

## THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT FOR THE AMERICAN LIBERTARIAN MOVEMENT: CHRISTIAN LIBERTARIANISM, 1950–71

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IN HIS 1971 BOOK, *Betrayal of the American Right*, Murray Rothbard argued that the Old Right in American politics, those isolationists and libertarians who had provided conservative opposition to New Deal liberal ideas since 1933, had been ‘betrayed’ by 1964. Led by William F. Buckley, the New Right had transformed American conservatism, a change marked by the Goldwater presidential campaign, by validating support for the welfare-warfare state that the Old Right had so trenchantly opposed for the previous thirty years. Rothbard correctly identified the root cause of the ideological schism that had separated American conservatives since the establishment of Buckley’s *National Review* in 1955; the extent to which the State should be involved in defeating communism abroad and progressivism at home. He, also, carefully related the contending philosophies of the Old and New American Rights. But what he failed to adequately explain was the importance of Christian thought to the libertarian movement. This article will remedy that omission by exploring the reasons why Christian libertarians, between 1950 and 1971, protested America’s liberal public policies. It will also present their alternative vision of how the United States should be governed; or, more accurately, how and why Americans should govern themselves. For only by understanding the religious arguments for political liberty can we appreciate America’s traditional defense of individual freedom.

Spiritual values were the predominant justification for espousing a libertarian viewpoint before 1971, and continue today to provide the founding convictions of many American libertarians and conservatives. In

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fact, if the beliefs of the founding fathers are taken at face value, then Christian libertarianism—the defence of individual freedom as the will of God—is the first and most enduring American political and moral philosophy. A case can even be made that Christian libertarianism forms the foundation of any claims for ‘American Exceptionalism.’ And as a body of political thought, largely as a consequence of the pressures exerted upon individual freedom by New Deal liberalism and events of the early cold war, Christian libertarianism received its fullest exposition in the 1950s and ‘60s.<sup>1</sup>

The winter of 1949–50 marked a transitional moment in the history of the intellectual conservative movement in the United States. Before the traumatic events of that period of the cold war conservatism existed only as the philosophy of a marginalized, in Alfred Jay Nock’s term, ‘Remnant,’ of scattered and isolated opponents of the liberal juggernaut. After that critical winter of 1949–50, however, conservatives, instilled with a new apocalyptic urgency, slowly began to coalesce as an organized movement dedicated to ending liberal dominance in Washington. Historians of post-World War II conservative intellectualism have paid most attention to the emergence of the New Right in the 1950s, especially the establishment of the *National Review* in 1955 by William F. Buckley Jr. and associates. Historians have also commented extensively on the pivotal role of the Old Right libertarian journal the *Freeman* in helping build the rudimentary outlines of a philosophy that, by 1964, could immediately be identified in the political arena as a conservative alternative to the existing liberal consensus.

Far less attention, however, has been given to two journals, *Christian Economics* and *Faith and Freedom*, which first appeared in 1949–50. Both journals promoted the theory of Christian libertarianism, and their importance to the history of intellectual conservatism is twofold. First, their defense of individual freedom and the free market, based on religious principles, provided conservatism with a moral foundation—or certitude—upon which to confront the menace of both international communism and domestic liberalism. Second, an appreciation of Christian libertarianism dispels once and for all the lazy association of libertarianism with, as one historian has claimed, an “atomistic economism found wanting by conservatives who see humans as spiritual creatures, reflecting a superior side of human nature.”<sup>2</sup> For libertarians individual freedom is an end in itself, not

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<sup>1</sup> Lew Rockwell and Jeff Tucker, ‘Ayn Rand Is Dead,’ *National Review*, May 28, 1990, p.35, argues: “‘In the 1950s virtually everyone in the libertarianism movement was a cultural conservative, and virtually everyone was a believer,’ says George Resch of the Center for Libertarian Studies.” “The Randian Movement changed that, for the worse.”

<sup>2</sup> Ronald Lora, in Ronald Lora and William Henry Longton (eds.), *The Conservative Press In Twentieth Century America* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999), 511.

merely the means for the strong to dominate the weak in a capitalistic world of dog eat dog. As Murray Rothbard explained in the *Libertarian Manifesto*, the libertarian “does not want to place man in any cage.” What the libertarian “wants for everyone is freedom, the freedom to act morally or immorally, as each man shall decide.”<sup>3</sup> Christian libertarians made *exactly* the same argument, but with the added proviso that the Bible contained the lessons that would persuade everyone of faith to decide to use their ‘freedom to act morally.’

Before 1949, journals like *Human Events*, *analysis*, *Plain Talk*, and *American Affairs* provided a platform for authors such as Garet Garrett and Frank Chodorov to air their grievances at the growth of federal government, and for isolationist historians like Harry Elmer Barnes to cry unheeded at the warmongering tendencies of the liberal state. Voices were also raised in the conservative wilderness in books by Isobel Paterson, John T. Flynn, and Friedrich Hayek warning that the ‘Road to Serfdom’ beckoned if America did not abandon the nation’s disastrous experiment with collectivism that had started in 1933. They were, largely, ignored as the liberal media portrayed them, and any dissenting opinion to the prevailing progressive orthodoxy of Washington, as reactionaries intent on returning the United States to a Robber Baron past of capitalist exploitation and greed. Liberals were aided in this presentation, after 1945, by an American public more concerned with garnering their share of the American Dream in the new age of prosperity and affluence for all, than with questioning the assumptions that underlay the existence of the liberal Leviathan.<sup>4</sup>

But that complacency was shattered in the fall of 1949 by two international catastrophes. First, the discovery that the Soviets now possessed the A-bomb, and presumably the means to deliver it within the borders of the United States, destroyed the illusion that America was safe from physical destruction. Second, the news that the countless hordes of mainland China had fallen under the sway of a Communist dictatorship ended the optimism that the Cold War would be ended swiftly and painlessly. Before 1949, Americans worried about communism, but in the abstract. Truman had saved Greece and Turkey with his ‘Doctrine’; a declaration of foreign policy that would presumably suffice to blunt communist expansionism everywhere. Marshall was saving Europe from communist takeover with his Recovery

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<sup>3</sup> Murray N. Rothbard, *For A New Liberty: The Libertarian Manifesto* (1973; Ludwig von Mises Institute edition, 2006), 129.

<sup>4</sup> Murray N. Rothbard, *Betrayal Of The American Right* (Auburn, Alabama: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2007), 56 “During World War II, I was an undergraduate at Columbia University, and it seemed to my developing conservative and libertarian spirit that there was no hope and no ideological allies anywhere in the country.”

Plan.’ And HUAC had protected the home front by purging the Communists in Hollywood. All, if not well, was under control in the world. But now the threat America faced from Communism was real and immediate, and all the more frightening because Americans could not understand how these two disasters had been allowed to happen.

So, Americans were even more shocked to find in the winter of 1950 that the reason for these international debacles was the internal subversion of the United States by domestic and foreign Communist agents. The guilty verdict reached by the jury at Alger Hiss’s second perjury trial in January 1950, followed almost immediately by the announcement America’s nuclear secrets had been passed to the Soviets by the British (originally German) scientist Klaus Fuchs, incensed Americans. And anger soon turned to fury when on February 9, 1950, Senator Joe McCarthy informed his fellow citizens that the country’s Government, especially the State Department, was riddled with traitors, and that he had the evidence to prove it. If this was not enough astonishment for Americans, the unexpected invasion of South Korea by the Communist North provoked the dawning realization that once more American boys were to be sent to fight for freedom in some foreign land.

It was at this point that American conservatism began to emerge as an organized voice of intellectual opposition to liberal dogma at home and the communist menace abroad. 1950 saw the beginnings of a conservative movement dedicated to educating American citizens, and especially the opinion makers in society, about the errors inherent in the liberal philosophy; and as a concomitant, in reawakening their fellow Americans to the correct principles to be learnt from the country’s traditional belief in conservative ideas. The object of conservatives after 1950 was to bring together and propagate the opinions of the critics of the New Deal and early cold war years, and to couch their message in terms that would reassure an anxious populace that conservatism could save America from a perplexing future. Unsurprisingly, given America’s past as a Christian nation, most attention in the early years of the new conservative movement was given to the disastrous abandonment of correct religious values in the United States, especially by those swayed by the false arguments of the high priests of the social gospel order, the National Council of Churches. Consideration was also given to the proper application of the moral lessons contained in scripture to the just relationship between the State and the individual, and to the conflict taking place between the free and communist worlds.

It was these two questions that formed the basis for the establishment of the two journals that specifically promoted the idea of Christian libertarianism; *Faith and Freedom* in December 1949, and *Christian Economics* in

May 1950. But, as crucially for this fledgling development of a conservative movement, other journals also espoused a philosophy of individual free will and economic freedom based on religious ethics. Often overlooked in discussions of the libertarian ideology contained in the *Freeman*, first published November 1950, is the number of articles that used religious and moral lessons to buttress their defence of individual freedom. This article examines the essential propositions of Christian libertarianism as presented in these three journals, and also, in light of the controversy provoked among conservatives by the liberal policies of the National Council of Churches, briefly examines Carl McIntire's paper *Christian Beacon*. Lastly, the article presents the testimony of some noted conservative writers as corroborating evidence for the contention that, before 1971 at least, libertarianism in the United States was strongly influenced by religious conviction.

