

Essays on Self-Governance

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The Responsibility Of Citizens

"Cherish, therefore, the spirit of our people, and keep alive their attention. If once they become inattentive to the public affairs, you and I, and Congress and Assemblies, judges and governors, shall all become wolves. It seems to be the law of our general nature." - Thomas Jefferson (Letter to Edward Carrington January 16, 1787)

Background And Original Intent

"A good constitution is the greatest blessing which a society can enjoy." So said James Wilson, in his oration at Philadelphia on July 4, 1788, celebrating the adoption of the Constitution of the United States. Wilson, who signed both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, preached startlingly democratic theories - more democratic than the ideas of any other delegate to the Constitutional Convention. Yet Wilson emphasized the duties, as well as the rights, of citizens:

"Need I infer, that it is the duty of every citizen to use his best and most unremitting endeavours for preserving it [the Constitution] pure, healthful, and vigorous? For the accomplishment of this great purpose, the exertions of no one citizen are unimportant. Let no one, therefore harbour, for a moment, the mean idea, that he is and can be of no value to his country; let the contrary manly impression animate his soul. Every one can, at many times, perform, to the state, useful services; and he, who steadily pursues the road of patriotism, has the most inviting prospect of being able, at some times, to perform eminent ones."

Wilson's argument is quite as sound now as it was two centuries ago. The success of the American Republic as a political structure has been the consequence, in a very large part, of the voluntary participation of citizens in public affairs - enlisting in the army in time of war; serving on school boards; taking part unpaid in political campaigns; petitioning legislatures; supporting the President in an hour of crisis; and in a hundred other great ways, or small-assuming responsibility for the common good. The Constitution has functioned well, most of the time, because conscientious men and women have given it flesh.

The Premises of Americans' Responsibility Under the Constitution of 1787

- The Framers' first assumption was that all just authority for government comes from the people, under God; not from a monarch or a governing class, but from the innumerable citizens who make up the public. The people delegate to government only so much power as they think it prudent for government to exercise. Government is the people's creation, not their master. Thus, if the people are sovereign, it is the citizens' responsibility to take upon their shoulders the task of seeing that order, justice, and freedom are maintained.
- The Framers' second assumption was that American citizens would undertake responsibility for the ordinary functioning of the civil social order and that local communities would

manage their own affairs. Under their system, the roles of the various levels of government would be minimal and would not unnecessarily intrude into the day-to-day lives of the citizens.

In the matters which most immediately affect private life, power should remain in the hands of the citizens, or of the several states - not in the possession of federal government. So, at least, the Constitution declares. Americans have no official cards of identity, or internal passports, or system of national registration of all citizens - obligations imposed upon citizens in much of the rest of the world. This freedom results from Americans' voluntary assumption of responsibility. In matters of public concern, it was the original intent to keep authority as close to home as possible. The lesser courts, the police, the maintenance of roads and sanitation, the levying of real-property taxes, the control of public schools, and many other essential functions still are carried on by the agencies of local community: the township, the village, the city, the county, the voluntary association. Citizens' cooperation in voluntary community throughout the United States has been noted and commended in the books of Alexis de Tocqueville, Lord Bryce, Julian Marias, and other distinguished visitors to the United States, over the past two centuries:

- America's citizens, most of them, have believed in a moral order ordained by divine wisdom; and so they have assumed moral responsibilities, including personal responsibility for constitutional government. The more thoughtful citizens have seen society as primarily moral in origin: a community of souls. Behind the outward forms of American political structure lie the old convictions that citizens have duties toward a Creator and toward other members of the society, and that a just government must recognize moral law.
- In family, church, and school, until the middle of the twentieth century, the rising generation of Americans were taught that they must be personally responsible for their own welfare, for the care of their aging family members, for the security and prosperity of their community, for their patrimony of order and justice and freedom. A sense of responsibility is developed by severe lessons, by private risk and accountability, by a humane education, by religious understanding, by knowledge of the past. Once upon a time, this sense of responsibility was diffused throughout the American nation. If it drains away, the consequences will be dreary.

