin enjoyed food, but he could not stand too much of it because of his intestinal problems.

I think we should just read the sources and see those people in their context. They had an eye for poverty and for injustice, and they wanted to do something about that, so the conviction was to shed luxury, for it could keep you from giving to the poor. The stereotypes do not fit. They wanted to lead a Christian life and to keep away from sin, so that brought them into a strict way of life, but not in an attitude that believed this world is an enemy to your spiritual life. They could enjoy earthly things.

*Some of the most significant theological debates in the Reformation era had to do with the nature of human freedom. How do these debates inform us today about what it means to be human, and how should they inform modern notions of freedom?*

*continued on pg 11*





# Two Faiths: The Witness of Whittaker Chambers

By Richard M. Reinsch

Calvin Coolidge remarked that, “Great men are the ambassadors of Providence sent to reveal to their fellow men their unknown selves. To them is granted the power to call forth the best there is in those who come under their influence.” To Coolidge’s treatment of greatness, we might add the transcendent voices of certain writers who encapsulate in almost lyrical form the creative ideas, passions, and tensions within themselves, as measured by the period’s conflicts they were providentially hurled against. These voices speak to the heart of man from the center of the writer’s soul.

One such writer was Whittaker Chambers, whose autobiography *Witness*, published in 1952, details his life as an agent in the Fourth Section of Soviet Military Intelligence from 1932 to 1938, where he coordinated espionage activities with high-ranking United States government officials. *Witness* also movingly explains Chambers’ departure from Communism and his conversion to Christianity. From his conversion, Chambers grasped that revolutionary ideology lied about the nature of man and the source of his being. The sources of Chambers’ ascent and the witness he made are worth recalling in our own period of late-modern anomie.

One morning in 1938, shortly before leaving the Communist Party, while feeding his young daughter, Chambers concluded that the shape of her ear could not be explained by Marxist materialism. Something this beautiful and

unique, Chambers observed, implied design, which implied the existence of God. Understanding the divine gift of his daughter Ellen, also strangely related to the horrific irruption within Chambers



Whittaker Chambers

of the “screams” from Communism’s suffering victims. He writes “[O]ne day the Communist really hears those

screams. [The screams] ... do not merely reach his mind. They pierce beyond. They pierce to his soul.” A soul in agony, in this case, a person under persecution by Communist authorities, has attempted to communicate with another soul through memory and across time. The crucial significance of both episodes rests in Chambers embracing the presence of his soul, thus denying the false materialism of Communism and the darkness it had covered him in. As Chambers observed, “A Communist breaks because he must choose at last between irreconcilable opposites—God or Man, Soul or Mind, Freedom or Communism.”

Chambers’ conversion inspired him to atone for his past betrayal of his country. He divulged to the federal government information about the Soviet espionage cell he had organized during the 1930s in Washington, its membership, and his complicity in its operation. Of those officials in Chambers’ Soviet-allied cell, Alger Hiss, Director of the Office of Special Political Affairs in the Department of State and Chambers’ close friend, would prove to be the most consequential. Hiss formally denied any involvement in Communist activities and insisted that he had never even met “that man named Whittaker Chambers.” The truth was that Hiss and Chambers had been close friends in their subversive activities, and even their wives and children had frequently socialized together.

Alger Hiss had regularly passed State

Department documents to Chambers during the 1930s; in turn, Chambers carried them to various handlers, who then sent them to Soviet authorities. Hiss, a graduate of Harvard Law School and a former Supreme Court clerk to Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, a close friend of Dean Acheson and John Foster Dulles, an adviser to President Roosevelt at Yalta, the Secretary General of the United Nations organization conference at San Francisco, and the President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, outwardly personified the New Deal ethos of public service. Seemingly above reproach, Hiss was refined, handsome, and a gentleman, and reportedly came to Washington after being transfixed by a radio address of Franklin Roosevelt calling for national renewal.

Chambers was none of these things. He was brilliant but was also, one might say, “off the grid.” Born to a highly dysfunctional family, a dropout at Columbia, racked by depression and self-doubt, something of a vagabond, Chambers had cut short his early promising writing career to spy for the Soviet Union. However, one harrowing year after his literal escape from a life of espionage, Chambers found bourgeois redemption in an unexpected opportunity at *Time* magazine as the books editor. At *Time*, Chambers succeeded marvelously under Henry Luce, America’s media emperor of mid-century. In numerous political, philosophical, and religious pieces, Chambers voiced Luce’s sense of modern America’s spiritual and political disorientation and quickly became one of Luce’s featured writers. However, Chambers’ decision in 1948 to testify as a former Communist agent against Communists he had once organized against America ended his glorious run with the publication.

Naming Hiss to the House Committee on Un-American Activities as a Communist agent earned Chambers the full disdain of much of the political and media leadership, and was, in retrospect, the begin-

ning of the deep social, cultural, and political divides that continue to mark American life between its elites and *petit bourgeoisie*. Chambers’ fear was that subversive activity had continued in the ten years between his exit from Communist activity in 1938 and 1948, the year he first testified before Congress (he first revealed his traitorous conduct in 1939 to Adolf Berle, Director of Security at the Department of State). Chambers thought America was oblivious to the spiritual and philosophical degradations that surrounded it, and he believed his testimony would prove to be an exemplary sign of contradiction, calling forth the nation’s latent spirit. He referred to the federal trial of Alger Hiss, truly one of the greatest trials of the 20th century, as

“ Unlike the disenchantment of many Western intellectuals who left Communism because of the Stalinist purges in the 1930s but remained committed to various shades of socialist politics, Chambers’ conversion was root and branch.”

one involving “two faiths.” “At heart,” Chambers observed, “the Great Case was this critical conflict of faiths; that is why it was a great case. On a scale personal enough to be felt by all, but big enough to be symbolic, the two irreconcilable faiths of our time—Communism and Freedom—came to grips in the persons of two conscious and resolute men.” After a second federal trial in 1950, Hiss was judged guilty of perjury for lying about sending secret government documents to Chambers and for claiming that he had not seen Chambers since 1937. The perjury conviction masked the much

larger crime of treason that Hiss was never charged with by authorities because of the statute of limitations.

