Chapter 5

God's Work in the World: The Deep Compatibility of Real Liberalism with Any Abrahamic Religion

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Abstract I propose, in brief, an intimate, perhaps desirable, but anyway necessary, connection between free will in Abrahamic theology and free action in liberal ideology. The economy, its work, its consumption, even its banking, are not inconsistent with a Christian life if achieved by free will. That is to say, contrary to a century-long supposition among theologians and their enemies, belief in a just and loving God does not entail socialism. The Christian gospels and many a Christian theologian attack wealth, surprisingly harshly by the standards of the rest of the world's religious canon. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the nineteenth century, a bourgeois but Christian Europe invented the idea of socialism. But statism is by no means necessary for a Christian community. I gesture here towards a much longer case made earlier and recently by me and other Christian admirers of commercially tested betterment. The great liberal era was brief, from 1776 to 1848. It established freedom of religion. But freedom is freedom is freedom. A free-willed person should be, in God's eyes, free from human interference in religion and behavior and business.

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surprising, therefore, that in the nineteenth century, a bourgeois but Christian Europe invented the idea of socialism. Marx and Engels wrote fiercely about it in 1848: “Nothing is easier than to give Christian asceticism a Socialist tinge. Has not Christianity declaimed against private property. . . ? Christian Socialism is but the holy water with which the priest consecrates the heart-burnings of the aristocrat” (Marx and Engels [1848] 1988, p. 77). The co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, the French peasant and priest Peter Maurin, used to wander the streets of America in the early twentieth century declaring, “The world would be better off/ if people tried to become better./ And people would become better/ if they stopped trying to be better off” (Ellsberg 1983, p. xxv). Do good by doing poorly.

In 1919, Paul Tillich, then a 33-year old Protestant pastor in Germany, wrote with his friend Carl Richard Wegener an “Answer to an Inquiry of the Protestant Consistory of Brandenburg” (1919):

The spirit of Christian love accuses a social order which consciously and in principle is built upon economic and political egoism, and it demands a new order in which the feeling of community is the foundation of the social structure. It accuses the deliberate egoism of an economy . . . in which each is the enemy of the other, because his advantage is conditioned by the disadvantage or ruin of the other, and it demands an economy of solidarity of all, and of joy in work rather than in profit (Tillich [1919] 1971).

The economy in this view is a zero sum game. As the economist and theologian the late Robert Nelson puts it, “If the private pursuit of self-interest was long seen in Christianity as a sign of the continuing presence of sin in the world – a reminder of the fallen condition of humanity since the transgression of Adam and Eve in the garden – a blessing for a market economy has appeared to many people as the religious equivalent of approving of sin.”

I gesture here towards a much longer case made early and late by me and other Christian admirers of commercially tested betterment (McCloskey 2016, 2019, and esp. 2006).

First, political economy.

The “real liberalism” in my title is the liberalism of, for instance, John Stuart Mill and of the Blessed Adam Smith. I do not intend to dismiss merely by choice of terminology the “liberalism” of the United States, which is leftish, or that of Latin America, which is rightish. It might be a good plan by the U.S. “liberal” left to make public universities free at Federal expense, bestowing therefore a large subsidy (as an economist is duty bound to point out) on rich parents with college-ready children. Or it might be a good plan by the Latin “liberal” right to support militaries devoted to suppressing domestic dissent (as an admirer of liberty is duty bound to point out). Perhaps you can discern that I don’t agree with either plan. But opposing or supporting them is not the direct purpose of returning here to the original and non-Western-hemisphere meaning of “liberal.” (Opposing both left and right plans, though, is on the cards.)

We need now, as much as in 1776, to have a prominent word for the political position that is wary of state power, whether exercised by left or right. In the Netherlands and other reasonably well-run polities the state is not always the enemy

of the people. But we are framing principles for actual humans, not angelic Swedish bureaucrats. It is surely ethically irresponsible to assume that we have easily available a government of angels. As James Madison remarked in 1788

If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself (Madison 1788)

The question is *quis custodiet ipsos custodies*? Who guards the very guardians? We do, of course. And we need to watch them closely. After all, the guardians are armed.

In the world at large, which a Christian admitting the fallen character of humans is duty bound to note, there are very many exceptionally bad guardians, murdering journalists and dismembering them, say, or running phony elections in which the present government gets 95 percent of the vote. The liberal and well-managed countries, in which the monopoly of coercion is exercised with reasonable justice and competence, under suitable guarding of the guardians, are startlingly rare in human experience. Before 1800 there were a handful of them, ever, anywhere, locally.

Nowadays, look at the 176 countries in the world ranked in 2016 by Transparency International for its Corruption Perceptions Index, ranging from Denmark and New Zealand at the top to Zimbabwe and North Korea at the bottom. Suppose, generously, that we reckon the top 30 or so to be reasonably honest – worthy, say, of fresh infusions of taxpayer dollars, and, anyway, worthy of a degree of trust in their politicians and guardians (Transparency International, 2017). Portugal in 2016 was the marginal case of the 30, ranked 29th. Italy, by contrast, though in many ways liberal, or indeed anarchistic, was ranked at 60th out of the 176, just below Romania, which is highly corrupt, and Cuba, which is highly illiberal, and just above Saudi Arabia, which is both. Despite many upstanding Italian judges, prosecutors, and police, no wise Italian (of which there appear to be too few) wants to give the extant government more power.

The prime minister in liberal Spain (ranked 41st) arranged to build a hugely expensive high-speed train from Madrid to his small home city. It wouldn't happen in Denmark or New Zealand, though in some U.S. states quite similar corruptions do occur. In my own state of Illinois, for instance, a proposed third airport for Chicago was corruptly sited. In the state I grew up in, Massachusetts, a corrupt Big Dig in Boston buried a highway, making richer the rich friends of the politicians. (I focus here on self-interested corruption alone, setting aside economic incompetence without notable venality, such as the half-built high-speed rail between San Francisco and Los Angeles.) The United States overall ranks 18th. But some of its constituent states and cities would rank much lower. The politicians and guardians in such places lack full integrity or competence, as for example the city government of Chicago covering up torture and murder of African-Americans by the police.

