



INDIVISIBLE

Social and Economic Foundations of American Liberty

Leading Conservatives
Exchange Policy Perspectives

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INTRODUCTION BY JAY W. RICHARDS

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PREFACE

BY JENNIFER A. MARSHALL AND J.D. FOSTER, PH.D.

“Whether for good or evil, it is power which has the next to the last word in the affairs of men—but not the last word....”

It is ideas and beliefs that truly reflect the nature of man and his destiny that will in the end decide our future.”

– Frank Meyer¹

CONSERVATIVES ARE FAR FROM BEING A HOMOGENEOUS lot. Even within the scope of domestic policy, we have differing emphases and develop specializations that tend to highlight distinctions and even genuine differences of policy perspective. Focused on a narrow swath of policy, we can overlook how it fits into the whole pattern of conservative principle and fail to explain this interrelatedness to others. Yet we share an often unstated agreement, an indivisible philosophy about the nature of human beings and our dreams for this nation: an America in which freedom, opportunity, prosperity, and civil society flourish.

Each of these outcomes is unique, and they are also mutually interdependent. Overcoming poverty depends on policies that promote a free and thriving economy. Reducing the size of government requires strong families



Jennifer A. Marshall



J. D. Foster

1 Frank Meyer, *The Conservative Mainstream* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1969) pp. 87-88, quoted by William C. Dennis in Foreword to *In Defense of Freedom and Related Essays* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1996) p. xxii.

and community networks to provide for human need. The character of our culture will determine America's strength and leadership in the world.

The challenges of this generation, like those before, demand a coherent vision of government and social order. Today we again find common cause against the encroachments of government and the erosion of human dignity:

The desecration of the image of man, the attack alike upon his freedom and his transcendent dignity, provide common cause in the immediate struggle.... As with our ancestors who laid the foundations of the Republic, the challenge to our common faith inspires us, without surrendering our differences of stress, to create a fundamental unity of doctrine ... [to] vindicate the true nature of man, free and responsible....

— Frank Meyer, 1964²

This project was designed by two analysts who focus on different aspects of public policy—one with those typically associated with social conservatives and the other with those typically associated with economic conservatives. We've benefited from exchanging viewpoints, learning to understand more deeply the other's policy perspectives, and detecting additional nuances in our own fields of expertise as a result. Most significantly, we've grown in appreciation of the many strikingly complementary aspects of the social and economic goals we pursue—and so we invited others to join in this exchange.

In the following essays, leading social and economic conservatives each focus on a key thread of the other's argument, looking at it through their own lens and describing what they particularly value about it from their perspective. Together, these principles make up the fabric of American liberty and the two lenses help us see the whole more vividly.

2 Frank Meyer, "Freedom, Tradition, Conservatism," from *In Defense of Freedom and Related Essays* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1996), p. 29. Reprinted from *What Is Conservatism?* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston for the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1964).

Our objectives are:

- To portray a vision that is true to human nature, the American founding, and the principles we believe most Americans espouse;
- To unify around a coherent, indivisible social–political framework of social and economic conservative goals;
- To develop a deeper understanding of the foundational purposes of constitutional government, and to achieve greater clarity about the proper roles of family, religion, civil society, market, and government in a free society;
- To strengthen connections between social and economic conservatives;
- To renew common efforts around core policy proposals.

As the following essays show, whether dealing with taxes and entitlements or marriage and education, sound conservative policies are informed by the same overarching philosophy, directed toward the same goals, and work together to support one another. Together, we hope this collection will lead to a more coherent, cohesive, and effective conservative movement and a more free and flourishing America.

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INTRODUCTION

BY JAY W. RICHARDS, PH.D.

“Liberty is the delicate fruit of a mature civilization.”

– Lord Acton

TO LISTEN TO MEDIA AND POLITICAL STRATEGISTS IS TO get the impression that American public life is a checklist of issues. Some are known as “social” issues (marriage, family) and some are known as “economic” (international trade, wages). There may be some good reasons for this distinction, but when we itemize and divide these topics into two separate categories, we fail to convey the underlying unity of the principles behind the American Experiment in ordered liberty.

In reality, the two groups of issues are interdependent. For instance, a free economy cannot long exist in a culture that is hostile to it. The success of free market economic policies depends on important cultural and moral factors such as thrift, delayed gratification, hard work, and respect for the property of others. A virtuous and responsible populace derives, in turn, from strong families, churches, and other civil institutions.

Conversely, economic issues have a strong influence on culture and the institutions of civil society. High taxes, for example, put pressure on families and force parents to spend more time in the workforce, leaving less time to devote to their spouses and children. When government expands spending and control in education, it crowds out parental responsibility; when it expands its role in providing social welfare services, it tends to erode a sense of responsibility among churches and other groups doing good work to help neighbors in need.



Jay W. Richards

The connections are such that the individual issues rarely fit neatly and exclusively into one set or the other. An “economic” issue is rarely exclusively about economics. For instance, poverty in America is often as much a moral and cultural problem as an economic problem. Reducing such poverty depends on civil institutions that inculcate virtue and responsibility as well as policies that promote economic freedom and discourage dependency. Most poverty among children in America is not caused by a lack of jobs but rather by factors such as family breakdown, negligent or absentee parents, substance abuse, or other social pathologies. To consider American poverty in strictly economic terms is to fail to see the full scale of issues involved in this problem.

These points aren’t merely academic. We need an integrated perspective both to diagnose our policy problems and to identify lasting solutions. The purpose of this volume and related work is to show the interdependence of social and economic principles in advancing freedom and human dignity.

Of course, millions of Americans do not see any tension between social conservative and economic conservative issues and may not even distinguish those issues as those in the policy world tend to do. They may not think of marriage as a “social” issue and free trade as an “economic” issue. While academics and the media make much of these distinctions and tend to exaggerate differences, millions of ordinary Americans take all of these issues together without any sense of contradiction or conflict. They do so for good reason. These issues rest on principles that are widely shared by people of diverse political affiliations. That’s important because, in the end, people are attracted to and live by principles and ideas rather than labels.

At the same time, most people don’t spend their evenings and weekends figuring out how their commitment to, say, free trade, is bound up with their commitment to a culture that respects the life of the unborn. It’s not just that most people don’t have time to plumb the full philosophical depths of their beliefs. In public discussions, the underlying ideas and principles of ordered liberty are often left implicit and assumed rather than explicitly articulated. As a result, it’s easy to be attracted to a particular cause (for example, lower taxes or pro-life marches) without recognizing the undergirding framework that is necessary to support their single-issue goal.

The following essays are intended as a concise exploration of the link between liberty and human dignity and of the policy issues that tend to cluster

around these two themes in American life. This collection brings together a number of well-known social and economic conservatives. To encourage cross-fertilization of their ideas, those known as social conservatives have written on themes normally identified with economic conservatives, and vice versa. The authors highlight economic arguments for issues typically categorized as “social” and social/moral arguments for “economic” issues. Each author focuses on a single topic, briefly summarized below, that is associated with either social or economic conservatives or, in some cases, both.

CIVIL SOCIETY

For several reasons, civic, religious, and other “mediating” institutions are essential to a sustainable market economy and a limited government. First, these institutions define a buffer of human activity between the public and private arenas that is still fully outside the jurisdiction of the state. Second, mediating institutions are primarily responsible for cultivating both personal virtues and cultural values, without which a society cannot survive. Third, they tend to provide vital services more effectively than comparable government-controlled services and to do so without the coercive power of the state. Without such institutions, pressure mounts to surrender vast swaths of public life to the state.

RULE OF LAW

The last few decades have demonstrated that rule of law is central to long-term economic success. But some have treated rule of law as if it referred primarily to political or economic institutions, such as a transparent judicial system or robust private property laws. Get the policies and infrastructure right, so the argument goes, and prosperity will follow.³

Unfortunately, much analysis of the rule of law has overlooked the profound effects of religious and cultural institutions in forming and maintaining a lawful, self-governed citizenry. Without such an environment, rule of law is a form without substance. Additional research is needed to understand how those cultural

3 Heritage Foundation/Wall Street Journal *Index of Economic Freedom*, at heritage.org/index.

institutions that inculcate virtue from the bottom up—such as the Boy Scouts, churches, and synagogues—serve to create and sustain the rule of law.

LIFE

Fundamentally, both pro-life and free market advocates are committed to the inherent dignity of every human being. The central role of government is to maintain the conditions in which individual initiative, personal freedoms, and personal property are protected under the rule of law. Without this rule of law, there can be no free men or free markets. Rule of law must extend to the most vulnerable members of society. Protection of innocent human life, then, is not only compatible with the cause of economic freedom, it is one of its prerequisites.

FREE EXCHANGE

A free exchange means both sides of a transaction must be free to accept or decline the terms of the transaction, including price, amount, quality, and so forth. This requires a stable rule of law. Free exchanges are win-win interactions by definition, since individuals participate only if they perceive they will be better off as a result of the exchange. The ability of individuals to improve their lot by engaging in mutually beneficial exchanges with others is much more fitting to the dignity of man than are the alternatives, such as exchanges coerced by the state or by other citizens.

MARRIAGE

In virtually every culture, marriage is the fundamental human institution around which other social arrangements develop.⁴ For numerous reasons, society, including the state, has a strong interest in preserving this institution. First, marriage is an antidote to many social pathologies that have destructive public consequences.⁵ Second, mothers and children are much less likely to live in poverty in a family in which the mother and father are married. Third, all else

4 Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Marriage: The Dream that Refuses to Die* (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2008), p. 113ff.

5 See Carle C. Zimmerman and James Kurth, *Family and Civilization*, 2nd abridged edition (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2008).

being equal, a family with married parents is the best context for raising children. Finally, a married couple is more economically efficient and uses fewer resources per person than they would as singles.

Like the family, marriage is a pre-political institution that exists by nature. Recent attempts to redefine the institution of marriage are fundamentally at odds with the nature of marriage because no law or court decision—no matter how widely supported or passionately embraced—can change the unique natural relationship between man and woman.

PROFIT

A cardinal rule of capitalism, and indeed of human nature, is that those who pursue opportunity must have some prospect of reward or return for their efforts and the risks they run. For several reasons, this reward—called profit in economics—is vital to any economy that aspires to create wealth and reduce poverty.

First, profit provides an incentive for taking future economic risks. Without this prospect, would-be entrepreneurs are more likely to consume, rather than risk, their capital. This, in turn, would create an economy that is static and sliding, rather than dynamic and growing.

Second, in an economy based on free exchange, profit is a signal that capital is being allocated to its more valued purposes. Profit rewards those individuals and companies that most successfully anticipate the needs of others, and it channels even selfish motives into socially beneficial outcomes.

Third, profit is a source of saving, the raw material of future investment and further wealth creation. Without savings and investment, an economy will contract rather than expand.

FAMILY

Although respect for the traditional family may seem to have little to do with economic freedom, in the long run it is actually crucial to preserving economic freedom.

First, the family is where most individuals learn the virtues necessary for a free society. Second, strong families make arguments for an all-encompassing welfare state less compelling. Third, an intact family is much more efficient and enjoys greater economies of scale than either single life or a broken family.

The family is a pre-political, universal, and fundamental social reality. The state has no authority to establish or abolish it. By recognizing the perennial

nature and reality of the traditional family in its laws, the government limits its jurisdiction over individuals and the family.

WAGES

People's right to the fruits of their labor is basic to any free and just society. (This is one reason that slavery is unjust.) We can exchange our labor—that is, our time, knowledge, skill, willingness to risk, and effort—for wages.

Economically, however, there is no eternal, fixed value to our labor, so wages may vary widely in a free society. If one's wages are the result of a free exchange, they represent the underlying reality of the value of one's labor. The disparity in wages between individuals will vary in accordance with the varying economic value of their labor.

Of course, we want everyone to earn enough to avoid poverty. But attempts to artificially reduce a wage gap, such as minimum wage laws, do more harm than good, especially to the poorest of the poor.

RELIGION

The Judeo-Christian tradition, like many of the world's great religions, encourages behavior that is consistent with, and even conducive to, a prosperous society. Empirical evidence suggests that, on an individual level, within such societies, religious citizens are more likely to prosper over time.

The Judeo-Christian tradition, with its emphasis on the dignity and equality of individuals and the universality of sin, eventually gave rise to political institutions that protected and defended human dignity and freedom, including economic freedom.⁶

Conservatives defend an institutional separation between churches and the state because the state is limited in its jurisdiction. At the same time, they stand with the American Founders in defending the freedom of religious citizens to articulate their beliefs in political settings and other public arenas.

6 See, for instance, Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success* (New York: Random House, 2005).

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

International trade is invariably an economic good for those who participate in it. A transaction happens in the international marketplace only when both buyers and sellers are better off as a result. Otherwise, there would be no reason to engage in the transaction. Here's how Adam Smith, the father of modern economics, put it:

What is prudence in the conduct of every family can scarce be folly in that of a great kingdom. If a foreign country can supply us with a commodity cheaper than we ourselves can make it, better buy it of them with some part of the produce of our own industry, employed in a way in which we have some advantage.

Recent evidence confirms Smith's wisdom. In the past 30 years, per-capita income and life expectancy have gone up dramatically throughout the world. The exceptions are the few communist and other inward-looking countries that have remained mostly outside global markets.⁷ Total income has increased worldwide, and growth rates have been highest in the developing world. Whether rich or poor, those countries participating most freely in international markets have grown the fastest economically.

CULTURE

American culture ought to promote responsibility as necessary to sustain a society that emphasizes and protects individual rights. Without a citizenry who accepts responsibility for its actions, liberty quickly descends into license. A culture of responsibility both encourages virtue in individuals and promotes civil institutions that best instill virtue. We seek a limited government that is strong enough to protect our rights, but not one so strong that it can violate those rights. A culture of rights without responsibility, however, creates a vicious cycle that in the end erodes our rights.

7 See the animated graphs under "Explore the World" at <http://www.gapminder.org/> and the ranking of countries on Heritage Foundation/Wall Street Journal *Index of Economic Freedom*, at <http://www.heritage.org/index/>.

PROPERTY

The right to property is one of the foundational tenets of civilization. Although inchoate rights to property have existed in many cultures, these rights have been most fully articulated in the West. They are deeply embedded in the Judeo-Christian tradition. In the Bible, for instance, private property is everywhere assumed.

This right that most of us take for granted has had profound benefits. Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto has argued that the poor everywhere need strong private property laws to improve their standard of living. According to de Soto, sophisticated Western property laws and titling are the “mystery of capital” that has allowed the West to create vast wealth and raise the living standards of the poor.⁸ Anyone concerned about third-world poverty, therefore, ought to support reforms that improve property laws in those regions.

ENVIRONMENT

As if by definition, conservatives commonly believe in conservation, but many see much modern environmentalism as ideology in the guise of dubious science. While social conservatives tend to oppose the anti-human and pantheistic strains of environmentalism, economic conservatives tend to oppose environmentalist attempts to increase state (and international organizations’) control over the economy for questionable environmental ends.

The traditional Judeo-Christian view of man and nature provides a stable platform for environmental stewardship while avoiding dangerous extremes. Human beings, as image-bearers of God, are not parasites but are called to be good stewards of the environment. Human well-being must be included in any environmental policy. Good stewardship requires that we take the truths of economics into account, both to avoid unintended consequences and to avoid environmental policies that do little more than strengthen the power of the state over the economy.

EDUCATION

For a society to sustain liberty, it must have a reasonably and classically educated citizenry. To be educated in the classical sense is to develop the skills and

8 Hernando de Soto, *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

knowledge needed to navigate the surrounding world as well as the moral and ethical training to master oneself.

Parents have the primary right and responsibility to educate their children, but they are free to delegate some of that responsibility (while retaining their rights) to a school. Given the importance of parents in the education of children, family breakdown has added to the problems in American education. But the government near-monopoly in primary and secondary education, which drastically limits competition, has had devastating effects, especially for the poorest Americans.

As with consumer goods, it is competition that will improve education, both public and private. Educational choice recognizes the educational rights and responsibilities of parents. The competition it provides can help public and private education deliver on its promise to poor children, who now suffer the most from a lack of real choice in education.

*

Much more remains to be said, of course, about these and many other issues. The brief summaries here, and the essays that follow, are not intended to be exhaustive or definitive. But hopefully these efforts will provoke others to reflect deeply on the indivisible unity of the foundation of principles that gave rise to the American Experiment in liberty and that are vital to its continued success.

JAY W. RICHARDS, PH.D., has served as a visiting fellow in The Heritage Foundation's Richard and Helen DeVos Center for Religion and Civil Society. He has written four books, including The Privileged Planet (co-authored with astronomer Guillermo Gonzalez), and, most recently, Money, Greed, and God: Why Capitalism is the Solution and Not the Problem. Richards is also the executive producer of two documentaries from the Acton Institute: The Call of the Entrepreneur and The Birth of Freedom.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Moral Arguments for Limiting Government

BY JOSEPH G. LEHMAN



Joseph G. Lehman

MORAL IMPERATIVES USUALLY TRUMP ECONOMIC arguments. The charitable impulse to help the needy arises from a moral imperative. Those two facts help explain why it's extremely difficult to fix, scale back, or replace government social programs even when they are indisputably inefficient, unaffordable, or even downright harmful to those they are intended to help. This endlessly frustrates fiscal conservatives who want to solve these budget-busting problems. But, unlike their social conservative brethren, fiscal conservatives are more accustomed to making economic arguments than moral arguments. Instead, we should be making the moral case for downsizing the welfare state and letting civil society have some room to breathe. Welfare is not just a fiscal issue. It is a decidedly moral one as well.

Fiscal and social conservatives alike generally agree on three broad goals for programs intended to help people beset by poverty, addiction, homelessness, and other special hardships. Those goals are to improve the programs' success rates, reduce their cost, and make their recipients less dependent on government. Let's look at the moral case for such reforms.