*Witness* is part espionage drama, part political thriller, part indictment of the self-righteousness of progressive New Dealers; above all, the text’s soulful depth emerges from the intellectual and spiritual strength that lifted Chambers above the maddening ideology he had served. The title’s manifold meanings point to Chambers’ lasting significance as a thinker and writer about the condition of modernity, the nature of ideology, and the irrepressible feature of religion in human nature and politics. The meaning he ascribed to his conversion underscored how the political distortions of the 20th century emerged from the philosophical errors that had preceded them.

Unlike the disenchantment of many Western intellectuals who left Communism because of the Stalinist purges in the 1930s but remained committed to various shades of socialist politics, Chambers’ conversion was root and branch. He described his exit from Communism in this manner:

What I had been fell from me like dirty rags. The rags that fell from me were not only Communism. What fell was the whole web of the materialist modern mind—the luminous shroud which it has spun about the spirit of man, paralyzing in the name of rationalism the instinct of his soul for God, denying in the name of knowledge the reality of the soul and its birthright in that mystery on which mere knowledge falters and shatters at every step. If I had rejected only Communism, I would have rejected only one political expression of the modern mind, the most logical because the most brutal in enforcing the myth of man’s material perfectibility.

This statement exemplifies Chambers’

*continued on pg 6*

conviction that much of modern thought enthrones the autonomy of reason. The intellectuals who had left Communism sensed it was wrong, but did not really believe that another philosophical approach was right. Communism's barbarity repelled them but, "Not grasping the source of the evil they sincerely hate, such ex-Communists in general make ineffectual witnesses against it."

Standing apart from liberal anti-Communists, Chambers forcefully argued that Communism must be rejected in the name of something other than 20th-century modern liberalism. The Communist vision "is the vision of man's mind displacing God as the creative intelligence of the world. It is the vision of man's liberated mind, by the sole force of its rational intelligence, redirecting man's destiny." The problem was that man's belief that he could order his existence without the insights of biblical religion and premodern philosophy had not equaled liberation but instead had left the human person in the grip of naked power.

Related to this proposition was Chambers's counsel that political freedom must be independently grounded in God, the human soul, and the irreducible dignity of the person—what Chambers termed the biblical understanding of man. As he wrote in *Witness*, "political freedom, as the Western world has known it, is only a political reading of the Bible." These propositions make Whittaker Chambers a dissident voice within the modern political experience. If Communism and progressivism were the effectual truth of philosophic modernity, as Chambers urged, then their defeat had to come from outside the well-worn path of hyper-rationalist thought.

Of course, as citizens of late-modernity who inhabit stumbling civil societies and political orders that may still be saved, or, as we might fear, may continue an inexorable slide into impotence, if not worse, we need Chambers's

counsel if we are to recover the truth that can save us. Chambers' enduring relevance abides in his diagnosis of a West "sick to death" from the philosophical and religious choices it had made in the modern era. Man had too easily concluded that he creates his reality through his own mind and consent. In the 20th century, the horrific consequences for the human person, for liberty, and for civilization itself were the piles of dead bodies sacrificed by the terror regimes in pursuit of a liberationist politics that ended in man organizing the world against man.

The West itself, Chambers feared, was listless at the moment when it most needed strength. Chambers argued that the West's weakness grew out of its tacit adoption of many of the philosophical errors on which Communism rested. A larger Western conversion, Chambers

standing of the free society's conservative origins. This could happen, Chambers observed, only if the West reen-gaged the truth about God and man.

Chambers' diagnosis troubles us today because of the West's retention of so many of the ideas that shaped Communism. We still remain distant, if not cut off, from the intellectual and religious sources that shaped the West from its beginning. The contemporary West still asserts that reality should be understood through empirical reason alone, that man is merely a highly evolved creature, or that liberty is only a useful fiction because history, science, economics, and the state are the real movers carrying man forward. Chambers' witness and writings controvert this ideological reduction of man. He remains, as William F. Buckley Jr. wrote, a voice "that is magnificent in tone, speaking to our



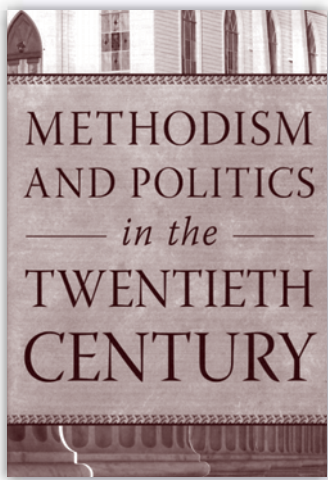
Alger Hiss, American diplomat convicted of perjury.

boldly urged, similar in many respects to his personal conversion, would have to be made if Communism and its philosophical underpinnings were to be defeated. The West would have to emerge from its deep-seated materialism, its confusion over the nature of the person and his dignity, and its detached under-

time from the center of sorrow, from the center of the earth."

*Richard M. Reinsch is a Fellow at Liberty Fund, Inc., the editor of the Online Library of Law and Liberty, and is the author of Whittaker Chambers: The Spirit of a Counterrevolutionary.*





# A Receding Voice: A Century of Methodist Political Pronouncements

Review by Ray Nothstine

Review of Mark Tooley's *Methodism and Politics in the 20th Century* (ISI, Jan 2012) ISBN: 978-1885224712. Hardcover, 406 pages; \$24.95.