A republic whose citizens - whose leaders, indeed - are concerned chiefly with "looking out for Number One," and ignoring their responsibilities of citizenship, soon cannot "insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare" - or carry on the other major duties of the state. When the crisis comes, the people may turn in desperation to the hero-administrator, the misty figure somewhere at the summit. But in the end, that hero-administrator will not save the republic, although he may govern for a time by force. A democratic republic cannot long endure unless a great many of its citizens stand ready and willing to brighten the corner where they are, and to sacrifice much for the nation, if need be.

Has The Consciousness of Responsibility Withered in America?

For the past five or six decades, several perceptive observers have remarked, an increasing proportion of the American population has ceased to feel responsible for the common defense, for productive work, for choosing able men and women to represent them in politics, for accepting personal responsibility for the needs of the community, or even for their own livelihood. Unless this deterioration is arrested, the responsible citizens will be too few to support and protect the irresponsible. By 1978 there were more people receiving regular government checks than there were

workers in the private sector. What follows, if we are to judge by the history of fallen civilizations, is described by Albert Jay Nock in his book *Memoirs of a Superfluous Man* (1943):

"... closer centralization; a steadily growing bureaucracy; State power and faith in State power increasing; social power and faith in social power diminishing; the State absorbing a continually larger proportion of the national income; production languishing; the State in consequence taking over one 'essential industry' after another, managing them with ever-increasing corruption, inefficiency, and prodigality, and finally resorting to a system of forced labor. Then at some point in this process a collision of State interests, at least as general and as violent as that which occurred in 1914, will result in an industrial and financial dislocation too severe for the asthenic [weak] social structure to bear; and from this the State will be left to 'the rusty death of machinery' and the casual anonymous forces of dissolution."

Modern civilization offers a great variety of diversions, amusements, and enticements - some of them baneful. But modern civilization does not offer many inducements to the performance of duties, except perhaps monetary payment, and certainly it does not teach people that the real reward for responsible citizenship is the preservation of a free society. It is not money that can induce citizens to labor and sacrifice for the common good. They must be moved by patriotism and their attachment to the Constitution. And patriotism alone, ignorant boasting about ones native land, would not suffice to preserve the Republic. Thus it is that on the occasion of the Bicentennial celebrating of the Constitution, a mighty effort ought to be made to restore the American public's awareness of the principles of their government, of their responsibilities toward their country, their neighbors, their children, their parents, and themselves to be sure that their patriotism is based on this solid foundation. No one knows how late the hour is; but it is later than most people think. Love of the Republic shelters all our other loves; and that love is worth some sacrifice.

Responsibilities Are Readily Forgotten

Nearly all of us are quick to claim benefits, but not everybody is eager to fulfill obligations. We have become a nation obsessed with rights, forgetful of responsibilities. In an age of seeming affluence, a great many people find it easy to forget that all good things must be paid for by somebody or other - paid for through hard work, through painful abstinence, sometimes through bitter sacrifice. Below we set down some of the causes for the decline of a sense of responsibility among some American citizens.

- The growth of an American welfare state, over the past half-century, has produced in the minds of a good many men and women the illusion that somehow somebody in Washington can provide for all needs: so why make much effort to fulfill what used to be considered personal responsibilities? As Alexis de Tocqueville remarked, a century and a half ago:
- The increase of the scale of society and the size of government has bewildered many Americans, inclining them to think that the individual can accomplish little or nothing in a responsible way, engulfed as he seems to be by the overwhelmingness of it all. It was easier to see ones personal responsibilities in a Massachusetts township or next door to a Virginia courthouse, in 1787, than it is to perceive what one's duties to country and community may be in the New York or Los Angeles of 1987. When one contemplates the enormous size of the federal government, then the exercise of individual citizen responsibility seems almost hopeless.

