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Cato Policy Report

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The Libertarian Pioneers of School Choice

BY KEVIN CURRIE-KNIGHT

School choice is a central debate in education policy today, with advocates of charter schools, vouchers, and private schools arrayed against defenders of the government-run public schooling model. While many states have adopted some kind of school choice program, some politicians denounce this trend as a stalking horse for segregation or a corporatist dystopia. The modern school choice movement was pioneered by 20th century libertarian theorists, though not all of them agreed on what type of reform was best. Understanding their views is critical to understanding the debate over school choice in the 21st century.

In his 1973 book *For a New Liberty*, economist Murray Rothbard sketched a thought experiment to explain the value he saw in school choice. Imagine, he wrote, a government news service that operated the same way as U.S. public education. Since everyone needs news, this service claims for itself a taxpayer-funded virtual monopoly on producing news. In return, everyone would be forced to consume this public

news source, and this service is enticingly “free of charge.” Private news services could exist, but only with the government’s blessing. And while you could purchase private news, your taxes still support the government’s news service. It’s probably obvious

to all, Rothbard wrote, the several ways in which this is a problematically rigged game. The state could easily use its monopoly power to propagandize or quash a diversity of news services and competition between

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EMILY EKINS, research fellow and director of polling at the Cato Institute, participated in a panel on midterm election results at NYU School of Law with DAVID AXELROD, former senior adviser to President Barack Obama; RON KLAINE, former chief of staff to vice presidents Al Gore and Joe Biden; and Democratic political strategist DOUG THORNELL.

KEVIN CURRIE-KNIGHT is a Teaching Associate Professor in East Carolina University’s College of Education and the author of *Education in the Marketplace* (Springer, 2019).



BY DAVID BOAZ

EDITORIAL

Think Tanks in a Polarized Era

There has been a great deal of concern lately about rising partisanship and tribalism in the American political and cultural dialogue. Magazines, cable networks, and friends on Facebook line up with the Red Team or the Blue Team (which, lately, means pro- or anti-Trump) and present very different views of the world.

In times of polarization, think tanks seek to model civil discourse and respectful disagreement. Scholars at think tanks—more formally, public policy research organizations—may disagree, but they do so on the basis of facts, logic, and analysis.

But think tanks increasingly find themselves pressured to join a team and face off with the opposition. U.S. think tanks across the political spectrum report more pressure from donors and allies to be part of the red or blue team.

Meanwhile, increased partisan competition means more focus on think tanks, their activities, and their funding. Journalists and activists demand more transparency about funding sources and donor relations. The *New York Times* blasted several major think tanks for seeming to give foreign-government donors what they want. Yahoo! News reported in 2018, “Think tanks reconsider Saudi support amid Khashoggi controversy.” The Cato Institute has not been mentioned in these stories—not because we’re lucky, but because we don’t seek or accept money from governments. That course of action proves wiser every year.

There are legitimate arguments for transparency about funding. But we have also seen an uptick in efforts by political opponents and even by officeholders to pressure or punish donors. Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) has urged the Justice Department to bring a lawsuit under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act against Exxon Mobil and its purported “network” of “conservative policy institutes” that disagree with the senator on climate science. And in 2013, Cato received a letter from Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL) demanding to know, among other things, “Has Cato Institute served as a member of ALEC [American Legislative Exchange Council] or provided any funding to ALEC in 2013?” The answer to that question was no, but then-CEO John Allison’s answer to Senator Durbin was more blunt: “Your letter . . . represents a blatant violation of our First Amendment rights.”

All think tanks need to resist this sort of intimidation, no matter at whom it is directed, and insist on our institutional independence.

Red-blue polarization is tough for those of us who don’t line up with either side, who try to talk to people of good will across the political spectrum, and who seek to defend principle while holding politicians accountable. There have certainly been policy improvements that were driven by the left (gay marriage, marijuana reform), the right (tax cuts, regulatory slowdown, repealing the health care mandate), and both (criminal justice reform). But politicians and parties have an incredible propensity to let us down even when we supposedly agree. Democrats pay lip service to civil liberties but do little to defend them, while for all the talk of fiscal conservatism by Republicans, spending and debt grow regardless of which party is in charge. Cato must defend these values and be willing to call out either side as necessary.

This stance is particularly necessary as the attitudes of both parties have hardened and polarized in unfortunate directions. Although his tax and regulation policies are laudable, President Trump has shifted the GOP’s focus from smaller-government Reaganism to protectionism, anti-immigration hysteria, and cultural issues, often racially charged ones. Meanwhile, the Democratic Party has moved sharply left on all the wrong things—the Green New Deal, Medicare for All, and a wealth tax. Those changes make Cato’s role all the more important, and we’ve developed some projects to fight back against tribalism, such as our recent art exhibit and a high school teachers’ conference this summer.

Most think tanks are committed to liberalism in the broad sense—to rule of law, freedom of conscience, toleration, limited government, markets, democracy, and, perhaps especially, free speech and the value of truth. With rising tides of illiberalism on left and right, here and elsewhere, we have a common purpose to defend liberalism, even though we argue a great deal about policy details.

“Think tanks seek to model civil discourse.”

Mark Calabria takes reins at FHFA

Former Cato Scholar Pushes Privatization of Fannie and Freddie

Mark Calabria, former director of financial regulation studies at the Cato Institute, was confirmed by the Senate in April to be the director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA). Before his confirmation, Calabria had been serving as chief economist to Vice President Mike Pence, a position he left Cato to accept in 2017.

The FHFA is an independent agency that regulates Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the 2 government-sponsored enterprises at the center of the



secondary mortgage market, and the 11 regional Federal Home Loan Banks.

In an interview with the *Wall Street Journal* (“Administration Nears Plan to Return Fannie, Freddie to Private Ownership,” May 30, 2019), Calabria outlined his intention to put the two agencies on a firmer financial footing before proceeding with full privatization. Calabria thinks such a plan could proceed as executive

action in lieu of a congressional overhaul of the agencies, which received controversial bailouts during the 2008 financial crisis.

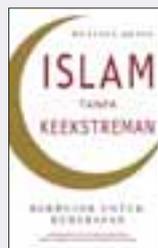
Fannie and Freddie function by bundling mortgages and selling the bundles to investors as mortgage-backed securities. In theory, the value they add to this process is performing due diligence on the underlying mortgages to ensure that they are fit for safe investment. In practice, however, this diligence has often been lacking. Subject to political pressure to expand homeownership, Fannie and Freddie played a central part in fueling the bubble in mortgage-backed securities that led to the 2008 crash.

Cato analysts have long advocated privatizing Fannie and Freddie, getting the federal government to stop putting its thumb on the scale in the mortgage market. The agencies’ financial entanglement with the federal government has gone both ways. Not only were Fannie and Freddie bailed out by the federal government in 2008, but also, in 2012, the Obama administration used their profits in the recovering market to reduce the reported federal budget deficit heading into that year’s presidential election. ■

STUDIES AND COMMENTARY ON FANNIE AND FREDDIE, INCLUDING SEVERAL WORKS BY MARK CALABRIA DURING HIS TIME AT CATO, CAN BE VIEWED AT CATO.ORG.

Cato News Notes

MALAYSIA BANS CATO SCHOLAR’S BOOK



The government of Malaysia has banned Cato senior fellow Mustafa Akyol’s book *Islam Without Extremes* after the author was arrested and briefly detained by the nation’s religious police in 2018. In response, Cato has made the Malay-language edition of the book available for free on the Institute’s website.

ANNUAL REPORT RECEIVES DESIGN AWARD

The Cato Institute’s 2018 Annual Report was honored with the Award of Excellence from the Printing and Graphics Association Mid-Atlantic. The report can be viewed on cato.org and features information about the Institute’s activities and finances. A copy is also provided to Cato Sponsors.

Free Thoughts Podcast



“Free Thoughts explores the richness, power, and diversity of libertarian thought.”