Methodism was once the largest denomination in America. The faith grew rapidly from America's beginning and has traditionally been characterized by aggressive evangelism and revival. It has carried a vibrant social witness, too. Methodist Church pronouncements once garnered front page headlines in *The New York Times*. Its high water mark undoubtedly came during prohibition, the greatest modern political cause of the denomination. Methodists even built and staffed a lobbying building next to Capitol Hill, believing a dry country could remake society.

In *Methodism and Politics in the 20th Century*, Mark Tooley has chronicled Methodism's denominational political pronouncements from William McKinley, America's first Methodist president, to 9-11. Tooley has unearthed a staggering amount of official and unofficial Methodist declarations and musings on everything from economics, war, civil rights, the Cold War, abortion, marriage, and politics.

Tooley, who is also the author of *Taking Back the United Methodist Church*, offers very little of his own commentary on the issues in *Methodism and Politics*, instead allowing Methodism's voice for over a century to speak for itself. Ultimately what emerges is a denomination that begins to recede in significance, perhaps

because of the sheer saturation of their witness in the public square. But its leadership often trades in a prophetic voice for a partisan political one, and sadly at times, even a treasonous voice.

Methodists not only led on prohibition, but were out in front on issues like women's suffrage, the New Deal, and the Civil Rights Movement. While they did not always carry a unified voice on these issues, even many Southern annual conferences and bishops broke with the popular political position of defending segregation in their home states.

While support for the New Deal and greater federal intervention in the economy was not rubber stamped by all Methodists, an emerging and often biting anti-free market voice would dominate official pronouncements. This continues to this day with declarations calling to support greater government regulations, single payer health care, and a host of measures calling for government wage and price controls. Way back in 1936, one Oklahoma Methodist pastor offered his own advice to some of his brethren:

Why do [these Methodist Reds] not get passports, emigrate to Russia where they can prostrate themselves daily before the sacred mummy of Lenin and submit themselves to the commands of Joseph Stalin?

Tooley chronicles the pacifist sentiment

that begins to overtake the denomination. This amounted to the equivocating of a denomination that once was harsh in its critique of communism to one where a committee of bishops would pronounce by the 1980s, that "actions which are seen as 'Marxist-Leninist' by one group are seen as the core of the Christian message by others."

Perhaps most shameful was the action of several bishops during the American hostage crisis in Tehran, Iran, from 1979 - 1981. United Methodist Bishop Dale White said of the new Islamic fundamentalist regime, "I know there are individuals in the Iranian power structure who do trust The United Methodist Church." White offered assessments of the new regime being "democratic." The General conference sent a message to Ayatollah Khomeini declaring that it hears the "cries of freedom from foreign domination, from cultural imperialism, from economic exploitation." Methodist officials participated in pro-Khomeini student demonstrations in Washington D.C. and met with and offered praise for officials in the new Iranian government. One former hostage recalled:

Some of the people who came over, especially the clergy, were hypocrites because they came to aid and comfort the hostages but ended up giving aid and comfort to the Iranians and actually making it worse for us.

The election of President Ronald Reagan naturally sent many United Methodist

*continued on pg 8*

Church officials into a tizzy. “People voted their self interest instead of the Social Principles of the church. It looks like United Methodists with everybody else forsook their Christian idealism at the ballot box,” said Bishop James Armstrong. Some United Methodist Bishops had already declared their denomination much more aligned with the Democratic Party. It was downhill from there for many Methodist leaders, as they coddled the Sandinistas and “Brother Ortega” in Nicaragua and dove head first into the nuclear freeze movement. While Reagan was strengthening the NATO alliance with the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) and deployment of Pershing II mis-

“ In the 1920s Calvin Coolidge once said of Francis Asbury, one of the first two Methodist Bishops in early America, that ‘he did not come [to America] for political motives,’ but came to bear ‘the testimony of truth.’ ”

siles to Europe, Board of Church and Society Haviland Houston declared that the church needs “to tell the boys with their nuclear toys” “that it’s time to” “come inside.” As the Cold War began to wind down and new freedoms emerged, a few United Methodist Bishops seemed to lament the seeming triumph of the free-market as an economic structure. Bishop Rüdiger Rainer Minor noted, “As critics, I think Marxists are still relevant. Marxism has insights into power that we can learn from,” such as capitalism’s “competition structures.” The bishop declared, “Most United Methodists in this country would give you an unreserved negative verdict on Marxism. I guess I’m an outsider.”

In the 1990s, one General Board of Global Ministry official bewailed the Republican Congress by saying, “White, male supremacists now wear suits. They talk states’ rights and anti-taxes. The climate of hate and violence is a challenge to us.” General Board of Church and Society official Robert McLean declared that the GOP Contract with America effectively “cancels” the Sermon on the Mount.

Hyperventilating over partisan politics would continue in The United Methodist Church and continues to this day by American officials. Most recently, many have joined forces with the “What Would Jesus Cut?” campaign. But because Methodism is a connectional denomination, the growing African influence is counterbalancing what Methodist progressives and political liberals can accomplish. They have already reached the pinnacle of their power, which has been shrinking for decades. Because progressives have made so many predictable pronouncements, they no longer speak with the weighty spiritual authority they once held. It is a

ing out what they mean afterward.”

Just over a month ago, The United Methodist Church’s General Board of Church & Society heaped praise on President Obama’s HHS mandate with no mention of the measure’s threat to religious liberty, deciding to only view it as a partisan measure to defend for furthering the role of government in health care.

At the conclusion of the book, after reading through 100 years of political pronouncements, Tooley finally offers just a hint of his own assessment,

American Methodism in 1900 was growing, confident, largely unified, and politically formidable. One hundred years later, it had already endured several decades of steep membership decline and accompanying political marginalization as church officials were no longer presumed to speak for most church members.