Ask, then: What percent of the world's population was governed in 2016 by the better governments, taking countries as a whole and following the relaxed,

better-than-Portugal standard, such as Japan (20th) or France (23rd)? What is the weight of present-day human experience with honest and competent government? Answer: 10 percent. That is, fully 90 percent of the world's population suffered in 2016 under governments agreed on all sides to be disgracefully corrupt and incompetent, and mostly illiberal, being notably worse than Portugal's.

And of course, in a fallen world, even the competent governments are not omniscient. The presumption, often unspoken, leading to fresh proposals for governmental regulation is that the government is wise. One will hear of numerous failings in the voluntary, non-governmental sphere. (The importance of which, by the way, no economist has demonstrated, not ever in the century of economic policy past.) But the question is whether the government can do better than some proffered "monopoly" or "externality," considering that governments are not of the angels.

We need to revive for present use a word for the anti-statism that for a century or so characterized much of Western and then Eastern thought, such as that of Henry David Thoreau in 1849: "I heartily accept the motto, 'That government is best which governs least'; and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically." Thomas Paine had written in the liberal birth year of 1776, "Government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state, an intolerable one" (Paine [1776] 2004, p. 47). Better keep the power to coerce modest, said the liberals coming into their own in the late eighteenth century. Old Adam Smith recommended in the same revolutionary year of 1776 "the obvious and simple system of natural liberty," by which he meant "the liberal plan of [social] equality, [economic] liberty, and [legal] justice." It is liberty from literal human tyranny (Greek *tyrannos*, "master"), as also in the free evolution of language or art or science. It entails not equality of result – an unattainable goal if people have differing gifts of prophesy and speech and height and soccer-playing ability and desirable entrepreneurship – but equality of permission and approval from other people. Let my people go.

In its fitful development after the eighteenth century in northwestern Europe such a liberalism – from Latin *liber*, long understood by the slave-holding ancients as in the words of *The Oxford Latin Dictionary* "possessing the social and legal status of a free man (as opp. to slave)," and then *libertas* as "the civil status of a free man, freedom" – came to mean the theory of a society consisting *entirely*, if ideally, of free people (Glare 1982, pp. 1023, 1025). No slaves at all. No masters. No priests. (Liberalism is Protestant – or Early Church, before the western church took on a reinvention of the Roman Empire). Equality of status. No pushing people around by physical coercion. Sweet talking. Persuasive. Rhetorical. Voluntary. Minimally violent. Humane. Tolerant. Unenvious. Accepting of difference. No racism enforced by the state. No imperialism. No unnecessary taxes. No domination of women by men. No casting couch. No beating of children. No messing with other people's stuff or persons.

Liberalism is not anarchism, though we liberals look with sisterly affection on such anarchists as Mikhail Bakunin, Prince Kropotkin, Emma Goldman, and Murray Rothbard. Considering, though, that we are *not* anarchists, it does not suffice to dispose of real liberalism, as did the New Liberals in the 1880s in Britain and

the Progressives in the U.S. in the 1900s, and many of our good government-loving friends nowadays on the left and right along the usual spectrum, by remarking irritably that “after all, government must have *some* role.”

A government of course “has a role”—as my progressive and conservative friends put it to me, predictably, relentlessly. George Romney, the automaker and conventional 1950s Republican, opposing the liberal 1.0 (I am an Abrahamic liberal, version 2.0, if you care) and conservative Barry Goldwater in 1964, declared, “Markets don’t just happen,” that there must be “some role for government” (quoted in Schultz (2015, p. 77). True, governments sometimes support markets, though they more usually tax, obstruct, outlaw, or monopolize them. And contrary to Romney’s assertion most markets do in fact “just happen,” because people find them mutually beneficial, with or without governmental action. Markets just happen, to take the extreme case, inside jails and prisoner-of-war camps, with no governmental action to enforce the deals made. Markets just happened among pre-contact Australian aborigines buying their boomerangs from better-skilled hands hundreds of miles distant (Radford 1945; Berndt and Berndt 1964, pp. 302–5).

Yes, government should have some role. The political question is how much. The government, declared Max Weber in 1919, can, with justice, claim “the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical constraint/ force/ violence/ coercion” (“*das Monopol legitimen physischen Zwanges*”) (Weber 1919, p. 310). Good. Such a monopoly is to be preferred to oligopolies of gangs, surely. Liberalism merely recommends that the monopoly be exercised gingerly. Very gingerly. It recommends a maximum liberty to pursue your own project, free of taxing or interference for “social” purposes, if your project does not use your own or the government’s physical coercion to interfere with other people’s projects.

Real liberalism is a noble vision, suited to free men and women. Contrary to the charge of anti-liberals, it is not destructive of community (Deneen 2018; McCloskey 2018). Rather the contrary. It is a vision of free cooperation, as against regimented obedience.

The left “liberalism” as understood in the U.S., and pretty much only there, is in the classical sense “illiberal.” It recommends massive use of coercion of one class of citizens to achieve capabilities for another class, and the massive use of coercion to regulate all classes by our masters in the government. The ends are said to be “social,” from which we understand the sweet-sounding word “socialism,” helping the poor or invading Iraq, separating toddlers from their mothers at the southern border, protecting doctors from competition.

At the scale of such social projects as pursued in, say, France, with 55 percent of the nation’s production funneled through *l’État*, one might as well name it 55 percent “socialist.” American left “liberals” such as Paul Krugman wax wrath if one applies the word to their proposals, but there does not seem to be a difference in kind between 55 percent and 100 percent (and there *is* between 10 percent and 35 percent), especially considering that even a communist economy uses prices a little, pushing the percentage below 100, and even the 45 percent remnant not spent by the

government in France is tightly regulated, by populist-statist demand and by regulatory capture. The composition of bread has been regulated in Paris since the Middle Ages (with, it must be admitted, satisfactory results). Rents in Paris have been frozen since 1914 (with not so satisfactory results). Henry Kissinger, a war criminal but a witty man, calls France “the only successful communist country.”