—DAVID BOAZ

A weekly show about politics and liberty, featuring conversations with top scholars, philosophers, historians, economists, and public policy experts.



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As part of Cato’s art exhibition, panelists discussed the concept of being offended and its place in art. Left to right: moderator CALEB BROWN, *Washington Post* art critic PHILIP KENNICOTT, JANIS GOODMAN of George Washington University, author LENNY CAMPELLO, and Cato’s JASON KUZNICKI.



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From April 4 to 7, Cato hosted its 31st Annual Benefactor Summit at the Institute’s building in Washington, DC. 1. Attendees discuss the ideas of freedom during a dinner reception. 2. Policy Analyst VANESSA BROWN-CALDER. 3. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development BEN CARSON with Cato President PETER GOETTLER. 4. Educational entrepreneur Dr. STEVE PERRY. 5. Sen. RAND PAUL (R-KY).



BRANDON VALERIANO, Donald Bren Chair of Armed Politics at Marine Corps University, discusses the future of cyber warfare at a policy forum in May.



STEPHEN DAVIES, head of education for the Institute of Economic Affairs, explains the thesis of his book *The Wealth Explosion: The Nature and Origins of Modernity* at a forum in May.



ANNE KRUEGER, former chief economist at the World Bank, participated in a book forum on *Free Trade and Prosperity: How Openness Helps Developing Countries Grow Richer and Combat Poverty* with the author, ARVIND PANAGARIYA of Columbia University.



Continued from page 1

them. Yet to libertarian supporters of school choice, this is what the world of public education looks like.

Critics of school choice often depict the movement as based on a desire to see the public square gutted and handed over to corporations as well as an intent to resegregate and further stratify America. For instance, in a 2017 opinion piece Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, warned readers to “Make no mistake: The real ‘pioneers’ of private school choice were the white politicians who resisted school integration.” Historians Diane Ravitch (in *Death and Life of the Great American School System*) and Nancy MacLean (in *Democracy in Chains*) tell similar stories: school choice was born as a way for southern states to maintain segregation after *Brown v. Board of Education* and lives on today because a group of corporatists want to commodify what’s left of a public institution.

This history is oversimplified when not outright wrong. To be sure, the aftermath of *Brown* found several southern states using school choice plans as a way to bypass integration of public schools. But the implication that school choice has its roots in, or is necessarily attached to, segregationist politics is inaccurate.

Libertarians have a long history of arguing for school choice against government monopoly on a variety of economic and philosophical grounds, none involving a desire to accelerate segregation or shift for corporations. These reasons range from the natural right of parents to direct their children’s education to public choice—inspired arguments about the efficiency of decentralized markets over state bureaucracies. In my book *Education in the Marketplace* I recount the various ways libertarians in the 20th century United States have defended markets in education. None of them fit segregationist or corporatist caricatures set by Ravitch, Weingarten, or MacLean.

“That school choice has its roots in segregationist politics is inaccurate.”

AMERICAN SCHOOLS WEREN'T ALWAYS RUN BY GOVERNMENT

First, we should note that the idea of a tax-supported public school that most school-age children attend is a relatively new invention. In the early American republic, almost all children who went to school went to private schools. When governments subsidized schooling, it was generally targeted to poor families who could use the subsidy at any school they had access to. Some schools were run by churches and supported primarily by charity, others (like “dame schools” that usually operated in a person’s house) were fee-based. It was only in the 1830’s that localities made significant attempts to create “common schools,” and even then, attendance required payment of tuition (a “rate bill”).

In the Progressive Era of the late 1800’s and early 1900’s, tax-supported and compulsory public schooling expanded. It was that expansion that early libertarians were reacting to. While today critics of school choice might see free marketeers clamoring to privatize a cherished public space, libertarians in the early-and-middle 20th century saw government intruding on what had previously been a private affair.

It is this encroachment that worried writer Albert Jay Nock (1870-1945). Citing sociologist Franz Oppenheimer, Nock believed there were two fundamental modes of social interaction: free exchange and force. Private enterprise and liberal values reflected the former, while government specialized in the latter. In his 1931 book *Theory of Education in the United States*, Nock wrote of several reasons public education was suspect, among which was Nock’s pessimism that everyone was truly educable

(as opposed to merely trainable). Although Nock was somewhat more optimistic about private enterprise in education, his social conservatism led him to suspect that the private market would cater too well to mass tastes. If the public wanted junk education, junk education is what the market would offer—in Nock’s view, no worse than what the state could do, but probably not much better.

Nock’s protege Frank Chodorov (1887-1966) shared much of Nock’s outlook, but was far more optimistic about private markets in education. Chodorov defended markets in education largely on the grounds that markets would foster pluralism. His reasoning was that all education involves ideological choices, from what to put in and leave out of curriculum to the best methods of teaching. In a liberal society, we should not assume that there will be one best way to resolve these issues. Witnessing court cases like 1925’s *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, which arose from Oregon’s attempt to mandate that all students attend public schools thus effectively outlawing Catholic parochial schools, Chodorov believed that markets in education would allow families to pursue the education that worked best for them. Chodorov was an anarchist in theory, but as a compromise he advocated for a tuition tax-credit system. In this model, public schools could exist, but families could choose private schools and deduct tuition from their taxes.

Ayn Rand (1905-1982) and the aforementioned Murray Rothbard (1926-1995) also wrote about education and advocated for two very different conceptions of the role of markets in education. For both, public education was largely an engine for the state to indoctrinate citizens in collectivist ideas. (If this sounds unduly conspiratorial, it is not far off, according to Charles Glenn’s more mainstream history, *Myth of the Common School*, or Andy Green’s *Education and State Formation*.) Both also believed that public schooling was an impermissible intrusion

“Vouchers increased racial integration.”

into people's natural rights to economic liberty and to direct their children's education. A believer in minimal government, Rand argued for a tax-credit system similar to Chodorov's. The anarchist Rothbard rejected any government intervention in education. He wanted a complete separation of education and state, believing that charity would be enough to ensure education to the poor.

MILTON FRIEDMAN AND THE MODERN EFFORT FOR SCHOOL CHOICE

The best-known libertarian defenders of markets in education were the economist duo of Milton Friedman (1912-2006) and his wife, Rose Friedman (1910-2009), who wrote wholly economic defenses of school choice. As Milton Friedman explained, his most popular essay on the subject, “The Role of Government in Education,” simply applied economic ideas he'd formulated elsewhere to the subject of schooling. If we go back to Rothbard's “public news” thought experiment, Friedman would be (slightly) less concerned with the philosophical objections than economic ones: private news would be preferable to government news largely because the former could respond to consumer demand better than the latter. In his essay, Friedman advocated that the state provide vouchers of equal amounts per child to families that could then be used toward any state-accredited private school. This, of course, allowed much more government involvement in education than folks like Chodorov or Rand (let alone Rothbard!) would tolerate. Friedman justified this by appealing to the positive externalities—what he called “neighborhood effects”—of ensuring that all citizens received some education. In later years, Friedman changed his mind about how much the state should fund education, coming to believe that in a truly free market only the poor would need subsidies.

Writing on the heels of *Brown v. Board*, Friedman dealt with questions of how school

choice would interact with race and segregation, questions that still dog today's advocates of school choice. To make things more awkward, Friedman's championship of vouchers appeared around the time as the “pioneers” mentioned by Randi Weingarten were designing school choice programs meant to *maintain* segregation. Contra Weingarten's innuendo, Friedman's voucher plan was not intended to segregate, but to allow the freedom that he hoped might lead to integration. Integration, he argued, was more likely if all parents could choose schools for their children rather than attend the school dictated by their zip code.