Tooley, through the myriad of voices that he has chronicled over such a lengthy period, understands those voices only need to speak for themselves to make his point.

In the 1920s Calvin Coolidge once said of Francis Asbury, one of the first



The Francis Asbury Memorial located in Washington, D.C.

lesson for all churches and those that wish to bring their faith into the public square. At the 1934 Illinois Annual Conference, one lay delegate offered what can be seen only as prophetic now when he declared, “It is time for churches to stop adopting resolutions and then find-

two Methodist Bishops in early America, that “he did not come [to America] for political motives,” but came to bear “the testimony of truth.” One wishes Methodist denominational officials would not only follow more of Asbury’s doctrine, but his praxis as well.





Rubens tribute money; Credit: Wiki Commons, Peter Paul Rubens/1612-1618

# A Case for Limiting Caesar

By James Franko

For too long the commentariat has assumed it is an oxymoron for someone to be both an advocate for limited government and concerned about the well-being of their fellow man. A classically liberal philosophy is too often equated with a form of individualism so brutish that it is scarcely recognizable as human. For many classical liberals, it is precisely because they care deeply for the welfare of humanity, and religious liberty, that they advocate for limiting the role of government at all levels.

In fact, Americans should be seeking less action from Capitol Hill and 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue if they want to answer the call to be our brother's keeper and uphold the First Amendment. The tumult surrounding President Obama's HHS mandate only serves to reinforce this. Instead of looking to elected officials for satisfaction on contraception or any other issue, Americans should be asking government to take a step back instead of simply stepping in the direction they'd like.

What is worse than any argument against the many abuses of crony capitalism is the simple fact that government action to help the most vulnerable absolves individuals of the higher calling to serve others. The true, and right, desire to help others is easily replaced with a belief that government will take care of it.

It is far easier to step over that homeless

man on the way to work knowing that a government funded homeless shelter is right around the corner. If, instead, the only help that man can rely on is found through the generosity of individuals then a new obligation exists. Suddenly, the businessman on his way to work is responsible for his welfare and must act appropriately.

However, by the many names they are known, a vast majority of believers in freedom and liberty would not simply offer a pocket of change and move on. They act to help these least amongst us in soup kitchens, English language centers, and career training all in an effort to teach the man to fish. This is the tradition of charity and social responsibility that de Tocqueville would have found in America. Unfortunately, an ever-more intrusive government threatens to blot it out.

Who is better at feeding the hungry, extending a hand to an unemployed member of the community, or mentoring young people: government, the local church or synagogue, Big Brothers Big Sisters? Arguing that Catholic Charities, or any other entity, receives government grants misses the point. Private charities, both secular and religious, existed long before Leviathan rose and will exist long after Leviathan goes bankrupt.

The institutions integral to the social fabric of America are better left to individuals than ham-handed bureaucrats. Do the

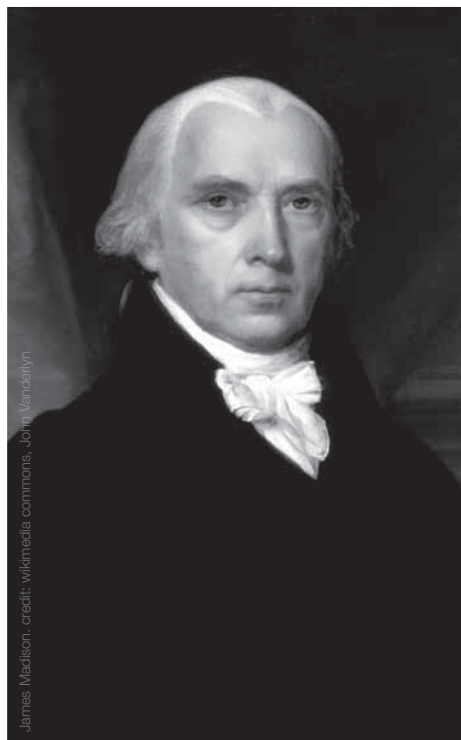
contents of a textbook matter as much if parents are teaching their children the lessons of their faith or conscience at home? The small town community held up for its virtue did not come together because of a Community Development Block Grant or a presidential speech. It came together through shared experience and a true sense of brotherhood.

This culminates in one simple and historically proven truth: Government that takes action which John Q. Citizen supports today will, inevitably, become a government that takes action he does not support tomorrow. A government that spends hundreds of billions on a prescription drug benefit under a compassionate conservative administration yesterday will spend hundreds of billions on individual health insurance mandates and trample on religious liberty under a social justice administration tomorrow.

The only logical response is a government without the authority to do either - a constitutionally-limited government which leaves individuals free to pursue their form of happiness. Of course, constitutions are a product of men and, therefore, fallible. In their wisdom, America's Founding Fathers realized this. Three co-equal branches of government, the Tenth Amendment's demand for balanced powers between the federal and state governments, and a process by which to amend the very document they authored serve as a re-

*continued on pg 10*

minder of humanity's inherent shortcomings. James Madison said in Federalist 51, "If men were angels, no government would be necessary.



However, looking to Washington or the statehouse to right social wrongs means they will almost certainly wrong social rights. Classically liberal thought is an acknowledgement of both the best and worst of mankind. Precisely because governments are instituted amongst people, political efforts at ensuring the best often lead to the worst.

Jesus admonished the Pharisees and Herodians to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and God the things that are God's." Given that, the need to limit Caesar as much as possible should be obvious. This can only be done through an adherence to the principles of limited government and personal freedom.

*James Franko is a former Capitol Hill staffer who currently lives in Wichita, KS with his wife and their new son.*

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

## Matthew 5:4

*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

The Psalmist declared that, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." This text from Matthew, the second verse in the Sermon on the Mount, ultimately points to what the coming of Christ has accomplished.