*Welfare is not just a fiscal issue.
It is a decidedly moral one as well.*

MOVEMENT FROM PERSONAL OUTREACH TO GOVERNMENT SERVICES

To get some perspective, we first have to look at the history of aid in America. The contemporary term "social services" helps tell the story because the term was not used in the Colonial and Founding eras. In those days, the closest analogue would have been "charity." Virtually all charity was funded and administered privately,

apart from government.⁹ It was typical for charities to operate with explicit religious motivations and goals. Religious and non-religious charities tended to extend aid coupled with close monitoring, accountability, and relationships between recipients and givers. Providing charity was a virtuous act that could be individual or corporate. Helping the needy per se was not considered a public service of government, but rather the job of voluntary institutions in what we would now call “civil society.”¹⁰

Two things occurred in the evolution from “charity” to “social services.” First, the nature of some charities changed in response to ideological and societal trends in the second half of the 1800s. Charities arose that dispensed aid while de-emphasizing spiritual matters and religious motivations. Many made few demands of recipients or required little follow-up with them.¹¹ Recipients naturally gravitated to charities that offered the most aid with the least strings attached. This paved the way for the second change.

Government’s involvement in aid programs was legitimized, in part, by the trend to separate material aid from spiritual aid and accountability. Government had to remain officially non-sectarian. Government grew to assume more and more of what had once been the near-exclusive province of churches, families, and religious and non-religious aid societies. Aid became part of the public policy and political agendas, and eventually became divorced from the private moral and religious contexts that had nurtured it.

But this didn’t happen immediately. By 1919, the term “social service” had begun to take hold¹² as a non-religious umbrella term covering different kinds

9 Alexis de Tocqueville was one of the most insightful observers of this phenomenon. See de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve (Cambridge, Mass.: Welch, Bigelow, and Company, 1835), pp. 129–130.

10 Marvin Olasky contributed enormously to contemporary understanding of historical changes in American charity in his book *The Tragedy of American Compassion* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway Publishing, 1992).

11 Olasky’s *Tragedy of American Compassion* resurrected the provocative term “promiscuous charity” to describe this kind of assistance. The term had been used as early as 1849. See James Hill Burton, *Political and Social Economy* (Edinburgh: W. and R. Chambers, 1849), p. 326.

12 W. N. Hutchins, “The Psychological Approach to Social Service,” *Religious Education: The Journal of the Religious Education Association* Vol. 14, Issue 6 (1919), pp. 365–368.

of private charity as well as government's growing role. Still, the term didn't so much redefine "charity" as re-contextualize it. Charity was still private, but it was now merely one way to help needy people. Government added "social services" to its growing list of functions. This didn't necessarily expand society's capacity for charitable work, however, since private charities began to understand their role, at least in part, by what the government was not doing.

COUNTERPRODUCTIVE GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Government social programs multiplied and spending grew dramatically with great popular and political support, particularly in the 1930s and 1960s. The new aid philosophy, dominated by government, tended to crowd out charities that connected aid to spiritual matters, accountability, and personal relationships.

But persistent poverty and a growing underclass invited skepticism. In his 1984 book *Losing Ground*, Charles Murray persuasively demonstrated the perverse incentives of government welfare programs. They hurt many people who needed help the most.¹³ Marvin Olasky, in 1992, chronicled two centuries of poverty fighting in his book *The Tragedy of American Compassion*. He concluded that government programs could not match the success of private programs that employ spiritual and relational components.¹⁴ In 1995, Robert Rector and William Lauber estimated the cumulative cost of the three-decade "War on Poverty" at \$5.4 trillion,¹⁵ which was more than the U.S. spent fighting World War II.

In 1996, Congress and President Clinton seemed to respond to Murray's (and others') findings by placing work requirements and time limits on welfare recipients.¹⁶ This victory was a step in the right direction, but only a step.

13 Charles Murray, *Losing Ground*, 2nd edition (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

14 Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion*.

15 Robert Rector and William F. Lauber, *America's Failed \$5.4 Trillion War on Poverty* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 1995). New calculations in the fall of 2009 by Robert Rector put the total at \$15.9 trillion on means-tested welfare since the beginning of the War on Poverty (in inflation-adjusted 2008 dollars). See "Obama to Spend \$10.3 Trillion on Welfare: Uncovering the Full Cost of Means-Tested Welfare or Aid to the Poor," The Heritage Foundation, September 2009.

16 See U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, HHS Fact Sheet, "The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996," at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/new/prwora.htm> (accessed August 13, 2009).

The positive shift in welfare policy showed the power of moral arguments. We can further harness moral arguments to shift welfare policy even closer to the ideal where private charity, greatly expanded, reduces poverty so much that little justification remains for government social programs.

It's a tall order, but not an unknown ideal. As Olasky documented, it's an ideal to which we were once much closer. To move toward it, conservatives must consider moral arguments anew.

This means fiscal conservatives, especially, must embrace the legitimacy of moral arguments and use them. Moral arguments, not merely economic ones, have produced the major changes in social service policies. The moral argument for welfare reform does not focus so much on how much is spent, how much is saved, or how efficient a policy is. Rather, it seeks to answer this question: What policy will, in the long run, best help those in need?

HOW BEST TO HELP THOSE IN NEED

When people believed more money was the key to helping people more, the policy they supported was to involve government and its vast funding apparatus. Decades later, when Murray and others showed that the resulting programs were harming those they were supposed to help, the programs were modified by adding some of what Murray said was missing. Economic arguments were made for all these changes, but those only augmented the moral imperative of how best to help needy people.

The lesson is that moral arguments ultimately matter more than economic ones, at least in public policy debates. Durable policy changes don't appear out of nowhere. Most of the time they arise from political changes that, in turn, flow from social movements. Social movements in America have been driven mainly by moral ideas framed in terms of how to help people, not merely by cold logic, hard economic data, and the bottom line. It was principally moral convictions and arguments that drove the social movements behind abolition, civil rights, women's suffrage, prohibition, labor unions, and environmental activism. These social movements all produced major changes in public policy.

The contemporary political Left may be more successful at framing its policy goals in terms of how to help people, but the political Right has its own successes to build on. School choice probably would not have progressed in the last two decades without compelling moral arguments for permitting parents

to choose the safest and best schools for their children. Economic analyses were necessary, but they would not have been sufficient.

GOVERNMENT'S PROPER DOMAIN

Another moral issue concerns the nature of government itself and the morality of using government to accomplish certain ends, such as reducing poverty. The sanc-

What policy will, in the long run, best help those in need?

tioned use of force is what distinguishes government from all other institutions.

For some functions, force, whether direct or indirect, may be necessary, even mor-

ally imperative. But the issue is complicated in liberal democracies where the use of force is rarely overt. As a result, it's easy to opt for the coercive power of the state without quite realizing it. Whether or not we intend it, however, every tax, expenditure, regulation, police action, and mandate is ultimately backed by the legal use of force. When people do not comply, they are either forced to comply or met with the threat of force. And the use of force always has moral implications.

Different societies extend aid to needy people in different ways. The driving force behind aid in a society can locate that society on a spectrum that runs between two poles, compulsion and voluntarism. Near the compulsion pole lie societies in which the state compels citizens to help others through taxes and other means. Near the voluntary pole lie societies characterized by citizens who help one another without being forced.

Societies near the compulsion pole require expansive governments powerful enough to force people to do what they might otherwise not do. Societies near the voluntary pole have more limited governments. Put another way, in some societies the government constrains its people. In others, the people constrain their government.

All governments employ force, but at one end of the spectrum the force primarily restrains people from unjustly harming others. At the other end, the force routinely compels people to do what might be virtuous if it were voluntary. Somewhere along the spectrum, a government ceases to be limited.

The distinction is not merely academic. It has practical consequences. As we've seen in the case of welfare, for instance, when certain forms of "help" are taken over by government, they become less helpful. They can even become

harmful. The problem is rooted in using the state to deliver charity in the first place. Charity is an exercise of private virtue. And virtue requires freedom.

Therefore it's impossible to force someone to be charitable.

If something can be accomplished voluntarily rather than coercively, surely we ought to prefer voluntarism. And with regard to "social services," we have every reason to argue that these not only can be performed, but performed *better* by voluntary charities. The moral burden of proof should lie squarely on those who seek to replace voluntarism with redistributive coercion.

Charity is an exercise of private virtue.
And virtue requires freedom.

Of course, moral arguments are grounded in some moral vision, some notion of ultimate truth; but not everyone agrees on the source of ultimate truth. Some do not believe in God and others conceive of God differently. One brief essay is not the place to settle ultimate questions, but perhaps we can affirm principles upon which all can stand.

Social movements draw their power from moral conviction. Fiscal conservatives must not leave it to social conservatives alone to advance moral arguments. Those who sought abolition and civil rights for political or economic reasons were successful because they worked in league with those who advocated those goals on moral and often explicitly religious grounds.

Effecting durable change in public policy by means of economic analysis alone is like bringing a knife to a gun fight. Uniting with a new focus on moral suasion and a better articulation of the moral implications of government force is what will win the day.

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RULE OF LAW

Economic Prosperity Requires the Rule of Law

BY J. KENNETH BLACKWELL



J. Kenneth Blackwell

AMERICA IS THE MOST PROSPEROUS SOCIETY IN the history of mankind, and many factors have contributed to its success. Some credit our unparalleled university system. Others note our vast natural resources. Many reference the fact that our melting-pot culture tends to attract people willing to work from all over the globe, who then bring new perspectives and approaches to augment our own. All of these are reasons for American success.

But none is more important than America's respect for the rule of law. Not only American politics but also the American way of life could hinge on the fate of this concept.

Rule of law, as traditionally understood, is now being threatened. If Americans wish to see a return to prosperity, we must demand public policy that upholds the rule of law when it comes to property and business and hold elected officials accountable not only to deliver such policy but also to submit to the rule of law as well.

We are a nation of laws, not of men. We do not have one set of laws for the people and another for the elites. In the United States, every person, including the President, is required to obey the law. The U.S. Supreme Court building has the words "Equal Justice Under Law" carved into its massive façade. These words remind us of the truth that whether you are rich or poor, man or woman, young or old, in America we all live equally under the protection of our laws.

The Founders, however inconsistent they may have been in implementing it, rightly saw that justice requires our equality before the law, because each of us is created by God. More recently, however, we have become aware of the way rule of law has contributed to our unprecedented economic opportunity. In America, we all have the legal right to use all of our God-given talents to pursue our dreams. We have the opportunity, protected by law, to work hard and enjoy the success that we earn as the fruits of our labors. We know that if we work at a job we will receive our salary or wages at the agreed-upon rate. We have the freedom to

negotiate the value of our skills and our labor. Our laws provide a degree of confidence that the business we pursue is a legitimate enterprise, and employers have confidence that they know the true identity of those working for them. The rule of law makes it illegal to deny someone the opportunity to work on the basis of their gender or skin color and allows businesses to freely compete for customers and to pay competitive wages for good employees.

In America, we all have the legal right to use all of our God-given talents to pursue our dreams.

RULE OF LAW AND CAPITALISM

The rule of law is essential to a sustainable capitalism. Capitalism requires long-term agreements and contracts, which require predictability. The law can't change capriciously depending on who is in office. The right kind of law requires all parties to a contract to fulfill their obligations or provide adequate recompense for parties that have been wronged. These laws encourage trade by instilling confidence in buyers that they will get what they pay for and can be compensated if they do not receive it. The law provides redress for people or organizations that suffer economic harm from another party's actions, whether willful or negligent.

Property laws need the same, long-term reliability. Our property laws enforce the rights of ownership and proper use and enjoyment for all manner of property, whether it be real estate, personal property, or intangibles such as copyrights or intellectual property. It allows individuals and organizations to make long-term economic plans, which typically produce more wealth than short-term ventures. In recent years, economists such as Hernando de Soto have come to recognize the importance of these laws for economic prosperity.¹⁷

Another reason that the rule of law is necessary for capitalism is that it drives capital formation. People can invest their money with confidence that the government will not decide to take it away tomorrow. They are also confident that the law will be on their side if the securities or other investments in which they place their money turn out to be fraudulent. Investors derive comfort from the

17 See, for example, de Soto's *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

detering effect that our criminal laws—applied in an even-handed manner by judges who are not corrupt and vigorously enforced by police officers and federal agents who are likewise not corrupt—have on would-be criminals.

For these reasons, a country under the rule of law is a good place to invest, and a promising environment in which to succeed. By maximizing opportunity through the proper balance of good laws and sparse regulations with personal liberty and individual choice, the rule of law facilitates the creation and accumulation of wealth and financial security.

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RULE OF LAW: A CONCEPT IN JEOPARDY

However, these benefits provided by the rule of law are threatened by various policies currently being enacted. The term “rule of law” is broader than simply not violating specific statutes and regulations found on the books. It also concerns changes in law and the politicizing of business and economics.

The federal government is exploding, both in size and in scope. This expansion entails a staggering increase in federal spending. That spending is creating trillion-dollar-plus deficits for years to come that will bury not only our children, but even our grandchildren under a mountain range of debt. The government is indebting people who have not even been born by spending wealth that has not even been created.

Spending vast sums of money that others must repay is not only immoral, it’s bad economic policy. This debt discourages investment and burdens economic activity by making it less likely that businesses will succeed over time. It also hampers commerce, as consumers have to divert more of their hard-earned money to pay installments and interest on this government debt. All this undermines the sense of confidence that the rule of law provides.

The government is also decimating the private sector. It is directly taking over the financial sector, not only with massive regulation but also by claiming ownership rights over institutions that took bailout funds. Even after recent stock sales reduced its stake, the federal government still owns some 37 percent of General Motors and still holds ownership stakes in other businesses as well, discarding and rewriting contractual commitments that were originally made in good faith. It is promulgating an enormous “cap-and-trade” system for carbon

emissions that could cripple companies, putting them at the mercy of the government. And President Obama seeks to commandeer the entire American health care system that alone accounts for around 16 percent of our economy.

This reduces prosperity in two ways. First, nullifying or modifying contractual terms that were legal and enforceable is antithetical to the rule of law. Parties enter into agreements with the sense that they understand the rules that will govern their activities. They look to government to uphold and enforce those rules, rather than change them mid-stream. Second, the government takeover of such private ventures violates the property rights of the owners and debtors, destroying the confidence they ought to be able to have under the rule of law.

By its very nature, government is inefficient, wasteful, and tends toward corruption. It tends to be driven by the headlines of the day and the passions of the moment. Because of this, when government gets involved in business, it tends to replace a focus on long-term results with a focus on short-term political gains. Profit incentives are supplanted by political considerations. Uncounted sums are routinely wasted by government in a manner that would never be tolerated in the private sector. And the lack of profit incentives, protections from legal liability, and the anonymity of endless bureaucracies often lead to individuals acting to enrich themselves or their friends, instead of investors. All too often, such behavior is also found in some corporate cultures when those corporations are shielded from failure by taxpayer bailouts or political entanglements.

THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

But this is not a conflict only between governments and corporations. The rule of law cannot long be exercised nationally unless it is upheld individually and culturally. The rule of law may be enforced most visibly by the government, but it is first enforced in the self-restraint of individuals and families. People tend to excuse behavior in others that they are willing to tolerate in their own lives. The rule of law exists in a democratic republic only to the degree that the voters demand it of their elected leaders and shareholders demand it of their corporate executives. A morally corrupt population will inevitably give rise to a corrupt polity.

When it comes to debt, for instance, it is not just the government's problem. It is our problem as well. For both moral and economic reasons, we must repudiate our culture of creeping debt. For decades America has been moving from a

culture of saving to a culture of debt. In large part this culture is what led to our current economic woes, which are an indictment of our desire for instant gratification. Irresponsibility is no longer stigmatized. Rights and responsibilities have been replaced with a pervasive entitlement mentality. People are routinely living

The rule of law cannot long be exercised nationally unless it is upheld individually and culturally.

beyond their means and relying on the next generation or the government to provide for them when they are older. Government policies certainly encourage these problems, but some of the blame falls on us.

The good news is that we can reverse these trends, starting in our homes. First, parents must teach children that irresponsible living is frowned upon, and we must start by living in a responsible and self-sufficient manner ourselves.

Second, we need to foster a culture of virtue and integrity. Hard work is a virtue. Planning for the long term and providing for the financial stability of our children is honorable. Beyond that, our word must once again be our bond. Regardless of what laws are written on the books, contracts ultimately are not much good without basic honesty. Our conscience and an awareness that we all live our lives under the watchful eye of God, who will hold us to account in this life or the next, must bear on our business dealings, our work ethic when no one is looking, and our life choices.

The political value of this relationship of the rule of law to economic prosperity is that it can unite all conservatives, as well as conservatives and libertarians. We all understand that, rather than bringing prosperity, government involvement in day-to-day business affairs is the route to economic stagnation and the loss of innovation and initiative. It is incompatible with the freedom and rugged individualism that has made America great. It also causes government to lose sight of its proper domestic role of promoting prosperity by upholding the rule of law.

The American people must reclaim these truths if we desire to return to prosperity. The well-being of our children and grandchildren depends on it.

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LIFE

The Cause of Life Can't be Severed from the Cause of Freedom

BY REPRESENTATIVE PAUL RYAN

I WRITE AS AN UNSWERVING PROPONENT OF BOTH FREE market choice and the natural right to life. It is unfortunate that “life” and “choice” were ever separated and viewed as alternatives. This is a false dilemma. Logically, each implicates the other.

I am deeply committed to capitalism, the “system of natural liberty,” as Adam Smith called it. Free markets create unparalleled prosperity and have a moral basis in freedom and choice. Under capitalism, people exercise their right to choose products and services they prefer, to pursue the job or career they desire, the business they wish to establish or deal with, the kinds of investments and savings they favor, and many more options. These choices reflect individuals’ hope to improve their lives and to develop their full human potential. While freedom of choice alone doesn’t guarantee happiness, it is essential to the pursuit of happiness.

As a champion of capitalism, I strongly support every person’s right to make these economic choices and to fight against government efforts to limit them. Freedom and the choice it implies are moral rights which Americans are granted, not from government but from the principles that have made this a great and prosperous society. These principles uphold the equal natural rights of all human beings to live, be free, and pursue happiness, insofar as the exercise of these rights does not violate the corresponding rights of others. Individuals grow in responsibility, wisdom, intelligence, and other human qualities by making choices that satisfy their unique needs and by avoiding things that do not. Government helps maintain the rule of law that makes all this possible, but government’s role is very limited when it comes to our specific choices. Under our Constitution, government’s job is to guarantee the universal



Paul Ryan

While freedom of choice alone doesn't guarantee happiness, it is essential to the pursuit of happiness.

human rights of its citizens. By virtue of its mission in this social contract, government cannot possess unlimited power.