The real liberal David Boas of the real liberal (not “conservative” or “right wing”) Cato Institute notes that it is a question whether a modern nation like the U.S. is more or less free than it was in 1776, or as Boas notes, 1919. On the one hand, more and more people have been freed from private and some public enslavements of, for example, poor men and chattel slaves still in 1776, or women and gay men and southern Blacks still in 1919. But on the other hand, and especially since 1919, public enslavement to the will of the government has radically increased. The cowboy comedian Will Rogers used to say in the 1920s, when the share in national product of taxes spent by government at all levels was about 10 percent, “Just be glad you don’t get the government you pay for.” Nowadays on TV, the congress-people (representing a government at all levels that takes over 30 percent) are interviewed in front of a statue in the Capitol Rotunda of the same eloquent cowboy. One wonders why Will doesn’t topple over when he hears the present extent of socialized expenditure and bureaucratic regulation, and the proposals to do more, emulating France.

The New Liberal/Statist/Progressive has believed in a particular theory of the economy. She has believed down to the present that the economy is above all *easy* to administer, and that therefore intentional action by wise folk having no business or technical experience does the trick, quite easily. The woman of system, to quote Smith again, “seems to imagine that [s]he can arrange [by governmental coercion] the different members of a great society with as much ease as the hand arranges the different pieces upon a chess-board. [She] does not consider that . . . every single piece has a principle of motion of its own.”¹ People are motivated in varying proportions by prudence, temperance, courage, justice, faith, hope, and love, together with the corresponding vices. By way of such principles of motion, you and I pursue our endlessly diverse projects, knitting and model railroading. Let them do it. Such a modern liberal plan fits well a society in which people are taken to be free and equal and increasingly competent, unlike the stolid peasants or helpless proletarians of conservative theorizing always, or progressive theorizing since 1848.

The social/socialist plan is to pass a law seizing, say, two percent of financial wealth for governmental projects, which is to say a third or so of the annual yield on non-human capital. Problem solved, says the woman of system, if our masters (including the very woman in charge) are thus enabled to spend an immense sum as they wish rather than as we wish. The woman of system here does not appear to believe that the allocation of capital between its human and non-human forms will be distorted by reducing the return to one of them by a third. She does not believe that knowledge of what we should do and how to do it is distributed locally among

¹ 4.2.2.17, pp. 233–234.

the people, accessible only by unregulated markets. And above all she does not believe it is unethical to coerce people.

In fact, people, she believes, get better housing and the eight-hour day from governmental plans and compulsions, such as the Wagner Act facilitating excellent industrial unions, or rent controls providing wonderfully cheaper housing, or an entrepreneurial government coming up with brilliant ideas (Mazzucato 2013).² John R. Commons (1862–1945) of the University of Wisconsin was the American sage of such statism, described at length in the Irish poet Michael O'Siadhail's astounding epic in 2018, of which Quintet 2, still more astoundingly, sings accurately of, believe it or not, economics and its intellectual history. Says O'Siadhail [oh-sheel, by the way] of Professor Commons: "Empiricist, you purged the harsh / And gilded age with labour law / And compensation, chose to side / With plans to practice price controls; Protectionism too you saw / As trammeling a too-free trade" (O'Siadhail 2018, p. 129).

Betterment, the statist says, especially if she is a labor lawyer or a labor historian inspired by Commons, or a senator inspired by Thomas Piketty, had little or nothing to do with private agreements in commerce directed by profits earned both by producers and consumers, and yielding, therefore, a working class enriched 3000 percent since 1800. A working class 30 times better off than its ancestors, the liberal claims in response to the statist faith, could get beyond houses without central heating or 12-hour working days without rest. "Don't be silly," the statist retorts to such a liberal account of enrichment. "We New Liberals and Continental socialists came in the nineteenth century to see 'intentionality' [to use again the word favored in New-Liberal public theology] as crucial to making a just society – easily done in law though a struggle in politics. After intentional struggles on the picket line and intentional votes in Parliament, the just and rich society was finally achieved. None of your mythical invisible hand about it!" The just and rich society did not occur, she is saying, through enrichment from creative trade and innovation, allowed to better ourselves and others by free exchange, down in the farmers' market or the auto dealership – but by pure hearts and coercive regulations.

A weak reply (among many weak replies) to liberalism's stand against coercion supposes that the government is composed of ethical philosopher-monarchs, who can therefore be trusted to run a government kindly, giving us wisely the monarch-chosen stuff out of taxes – the taxes gently, sweetly, democratically extracted from the stuff we make. Says the liberal then: Maybe it's roughly true in Sweden or New Zealand; but not in the U.S. When the Commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Margaret Hamburg, retired in 2015, she was introduced on National Public Radio as having regulated fully a fifth of the American economy (Hamburg 2015). The statistic is startling, but accurate (Walker and Nardinelli 2016). Food. Drugs. Was Ms. Hamburg a Wonder Woman – a wholly ethical and wholly wise philosopher queen? It seems unlikely, though I am sure she is very

²The idea is old, even in the United States. "You gotta go down and join the union," as I sang in my socialist youth.

nice. Therefore the early-stage cancer treatment that works in Berlin, may not be accessible to you in Houston, because the useful treatment still awaits a certified finding by the FDA, affirming that the drug or medical appliance or procedure has “efficacy,” tested unethically by “gold standard” double-blind experiments guided by meaningless tests of statistical significance, and going far beyond the original brief of the FDA to test merely for safety, not for an elusive efficacy, efficacy anyway regularly modified in the clinic by discoveries by doctors trying out the drug or appliance off-label.³ That last was the history of Rogaine (minoxidil), originally an FDA-restricted heart drug, now an over-the-counter treatment for male-pattern baldness – “over-the-counter” because the politicians responded to the middle-aged men demanding that it be made easily and cheaply available, despite the FDA.