These words from Christ may appear contradictory to us. Those that spiritually and physically mourn don't feel blessed and certainly they would believe their comfort is in doubt. The words have a deep spiritual and theological significance however. The words primarily address those that recognize their need for salvation. Jesus is addressing those that understand their fragile state, the seriousness of sin, and what it means for their soul. They mourn over the seriousness of their sin and the despair and havoc it wreaks. There is indeed a blessing in these actions.

Today in our culture, public sin is less controversial, if it is noticed at all. Sin is glorified by the culture and one wouldn't be incorrect in saying we are living in a period not unlike the time of the Judges. The famous refrain from Judges of course was, "Everybody did what was right in their own eyes."

Those that mourn over their sin are being called out of themselves and are being configured and made into the image of Christ. How beautiful is the Lord to us when we realize the very God who we have sinned against is the God who has saved us. "Not with the proud -- not with you who think yourselves good and excellent -- does God dwell; but with men who feel their sin, and own it; with men who feel their unworthiness, and confess it," says Charles H. Spurgeon.

It's also hard to imagine that one would mourn over the sin and the lost state of others if they did not indeed mourn over their own sin. It is why the Apostle Paul, a holy man indeed, declared himself "the chief among sinners."

Likewise, because we are forgiven, it is important not to continually point out the shortcomings of others, or ourselves, but we should never minimize sin in our lives.

If we feel far from God, repentance is the best place to start. It was John the Baptist who announced the coming of Christ with the words, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is now close at hand." God is restoring all of creation and making it into His image. Don't let pride, conceit, or arrogance leave you behind. And when we do mourn our sins, we should be confident in knowing that because of the love of Christ, he has given us a precious peace through his blood.

Well, I think freedom today is not exactly the same as freedom in the Reformation. For them, the first aspect of freedom is freedom of your guilt towards God.

You're free in the face of God. There is no more guilt. You are forgiven, which means you're set free to focus on your neighbor, to focus on the social issues, to focus on serving the Church. So according to the reformers, this is a freedom towards God. Then there is also this freedom as to being a Christian. I have the freedom to shape my Christian life the way I want it, but my freedom is, in a way, limited by my neighbor. I do not want to use this freedom to affront or hurt my neighbor. Then there was the freedom that was claimed by the Church as a free church in a free state. For example, the Dutch in their uprising against the Catholic Spanish government used that as one of their arguments.

They were a free church. Christ is King in a church, so His words should have the saying of the force of civil law. There was the freedom of the state in the sense that each state should have its own development and other states should be partners and not hinder that freedom and development. So these are some of the aspects of freedom, whereas today I see a lot of freedom for the individual stressed. This kind of freedom is not bound to any power at all, to any outward law, to any obligation. That however is totally different from what the reformers meant with freedom.

The Reformation stressed, as did the Catholic visions during the 16th century, that freedom is always freedom that is useful for God and my neighbor, and it's not a freedom that is focused on the individual alone.

*What was life like in Calvin's Geneva?*

It was a very pleasant life if you wanted to lead a Christian life, a life governed by Biblical principles. But then again, if you had other ideas about it, then life was sometimes unpleasant. You were more bound to laws that you did not really

they chose under the guidance of John Calvin in the 16th century.

*What is the overall significance of the Reformation for today?*

If you want to understand the western world, you need to know about the history, theology, and the influence of the Reformation. That was a decisive moment in the history of the Western world, not only for the breaking of the Church, but also for the consequences of that for Church and state, for visions about life and death, on culture, society, education, development of law, and natural sciences.

It's important to look at the Reformation and have good knowledge of it because there were many issues in those days that are still issues today, or that are new issues of today. The question of how to deal with more than one religion in a city or in a region or in a state is a big one. Although Western govern-

ments today defend the Catholic and Protestant faith, we could look at how did they deal with the questions in those days and maybe we could learn from that. We now have more religions moving into the West that are not Christian.

What I also see in the Reformation is that there is a keen eye on the social needs of society and the system they developed that can be put into practice today, how you make theological notions work for society today.



Cathedral Saint Pierre in Geneva, Switzerland.

enjoy. That certainly gave rise to some discussions and struggles in Geneva.

People choose to go to Geneva though. There were even tourists in those days that went to visit Geneva to see how orderly things were and how peaceful people would live and how economy flourishes and prospers because of this strict living according to Biblical law.

As I see it, life in Geneva was not a bad choice. When I look at Geneva today, I can still see that there. It is a very prosperous city and part of that is due to the road

*continued on pg 12*



Then there were, of course, the big questions of the relation between religion and the state. This relates to educational or pedagogical concepts, or how you look at a person. A good example is one of the topics of the conferences we have planned on anthropology looking at the past and present day. Today young people in the world are looked upon by companies as an object on which you can make money. You can sell a cell phone to them. You can sell Coca-Cola to them. You can sell a certain brand of jeans to them. They are objects. Whereas, the discovery in the 16th Century stressed that young people are not objects. They are subjects. You have to train them. You have to teach them to make their own decisions. Phillip Melancthon, who was a colleague of Luther's, was very good at teaching that concept to people. That is something our society needs to see again, that young people are not objects on which you can make money, but subjects that you should help develop their gifts, their possibilities, and help them to make the right choices.

*The early modern era saw explosion of various forms of social life. How has this social dynamism had an impact on the development of free societies in the Western world?*

Well, I would concentrate on one of the most important developments in social life, and that is the rediscovery of the family. The old view was that the good state of life was the unmarried state. And those that married, in fact, were weaker because they gave into their sinful desires. Many in the Church thought something was wrong with you if you could not live a celibate life.

With Luther's theology, he says that if you don't have the gift to live a celibate life, you should marry, and marriage and having a family is on the same level of worth for God as celibacy and singleness. So as Luther said, it's not whether you do your work as a wife in the family, in the kitchen, or you work as a laborer, or you are a priest or a preacher, for God it's all the same. What counts is you do your work well.