- Until the 1930s, and in many schools later than that, young people learned their responsibilities through the lively study of history, government, and especially imaginative literature that taught them about human dignity and human duties. But in recent decades, especially during the 1960s and 1970s, the disciplines of history and government have been supplanted by a vague social stew," and the study of great literature and philosophical ideas has given way to anthologies of relevant" - and often depressing - third-rate recent writing. So the function of the schools as places where responsibility would be taught - an expressed hope of several of the Framers of the Constitution, John Dickinson among them - has been ignored.
- Of all social institutions, formerly the family was most active and successful in teaching young people their responsibilities. But since the Second World War particularly, the American family has been weakened by economic changes, both parents being gainfully employed (often to pay for increases of taxation, in large part), the triumph of the television set over family conversations, the influence of periodicals read by young people, and a considerable range of challenges to parental authority - many times encouraged by judicial decisions and actions of the education establishment. At the same time, the influence of school teachers and of the clergy in perpetuating this strong sense of responsibility has diminished. So, in some degree, the restoration of a sense of responsibility depends upon the family's recovery of authority.
- The fundamental impulse to accept responsibilities and perform duties, in every society, has been religious in origin. Individuals obey moral laws and do their duty because of awareness of duties toward God. Religion teaches that there exist natural laws; and that if individuals try to ignore those natural laws, they find themselves in peril, individually and as a society. People who deny the reality of the Divine tend to shrug off their responsibilities to other men and women. Thus, weakness in religious awareness commonly leads to the decay of personal responsibility in many walks of life.

These are only some of the reasons why a 'permissive" society speaks often of rights and seldom of responsibilities. A time comes, in the course of events, when abruptly there is a most urgent need for men and women ready to fulfill high and exacting and dangerous responsibilities. And if there are no such citizens, then liberty can be lost. It must be remembered that the great strength of the Signers of the Declaration and the Framers of the Constitution was that they knew their classical history, and how the ancient Greek cities had lost their liberties, and how the Roman system had sunk to its ruin under the weight of proletariat and military state.

Prospects For The Renewal Of Responsibility

What may be done by way of remedy? Although America's social difficulties are formidable, probably they are less daunting than those of any other great nation today. The economic resources of the United States remain impressive; and the country's intellectual resources are large. This essay cannot offer, in its small compass, a detailed program for the popular recovery of devotion to duty. Here we can only suggest healing approaches:

- Like moral virtue, responsibility is first acquired in family and home. Nobody does more to injure a sense of responsibility than a parent who abandons children to the television set and the peer group, "liberating" them from household chores and study at home. Assigning and enforcing duties within home and family, though it may seem stern at first, is kindness to everybody in the long run.

- In the family, as well as in the school, the imagination and the intellect can be introduced to the literature of responsibility - for such does exist, and young people are much taken with this literature if they have not already been absorbed into a juvenile "counter-culture." It was not many years ago that boys read, for instance, Theodore Roosevelt's and Henry Cabot Lodge's Hero Tales from American History, with its stirring descriptions of George Washington; of George Rogers Clark conquering the Northwest; of the battles of Trenton, Bennington, King's Mountain, and Stony Point - to confine ourselves to Revolutionary fighting - of Gouverneur Morris, the most brilliant delegate to the Constitutional Convention, with his one leg and his crippled arm, refusing to flee from the Jacobins in Paris. In such true tales one learns what responsibility requires. And it was not many years ago that girls were reading about the heroines of ancient times and modern - about Hypatia, Joan of Arc, Abigail Adams. We learn our duties from learning about men and women who did theirs. One recalls James Wilson's words, quoted at the beginning of this essay: "He, who steadily pursues the road of patriotism, has the most inviting prospect of being able, at some times, to perform eminent ones."
- In schools, the pupils need to be rescued from the sham subjects of "social studies" and "civics," ordinarily the most boring and empty disciplines in school curriculum, and introduced instead to real history and to the Constitution and American political institutions. From studying genuine historical figures and genuine politics and literature of the past, young people can come to apprehend what a citizen can do for his country.
- Perhaps the best way to renew responsibility in American society is to assume responsibilities one's self. It may be difficult to find the time, and painful to fight one's way into politics at any level; nevertheless, some honest men and women must do so if the Republic is to endure another two centuries - or perhaps to the end of the twentieth century. From running for Congress to campaigning for the office of drain commissioner; from publishing a newspaper to writing a letter to the editor - there is no end to the responsibilities that may be undertaken, to the general benefit. The apparatus for doing one's political duty still exists, thanks to our Constitution.
- To fulfill one's moral responsibilities through the agencies of a church, neighborhood, and personal charity may not be exciting; yet the example of duty does win converts, and one lays up treasure in a place unaffected by manipulated currency. To give aid and comfort to fugitives from Communist lands, say, is such an act as the Signers and the Framers would have approved heartily; and it teaches moral responsibility to one's children.
- Ultimately, the recovery of a sense of responsibility is bound up with the recovery of the old concept and virtue of piety - gratitude toward God for his gift of life, gratitude toward one's ancestors, concern for one's children and descendants. Such a sense of responsibility is in keeping with the philosophy upon which the nation was built - Creator-endowed rights and responsibilities.