“Freedom,” the Latin-French “liberty,” is often extended to equality of result, Roosevelt’s “freedom from want.” But we already have words for such “freedoms” – namely, adequate comfort, great wealth, considerable power, physical abilities, central heating, subsidies from taxes. To use the freedom-word to mean all these other good things, such as in the economist Amartya Sen’s and the philosopher Martha Nussbaum’s vocabulary of “capabilities,” confuses the issue (Sen 1985, 1999; Nussbaum and Sen 1993). Capabilities are very good. We should work to assure that every person on the planet has them, chiefly if not only by letting a free economy enrich ordinary people, as it has regularly done by that 3000 percent. Smith declared, when a nascent science of economics was shifting attention away from the glory of the king toward the flourishing of the people, that “no society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable” (Smith 1776, I.viii.36, p. 96). That’s the humane part of humane liberalism, expressed in its goal of higher real income per head, and greater flourishing of the heads, especially the poor ones. But developing such good things is not itself “freedom,” unless we want to smooch into the one word all good things under the sun.⁴

To put it another way, Smith and I do claim emphatically that economic, or indeed ethical, development is the consequence of freedom, the “obvious and simple plan of natural liberty.” But development – contrary to the title of one of Sen’s book – is not the *same thing* as freedom. A cause is not the same thing as its consequence. No one would deny that it’s good to be developed to the extent of being adequately rich. In 1937, Beatrice Kaufman advised a friend, “I’ve been poor and I’ve been rich. Rich is better!”⁵ Yup. Yet we still need a word for a distinct

³On the FDA see Briggeman (2015) and Bhidé (2017, p. 28), and on development of drugs for early-stage cancer see Budish et al. (2015). On the meaninglessness of tests of statistical significance see Ziliak and McCloskey (2008) and the statement of the American Statistical Association in Wasserstein and Lazar (2016, pp. 131–3). On corruption of the procedures at the FDA, see Piller and You (2018).

⁴In 2018 I discovered that Tom Palmer had reasoned before 2009 in the same way I am here, to the same conclusion (Palmer 2009, pp. 32, 35–6).

⁵Quoted in Lyons (1937).

“freedom from physical constraint by others humans.” The constraint in political terms is called “tyranny,” its opposite “liberty/freedom.” We need to watch out for masterful tyranny by kings and bureaucrats and husbands and priests, and its consequences in poverty. And beyond money and poverty, we need to watch out for the consequences of tyrannical unfreedom in preventing other sorts of human flourishing, such as a spiritual one. Tyranny is bad for the human soul. Nowadays, as much as in 1776 or 1789 or 1848, we need to watch out for the tyranny of the king, husband, slave owner, chief, village elder, priest, bureaucrat, police. Watch and beware. To do so, we need a word for it, avoiding a smooching that makes it difficult to watch, and which indeed excuses tyrannical coercion.

So much for a sketch of the political economy of liberty. Consider then, with, I am afraid, markedly less authority or competence, theology – leading, if combined with the political economy, to a new and truly liberal public theology.

We are God's creatures. God therefore owns us, by an analogy with Lockean mixing of labor with unappropriated land, or by an analogy with the ownership of children by parents. But He, or rather She, chooses to make us free, not slaves. She wants us to be free adults, not perpetual children. We Jews and Christians say at Passover/Easter that She brought us out of slavery in Egypt and then, by Christ's sacrifice, out of death. We Jews or Moslems say that a child undergoes a bar/bat mitzvah or instruction in the Holy Koran to become an adult, a *mukallaf* – in modern English a “responsible” person (Haskell 1999).

The core of Christian theology, I need hardly say, is free will. God does not want us to be Her pets, but individuals with autonomy (“self-governance”), able to choose evil as well as good, and living therefore in a real world in which the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 can happen. If we lived in Eden, it would not be so. But, as free adults in a real world governed by natural and social laws, we chose, as Eve in the tale chose, and Adam, too, chose by the persuadable will of a free man.

Now the central theme of my argument: The uber-liberal “Austrian” economics, which speaks of free will as “human action.” It is free will. Putting the two together, I am afraid, will annoy both my Austrian economist friends, who are mainly atheists, and my progressive Anglican friends, who are mainly socialists. But I can't help it, because human action and free will *are* the same. As against the Marxism I espoused at age 16, or the Samuelsonian Chicago-School economics I came to teach ten years later, real choice is involved in both a Christian life and in the system of commercially tested betterment misleadingly labeled “capitalism.” It is an unhappy fact that orthodox, non-liberal public theology nowadays wants the government and God to treat us like obedient pets, not free wills. It is an equally unhappy fact that orthodox, non-Austrian economics nowadays views people as entirely reactive, like pigeons maximizing utility under a constraint, or like grass seeking light and water optimally.

No. God made us in the *imago Dei/Deae*. Free.

Christian and leftish communitarians celebrate what they consider interdependence, which they think is the furthest thing from independence. Oh, no. The *in*dependence of the individual in a liberal economy lets people converse and exchange freely – and results in the great *inter*dependence of modern life. It gives us by the

grace of liberty our shoes, TVs, books, whatever come from the voluntary paid work of thousands of people worldwide. Listen yet again to Smith:

The woollen-coat, . . . is the produce of the joint labour of a great multitude of workmen. [and workwomen, dear!] The shepherd, the sorter of the wool, the wool-comber or carder, the dyer, the scribbler, the spinner, the weaver, the fuller, the dresser, with many others, must all join their different arts in order to complete even this homely production. How many merchants and carriers, besides, must have been employed in transporting the materials from some of those workmen to others who often live in a very distant part of the country! . . . Let us consider only what a variety of labour is requisite in order to form that very simple machine, the shears with which the shepherd clips the wool. . . . the workmen who attend the furnace, the mill-wright, the forger, the smith, must all of them join their different arts in order to produce them.

Cooperation, that is, does not by any means always require intentional direct action on the model of the good Samaritan, and especially not the coercive action of a taxing and regulating state. As Smith also said, cooperation in society often results even if the good done was, as Smith noted elsewhere, “no part of his intention.” When Jesus’ fishermen sold their catch – the abundant one He arranged for them, for example – they intended only to help their own families. But thousands ate. The unintended consequence of specialization and trade is a social miracle analogous to the divine miracle of loaves and fishes.

The Smithian point is something Donald Trump, for example, doesn’t get, because like his opponents on the left he thinks of the economy as a battle, not as cooperation. Indeed, he puts the “dependence” of nationalism ahead of everything: he wants a slavish dependence of the individual *imago Dei* on The Leader, who in the Nuremberg rally usurps the place of G-d.

In saying that we should “keep away from believers who are living in idleness,” St. Paul is not here recommending a life of work, work, work ignoring the sacred. A young lawyer working a 70-hour a week should not draw comfort from Paul’s words, unless indeed the lawyer’s work is infused with the Holy Spirit. Paul is warning instead against a particular type of *unworldly* excess, a laying down of tools in expectation of the Second Coming. He appears to have heard that some of the Thessalonians were withdrawing from the world to prepare for the end days, which they thought in 53 C.E. were coming any day now.