This concentration on the family, and the responsibility of fathers, mothers, children and what they mean for society, for the

Church, for politics, is a very central notion that has had real development in the Western world. The family was called a church within a church, a little church, ecclesiola, but it's also a mini-state in the state with the way things go in a family, the appointments you have, the deals you make with each other. So this is a nucleus, a center. You have the state in a nutshell in the family, and that really has helped. That is what I would say as the first aspect of social life, rediscovery of the family and how that worked.

*David Steinmetz said that "the history of Biblical interpretation is not incidental to European cultural history, but central to it." How important is it for Europe to recover this truth?*

If you look at it from a Christian standpoint, it is evident that people need to read the Bible again today. However, I think even if you would look at it from a

*"If you look at it from a Christian standpoint, it is evident that people need to read the Bible again today."*

non-Christian standpoint, you would admit that the Bible has a lot in it that is valuable for today. What we need to do with this, and what Steinmetz says we need to do, is to interpret these Biblical texts for today. We do not live in Israel of the Old Testament. We do not live in the times of the Greek monarchs and the Greek cities, so our world is different. There are notions in the Bible that are relevant for today, even if you would limit it to how one person should deal with another, how you should deal with questions of war and peace with anger, with jealousy. The world would be better off if more people would take notice of what the Bible says. We need people to explain that to them. So I agree with Steinmetz and I would underline the importance of Biblical interpretation for today.

*What is the current state of religion in Holland and, more broadly, Christianity in Europe?*

Well, when we look at church numbers and church attendance, it does not look good. I just lectured today on the developments in former Eastern Germany, the former German Democratic Republic, and linked that to developments in Germany in general. The Protestant Church in Germany has lost 2.5 million members in the last ten years, which is quite a bit. You still have a lot left, but ten percent has vanished and it is a trend. As for the Netherlands, the perspective is that within the next ten years, 1,000 churches will close.

On the other side, you see new developments. Young churches are emerging. You see church planting movements. We see missionaries from foreign countries, those countries European churches used to send missionaries to and now they are coming back. They say that you brought us the Gospel, now we will take it back to you so you can learn from it again. So on the one hand, the institutional churches have a hard time nowadays, but Christianity as a way of life and a way of faith has a future and there are developments among young people. A perfect example is the young Catholic convention in Spain and the Pope attended the event there and hundreds of thousands of young people attended that Mass, and they were enthusiastic about it.

These two developments are contradictory. What I do see is that young people need a clear message. They want that. They want to hear what is right and what is wrong. There is chaos—there is ethical chaos, there is political chaos—now who will give us straight talk? Who tells us what way to go? There is a need for that and the Pope is preaching a clear message and young people are attracted to that.

Then there is the development of the growing number of Islamic people in Europe and that raises questions. How do we deal with that? What does that mean? It will mean that over the next couple of decades, Islam will be a major force in Europe. Maybe then Christianity will go the same way it went in North Africa after Augustinian times. There, as soon as Islam emerged as a majority, churches had a hard time and were even persecuted and disappeared. ■■■■

## Francis Hutcheson [1694 – 1746]

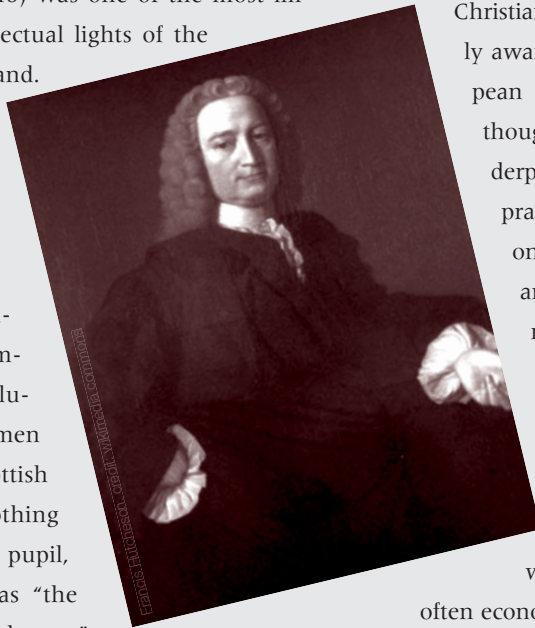
*The ultimate notion of right is that which tends to the universal good; and when one's acting in a certain manner has this tendency he has a right thus to act.*

Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746) was one of the most important clergymen and intellectual lights of the 18th century Church of Scotland.

As the successor of another Scottish minister and philosopher, Gershom Carmichael, as Chair of Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow from 1729 onwards, Hutcheson wielded immense, even charismatic, influence over the generation of men who presided over the Scottish Enlightenment. Not for nothing did Hutcheson's most famous pupil, Adam Smith, describe him as "the never to be forgotten Dr. Hutcheson."

Hutcheson was also the first to lecture in English rather than Latin at Glasgow University.

An Irishman by birth and the son of a Presbyterian minister, Hutcheson himself was ordained as a clergyman of the Church of Scotland in 1716. Most of his life, however, was spent in the academy. During his time as a scholar, Hutcheson lectured and wrote at length on subjects ranging from moral philosophy, metaphysics, aesthetics, logic, jurisprudence, and political economy. He also drew upon Christian, stoical and natural law sources to develop robust foundations for the notion of human rights, property, and other protections of human freedom. Here Hutcheson was especially attentive to the early-modern Protestant natural law thinkers such as Hugo Grotius and Samuel von Pufendorf. He played a major role in introducing their ideas into the university curricula studied by Scottish clergy and students.