One of the distinguishing features of the conservative intellectual movement after 1950 was the financial backing it attracted from businessmen in the United States. Either through individual donations, or the establishment of think tanks and foundations, industrialists provided the finance needed to spread the conservative message to a wider audience than before.<sup>5</sup> One of the most, if not the most, generous of these donors was the retired Pennsylvanian oilman, J. Howard Pew.<sup>6</sup> With a gift of personal stock from his company Sun Oil he established the Christian Freedom Foundation (CFF) in May 1950. Because of his personal religious beliefs Pew desired that all his philanthropic activity remained anonymous, and as a result he allowed the story to circulate that the CFF was organized and founded by Howard E. Kershner; the retired Quaker businessman who became the first President of the new Foundation, and editor of the organization's 4-page bi-weekly paper *Christian Economics*. The two men's correspondence, however, reveals that the CFF was Pew's idea, and that after consultation with Rev. Norman Vincent Peale in the fall of 1949, he invited Kershner to become the President of the new organization.

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<sup>5</sup> See, Rothbard, *ibid*; 67, for the crucial role played by the William Volker Fund in "promoting libertarian and *laissez-faire* scholarship" in the post-war period. See also; Dane Starbuck, *The Goodriches: An American Family* (Liberty Fund, Inc., 2001) 311–430, for the contributions of Pierre F. Goodrich to conservative causes.

<sup>6</sup> For a broad overview of Pew's contributions to causes that explored the relation of Christianity to individual freedom see, Mary Sennholz, *Faith and Freedom: The Journal of a Great American, J. Howard Pew* (Grove City, PA: Grove City College, 1975). Especially, 152–57, for Pew's reasons for establishing not only *Christian Economics*, but *Christianity Today* (1956) and *The Presbyterian Layman* (1967) as well.

In a 1961 letter to a friend (at which point he had spent nearly \$2.7 million on his organization)<sup>7</sup> Pew explained why he had started the CFF in 1950. He stated that in 1946 and 1947, as Assistant Chairman and then Chairman of the Public Relations Committee of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), he had commissioned an opinion poll to determine why businessmen were so distrusted by the American public. And why, in general, capitalism was under attack. He was surprised to find that respondents named their ministers as the most influential molders of public opinion, and “shocked,” that “in those tests it came out the Protestant churches were doing more to promote socialism and communism than any other group.” As a consequence, Pew related, he “started a paper to educate ministers”<sup>8</sup> in correct principles. And for the next twenty years Pew’s paper, *Christian Economics*, was sent free to every minister in the United States, approaching at its peak a circulation of 200 000.

What the ministers received was a paper that promoted the idea that the free market economy is implicitly sanctioned, but not specifically endorsed, by lessons contained in the Bible. God gave us the way, the Ten Commandments, by which to live a moral life. Unfortunately, the ‘original sin’ of mankind meant individuals tried to circumvent the Divine law, and only the threat of harsh punishment by an earthly authority prevented the strong from enslaving the weak. In effect, individuals were coerced to *obey* God’s plan for His creation through fear of the consequences.

The crucial development came, for the Christian libertarian, when Jesus wrote the desire to *follow voluntarily* the Ten Commandments into the heart of mankind. Jesus gave us the choice, the individual freedom, to believe in Him and his message, or to reject Him. And as no manmade authority can intervene in that decision, the most important an individual can make, then no earthly authority can intervene in an individual’s free agency in those parts of their life—economic, political, or religious—where mankind attempts to be a good Christian and live according to the laws revealed in the Bible. Thus, Government is a ‘necessary evil,’ as Thomas Paine once argued, limited to the police powers of preventing the unregenerate from injuring the ‘life, liberty and property’ of their fellow citizens. When the State arrogated powers to

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<sup>7</sup> Memorandum, Summary of Income and Expenses from 1/1/1951 to 4/30/1961, Walter W. Brown–J. Howard Pew, June 9, 1961. In J. Howard Pew papers, Accession No. 1634, Box 185; HML.

<sup>8</sup> Letter, Pew–Herbert V. Kohler, Sept. 5, 1961, Pew papers, Box 186; HML. See also, James C. Ingebretsen, ‘Pause For Reflection,’ *Faith and Freedom*, January 1955; 6, for the observation that labor leaders, after a study of workers’ opinions, “were shocked to learn ... that the ‘great dominant force in public opinion still remained the ministers, priests and rabbis.’”

itself more than those basic functions it became the ‘enemy’ of the Christian libertarian, interposing governmental regulations between an individual and their God.

Kershner wrote the editorials for *Christian Economics*, and had an initial writing staff of two economists, George Koether and Percy E. Greaves, who received instruction from Ludwig von Mises in the correct economic principles to explain to ministers. In an early editorial of September 1951, Kershner set forth a general libertarian position that government should be limited to the basic requirements of: maintaining domestic order, restraining and punishing fraud, providing for the common defense, conducting international relations, and insuring the public health.<sup>9</sup> And, for the next twenty years, Kershner and a succession of staff and guest writers (including von Mises, Hayek, Haake, and Roepke) consistently defended that *laissez-faire* position in relation to the eternal principles contained in the Bible.

The CFF urged a return to: the Gold Standard and the sound money principle that protected the savings of retirees from inflation, the abolition of the welfare state and a return to the voluntary charity impulse that glorified the word of God, and the repeal of the Sixteenth Amendment which, with the establishment of the income tax, had made the State the arbiter of an individual’s conscience when it came to the distribution of property. These last two arguments are developed succinctly by H. Edward Rowe in the *Christian Economics* article, ‘The Christian Scriptures and Freedom,’ an example of how Christian libertarians applied the lessons in the Bible to contemporary affairs.

Rowe promoted the primacy of individual moral autonomy by arguing, the “Christian Scriptures clearly proclaim the principles essential to freedom in any human society.” And even though they were not carved in stone as the Ten Commandments were the Scriptures, nonetheless, “disclose a way of life” which, “constitute the only solid foundation upon which freedom, self government and economic well-being may be constructed.” In particular, the Bible illustrated five articles of faith which were needed for a free society to exist: freedom of choice, a life based on moral principles, a realistic view of human nature, rewards for service, and personal accountability to God. Of those tenets the first was by far the most important; individual free agency was the “heart of political and economic freedom,” without which there could be no religious freedom.

Rowe continued the article’s explication of the importance of individual free-will by pointing out that the “Bible is replete with evidence of

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<sup>9</sup> Draft, ‘Christian Economics: The Editor’s Definition,’ enclosed in letter, Kershner–Pew, Sept. 6, 1951, Pew papers, Box 181; HML.

free agency on the part of God and man alike.” God was “free to create and sustain the universe,” and in the act of Creation man emerged free “to accept or reject Him and His way of life.” Further, God had not coerced Jesus to redeem the sins of mankind and, similarly, Jesus had not compelled the rich young ruler to give up his wealth. He was given the choice “to choose wealth instead of God.” Neither, did Scripture state that the recalcitrant young ruler should have his wealth redistributed for him; “Jesus might have instructed his disciples to dispossess the young man and to distribute his goods to the needy, but He did not do that.”

Instead, Jesus taught, and made clear through his actions, that one person could not force another person to act morally. Jesus offered a path to salvation where each individual was at liberty to act according to their conscience, to honor God by voluntarily following the moral lessons contained in the Scriptures. An individual could not be forced, for instance, to give charity as Jesus had given us the “power to choose between right and wrong,” and when the State took that responsibility upon itself (the welfare state) it broke the First, and Great, Commandment—“Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.”

Rowe then related the example of how Jesus had dealt with the rich young ruler to the Sixteenth Amendment, to prove the eternal (and Absolute) relevance of God’s word. The Federal income tax was introduced in 1913, and for the nearly 100 years since then constitutionalists (adherents of the ‘original intent’ of the document) and libertarians have denounced the Amendment as unconstitutional. Rowe believed, more importantly, that the Amendment should be repealed because it violated the First Commandment. By forcing citizens to pay tax to finance the welfare state the Federal Government replaced God as the keeper of mankind’s conscience. Each individual had the right to dispose of their private property as they wished; if poverty existed they had the choice, or the moral desire if they were good Christians, to use their property to lessen the hardships of their ‘Brothers in God.’ It was not the function of the State to redistribute wealth because when they did so they intervened in the covenant between God and His Creation. And Rowe noted sadly, even Christians, “in one of the greatest tragedies of our time,” were “abandoning the plan for human salvation inaugurated by Christ and are calling in the policeman (State power) to do what they...despair of being able to accomplish by Jesus’ plan.”<sup>10</sup>

Last word on this brief outline of the Christian libertarian philosophy contained in *Christian Economics* goes to Kershner’s explanation of the central

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<sup>10</sup> H. Edward Rowe, “The Christian Scriptures and Freedom,” *Christian Economics*, Sept. 6, 1966.



importance of the Golden Rule to the Christian life; the charitable impulse that led Pew, William Volker, J.C. Penney and other supposedly selfish businessmen of the era to donate most of their hard won substance to philanthropic causes. Kershner believed the Jews of the Old Testament had obeyed the letter of the Ten Commandments, without fully appreciating the spiritual essence (the route to eternal life in heaven) the laws embodied. When the moral imperative to follow Mosaic Law was lost then it became a relatively easy task to break them, and when that happened, inevitably, “the strong quickly find ways of exploiting the weak, and a master-slave relationship develops.”