Yet to ensure that this guarantee is consistently provided, the government first needs to determine whose rights should be protected—that is, what the concept of a human being entitled to natural rights denotes. The rights of any entity that qualifies as “human” *must* be protected.

The car which I exercised my freedom of choice to purchase is not such an entity and does not “qualify” for protection of human rights. I can drive it, lend it, kick it, sell it, or junk it, at will. On the other hand, the widow who lives next door does “qualify” as a person, and the government must secure her human rights, which cannot be abandoned to anyone’s arbitrary will.

RIGHTS AND PERSONHOOD

Yet, identifying who “qualifies” as a human being has historically proved to be more difficult than the above examples suggest. Twice in the past the U.S. Supreme Court—charged with being the guardian of rights—has failed so drastically in making this crucial determination that it “disqualified” a whole category of human beings, with profoundly tragic results.

The first time was in the 1857 case *Dred Scott v. Sandford*. The Court held, absurdly, that Africans and their American descendants, whether slave or free, could not be citizens with a right to go to court to enforce contracts or rights or for any other reason. Why? Because “among the whole human race,” the Court

How long can we sustain our commitment to freedom if we continue to deny the very foundation of freedom—life—for the most vulnerable human beings?

declared, “the enslaved African race were not intended to be included ... [T]hey had no rights which the white man was bound to respect.” In other words, persons of African origin did not “qualify” as human beings for purposes of protecting

their natural rights. It was held that, since the white man did not recognize them as having such rights, they didn’t have them. The implication was that Africans were property—things that white persons could choose to buy and sell. In contrast, whites did “qualify,” so government protected their natural rights.

Every person in this country was wounded the day this dreadful opinion was handed down by this nation’s highest tribunal. It made a mockery of the

American idea that human equality and rights were given by God and recognized by government, not constructed by governments or ethnic groups by consensus vote. The abhorrent decision directly led to terrible bloodshed and opened up a racial gap that has never been completely overcome.

The second time the Court failed in a case regarding the definition of “human” was in *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, when the Supreme Court made virtually the identical mistake. At what point in time does a human being exist, the state of Texas asked. The Court refused to answer: “We need not resolve the difficult question of when life begins. When those trained in the respective disciplines of medicine, philosophy, and theology are unable to arrive at any consensus, the judiciary, at this point in the development of man’s knowledge, is not in a position to speculate as to the answer.” In other words, the Court would not “qualify” unborn children as living persons whose human rights must be guaranteed.

Since the Court decided there was no “consensus” on when fetuses become human persons, it struck down abortion restrictions in all 50 states that thought they had reached a “consensus.” Only those already born “qualified” for protection. Moreover, the already born were empowered to deny, at will, the rights of persons still in the womb. The Court did not say that, given the lack of consensus, the matter ought to be left to the states. It did not choose to err on the side of caution, since human lives might be at stake. Nor did it choose not to rule on the matter. These options would seem to be rational courses in light of the Court’s stated agnosticism. Instead, the Court used the lack of consensus to justify prohibiting states from protecting the life of the unborn.

Like the *Dred Scott* decision, this opinion has wounded America and solved nothing. It has set good people on all sides against each other, fueled a culture war, split churches, soured politics, and greatly strained civil dialogue. A recent Gallup poll showed that 51 percent of Americans consider themselves pro-life, 42 percent are pro-choice, and 7 percent not sure.¹⁸

18 Lydia Saad, “More Americans ‘Pro-Life’ Than ‘Pro-Choice’ for First Time,” Gallup, Inc., May 15, 2009, at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/118399/more-americans-pro-life-than-pro-choice-first-time.aspx> (accessed June 29, 2009).

President Obama has done nothing to bridge the gap. During his campaign last year, he was asked when a “baby” has “human rights.” He answered by practically repeating the Supreme Court’s confused response: “[W]hether you’re looking at it from a theological perspective or a scientific perspective, answering that question with specificity, you know, is above my pay grade.” God alone, he implied, knows whether babies are human beings!

Now, after America has won the last century’s hard-fought struggles against unequal human rights in the forms of totalitarianism abroad and segregation at home, I cannot believe any official or citizen can still defend the notion that an

The freedom to choose is pointless for someone who does not have the freedom to live.

unborn human being has no rights that an older person is bound to respect. I do know that we cannot go on forever feigning agnosticism about who is human. As Thomas Jefferson wrote, “The God who gave us life gave us liberty at the same

time.” The freedom to choose is pointless for someone who does not have the freedom to live. So the right of “choice” of one human being cannot trump the right to “life” of another. How long can we sustain our commitment to freedom if we continue to deny the very foundation of freedom—life—for the most vulnerable human beings?

At the core, today’s “pro-choice” liberals are deeply pessimistic. They denigrate life and offer fear of the present and the future—fear of too many choices and too many children. Rather than seeing children and human beings as a benefit, the “pro-choice” position implies that they are a burden. Despite the “pro-choice” label, liberals’ stance on this subject actually diminishes choices, lowers goals, and leads us to live with less. That includes reducing the number of human beings who can make choices.

In contrast, pro-life conservatives are natural optimists. On balance, we see human beings as assets, not liabilities. All conservatives should find it easy to agree that government must uphold every person’s right to make choices regarding their lives and that every person’s right to live must be secured before he or she can exercise that right of choice. In the state of nature—the “law of the jungle”—the determination of who “qualifies” as a human being is left to private individuals or chosen groups. In a justly organized community, however,

government exists to secure the right to life and the other human rights that follow from that primary right.

Conservatives can bridge the gap on issues of life and choice by building on the solid rock of natural rights, which belong, not just to some, but to all human beings.

PAUL RYAN represents the 1st District of Wisconsin in the U.S. House of Representatives and is currently serving his eighth term. He is the Chairman of the House Budget Committee and a senior member of the House Ways and Means Committee.

FREE EXCHANGE

Morality and Economic Freedom

BY JIM DALY WITH GLENN T. STANTON



Jim Daly

I DID NOT COME FROM WEALTH, PRIVILEGE, OR INFLUENCE. Though I lived in one of the most prosperous corners of the world, there were days in my childhood when I did not know where my next meal would come from or where I would lay my head for sleep that night. For far too much of my childhood, I was an orphan. My mother died when I was young and my father and stepfather both left me for destinations unknown and without any connection. While most of my schoolmates' greatest concern was what their mothers would serve for dessert that night, my deepest fear was who would watch out for me. Who, if anyone, would provide for my needs? Beyond basic food and shelter, it sure wasn't the foster home I was placed in.



Glenn T. Stanton

But you would never know any of this by looking at me today. Thankfully, I have come to a good place in life, far beyond my wildest expectations. I earned an advanced degree in business administration, over many years, while working full-time. By God's grace, I now hold a challenging and deeply fulfilling job as the president and CEO of a large international nonprofit, which I joined two decades ago in an entry-level management position.

My most important position is the honor of being the husband of a beautiful and super-smart wife and the father of two beautiful, energetic young boys. We have a lovely home in a nice neighborhood. Our life is settled, if still a little hectic. I am committed to making sure my boys have a very different childhood from mine.

While the pain and hardship of my youth had one source, the good in my life today springs from two very different sources. The first was my remaining family. Even though my parents were taken from me, I had a gracious band of older siblings who became my surrogate parents, loving me, watching out for me, and making

sure I stayed on (or, at times, returned to) a straight path. It was a dysfunctional family—teenage siblings should not have to be parents—but a family all the same.

The second source was a land that afforded me the opportunity to improve my lot in life based only on my desire and willingness to work hard to do so. This is the same system (somewhat new in the long course of human experience) that has lifted millions of men, women, and children out of poverty, anxiety, struggle, and early death. The evidence of human migration in the past few centuries is unmistakable. We find people voting for this society not only with their feet but also from the depths of their very souls, risking fortune and life for the chance to prosper under its benefits.

We know that nations that allow free exchange, including the solid right to own property, do much better economically and socially than those that do not.

The benefits of the American Experiment are not a well-kept secret. Its benefits include many things but, most importantly, America has meant freedom, including economic freedom. We know that nations that allow free exchange, including the solid right to own property, do much better economically and socially than those that do not.¹⁹

I recognize God as the provider of these two rich sources in my life, and in what follows, I want to show how three things come together for the benefit of all humanity: God, family, and free-market economics.

Few see economics and religious faith as having much to say to each other. But that is the fault of a small and parochial faith. God has much to say about how we interact with each other in the market as well as about our responsibilities to our families and our neighbors. As a committed Christian seeking to live authentically both in my personal conviction and professional position, the command upon me is quite simple. Jesus took the Ten Commandments given to Moses as well as all the teachings of the Prophets and summed them up in two simple but far-reaching commands:

1. Love God with your whole being.
2. Love your neighbor as yourself.

¹⁹ Heritage Foundation/Wall Street Journal *Index of Economic Freedom*, at <http://www.heritage.org/index/>.

These commands connect those who seek to obey them to both the eternal and the temporal, giving us responsibilities both in the *Here* and the *After*—both in the realm of the spirit as well as that of our flesh, blood, appetites, and feelings.

ECONOMIC FREEDOM AND PROSPERITY

In considering the lives of our neighbors—remember that every day technology widens the circle of who our neighbor is—we must be concerned with the fair and free exchange of goods and services. Theologian Paul Tillich once explained to his students that socialism “is the only possible economic system from the Christian point of view.” Since he said that in 1957, however, the verdict upon socialism as a vehicle for improving our lot has been unmistakably delivered. It does not work because it does not correspond to the motions of the human heart and soul. It is not socialism but economic freedom that most closely corresponds with our human needs and desires.

Adam Smith recognized an old truth in 1776 when he argued in *The Wealth of Nations* that real abundance is not found in a nation’s supply of gold and silver, but in the ability of its people to create and trade goods and services and to do so freely, driven by a desire to improve their own interest. Smith’s famous “invisible hand” is the self-regulating nature of markets that discourages us from filling our own stomachs to the exclusion of others (even if we would like to) but naturally rewards individuals when they seek their own good by meeting the needs of others. As for the market’s ability to punish mere selfishness, think of the consequences that some Wall Street and banking executives face today.

In fact, Smith believed that individuals’ pursuit of their own self-interest actually results in promoting the good of society to a greater extent than if each person had intentionally set out to do so through other means. That’s the fruit of the invisible hand. Smith’s “hand” is far better at distributing goods and services than are state planners; thus, Milton Friedman’s summation of Smith’s theory—“the possibility of cooperation without coercion.”²⁰

20 Milton Friedman, introduction to Leonard E. Read, “I, Pencil: My Family Tree as Told to Leonard E. Read” (Irvington-on-Hudson, New York: The Foundation for Economic Education, Inc., December 1958), at <http://www.econlib.org/library/Essays/rdPncl1.html> (accessed July 20, 2009).

Time and experience, as well as the flow of immigration, have proved Smith largely correct. This is not rooted in the nature of nations, but in the nature of nations' citizens, all created in a particular image. Every healthy human being ever to walk the earth was created with a nearly inexhaustible capacity to create or provide something of value and, in doing so, to enhance his own life as well as to promote the happiness and satisfaction of those around him. But those capacities come to greater fruition in societies that protect economic freedom.

It is not socialism but economic freedom that most closely corresponds with our human needs and desires.

As Ludwig von Mises recognized:

Within the frame of social cooperation there can emerge between members of society feelings of sympathy and friendship and a sense of belonging together. These feelings are the source of man's most delightful and most sublime experiences. They are the most precious adornment of life.²¹

We are made by a relational God who freely chose to create the world. Genesis, the book of both Jews and Christians, tells us we are each created in and after His image. It tells us that God gave us and put us in a community of His people and it is there that we are happiest. The Christian story, building on this, tells us that we are creatures of a triune God. God is *inherently* relational. In some mysterious sense, God is not a mere individual, nor a couple, but a "community" of three Persons—yet He remains always one God.

As creatures made in His image, we desire to relate to others, as well as to create and provide for ourselves and for others. Our sinful hearts will move us toward a naked individualism in which our self-interest devolves into selfishness—as it did with my father and stepfather. Yet such "individualism" does not satisfy, but rather leads to isolation and misery. The "happy individualist" is an oxymoron if ever there was one.

21 Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action*, 4th edition, Chapter 13, Section 1, "Human Cooperation" (Irvington-on-Hudson, New York: The Foundation for Economic Education, 1996), p. 143.

Free markets and true free exchange are economic displays of this theological truth and metaphysical reality. It is what we are made for. In free exchanges, we are not isolated islands but social individuals who can meet the needs of others while prospering ourselves, without losing our own individual identity.

Michael Novak makes this point elegantly in the first sentence of his consequential book, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*:

Of all systems of political economy which have shaped our history, none has so revolutionized ordinary expectations of human life—lengthened the life span, made the elimination of poverty and famine thinkable, enlarged the range of human choice—as democratic capitalism.²²

He later explains:

It is no accident that democratic capitalism arose first in Jewish–Christian lands (or that it is imitable only in analogous cultures). Apart from certain specific views of human life and human hope, neither a democratic polity nor a market economy makes sense. If those who live under democratic capitalism lost sight of the moral foundations of the system, a loss of morale is likely to occur... Necessary reforms and advances cannot be attempted when individuals within the system have lost sight of its proper ideals.²³

MORALS, VALUES, AND ECONOMIC FREEDOM

This economic system relies on certain ideals and values present both in our government and in our citizenry. In the long run, widespread moral ignorance will bring—along with other ills—economic paralysis. And this is precisely what we are seeing today. Our present and deeply troubling economic realities are more the result of our moral failures than our market failures. Our appetites have become much larger and stronger than the constraints of our souls. We prefer instant to delayed gratification. We are creating “men without chests,” as C. S. Lewis put

22 Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (Lanham, Md.: Madison Books, 1991), p. 13.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 334–335.

it. Drawing from Plato's idea that each person is governed by three sources—the thinking (head) rules the appetites (stomach) through moral strength (chest)—Lewis explains, “It is by this middle element that man is man: for by his intellect he is mere spirit and by his appetite, mere animal.”²⁴ A market economy demands participants whose “chests” can govern both their minds and their stomachs.

Virtuous people are most likely created in good families. This is a fundamental and unavoidable fact.

How do we get the kind of people our markets require? Where are they made? It does not start in the marketplace, nor even in Sunday School or the classroom (although these last two are necessary helps once the process is started). Virtuous people are most likely created in good families. This is a fundamental and unavoidable fact.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown recognized this in a public forum on economics the day before the convening of the monumental 2009 G-20 Summit in London. He began his remarks by explaining that he would not talk about the fine points of economic theory or market minutiae. (That is something you might expect from the man who served as the Chancellor of the Exchequer under former Prime Minister Tony Blair longer than any other leader held the position in the modern age.) He said he would, rather, speak of the “enduring values—indeed the enduring virtues—that we have inherited from the past, which must infuse our ideals and hopes for the future.” While his speech fell short on the global order, Brown eloquently evoked the core of local order:

And I want to suggest to all of you here today that this most modern of crises, the first financial crisis of the global age, has confirmed the enduring importance of the most timeless of truths: *that our financial system must be founded on the very same values that are at the heart of the best of our family lives.*²⁵ (Emphasis added.)

24 C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1947), p. 34.

25 Gordon Brown, “Speech and Q&A at St. Paul’s Cathedral,” London, England, March 31, 2009, at <http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page18858> (accessed August 21, 2009).

Brown was talking about basic truth and honesty. Without such honesty, there can be no trust. And, without trust, there can be no vibrant system of trade. It is in the family where we first learn how to care for ourselves and then of the need and duty to care for others. Family is where love is first learned and demonstrated and, hopefully, selfishness discouraged. It is where we learn both self-confidence and security, leading to empathy and altruism. It is where we learn the value of hard work, sacrifice, and honesty. It is where we learn that we ought to tell the truth rather than lie.

This is as much a human fact as a Christian one. The Greek philosopher Aristotle held that “the family is the association established by nature for the supply of men’s everyday wants.” As families developed, he said, thus came the village and, out of the villages, the state arises. The family is also the most powerful human elevator of a free market of exchange.

If we care for others and want to lift them out of misery and poverty and on to a better, healthier life, we cannot be apathetic about the economic system that has proved itself better than others at doing this. Nor can we be *laissez-faire* about the social conditions that create what is required to drive this system. The free market is the best and fairest system for allowing human beings to create resources and then distributing the resources we need to live prosperous and ever-improving lives. But this system cannot function strongly and fairly if our culture produces “men without chests.”

This is why we at Focus on the Family do the upstream work we do to help families thrive worldwide—because we want other little boys and girls that are in the unfortunate place I once was to have the resources and opportunities to create a better, more hopeful life for themselves.

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MARRIAGE

The Limited-Government Case for Marriage

BY JENNIFER ROBACK MORSE, PH.D.

LIFELONG MONOGAMY WAS ONE OF THE DISTINCTIVELY Christian contributions to Western civilization. Socialists have attacked every aspect of the social order created around the lifelong, sexually exclusive union of a man and a woman. Same-sex marriage, the current hot button issue, is but one of many issues designed to turn marriage into a collection of individuals loosely stapled together by the state. The Left often uses the rhetoric of individual choice and liberty to advance this project. But the rhetoric is not the reality. Deinstitutionalizing marriage will lead to an expansion of the size and scope of the state.

I came to the marriage issue late, and reluctantly. I had been trained in the University of Chicago school of economic thought and had been deeply engaged with the Austrian and Virginia schools of economics. Frankly, I didn't give the marriage issue much thought until I became a mother. That experience convinced me that we free-market advocates have taken the social institution of marriage far too much for granted.



Jennifer Roback Morse

THE SOCIAL PROBLEM THAT MARRIAGE SOLVES

Marriage is a pre-political, spontaneously arising, universal social institution. The essential purpose of marriage is to attach mothers and fathers to their children and to one another. Human beings are born alive and immature, through the sexual relations of a man and a woman. Every human child needs adult assistance in order to survive. Marriage exists, in all times and places, to solve this social problem. If our offspring were born as adults, ready to live independently, or if we reproduced through some asexual

Just as the market is a system of social cooperation, so too is marriage the most basic and fundamental unit of social cooperation.

process, we might not need marriage (though marriage might still be valuable for other reasons).