Hutcheson himself was very much a Christian. More generally, Hutcheson was one of a large number of intellectually-active Church of Scotland ministers such as William Robertson and Hugh Blair who played a significant role in shaping Christian responses to the Scottish Enlightenment. Deeply aware of the growing commercial character of European societies, Hutcheson and his fellow clergymen thought that such societies needed strong moral underpinnings in the form of the classical virtues and practical Christian ethics. Their approach was not one of seeking to oppose the subsequent economic and political changes unleashed by the spread of markets. Rather, they were concerned with helping people to live the moral life and pursue human flourishing in increasingly market-ordered communities. Like Smith, Hutcheson sought to moderate the powerful role played by self-interest in commercial society, though without seeking to negate what he regarded as its often economically beneficial side-effects.

Hutcheson's most long-term influence, however, may well have been upon key aspects of the American Founding. Hutcheson's books were studied in all the main colonial American educational establishments from the 1730s onward – including by several of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, such as John Adams as well as the Scottish clergyman and sixth principal of the College of New Jersey (now known as Princeton University), John Witherspoon. Though Witherspoon and Hutcheson had often been on opposing sides of theological debates in the Church of Scotland, Witherspoon was deeply influenced by Hutcheson's writings on ethics, especially his posthumously published *Philosophiae moralis institutio compendiaria with a Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy* (1747). Some scholars have even argued that Hutcheson's language and phraseology is, of all the discernible influences upon the American Declaration of Independence, the most significant (even more than John Locke), including the immortal words, "unalienable rights."



## Globalization and Culture

Many of the ills of globalization are the result of top-down planning rather than free markets, but this realization needs to be balanced against another: Global capitalism can't of itself supply the cultural and moral formation worthy of the human person and

essential for human flourishing. Even if we could purge much of the cronyism and misguided central planning from the process of globalization, the global market wouldn't suddenly supply the cultural and moral formation essential for widespread economic and human flourishing. This is not the function of a market, and both the critics and supporters of an international process of globalization and free exchange need to understand this clearly.

My friend, the late Rev. Edmund Opitz, put it this way: "The market will exhibit all the shortcomings and failures that people, in their peaceful acting, will exhibit." What this means, among other things, is that our increasing interconnectedness holds great potential for offenses against human dignity. Advances in technology and communication can make it easier to sell pornography—or to traffic in human beings. Or to give a less dire example, foreign investment allows for dispersed, non-localized ownership of businesses, which in turn can render their management less personal and less attuned to local customs and expectations.

Globalization also poses immense long-term challenges for culture. False and demeaning ideas can spread, sometimes more swiftly than truths that contribute to human flourishing. Because widespread skepticism now exists about universal and timeless truths, cultural freedom can be abused. The weak who seem to have little to offer—the poor, the unborn, the elderly, and the disabled—are seen as a burden to be marginalized, limited, and even destroyed instead of being recognized as persons worthy of respect and solidarity.

Western mass media often does more harm than good when globalization extends its reach: the degradation of human sexuality, including the exploitation of women; the confusion between "having" and "being" and an inflated

sense of our rights along with a lessening sense of social responsibility—these are just a few of the cultural manifestations of Western society worthy of critique and that can do real harm to the culture of a developing country once it gets plugged into the global information economy.

But these cultural problems are accompanied by positive opportunities, including an invitation for religious communities to do what they do best, which is to lead men and women to a conversion of life so that all their values and choices, including those in the economic sphere, reflect their encounter with the truth about God and human nature. One of the great resources that Christianity brings to the mission of ensuring that globalization serves the human person is its universality. Since "the Gospel is for all," as the old hymn says, and has been from the beginning, we are well situated to extend its message throughout the entire world. That truth and the community around it embolden us to proclaim unequivocally the absolute dignity of all human persons and to build political, charitable, and market institutions that reflect that dignity. The challenge now is to use the opportunities that globalization affords for a new evangelization that will transform the global culture for the better.

The idea that Christianity can and does play such a positive role isn't restricted to Christians or even theists. The English psychiatrist and social commentator Theodore Dalrymple, a professed atheist, has argued as much. Former British MP and *London Times* columnist Matthew Parris made the same point in a December 2008 op-ed:

Now a confirmed atheist, I've become convinced of the enormous contribution that Christian evangelism makes in Africa: sharply distinct from the work of secular NGOs, government projects and international aid efforts. These alone will not do. Education and training alone will not do. In Africa, Christianity changes people's hearts. It brings a spiritual transformation. The rebirth is real. The change is good.

There is a recursive process at work here. Christianity, a



global religion, played a role in paving the way for economic globalization, and economic globalization then played a role in bringing more people into contact with other cultures and, with it, Christianity, which in turn brings more people into the fold of Christianity.

We shouldn't be distracted by the complexity of this historical process. The process of free trade is a process whereby the values that people hold are given expression in the form of goods and services which are demanded and supplied. To a significant extent, the culture and the values that determine what is bought and sold are already in place. The market does not create the culture or people's values so much as reveal them. Also, cultures are not static. When cultures encounter each other, a refining process can go on for reciprocal improvement. What this means is that the virtuous formation of a culture, which begins with the virtuous formation of people, is much more a moral enterprise than it is an economic one, and can only be effectively altered on that level.

Taken together, what we find then is that the free market is neither the destructive boogeyman that its detractors on the left make it out to be nor an elixir that can bless a society absent a moral context. Capitalism has the power to create even as it replaces older forms of creating and serving, and with a strength and energy unknown to centrally planned economies, but only if it is a system of enterprise governed by the rule of law and a respect for the dignity and capacity of the human person—only, in other words, if it is a just capitalism.