The early Christians were of course not the last to form such expectations. Readers of a certain age will remember the Johnstown cult. Such millenarianism breaks out repeatedly, as it did in the 35 million copies sold of the first of the Rapture books. “I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (John 9:4–5). By a mechanism that the sociologist of religion Rodney Stark has described in historical detail, cult-formation is natural in any religion that emphasizes a distinction between the sacred and the profane, the Lord’s work and the world’s work (Stark 2001). The Church of Faith, as Stark calls it, grows restive under the rule of the Church of Power. The holy ones repeatedly break off from the world and form cults in expectation of Christ’s coming. One sees a similar joyous expectation, of the *First* Coming of the Lord, in the Jewish Hassidim. And if they

believe the time is late and the End is Near they stop working, as St. Paul complained. One of these cults is called Protestantism, and some of the Radical Reformation such as the Anabaptists in the sixteenth century, were willing, on account of imminent salvation, to go to the stake singing hymns.

Thus earlier, in the eleventh century in southern France, the Albigensians, or Cathars – the Greek *katharos* means “pure” – would in their last days withdraw from Satan’s world to enter God’s kingdom as “Perfects,” as they called themselves. The believing Cathars who were short of perfection would go about their worldly business until their end days. As St. Paul said, “work with quietness and eat your own [earned] bread.” But when the Cathars were called to perfection – and many were called from the elite of Languedoc society during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries – they gave away all their goods and followed Jesus. Stark notes that in European history, or for that matter in Islamic or Jewish history, such purifying moves did not usually come as an upwelling from the poor and oppressed. The cults tended to be led and staffed on the contrary by the rich, or more exactly the formerly rich, such as St. Francis of Assisi. Compare Lord Buddha. The riches of Mammon (the word means in Aramaic simply “wealth”) were spurned in the name of purity. No need to work. Just pray.

The Church of Power did not look kindly on the Cathars. And their anticipation of the priesthood of all believers. The ironically misnamed Pope Innocent III arranged in 1209 a crusade of northern knights, led by Simon de Montfort, in which fully 200,000 withdrawers from the world were sent out of it prematurely. The Inquisition of later notoriety was invented by the papacy in 1284 to deal with the persistent remnant of Cathars. So the Church of Power has always been suspicious of what it regards as *excessive* withdrawal from God’s beloved world of work. Augustine, who was not exactly easy going about worldly pleasures, nonetheless was harsh, with fire and sword, against the holier-than-thou Donatists.

The social science of worldly goods called economics could be expected to have a similar attitude, right? *Not* working is bad. Stay in the world. Pump up the economy.

But economics doesn’t. On the contrary, economists view withdrawal from the world, a refusal to work (because what is the point of work if Christ is coming soon?), as what they call “leisure.” “Leisure” in economic analysis is anything but paid work. The economist views volunteer “work,” visiting the sick or feeding the poor or just sitting there praying in expectation of the End Times, as something you do, literally, in your spare time. Work or pray. No worries: your call, or calling. Whatever.

What’s St. Paul’s complaining about, then? He goes on to remind the Thessalonians that when he was visiting them, he himself worked “night and day.” In a verse that sounds to an economist like a lesson in the budget constraint he declares, “Anyone unwilling to work should not eat.” The economist would put it a little differently: “Anyone unwilling to work,” she would say, “will not *in fact* eat, unless he has support from outside the marketplace. But no blame attaches,” says the non-Christian economist. “It’s his choice. Whatever.”

Notice that the economist is not *angry* at the idle person. That's the force of the Valley-girl "whatever" that one feels comes after most refusals by economists to think seriously about ethics. The idler "chooses leisure," or, in the case that he does *not* have that support from a mother or a charitable person, he "chooses" starvation. St. Catherine of Siena (1347–1380) starved herself to death at age 33, the age that Jesus died, by refusing to eat anything but the communion host. The French mystic Simone Weil followed St. Catherine, starving herself to death during the Second World War, age 34. An economist is likely to analyze such behavior as a mere choice, like choosing between chocolate and vanilla ice cream, and leave it at that. Whatever.

St. Paul, with some theologians such as Aquinas and up to the present, would have taken a less neutral view of Catherine and Simone. Such radical withdrawing from the world strikes some Christians as spiritual pride (McCloskey 2006). I am proud that I am so humble, and Satan swoops down at the last minute to claim my soul. An old *New Yorker* cartoon shows two monks walking in the cloister, one saying to the other, "But I *am* holier than thou." (And the Devil swoops in at the last minute and takes his soul, for the sin of pride that he is not proud.)

What, then, is the theological gripe against the holier than thou? Why isn't withdrawal from the world orthodox (in Greek the word means "upright opinion")? What's not upright about withdrawing from the world?

The answer I would give is that the world's work in Christianity is *dignified*. If Christianity is to be, in Nietzsche's sneering characterization, a slave religion – we Christians embrace the characterization with satisfaction – it cannot downgrade what slaves do, that is, work. Paul, in requiring that people work if they are to eat, was standing against the ethos of a slave and patriarchal society in which dignified people, such as non-slaves and non-women and free male citizens of Rome, like Paul, specifically did *not* work "night and day," or at all. St. Benedict's Rule, in about the 530rd year of the Christian era at Monte Cassino, uses the same word for work in the fields and the "work of God." The monastic formula was *laborare est orare*, to work is to pray. Work in the world is a form of prayer, if done with God in mind: "Idleness is the enemy of the soul," said Benedict (Verheyen 1949, chap. XLVIII). This work-praising tendency in Christianity made it easy for urban monks in the high Middle Ages, such as Aquinas, to justify the urban work of say, merchants, as creative work, like God's.

The obligation to self-development is the obligation to use God's gifts. The Christian version is reformulated in 1673 by Joseph Pufendorf of Leipzig, Heidelberg, and Lund thus:

It seems superfluous to invent an obligation of self-love. Yet . . . man is not born for himself alone; the end for which he has been endowed by his Creator with such excellent gifts is that he may celebrate His glory and be a fit member of human society. He is therefore bound so to conduct himself as not to permit the Creator's gifts to perish for lack of use. . . . (Pufendorf [1673] 1991, Bk. I, Chp. 5, p. 46).

Thus Comus, tempting the Lady in John Milton's poem of 1634, argues that from niggardliness in using God's gifts "Th'All-giver would be unthanked, would be

unpraised/ Not half his riches known . . . / And we should . . . live like Nature's bastards, not her sons."