In your own circumstances, you may encounter opportunities for the renewal of responsibility more promising where you live than any suggested here. In any society, it always has been a minority who have upheld order and justice and freedom. If only one out of every ten citizens of the United States of America should vigorously fulfill his responsibilities to our civil social order - why, we would not need to fear for the future of this nation.

Consider

1. In all previous cultures, children ordinarily accepted responsibility for the well-being of their parents in old age; and in various societies, the children were so held accountable in law. Why has this form of responsibility decayed in the twentieth century? Can you think of political and social causes for the care of elderly parents being turned over to public agencies?
2. Can you name seven or eight voluntary associations or organizations, not subsidized or directed by government, that perform important services in your community or in America generally? Explore the benefits from this kind of involvement as opposed to "letting the government do it."
3. Responsible citizenship sometimes brings risks - all the way from unpopularity in some local dispute to pushing forward under enemy fire in military action. How may schools help to teach the rising generation the high importance of performing duties that may be dangerous?
4. Are you and I personally responsible for our decisions and actions, or are we simply creatures of our environment, "conditioned" to respond in one way or another to events and challenges? Marshal the arguments on either side of this question, and then consider the probable social consequences of believing in freedom of the will, or believing that society, rather than the individual person, is responsible for citizen's actions.
5. What are you doing to help preserve the great principles on which this nation and your personal freedoms are based?

Our Ageless Constitution, W. David Stedman & La Vaughn G. Lewis, Editors (Asheboro, NC, W. David Stedman Associates, 1987) Part VII: ISBN 0-937047-01-5

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The Changed Meaning of Liberty

Words change their meanings, and people who assume that older meanings still prevail invite deception thereby. It is part of current Marxist ideology to give a new content and an alien meaning to such familiar words as peace, freedom, republic, law, and so on.

New meanings precede revolutions, because the content of human hopes is altered dramatically, and the existing order finds that it cannot satisfy the new meanings. Before the French Revolution, the idea of liberty had taken on a new meaning, a very different one than had previously prevailed. As Frank E. Manuel, in *The Prophets of Paris* (1962), pointed out, "The very term liberty lost its medieval connotation of a privilege and became the right to bring into being what had not existed before" (p. 24). Liberty as a privilege had reference to a religious fact of immunity from civil controls and regulations. Thus, the ancient privilege of the church is its freedom from the state because it is Christ's personal domain and body and hence subject to no controls but those of His law word. Similarly, the privileges of the family exempted it from various controls. Each area of life had its privileges. We still use the word privilege in this older sense when we speak of "privileged communication." A privileged communication, as for example between a priest or pastor and a parishioner making a confession or seeking counsel, or between a doctor and a patient, or a lawyer and a client, is free from the controls or knowledge of the state or of other men and agencies. This freedom and immunity is, moreover, a religious fact. Thus, the older definition of liberty as a privilege and as a religious immunity rested firmly and clearly on a Christian culture. As long as the education and culture of the Western World was clearly Christian, liberty or freedom remained a Christian privilege.

This older meaning survived in the United States as recently as 1868, when the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution declared, "No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States." Unhappily, the Federal Government did not bar itself from any such infringement of the people's "privileges or immunities." The annotated edition of the Constitution published by the federal government says of this, "Unique among constitutional provisions, the privileges and immunities clause of the Fourteenth Amendment enjoys the distinction of having been rendered a nullity by a single decision of the Supreme Court issued within five years after its ratification" in the *Slaughter-House Cases*. The Court at that time began also to redefine the term "privileges and immunities" by declaring them to be, not religiously grounded, but owing their existence to the grace of the Federal Government. The state had begun to usurp the place of God!

It was the Enlightenment thinkers and the French "philosophes" who began the redefinition of liberty and its separation from the religious foundation which liberty as privilege had enjoyed. The French Revolution greatly advanced the new meaning. Its slogan was "Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality," and it soon became apparent that all three had new, ugly, and murderous meaning. Not without reason, as Madame Roland in 1793 went to the guillotine, that new symbol of freedom, she cried out, "O Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name." All French landlords had to paint on their walls, "unite, indivisibilite de la Republica, Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite ou la Mort!" Death came quickly for many, and for lesser reasons than failing to paint this slogan.