*This article is drawn from Rev. Robert A. Sirico's new book, *Defending the Free Market: The Moral Case for a Free Economy*. (Regnery, May 2012).*

## *Why is Acton moving into new headquarters?*

The short answer is that we're bursting at the seams. The new building, a landmark structure that dates to 1929, will accommodate our needs as we expand in staff, outreach activities, and in all our international educational programs and operations. The substantial basement space will allow us to expand our library and accommodate a fully functional state-of-the-art lecture hall. The hall will undergo an overhaul to seat close to 200 for in-house events, lectures, and discussions and feature the latest multi-media technology. This venue will be much more versatile for educational purposes and with its own entry point, it will be much more inviting to Acton's visitors and guests.

The Acton Institute also has a tremendous opportunity to raise its visibility in Grand Rapids with our recent building purchase. We look forward to being a significant part of the continued economic growth of downtown Grand Rapids, a vibrant city center that has benefited from tremendous private investment in recent decades. The early press reports on our move are already linking Acton to the ongoing revitalization of the downtown area. There's a lot of work to do before we move into the new building. We must work with architects and builders to design and rehab a significant space -- in total it constitutes almost 33,000 square feet. Because of all this new space, Acton will be able to accommodate future growth comfortably as we expand our mission to the four corners of the earth.

A major piece of this move will be a capital campaign to raise funds for the building project and move. We are thankful to our contributors who have already stepped forward with generous support to make this new building a reality. Acton is confident that the new building is a sound investment for the community, for Acton as an organization, and most importantly, that it will pay clear dividends in our effort to build a free and virtuous society.



Kris Alan Mauren  
Executive Director

# How will evangelicals respond to contemporary cultural shifts?

What we believe influences how we respond and this will have significant ramifications for the future of a free society and its business, economic, and public sectors.

Sometimes the way forward is found by looking back.

Abraham Kuyper elaborated on the doctrine of common grace, a theology of public service and cultural engagement of Christians' shared humanity with the rest of the world.

As Kuyper noted, "If God is sovereign, then his lordship must extend over all of life, and it cannot be restricted to the walls of the church or within the Christian orbit." Kuyper's work shows us that God is not absent from the non-church areas of our common life and bestows his gifts and favor to all people.

---

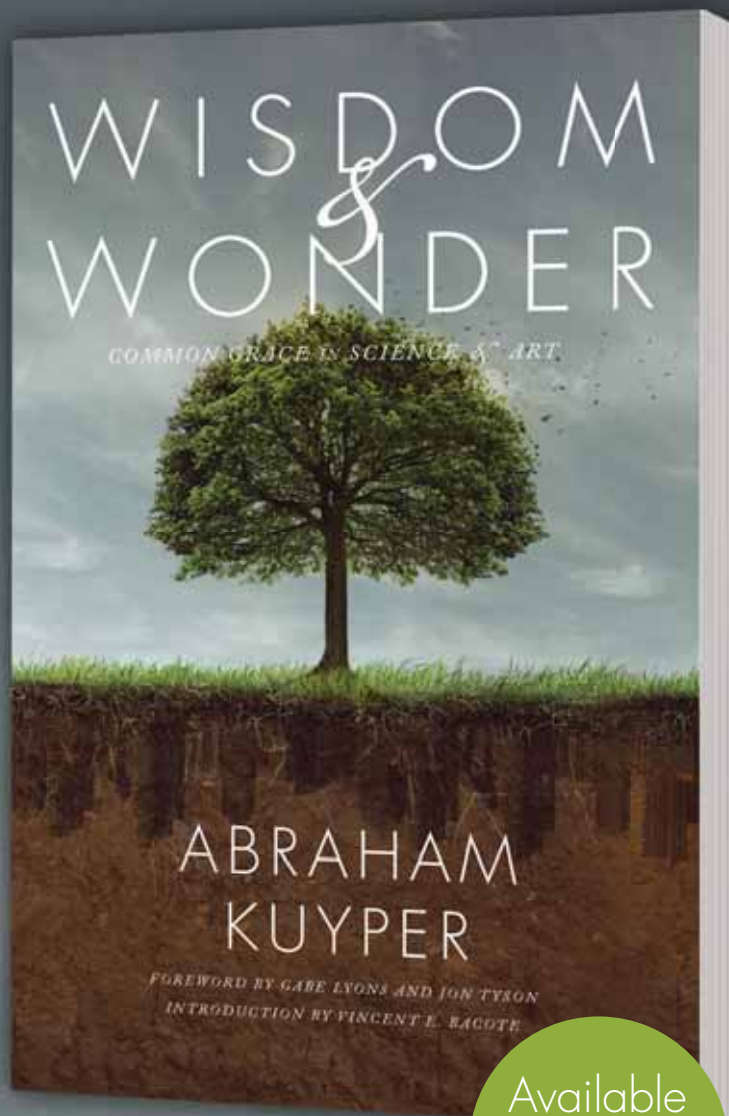
"Abraham Kuyper was a profound theologian, an encyclopedic thinker, and a deeply spiritual man who believed that it is the believer's task 'to know God in *all* his works.' In a day when secular science is seeking to establish hegemony over all knowing, and when postmodern art is threatening to bring an end to art, Kuyper's solid, Biblical insights can help to restore perspective and sanity to these two critical areas of human life."

—Chuck Colson, Founder, Prison Fellowship and the Colson Center for Christian Worldview

"The appearance of this treatise in English translation is for me the beginning of a larger dream come true. Kuyper's writings on common grace are much needed 'for such a time as this' and *Wisdom & Wonder* is a marvelous foretaste of more that is to come!"

—Richard J. Mouw, president and professor of Christian philosophy, Fuller Theological Seminary

Christian's  LIBRARY PRESS



Available  
Online  
Now!

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) is a significant figure in the history of the Netherlands and modern Protestant theology. A prolific intellectual, he founded a political party and a university, and served as the prime minister of the Netherlands (1901-1905). His enduring passion was to develop a theology for the general public and was seen in his extensive elaboration of the doctrine of common grace.

WWW.CLPRESS.COM