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TOWARD A MEANINGFUL DEFENSE OF FREEDOM

IF FREEDOM is worth defending, then it is worthwhile for its defenders to do the very best job possible. Far too often, however, we fail to present our case for freedom completely or accurately. We unintentionally give our audiences a false impression, which makes the case for freedom unpalatable to those uncommitted individuals whom we would most like to influence.

We all realize that an entrepreneur offering a good product on the market will, nevertheless, spend a substantial amount of time, effort and money to properly and attractively package the product. We are all familiar with the research efforts and creative talent used in launching an advertising campaign for a

product. It does no good to have a superior product if nobody knows how good it is or if shoppers are repelled by its appearance on the display shelf.

It is a scandal that those who so well understand the rules of the market place for goods and services fail to translate that understanding to the market place of ideas. For the consequences of failure in the market for products, is at worst, a temporary loss of money; failure to sell our philosophy of freedom will result in the permanent loss of our freedom.

When we present our defense of the free market, we leave ourselves open to a charge of advocating extreme individualism, since our total thrust is, properly, concentrated on the action of the individual in society. Unfortunately, we tend to sound quite selfish. Our opponents, those

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who would substitute a coercive society for a free one in the name of the general welfare, will invariably contrast this alleged selfishness with the moral tenets of our Judaeo-Christian tradition, to our disadvantage. We are often faced with the paradoxical situation wherein those who philosophically reject all religion use it as a weapon against those who accept a religious basis for their beliefs.

We should never forget that the foundation of the belief in freedom is that men have a right to be free because God gave them that right. Without this foundation, it is impossible to honestly defend freedom. We do not advocate a free society so that we can go about our business without a concern for the welfare of others; we hold to our philosophy because it is morally right. Atheism is an essential component of the coercivist credo, the one does not exist without the other. When we fail to emphasize this, we do a disservice to our cause. We enter the battle with our best weapons left behind in camp.

Self-Crippling

A common instance of libertarians crippling themselves unnecessarily is in the presentation of the operations of the free market. Most free market defenders devote a substantial amount of space to describing the mechanics of exchange and the

environment necessary to support a free market. Usually, there are elaborate descriptions of the ideal market and comparisons of that ideal to the prevailing situation. Great emphasis is generally placed on the structure and institutions of political organization which are necessary to support the author's concept of the ideal market structure. These presentations tend to be very mechanical in content. Their tacit argument in this mechanistic approach is that if we reform our institutions to more closely conform with the ideal market environment, then all will be well. This line of argument is doubly weak.

First, it will not be supported by the facts of history. We have only to examine the conditions in the United States and the United Kingdom to realize that the existence of institutions to promote freedom will not necessarily guarantee the survival of freedom. In both countries, freedom is under assault through those very institutions, such as the independent judiciary and the representative legislatures. Something else is also needed. That something else is the conviction of the citizenry that it will be free.

I am not attacking the utility of constitutional and institutional safeguards to freedom in society. I do attack those presentations which leave one with the impression that it is the institutions which make men

free in their societies. This is a twisted Rousseauism. The institutions of a free society are, in reality, the results of the action of free men who believe in the need of protecting their freedom. Freedom precedes freedom-supporting institutions. But if freedom does not arise from social institutions, where then is the source of freedom?

Sustaining Institutions

The Declaration of Independence of the United States was written with a belief in freedom and a desire to construct a political order which would help protect that freedom. Human freedom was not expected to result from the institutions to be established; rather, the institutions were expected to flow from the desire to protect pre-existing rights. These rights are God-given and Jefferson began the case for independence by recognizing the fact; and at the conclusion of the Declaration, the signers placed their reliance on the Almighty, the author of the rights they were defending.

In too many defenses of the philosophy of freedom, contemporary advocates place all of their reliance on the mechanical structures of social, political, and economic organization, as if that were protection enough. If the constitutional mechanics were sufficient to assure a free state of free men, how then explain the fact that Benito Musso-

lini was the prime minister of a constitutional monarchy, while ruling it as an absolute tyrant. Hitler came to power through the constitutional mechanism of the Weimar Republic. The constitution of the USSR is, on the surface, a marvelous document assuring great personal freedom to its subjects. In reality, it is an outstanding example of how substance can be removed while form remains.

In today's mechanistic presentation of the free market, rarely is mention made of reliance on the laws of nature and of nature's God. This omission leaves the debate concentrated on the relative efficiency of the coercive as opposed to the free society. Yet efficiency is not the essential issue. Even were freedom inefficient, it is to be chosen because it is right.