This essential purpose is also profoundly social. Marriage creates a small society of mother, father, and children. That small social unit contributes to the larger society by creating a functioning future, a next generation. Everyone benefits from having a next generation in place to sustain the society and keep its institutions going. When I am old, even if I have not had any children myself, I benefit from the fact that younger people are building cars and houses, providing medical and legal care, starting new businesses, and running old ones. In modern developed countries, the family saves the state money by taking care of its own dependent young, rather than foisting that responsibility onto the taxpayers. Thus, the benefits of marriage go far beyond the benefits to the individual members of the family.

Marriage exists to meet the social necessity of caring for helpless children, who are not and cannot be contracting parties. They are, rather, protected parties. At the same time, marriage should protect the interests of both parents in pursuing their common project of rearing their children.

Just as the market is a system of social cooperation, so too is marriage the most basic and fundamental unit of social cooperation. A man and a woman come together and create a child together. They work together for the benefit of the child, to raise him or her to adulthood. They both have an interest in the child's well-being. They both have the particular knowledge of the child's unique needs. Their union, their cooperation, is socially productive. Working together, they bring a child into being, which neither of them could do completely on their own.

Just as the market is a wealth-producing social institution, so too is marriage. Like the market, marriage harnesses the abilities, knowledge, and motivations of millions of people in a decentralized social system. Rather than trying to have some centralized agency of the state raise all the children in a homogenized way, each couple raises its particular children in the way that they deem will have the best chance of success.

Marriage should be an awe-inspiring sight to fans of limited government. By providing an extremely minimal legal structure related to marriage, the state facilitates a huge amount of voluntary cooperation. The state doesn't

care about the details of particular couples' arrangements. As long as they fulfill a few basic requirements, the state has no further concern. Marriage is a largely self-regulating, largely voluntary system of long-term cooperation between parents.

THE SOCIALIST CHARACTER OF THE OPPOSITION TO MARRIAGE

The Marxist variety of feminism was one of the most persistent and virulent enemies of marriage in the 20th century. Marxist theory holds that relationships between men and women are necessarily characterized by conflict, with the continual danger of dominance of men over women. Thus, Marxists, then and now, consistently look for alternatives to marriage.

Frederick Engels, Marx's closest collaborator, equated the dominance of men over women with the dominance of capitalists over workers. He writes of an early, almost mythical period in which group marriage without concern for parentage was the norm. According to Engels, the transition from group marriage to monogamy marked the beginning of the subordination of women. He argues further that the economic and legal status of women is intimately connected to the organization of the household.

In Engels' version of history, the original communistic household, composed of many couples and their children, the task entrusted to women of managing the household was as much a public, socially necessary industry as the procuring of food by the men. With the patriarchal family, and even more so with the single monogamous family, a change came. Household management lost its public character. It no longer concerned society. It became a private enterprise; the wife became the head servant, excluded from all participation in social production.

Within the family, the husband is in the role of the bourgeois, and the wife represents the proletariat, according to this perspective. The first condition for the liberation of the wife is to bring the whole female sex back into public industry. This, in turn, demands that the role of the monogamous family as the economic unit of society be abolished.

If you doubt the Marxist origins of these ideas, consider Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique*. She was not just a random disgruntled housewife. She had been a committed Leftist since her student days at Smith College. She wrote for radical publications, including the journal of one of the most

radicalized labor unions. Consider also: Destabilizing marriage has been a consistent priority for the radical Left, because they see marriage as a central part of the capitalist system of oppression. Liberalizing divorce laws was one of the first actions of the Bolsheviks in Russia as early as 1917 and was a priority of the Socialist government in Spain as recently as 2005.

The trend in academic family law is to “knock marriage off its perch.” The state, according to this trend, has no particular interest in channeling parenthood into marriage or assigning social and legal parental rights to the biological parents. Currently, the family courts have enormous discretion in allocating custody and financial support among known parents. If the family-law radicals have their way, the state will not simply be recording parentage, but actually determining parentage. This will vastly increase the discretion, and hence the power, of the family courts. This will necessarily be one of the consequences of same-sex marriage. The biological principle for establishing parentage will be weakened, and will be replaced in practice by the state establishing, rather than merely recording, parentage.

WHY THE DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE NOURISHES THE STATE, NOT SOCIETY

Our experience with no-fault divorce illustrates how marital dissolution contributes to centralized state power. Presented to the public as a great expansion of personal liberty, no-fault divorce has actually increased the power of the government over individual private lives.

No-fault divorce frequently means unilateral divorce: One party (the woman, in a majority of cases) wants a divorce against the wishes of the other, who wants to stay married. Therefore, the divorce has to be enforced. The coercive machinery of the state is wheeled into action to separate the reluctantly divorced party from the joint assets of the marriage—typically the home and the children.

Family courts tell fathers how much money they have to spend on their children, and how much time they get to spend with them. Courts tell mothers whether they can move away from their children’s father. Courts rule on whether the father’s attendance at a Little League game, a public event that anyone can attend, counts toward his visitation time. Courts rule on which parent gets to spend Christmas Day with the children, down to and including

such details as the precise time of day they must turn the child over to the other parent.

Involving the family court in the minutiae of family life is hardly the role of the low-impact “night watchman” state. In fact, the activities of the family courts amount to an unprecedented blurring of the boundaries between public and private life. People under the jurisdiction of the family courts can have virtually all of their private lives subject to scrutiny.

UNMARRIED CHILDBEARING AND EXPANSION OF STATE POWER

At the same time, the breakup of families, or the failure to form families, leads to an expansion of state authority and expenditures. Children from disrupted families do worse than the children of intact

married-couple households in virtually every way. Children whose families are not intact are more likely to have physical and mental health problems. Even when taking income into account, fatherless

The breakup of families, or the failure to form families, leads to an expansion of state authority and expenditures.

boys are more likely to be aggressive and ultimately to become incarcerated. A recent British study suggests that the children of single mothers are more likely to become schizophrenic.²⁶ And an extensive study of family structure in Sweden took into consideration the mental illness history of the parents as well as the family’s socio-economic status, yet found that, even in this most generous welfare state in the world, with very accepting attitudes toward unmarried parenthood, the children of single parents were at significantly higher risk of psychiatric disease, suicide attempts, and substance abuse.²⁷

All of these social pathologies are expensive to the taxpayer and painful to the individuals involved. A recent study, calculating the national, annual

26 Sarah Hall, “Schizophrenia Much More Likely in Children of Single Parents,” *The Guardian*, November 22, 2006, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2006/nov/22/lifeandhealth.medicineandhealth> (accessed August 13, 2009).

27 G.R. Weitoft, A. Hjern, B. Haglund, M. Rosen, “Mortality, Severe Morbidity and Injury in Children Living with Single Parents in Sweden: A Population-based Study,” *The Lancet*, Vol. 361, Issue 9354 (January 25, 2003), pp. 289–295.

taxpayer costs of family breakdown, announced its conclusion in its title: “The One Hundred Billion Dollar Man.”²⁸

But more income doesn’t solve the most severe problems associated with divorce or unmarried childbearing. Children suffer from the loss of relationship with one or both of their parents. That was the truly insidious harm caused by the old welfare system. The state gave families money if the father was not in the household. This doesn’t help children any more than paying farmers not to grow crops improves the food supply. “Relationships over resources” should be the slogan of truly minimal government family policy.

“GETTING THE STATE OUT OF THE MARRIAGE BUSINESS” EMPOWERS THE STATE

“Getting the state out of the marriage business” is becoming a new, almost mantric, solution to the conflict over same-sex marriage—as if “privatizing marriage” were like privatizing the post office. Part of the appeal of this proposal is that the state appears to be neutral and even-handed, allowing each couple to form any kind of marriage and parenting contract they want. But this appearance is deceptive.

The motivation to form a contract depends largely on the “default” alternative position. If the state finances unwed childbearing, women have little incentive to form any union with the child’s father. Even though the state may refuse to “privilege” biological mothers and fathers over other family forms,

it can greatly affect the incentives for parental collaboration.

“Relationships over resources”
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Rather than solving the problem,
this move of government away from the
issue of marriage simply shifts the prob-

lem and the conflict back a step. Instead of fighting over marriage, we still have to slug it out over related issues. Is unlimited, taxpayer-subsidized access to in vitro fertilization an entitlement for all women, married or not? We still need

28 Steven L. Nock and Christopher J. Einolf, “The One Hundred Billion Dollar Man: The Annual Public Costs of Father Absence” (2008), available from the National Fatherhood Initiative, Gaithersburg, MD, at www.fatherhood.org.

an answer to this question. “Privatizing marriage” doesn’t address this and other questions, and will only worsen the problems in the long run.

A FREE SOCIETY NEEDS MARRIAGE

Those who seek to deinstitutionalize marriage so that it becomes a series of temporary couplings with unspecified numbers and genders of people have used the language of choice and individual rights to advance their cause. This rhetoric has a powerful hold over the American mind. Dismantling the family could not have proceeded as far as it has without the use of this language of personal freedom.

But this rhetoric is deceptive. It is simply not possible to have a low-impact government in a society with no social or legal norms about family structure, sexual behavior, and childrearing. The state will have to provide support for people with loose or non-existent ties to their families.

So, in the long run, a free society needs marriage. It is high time that friends of freedom object when their rhetoric is hijacked by the advocates of big government. Rather than supporting enemies of traditional marriage, those who advocate limited government also need to defend a robust set of social institutions. If marriage isn’t a necessary social institution, then nothing is. And if there are no necessary social institutions, then the individual truly will be left to face the state alone.

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PROFIT

Prophets and Profit

BY MARVIN OLASKY, PH.D.



Marvin Olasky

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONSERVATIVES TEND TO HAVE different sacred texts and heroes. Social conservatives often revere the Bible and the Bible's hero, Jesus. While many economic conservatives share that faith, publicly they tend to venerate Hayek, von Mises, and other free-market economists.

In reality, however, the gap between prophets and profit should be little wider than the Jordan River (probably the narrowest of all famous streams). At the level of basic principles, economic and social conservatives are natural allies. Those who esteem the Bible should also applaud St. Milton Friedman and other Church of Chicago prelates, because their insights amplify what the Bible suggests about economics.

I'd like to offer a brief overview of biblical teaching—authoritative for most social conservatives—as it relates to the economic concept of profit. This teaching should keep social conservatives from listening to the pied pipers of economic populism. It can also remind free-market fans that the Austrian Alps are only small hills in God's sight. To be sustained, the free market requires certain virtues drawn from religion and culture rather than from economics.

My overview begins with chapter 2 of Genesis, prior to the fall, where God gives Adam physical and intellectual work to do: till the ground to grow crops and name all the animals. In the following chapter, the work becomes much harder, as the ground is cursed as a result of the fall. What theologians call “the fall of man” is also the rise of economics, because, once food and shelter can no longer be taken for granted, scarcity enters the picture. Arguments over production, consumption, and distribution are unavoidable.

To be sustained, the free market requires certain virtues drawn from religion and culture rather than from economics.

The Bible makes it clear that, on this side of the fall, only by the sweat of our brows will Adam and we, his descendants, profit. But, despite the added hardship, our task is still the same as it was before the fall: to take the raw materials God has created and impose order on them for human flourishing.

The Hebrew and Greek words translated as “profit” appear 43 times in one careful translation of the Bible, the English Standard Version (ESV). Some uses do not relate to finances, but those that do suggest two positive lessons and two warnings that still deeply affect our debates about the role of profit.

First positive: Hard, smart work is good, and profiting by it is admirable. One indication of God’s blessing of the Old Testament patriarchs Abraham and Jacob is that they became “very rich,” with sheep, camels, donkeys, and much besides. Women also can be entrepreneurs: The ideal wife in chapter 31 of Proverbs rises while it is still night, “evaluates a field and buys it,” and “sees that her profits are good.”

Second positive: Profit is a gift from God because our lives and our ability to work at all are totally dependent on Him. The epistle of James notes, “You who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit’—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.’”

First warning: Profiting from the distress of the poor is wrong. Chapter 25 of Leviticus states, “If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall support him as though he were a stranger and a sojourner.” During this period of temporary support, “Take no interest from him or profit, but fear your God, that your brother may live beside you.” There is a similar warning in the book of Job: A person who “has crushed and abandoned the poor ... will give back the fruit of his toil ... from the profit of his trading he will get no enjoyment.”

Second warning: While profit can be a blessing, don’t think that profit proves or indicates godliness. Psalm 73 castigates those who confuse wealth and salvation: “Pride is their necklace.... Their eyes swell out through fatness.... They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongue struts through the earth.” The Bible frequently warns about dishonest gain: Paul wrote that an elder must not be “a lover of money” and a deacon must not be “greedy for dishonest gain.”

These teachings together display the biblical teaching that profit, in most circumstances, is good but not ultimate.

The Book of Acts criticizes silversmiths who profited from making idols.

These teachings together display the biblical teaching that profit, in most circumstances, is good but not ultimate.

To be sure, some Christian scholars, and some modern Leftists, have taken individual verses out of context, thereby creating barriers to hard work and human flourishing. For example, the prophet Ezekiel says the righteous man “gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, does not lend at interest or take any profit....” The context makes it clear that this prohibition concerns lending to or profiting from the destitute—yet some have interpreted such verses as precluding all interest or profit, and a few still do.

RISK, INVESTMENT, AND PROFIT

The Bible’s strongest pro-profit teaching comes in two parables—in Matthew, chapter 25 (often called “the parable of the talents”) and in Luke, chapter 19 (often called “the parable of the minas”). In both of these, Jesus speaks of a master going away and entrusting wealth to his servants: Roman “talents” were worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, perhaps even millions; a mina was worth considerably less, but still, perhaps, the equivalent of 100 days of labor.

In the parable of the talents, both the servant who receives five talents and the servant who receives two invest them and garner a 100 percent return. The master responds to each, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much.” But the servant who received one talent, fearful of losing it, buries it in the ground: The master calls him “wicked and slothful” and says that at least the servant should have left the money with bankers so that it would have earned some interest.

In Jesus’ parable of the minas, the master gives 10 of his servants one mina each and tells them to engage in trade while he is away. One servant multiplies his investment tenfold and is told, “Well done, faithful servant.” Another servant multiplies his investment fivefold and also receives commendation. But the master condemns the servant who hid his mina: He gives it to the one who has ten,

noting once again—as in the other parable—that he should at least have earned some interest on it. (These parables provide more indication, by the way, that the biblical ban on interest rightly concerns only loans to the poor.)

Christ's parables typically have multiple meanings, and these are no exceptions. Jesus clearly was referring to faithfulness, not just finance. He was showing that the reward for responsible action is not vacation but more responsibility. But the parables also display the assumption that legitimate profit is praiseworthy. Over the past 2,000 years many Christians have criticized profit wrung from the poor, but some have gone on to attack profit-making enterprises generally—and that critique is thoroughly unbiblical.

Misquoting the Bible has sometimes led to other mistakes. Some Gnostics, ancient and modern, have seen all matter as evil, leading them to argue that “money is the root of all evil.” A Lexis-Nexis search reveals current leaders ranging from a Las Vegas registrar of voters to a *New York Times* headline writer saying the same. But Paul the apostle (who, like other biblical writers, had nothing against food, drink, and other material things in the right amounts) wrote: “The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil” (ESV). It's the love of money, not the money itself, that is the problem.

These Scriptural texts can correct those who preach unbiblical economics. The Bible also suggests (and the history of the past 2,000 years confirms) some additional lessons. Among them: that individuals work hardest when their efforts are likely to be rewarded; that the creation of wealth and the reduction of poverty require risk-taking that is likely to occur only when the opportunity for profit is present.

It's vital to understand that the Bible is more than a series of vignettes and verses. It repeatedly conveys a realistic sense of human nature (which makes sense, since the Author of the Bible made humans and knows our frailty). Unlike the scriptures of other major religions that characterize their founders—Buddha, Muhammad, or others—as ideal human beings, the Bible shows the flaws of its leading figures. Noah, recently saved from death by flood, gets passed-out drunk; Abraham, fearing for his life, is ready to pimp his wife; Jacob is a deceiver, Samson a muscular twit, and David an adulterer who covers up that act by having a loyal captain killed.

PROFIT AND MUTUAL BENEFIT

As a result, economic truths known by free-market economists resonate with the biblical view of the world. Biblical realism opposes communists and socialists who believe that human beings forced into a non-competitive environment will all be ready to work hard for no profit but the satisfaction of providing for others. Biblical realism suggests that, without the opportunity for profit, most individuals bury their talents, both occupational and financial. Profit leads to further investment and wealth creation; without profit, economies contract. After all, without profit, there is no wealth left over to be reinvested.

The opposite of profit, remember, is loss. Some equate profit with greed, but it's the absence of profit that's likely to produce greedy consumption rather than risky investment.

Biblical realism also helps us to see that few among us are likely to love our neighbors as ourselves on a regular basis—but we are normally quite willing to help our neighbors if we can help ourselves in the process. Free markets provide the opportunity for willing buyers and sellers to come together to make “a trade that helps both teams,” as baseball fans say. Markets merge altruism and selfishness in a way that no system based on either command and control or singing around the campfire can do.

James Madison, trained in biblical realism at John Witherspoon's Princeton, noted in *Federalist* 51 that “If men were angels, no government would be necessary.” Perhaps if men were angels, profit and loss statements would be

When we minimize the importance of profit we also reduce the magnitude of philanthropy.

unnecessary (although they would still be valuable, since profit or loss communicate whether capital is being allocated perceptively or poorly). But since we are not angelic, the opportunity to

profit makes us more inclined to serve than to be surly. Those who have had the foresight to anticipate which goods and services buyers most want should be rewarded—otherwise, we won't have those goods and services.

Furthermore, when we minimize the importance of profit we also reduce the magnitude of philanthropy. The faith of a woman who donates her last pennies is wonderful, but many charity leaders would also welcome gifts of appreciated stock. The Bible is pro-property and pro-compassion. In chapter 5 of Acts,

Peter the apostle scolded a liar named Ananias about property, saying, “While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal?” The problem wasn’t the property but the lie. Ananias was pretending to be more generous than was true: The biblical goal is to make a profit and give much of it away.