Interestingly, Friedman was not the only champion of school choice who saw its potential for integration. Such nonlibertarians as Theodore Sizer (1932-2009), John Coons (1929-) and Stephen Sugarman (1942-) envisioned voucher programs they believed might better integrate students in ways the public system stubbornly resisted. Their proposals were different from Friedman's in various ways, for instance, often distributing vouchers in ways that gave more financing to students that private schools might be less keen on accepting. In a 1968 article titled “A Proposal for a Poor Children's Bill of Rights,” Sizer defended vouchers that, as he described it, “discriminate[d] in favor of poor children.” Even though Friedman is probably the most famous champion of vouchers, “weighted” voucher programs envisioned by the likes of Sizer more closely resemble what states have been willing to implement.

Was Friedman right to be enthusiastic about the desegregation potential of school choice? We can surely say that the public system has not done a remarkable job integrating students by race or social class. But whether school choice does any better is tough to tell, as different sets of evidence

will be cited by different political groups with different political goals. In a 2018 academic review of literature, Elise Swanson finds that different models of school choice in the United States seem to have different effects. District-based school choice—magnet schools, “open enrollment” programs—and charter programs show mixed results. Some studies indicate a segregating, and others an integrating, effect. As for voucher programs, seven of the eight studies reviewed “found that vouchers increased racial integration for participating students.”

While libertarians are generally quite familiar with Milton Friedman's work on school choice, few are as familiar with author Myron Lieberman (1919-2013). This is a shame. His books, such as *Public Education: An Autopsy* and *The Educational Morass*, are stunning applications of public choice economics to the operations of both public and private education. Lieberman started as a public-school teacher, going on to become a collective bargaining negotiator in six states, securing contracts between teachers' unions and school districts. It was in that role that Lieberman began to notice that certain clauses in contracts benefited teachers' unions or the public-school bureaucracy at the expense of being responsive to students and families. Thinking through these problems led him to the public choice theory of economists like James M. Buchanan and Mancur Olson, because of their emphasis on how special interest groups often negatively affect public policy. He went on to champion markets in education largely on public choice economic grounds, believing that allowing individual consumers to choose between competing private firms would lead to better outcomes than everyone being served by a public bureaucracy. Unlike Friedman, however, Lieberman took care to emphasize that an effective market in education had to be open to for-profit firms. (Friedman wasn't against this but did not emphasize it as much as Lieberman did.) For a market

to produce high quality outputs for any product, including education, firms had to be able to make money, which would allow them to invest in research and development, and be able to scale, in ways that markets limited to nonprofits could not. For similar reasons, Lieberman also warned against enthusiasm for charter schools because, as much as they provided valuable choice for parents, charters were hardly a market-based solution. For Lieberman, charters were examples of problematic public-private partnerships where entry into “the market” (receiving a state charter) depended entirely on political favor, the school’s income is paid by tax revenue rather than tuition, and charter status is achieved in return for being subject to most of the same laws governing “traditional” public schools. Lieberman’s fear—that has arguably materialized—was that charters lack market incentives and so will fail to deliver what a truly private system might, yet they look enough like a market solution that critics will decry charter failures as market failures.

THE CASE FOR CHOICE

Libertarianism contains a rich history of advocacy for school choice. Where others may see Rothbard’s “public news” thought experiment as off-base, that scenario is indeed how libertarians have always viewed the idea of a state-run school monopoly. Some, like Rothbard and Rand, have argued for choice in education primarily on philosophical grounds, largely appealing to natural rights. Others, like Friedman and Lieberman, argued along more economic lines about the relative efficacy of markets compared to state bureaucracies. Still others, like Chodorov, argued for school choice out of a deep respect for ideological pluralism that markets could provide. Just as these figures differed in their justifications for school choice, they disagreed on how school choice should be structured. True to his anarchist sympathies, Rothbard wanted no involvement at all from the state: no funding, administration, or oversight of any kind. Rand and

“School choice is coming into its own.”

Chodorov advocated very minimal state involvement in the form of allowing tax credits to be used toward private tuition. Friedman and Lieberman allowed for still more state involvement, permitting the state to administer vouchers to parents as well as accredit the schools those vouchers could be used for.

Have we reached the promised land these libertarians advocated? Not by a long shot. Still, school choice is coming into its own. A 2018 *Education Next* poll shows steadily increasing public support for various school choice measures, and over half of respondents favor increased choice between schools. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has been an outspoken champion of school choice options, including charters, vouchers, and education savings accounts. More and more, states are expanding the availability of school choice options, such as a statewide voucher program in Indiana and a (yet unfunded) statewide Education Savings Account program in Nevada.

With these successes also come backlash

from critics of school choice. Many want to portray school choice as motivated by a plutocratic desire to gut and monetize, or worse resegregate, a public space. The pioneers of school choice, we are told, were part of the post-*Brown* segregationist movement. None of that is true. Arguments for school choice predate the strategy of “massive resistance” to *Brown*. These libertarians all argued for school choice on other grounds, like Chodorov’s hope for educational pluralism. Nor were any of these libertarians simply corporate cheerleaders. None of them would have been averse to for-profit schools (and Lieberman argued specifically for them), but this was simply because they had reasons to think companies motivated by profit would serve customers better than a state agency.

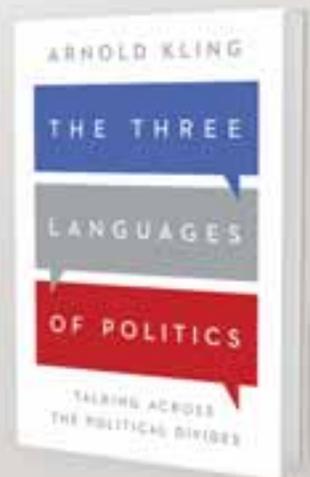
The libertarian cases for choice remind us that education probably isn’t different from other arenas of life. Just as people would have good reason to balk at a state news monopoly, we should balk at the public education system for the same reasons. We take it for granted that choice is valuable in a whole host of areas, from car and home purchases to lawn and counseling services. Maybe choice in education would provide similar value. ■

New from the Cato Institute

The Three Languages of Politics is a profoundly illuminating exploration of communication in America’s political landscape. Arnold Kling offers a way to see through our rhetorical blinders so that we can incorporate new perspectives into the important issues we must together face and resolve.



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Is Liberalism Good for Religions?

Liberalism, a political philosophy that grew out of the Enlightenment and that champions reason, freedom, and equality, has lately been criticized by some religious thinkers in the West. Liberalism, in their view, atomizes individuals, weakens society, and ultimately corrodes all faiths. To discuss these challenges, Cato hosted a policy forum in April on the question “Is Liberalism Good for Religions?” Participants included JOSEPH LOCONTE, associate professor of history at The King’s College, and Cato senior fellow MUSTAFA AKYOL, who specializes in the Islamic case for liberty.

JOSEPH LOCONTE: There are a lot of people on the cultural left who think that political liberalism is, and ought to be, the enemy of traditional religion. And they’re happy about that. I think many on the left want their particular vision of liberalism to render religious belief irrelevant and to keep people of faith confined to their little sanctuaries. That’s a view that’s out there. Others, though, especially some on the cultural religious right, also believe that liberalism erodes traditional religious belief. And they think this is what liberalism was designed to do. Catholic political scientist Patrick Deneen argues that the liberal project was essentially steeped in sin from its birth. Deneen argues that when liberalism dissolves our moral commitments to one another and stigmatizes our faith communities, it is being true to itself.

I think that both sides in this debate, on the left and on the right, misconstrue the foundations of liberal democracy. And I don’t think they’ve got a strong-enough grip on the nature of authentic religious belief. Maybe that’s intellectual laziness, maybe it’s something else, but I think both sides have embraced a thoroughly false and, ironically, militantly secular view of the historic rise of the liberal democratic project. The liberal democratic project helped to make possible the renewal of religious belief in the West, I would argue. It was this liberal democratic project that, properly understood, en-

shrined the concept of religious freedom, freedom of conscience, in the culture and institutions of the West. The conservative critics of liberalism—I don’t think they’ve taken their historical task seriously enough. And by failing to attend carefully to the past, they can’t really understand the current predicament. Let me just take a moment with this history about the liberal project.