The liberal Christian tradition of the urban friars, such as Francis and Dominic and Aquinas, recommended *working* on God's gifts. "Albert the Great and [his student, St.] Thomas," writes Lester K. Little, "brought about the emancipation of Christian merchants." They were not commending unlimited greed, but a purposeful buying low and selling high. "The honest merchant, for all these writers, was a man deserving of the profit he made, for they considered it as payment for his labor (*quasi stipendium laboris*)" (Little 1978, p. 178). Profit paid for alertness. This is the virtue of the liberal man, in Aquinas's words: "by reason of his not being a lover of money, it follows that a man readily makes use of it, whether for himself, or for the good of others, or for God's glory" (Aquinas, c. 1270, IIa IIae, q. 117, art. 6). The miser keeps his pile. The liberal man spends it for the three levels of ethics, self (for lessons in the cello, so as "not to permit the Creator's gifts to perish for lack of use"), for others (in Jesus of Nazareth's formulation of the Golden Rule), for the transcendent answer to the question "so what," *quo vadis*?

One wonders where the work-praising came from, because in the Greek and Roman world any work except war-making and speech-making was so very undignified, and the collection of feudal rents by the genteel was precisely why they did not work at anything but war and courtesy. After Adam's curse, of course, a human was to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. Yet Judaism praised work – "Seest thou a man diligent in his work? He shall stand before kings." Maimonides wrote in the early thirteenth century "One who make his mind up to study Torah and not to work but to live on charity profanes the name of God, brings the Torah into contempt, extinguishes the light of religion, brings evil upon himself, and deprives himself of the life hereafter."⁶ It sounds like Paul scolding the Thessalonians. The Christians of course go further than the Jews, praising diligence or the Muslim's listening to an inspired merchant of Mecca. *God himself*, in the form of God's only begotten son, became in the words of the Creed "truly human." God was a carpenter, the Christians say, and not merely metaphorically as among Jews and Muslims, a maker of the world, but literally in the sweat of his brow. That is the startling Christian story.

But wherever it came from historically, God appears to want it. He wants us to live and choose in his created world, though not, since the Fall, in the Edenic part. To put it economically, God wants us to face scarcity. He wants it, not because He is a trickster who is amused by seeing us struggle with disease and the law of gravity in our pain-filled and finite lives. He so loves us that, after Eden, he wants *us* to have the dignity of choice. That is what free will means. Denys Munby said to me once, "In Heaven there is no scarcity and in Hell there is no choice." In the created world there are both. The dignity of free will would be meaningless if a choice of one good, such as apples, did not have what the economists call an "opportunity cost"

⁶Maimonides, *Mishnah Torah*, c. 1200, quoted in Sacks (2002, p. 95).

in, say, oranges. If we could have all the apples and oranges we wanted, “living in idleness,” as Paul put it, with no “budget constraint,” no “scarcity,” we would live as overfed pet cats, not as human beings. If we have free will, and *therefore necessarily face scarcity*, we live truly in the image of God.

Scarcity is necessary for *human* virtues. Humility, said Aquinas, answers among the Christian virtues to the pagan virtue of Great-Souledness that Aristotle the pagan teacher of aristocrats admired so much. To be humble is to temper one’s passions in pursuing as Aquinas put it “*boni ardui*,” goods difficult of achievement. To be great-souled, which in turn is part of the cardinal virtue of Courage, is to keep working towards such goods nonetheless.⁷ No one would need to be courageous or prudent or great-souled or humble if goods were *faciles* rather than *ardui*.

The virtue of Temperance, again, is not about mortification of the flesh, at any rate in Christian thinkers like Aquinas (there were others, descendants of the Desert Fathers, who had another idea). On the contrary, this side of Christianity says, we should admire the moderate yet relishing use of a world charged with the grandeur of God. It is the message of the Aquinian side of Christian thought that we should *not* withdraw from the world. On the contrary, as Jesus was, we should be truly, and laboriously, and gloriously human. As the economists say, too, though they omit the Christian claim that working is praying.

The economist Frank Knight, in an anti-clerical fury, mistook the Christian morality of charity for a call to common ownership, the extreme of loving Solidarity, and attacked it as unworkable. (It is said that the only time the University of Chicago has actually refunded money to a student was to a Jesuit who took Knight’s course on “the history of economic thought” and discovered that it was in fact a sustained and not especially well-informed attack on the Catholic Church.) Knight wrote a book with T. W. Merriam in 1945 called *The Economic Order and Religion* which mysteriously asserts that Christian love destroys “the material and social basis of life,” and is “fantastically impossible,” and is “incompatible with the requirements of everyday life,” and entails an “ideal . . . [which is] not merely opposed to civilization and progress but is an impossible one.” Under Christian love “continuing social life is patently impossible” and “a high civilization could hardly be maintained long, . . . to say nothing of progress” (Knight and Merriam 1945, pp. 29, 30, 31, 46).

It develops that Knight and Merriam are arguing that social life in a large group *with thoroughgoing ownership in common* is impossible. *That* is what they believe Christian love entails.⁸ Their source is always the Gospels, never the elaborate compromises with economic reality of other Christian writers, such as Paul or Aquinas or Luther, or the 38th article of the Anglicans: “The riches and goods of Christians are not common, as touching the right, title, and possession of the same, as certain Anabaptists do falsely boast.”

But, yes: social life without private property *is* impossible, at any rate in large groups. So said Pope Leo XIII in 1891 in *Rerum Novarum*, re-echoed by Pius XI in

⁷ IIa IIae, q. 161, a. 1, quoted in Pope (2002, p. 311).

⁸ See for example Knight and Merriam (1945, p. 48).

1931, John XXIII in 1961 and 1963, by Paul VI in 1967 and 1971, and by John Paul II in 1981 and 1991.⁹ These men were not nineteenth-century liberals – especially, as Michael Novak explains, not in the harsh, Continental sense, the “old liberals” of Jan Gresshof’s satiric poem of the 1930s (Novak 1989). They celebrated private property – when used with regard to soul and community. They were nothing like the Sermon-on-the-Mount socialists that Knight and Merriam attack.