So social conservatives who revere the Bible can learn much about how to apply it from economic conservatives who share a realistic outlook. Economic conservatives also can learn from biblically motivated conservatives the importance of ethical and other non-economic factors in determining economic success. We have witnessed in our recent economic travails what happens when honesty is hard to find and people don’t trust each other enough to go to market. Econometrics without econo-ethics fails all of us.

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FAMILY

Washington's War on the Family and Free Enterprise

BY STEPHEN MOORE



Stephen Moore

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS IN WASHINGTON HAVE STRUCK political pay dirt in recent elections with a message of the “middle-class squeeze.” By this they mean that the federal government’s policies are failing middle-class Americans. Stagnating or declining real wages for workers, exploding health care and college costs, and higher gasoline prices—among other challenges—are said to be “threatening most Americans’ valued way of life.” And certainly the deep recession of 2008–2009 has only confirmed in voters’ minds the hard pocketbook reality of this recurring theme.

What the Democrats under President Obama have proposed as a relief to the financial crunch facing families is more governmental assistance to reduce these costs through federal subsidies, for example, to help pay for college. Mr. Obama’s fiscal year 2010 budget is filled with more than three dozen tax credits and new spending programs to help stretch the incomes of middle-class families—including the President’s signature tax cut of a \$400 credit per household.

This is the same budget that proposes some \$9 trillion to \$10 trillion of new borrowing to pay for all of these programs as well as new tax increases on

A society that cares about the future of its children does not run up massive debts for those children to pay off in the future.

the rich. To get a \$400 tax credit, each family in America will have to bear nearly \$100,000 of its share of the new debt on the federal credit card. No wonder so many Americans have come to recognize

the Obama giveaways as a kind of fool’s gold. A society that cares about the future of its children does not run up massive debts for those children to pay off in the future. I have often described the Obama-Democrat agenda as one of fiscal child abuse, and the abusiveness is getting worse with each passing month.

Republicans, in turn, have done little to win the trust of families in recent years. The Democrats are right in their diagnosis of the problem in many cases—such as the rising cost of essentials like education and health care—though wrong in their prescription. The borrow-and-spend policies of George W. Bush led to only modest advances in family incomes from 2001–2007, and the 2008–2009 recession has caused big declines in incomes and family savings. The latest Federal Reserve study, which was released in April 2009, indicates that about \$9 trillion of wealth has been destroyed in the stock and housing market implosion.

STRONG FAMILIES AND ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

A falling economy puts stress on our families. Family counselors across the country are reporting that the financial strains of this recession are causing more disharmony in marriages and families. A *New York Times* story in June 2009 describes how the downturn is putting a “chokehold on those caring for family members,” including elderly parents, younger children, and even 20-somethings who have not found jobs that will allow them to become financially independent.²⁹ If families are split apart by economic hardship, this will be a bigger blow to the long-term economy than even lost wealth. Why? Because healthy, intact, and loving families are absolutely critical to keeping the U.S. economy on solid footing in future years and decades.

Healthy, intact, and loving families are absolutely critical to keeping the U.S. economy on solid footing in future years and decades.

Sometimes free-market economists underestimate the importance of intact families as basic building blocks for sustainable economic growth. I admit to being guilty of this myself. I concentrate on taxes, trade, and regulation—all of which are critical “pillars for economic growth,” as described in my recent book *The End of Prosperity*.³⁰ But in preparation for writing this essay, I was shocked to

29 John Leland, “Downturn Puts a Chokehold on Those Caring for Family Members,” *The New York Times*, June 6, 2009, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/07/us/07squeeze.html> (accessed August 18, 2009).

30 Arthur Laffer, Stephen Moore, Peter Tanous, *The End of Prosperity: How Higher Taxes Will Doom the Economy—If We Let It Happen* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2008).

learn how strong and even incontrovertible the linkage is between strong families and strong economic performance.

I will not summarize all of the evidence here, but suffice it to say that, in the short term, one family can live much more cheaply than two (i.e., households of divorced parents). Parents who stick with their spouses are generally happier than divorced spouses, and they tend to be more productive and successful in their careers. The mean net worth of households with married couples is two to four times higher than other households. For example, on average, a married-couple household has a net worth of \$187,000, while a female-headed household has a net worth of just \$49,000, according to a study in *Children and Youth Services Review* published in 2008.³¹ Census Bureau data indicate the same basic pattern regarding household incomes. The data are also clear that married men have higher earnings than single men, so the difference in family income is not solely a result of two-income households.

Much of this seems self-evident, though the magnitude of the differences is striking. And the causality clearly runs in both directions: When families are facing financial trauma they are less likely to stay together.

But the much more important finding that keeps rolling in is the trauma that divorce and wrecked families cause for children, not only in their adolescent and teen years, but also into their adult lives. The convenient mythology that divorce and out-of-wedlock births have little lasting impact on children has now been exposed as devastatingly inaccurate. Children in single-parent homes generally have lower self-esteem, more drug use, lower academic achievement, and higher rates of depression than children in two-parent homes. What is more, longitudinal studies now suggest that these effects are long-lasting. Children who grow up in intact families with both spouses present in the home have higher educational achievement and higher incomes than children from broken families.

31 Charles Pajarita, Michal Grinstein-Weiss, Yeong Hun Yeo, Min Zhan, "Asset Holding and Net Worth Among Households with Children: Differences by Household Type," *Children and Youth Services Review*, Vol. 30 (2008), pp. 62–78.

In other words, if we want our economy to perform, we need our families to be resilient and stable. Our society invests hundreds of thousands of dollars in converting each child into a well-functioning and productive adult citizen, and yet, culturally and economically, we undervalue by far the critical function of traditional families.

HOW FEDERAL POLICIES UNDERMINE THE FAMILY

All of this brings me back to the idea of government as the presumed solution to middle-class squeeze and financial hardship. I would make the case that many federal policies still intact today work against the family and thus against our social and economic well-being. Let me list several ways in which the government undermines the family, the foundational social and economic building block:

- 1. The marriage tax penalty.** Steps have been taken to reduce this, but there is still a financial advantage on 1040 IRS forms for a couple to live separately rather than to marry and live together.
- 2. Progressive taxation.** The biggest losers with high tax rates are working married women. Many women who work pay taxes on their first dollar of income at the highest rate of their husband's income. A flat rate tax would be fair and pro-family.
- 3. The death tax.** No federal policy is more damaging to wealth creation than the death tax, which can snatch away up to one-half of a parent's lifetime earnings at the time of death rather than allowing the money to be transmitted to children and grandchildren. This causes the sale and breakup of family businesses, farms, and ranches. The death tax subverts the American ideal of passing on wealth from one generation of family to the next.
- 4. The absence of school choice.** Our education system robs parents, especially those with lower incomes, of the opportunity to send their children to the best quality schools or to home school them. Educational decisions should rest with parents, not with politicians, school boards, or professional educators.

5. **Overspending.** Milton Friedman said it best: There's no such thing as a free lunch. Heritage Foundation analysis finds that federal spending is averaging \$33,932 per American family in 2009.³²
6. **The national debt.** We are passing on a "second mortgage" in excess of \$100,000 to every child in America. As stated earlier, this is immoral and weakens our nation's economic foundation for many future generations.

And finally, and most dangerous:

7. **The assault on free markets.** One theme that we have hammered home on the pages of *The Wall Street Journal* is that economic growth is reliant on economic freedom. This means low taxes, property rights, free trade, limited government, individual responsibility, and sound money. Our current policies of bailing out and nationalizing failed institutions—banks, insurance companies, car companies, the health care industry—short-circuit individual responsibility and so threaten to kill the golden goose of free enterprise that has made America the most prosperous nation in history. These policies will eventually slow economic growth, robbing our children of their economic future. At a 4 percent rate of economic growth, over 50 years our kids will be about two-and-a-half times richer than they would be at a 2 percent rate of economic growth.

The American Dream is based on the principle that every generation will be better off than the one that came before. This is the legacy that each generation of parents leaves to their children. We now know with certainty that a big

³² Brian M. Riedl, "Federal Spending by the Numbers," Heritage Foundation *Special Report* No. 63, July 27, 2009, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Budget/sr0063.cfm>.

part of attaining the American Dream is to produce healthy and resilient families in which parents impart values, a work ethic, and a success ethic to their children.

By overtaxing, overspending, and over-borrowing, runaway government is creating the very middle-class squeeze on families that our politicians now decry. The new saying in Washington is that a trillion dollars is the new “billion dollars.” It’s sad but true. The politicians have added three zeroes to every expenditure.

This increasingly powerful government is not the protector of children and families but their adversary.

Now is the time for economic and social conservatives to work together to preserve our families and our free enterprise system, which are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing.

When our politicians pursue policies that take away the rights of parents or the rights of individuals in the free market, they are not pursuing policies of compassion but of cruelty.

By overtaxing, overspending, and over-borrowing, runaway government is creating the very middle-class squeeze on families that our politicians now decry.

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WAGES

The Value of Wages

BY BISHOP HARRY R. JACKSON JR.



Harry R. Jackson

IN LATE 2008, A FUNNY THING HAPPENED TO OUR AUTO industries. The heads of the top three American firms flew to Washington, D.C., to ask the U.S. government to bail out the beleaguered trio. Unfortunately, the CEOs had failed to check with their public relations firms, who might have suggested driving from Detroit to D.C. They could have had a great communications campaign. During their “drive to Washington” (no doubt in an American-made hybrid), they could have stopped at historic landmarks or closed factories or dealerships. With little effort, they could have dramatically illustrated that one out of 10 American jobs is somehow connected to the auto industry.

Instead, these bright corporate titans flew into town on three separate jets. Apparently, jet pooling did not occur to them. This faux pas set off a series of discussions about wages at the corporate level. (Unfortunately for the American public, the real wages of the union workers were never accurately assessed. If the media mentioned the subject, it was usually by way of spin. One *New York Times* headline read, “\$73 An Hour for Autoworkers and How It Really Adds Up.” The author claimed that enemies of unions had grossly exaggerated the autoworkers’ wages.)

From white, middle-class country clubs to ethnic barbershops, everyday folks were suddenly debating the morality of auto industry pay scales. Some people began to speak in near socialistic terms about the need for wealth to be redistributed. Others decried the tendency of lawmakers to punish achievement rather than reward it.

After the dust settled, most Americans could agree on only two things. First, the auto industry needed a comprehensive readjustment of costs in order to remain competitive. Second, the unwillingness of both union workers and management to develop rational plans for remuneration jeopardized the survival of two out of the big three automakers.

MORALITY AND WAGES

So a discussion about the morality of wages is timely, especially since the subject is so widely misunderstood. I would like to provide a clear way of viewing compensation. My perspective is based upon basic moral law and common sense. Although I am a theologian with an MBA, I will avoid boring you with a litany of Bible verses or micro-economic theories that I studied in graduate school. I will simply say that we should want workers to receive just compensation for their labor. While I would argue that fair wages are morally desirable and necessary for a just society, I also think that the government is a bad guardian of our interests in this matter.

First of all, having government establish fair or appropriate wages that everyone can agree upon would be an extremely cumbersome process, if not impossible. There are scores of little hurdles that would prevent it. After all, there is no objective, international equation that determines what each individual should be paid in a particular time and place. How could there be? How much my labor is worth at a particular time and place is not written in the laws of the universe. In a free society, wages are based upon what someone is willing to pay, just as value is set for a large variety of other goods and services.

For instance, a few years ago, much was made of a wealthy presidential candidate paying \$200 for a haircut. He was called “wasteful” and an “elitist.” While many of us would gladly settle for a \$20 “do,” that did not stop him from using the expensive barber’s services on an ongoing basis. Many of us may find it irksome that some hairdressers get \$200 for a haircut, while others get \$20. But this variation in wages is one of the marks of a free society. Free societies base the value of labor on the willingness of others to pay an individual a certain amount for that labor. The alternative is to force people to work for a fixed amount and to force employers to pay employees a fixed amount, regardless of the economic value of their labor. This coercion reminds me of slavery. As an African-American, I have a special, personal abhorrence against fixing salaries. Taken to its logical conclusion, it is one step away from a 21st century brand of slavery.

But many will ask: “Is this fair that some should receive so much, and others so little?” I would respond: “How does one determine fairness?” And, “Who is going to enforce your vision of fairness?” Naturally, we may want to establish some legal guidelines for personal safety, working conditions, and things of

this nature. But determining wages based on one's subjective idea of fairness is another thing entirely.

As an ex-professional football player (I spent three days in the NFL), my wages in the mid-1970s were nominal. I signed an annual contract for just \$17,500 in 1975, while top-round draft choices might have received a whopping \$40,000. (What a difference 30 years makes!) But I do not begrudge the top draft choices. On the contrary, I am delighted that today working-class kids from the ghetto can rise to millionaire ranks, and not just as athletes. Rags-to-riches scenarios are being lived out in this generation. While you might question the socially redeeming value of the work of some athletes, many of the young black entrepreneurs of this generation have earned the seed money for their work from huge salaries earned in sports or entertainment. Consider Michael Jordan, Sean (Puffy) Combs, Jay-Z, Russell Simmons, and a host of others who are now developing multi-national businesses that are collectively employing thousands who, in turn, are seeing the glass ceiling in the business world shattered. This kind of development of wealth is much better than welfare checks or handouts.

I celebrate these persons' abilities to identify their marketable skills and use them to overcome poor social environments and move into a realm of world-class achievement. Their wealth comes not by government coercion or dishonesty but from the free choices of others who value what they do. This model for personal and community development is achievable only in an economically free culture. Of course, I sometimes wish these folks would take bolder steps to improve the social and moral dimensions of our society. Moreover, some of these figures make poor choices and fail to give to their communities, yet this is their choice to make—not ours. The stinginess of some should not lead us to support

coercive policies that would ultimately harm us all.

Their wealth comes not by government coercion or dishonesty but from the free choices of others who value what they do.

Certainly, it is regrettable that many of us do not have the highly marketable skills that professional entertainers and athletes do. As a result,

there is often a wide disparity between what individuals make for a living. Many people believe that the disparity, in and of itself, is immoral. Others celebrate the fact that in our society one may truly be the captain of his own ship

and navigate the waters of life to his benefit. As a minister, I want everyone to make enough to survive and thrive. Jesus' earthly ministry often focused on preaching good news to the poor. So there's no question that we should seek to help the poor. The question is, what type of economic system gives all of its citizens the best opportunity to maximize their God-given abilities and lift themselves out of poverty?

COUNTERPRODUCTIVE MINIMUM-WAGE LAWS

I am convinced that wage controls, such as minimum-wage laws, are not the way to go. Minimum-wage laws don't make the work of minimum-wage earners more economically valuable. They are merely attempts to artificially reduce a wage gap. While they may help some recipients in the short term, they often hurt small businesses and entrepreneurs, which can reduce the aggregate number of jobs. In fact, the least skilled are often the folks hurt the most, since their labor is worth less to most employers than the minimum wage. If an unemployed laborer's work is worth only \$5 an hour in a particular place, how does he benefit from a law that forbids anyone from hiring him for less than \$10?

Many people assume that "economic justice" will come as a result of massive governmental control over the economy initiated by lawmakers in Washington. Many economists, however, argue that real growth in wages for low-income earners comes from the bottom up.

Let's look at some specifics about minimum wages for a few moments. Nearly 60 percent of all wage and salary workers are paid at hourly rates. These are the jobs that minimum-wage laws target. In 2004, 520,000 (or 0.7 percent of 73.9 million) workers were reported as earning exactly \$5.15 (minimum wage at that time). That may seem regrettable, but those workers tended to be young, single workers between the ages of 16 and 25. Further, barely two percent of those workers continued to earn minimum wages after age 25.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) gives the most comprehensive analysis of the people receiving minimum wage. The segment of the population earning minimum wage is constantly changing. The BLS concluded that 63 percent of minimum-wage workers receive raises within one year of employment and that, after three years, only 15 percent still earned the minimum wage. Few Americans are stuck earning minimum wages indefinitely.

Furthermore, 40 percent of minimum-wage earners live in households with incomes of \$60,000 and higher, and more than 82 percent of minimum-wage earners do not have dependents. This means that these minimum-pay jobs are probably not the main source of income for their household. Only 5.3 percent of minimum-wage earners are from households that are below the official poverty line.

Of course, American minimum wages tend to be fairly low and, in some cities, are not much of a burden. But even in these cases, minimum wages can have surprising unintended consequences, as columnist George F. Will recently explained:

Raising the minimum wage predictably makes work more attractive relative to school for some teenagers, and raises the dropout rate. Two scholars report that in states that allow persons to leave school before 18, a 10 percent increase in the state minimum wage caused teenage school enrollment to drop 2 percent.³³

If Will is correct, a mandated minimum wage can actually work against long-term increases in pay.

In addition, correctly defining an appropriate living wage (as minimum wages are sometimes branded) is highly subjective. The term “living wage” typically means making enough to provide for a family of four. As Thomas Sowell, the well-known author and economist, puts it, “What the so-called living wage really amounts to is simply a local minimum wage....”³⁴

The idea of a “living wage” is popular in various communities, churches, and academic institutions. It sounds nice, but Sowell points out that a mandated living wage actually kills jobs because as the living wage soars, job qualifications also rise. Those workers with fewer skills or less experience may become unemployable

33 George F. Will, “The Right Minimum Wage,” *The Washington Post*, January 4, 2007, p. A17, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/03/AR2007010301619.html> (accessed July 20, 2009).

34 Thomas Sowell, “‘Living Wage’ Kills Jobs,” *Townhall.com*, November 5, 2003 at http://townhall.com/columnists/ThomasSowell/2003/11/05/living_wage_kills_jobs?page=full&comments=true (accessed July 20, 2009).

by the new standards. Sowell poignantly states, “Think about it. Every one of us would be unemployable if our pay rates were raised high enough.”³⁵ Of course, no one will suggest high minimum-pay rates for doctors and lawyers. Those who suffer from such policies are unemployed workers—those who can least afford it.

We want everyone to be able to avoid poverty. We want everyone to be able to pursue their talents and receive just compensation for their efforts. The question is how to best achieve that goal.