It began as a response to the sins of Christendom. What sins? Let me just name a few here. The denigration of individual conscience. The criminalization of dissent. The corrosive entanglement of church and state. The hedonism of clerical leadership, and the deeply rooted anti-Semitism. I would argue that the Catholic medieval project, for all of its achievements (and some of them are truly remarkable and positive), failed to uphold one of the most transformative ideas of the Jewish and Christian tradition: the freedom and the dignity of every human soul. And that was a catastrophic failure. That failure, I would argue, generated a robustly Christian response. The liberal project began as an attempt to build a more just society. How? By appealing, believe it or not, to the life and teachings of Jesus.

Listen to John Locke on this one, in his *A Letter Concerning Toleration*: “If the Gospel and the apostles may be credited, no man can be a Christian without charity and without that faith which works, not by force, but

by love.” This was the Lockean basis for religious freedom, an appeal to the moral example of Jesus. Combined, yes, with the principle of equal justice under the law regardless of religious belief. So, the father of political liberalism renewed our commitment to authentic Christianity, uncoerced Christianity, as the foundation for pluralistic society. For thinkers such as Locke, the problem wasn’t religion. The problem was the decline of genuine faith, a spiritual corruption aided and abetted by a culture of coercion. And what were the results of that culture of coercion? The Europe of Locke’s day was a persecuting society. Here’s how Locke put it in his letter: “No peace and security, no, not so much as common friendship, can ever be established or preserved amongst men as long as this opinion prevails, that dominion is founded in grace and that religion is to be propagated by force of arms.” No peace, no security, not even friendship, with that idea. So, the liberal project, by insisting on the separation of church and state, offered the pathway toward religious renewal and to a more just and humane society.

So then, what has the Lockean vision of a just commonwealth produced, particularly in the United States? What effect has it had on religion? I’d like to quote a few lines here from Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*: “There is a certain European population whose disbelief is equaled only by their brutishness and ignorance, whereas in America one sees one of the freest and most enlightened peoples in the world equally fulfill all the external duties of religion. On my arrival in the United States it was the religious aspect of the country that first struck my eye. . . . Among us [the Europeans], I had seen the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom almost always move in contrary directions. Here [in America] I found them united intimately with one another: they

reigned together on the same soil.” The spirit of freedom and the spirit of religion, on the same soil. That’s what he saw, one of the most careful observers of the American scene. All the ministers he spoke to said the vitality of religion in America is due to the separation of church and state.

Locke was initially attacked as an atheist. One critic compared Locke to one of those locusts that arose from the smoke of the bottomless pit. And the amazing thing is that by the 18th century, Locke’s combination of Christian piety, Christian faith, and natural rights was being sounded from the pulpits on both sides of the Atlantic. And yet today, we hear Christian conservatives—or at least some of them—rejecting liberal democracy with its emphasis on individual freedom. Let me quote again from Patrick Deneen: “Locke writes that the law works to increase liberty, by which he means our liberation from the constraints of the natural world.” [See “Inescapable Liberalism? Rescuing Liberty from Individualism and the State,” ABC Religion and Ethics, May 20, 2013.] R. R. Reno, editor of the Catholic journal *First Things*, says, “Locke’s ideal society is a free association of individuals, unbound by duties that transcend their choices.” [See Joseph Loconte, “The War over Liberal Democracy,” *The National Interest*, February 11, 2019.] In other words, radical individualism is what they believe Locke was setting out to try to achieve. I think they’ve got it completely wrong. I, like some of these conservatives, am steeped in this nostalgia for a premodern, medieval world. And they blame our modern social problems on the wicked, corrosive ideas of Lockean liberalism. So, I would put the question to them—which Lockean liberal ideas, exactly, are so corrosive of religious belief and moral commitments? Is it the idea of human equality and human freedom based on the proposition that every person bears the image of God? Is it the idea that the rights of conscience are sa-

cred and can’t be coerced by church or state? Is it the idea that impartial justice, the golden rule, must be the cornerstone of any democratic society? Or how about the idea that the desire to know God, to find peace with God, is inherent in every human soul, and that the state must respect this desire or forfeit its legitimacy?



“Grace and freedom can defeat bigotry and oppression.”

These are the ideas that threaten religious belief and have somehow shipwrecked the liberal order?

Friends, as a historian I can tell you, it was these concepts, on the contrary, that helped the West to recover its Christian conscience. John Locke, a founding father of political liberalism, defended all these ideas, as did James Madison. The American Revolution was, in many ways, a Lockean revolution, and it still has the power to inspire. Writing in the *New York Times*, my dear friend Mustafa Akyol, in a nod to Locke, wrote an op-ed called “A Letter Concerning Muslim Toleration.” Here’s what Mustafa wrote a couple of years ago: “If Islamic thought is to liberalize today, it

must take a Lockean leap.” When I read that line a few years ago, I just wanted to crack open a bottle of prosecco! Exactly right, a Lockean leap. Now more than ever, we need that Lockean leap both at home and abroad. Although he’s considered a modern thinker, Locke helped to retrieve one of the historic gifts of Christianity. What’s the gift? A narrative of grace and freedom that can defeat a culture of bigotry and depression. Locke reminded us that every human heart whispers its desire for the mentions of the blessed, for a glimpse of that bright kingdom that lies beyond the sea. We could use another John Locke, ladies and gentlemen, or someone like him, in our latest hour of crisis.

MUSTAFA AKYOL: Thank you, Joe, for referencing my article. It’s a pleasure to hear from you. Now, I was reading Joe’s article a few days ago [“The War over Liberal Democracy”], and especially the parts about the persecutions done in the name of Christianity in premodern, preliberal Europe. It reminded me of a trip I had to Montepulciano, in Tuscany. It’s a beautiful place, up on a hill, with great food and architecture and everything. But they also have something called the Museum of Torture, and when you go in there, you see all these rusty iron devices that were used to tear bodies into pieces in the most horrible ways. I don’t want to describe it in any more detail than that. Some of these were used by church authorities, against heretics and the like.

When I saw these devices in the museum, I remember thinking: well, it’s not just us Muslims who have a problem with religious fanatics, or religious persecution and authoritarianism. Of course, that’s history. In Christianity, all that’s long gone. But that progress was made possible, at least in the Protestant world, by people like John Locke. It was Enlightenment thinkers like him who said heretics should not be persecuted. It was a very progressive idea

at the time! Now, looking at this history from the perspective of Islam is important today, I think, because I have always felt that religion can be used for persecution, for authoritarianism, but religion can also be compatible with a free, open society. It happened in Christianity. It can happen in Islam. We should work on it. That has been my vision. But now I read intellectuals like Deneen who are saying liberalism is so bad, liberalism is so terrible. First of all, I want to take them to visit the Museum of Torture, so they can get a better sense of what we're talking about here.

And, of course, there are problems in modern societies as well. But we should compare the modern liberal order to its alternatives. Just like there are problems in capitalist societies—but compared to Stalin, capitalism still looks pretty good.

From the Islamic perspective, here's what I can say on this topic. In the premodern era, Islam actually wasn't that bad at all in terms of human rights and toleration. At times it was better than its Christian contemporaries. Because from the very beginning, Islam had rejected the idea of forced conversion. That's why Christians and Jews remained as who they are in predominately Muslim lands for centuries. Middle Eastern Christians are now being wiped out by groups like ISIS and other terrorists. But they were present for centuries, and there's a reason for that. It is the same reason why, at times, Jews fled from Europe to the Ottoman Empire and other Islamic lands.

However, with the advent of modernity, with the advent of the ideas of human rights, religious freedom, and freedom of speech, and with the stagnation of Islamic law in most Muslim societies, the gaps between the West and Islam on these things became very clear. In spite of those setbacks, liberalism has made some advances in the Muslim world in the past two centuries. That's why there are constitutional governments in many parts of the Muslim world.