It was because of this diversion from the intended path to salvation, and because it “is the purpose of God to restore man’s broken fellowship with His maker by the means of spiritual regeneration,” that He had sacrificed His only Son. The Jesus revealed in the New Testament did not coerce obedience with dire threats of retribution. He did not threaten another Sodom and Gomorrah to force compliance with His message; instead He “made the incentive for conduct dependent upon the voluntary wills of men.” The example of Jesus’ life was central to the doctrine of individual freedom because He inspired people to follow the road to salvation, and “men with (such) faith gradually come to believe that God is just as much interested in others as in themselves.” With that realization came an understanding of the dynamic of Christian theology; that when mankind is guided by the Golden Rule in their conduct to each other, then they “can no longer exploit and enslave his fellows.” And when they no longer desire to exploit one another because they do not *want* to, not because they *fear* to, only then can all mankind be free.<sup>11</sup>

It was because they believed all mankind should be free that Christian libertarians looked with dismay upon the rise of communism, with its denial of the centrality of spiritual values to an individual’s existence. Kershner, in a 1957 Commencement Address at Grove City College<sup>12</sup> explained to the students, “socialism is anti-God.” He narrated the cradle-to-grave realities of life under a socialist government—which he equated with a communist

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<sup>11</sup> Draft, “Christianity and Freedom,” enclosed in letter, Kershner–Pew, July 7, 1961, Pew papers, Box 184; HML.

<sup>12</sup> Grove City College is another example of the Pew family commitment to funding the dissemination of Christian values as they relate to individual freedom. Pew graduated from GCC in 1900, and was chairman of the board of trustees from 1931 to 1971—a role his father had undertaken in 1895 when the school was reorganized as a nonprofit educational institution. GCC does not possess a large endowment, but operates from the principle that the costs of an affordable education can be met from tuition fees. For more, see Sennholz, *op. cit.*;<sup>17</sup> and ‘Chapter Six: Education—A Debt To Future Generations,’ 147–61. See also [http://www.gcc.edu/About\\_GCC.php](http://www.gcc.edu/About_GCC.php).

system—and argued socialism “rejects God’s plans for creating unique individuals and starts back down the trail toward obscuring the person in the mass.” It was the “impudence, and sin of socialism” to “reverse God’s plan and begin the process of reducing individuals to the level of the common denominator.”<sup>13</sup> And though Kershner was a Quaker, he believed communism should be contained militarily when it involved the prestige of the United States. Kershner, also, had no time for coexistence, arguing in 1955 that by “treating these cruel Communist tyrants as friends and gentlemen” at the Geneva Summit Conference, “we may have caused a serious decline in the morale of the victims who still have some hope that the U.S. will aid them in throwing off their galling yoke.”<sup>14</sup> And the CFF displayed little faith in the United Nations. A 1954 article by V. Orval Watts declared, the “UN is mainly a device for spreading socialist tyranny.”<sup>15</sup>

Overall, when discussing the imminence of the Soviet threat to the United States way of life, the CFF mirrored the position Chodorov took in his November 1954 debate with William Schlamm in the *Freeman* (an argument Schlamm continued with Murray Rothbard in 1955 in the May and June issues of *Faith and Freedom*). The communists would never attack the United States, and there was no reason to destroy communism abroad through military means as the system would, inevitably, destroy itself. The growth of the bureaucratic State to administer America’s increased military establishment posed more of a danger to individual freedoms than the Soviets ever would. But, in general, foreign policy issues received relatively little attention in *Christian Economics*. The journal reserved most of its anticommunist ire for the National Council of Churches (NCC), which replaced the FCC as the voice of organized Protestantism in the United States in 1950. The CFF opposed the NCC on a whole raft of issues (e.g., in 1954, the CFF denounced the NCC for proposing the recognition of Red China, and opposing the Bricker Amendment), but its overriding criticism concerned the NCC’s destruction of the unity of the church.

The CFF believed in the evangelical approach to solving society’s problems. The only way ‘sin’ could be eradicated from society (which included poverty, homelessness, etc.) was by the church teaching individuals that the personal acceptance of the Holy Spirit would save their souls. Only then, in a Christian society, would there be social justice, in the sense of everyone receiving a fair reward for their efforts. If you lived a Christian life and worked hard, with a Christian employer, you would not be poor. Leading

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<sup>13</sup> Commencement Address delivered at Grove City College, June 8, 1957, Kershner, ‘The Moral Basis Of A Free Society,’ 5; Pew papers, Box 183; HML.

<sup>14</sup> Kershner, ‘The Summit Conference,’ *Christian Economics*, Sept. 6, 1955.

<sup>15</sup> V. Orval Watts, ‘How the U.N. Leads to War,’ *Christian Economics*, May 4, 1954.

unbelievers to the salvation promised by Jesus was the *only* legitimate use of the pulpit, and the only way the Church should act as a corporate organization.

Kershner warned those who believed the church should campaign for the application of the values contained in the Gospels through government intervention, in the 1958 editorial, 'Dare We Limit the Gospel,' that "there is a great difference between the intelligence, the education, and the level of understanding" of Church members. Consequently, when the minister uses the pulpit to make "pronouncements on political and economic questions it leads to much division."<sup>16</sup> As no two people hold exactly the same opinions on political and economic questions, when the minister uses his sermon to address those problems by urging support for remedial legislation, backed by the 'higher' authority of a NCC directive, he becomes a 'sower of discord' in the congregation. And in a letter to Pew of April 1960, enclosing a proposed editorial for *Christian Economics*, the journal's editor made a timeless argument against the Church preaching the 'Social Gospel.' He stated that in the opinion of the CFF, "the Christian religion would never have been heard of if Jesus had made his appeal on the basis of political and economic pronouncements and the organization of pressure groups to achieve them through the power of government."<sup>17</sup>

In a 1962 speech to the Laymen's Leadership Institute, 'Our Reformation Heritage,' Pew observed that since the formation of the FCC in 1908, and since "the church has become increasingly involved in social, economic and political affairs," the result has been that, "the spiritual and moral life of our nation has deteriorated to a frightening degree."<sup>18</sup> The detrimental effect of the FCC and NCC on American society was also a major concern of Spiritual Mobilization (SM); the organization founded by Dr. James W. Fifield Jr., Dr. Donald J. Cowling, and Professor William Hocking at Palmer House, Chicago, in the spring of 1935. But their opposition to liberalism inside and outside of the church did not reach its full audience until the publication of the first *Faith and Freedom* in December 1949.

A monthly journal of (usually) 24 pages, originally edited by William Johnson, *Faith and Freedom* also promoted Christian libertarianism. The credo of SM, and the organization's journal, underwent several revisions, but the

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<sup>16</sup> Draft, "Dare We Limit the Gospel," in letter, Kershner-Pew, April 22, 1958, Pew papers, Box 184; HML.

<sup>17</sup> Draft editorial, on Dr. Dahlberg's keynote speech at the recent General Assembly of the NCC, Kershner-Pew, Dec. 10, 1960, in Pew papers, Box 184; HML.

<sup>18</sup> Pew, "Our Reformation Heritage," excerpts from an address before the Laymen's Leadership Institute, New Orleans, LA, 1962, in Pew papers, Box 186; HML.

declaration in the January 1954 issue is representative of the others: “*Faith and Freedom* is a voice of the libertarian—persistently recommending the religious philosophy of limited government inherent in the Declaration of Independence,” and explained, “our editorial policy is based on a profound faith in God, the Author of liberty, and in Jesus Christ, who promoted persuasion in place of coercion as the means for accomplishing positive good.”<sup>19</sup>

An example of the central importance of persuasion rather than coercion as a means of accomplishing good came in the first issue of December 1949, in the article ‘Should Government Be Our Brother’s Keeper,’ written by ex-President Herbert Hoover. He began by recognizing the strain increased taxation had placed on the individual’s ability to voluntarily contribute to welfare agencies, but gave several reasons why citizens should not relinquish the desire to continue their own charitable activities. The first, not surprisingly for Hoover, argued that the exceptional ‘free and noble’ character of American civilization rested upon the inspiration for progress the country’s voluntary organizations—churches, businesses, women’s organizations, labor and farmer associations, charitable agencies—galvanized. If this “very nature of American life” was absorbed by government bureaucracies, the result would be that something “neither free nor noble would take its place.”