Thus Leo: “private possessions are clearly in accord with nature” (15), following his hero, Aquinas.¹⁰ “The law of nature . . . by the practice of all ages, has consecrated private possession as something best adapted to man’s nature and to peaceful and tranquil living together” (17). “The fundamental principle of Socialism which would make all possessions public property is to be utterly rejected because it injures the very one’s whom it seeks to help” (23). “The right of private property must be regarded as sacred” (65). “If incentives to ingenuity and skill in individual persons were to be abolished, the very fountains of wealth would necessarily dry up; and the equality conjured up by the Socialist imagination would, in reality, be nothing but uniform wretchedness and meanness for one and all, without distinction” (22).

Nick Hornby’s comic novel *How to Be Good* (2001) shows the difficulties of To Each According to His Need, Regardless of His Property Acquired by Effort Directed at Supplying Goods and Services That Other People Are Willing Themselves to Expend The Effort to Acquire (“Thank you for your service”). A graceful generosity that works just fine within a family works poorly within a large group of adult strangers. In Hornby’s book the husband of the narrator goes mad and starts giving away his and his wife’s money and his children’s superfluous toys. He and his guru are going to write a book:

“‘How to Be Good’, we’re going to call it. It’s about how we should all live our lives. You know, suggestions. Like taking in the homeless, and giving away your money, and what to do about things like property ownership and, I don’t know, the Third World and so on.”

“So” [replies his annoyed wife, a hard-working GP in the National Health Service] “this book’s aimed at high-ranking employees of the IMF?” (Hornby 2001, p. 210).

It’s a version of the Sermon on the Mount, from which many people have concluded that Jesus was of course a socialist. “The love-gospel,” writes Knight and Merriam, “condemning all self-assertion as sin. . . would destroy all values” (Knight and Merriam 1945, p. 50). Knight and Merriam are correct if they mean, as they appear to, that *Love without other and balancing virtues* is a sin. Knight’s understanding of Christianity appears to have derived from his childhood experience in a frontier Protestant sect, the Campbellites (evolved now into a less fierce Church of Christ and Disciples of Christ), and theirs is what he took to be the core teaching of Christianity: “No creed but the Bible. No ethic but love.”

⁹These are Pius: *Quadragesimo Anno*; John: *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris*; Paul: *Populorum Progressio* and *Octogesima adveniens*; and John Paul: *Laborem Exercens* and *Centesimus Annus*. Michael Novak is my guide here (1989, chapt. 6–8).

¹⁰Leo XIII. 1891. *Rerum Novarum*, paragraph numbers given. See Aquinas *Summa Theologiae*, c. 1270, IIa IIae, Q 66, quoted and discussed in Fleischacker (2004, p. 35 and n40).

But Love without Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and the rest is not Christian orthodoxy – for example the orthodoxy of Aquinas or of Leo XIII. Leo in fact was a close student of Aquinas, and in 1889 elevated him to dogma within the Church. And, yes, such a single-virtue ethic would *not* be ethical in a fallen world. Economists would call the actual orthodoxy a “second-best” argument, as against the first best of “if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.” Given that people are imperfect, the Christian, or indeed any economist would say, we need to make allowances, and hire lawyers. Otherwise everyone will live by stealing each other’s coats, with a resulting failure to produce coats in the first place, and a descent into poverty for everyone but the thief.

St. Paul himself said so, in his earliest extant letter (1 Tim. 3: 8–11):

Neither did we eat any man's bread for naught; but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you . . . to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us. . . . We commanded you that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some . . . among you disorderly, working not at all.

Or to put it more positively, as Michael Novak did, “one must think clearly about what actually does work – in a sinful world – to achieve the liberation of peoples and persons” (Novak 1989, p. xvi). “In the right of property,” wrote even the blessed Pope John XXIII in 1961, “the exercise of liberty finds both a safeguard and a stimulus.”¹¹ Frank Knight couldn’t have put it better.

Charity is not socialism. Generosity is not a system at all. It is of a person, then two, then a few. God arranges such encounters, a Christian might say. But humans want them, too, the gift-economy of grace above material concerns. So the great Quaker and economist Kenneth Boulding said. To make them into a system, *How to Be Good*, is to cancel their virtue. The heroine and narrator of Hornby’s novel sees that Erasmus began all editions of his *Adages* from 1508 onwards with “Between friends all things are common,” remarking that “If only it were so fixed in men’s minds as it is frequent on everybody’s lips, most of the evils of our lives would promptly be removed. . . . Nothing was ever said by a pagan philosopher which comes closer to the mind of Christ” as the proposed socialism of goods in Plato’s *Republic*.¹² Such is the first best. But Erasmus notes, sadly, “how Christians dislike this common ownership of Plato’s, how in fact they cast stones at it.” Many of his 4150 proverbs collected from classical and Christian sources recommend attention to Prudence and work, if not quite with the insistence of, say, proverbs he might have collected in his native Dutch. We are mostly not friends, but strangers, and even in the Society of Friends property was not held in common. Knight and Merriam are not really undermining Christian orthodoxy and Christian ethics. They are misunderstanding it.

One owes Love to a family first. Property, with the virtue of justice, protects the beloved family. If any would not work, neither should he eat. Work, depending on temperance and prudence, is desirable to create and to acquire the property. So is

¹¹ From the encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, 1961, quoted in Novak (1989, p. xxii).

¹² Erasmus, *Adages*, 1500–1533, 1508 onwards I i 1 (Barker 2001, p. 29).

prudent stewardship in managing it, though the lilies of the field toil not. For societies of humans, she realizes, not lilies and families, the right prescription is bourgeois virtue. True, she cannot quite get rid of the notion that “maybe the desire for nice evenings with people I know and love is essentially bourgeois, reprehensible – depraved, even” (Hornby 2001, p. 218). Such is the agony of the left US “liberal.”

It is a matter of Christian ethics.

Ethics has three levels, the good for self, the good for others, and the good for the transcendent purpose of a life. The good for self is the prudence by which you self-cultivate, learning to play the cello, say, or practicing centering prayer. Self-denial is not automatically virtuous. (How many self-denying mothers does it take to change a lightbulb? None: I'll just sit here in the dark.)

The good for a transcendent purpose is the faith, hope, and love to pursue an answer to the question “So what?” The family, science, art, the football club, God give the answers that humans seek.