The Ottoman Empire began imple-

menting some remarkably liberal reforms in the 19th century. They changed the penal code. Corporal punishments were abolished, for example. However, these reforms were only a half success, and today there is certainly a resistance in the Muslim world against liberalism, in the very basic sense of the word. In Malaysia, for example, my



MUSTAFA AKYOL

“I see this coming in the Muslim world. It is a good thing.”

book has been re-banned just this week because it promotes liberalism. In Malaysia, the religious authorities give sermons in the mosques condemning liberalism and “human rights-ism.” The two always go together in their vernacular: liberalism and human rights-ism.

As they view it, human rights-ism is an idea that promotes falsehoods like people are equal, or that people should have the freedom to change or reject their religion. So, why is this happening in Islam? Because we have something that the Christians don't have, or at least not nearly as much of, which is the legal aspect of the religion: shari'a. In Christianity, there were church laws, but they're not as integral. In Judaism,

the legal aspect was integral. But in Judaism, the religious law wasn't state law for most of Jewish history.

So, in Islam, how do we approach shari'a, and how do we change it? Or, how do we change the interpretation of shari'a through jurisprudence? This is the big issue. And there are people who say we should understand that it's contextual; that it's God's word but God spoke in a context, and we can go forward from that. There are people who are making that argument, exploring how we can reconcile shari'a with the perspective of freedom which you can find in the Quran, for example, in Quranic verses like “there is no compulsion in religion.” (Al-Baqara 256).

However, a lot of Muslims are still hesitant to take this Lockean leap. I think one reason is that they fear that if you enter liberalism there will be freedom, and then you will be free from religious morality itself. You will abandon everything you believe in because there is freedom. You will be doing cocaine parties and orgies every day, to put it in a caricaturized way. Well, we should put it right. Freedom doesn't compel you to abandon your religion. It doesn't even advise you or encourage you to do that; freedom just gives you a vacuum, and it is your job to fill that vacuum.

You can be a very pious conservative Muslim and live fully in a free society. You might have problems in France under *laïcité*, which is maybe not full freedom when it comes to the wearing of headscarves and issues like that. But in a fully free society, you can live like the Amish if you want! You can even create a community that is conservative, but you don't have to define the whole overarching structure of society. However, there are some people who say we need coercion for sustaining our religion, because our religion can only thrive if it dominates all of society rather than merely having a space within society where it can be freely exercised.

Echoing this view, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a

conservative Egyptian cleric, once said in a TV program: “If we didn’t execute apostates, Islam wouldn’t be here as it is here today.” He probably said this without thinking about how it would sound. But to a lot of people, including myself, it looks very bad. If you’re saying that without coercing people we can’t keep them in our religion, that doesn’t reflect very well on our religion, does it? Our religion should be keeping people in because it’s convincing them, it’s inspiring them. There are people like that cleric in the Muslim world, but there are others who see this problem, and they are growing in number and influence.

I think we should all understand that liberalism brings a new responsibility to religions. Liberalism says to a religion that you must defend yourself, articulate yourself, revitalize yourself, in a more energetic way. In an illiberal society, you can try to ban all the atheist books, you can jail all the atheists, and perhaps your children will never hear about somebody who says there is no God. So they won’t be confused about that. But that world is not possible any more in the modern world, so it’s just a los-

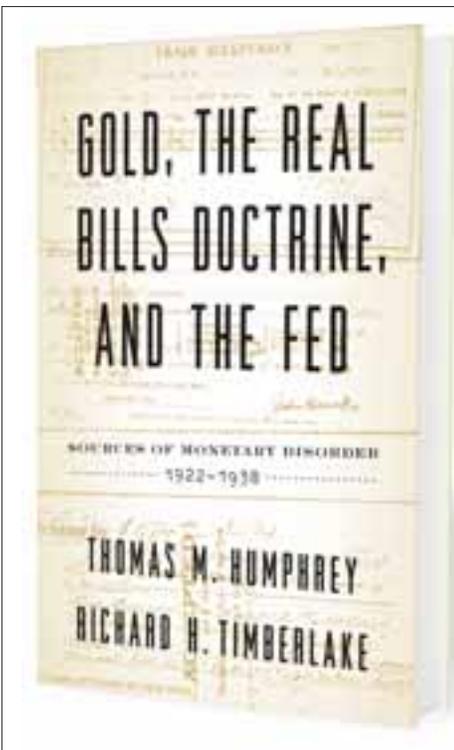
ing strategy. But in a liberal society, in an open society, atheist books will be there, atheist people will be there, critics of religion will be there, alternative religions will be there. Then you, as a religious person, have a job to do! You have to argue against them. With reason, you have to show why your religion is more persuasive. Perhaps you can’t convince everybody, but that’s your job. And actually, religions flourish intellectually in environments like that. We had a great intellectual flourishing in early Islam, when Muslim scholars read Aristotle, Plato, and Greek philosophy. They struggled with those works and tried to find arguments, and developed syntheses. There was a great intellectual flourishing in the late Ottoman Empire and in the 19th century Arab world as well thanks to the intellectual encounter with modernity.

When you close yourself down, yes, you can remain religiously conservative, but you will actually be deintellectualizing the faith. You’ll be losing your sophistication and ability to defend the religion in the realm of ideas. So, I think that’s a choice ahead for religious communities. But I

think, especially in this day and age, there is no reason to retreat from the liberal accomplishment that saves us from persecution in the name of religion.

Finally, one can ask, why would Muslims need to get into this modern liberalism? Why don’t they just live in their premodern world? First of all, it’s not possible, but second, there is a great motivation to accept liberalism in the Muslim world today, and it’s coming. It is precisely the motivation that triggered liberalism in Europe, which is seeing all the persecution, all the violence, all the bigotry done in the name of religion. I see this coming in the Muslim world. It’s a good thing. I mean, it’s a horrible thing that ISIS is killing people in the name of Islam, but be aware that a lot of Muslims are seeing this and saying there is something deeply wrong with this.

So they will either go fully secular, or maybe they will embrace a more liberal Islam. And I think Muslims who are conscientious about their faith should work on the latter option. Otherwise, the alternative isn’t liberal religion, but rather the loss of religion. ■



New from the Cato Institute

“In my opinion, this book is the most important book written on the Great Depression since Friedman and Schwartz published their *Monetary History of the United States*. . . . I strongly recommend this book to anyone who seeks to understand the economic history of America. ”