His final rationalization for the voluntary impulse extended this argument to the future of world civilization. Noting that the world “is in the grip of a death struggle between the philosophy of Christ and that of Hegel and Marx,” he contended that the distinguishing characteristic of the Christian philosophy was compassion—and that compassion was not only the outward “noblest expression of man,” but also those “who serve receive untold spiritual benefit.” If individual compassion was replaced by a government who acted as our ‘Brother’s Keeper,’ that spiritual benefit would be lost, and along with it the “outstanding spiritual distinction of our civilization.” Hoover left unspoken the inevitable outcome of that loss; why make the sacrifices necessary to fight for a civilization that differed little from the philosophy of the enemy. Hoover concluded by explaining that the simplest answer to why government agencies should not replace voluntary organizations was contained in the parable of the Good Samaritan. He did not “enter into governmental or philosophic discussions” before aiding the

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<sup>19</sup> *Faith and Freedom*, January 1954; 2.

injured man. Instead, the Good Samaritan, as the Bible describes, “had compassion on him ... he bound his wounds ... and took care of him.”<sup>20</sup>

The Tenth Anniversary edition of *Faith and Freedom* also used the parable of the Good Samaritan as the means of explaining differences in attitude to the role of government in providing aid to the individual. Written in the Winter of 1959–60, just as the acrimony between the Right and Left that reached its climax in the election of 1964 was beginning, the issue debated (in deliberately respectful and conciliatory tones) the divergent approaches taken by liberals and libertarians to the proper place of the Church in contemporary society. The debate began with the printing of the modern parable, ‘Structured Neighborliness,’ by the liberal Congregationalist minister, Rev. Julian J. Keiser. It recounted the tale of a motorist who suffered an accident on the freeway, and who was rescued only after the police were called on a car telephone by a passing driver. Other motorists who witnessed the collision were stymied in their desire to help by their inability to stop on the fast-moving freeway. Keiser’s lesson was that in the new mechanized age the ‘hands-on’ efforts of the Good Samaritan were now impractical; that modern solutions, and modern agencies, were the only answer to modern problems.

Keiser’s fellow Congregationalist, the Rev. Harry R. Butman, disagreed, and made his rejoinder in the article, ‘The Minimized Man.’ He argued the modern parable illustrated the lamentable tendency among many ministers, “to move away from the teachings of Jesus into a religion of collectivism.” Butman contended that Keiser and his brethren were too ready to embrace “an unthinking worship of the machine,” and as a consequence regarded problems in society as a product of the new industrialized America, structural faults only resolvable by ‘engineers’ who understood how the machine was supposed to work. Butman argued that Social Action ministers (of whom Keiser was representative) held an unquestioning assumption in the efficacy of the State in administering to the needs of the individual, because the State was the only agency capable of effecting significant and enduring reform in the new mass society. Keiser, Butman objected, dismissed the choices of the individual as irrelevant and ineffectual in the face of the reality of modern conditions, mistakenly claiming that the dictates of a Christian’s conscience were only fully attainable in the pastoral society the Good Samaritan, and Jesus, had lived in.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Herbert Hoover, ‘Should Government Be Our Brother’s Keeper?’ *Faith and Freedom*, Volume X, No.2, 1959–60; 20–21.

<sup>21</sup> Rev. Julian J. Keiser, ‘Structured Neighborliness,’ *Faith and Freedom*, Volume 10, No.1, 1959–60; 7.

Butman countered that the teachings of Jesus were timeless; that “his stress on the worth of the single soul, and his disesteem of the organized group,” were as relevant to an industrial age as to an earlier agricultural society. Where Keiser ‘minimized’ man by making the car telephone and the police the ‘heroes’ of the parable, and dehumanized man by substituting the impersonal assistance of an organization for the human contact and compassion of the Samaritan, God glorified man by making him in His own image. The poet of the Eighth Psalm, Butman explained, delivered “a pean (sic) to man’s greatness as God’s son,” and that ennobling perspective should fortify the individual in the impersonal society inhabited by liberals, and help him maintain the scepticism to “never grant the Moloch-machine or the god-state the idolatrous homage they get from the unthinking many.” Butman recognized that Christian libertarians could not escape the mechanized world, and held out little optimism that the prevailing collectivist society could be changed until there was a spiritual revelation in America, but he stressed the need to fight the good fight and “hold fast” to God’s commandment to “love his God and his neighbour with all his heart.”<sup>22</sup>

The differing opinions of Keiser and Butman excited much discussion among the journal’s readers, and the next issue of *Faith and Freedom* devoted an extended appraisal, along with editorial comment, to the opinions of correspondents. One section addressed the essential question for Christian libertarians: ‘Where Is The Line Between Caesar and God?’ Rev. Edward W. Greenfield, who had succeeded William Johnson as editor in September 1958, stated that the framers of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights used their understanding of human nature to, “draw the line near that end of the spectrum which gave minimum scope to Caesar and maximum scope to God,”<sup>23</sup> but over time the line had steadily moved until it now rested at the other end of the spectrum.

Unfortunately, Greenfield recognized, it was not possible to return to the political economy of the late eighteenth century, and so the question remained for the individual of how much of his personal responsibility should he attempt to recover from the state. Greenfield called for a gradual return of the freedoms usurped by Caesar, and a steady expansion of the “province of God,”<sup>24</sup> by eliminating some of the more egregious abuses of the State. For instance, the laws which protected the monopoly power of unions and artificial price supports. But, he stressed, political efforts to overturn restrictive legislation was of secondary importance to the fundamental question of ‘What Is Happening To The Human Spirit?’ in a

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<sup>22</sup> Rev. Harry R. Butman, ‘The Minimized Man,’ *ibid*; 8–13.

<sup>23</sup> ‘Cavalcade of Concerns,’ *Faith and Freedom*, Volume 10, No.2, 1959–60; 16.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

modern world where, “mechanized material abundance and the intrusions of the State upon individual liberties are a threat to the integrity of the individual soul.”<sup>25</sup>

Greenfield was no luddite, no Southern Agrarian. He accepted the technological marvels which had transformed American society, but believed they were only useful to the extent that they advanced the potential for human freedom. Wealth, leisure time, physical wellbeing, were all desirable, but only as the means of procuring the ends of the “sacredness of personality.” Material improvements in society were only a benefit to the individual when they helped in the achievement of the spiritual knowledge to become, as Jesus, “The Master of Life.” Master of life in that individuals should recognize, “that most human problems were, in the final analysis, a reflection of something wrong, something ugly, within man himself.” Once the individual realized no manmade coercion could force him or others, to be virtuous, that laws could not eradicate the Original Sin of human nature, then each person could strive to fulfil the responsibilities and duties owed to God.

The reason why Christian libertarians spent so much of their ire on “the blasphemy of much of the so-called Social Gospel,” Greenfield continued, is that by tending to “substitute the powers of this world for the power of God,” they were “telling the great lie of the twentieth century!”<sup>26</sup> And by lying to their congregations, ministers were impeding them in their search for the truth. Legislation could not reform the individual or society; only spiritual regeneration of the individual could transform society by a step-by-step, one by one, desire for a return to the limited government that alone ensured the means for the development of individual freedom.

But, largely as a result of the greater space available, *Faith and Freedom* was much more interested in matters of an immediate political concern than *Christian Economics*. A regular feature in Spiritual Mobilization’s journal was the 2-page article, ‘Along Pennsylvania Avenue,’ a report on current affairs from Washington written by Frank Chodorov before he left to become editor of the *Freeman* in July 1954, and then by Murray Rothbard under the pseudonym Audrey Herbert. *Faith and Freedom* was also able to devote much more attention to foreign policy, as evidenced in April 1954 when an entire special 36 page issue debated the best ways (with a variety of contending opinions) to deal with the Soviet menace. It included an article by Audrey Herbert, ‘The Real Aggressor,’ which argued for a placatory attitude toward the Soviets, and lambasted the real enemy as those conservatives “who are calling for lower taxes and less government control, while on the other they

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

are calling for a virtual holy war against Russia and China, with all the costliness, death and statism that such a war would necessarily entail.”<sup>27</sup>

Still, the major concern of *Faith and Freedom* was to encourage a return to the traditional reverence for the principles, religious in foundation, established by the founding fathers. Only then could a revitalized United States defeat the threat communism posed to not just America but the rest of the world as well. *Faith and Freedom*, in article after article, stressed that America’s greatest danger came from the nation’s spiritual malaise, not from outside enemies. Dr. James W. Fifield Jr., in the September 1954 article, ‘Freedom Under God,’ argued that: “Our founding fathers recognized that there is a moral law which inheres in the nature of the universe,” and that they “found the rules in the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes.” It was the assurance gained from such knowledge that encouraged them to overthrow the immoral rule of the British, and to establish a government which recognized the natural right of individuals to live their lives free from government interference. In recent times adherence to this moral law had been abandoned, Fifield contended, and instead of “inquiring whether a thing is right or wrong, we have wondered whether it is Right or Left.”<sup>28</sup> The result was confusion and fear; the same emotions that had allowed Hitler, with the misguided assistance of the country’s opinion makers, to destroy freedom in Germany.