Clearly, we should avoid strategies that have not worked in the past. If higher minimum wages could cure poverty, we could end domestic poverty just by setting minimum wages above the poverty

Minimum-wage laws don't make the work of minimum-wage earners more economically valuable. They are merely attempts to artificially reduce a wage gap.

line. And we could end worldwide poverty simply by telling poor nations to legislate higher minimum wages. It's just not that simple. Instead, we need policies that promote free enterprise, job creation, education, and training. These, not misguided federal mandates, allow wealth to be created. And only the creation of real wealth will bring the poor out of poverty in the 21st century, as it has done for countless others in the previous two centuries.

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35 *Ibid.*

RELIGION

Why Faith Is a Good Investment

BY ARTHUR BROOKS, PH.D., AND ROBIN CURRIE



Arthur Brooks



Robin Currie

RELIGIOUS FAITH IS AN IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTIC of America today, just as it has always been. It is generally considered to be a quality-of-life issue—a significant factor for those who practice, but an entirely personal one. However, the practice of religion in America affects not just the particular individual concerned. It has consequences, and beneficial ones at that, for everyone in society.

The scope and scale of those consequences are relatively straightforward in the non-financial sphere (happiness and optimism, for example). More surprisingly for many, however, faith also has financial consequences, and these too benefit American public life. In a nutshell, all the available data tell us that income and practice of one's faith are positively correlated.

Surveys typically show that, on average, religious people do better financially than non-religious people, all other things being equal. For example, the General Social Survey reveals that, in 2004, the average “religious person” (who attended a house of worship once a week or more) earned 8 percent more income than the average “secularist” (who attended once per year or less). There is some variation between religions—for example, practicing Jews earn, on average, about 25 percent more than practicing Christians and people of other religions. Within Christianity, however, denomination seems to matter little with regard to income.

RELIGIOSITY AND INCOME

Even if it is clear that church attendees do better financially than non-attendees, correlation, in itself, does not imply causation. Because of what economists call

exogenous heterogeneity—that is, outside factors affecting both worship and income—it is difficult to prove that church attendance actually causes financial prosperity. There are just too many other factors involved. For example, we know that the strength and intactness of one’s family can increase both religiosity and income. But to prove a causal link between the two variables, we have to use more sophisticated tools.

One idea might be to conduct controlled experiments—like doing drug tests, but with religion. Just imagine, though, what such studies might entail: Over the course of a generation, one group would be fed a diet of Billy Graham sermons, the other the plays of Jean-Paul Sartre. In other words, experiments are an impractical method of finding a causal link between faith and material prosperity.

Fortunately, there are other ways to isolate and examine the causal effects. One of the most ingenious was developed by MIT economist Jonathan Gruber. Gruber attempted to relate religious participation and economic outcomes by analyzing “religious market density” (defined as the proportion of the population in an area that shares an individual’s religion).

All the available data tell us that income and practice of one’s faith are positively correlated.

He found that higher levels of religious market density result in higher levels of income. From this, we can infer causality between religious activity and income. It really does appear that religion in one’s life and community drives up income.

But the question remains: Why is this so? There are four plausible reasons.

First, religious faith builds **healthy social bonds**—what American political scientist Robert Putnam called social capital. Strong connections among individuals increase social cohesion and a sense of community. What are the traits associated with these desirable outcomes? They include honesty, dependability, responsibility, accountability, loyalty, sacrifice, generosity, trustworthiness, and transparency. Such traits—sought and rewarded by all mainstream religions—are factors that make it easier to transact business. Expectations of this kind of behavior from others can create a virtuous cycle, and the practice of trade and commerce can more easily flourish.

Second, religious faith can develop **robust human capital**. As defined by Scotsman Adam Smith, human capital includes skills and knowledge acquired

through education and training. These are the skills that, when coupled with hard work and perseverance, produce economic value and increase material well-being. Religious people, data show, tend to attain higher education levels. In short, all other things being equal, those who live in religious communities do better materially than those who live in secular communities because they are better educated.

Third, religious faith—and the human capital that it builds—encourages the development of **entrepreneurship**. With its emphasis on private ownership of property, exercise of talents, and stewardship of resources, the Judeo-Christian ethic facilitates enterprise, achievement, and the fulfillment of one's potential. Many scholars have argued that these are characteristics of Western nations that were informed by the Judeo-Christian ethic. For example, German social scientist Max Weber famously examined that ethic in a Protestant context, analyzing the sociology of religion and the culture of hard work and prosperity that stems from it. He concluded that a personal religious belief had repercussions for society as a whole. According to Weber, a Protestant Calvinist ethic had the effect of spurring large numbers of people to engage in enterprise, trade, and the generation of wealth in the secular world. While most scholars think Weber overworked the connection between Calvinism and capitalism, his broader insight is confirmed by the data.

And fourth, religious faith promotes **constructive behavior**. One of the first to use quantitative methods to explain this truth was Émile Durkheim. The Jewish-born sociologist had abandoned the faith of his parents at an early age. Yet he acknowledged the importance of religious faith in his classic study *Suicide*, in which he compared the mental states of various groups of Europeans

Religious people tend to forge healthy social bonds, strong human capital, an entrepreneurial approach to life, and constructive forms of behavior.

with their social constraints. Durkheim concluded that those who submitted to moral rules engaged less in destructive behavior than those who exercised the most moral license. People of faith who adhered to the constraints of their reli-

gious group live happier, more productive lives, contributing more fully to the well-being of the societies in which they live.

Let's return, then, to the initial proposition that religious faith is essentially a quality-of-life issue. Few would disagree with this statement. The surprising

truth is that quality of life for believers appears to be manifest in financial (as well as non-financial) ways. Religious people tend to forge healthy social bonds, strong human capital, an entrepreneurial approach to life, and constructive forms of behavior.

INDIVIDUAL PROSPERITY AND SOCIETAL WELL-BEING

This finding is important for public policy because financial benefits to individuals have spillover effects for communities. If practicing their faith increases the earning capacity of religious people in my community, the resulting impact on economic growth will help me—through job opportunities, tax revenues, and increased charity, among other channels. In this sense, at least taken broadly, Judeo-Christian religion is good for all of us, regardless of our more specific religious beliefs.

Secularists, atheists, agnostics, and lapsed Unitarians may not share the four attributes mentioned above. But if they live in communities and societies with people who do, then they likewise will derive a share of the economic benefits that such high levels of religiosity bring. Strong social bonds promote the transaction of business for all. Well-developed human capital promotes general economic mobility. Fulfillment of potential leads to innovation and achievement across the economy. And lives lived within defined moral constraints produce entire societies with less destructive behavior.

One's spiritual well-being not only has a positive impact on one's spiritual life. It similarly improves one's material well-being—and that of one's non-believing neighbor as well.

An individual's belief that his religion is good for his neighbor has always underpinned the work of missionaries. It has inspired great acts of courage, dedication, self-sacrifice, perseverance, determination, and altruism. The findings here provide evidence that serving one's neighbor as a person of faith occurs even without overt acts of evangelism. Indeed, by just being who they are and living how they live on a daily basis, religious practitioners will be helping their neighbors economically, whether they convert them or not. One might go so far as to say that the private matter of faith is an act of public charity.

Perhaps in some instances this is the Good News that many will have to settle for—the realization that my religion is not good for me alone. Whether he

Indeed, by just being who they are and living how they live on a daily basis, religious practitioners will be helping their neighbors economically.

or she is religious or not, it's good for my neighbor, too.

Might divine providence again be the explanation? Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* claims that individu-

als pursuing their own economic self-interest tend also to promote the economic good of their community as a whole. Similarly, those pursuing their own spiritual “self-interest” can also promote the economic good of the community. One might interpret this phenomenon as evidence of not just the “invisible hand” of Adam Smith but of the all-powerful arm of God.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Why Trade Works for Family, Community, and Sovereignty

BY RAMESH PONNURU

NEARLY ALL ECONOMISTS FAVOR FREE TRADE.³⁶ THEY believe that national governments should let products flow in and out of their borders without subjecting to them to special taxes or imposing other kinds of barriers. They believe this for the same reasons they believe that Kansas and Missouri ought to let commerce flow freely between them.

Those reasons are both theoretical and practical. Economic theory suggests that free trade allows different countries to specialize in such a way that everyone is better off, just as it allows different states and different households to specialize. The practical benefits of trade are also well established: Study after study has shown that trade raises living standards, and freeing trade raises them more.

The public at large is more divided than economists on this issue. Many people believe that Americans have “lost jobs” to overseas trade. In recent years, they have worried particularly about “outsourcing.” Economists know that trade is a minor factor in job losses, that trade creates at least as many jobs as it destroys, and that more Americans have gotten jobs from “insourcing” than have lost employment from its opposite.

Much of the public blames the decline of American manufacturing on trade. The flaw in this popular view is that American manufacturing has not actually declined. The share of the population that works in manufacturing has



Ramesh Ponnuru

36 “A 2006 poll of Ph.D. members of the American Economic Association found that 87.5 percent agreed that ‘the U.S. should eliminate remaining tariffs and other barriers to trade.’” N. Gregory Mankiw, “Beyond the Noise on Free Trade,” *The New York Times*, March 16, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/16/business/16view.html> (accessed August 18, 2009).

been dropping for decades because productivity has increased: Each remaining worker can produce a lot more than his predecessors. The number of Americans involved in farming has been dropping for even longer for the same reason: We can use fewer people to produce more food. That isn't a crisis of agricultural decline. That's economic progress. That progress can be wrenching for particular people and communities—but it leaves the vast majority of people better off.

Many social conservatives distrust free trade for additional reasons of their own. They are not generally moved by economic studies that show that trade expands the gross domestic product. Their concerns about trade center on family, community, and sovereignty. They fear that it undermines all three. Their fears are, thankfully, also unfounded. Let's take them one at a time.

PROTECTIONIST MYTHS

Critics of trade believe that international competition brings wages down and thus makes it harder for people to support their families. Trade can, indeed, have this effect on individuals and even on entire industries. So can other economic trends, such as technological development. But just as new technologies benefit most families, so too does trade.

By reducing prices for consumer goods, trade makes family budgets go farther. (How many families shop and save at WalMart? Free trade makes many of those savings possible.) When governments try to protect industries from trade by imposing taxes on imports or sending tax dollars to domestic producers, they make it more expensive for people to buy clothes and food for their children.

Higher taxes on these staples fall particularly heavily on poor families.

By reducing prices for consumer goods, trade makes family budgets go farther.

Protecting some industries also hurts others. For example, whatever benefits protection for the steel industry might yield for its workers must be set against the costs

imposed on the larger group of people who work for steel-using industries. When those companies have to pay more for supplies, they may have to reduce wages or even close plants.

Using protectionism to prevent the decay of communities has a surface appeal because free trade, like free markets generally, promotes an economic dynamism that can undermine settled ways of life. Trade is often blamed for the decline of Rust Belt towns and even large cities such as Detroit.

But we should keep in mind that economic change is often desirable. The shift away from an agriculture-based society was enormously disruptive to society. But how many people really want to go back to the farm? Preventing economic disruption would require a lot more than trade restrictions and would come at an extremely high cost.

If trade protection bought time to soften the blow of economic change for the affected communities, and did so without imposing great costs on everyone else, it might be worth considering. But allegedly “temporary” protection imposes changes of its own: It tends to turn once-thriving industries into permanent wards of the state. (We may be seeing this tendency in Detroit today.) This arrangement typically involves a cozy relationship among big government, big business, and big labor at the expense of taxpayers and consumers. In the long run, this system is bad for nearly everyone.

Nor need trade undermine national sovereignty, either in theory or in practice. Thinking clearly about this question requires getting a handle on what sovereignty is. The phrase “economic sovereignty” has been especially misleading. Free trade, particularly the free movement of capital, tends to reduce the power of national governments: If they get too ambitious, economic activity moves outside their jurisdiction. The threat of that movement is thus a constraint on governmental ambition. But a reduction in government power is not a reduction in national sovereignty. The fact that the federal government cannot control the weather does not mean that we should lament our inability to exercise “meteorological sovereignty.”

Preventing economic disruption would require a lot more than trade restrictions and would come at an extremely high cost.

FREE TRADE AND THE POOR

For decades, the chief method by which governments have brought down barriers to international trade has been through multilateral agreements. So free

trade has come to carry a whiff of “globalism.” Conservatives, and particularly social conservatives, have long been suspicious of global government and other attempts to subordinate U.S. law to supranational organizations.

But it is important to distinguish between supranational organizations that threaten sovereignty and international organizations that facilitate its exercise. NATO is an example of the latter. So is the World Trade Organization. The WTO has no power to keep us from imposing tariffs against the exports of other countries. It merely warns us that if we do, it will give its blessing to the retaliatory moves of those countries—moves that they could have taken even if the WTO did not exist. Nations generally accept the organization’s judgments because doing so is useful to them.

For a contrasting example of an international treaty that threatens sovereignty, look no further than the proposed Kyoto Protocol on global warming. If the U.S. ratified that protocol, it would be committing itself to be bound, in advance and as a matter of law, by the decisions of new international bureaucracies. Free trade constrains governmental power by making governments accountable for bad decisions. Supranational bodies, on the other hand, often expand governmental power and reduce accountability. (Think of them as a cartel of governments.)

One more consideration that weighs in favor of free trade deserves mention. Conservatives are, rightly, quick to reject any claim that the moral imperative to help the poor necessarily means that we should support welfare or foreign-aid programs. But the imperative is, nonetheless, relevant to political debates. As mentioned above, our trade barriers fall most heavily on products that poor Americans disproportionately consume. They also fall most heavily on products that the Third World poor disproportionately produce.

Reducing those barriers would thus aid the poor both at home and abroad—without enmeshing them in dependency, without taking money from taxpayers, and without harming our own economy. To borrow a phrase from Pope John Paul II, it would allow the needy “to enter the circle of exchange.”³⁷

37 Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* Papal Encyclical, Chapter IV, para. 34, May 1, 1991 at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus_en.html (accessed August 31, 2009).

Trade enriches Americans and foreigners, especially the poor. It poses no threat to sovereignty. Governments should not discourage it—and social conservatives should oppose them when they do.

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CULTURE

A Culture of Responsibility

BY EDWIN J. FEULNER, PH.D.



Edwin J. Feulner

“CULTURE” CAN REFER TO MANY THINGS, FROM BALLET to opera, museums to memorials, book clubs to fraternal societies. Wikipedia’s entry on the topic runs more than 40 printed pages. But for those of us working to advance freedom, our primary concern must be how culture forms individuals who guard and exercise their freedom. A culture that inculcates responsibility is especially vital to any sustainable experiment in liberty.

Our culture rests on the twin pillars of liberty and responsibility. They are inseparable, observes F. A. Hayek in his 1960 book *The Constitution of Liberty*:

A free society probably demands more than any other that people be guided in their action by a sense of responsibility which extends beyond the duties exacted by the law.... When men are allowed to act as they see fit, they must also be held responsible for the results of their efforts.³⁸

Professor Hayek further explains that, while responsibility has come to be regarded primarily as a legal concept, “it is, of course, no less a moral concept, a conception which underlies our view of a person’s moral duties. Our whole attitude toward the working of our social order ... is closely tied up with our views about responsibility.”³⁹ This “working of our social order” and duties beyond those “exacted by the law” are what we might call *culture*.

38 F. A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 76. Excerpted in “Responsibility and Freedom,” in Edwin J. Feulner, ed., *The March of Freedom: Modern Classics in Conservative Thought* (Heritage Books 2003), p. 72.

39 *Ibid.*

Culture takes its shape from the character of each of us as individuals and the character of our interactions with one another in community. As Hayek's comments reveal, culture and political order go hand in hand. A free economy and limited government cannot exist apart from a culture of responsibility.

A culture of responsibility is the safeguard that prevents liberty from degenerating into license. It is made up of citizens who possess what the American Founders called “republican virtue”—character traits such as honesty, kindness, trustworthiness, respect for law, fairness, self-discipline, and self-reliance.

Because a culture of responsibility prizes individuals of strong and noble character, it also encourages the institutions that best model and nurture good character. These character-building institutions include families, religious congregations, schools, neighborhoods, business associations, trade unions, civic and service clubs, Boy Scouts, and Little Leagues.

A free economy and limited government cannot exist apart from a culture of responsibility.

These “little platoons,” as Edmund Burke called them, introduce the individual—and particularly the young—to the values and ideals of our larger society. They are entrusted with passing the culture of responsibility down through the generations.

AN AGE OF IRRESPONSIBILITY

Sadly, the culture of responsibility has not fared well in recent years. We've witnessed a coarsening of public life, a loss of respect for good character and personal virtue, and a loss of shame for actions that once brought disrepute. Human nature has never been perfect. But the “better angels of our nature,” to borrow Abraham Lincoln's phrase, call us to acknowledge ideal virtues, even if those virtues represent standards that we can never perfectly attain.

Rather than striving to reach those standards, however, some say that we should lower them to a more “realistic” level—or abandon them altogether. For example, some say it's unrealistic to expect young people to maintain a standard of abstinence until marriage, given that, after all, not all young people will live up to that ideal. But no one is hurt more by such lowering of cultural expectations than young people themselves—or the children brought into the world as the result of their decisions. Fatherlessness has become a problem of extraordinary

proportions in America: today, four out of 10 children are born to unwed mothers. Among black children, that figure is a staggering seven out of 10.

Those statistics will have a profound effect on the lives of millions of children as well as on our culture in general. Children born outside of marriage will have a much more difficult time getting ahead in life educationally and economically. They're more likely to end up dependent on welfare or in prison. And they're more likely to repeat the cycle of out-of-wedlock childbearing when they reach adulthood.

It is a vicious circle. As dependence on the welfare state grows, the welfare state, in turn, erodes freedom and responsibility. As Hayek describes in *The Road to Serfdom*, the welfare state poses a serious threat to individual character. He warns that the "most important change which extensive government control produces is a psychological change, an alteration in the character of the people."⁴⁰ That gradual, almost imperceptible, character change can have enormous consequences. Among recipients of government largesse, the culture of responsibility can easily succumb to an entitlement mentality. For those around them, the welfare state encourages an unhealthy individualism that shrugs off the responsibility to be our brother's keeper and cedes the care for the needs of our neighbors to distant bureaucrats.