—PHIL GRAMM

Economist and former chairman of the Senate Banking Committee

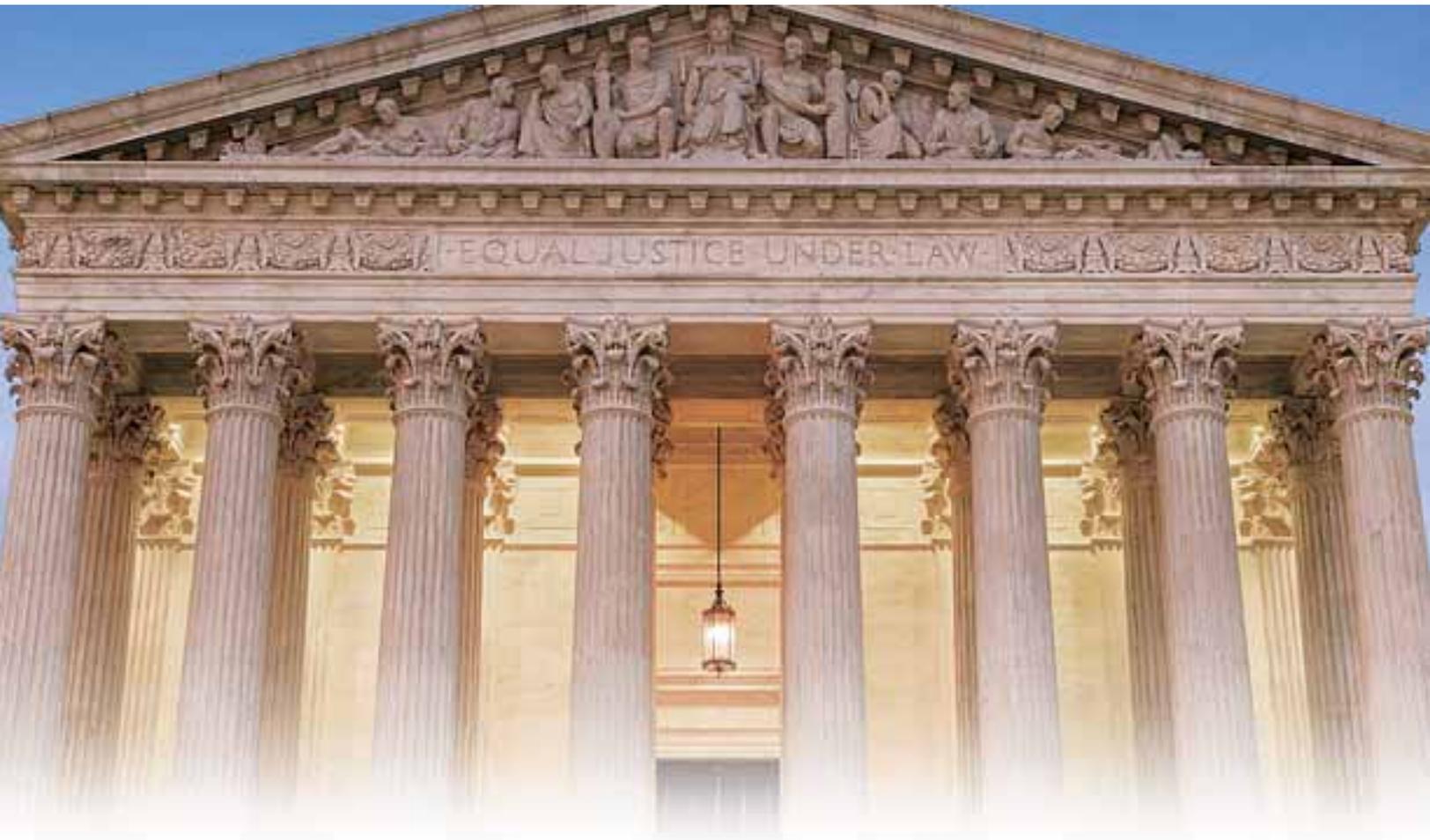
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For details and registration: www.cato.org/constitutionday

This Constitution Day Symposium is presented through the generosity of the George M. Yeager Family Foundation.

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CHRISTOPHER PREBLE, vice president for defense and foreign policy studies, at the launch party for his new book from Libertarianism.org, *Peace, War, and Liberty: Understanding U.S. Foreign Policy*.



MICHAEL F. CANNON, director of health policy studies, interviewed Sen. BILL CASSIDY, MD (R-LA) at a forum in April to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Cato's publication of *Patient Power* by John C. Goodman and Gerald L. Musgrave.



EMILY EKINS, director of polling, and senior fellow MICHAEL TANNER participated in a Capitol Hill briefing in April to present Tanner's book *The Inclusive Economy: How to Bring Wealth to America's Poor*.

APRIL 1: How Much Should Medicare Pay for Drugs?

APRIL 8: *The Inclusive Economy: How to Bring Wealth to America's Poor*

APRIL 9: 25 Years of *Patient Power*

APRIL 15: Zimbabwe: Africa's Shame and Opportunity

APRIL 15: Why the Government Should Not Regulate Content Moderation of Social Media

APRIL 17: *The Twenty-Six Words That Created the Internet*

APRIL 17: Breaking Barriers: Art as the Messenger

APRIL 18: The Costs and Unintended Consequences of Beneficial Ownership Reporting

APRIL 22: The Simon Abundance Index: A New Way to Measure Availability of Resources

APRIL 22: CyberWork and the American Dream

APRIL 24: Two Roads to War: How (and Why) America and Britain Decided to Invade Iraq

APRIL 24: Is Liberalism Good for Religions?

APRIL 26: Cato Institute Policy Perspectives 2019: San Francisco

APRIL 30: Unnatural Disaster: Assessing the Jones Act's Impact on Puerto Rico

MAY 7: *Punishment without Crime: How Our Massive Misdemeanor System Traps the Innocent and Makes America More Unequal*

MAY 9: Cyber Warfare, Coercion, and Restraint

MAY 22: "I Am Offended": Art & Free Expression

MAY 23: *The Wealth Explosion: The Nature and Origins of Modernity*

MAY 29: Why Is College So Pricey? Theories Compete!

MAY 30: *Free Trade and Prosperity: How Openness Helps Developing Countries Grow Richer and Combat Poverty*

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Cato Calendar

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SCOTTSDALE, AZ

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SEPTEMBER 12-15, 2019

Speakers include George Will, Nicholas Christakis, Maia Szalavitz, and Clint Bolick.

18TH ANNUAL CONSTITUTION DAY
WASHINGTON • CATO INSTITUTE
SEPTEMBER 17, 2019

Speakers include Thomas Hardiman, Tom Goldstein, and Jan Crawford.

POLICY PERSPECTIVES 2019
PALO ALTO, CA • FOUR SEASONS
SEPTEMBER 27, 2019

POLICY PERSPECTIVES 2019
NEW YORK • INTERCONTINENTAL BARCLAY
OCTOBER 25, 2019

POLICY PERSPECTIVES 2019
CHICAGO • RITZ CARLTON
NOVEMBER 8, 2019

37TH ANNUAL MONETARY CONFERENCE
WASHINGTON • CATO INSTITUTE
NOVEMBER 14, 2019
Speakers include Richard Clarida, Paul Tucker, Charles Calomiris, Sarah Binder, and George Selgin.

POLICY PERSPECTIVES 2020
NAPLES, FL
RITZ CARLTON NAPLES BEACH
FEBRUARY 19, 2020

POLICY PERSPECTIVES 2020
FORT LAUDERDALE, FL
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MAY 20, 2020

Scholars take message of freedom to students

Cato on Campuses Nationwide in 2018–2019

Part of Cato’s mission is to change the intellectual landscape in the belief that public policy is downstream of ideas. As part of that effort, the Institute’s scholars spend much of the year crisscrossing the country to address students on campus, bringing the ideas of liberty to the next generation. Addressing a wide variety of fields, these presentations often offer students new perspectives not heard in the classroom.

Matthew Feeney is the director of Cato’s Project on Emerging Technologies, where his work touches on hot-button topics such as internet regulation, privacy, and the Fourth Amendment. During the 2018–19 academic year, Feeney spoke to students at Northern Illinois University during a symposium on the “gig economy,” discussing how regulators have responded to the emergence of companies such as Uber for ridesharing and Airbnb for short-term lodging. At Florida Gulf Coast University, he participated in a three-way debate on conservatism, progressivism, and libertarianism sponsored by the university’s Students for Liberty, College Democrats, and College Republicans. In addition to Feeney’s defense of libertarian principles, the event sought to highlight the potential for civic discourse between ideological opponents.

Walter Olson serves as a senior fellow at Cato’s Robert A. Levy Center for Constitutional Studies and is known for his writing on the American legal system and on political topics such as judicial nominations and gerrymandering. With his unique libertarian perspective, he has been invited to address events hosted both by progressive LGBT-rights organizations and by religious conservatives, a rare combination. (See also “Adoption and the Anti-discrimination Wars,” *Cato Policy Report*, Sep./Oct. 2018.) In



Top left: ILYA SHAPIRO at the Mississippi Center for Public Policy. Top right: MICHAEL CANNON at the University of Minnesota. Bottom: MUSTAFA AKYOL (far right) at New York University.