Fifield maintained that to avoid being “hoodwinked” like the Germans, Americans must seek to re-establish their faith, and the belief in the dignity of man and his freedom that necessarily accompanied it. Once faith had substituted fear then: “Putting on the whole armor of God,’ we can with confidence face whatever awaits or overtakes us.” And more, a rejuvenated America could fulfil its new mission as the last bulwark of freedom against the forces of darkness. Fifield recognized that the United States had, “thus far tragically failed” to provide moral and spiritual leadership for the rest of the world, “which is what the other nations really need and want.” Not for Fifield the immediate and expedient remedies of foreign aid or rearmament; instead he believed that once Americans had reclaimed their traditional freedom under God, we can “from our rekindled torch renew the lamps of freedom which have gone out in so many parts of the world.”<sup>29</sup> The essential impetus for a restoration of traditional veneration for the individual right of freedom under God, Fifield asserted, must come from the opinion makers;

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<sup>27</sup> Audrey Herbert (pseud. Murray N. Rothbard), ‘The Real Aggressor,’ *Faith and Freedom*, April 1954; 22.

<sup>28</sup> Dr. James W. Fifield Jr., ‘Freedom Under God,’ *Faith and Freedom*, April 1954; 10

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.



the professors, the businessmen, and especially the pastors who shaped the convictions of America's citizens.

Three years later, in April 1957, Fifield presented a somewhat more pessimistic view of the current situation in the United States and abroad, arguing “our military, political, and economic efforts have all failed,” and that “the world was worse off than it was when we inaugurated our current programs.” He alleged that the Marshall Plan, Point Four, and UNRRA had failed because they lacked the spiritual dynamic needed to foster acceptance and gratitude among the beneficiaries. These relief measures were presented as practical remedies for practical problems, with no mention of the charitable and voluntary impulses that underlay them. The recipients of aid viewed the programs as an attempt by an imperialistic American government to extend its global financial dominance, not realizing they were only possible because of the charitable character of the American electorate as a whole. A misconception that was fostered by the reluctance of Americans to elucidate their spiritual beliefs in political discourse. Americans, Fifield charged, were keeping their faith under “lock and key,” and not applying it “to the day-by-day problems of life,” thereby contributing “nothing to the strength of the last bastions” of freedom. The answer to this reticence was, as Fifield proclaimed in the title of his article, ‘We Need A Leader—Now!’ In a veiled sideswipe at the current President, Fifield called for “a stalwart, upstanding and adequate leader, who would raise and make manifest a standard to which all good men could repair.” He recommended Douglas MacArthur for the role because “people would listen, and would be persuaded by the logic of his position—the eloquence and soberness of truth.”<sup>30</sup>

The desire to spread the ‘truth’ lay behind the founding of the *Freeman* in 1950. Not content to contain his philosophy of individual freedom to the pages of *Christian Economics*, and its intended audience of Christian ministers, J. Howard Pew helped finance a magazine which, he explained in a letter of July 9, 1952, to Forrest Davis (then an editor of the *Freeman*), “should be a purveyor of the truth” to the general educated reader. Pew wrote to Davis to criticize the editorial opposition of the *Freeman* to Eisenhower’s campaign to become President (even though he agreed with their sentiments), because he did not consider “this to be their proper field.” He reminded Davis of, “what those of us who were instrumental in founding the *Freeman* had in mind as its objectives.” These objectives were for the editors to explain the enduring principles of economics, sociology, and political economy, with a “recognition of religious and spiritual values,” and to understand that

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<sup>30</sup> Dr. James W. Fifield Jr., ‘We Need A Leader—Now!’ *Faith and Freedom*, April 1957; 13.

“current events should be so handled as to point up an eternal truth.”<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, enough of these objectives had been achieved in the first issue of October 2, 1950, for Fifield to write to Pew that, it “runs in my mind that you are the force behind this.”<sup>32</sup> The two men were acquaintances (Pew donated an undisclosed amount to SM over the years), and Fifield realized the *Freeman’s* search for eternal truths was the result of the influence of the Pennsylvania oilman.

That first issue contained much that Pew disapproved of, but did contain two articles he praised in a letter to Jasper E. Crane, the Du Pont executive who, along with Alfred Kohlberg, was the main facilitator in bringing together the original subscribers and editorial staff of the magazine. The first, “excellent and appropriate article,”<sup>33</sup> was the editorial statement, ‘The Faith of the Freeman.’ Written by Henry Hazlitt, though, as Hazlitt revealed to Pew, “it embodied ideas also from John Chamberlain and Suzanne La Follette,”<sup>34</sup> this statement of principles explained that the main aim of the *Freeman* was, “to clarify the concept of individual freedom and apply it to the problems of our time.” Hazlitt continued by declaring that individual freedom had, “long been embodied in the classical liberal tradition,” and that the basis of “the true liberal tradition” was economic freedom, protected by a government that recognized “the equality of all men before the law, the subordination of the state itself to the law.” Economic freedom, he claimed, was only possible in a society where the free market was protected by a government that confined itself to prohibiting, “violence, intimidation, theft, fraud, coercive monopoly and coercion of every kind.” Although Hazlitt did not specifically look to religious values as the necessary guarantors of a free society, he did stress that the classical liberal tradition, “has always emphasized the moral autonomy of the individual.” An independence of action that was essential to a free society because, “[R]eal morality cannot exist where this no real freedom of choice.”<sup>35</sup>

The second article in this first issue that Pew commended, “as an excellent presentation of the subject,”<sup>36</sup> did discuss the specific relationship between religion and individual freedom. George Sokolsky, in ‘Freedom—A Struggle,’ argued that freedom of the individual, in the United States, “is not

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<sup>31</sup> Letter, Pew–Forrest Davis, July 9, 1952; Pew papers, Freeman file; HML.

<sup>32</sup> Letter, Fifield–Pew, October 13, 1950; Pew papers, Freeman file; HML. A connection made also by Sennholz, *op. cit.*, 157: “The moral and spiritual antecedents of individual freedom that are emphasized by the *Freeman* constitute the very foundation of J. Howard Pew’s philosophy.”

<sup>33</sup> Letter, Pew–Crane, October 6, 1950; Pew papers, Freeman file; HML.

<sup>34</sup> Letter, Hazlitt–Pew, October 31, 1950; Pew papers, Freeman file; HML.

<sup>35</sup> Editorial, ‘The Faith of the *Freeman*,’ *Freeman*, October 2, 1950; 5.

<sup>36</sup> Pew–Crane, *op. cit.*

the result of chance or the product of revolution, but is derived from the 'Laws of Nature and of Nature's God.'" The founding fathers were not content merely to overthrow British institutions and replace them with similar American agencies; instead they "established an intellectual and spiritual basis for the Revolution." The Declaration of Independence, Sokolsky maintained, was "not only a statement of separation; it was a reassertion of the dignity of man within the scope of Natural Law." Imbued with a reverence for the Natural Law philosophy, absorbed from their study of British jurists like Sir Edward Coke, the founders of the new nation (mostly lawyers) inaugurated a concept of the law that was, "based not on legislation but on a moral system which deals in terms of man as a creation of God and not as a creature of the state." And when they stated that men are 'endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights,' the founders were expressing their belief that freedom was, "fundamental to human existence; so fundamental that it was an endowment from God and not a work of man."<sup>37</sup>

Sokolsky concluded his article by asserting the relevance of such abstract ideas to the contemporary conflict between Western Civilization and communism. He contended that propaganda efforts to promote a belief in freedom behind the Iron Curtain, such as the Voice of America, were ignored because they failed to ground their message in the "doctrine of life incorporated in Natural Law." Only a belief in the fundamental principles inherent in the individual freedom proclaimed by the divine mandate of Natural Law could stir the oppressed masses to resist, with the attendant sacrifices that would require, their communist masters. And (surprisingly, if you accept that he was, as *Time* blithely commented, no more than a "Publicist," and "star-spangled spieler for capitalism"),<sup>38</sup> Sokolsky warned, "[U]nless it recognizes Natural Law as its guide, what is our civilization but a store-house of gadgets?" If America, he continued, asks "the world to love us because we own the most automobiles and refrigerators," then any efforts to help liberate the enslaved peoples of the world were doomed. Material incentives, promises of a prosperous future, were not enough. America needed, instead, to reclaim for themselves, and then spread to others, Alexander Hamilton's declaration that: "The sacred rights of mankind ... are written as with a sunbeam, in the whole volume of human nature, by the hands of Divinity itself and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> George Sokolsky, 'Freedom—A Struggle,' *Freeman*, October 2, 1950; 14.

<sup>38</sup> 'Radio: From Headquarters,' *Time*, July 3, 1939.

<sup>39</sup> Sokolsky, *ibid.*, 16.

As organizations, the purpose of the *Freeman*, *Faith and Freedom*, and *Christian Economics* was to educate the opinion makers in society in correct economic principles; with the presumption these ‘converts’ would use their influence to lead their followers to the same truth. For all three journals, albeit with a difference in emphasis, ministers of American churches were to comprise an essential part of the vanguard of the conservative counter-revolution. A counter-revolution in that ministers would shepherd their flock back to an understanding of the Christian roots of political liberty that had infused colonial Americans, and inspired them to overthrow the might of the British Empire in the original Revolution.