The middle level is attention to the good for others. The late first-century BCE Jewish sage Hillel of Babylon put it negatively yet reflexively: “Do not do unto others what you would not want done unto yourself.” It's masculine, a guy-liberalism, a gospel of justice, roughly the so-called Non-Aggression Axiom as articulated by libertarians since the word “libertarian” was redirected in the 1950s to a (then) right-wing liberalism. Matt Kibbe puts it well in the title of his 2014 best seller, *Don't Hurt People and Don't Take Their Stuff: A Libertarian Manifesto*.

On the other hand, the early first-century CE Jewish sage Jesus of Nazareth put it positively: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” It's gal-liberalism, a gospel of love, placing upon us an ethical responsibility to do more than pass by on the other side. Be a good Samaritan. Be nice.

In treating others, a humane libertarianism attends to both Golden Rules. The one corrects a busybody and coercive pushing around. The other corrects an inhumane and soul-destroying selfishness. Together they are the other-ethics of modern liberalism. What we do not need is the reactionary version, the old spoof of the Golden Rule, namely, “Those who have the gold, rule.” Nor do we need to follow the Florida football player on the eve of the Florida-Florida State game, “I follow the Good Book: ‘Do unto others before they do it unto you.’” Neither is non-aggressive or nice.

The Golden Rule in either formulation, note, is radically egalitarian. In the Abrahamic religions you are to treat every human soul the way you would wish to be treated. You are to honor your one God and keep His day holy, but the rest of the Ten Commandments are about treating other humans as you would wish to be treated in matters such as truth telling or adultery. By contrast, in the theism of the Hindus or in the civic religion of the Confucians you are to treat the Brahman or the emperor as superior souls. An Untouchable or a peasant or a woman or a younger son is not to expect equal, reciprocal treatment. Of course, it was not until the bourgeois societies of late eighteenth-century Europe that anyone but an early Christian radical or a late Muslim saint thought to carry out in any large society the sweetly other-regarding theory of Abrahamic egalitarianism. Until Tom Paine or Adam Smith, a duchess was still a duchess, a sultan still a sultan, King Herod still Great.

It is liberalism, a fulfillment at last of the Abrahamic equality of souls, that brings us human flourishing and human virtue, as God wishes for Her creations.

To this the Christian statist has a series of worries, replies, indignant objections.

For one thing, she says, work is not free. We are “wage slaves.” The claim was in fact the defense of actual slavery offered by Southern apologists before the Civil War in the United States. The Northern factory workers, they said, were virtual slaves. The leftish usage and its politics echo down to the present, as in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* of 1999, in which “wage slave” is defined coolly as “a person who is wholly dependent on income from employment,” with the notation “informal” – but not “ironic” or “jocular” or, better, “economically illiterate” (Pearsall 1999, p. 1610). Thus Judy Pearsall, the editor of the *Concise Oxford*, who lives, it may be, in a nice semidetached in London NW6 and drives an old Volvo, is a “slave.” You yourself are probably a slave. I certainly am a slave. We are all “slaves” – though all of us are paid in proportion to the traded value of goods and services we produce for others and none of us owes *unpaid* service to any boss (except, as Higgs and I would observe, to the state through taxation or draft, an actual slavery admired by most of the left and much of the right). Such progressive or conservative terminology of “wage slavery” is like calling an exchange of harsh words “verbal rape.” We need terms for the physical violence entailed in actual slavery and in actual rape, or for that matter in actual taxation backed by the wide powers of the IRS to do violence. We should not cheapen them by applying them to our middle-class guilt in NW6 or Morningside Heights.

One finds Oscar Wilde in 1891 declaring that “socialism [about which he knew only the contents of a lecture he had just heard by George Bernard Shaw] would relieve us from that sordid necessity of living for others,” by which he means charity but also paid work: “An individual who has to make things for the use of others, and with reference to their wants and their wishes, does not work with interest, and consequently cannot put into his work what is best in him” (Wilde [1891] 1930, pp. 257, 270).¹³ Even the owner of property is not exempt, Wilde continues, because property “involves endless claims upon one, endless attention to business, endless bother” (Wilde [1891] 1930, p. 259). Think of it. Worker or capitalist or landlords, we are all “slaves” to supplying things for others. Frightful.

In that highly metaphorical and imprecise sense, we are indeed “enslaved,” and to our mutual good. After Hegel, many intellectuals have declared that capitalism makes people work for others, and makes the worker therefore an “object,” not a “subject.” So it was said by Marx and Heidegger and Sartre, since “being for others” is “inauthentic.” If I adopt a social role, such as selling you a deep-fried Mars bar from my fish-and-chips shop in Edinburgh, I am treating you as an object, and you, when you hand over your money, are treating me the same. As the philosopher Roger Scruton puts it, to follow such a Kantian obedience to ethical law with respect

¹³ The editor, Hesketh Pearson, remarks that Wilde had been inspired by Shaw’s lecture, “without bothering himself much about economics” (p. xii). The astoundingly scholarly Wikipedia entry for “wage slavery,” by the way, gives arguments from people like Noam Chomsky against my views, and those by people like Robert Nozick in favor of them.

to others “launches us down that path towards the ‘bourgeois’ order on which finicky intellectuals are so reluctant to tread” (Scruton 1994, p. 468).

Or they say things like, “All right, a 3,000% increasing in material goods and services since 1800 – but humans do not live by bread alone.” Yes, certainly. If economic growth, as many conservatives and some socialists argue, corrupts the human soul, I will join them in attacking it. What benefit is it to someone who gains the world but loses her immortal soul? But the counter argument was the burden of *The Bourgeois Virtues: Ethics for an Age of Commerce*, the most theological of the trilogy. “Consumerism,” for example, is a common worry. But it has an answer, chiefly that it does not corrupt and is not new and is anyway a worry only for the rich, who are always with us.

Or they say that inequality is worrisome. Or that monopolies are prevalent and corrupt the government. Or that the 1980s Me Decade was a bad ‘un. Or, or, or. They all have answers that ought to satisfy a Christian or Jew or Muslim, and did before the theologians and their enemies became confused and immune to the evidence on innovism and its sad opposite in statism. The liberal era was brief, from 1776 to 1848. It established freedom of religion. But freedom is freedom is freedom. A free-willed person, in God’s eyes, should be free from human interference in religion and behavior and business.

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