October, Olson participated in a panel discussion hosted by Lambda Law Alliance at the University of Virginia School of Law on LGBT participation in electoral politics, as well as in Federalist Society events on nondiscrimination and employment law at

Washburn University School of Law and the University of Kansas School of Law. With nominations to both the Supreme Court and lower federal courts featured heavily in the news at the time, Olson also spoke at The Catholic University of Amer-

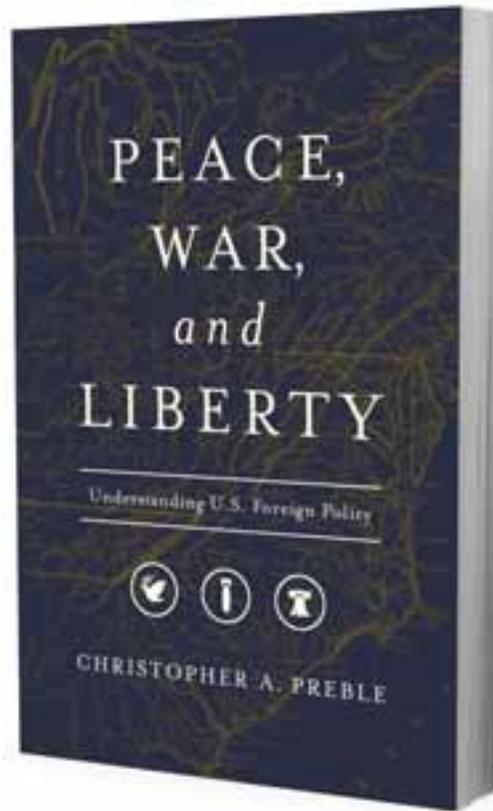
New from the Cato Institute

ica's Columbus School of Law for its law review's symposium on federal courts.

Cato scholars are also frequently invited to speak about books they have written. Cato senior fellow Michael Tanner recently published a book, *The Inclusive Economy: How to Bring Wealth to America's Poor* (Cato, 2018), to bring a fresh perspective to debates over anti-poverty policy and to break out of the usual left-right stalemate. Because this topic is of particular interest to students preparing to enter careers in public policy, Tanner spoke at the University of Vermont, the University of Texas, the University of Michigan, the University of Wisconsin, and Northwood University during the 2018–2019 academic year.

Those are just some examples of Cato's presence on campuses nationwide. Others include Executive Vice President David Boaz spoke about libertarianism and his book *The Libertarian Mind* (Simon and Schuster, 2015) at Claremont McKenna College and at the University of California, Berkeley. Ilya Somin, director of the Robert A. Levy Center for Constitutional Studies, gave talks at the University of Kentucky College of Law and at the Georgetown University Law Center on the role of the judiciary and judicial confirmations. Michael Cannon, director of health policy studies, gave presentations at St. Louis University, the University of Missouri, and the University of Minnesota.

Student groups and professors are always welcome to invite Cato scholars to speak on their campus. With dozens of scholars across a range of public policy topics, Cato has a libertarian expert ready to address just about any area of interest. In addition to directly contacting relevant scholars, invitations can be submitted through the speaker request form on cato.org. ■



In its dealings with the broader world, has the United States been a force for human liberty? Should it be? And if so, how?

To answer these questions, *Peace, War, and Liberty: Understanding U.S. Foreign Policy* traces the history of United States foreign policy and the ideas that have animated it and considers not only whether America's policy choices have made the world safer and freer, but also how those choices have influenced human freedom at home.

This evenhanded but uncompromising book considers the past, present, and future of United States foreign policy: why policymakers in the past made certain choices, the consequences of those choices, and how the world might look if America chose a different path for the future. Would America—and the world—be freer if America's foreign policy were more restrained?



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Fiscal Federalism

One of the key feedback loops of responsible government comes from the fiscal need to balance revenue against political responsibility for increased taxes. In **“Restoring Responsible Government by Cutting Federal Aid to the States”** (Policy Analysis no. 868), Chris Edwards outlines the advantages to be had by cutting federal transfer payments to state and local governments and how such payments break this crucial link.

SUBCONTINENTAL ECONOMICS

India’s economic reforms since 1991 have largely been a tale of private-sector success, government failure, and institutional erosion. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government has proven to be, at best, an incremental reformer rather than the agent of radical change many had hoped for. In **“A Reform Agenda for the Next Indian Government”** (Policy Analysis no. 869), Cato’s Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyar outlines a path forward to liberate markets, improve institutional governance, and raise standards of living after the May 2019 parliamentary elections.



AIYAR

NIXON SHOCK

The collapse of the Bretton Woods System on August 15, 1971, sent shock waves throughout the global economy. While much attention has been paid to the after-effects of President Nixon’s actions, less has been focused on what caused the instability in the Bretton Woods System preceding it. In **“The Imbalances of the Bretton Woods System, 1965–1973: U.S. Inflation, the Elephant in the Room,”** (Research Briefs in Economic Policy no. 164), Michael D. Bordo examines the

underappreciated role of increasing inflation in the United States and how it caused the imbalances in global trade that led Nixon to close the gold window, levy tariffs, and impose wage and price controls.

IMMIGRATION AND PUBLIC OPINION

Does immigration reduce support for redistributive policies and the welfare state? In **“Immigration and Preferences for Redistribution in Europe”** (Research Briefs in Economic Policy no. 165), Alberto Alesina, Elie Murard, and Hillel Rapoport find that the answer is yes, but with important qualifications. Preexisting political affiliations have a strong effect on the phenomenon, with those on the center and right far more affected than those on the left, as do regional variations in where immigrants concentrate in their new nation.

NEED JOB, WILL TRAVEL

How can people in the West best alleviate global poverty? It turns out that one of the easiest and simplest methods is not foreign aid, but allowing labor mobility. We know that within developed economies such as the United States, labor mobility is one of the key drivers of economic mobility. In **“Alleviating Global Poverty: Labor Mobility, Direct Assistance, and Economic Growth”** (Research Briefs in Economic Policy no. 157), Lant Pritchett of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government shows how the same is true across international borders and estimates the size of the potential gains to be had.

CENSORSHIP BY ANY OTHER NAME

On both the left and the right, calls have grown for the government to take on some or all of the responsibility for content moderation policies on major social media sites. In **“Why the Government Should Not Regulate Content Moderation of Social Media”** (Policy Analysis no. 865),

Cato’s John Samples outlines both the constitutional and the practical cases against this expansion of the government’s role. Within the strictures of the First Amendment, there is very little the government could do in this realm, and there are good reasons to doubt that the government could effectively replace private norms in a competitive marketplace.

PATHWAYS TO LEGALIZATION

A critical element of any future immigration reform will be the legalization of currently illegal immigrants, a fact that has repeatedly been a stumbling block for Congress. In an attempt to chart a viable path to reform, Cato immigration analysts Alex Nowrasteh and David Bier offer three concrete proposals in **“Three New Ways for Congress to Legalize Illegal Immigrants”** (Immigration Research and Policy Brief no. 12). These options include a tiered system that would allow immigrants to opt out of a path to eventual citizenship, rolling legalization based on length of time in the country without a set cutoff date, and a plan to slow so-called “chain migration” by limiting legalized immigrants’ ability to sponsor family members from abroad.

AMERICAN BRAIN DRAIN

The United States trains a large share of the world’s PhD scientists. In some fields, foreign nationals represent the majority of those graduating with doctoral degrees from American universities. In **“The Impact of Permanent Residency Delays on STEM PhDs: Who Leaves and Why”** (Research Briefs in Economic Policy no. 158), Shulamit Kahn and Megan MacGarvie examine why the “stay rate” of Chinese and Indian nationals obtaining doctorates in the United States has been declining. The authors find that bureaucratic delays, quota caps on EB-2 visas for advanced degree holders, and other

aspects of America’s clunky immigration system play a large role in the decline, as do increased economic opportunities in students’ home nations.