Rev. Stewart M. Robinson (treasurer of the Christian Freedom Foundation), declared in the August 13, 1951, issue of the *Freeman*, that the modern clergy, products of liberal dominated seminaries, “may be surprised at the courage of the colonial clergy in scourging the all-powerful state.” He used examples from colonial sermons to illustrate, they were “both informed and vocal on the fundamental issues of liberty under law and the necessity for a government of laws, not men.” And these colonial clergy were not reluctant to avow their conviction that freedom was threatened in America. They stood up and took their chances with the other rebels in the “crisis of 1776.”<sup>40</sup> Their endorsement and justification of the cause, Robinson exclaimed, “was so vital to the needs of the people that no public gathering was complete without a sermon.” Robinson ended his article with a call to arms, emphasizing that his article was not an historical lesson of what had happened, but an historical example of what could happen again. Ministers, he asserted, retained much of the respect they had commanded in colonial times. And it was their duty to use that spiritual authority, in this time of crisis, to remind their congregation of how the Scriptures endorsed, the “high dedication to personal liberty, the dignity of man, and freedom for each man from the deadening hand of the state.”<sup>41</sup>

Other articles in the *Freeman* proffered similar explanations of the fundamental relationship between religious faith and individual freedom, especially after the FEE assumed control of the magazine in July, 1954. Rev. Edmund A. Opitz joined the staff of FEE in 1955, moving from Spiritual Mobilization, and this prolific advocate of Christian libertarianism produced a string of articles over the next ten years with titles like: ‘Religious Roots of Liberty (February, 1955), and ‘The Religious Foundations of a Free Society (September 1959). The Congregationalist minister, Rev. Russell J. Clinchy, a board member of the CFF and a staff member of FEE, who wrote articles

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<sup>40</sup> Rev. Stewart M. Robinson, ‘Clergymen and Socialism,’ *Freeman*, August 13, 1951; 719.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 720.

for *Christian Economics* and *Faith and Freedom* as well as the *Freeman*, contributed ‘Religion is a Free Response,’ (May 5, 1952) and ‘The Protestant Basis for Individualism (January, 1955). Even J. Howard Pew joined in. ‘Governed by God,’ (July, 1957) asserted that religious faith, “is the condition without which individual freedom and liberty are impossible.”<sup>42</sup>

But alongside these positive affirmations of the religious basis for individual freedom, the *Freeman* also offered its readers as long a list of articles (many written by Opitz) criticizing the ministers of the church who, they believed, were preaching the message of the Social Gospel as the pretext for establishing a socialist government in the United States. One such article title of July 27, 1953—Julian Maxwell’s ‘Our Pink-Tinted Clergy’—is, perhaps, self-explanatory, but the abstract hammered home the accusation that, in “their sponsorship of Communist causes a growing number of our churchmen are furthering the aim of a secret core in their midst to destroy religion.”<sup>43</sup>

Maxwell’s article appeared at the height of the controversy surrounding the alleged communist infiltration of the clergy in the United States. July, 1953, also saw the publication of J. B. Matthews’ ‘Reds in Our Churches,’ in *American Mercury*, which claimed ministers were the most influential group in America in promoting communist ideas, primarily through their membership of communist ‘fronts.’ The ensuing outrage forced Matthews to resign his position as Executive Director of McCarthy’s investigating committee, a position he had only taken up three weeks previously, but it also led to HUAC conducting its own appraisal of the validity of Matthews’ charges. The Committee’s Annual Report for 1953 conceded that communists were trying to infiltrate the church, and that they had achieved a certain success by ‘duping’ many ministers to join ‘fronts’ from a humanitarian impulse; “completely unaware of the purposes for which they have been used and the ends to which the prestige of their names has been lent.”<sup>44</sup> They concluded, however, that an examination of the record showed that, “only a very small number of clergymen in the United States have been consistent fellow travellers with the Communist Party.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> J. Howard Pew, ‘Governed By God,’ *Freeman*, July, 1957; 11. Clinchy also wrote two pamphlets for the FEE: ‘Two Paths to Collectivism,’ and ‘Charity: Biblical and Political,’ which “sold into the hundreds of thousands.” *Freeman*, January, 1955; 3.

<sup>43</sup> Julian Maxwell, ‘Our Pink-Tinted Clergy,’ *Freeman*, July 27, 1953; 773.

<sup>44</sup> Annual Report of the Committee on Un-American Activities for the Year 1953 (Washington, D.C.: Committee on Un-American Activities, U.S. House of Representatives), 95.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

For Christian libertarians the main threat to individual freedom from the churches lay not in the small number of actual communists trying to infiltrate the clergy, but the no less alarming menace of the church, as a corporate organization, promoting the socialist philosophy of the Social Gospel. The *Freeman*, *Faith and Freedom*, and *Christian Economics* consistently inveighed against the tendency of the NCC to make pronouncements on political topics that were issued as representing the opinions of every member of the Council's constituent denominations. And they all—but especially *Faith and Freedom*—criticized the NCC's sponsorship of Social Action groups; committees composed of liberal clergymen who lobbied in Washington, and through the media, to establish the Kingdom of God (the society envisioned in the Gospel of Jesus Christ) by 'coercive' legislation.

The most outspoken opponent of the NCC (and its predecessor, the FCC), however, was the Presbyterian minister, Rev. Carl McIntire, who founded the American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC) in 1941, to counter the twin dangers of theological modernism and the Social Gospel movement prevalent in the FCC. But, McIntire and the ACCC also promoted a positive message; a Christian libertarian outlook that was ignored by commentators content to label McIntire as an 'apostle of discord,' or a 'hatemonger.'<sup>46</sup> In his weekly paper, the *Christian Beacon*, McIntire explained in October 25, 1956, that the purpose of the ACCC was to call "God's people back to the liberty, the individualism, the rights of private property, and the blessings of free enterprise in America."<sup>47</sup> The *Christian Beacon* of April 12, 1951, enunciated the religious foundations of the 'blessings of free enterprise in America,' by declaring: "We do not say that Christianity is freedom, or capitalism, or private enterprise. But Christianity presents the principles which undergird all these."<sup>48</sup> And, in an ACCC release of 1953, 'Marx or Christ in the Churches?' McIntire reiterated his belief that, "the Christian religion does lay down in the most specific manner the fundamental principles which undergird our free enterprise, capitalistic order."<sup>49</sup>

As well as *Christian Beacon* (which first appeared in 1936), and the ACCC, McIntire also disseminated his philosophy in the radio program 20<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> For an early interpretation of the religious right as a 'Ministry of Hate,' and a 'Ministry of Disruption,' see, Ralph Lord Roy, *Apostles of Discord: A Study of organized bigotry on the fringes of Protestantism* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1953). This portrayal of the Old Right as 'extremists' reached its height in the early 1960s as an attempt to discredit the burgeoning appeal of Goldwater. See, for instance, Brooks R. Walker, *Christian fright peddlers* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964).

<sup>47</sup> 'Christianity in Eclipse,' *Christian Beacon*, October 25, 1956; 1.

<sup>48</sup> 'How Radical Are the Clergy?' *Christian Beacon*, April 12, 1951.

<sup>49</sup> ACCC release, 'Marx or Christ in the Churches.' Accessed, June 6, 2009; [cm.org/speeches-marx.php](http://cm.org/speeches-marx.php).

Century Reformation Hour, established in 1955. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation Hour also produced pamphlets for the program's listeners, and one such, "What is the Difference between Capitalism and Communism," further elaborated McIntire's Christian libertarian views. Like the *Freeman*, *Faith and Freedom*, and *Christian Economics*, McIntire regarded the American Revolution, and the religious beliefs of the founders, as the fountainhead of political and economic liberty in the United States; arguing it was the "God-ordained concepts of man and freedom that gave birth to the Bill of Rights which constitutes the protection of the individual in the United States of America."

It was also the duty of ministers, McIntire argued, to remind their congregations of the Christian sanction of individual freedom untrammelled by interference from the State, and to "take the initiative in re-establishing in the minds of men everywhere the validity of profit, the responsibility of stewardship, the obligations of freedom, and, above all, the defense of the individual in his right to enjoy the fruits of his own labor." McIntire completed his account of the differences between capitalism and communism by warning his readers that, in these times of confusion and uncertainty, the capitalistic order could only withstand the advances of the Marxist philosophy by, the "offering to men of the standards of righteousness and the moral law set forth in the Ten Commandments."<sup>50</sup>

McIntire provided a full exposition of the relevance of the moral law contained in the Ten Commandments to contemporary problems in his 1946 book, *Author of Liberty*. He began with the standard conservative excuse for the liberal domination of politics: that America "is in the predicament which she finds herself today," because her citizens "are too scared to think, or too self-satisfied to think, or too downright lazy to think." Instead of thinking for themselves they, "depend upon the thinking of others," and "this thinking in many cases is being directed along socialistic or collectivistic lines."<sup>51</sup> As a result America's free institutions were in danger of being destroyed, and the only way to prevent this calamity was to "go back, away back to the Author of Liberty," and "sit at His feet, hear Him tell us again and again what it is that makes freedom and enables men to keep it."<sup>52</sup> The intention of the book, McIntire continued, was "to recall for the thinking of the Lord's people, and to offer also to those who are not Christians, the basic idea of freedom as our fathers believed it and as they received it from Him."<sup>53</sup> And

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<sup>50</sup> 20<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation Hour, "What is the Difference Between Capitalism and Communism." Accessed, June 9, 2009; [cm.org/booklets-capitalismVcommunism.php](http://cm.org/booklets-capitalismVcommunism.php).