The Declaration of Rights of the French Revolution set forth the new meaning of freedom: "Liberty consists in being allowed to do whatever does not injure other people." If this definition sounds familiar, it is because it has been the premise behind the sexual revolution, homosexual arguments, abortion, and a variety of so-called "victimless" crimes.

Liberty has come far from its earlier meaning of a religious privilege or immunity. The meaning of liberty has changed because the culture has changed, so that it is a part of a vast panorama of new meanings. Liberty, as someone told me last year with all the solemnity of a prophet revealing new truth, means that I can do as I please as long as I do not hurt another person. It was soon obvious that we had differing definitions also of the meaning of "hurt." We also differed on what constitutes a "person." For him, it did include a Soviet KGB officer (as it must for me, since he is like myself a creature made in God's image), but not a Nazi, perhaps not a South African white, not a white racist or anti-Semite, not an unborn child, and possibly not some terminally ill elderly people. Because he was a humanist and I am a Christian, our meanings differed at every point. Each of us had a different principle of definition because we had different religions.

Karl Marx in 1848, in the Communist Manifesto, gave a differing humanistic interpretation of liberty. For him, economic equality was the prior goal and virtue. His doctrine of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs," called for the satisfaction of all the economic needs before the hunger for liberty is satisfied. However, his plan meant also that a dictatorship defined every man's needs as well as the abilities and the productive responsibility of each man! In such a system, the needed food for a man as well as his needed freedom became a statist decision by elite planners.

When freedom lost its Christian definition, man became the new definer. Previously, God's law and sovereignty set boundaries on man's power. Man was not free from flagrant sins and breaches of liberty prior to the Enlightenment, but he knew that in all these things he was a sinner. Now, with humanism, he was a new god finding and expressing himself in his autonomous powers. The modern state, as the collective expression of these powers, was "liberated" to be humanity's new god walking on earth.

Artists began to give expression to this new world and life view. In France, Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918), an influential writer of the avant-garde, worked for total liberation from Christianity. Like the decadents and Andre Gide, he sought it in the gratuitous act, "l'acte gratuit," as the example of consistent human freedom. Since the free act, liberty, meant liberation from Christianity, only an inversion of morality could make men free. This meant the evil act, unmotivated evil, evil for its own sake. It meant "the liberating power of wickedness." (Roger Shattuck: *The Banquet Years*, p.304, 1955). The purity of the acts of liberation rested in the gratuitousness of their evil.

Within a generation or so after Apollinaire, Lindner, an American, wrote on *Rebels Without a Cause*, a study of juvenile criminals and their purposeless crimes. The assault, murder, and mutilation of innocent persons totally unacquainted with the criminal became increasingly commonplace after 1960. The new doctrine of liberty was being enacted on the streets.

The French Revolution had declared any act legitimate if it did not hurt or injure another person. The French revolutionary leaders quickly saw their enemies as non-persons and proceeded to kill them. Where God's definition of man is despised, soon man himself is despised and readily killed or victimized. Apollinaire in a novel, had put a prophecy into the mouth of one man: "On my arrival on earth, I found humanity on its last legs, devoted to fetishes, bigoted, barely capable of distinguishing good from evil - and I shall leave it intelligent, enlightened, regenerated, knowing there is neither good nor evil nor God nor devil nor spirit nor matter in distinct separateness" (Shattuck, p. 253).

When all values are denied except man, every man is free to define his own values and to act accordingly. The state, having greater power, has greater freedom to enforce its own values, and, as a result, the new freedom of humanism ends up in history's most malevolent tyranny and slavery. The new liberty is the old slavery writ large.

The modern world is far removed from the older world of liberty as a religious privilege which required responsibility and accountability to God. Sinning now passes as the new freedom, and the more perverted the sin the higher ostensibly the manifestation of liberty.

The saddest aspect of all this is the failure of so many churchmen and conservatives to see that, when politicians make promises using the old language of privilege and immunity, they have in mind the newer and revolutionary meanings. William Blake, himself a revolutionary, called attention to the fact that he and his opponents, reading the same thing, read differently: one read black where the other read white. Their presuppositions differed, and hence their reading.