TRUST AND ANTITRUST

William McKinley, elected president in 1896, was generally friendly toward business interests and did not attempt to use the Sherman Antitrust Act to challenge the wave of mergers then under way. His assassination in September 1901 presents a unique opportunity to study the effects of a change in the president’s attitude toward antitrust laws. Using this grim natural experiment, Richard B. Baker, Carola Frydman, and Eric Hilt find, in **“Political Discretion and Antitrust Policy: Evidence from the Assassination of President McKinley”** (Research Briefs in Economic Policy no. 159), that Teddy Roosevelt’s ascension to the Oval Office had a noticeable effect on stock market returns.

SELF-MEDICATION

Self-medication is notoriously risky, often fueling alcoholism and other types of addiction. However, too often this practice has been treated as an irrational error in judgment rather than a rational response to certain conditions and the lack of available help from the medical system. In **“Rational Self-Medication”** (Research Briefs in Economic Policy no. 160), Michael E. Darden and Nicholas W. Papageorge examine how responsive self-medication rates are to the availability of more effective medications. They find that the introduction of SSRI antidepressants did cause a significant decline in rates of alcoholism.

BARRIERS TO ENTRY

Over the past six decades, occupational licensing in the United States has increased its coverage from around 5 percent of the U.S. labor force to close to 25 percent. In **“How Much of a Barrier to Entry Is Occupational Licensing?”** (Research

Briefs in Economic Policy no. 161), Peter Q. Blair and Bobby W. Chung examine the effects of these barriers on employment. They find that occupational licensing reduces the labor supply by an average of 17 to 27 percent, a remarkably large and underappreciated effect of these laws.

TERRORIZED

The risk of terrorism has been one of the major drivers of the debate over immigration policy, with restrictionists urging stricter controls on immigration to stop attacks by foreign nationals. In **“Terrorists by Immigration Status and Nationality: A Risk Analysis, 1975–2017”** (Policy Analysis no. 866), Alex Nowrasteh updates his previously published catalog of terrorist incidents to quantify these risks.



NOWRASTEH

DRIVERS OF BACKLASH

What motivates political backlash against waves of mass migration? In **“Gifts of the Immigrants, Woes of the Natives: Lessons from the Age of Mass Migration”** (Research Briefs in Economic Policy no. 162), Marco Tabellini examines the era of mass migration in the early 20th century. His findings show little correlation between migration and depressed wages, supporting the theory that the political backlash culminating in the Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924 was driven primarily by cultural concerns.

RUNGS ON THE LADDER

Recent years have seen a resurgence of arguments for substantial increases in the minimum wage and denial of the negative effects on employment from such laws. In **“Making Sense of the Minimum Wage: A Roadmap for Navigating Recent Research”** (Policy Analysis no. 867), Jeffrey Clemens examines the research underlying this push and finds it fatally flawed in many

respects. By overstating and misinterpreting empirical evidence, progressive advocates of minimum-wage hikes have carried their arguments far beyond what the data support.

SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Thomas Hobbes famously posited that the state serves a crucial role in avoiding situations in which life is “nasty, brutish, and short.” In the modern era, black markets for illegal contraband such as drugs provide a real-world test case of this theory. In **“Scarcity without Leviathan: The Violent Effects of Cocaine Supply Shortages in the Mexican Drug War”** (Research Briefs in Economic Policy no. 163), Juan Camilo Castillo, Daniel Mejía, and Pascual Restrepo examine the market for illegal drugs, which falls outside the state’s usual role in preventing violence and mediating disputes. In studying the Mexican cocaine trade, the authors find that bouts of scarcity in black markets are associated with increased violence. ■

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“To Be Governed...”

BLINDED BY BUREAUCRACY

Tens of thousands of elderly people are left struggling to see because of an NHS cost-cutting drive that relies on them dying before they can qualify for cataract surgery, senior doctors say.

The NHS has ignored instructions to end cataract treatment rationing in defiance of official guidance two years ago, a survey by the Royal College of Ophthalmologists has found.

—*THE TIMES (OF LONDON)*, APRIL 6, 2019

... OR WE MIGHT PLANT MORE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

What would happen if everyone around the globe began to eat a healthy diet, filling three-fourths of their plates with fruits, vegetables, and whole grains? We'd run out. Yep, that's right. A recent study published in the journal *PLOS One* by researchers at the University of Guelph found that there would not be enough fruit and vegetables to go around.

—*NPR*, APRIL 3, 2019

MAYBE IT WORKS UNDER MODERN MONETARY THEORY

One of the new [ferry] routes Mr. de Blasio announced this year—between Coney Island and Wall Street—is projected to require a subsidy from the city of \$24.75 for every passenger. . . . City officials say the subsidy will fall as the system attracts more riders. They now project that it will drop to less than \$8 per passenger, after the addition in the next two years of routes to Coney Island, the North Shore of Staten Island, and Ferry Point Park in the Bronx.

But that forecast hinges on an estimate that two million riders a year will opt to pay \$2.75 to ride from Staten Island to the West Side of Midtown when they can get to Lower Manhattan on the city-run Staten Island Ferry for free.

—*NEW YORK TIMES*, APRIL 17, 2019

ANOTHER LOST WAR?

It is a heady goal for this coal-fueled [Kentucky] county where Lyndon B. Johnson launched his War on Poverty 55 years ago. Forty percent of the 12,000 residents still live below the poverty line, and the unemployment rate is well above the national average.

—*WASHINGTON POST*, APRIL 17, 2019

NEXT STOP, ANARCHY

In the Islamic State, “they told us what was right and what was wrong. It was better,” she said. “Here, people wear whatever they want.”

—*WASHINGTON POST*, APRIL 20, 2019

DISRUPTER-IN-CHIEF OR POLITICS-AS-USUAL?

The Trump administration is taking steps that could delay premium spikes for Medicare prescription drug beneficiaries until after President Trump's 2020 reelection bid.

—*WASHINGTON POST*, APRIL 10, 2019

AND BY ITS LEGAL MONOPOLIES

Comcast Corp. said net profit rose 14% in the first quarter, boosted by its high-speed internet business, a spate of successful movies, and the recent acquisition of European pay-television operator Sky PLC.

—*WALL STREET JOURNAL*, APRIL 26, 2019

CENTRAL PLANNING ALWAYS BUMPS INTO PEOPLE'S PREFERENCES

When she started her job nine years ago, Liu Fang's work involved making sure the women from her village did not have unauthorized babies. . . .

Today, her job could hardly be more different. After the Chinese government abandoned its one-child policy three years ago,

Liu's mandate has changed from making sure local women don't have too many babies to actively encouraging them to have more.

There's just one problem: Now, most people don't want to have more than one child anymore.

—*WASHINGTON POST*, MAY 5, 2019

FREEDOM IS A DANGEROUS IDEA

Access to this book online must be blocked. In Islam, there is no Secularism or Liberalism.

—*COMMENT AT YAHOO.COM*, MAY 5, 2019

The Polish interior minister, Joachim Brudziński, announced on Twitter on Monday that a person had been arrested for [designing] images of the Virgin Mary with the rainbow-coloured halo. . . .

Offending religious feeling is a crime under the Polish penal code. If convicted, the woman could face a prison sentence of up to two years.

Brudziński, who described the posters as “cultural barbarism” when they appeared overnight in April, said: “Telling stories about freedom and ‘tolerance’ doesn't give anyone the right to offend the feelings of believers.”

—*THE GUARDIAN*, MAY 6, 2019

WHY BE A SENATOR, THEN?

“The president doesn't have the authority to do it without our permission,” said libertarian-leaning Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), a frequent golf partner of the president, when asked about a possible military intervention in Venezuela. “There has to be a vote in Congress or it will be illegal and unconstitutional.”

Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), who is also close to Trump and is the polar opposite of Paul on foreign policy said, “I don't care about voting on the use of force.”

—*POLITICO*, MAY 6, 2019