<sup>51</sup> Rev. Carl McIntire, *Author of Liberty* (Christian Beacon Press, 1946), xiv.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi.

the basic idea of freedom that the fathers believed in was, he proclaimed, “revealed to us by the Almighty God in the pages of Holy Writ.”<sup>54</sup>

For McIntire, the Scriptures were “the handbook of freedom,”<sup>55</sup> containing eternal laws applicable to all stages of human history. And central to the Biblical message was the “unchanging moral law” of the Ten Commandments, “the most individualistic charter that has ever been written,” without which, “the individual is crushed in numerous forms of tyranny.”<sup>56</sup> McIntire explained the meaning of each Commandment in the struggle to preserve individual freedom, and in his discussion of the Eighth Commandment, “Thou shalt not steal,” asserted that it “establishes upon divine authority the right of private enterprise.”<sup>57</sup> God decreed that that each individual held the sacred right to dispose of their private property as they deemed most suitable to fulfil one of the obligations of Christian freedom; the stewardship of responsibility to God to aid those who were not as fortunate as they were. The state could not usurp that responsibility by the forcible redistribution—taxation—of an individual’s private property without condemning America to a socialistic future. McIntire ended his explanation of the Eighth Commandment with the declaration that it was the religious justification of the private enterprise system, as understood by the nation’s founders, that conceived, “the system of freedom that made America great!”<sup>58</sup>

The *Author of Liberty* also contained the reasons for McIntire’s opposition to the union closed shop. And those rationales are very different from those ascribed to him by Arnold Foster and Benjamin Epstein in their discussion of the founder of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation Hour in their 1964 book, *Danger on the Right*. Written to warn the electorate of the consequences of voting for Goldwater in the forthcoming presidential election, Epstein and Forster claimed his support rested on a ‘Radical Right’ whose ideology was, “no more sound as a political position than the troublesome communist conspiracy.” And worse, these Radical Rightists, with their continual divisive criticisms of the existing order, “pose a threat to our democratic institutions.”<sup>59</sup> In the chapter devoted to McIntire they stated that he based his opposition to the closed shop on the “fantastic argument,” that “Christians objected to joining unions and thus being ‘yoked together

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein, *Danger on the Right* (New York: Random House, 1964), xvi.



with unbelievers.”<sup>60</sup> Unfortunately, as with every other argument in the book against the Christian Right, and the conservative movement in general, no references were provided to substantiate their allegations.

In fact, McIntire supported Christians joining unions, and never called for a separation of the Christian from the ‘unbeliever’ in the workplace. Unions were a legitimate expression of the constitutional right to peaceful assembly, he argued, and even agreed with the unions’ right to strike and collective bargaining. He objected to closed shops, however, because they repudiate the “whole doctrine of the freedom of conscience, which gives to us the individualism of the Christian religion.”<sup>61</sup> Some Christians, and non-Christians, did not want to join a union, and when “men cannot even work at their trade unless they will join the union whether their conscience will permit it or not, we have a form of totalitarianism.”<sup>62</sup> McIntire considered a man’s right to labor as an integral part of his private property, protected by the Eighth Commandment, and thus no authority or organization other than God could interfere in his exercise of that right. Once the union movement began to recognize, “the right of any and every man to work freely in America,” and did not attempt to, “bind men and compel them to stifle their reason or their conscience,” then it would, McIntire predicted, “commend itself to the labouring man in America,” be he a Christian or an ‘unbeliever.’<sup>63</sup>

McIntire’s 20<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation Hour enjoyed a large amount of popularity in the late 1950s and early 1960s because it did not merely confine itself—as Epstein, Forster, and many other accused—to negative criticisms of the existing political system. It also offered a positive philosophy of individual freedom that appealed to Americans who, while they could not articulate it, felt that they were being subsumed in the mass of a socially engineered, conformist, liberal society. Other organizations espoused the same message, and achieved a similar prominence. Dr. Frederick C. Schwarz’s Christian Anti-Communism Crusade and Rev. Billy J. Hargis’ Christian Crusade attracted large numbers of followers because, while they were against communism, socialism and liberalism, more importantly, they were for the individual and the full expression of his God-given freedoms.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>61</sup> Author of Liberty, 83–84.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>64</sup> One of the recurring concerns of American liberals was the amount of money conservative organizations were able to spend in disseminating their ‘propaganda.’ See, Appendix: ‘Sources of Finance of the American Right Wing,’ Epstein and Forster, *op. cit.*; 272–80. The Institute of American Democracy estimated that the 1965 incomes of the above organizations were: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation Hour, \$3,040,000; CACC, \$604,000;

The desire for action and self-expression by individuals explains the following Robert H. Welch drew to The John Birch Society. Before a prospect could join the Society they needed a recommendation form an existing member, who vouched for their moral character. Only men and women of faith—Protestant, Catholic, Jew, or Mohammedan—were then allowed to attend a two-day seminar; the first day devoted to a presentation of the current communist threat in the United States, and the second to an explanation of the constructive values the Society was fighting for.

This two-day seminar, published as *The Blue Book of The John Birch Society*, made clear that the organization's fight against communism was only a first step in eradicating the collectivist philosophy in the United States, and "that the whole essence of our purpose, and the guiding principle for our action ... can be summarized in the objective expressed by just five words: Less government and more responsibility."<sup>65</sup> (emphasis in text) Religious faith, of whatever denomination, was necessary because the Society needed to become, "dynamic in our spiritual influence," (emphasis in text) and establish the moral foundations for the "positive leadership and example to provide a governmental environment in which individual man can make the most of his life in whatever way he—and not his government—wishes to use it."<sup>66</sup> (emphasis in text) And in case the attendees of the seminars had not grasped the fact that the Society was not just an anticommunist organization, Welch's final statement reminded them that, "after we have destroyed the communist tyranny, let's drive on towards our higher goals of more permanent accomplishment," and found, "an era of less government and more responsibility, in which we can create a better world."<sup>67</sup>

Welch, McIntire, Schwarz, *et al*, were not systematic Christian libertarians in the sense that they expounded a libertarian position exclusively predicated on the religious foundations of individual freedom. But their positive visions (as varied in emphasis as they were) of a 'better world' populated by individuals of religious faith reclaiming their freedom from an encroaching State had the same ultimate end as the Christian libertarian position. And some 'intellectual' journals of opinion also advocated libertarianism with a religious foundation. Jack Schwartzman, the editor of libertarian journal *Fragments*, declared in 1963, "I am an individual. I possess an individual soul... I believe in God. I recognize no interloper between God and me. If I yearn for a union with the One, it is a union which preserves my

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Christian Crusade; \$1,106,900; JBS, \$4,089,000. 'Who's Who on Far Right,' *Homefront*, May 1967, 5.

<sup>65</sup> *The Blue Book of The John Birch Society* (Tenth Printing, 1961), 127.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

individuality.”<sup>68</sup> In the same magazine, in 1964, Admiral Ben Moreell warned that Americans were turning away from God, and “in His place we are building a graven image, The Giant State.”<sup>69</sup>

One of the more rigorous explorations of the relevance of religion to libertarian thought occurred in the pages of the *New Individualist Review* (NIR). In the Autumn issue of 1964, Ralph Raico reviewed ‘What is Conservatism’—a collection of twelve essays, edited by Frank S. Meyer, presenting the ‘fusionist’ ground where traditionalists and libertarians could unite to argue a common conservatism. Raico took particular umbrage at M. Stanton Evans’ essay, ‘A Conservative Case for Freedom,’ for arguing, the “libertarian, or classical liberal, characteristically denies the existence of a God-centered moral order.” He then proceeded to demolish Evans’ argument by documenting the Christian faith of classical liberals like Ricardo, Bright, Cobden, Acton, Macauley and Bastiat. He quoted approvingly Bastiat’s ‘Harmonies of Political Economy,’ where the French economist wrote: “There is a leading idea which runs through the whole of this work... and that idea is embodied in the opening words of the Christian Creed—I BELIEVE IN GOD.”<sup>70</sup> (emphasis in text)

Evans, due to the pressure of work commitments, took two years to reply. In the Winter 1966 issue of NIR he informed Raico that the NIR writer was mistaken. His ‘fusionist’ essay had explained there were some irreligious classical liberals of importance, J.S. Mill and Herbert Spencer especially, but only to highlight his argument that a secular foundation for the idea of freedom cannot hold the whole together. Indeed, the central topic of his essay was consideration of the question—“*Can a regime of political freedom long exist without the underpinning of religion and moral sentiment derived from Judeo-Christian revelation.*” (emphasis in text) And Evans’ answer, unlike Diderot and Mencken, was no. He contended that religious classical liberals, “men who combine *both* ethical affirmation and concern for human freedom,” are “the heroes of the piece.”<sup>71</sup> (emphasis in text)

The reason libertarianism became associated with greed and selfishness in the ‘popular’ mind was, largely, the result of the successful identification by liberals, especially in the years of the Great Depression, of conservative

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<sup>68</sup> Jack Schwartzman, ‘The Omelet and the Eggs,’ *Fragments*, April–June, 1963, 4; in Lora, 361.