An ever-encroaching state also erodes the institutions of family, church, and community, usurping many of the roles they played in prior generations. Pushed to the margins of public life, their character-shaping influence is diminished while that of the state is increased. Public schools hostile to religious expression and public assistance programs that reward idleness influence character in their own way—bending it away from respect for the transcendent and from an individual's responsibility for his personal actions.

Just as social welfare policy can erode a culture of responsibility, so can economic policy. Our economic system provides us freedom to make many decisions

40 F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). Quoted in "Seven Principles of a Free Society," Presidential Address by Edwin J. Feulner Jr. to the 1997 Regional Meeting of the Mont Pelerin Society, in *Intellectual Pilgrims: The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Mont Pelerin Society* (1999), p. 38.

that involve a degree of risk. Risk means that the outcomes may be unfavorable. If we accept the freedom to make decisions involving various risks, however, then we must also accept the companion responsibility when events turn against us and we suffer loss.

Individuals, institutions, and policymakers have made many poor decisions leading up to the market failures that we have recently witnessed. Now, government is heavily involved in trying to resolve those failures and restore the economy to growth. The dangers of heavy government involvement in these processes become more apparent every day. One of the most serious concerns is that when government seeks to protect individuals from the bad consequences of their decisions, it eliminates a vital discipline underlying our economic system. As economist Allan Meltzer commented: “Capitalism without failure is like religion without sin.”

If we seek freedom, let it begin with each of us modeling self-government in our own lives.

When government erases the negative consequences of our decisions, it absolves us of responsibility for our decisions. This distorts all economic processes. For instance, when the government repeatedly steps in to bail out faltering sectors of our economy, it only further disengages freedom from responsibility. What does it communicate, for example, to the 96 percent of Americans who do pay their mortgage on time when the government rescues those who don't?

RECOVERING A CULTURE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Failing to uphold standards of responsibility endangers the legacy of liberty. The good news is that we can restore a culture of responsibility. It is a matter of choice. It begins with the choices each of us makes in our individual lives and extends to the choices we make about our standards for society, whether exerted by the “little platoons” or enacted in law. Specifically, we can:

1. **Model the responsibility of self-government in our own lives.**

Whether student, spouse, stockbroker, or statesman, each of us has a duty to carry out our daily tasks with a sense of moral responsibility for our actions. Our personal, private actions shape the character of our culture, which, in turn, shapes the character of our political

and economic order. If we seek freedom, let it begin with each of us modeling self-government in our own lives.

- 2. Pursue policy that respects personal responsibility, character-forming institutions, and first principles.** As Jack Kemp often reminded us, when you tax something you get less of it, and when you reward something you get more of it. Welfare reform showed the power of changing the incentive structure in policy. After decades of telling single mothers they could continue to get a welfare check as long as they didn't get a job and didn't get married, the historic welfare reform act of 1996 required recipients to look for work. It also began to promote marriage. The success was dramatic: Welfare rolls were cut in half and black child poverty dropped to its lowest level in U.S. history.

As we pursue reform in other policy areas, we would do well to seek policies that conform to America's first principles. Our Founders understood that freedom and responsibility are inseparable. They created a Constitution that established a strong foundation of principles, respecting the dignity of a free and responsible people to apply those principles in their daily lives without dictating to them. In so doing, the Founders created the conditions that have allowed America to cope with change by balancing the best of tradition with the best of progress—in contrast to the revolutionary and central-planning spasms that have wracked other nations. These conditions have inspired many an entrepreneur, philanthropist, and charity worker in the course of American history—individuals who see beyond the status quo to a future that better realizes human potential.

- 3. Explain the full benefits of freedom and responsibility.** The combination of freedom and responsibility yields economic as well as moral benefits. Our political and economic order is materially as well as morally attractive. Some statist and centralizers have caricatured

capitalism as selfish individualism, but the historical record proves otherwise. A market-based economy depends on virtues and values that stabilize and harmonize a multitude of competing interests in society. Hayek described how he fell in love with the Greek word for “to exchange” (*katallattein*) when he learned that it also meant “to admit into the community” and “to change from enemy to friend.”⁴¹ The true purpose of free exchange, we must always remember, is to make friends of our enemies.

THE TASK BEFORE US

We have important work to do in restoring a culture of freedom, a work that will require broad engagement. As I told a gathering of the Mont Pelerin Society in 1997, “We must reach beyond the economic realm to the historians and political philosophers ... and to businessmen, artists, and the religious to build the ‘critical intellectual mass’ to address these questions creatively and constructively and move toward Hayek’s goal of articulating a comprehensive ‘philosophy of freedom.’”⁴²

That philosophy of freedom envisions a society firmly based on the “little platoons” of family, school, church, and neighborhood rather than the “nanny state.” It will be a genuinely compassionate society in which people look after the welfare of the neediest members of their community because they recognize a moral obligation to do so—and not because the state forces them to pay for social programs that end up doing more harm than good. Above all, it will be a society that recognizes that our most precious resource is the human spirit, and that a spirit of creativity and enterprise can flourish only in a climate of freedom.

A market-based economy depends on virtues and values that stabilize and harmonize a multitude of competing interests in society.

41 F. A. Hayek, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty: The Mirage of Social Justice*, Vol. 2 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul PLC, 1976), pp. 108–109.

42 Edwin J. Feulner Jr., “We Are All Liberals Now—Or Are We?” Presidential Address to the 1997 Special Gathering of the Mont Pelerin Society, in *Intellectual Pilgrims*, p. 23.

Contemplating the current state of our culture can invite despair and convince us that we're on an inevitable downward spiral, that things will only, always, get worse. To ward off such pessimism, I take inspiration, as have so many others, from the late Pope John Paul II, a man who experienced the totalitarian suppression of virtue and human dignity for many years—and a man whose indefatigable spirit played such a large role in restoring a culture of responsibility in his lifetime. This was his charge to us:

We must not be afraid of the future. We must not be afraid of man. It is no accident that we are here. Each and every human person has been created in the “image and likeness” of the One who is the origin of all that is. We have within us the capacities for wisdom and virtue. With these gifts, and with the help of God's grace, we can build in the next century and the next millennium a civilization worthy of the human person, a true culture of freedom. We can and must do so!⁴³

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43 Pope John Paul II, “The Moral Structure of Freedom,” Address to the United Nations, October 5, 1995, at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1995/october/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_05101995_address-to-uno_en.html (accessed August 13, 2009).

PROPERTY

Property and the Pursuit of Happiness

BY REPRESENTATIVE MICHELE BACHMANN

THE WORDS LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF happiness embody the spirit of the American founding better than any others. They evoke images of American patriots taking a sacred oath to lay aside their own rights as patrician property owners to give birth to a nation in which everyone would have such opportunities, regardless of birth or station.

It may seem passé in this age of Twitter and texting, but a brief examination of these first phrases of our founding document is worth doing now more than ever.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights”—rights that only God can give. Government must acknowledge these rights, but can neither give them nor take them away. They are the providential jurisdiction of God.

“...that among these are Life...” Life is the most personal of all rights, the one that ascribes dignity and worth to every human being. Without life, we can exercise no other rights. Therefore, it is the ultimate human right.

“...Liberty...”—the right to be free to follow our conscience and free in our decision-making.

“...and the pursuit of Happiness,” which requires economic liberty.

“That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...” Government doesn’t impose its will on the people; the people empower government to maintain for them an ordered liberty that protects our rights and prevents both the state and other people from violating our rights.

The Founders chose “Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” over the triad more common at the time, “Life, liberty, and property.” But their choice did not diminish property. Their view was similar to that of English philosopher



Michele Bachmann

John Locke, who argued that property is a natural right that is derived explicitly from one's own labor. The idea of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, then, entails a right to own property—not necessarily the right and guarantee to an item or piece of land but, rather, the underlying principle and ideal that, if one chooses, one can strive for as much or as little as one would like and that no one can take it away. Our Founding Fathers did not expect equality for all in terms of property and possessions, but they did aspire to a society that allows its citizens to be free to aim for what they wish, as long as they do not violate the rights of others.

The brain trust of the Founders who articulated our first principles fearlessly declared that our breaking of the bond with Great Britain was justified by natural law, which is the universal and God-given understanding of morality and human rights. The natural law applies to all people and all nations throughout the world for all time. Since they are grounded in this natural law, if we treat our God-

The idea of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, then, entails a right to own property.

given liberties as if they are gifts of a man-made government, we threaten those very liberties with extinction. When we forget the origin of our rights, when we forget

the principles from which our rights sprang into being, then we've abdicated the liberties endowed by our Creator.

REPLACING RIGHTS WITH ENTITLEMENTS

Today in Washington we are witnessing mass amnesia regarding the origin of our rights. We have mortgaged away our children's future with trillion-dollar deficits as far as the eye can see. In doing so, we have been spending away their rich inheritance of liberty. Personal liberty and economic liberty are entwined. You cannot have personal liberty without economic liberty, nor economic liberty without personal liberty. As we chip away at economic freedoms by taxing, spending, and borrowing ad infinitum, we loosen the bonds that secure political liberty.

In recent months, government has increasingly become the "chief decider" for all Americans, the arbiter of fairness. Government is choosing whose mortgage should be subsidized and whose shouldn't. Government is deciding whose student loans need to be repaid and whose don't. Outcomes that used to be the reward for hard work, thrift, and vision (such as a home and a college education) are increasingly seen as entitlements—pseudo-rights that the government can

offer only by drawing away from our real rights grounded in natural law. Risks that made the rewards of our investment all the sweeter have been erased. And if government has to take one person's property to provide that entitlement to another, so be it. In this case, one person's entitlement comes at the cost of another's basic rights.

As we chip away at economic freedoms by taxing, spending, and borrowing ad infinitum, we loosen the bonds that secure political liberty.

This contradicts both the spirit and letter of America's founding documents. It is not the government's role to make such decisions for its citizenry. The American experiment was born of the right of an individual to his or her own liberty and freedom—the right to control his or her own destiny within the bounds set by a proper rule of law. In its very essence, the American Experiment is about our being our own deciders.

Oppressive societies are alive and well in the world today, and the primary characteristic of those who belong to this notorious club is the stringent restriction on personal property. Our Constitution has basic safeguards to prevent the government from seizing one's private property for public use. More specifically, the Takings Clause of the Fifth Amendment states that no private property shall be taken by the government for public use without just compensation to the owner.

The words of the Takings Clause are simple and provide little room for creative interpretations, if read straightforwardly. But, that clause has been pummeled beyond recognition in recent years, most notably, perhaps, in the Supreme Court decision in *Kelo v. City of New London*.

Under the Fifth Amendment, the United States may invoke its power of eminent domain to take private property—known as “condemnation”—only for a “public use.” Typical cases had been about a person losing his home to make possible a highway right of way. In *Kelo*, however, five Justices gave government unmitigated authority to determine what “public use” means. In this case, private property was taken from one private property owner and given to another. This was justified, according to the Court, because the government had determined that the receiving private property owner would use it for a purpose more beneficial to the public good. The majority agreed with the Connecticut Supreme Court's determination that if a project creates new jobs, increases tax

and other city revenues, and revitalizes a depressed urban area, it then qualifies as a “public” use.

In dissent, the remaining four Justices insisted that “under the majority’s opinion, technically all private property would be vulnerable enough to be taken as long as it could be upgraded under the banner of economic development.” Little did we know then how far that proposition could subsequently expand.

PROPERTY: AN ENDANGERED CONCEPT

Today, we are witnessing the dissolution of the dividing line between private and public use. Consider, for example, the actions of the Administration’s Auto Task Force. Government has kicked private business out of the board room and installed itself as CEO, CFO, and board of directors of American automobile manufacturing companies. The government is making decisions about who to hire and who to fire, how much to budget for advertising, and what car lines to continue to manufacture.

In the case of Chrysler, the Auto Task Force has turned basic American legal principles on their head, by leapfrogging the unsecured debts of the United Auto Workers (UAW) ahead of secured debts of legitimate bondholders. In bankruptcy, secured creditors get preference because they loaned money on the contractual promise that if the debt was unpaid they would get specific property back. The Administration may have considered its political promise to the UAW to supersede that contractual promise; but in doing so, it has set an ugly precedent.

Government is grossly overstepping its boundaries by substituting its own interest over that of property owners. And, at some point the soft glow of

Government is grossly overstepping its boundaries by substituting its own interest over that of property owners.

“change” is going to fade and someone is going to demand to know where the U.S. Constitution gives government the authority to do this. We have made a critical, devastating wrong turn, and it is incumbent

upon us all to restore our nation to the principles of our founding documents and the intentions of our Constitution’s Framers who valued the role and free will of the individual over an imposing government.

From that constitutional principle, the United States has developed a set of rules and regulations that allow individuals not only to attain a piece of physical

property that they can call their own, but also to use that property to expand their wealth and increase their capital.

On July 5, 1802, The Reverend William Emerson preached a sermon on American independence and made this observation:

Those venerable men from whom you boast your descent brought with them to these shores an unconquerable sense of liberty. They felt that mankind were universally entitled to be free; that this freedom, though modified by the restrictions of social compact, could yet never be annulled....

Concerning this liberty, however, they entertained no romantic notions. They neither sought nor wished the freedom of an irrational, but that of a rational being; not the freedom of savages, not the freedom of anchorites, but that of civilized and social man. Their doctrine of equality was admitted by sober understandings. It was an equality not of wisdom, but of right; not a parity of power, but of obligation. They felt and advocated a right to personal security; to the fruits of their ingenuity and toil; to reputation; to choice of mode in the worship of God; and to such a liberty of action as consists with the safety of others and the integrity of the laws.

In their eyes honor had no allurements, wealth no value, and existence itself no charms, unless liberty crowned the possession of these blessings.⁴⁴

In its truest sense, the property to which our nation's guiding documents refer denotes not only the narrow interests of material goods, but also our ideas and inventions, as well as our broader human interests and aspirations. The pursuit of happiness doesn't have a street address, nor is it something you can put in a bank vault; yet it is a vital part of our right to property. Today, both the tangible and intangible forms of property are losing their meaning and their context to government avarice and public lethargy. We are not only losing the actual

44 William Emerson, "Fourth of July Oration (July 5, 1802)," *Classics of American Political and Constitutional Thought, Volume 1*, ed. Scott J. Hammond, Kevin R. Hardwick, Howard L. Lubert (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007), pp. 760–761.

property, but also the meaning that sustained those venerable men of whom Reverend Emerson spoke. We are losing one of the greatest gifts bequeathed to us by our Founding Fathers. We must reclaim it before it is too late.

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ENVIRONMENT

Conserving Creation

BY TONY PERKINS

IN 1907, PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT CALLED together a “Forest Congress” in Washington, D.C., composed of both lumbermen and conservationists. In his opening address, he used two terms to describe his view of how to treat our natural resources: *use* and *preservation*. He saw these two ideas—prudent use and wise preservation—not as opponents but as partners in the venture to keep America both green and productive.

Conservatives should approach environmental issues in the same spirit: Sustaining our natural resources for both their beauty and their utility is good public policy.

Yet today, many in academia, government, and the media seem to regard man as a cancer on the planet to be stopped, rather than as the ultimate “renewable resource.” And they seem to view the environment as an entity with almost divine characteristics that merits not just good stewardship but virtual worship.



Tony Perkins

THE VAGARIES OF CLIMATE

Let's begin with some perspective. In the 1880s, terrible blizzards paralyzed the United States; New York City took weeks to dig out. At that time, of course, the concern was about the earth's *cooling*. By the 1920s, *warming* was on the agenda. America suffered major flooding in 1927, and farmers in Oklahoma and Arkansas were driven from their homes by the terrible dust storms of the '20s and '30s. This turned vast tracts of the American heartland into a Dust Bowl. The pendulum swung again about 35 years ago. *Newsweek* magazine warned readers of “a new Ice Age.” Once again, it was *cooling* that worried some scientists as well as their eager supporters in the media and, consequently, many Americans.

Sustaining our natural resources for both their beauty and their utility is good public policy.

At the moment, of course, the concern is, again, warming. But swings in climate are nothing new. They happen over the course of a single century and throughout many millennia. As noted by geologist Dr. R. Timothy Patterson of Canada's Carleton University:

Climate stability has never been a feature of planet Earth. The only constant about climate is change; it changes continually and, at times, quite rapidly. Many times in the past, temperatures were far higher than today, and occasionally, temperatures were colder. As recently as 6,000 years ago, it was about 3C warmer than now. Ten thousand years ago, while the world was coming out of the thousand-year-long "Younger Dryas" cold episode, temperatures rose as much as 6C in a decade—100 times faster than the past century's 0.6C warming that has so upset environmentalists.⁴⁵

So the climate change we are currently experiencing is neither new nor unprecedented. With every minor shift in the weather, however, there seems to have been a corresponding shift in scientific and media preoccupation with either warming or cooling. Calmer, if not cooler, heads need to prevail.

THE ROOTS OF MODERN ENVIRONMENTALISM

No one disputes the fact that the West went through a period of rapid industrialization that polluted air and water and caused serious environmental damage in some places. Even today, throughout the developing world, regard for the environment often is far from the top priority, since basic survival is still at stake. In North America, however, where the "Green Movement" is at near fever-pitch, enormous strides have been made—and quickly forgotten—in recent decades.

Still, the most extreme environmentalists want to return the human population to a more primitive state, even if they hurt the environment in doing so. The self-named Earth Liberation Front took credit for torching a Vail, Colorado, ski resort in 1998, releasing massive smoke into the atmosphere. They have burned

45 R. Timothy Patterson, "Read the Sunspots," *Financial Post* (Canada), June 20, 2007, at <http://www.canada.com/nationalpost/financialpost/comment/story.html?id=597d0677-2a05-47b4-b34f-b84068db11f4&p=4> (accessed August 12, 2009).

SUVs, homes, and university facilities, sending airborne pollutants far and wide—all in the name of the environment.

The Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and a host of other environmental groups are less radical in their conduct yet often call for dramatic, counterproductive solutions to real or perceived problems. Walling off forests, mineral-rich lands, and coal fields from development or so restricting construction that costs rise prohibitively high, our national policies too often reflect the agenda of the environmental Left rather than commonsense approaches that allow market-based incentives to work efficiently.