The free market can be likened to an ecosystem, as much as any wetland or forest, and as such, it is a reflection of our Creator's plan in its uninhibited operation. When this premise is removed from our defense, we are no better than our opposition. Both sides are then guilty of deifying man-made devices. The definition of idolatry is the attribution to the man-made that which is proper only to God. The debate is merely between competing systems of idolatry. Small wonder that it is difficult to fire the imaginations of the onlooker to such de-

bates. People will not joyfully enter an arena full of lions to bear witness to the efficiency of abstract market models; they will, and they have, to bear witness to the Providence of a personal God.

Charity Is Love

Another, related weakness in many presentations on liberty is a total misuse of the concept of charity. In the Judaeo-Christian context, charity is the equivalent of love; the words are interchangeable. However, whenever charity is introduced in libertarian literature, it is often restricted to mean only almsgiving, that is, the provision for the poor and needy. Such imprecision of language can only lead to confusion. Moreover, there is seldom any mention of love as the essential motivating force for the redefined charity. In the absence of love, there is really no reason to provide for those in need. This becomes a telling weakness in our arguments. At best, it allows the audience to infer that the poor and needy are to be aided as a political expedient, to pacify them. Without the concept of love, our discourses leave us looking like hypocrites, and even more seriously, deprive us of the foundation for our advocacy of human freedom. For if we truly love a person, how then, can we enslave him or her? If we have no love in us, why not enslave our fellows when we can?

Freedom cannot be protected by institutions, nor on the ground that restricting it would introduce inefficiencies to our society. Only if we heed the commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves will we really be able to put our heart into the struggle. Lacking this insight, it is too easy to delude ourselves into thinking that we, and only we, are the sources of whatever good fortune we enjoy in this world. The corollary to this line of reasoning will also become part of our thinking: those who are not so well off as we have only themselves to blame.

All of us have at some time or other heard this position incorporated into an otherwise reasonable discussion of freedom. The hearer can only conclude that it is the cost of the social welfare programs and the unworthiness of their recipients that is at issue. The fact that social welfare programs promoted by various levels of government promote such attitudes on the part of the contributors and a corresponding militance and hatred on the part of the beneficiaries is proof that such programs hurt society more than they help. Saint Paul, in his second letter to the Corinthians, gives us the model that we should be using in our discussions.

A famine had arisen throughout the Roman Empire around the year 43 A.D. A collection was made

among the communities in Greece and Macedonia for the Christian community in Judea. Paul's instructions to the Corinthians is the essence of the proper attitude of giving in freedom. "Each one should give what he has decided in his own mind, not grudgingly or because he is made to, for God loves a cheerful giver." Please note that force, taxation, or any hint of coercion is missing from this instruction. Earlier in the same letter, Paul had indicated the motivation for any giving. "It is not an order that I am giving you; I am just testing the genuineness of your love against the keenness of others."

All proponents of freedom have their philosophical roots in the Judaean-Christian traditions of our culture. It follows from this that they are concerned with humans as individuals and not as cogs in an inhuman economic machine. However, when we forget our roots and our philosophical beginnings, our arguments and discussions convey just the opposite impression to our audiences. If the philosophy of freedom is to survive and prevail, we must make clear our concern, yes, and our love for our fellow men. We cannot allow our opposition to preempt the stance of morality and concern which is *our* heritage. ☉

The Case for Economic Freedom

THE most important part of the case for economic freedom is not its vaunted efficiency as a system for organizing resources, not its dramatic success in promoting economic growth, but rather its consistency with certain fundamental moral principles of life itself. . . .

If economic freedom survives in the years ahead, it will be only because a majority of the people accept its basic morality. . . .

The free market cannot produce the perfect world, but it can create an environment in which each imperfect man may conduct his lifelong search for purpose in his own way, in which each day he may order his life according to his own imperfect vision of his destiny, suffering both the agonies of his errors and the sweet pleasure of his successes. This freedom is what it means to be a man; this is the God-head, if you wish.

BENJAMIN A. ROGGE

IDEAS ON



LIBERTY

George F. Cahill

WHAT IS FREEDOM ?



FREEDOM is the most prized and coveted of all God's blessings. As Americans, you and I are part of only a tiny portion of mankind that has experienced freedom. Its blessings are as precious as the blessing of life itself.

What, then, are the characteristics of freedom?

Granted, freedom is an abstract thing. But let's try to make freedom more easily understandable. As an experiment, let's give all the qualities of freedom to one imaginary person.

Okay, so if freedom is a person, what would he or she be like?

Freedom would be delicate—easily bruised.

Freedom would be fragile—easily destroyed.

Freedom would be elusive—easily lost.

Freedom would be demanding—hard to serve.

That, then, may give you some inkling of what freedom is like.