<sup>69</sup> Ben Moreell, ‘Be Ye Doers of the Word,’ *Fragments*, July–Sept., 1964, 4; in Lora, 361.

<sup>70</sup> Ralph Raico, ‘The Fusionists on Liberalism and Tradition,’ *New Individualist Review*, Autumn 1964, 31.

<sup>71</sup> M. Stanton Evans, ‘Classical Liberalism and Religion,’ *New Individualist Review*, Winter 1966, 24.

thought as nothing more than the mouthpiece of big business. Historians have propounded that error by claiming, as one of the more discerning writers on conservatism did, that the conservative movement in the 1950s was nothing more than, “the spokesman of business interests, business ideology, a business elite.”<sup>72</sup> But, the telling blow against libertarianism, for many, came from the enormous popularity, in book sales at least, of Randian Objectivism. Ayn Rand wrote a succession of novels, including *Atlas Shrugged* (1957) and *The Fountainhead* (1943), outlining a rationalist philosophy of materialism that placed the greatest value for an individual in their efforts to transcend the restrictions and stultifying norms society imposed upon them. Unfortunately, as the Christian libertarian Joseph R. Peden, publisher of *Libertarian Forum*, pointed out in his own journal in 1971: “Wealth and the bitch goddess success are the household deities of the Randian cult,” and because of their “anti-human values,” the “Randian value system is a potential millstone around the neck of the libertarian movement.”<sup>73</sup>

In the same issue Peden’s editor, Murray N. Rothbard, delivered a cogent defense of the philosophy of Christian libertarianism. While admitting, it “is a bitter pill for us non-Christians to swallow,” he argued that in the two thousand years since the death of Christ “the greatest thinkers... have been Christian, ” and to “ignore these Christian philosophers and to attempt to carve out an ethical system purely on one’s own is to court folly and disaster.” Of course, Rothbard noted, Christian libertarianism should be questioned, as all tradition should, by the faculty of reason. But, the empirical record showed that the Christian system of values has “the longest and most successful tradition,” and that the “Christian ethic is, in the words of the old hymn, the Rock of Ages.” In an almost Burkean conclusion, Rothbard acknowledged that modern libertarians “stand on the shoulders of the thinkers of the past,” and reminded them, “it is at least incumbent upon the individual to think long and hard before he abandons that Rock, lest he sink into the quagmire of the capricious and bizarre.”<sup>74</sup>

Christian libertarianism arose in the 1950s as the first attempt to organize conservative opposition to New Deal liberalism. *Faith and Freedom*, *Christian Economics*, and the *Freeman* provided the platform for many conservative intellectuals to oppose the Leviathan state from deeply held religious convictions, which insisted individual freedom was a God-given right that the state could not abrogate except for a few sharply defined

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<sup>72</sup> Godfrey Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), 303.

<sup>73</sup> Joseph R. Peden, ‘Liberty: From Rand To Christ,’ *Libertarian Forum*, July–August, 1971, 4.

<sup>74</sup> Murray N. Rothbard, ‘Comment,’ *ibid.*, 5.

functions of defense against violence. It was made possible by individuals, who financed the movement from their personal assumptions of how the United States could get off the ‘Road to Serfdom,’ and not to advance their business interests. Pew, for instance, could have made more money by cooperating with the military-industrial state than he would make in a competitive laissez-faire economy.

That is the bare-bone explanation of a movement that still holds relevance for libertarians today. If you take individual freedom from state coercion as the highest political end, as Murray Rothbard and Lord Acton maintained, and not as end in itself, then what standards prevent that collection of individuals from descending into a state of anarchy. Rothbard explained that his “own position grounds libertarianism on a natural rights theory,” but recognized that there are many different (and equally valid) philosophic and non-philosophic arguments, “within the libertarian camp,” that provide “a satisfactory groundwork and basis for individual liberty.”<sup>75</sup>

Anyone who studies the organizations and individuals who opposed liberalism in the cold war years, and advanced an alternative position, face what Rothbard called the, “conceptual chaos of conservatism.”<sup>76</sup> The most publicized attempt to resolve the apparent contradictions between conservative traditionalists and conservative libertarians came in Frank S. Meyer’s ‘fusionist’ approach to the problem, first aired in ‘Freedom, Tradition, Conservatism.’ Published in *Modern Age*, in 1960, Meyer’s article attempted to find a common ground for all conservatives by stressing that both doctrines originated from the same source. The founding fathers, he argued, “created a political theory and a political structure based upon the understanding that, while truth and virtue are metaphysical and moral ends, the freedom to seek them is the political condition of those ends.”<sup>77</sup> Meyer insisted traditionalists did not appreciate that the libertarian desire for the political end of individual freedom was only the first, but crucial, condition whereby they could conduct a personal search for the metaphysical and moral end of truth and virtue. Meyer, like Lord Acton, believed that libertarians, “take the establishment of liberty for the realization of moral duties to be the end of civil society.”<sup>78</sup>

Meyer then explained to libertarians that the traditionalist insistence on an organic moral order did not obstruct the libertarian position on the political end of individual freedom, and that they should accept, as

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<sup>75</sup> Murray N. Rothbard, ‘Frank S. Meyer: The Fusionist as Libertarian Manqué,’ *Modern Age*, Fall 1981, 355.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 352.

<sup>77</sup> Frank S. Meyer, ‘Freedom, Tradition, Conservatism,’ *Modern Age*, Fall 1960, 363.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.

traditionalists did, that “the only possible basis of respect for the integrity of the individual person and for the overriding value of his freedom is belief in an organic moral order.”<sup>79</sup> Meyer’s ‘fusionism’ took as its uniting theme the assertion that only the freedom of choice, the freedom from coercion, could make any action virtuous. In somewhat tortured language, Meyer set forth a theory of conservatism that is Christian libertarianism in all but name. Christian libertarians do not want to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, an organic moral order, by coercion. They wish to see a Christian society, devoted to the development of individual personality, arise from the virtuous choice of individuals persuaded by the truth of the Scriptures. As a doctrine that recognizes the political end of freedom is nothing more than the means for individuals to determine what their duties to others are, Christian libertarianism still holds relevance today. Meyer warned that political freedom, “failing a broad acceptance of the personal obligation to duty and to charity, is never viable,” ending with the “licentious war of all against all.”<sup>80</sup> The Christian ‘Rock of Ages’ recognized Meyer’s caution against individual freedom without moral principles long ago, and, presumably, will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

In 1964, Milton Heimlich, a business associate, wrote to Pew advising him to desist from financing ‘fascist’<sup>81</sup> organizations; a reference to Pew’s reported support for The John Birch Society. Pew replied: “All of my life I have fought for the freedom of the individual—for the antithesis of the centralization of power which created such horrors as we witnessed in Hitler’s Germany and Mussolini’s Italy, and which we see today in Mao Tse-tung’s China and Khrushchev’s Russia.” And that, “I have also done what I could to promote a return to God, for Divine guidance is the desirable

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 360.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* See also Chapter One of Goldwater’s 1964 book, *The Conscience of a Conservative*, which argues that the central importance of political freedom is ensuring the conditions whereby the individual can fully develop their—much more important—unique spiritual personality.

<sup>81</sup> In his speech at the first meeting of the CFF on April 17, 1950, Pew stated; “in Washington there are many politicians who will tell you that I am an economic royalist—some who contend even that I am a Fascist.” A reference, primarily, to the accusations of George Seldes in, e.g., *1000 Americans* (New York, 1947), 292-98, which presents an appendix titled, ‘Nazis Parading on Main Street,’ detailing Pew’s contributions to anti-New Deal groups like the Liberty League and Sentinels of the Republic. These accusations continue today in, e.g., Glenn Yeadon and John Hawkins, *The Nazi Hydra in America: Suppressed History of a Century* (Joshua Tree, CA: Progressive Press, 2008), 183: “A quick look at the officers of the National Industrial Information Committee, the propaganda arm of NAM, reads like a who’s who of fascists ... Pew [also] was a large financial contributor to the Sentinels, Crusaders and other pro-fascist groups.”

condition under which to give expression to individual freedom.”<sup>82</sup> Many may not agree with the philosophy of Christian libertarianism, but as the opposite face of the totalitarian ideologies that slaughtered countless millions of people in the twentieth century, it deserves more than the cursory attention it has received so far from historians of the conservative intellectual movement. Study that will, perhaps, reveal that America’s claim to ‘Exceptionalism’ finds its foundation in the country’s respect for the religious justifications for individual freedom.

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<sup>82</sup> Letter, Pew–Milton Heimlich (President, Plymouth Machinery Co., Inc.), Oct. 27, 1964; Pew papers, Welch file; HML.