Much of this was inspired by a distorted interpretation of the Judeo-Christian view of the environment. This misinterpretation was immortalized by Lynn White's highly influential 1967 *Science* magazine article, "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis." White pegged the source of our troubles in the Judeo-Christian ethic, writing: "Both our present science and our present technology are so tinctured with Christian arrogance toward nature that no solution for our ecologic crisis can be expected from them alone." He even asserted that since "the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not.... [*We*] shall have a worsening ecologic crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man."⁴⁶ [Emphasis added.]

Sadly, White's misrepresentation of biblical teaching was received unblinkingly by many of his disciples.

Contrary to White's claims, however, the Scriptural instruction is that "the earth is the Lord's, and all the fullness thereof." This demands respect and wisdom as to its use. The Bible nowhere justifies raw exploitation. The "dominion" of wise stewards is not the domination of a tyrant.

White's call for a religious offensive against the Judeo-Christian understanding of nature has largely been fulfilled. In the words of columnist Charles Krauthammer, "Environmentalists are Gaia's priests, instructing us in her

Rather than seeing us as responsible stewards, radical environmentalism sees man as the enemy of the environment, not the solution to environmental problems.

46 Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science*, March 10, 1967.

proper service and casting out those who refuse to genuflect. And having proclaimed the ultimate commandment—carbon chastity—they are preparing the supporting canonical legislation that will tell you how much you can travel, what kind of light you will read by, and at what temperature you may set your bedroom thermostat.”⁴⁷

Rather than seeing us as responsible stewards, radical environmentalism sees man as the enemy of the environment, not the solution to environmental problems.

MAN AS THE PROBLEM

In *The Ethics of Environmental Concern*, Robin Attfield writes:

The scientific view [teaches us that] man differs from the other animals not in kind but in degree. He is an animal among his fellow animals, and has no dominion over them except insofar as his intelligence makes him their effective superior. As an animal he is mortal, and made of matter like everything else, for there is no soul and no Creator, nor anything else which cannot be investigated empirically. Indeed there may be nothing more distinctive about man than the absence of body hair.⁴⁸

Attfield has confused philosophical materialism with science. And that common confusion has consequences. This perspective—man as mere matter—leads to a larger belief among some environmentalists that human population has grown too fast, and that human progeny are a curse, not a blessing. If we are merely intellectually higher mammals, they reason, then we need to be culled and limited like any other overgrown flock.

The radical environmental “ethicist” Peter Singer follows this logical train to the very end of the line. Singer has argued that “the traditional view of the sanctity of human life will collapse under pressure from scientific, technological and demographic developments.”⁴⁹

47 Charles Krauthammer, “Moving Toward Energy Rationing,” RealClearPolitics.com, May 30, 2008, at http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2008/05/moving_toward_rationing.html (accessed June 30, 2009).

48 Robin Attfield, *The Ethics of Environmental Concern* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2004), p. 52.

49 Peter Singer, “The Sanctity of Life,” Foreign Policy (September/October 2005).

Dehumanization leads many on the environmental Left to support efforts to drastically prune the growth of the human population. Ironically, it is depopulation, not “overpopulation,” that is the gravest threat to our future. Using the United Nations’ own data, demographer Nick Eberstadt warns of an “Old Age Tsunami”—not only in the developed West but also in countries such as China, India, Korea, Russia, and even the Arab world. Such evidence should lead us to question why U.S. tax dollars go to fund such anti-birth outfits as the U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA), Planned Parenthood, and a host of U.N. conferences on various issues.

Fears of overpopulation have led to profound moral mischief. Justice Harry Blackmun expressed concern about overpopulation in his 1973 opinion in *Roe v. Wade*. Forty-five million U.S. children have been aborted since then. Elsewhere, claims of overpopulation have led to other gross abuses of human rights. In China alone, since the early 1980s, the “one child” policy has resulted in millions of forced abortions and widespread female infanticide. According to a recent report in the *BMJ*, a publication of the British Medical Association, China’s policies have resulted not in population reduction as such but rather in a marriage-age population composed of 32 million more men than women.⁵⁰

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

The late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan once complained that our society has defined deviancy down. We have also defined down our understanding of environmental stewardship.

This is not recent. Paul Ehrlich’s 1970 book, *The Population Bomb*, claimed that the world would be hit by famine, revolutions, and wars—all because of overpopulation. For environmental reasons, Ehrlich argued, we needed population control on a global scale.

50 Wei Xing Zhu, Li Lu, and Therese Hesketh, “China’s Excess Males, Sex Selective Abortion, and One Child Policy: Analysis of Data from 2005 National Intercensus Survey,” *BMJ*, April 9, 2009 at http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/338/apr09_2/b1211?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=chinese+population&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&fdate=4/1/2009&tdate=5/31/2009&resourcetype=HWCIT (accessed July 20, 2009).

In 1980, the late Julian Simon, a noted University of Maryland economist, bet Ehrlich \$1,000 that over the next decade the real prices of any five commodities would go *down*. Simon easily won that challenge. All five commodities were *more* plentiful and less expensive (adjusted for inflation) by the decade's end.⁵¹ But the fact that events have proved Ehrlich's doomsday predictions false has not made him a dishonored prophet.

What has been discredited, and should be dishonored, are radical environmentalism's policies that have done great damage to people in the developing world. For example, after the ban on DDT, inspired by Rachel Carson's best-selling book, *Silent Spring*, malaria has claimed millions of lives throughout the lesser-developed countries. Although some DDT spraying has occurred in the developing world in recent years, Robert Gwadz of the National Institutes of Health estimates that as many as 20 million people may have died of malaria because of the global ban on DDT. Whatever the exact number, the toll has been enormous.

Or consider ethanol, a corn-derivative fuel that some environmentalists hail as a cure for automobile carbon emissions. As more corn goes to fuel, less goes to the poor in developing countries where for generations corn has been a staple. Ironically, ethanol production is far from clean. *Time* magazine devoted a major story to what it called "the clean energy scam," noting:

The biofuel boom is doing exactly the opposite of what its proponents intended: it's dramatically accelerating global warming, imperiling the planet in the name of saving it. Corn ethanol, always environmentally suspect, turns out to be environmentally disastrous. Even cellulosic ethanol made from switchgrass, which has been promoted by eco-activists and eco-investors ... looks less green than oil-derived gasoline. Meanwhile, by diverting grain and oilseed crops from dinner plates to fuel tanks, biofuels are jacking up world food prices and endangering the hungry.⁵²

As David Stirling of The Heartland Institute asked, "What kind of ethos could motivate federal officials to elevate the concerns of mice and rats over those

51 Julian Simon, *The Ultimate Resource 2* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 32–33.

52 Michael Grunwald, "The Clean Energy Scam," *Time*, March 27, 2008.

of human beings in their darkest hour of need?”⁵³ The answer: The wrong understanding of the nature of man.

WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

For decades, Americans’ Judeo-Christian roots have encouraged us to conserve what has been viewed as God’s creation. While we have not always lived up to our ideals, we should not minimize the gains we have made. Since the early 1970s, our rivers, lakes, and skies are demonstrably cleaner. Not so long ago, Ohio’s Cuyahoga River actually caught fire because of pollution! It has now made a recovery that many claimed was impossible. And a few decades ago, wealthy Pittsburghers often went home at noon from their downtown offices—to change their sooty, formerly white shirts.

Our successes in environmental protection have been formidable. For example, according to former Delaware Governor Pete DuPont:

Since 1970, the year of the first Earth Day, America’s population has increased by 42%, the country’s inflation-adjusted gross domestic product has grown 195%, the number of cars and trucks in the United States has more than doubled, and the total number of miles driven has increased by 178%. But during these 35 years of growing population, employment, and industrial production, the Environmental Protection Agency reports, the environment has substantially improved. Emissions of the six principal air pollutants have decreased by 53%. Carbon monoxide emissions have dropped from 197 million tons per year to 89 million; nitrogen oxides from 27 million tons to 19 million, and sulfur dioxide from 31 million to 15 million. Particulates are down 80%, and lead emissions have declined by more than 98%.⁵⁴

These achievements are seldom heralded. Instead, the environmental Left browbeats even young children into accepting a set of glum ideas that bode

53 Quoted in Jay Lehr, Ph.D., “Activists’ Excesses Called to Account,” The Heartland Institute, at http://www.heartland.org/publications/environment%20climate/article/24379/Activists_Excesses_Called_to_Account.html (accessed August 21, 2009).

54 Pete DuPont, “Don’t Be Very Worried,” *The Wall Street Journal*, May 23, 2006.

dangerously for our future: Humans are exploiters. Population growth is evil. And the earth has the characteristics of a deity and thus merits not just good stewardship but worship.

These claims reject the Judeo-Christian teaching that man, the image-bearer of the God of all creation, has a duty to optimize the productivity of the earth in a responsible but efficient manner. Stewardship—caring for and using wisely what has been entrusted to us—is the true biblical model. It also comports with one of the most endangered intellectual species of our time, common sense.

From a purely environmental perspective, the socialist countries of the world not only sacrificed millions of human lives and human liberty, they also raped the planet. The former USSR gave the world the nuclear catastrophe at Chernobyl. Similarly, Communist China had to shut down all factories in its capital region *for two weeks* prior to the 2008 Beijing Olympics. This was so the athletes could breathe and the spectators could see the stadium scoreboards! Americans should take no lessons from socialist regimes regarding the environment.

We must reaffirm an environmental policy that acknowledges our Creator, honors human centrality and importance, and respects the created order. This is morally right and, in practical terms, simply makes sense. Creating sound environmental policy through a balance of well-documented scientific data and a recognition of the obvious need for minerals and ores, roads and construction, and

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food and water supplies will work to the benefit of all.

This chapter began by mentioning Theodore Roosevelt's Forest Congress. I'll close with a telling story about a presidential train trip he took to the West

Coast. Along the way, his train stopped at many a small town. Farmers and their wives brought their children to see the famous "Rough Rider." TR would speak from the rear of the train, commending these farm communities on their bumper crops of wheat, corn, rye, and sorghum. But the best bumper crop, the President said, was the large number of healthy, happy American *babies* he saw.

Roosevelt understood that human beings are the greatest, most noble and most beautiful of all God's creations and resources. He understood that people are not the adversaries of a clean, healthy environment and that, on the contrary,

they are not only essential to the wise care of that environment but are the centerpiece of it.

Without this perspective, the radical wing of the environmental movement will continue mounting anti-human environmental campaigns. With it, we can launch a new era in which sound science and respect for creation are balanced with the realities of human needs and economic growth. That balance can be achieved. Let's pursue it with boldness, wisdom, and courage.

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EDUCATION

A Unified Vision for Education Choice

BY RANDY HICKS



Randy Hicks

CONSERVATIVES OF ALL STRIPES VALUE THE FREE MARKET, but almost none would say, if pressed, that they support the concept of free markets as an end in itself. Instead, most would say that they support “freedom” generally and free markets specifically because freedom and the competition it encourages produce the conditions in which humans are best able to thrive. Of all the realistic alternatives, it is the system most fitting to human dignity.

As our Founders were keenly aware, however, for man to live in freedom he must be *educated* in the classical sense of the term. He must develop the requisite skills and knowledge to master the world around him. More importantly, he must acquire the moral and ethical training to master himself.

In the U.S. today, the public education system works for many. But too often it fails to do these two most basic things it was intended to do: to educate children so that they can compete with their peers at home and abroad and to prepare them morally and ethically to manage their passions.

We know that this failure to educate hurts poor and African-American communities disproportionately because the public system locks students into schools based upon their zip code, which is in large part determined by income. If you are wealthy, you can buy a home in a district with better public schools, home school, or send your children to private schools. If you are poor, however, your school choice is as limited as your ability to move. Unintentionally, the monopoly-like structure of the public system, which limits choice, has resulted in modern-day, government-enforced segregation—often by race or class, but ultimately by income. It serves to keep poor families poor and wealthy families wealthy by giving to each new generation a predetermined, and often poor, quality of education.

Combined with the failure to educate, especially to educate poor children, the public system is rightfully criticized for its failure to teach moral and ethical

values—with the exception, perhaps, of fashionable and politically correct values that tend to contradict traditional values. The second President of our country, John Adams, had this to say in an address to the military in 1798:

We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.⁵⁵

In 1947, the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. expressed similar sentiments in an article for the Morehouse College student newspaper, *The Maroon Tiger*:

Education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society.... We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.⁵⁶

Teaching morality and ethics is not critical in our society *just* because we want people to be good. Morality and ethics are prerequisites to sustaining the freedom provided to Americans by our Constitution. That freedom is only possible over the long haul if man is able to control his own sinful impulses and direct those tendencies to positive ends. It is man's willingness and ability to control his lesser impulses that also allows our free-market system to function. American-style capitalism is possible because business people, generally, embrace honesty, fair dealing, and good faith negotiating—all hallmarks of personal ethics. In the absence of these, government must legislate or regulate (and, most often, over-regulate) to fill the void created by a lack of ethics.

Of course, any serious assessment of the public education system must acknowledge the role that family fragmentation plays in predicting academic

55 Charles Francis Adams, *The Works of John Adams* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1854) p. 229.

56 Martin Luther King Jr., "The Purpose of Education," *The Maroon Tiger*, Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia, January/February 1947, at <http://www.ncat.edu/~univstud/The%20Purpose%20of%20Education.pdf> (accessed July 20, 2009).

success or failure. With roughly half of all children spending at least part of their childhood in single-parent homes, not all American academic ills can be laid at the feet of public education. Still, the systemic limitations in a virtually closed market have rendered the public schools inflexible and incapable of responding to new needs and conditions.

Ironically, the nation's public schools are just adequate enough to anesthetize many Americans. They do not directly experience the painful realization that far too many children—mostly poor—are locked into schools that are systemically incapable of imparting the knowledge, skills, and values required to hold down jobs and form stable families. As a result, although educational choice fares well in public polls, it has yet to reach the critical mass necessary to effect widespread reform.

MONOPOLY VS. COMPETITION IN EDUCATION

It is not difficult to figure out why our public education system is failing our children. It is failing because, in most significant ways, it is a government-sponsored monopoly. Conservatives will agree that a monopoly in almost any market will create problems for consumers because it need not compete with regard to price nor respond to the needs of consumers. The same holds true for students and families who are the consumers of public education.

Public education's monopoly status has the characteristics of any other monopoly. Because it is government-funded, the public system has a powerful financial advantage over private competitors. For families to choose a private education, they must be willing to pay for that education twice—once in taxes to the public system that they will not use and once for tuition to a private institution that they will. For most families, the cost is prohibitive and the public system becomes the default “choice.” And

Because it best accommodates the natural human drive to improve our lives and the lives of those closest to us, educational choice is desperately needed.

like other businesses that have enjoyed a monopoly status for years, the public education system has developed a web of constituencies (from administrators to teachers to bus drivers) who are willing to spend

tremendous sums of money to maintain the status quo and protect their personal interests, without regard to the needs of students and families.

In seeking their personal interests at the expense of education recipients, those in the education establishment expose the central problem with our system and with monopolies generally. At their core, monopolies misdirect our natural pursuit of self-interest into socially harmful, rather than beneficial, outcomes. If we agree, as I believe all conservatives can, that individual humans are naturally driven by self-interest, then we can recognize that the organizations that we create will also tend toward pursuing self-interest. Economists recognize that the pursuit of self-interest is our tendency—both as individuals and collectively. The great genius behind the free market, which entails competition and market incentives, is that it manages to harness and channel self-interest (and even its disordered state, selfishness) to create goods and services that provide for the needs of the community. In many ways, the free market is the best voluntary structural approximation to altruism that humans have devised. The market can direct even our fallen instincts into socially beneficial results.

In contrast, a monopoly, rather than harnessing self-interest in a way that can benefit others, encourages the worst aspects of self-interest to run amok. A monopoly intensifies and entrenches the worst of human nature by providing virtually no check or counterbalance to selfish pursuits. Instead of encouraging producers to focus on the needs of the consumer, a monopoly encourages producers (in this case, education providers) primarily to amplify their power by further entrenching themselves and illegitimately driving out threatening competition. This is an apt description of the current state of public education.

SCHOOL CHOICE AND THE ROLE OF PARENTS

Because it best accommodates the natural human drive to improve our lives and the lives of those closest to us, educational choice—that is, a competitive market for primary and secondary education—is desperately needed. For the same reason, parents should have greater control over the education of their children. All things being equal, parents are closest to their children and have far more detailed knowledge of the child's skills and needs than even the most well-intentioned education official. And no factor is more compelling than the reality that the family has the greatest interest in the child's success. The very existence and perpetuation of a family rests on its ensuring that its children have the skills necessary to succeed in life. The family is best situated to make educational decisions because

it stands to lose the most from a failure to educate its children. Government has a similar, but much more generic, interest; its interest can never be as strong or specific as the urgency felt by the family.

When parents exercise their choice, it also places a healthy limit on the power of government by keeping power localized to society's foundational unit, the family. In practice, this limitation on government stems from two facts. First, if families take care of their children's educational needs, government will not feel compelled to intervene. Second, if families understand that they have a vested interest in directing their children's education, they will jealously guard against encroachments upon their authority to do so.

Rhetorically, conservatives have much to learn in communicating the truth of these ideas. Although some speak in terms that can attract the average observer, too many of us speak a language that is native to our ways of thinking but is perceived by others as being cold, disconnected, or extreme. Some conservatives speak of choice in terms of efficiency, competition, cost-effectiveness, and free markets. Others speak in terms of morality, religion, discrimination, and parental control. While each of these arguments is legitimate and worthy of consideration, each is also highly theoretical and nuanced in ways that can hardly capture the attention (much less the hearts and passions) of those we are trying to influence.

The common ground unifying these various arguments is, again, our commitment to the dignity of the individual. Most Americans share this conviction, however inconsistently. Moreover, school choice arguments can be framed prag-

The common ground unifying these various arguments is, again, our commitment to the dignity of the individual.

matically as an answer to the question that is native to each of us, namely, "What difference would education choice make in my life?" Cutting through the theory, conservatives must be able to say to the student that choice means that he or she will have access

to a quality education and the brighter future it implies. To parents, conservatives must be able to say that, with school choice, their children will be better educated and better prepared for life than under a government-dominated system.

Choice most certainly will bring cost savings and greater parental control, but until our language demonstrates a determined and unified concern for the well-being of the individual child (and, by extension, the family), we will not win the rhetorical battle over school choice.

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