The presupposition of the humanistic doctrine of liberty are anti-God and anti-man. For humanism, the great evil is deprivation. Man is seen as entitled to the fullest liberty to express himself, to gratify himself and to reach true personhood in self-expression.

An old hymn, once popular, celebrates Christ as King of all creation, and of all things therein. The last two verses read:

"The government of earth and seas Upon his shoulders shall be laid: His wide dominions shall increase, And honours to His name be paid. Jesus, the holy child, shall sit, High on His father David's throne;- Shall crush his foes beneath His feet, And reign to ages yet unknown."

When Christians ceased to work in terms of this assured victory, the humanists began to do so. In terms of their plan, it is Christ and his people who are to be crushed beneath the feet of history and humanistic man. Their current power witnesses to the church's default. Wars are not won when men refuse to fight, nor can armies move against an enemy they refuse to recognize exists! Now that the long sleep of the church is ending, the battle begins.

The decline of true Christian liberty began when the enlightenment ideas of natural religion infiltrated the church and replaced the Biblical doctrine with the new ideas of "natural liberty." Previously, theology had, like Thomas Boston in his study of man's Fourfold State, distinguished between man's moral abilities in the state of innocence, the state of depravity, the state of grace, and the eternal state. Our Lord, in John 8:33-36, makes clear that true freedom comes from Him alone; it is an act of sovereign, saving grace. It gives us powers and immunities, and it restores us to our calling to exercise dominion and to subdue the earth (Matt. 28:18-20). Our freedom is a privilege and an immunity.

God's act of creation and His providential government establish Him as Sovereign or Lord. His law sets boundaries on man's will and thus gives us privileges and immunities which men and civil governments are forbidden to violate.

At one time, men spoke of their freedom as "ancient privileges and immunities." What was urgently needed was the development of this premise. The concept of sphere laws was early set forth in the church's struggle for freedom from the state. The Puritans, with their affirmation of covenanted spheres of life, advanced this doctrine. Abraham Kuyper, who admired the Puritans, formulated this concept philosophically and theologically.

On this foundation, the Christian community must revive the doctrine of liberty as a religious privilege and immunity. The claims of the state to be the source of freedom are false and evil. The American patriotic song is clearer on the issue when it hymns God as the "Author of Liberty." Those

words are no longer sung in most public schools. Both God and liberty are now denied by the humanists. For this bit of honesty, we can thank them, as we work to undo their legacy of slavery.

Rev. R.J. Rushdoony, *Roots of Reconstruction*, p. 241; Chaldeon Position Paper No. 53

Source: <https://chalcedon.edu/resources/articles/the-changed-meaning-of-liberty>.

The Modern Obfuscation Of Liberalism

Failure to recognize the distinction between classical and modern liberalism can have grave consequences for the protection of our rights and liberties.

Modern liberals are unflinching in their support for political and civil freedom. In this respect, they are similar to the liberals of the yesteryears- the classical liberals. But the similarity ends there. While classical liberals supported freedom for an individual in all spheres – political, civil and economic, modern liberals have removed protection of economic freedom from their agendas. It is important to understand the implications of this. Else modern liberals run the risk of destroying the very ideals liberalism originated to promote.

We first need to take a dive into history to trace the birth of liberalism and understand what it originally stood for. As a doctrine, liberalism originated in Europe in the seventeenth century. The central value that it espoused was that individuals should be free to decide their destiny, and there should be equality in opportunity. This was sought to be achieved through three dimensions- promoting political freedom by challenging the absolute rights of kings, promoting civil liberty through freedom of speech, press, religion, and, promoting economic freedom through free-markets and international trade. This version of liberalism is called classical liberalism.

Classical liberal ideas played an important role in the Glorious Revolution (1688-1689), a battle between the English monarchy and the Parliament of England. The outcome of this Revolution was the abolition of absolute monarchy in England through the promulgation of the Bill of Rights in 1689. Classical liberal ideas were also behind the Declaration of Independence in 1776 by thirteen American colonies that proclaimed independence from the British Empire and the French Revolution from 1789 to 1799. All these events bore the classical liberal stamp of promoting political and civil freedom.

The revolutionary impact of classical liberalism was not limited only to political and civil aspects. The classical liberals also sought to promote actively economic freedom. Adam Smith's magnum opus, *The Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776, formed the intellectual bedrock of classical liberalism's defense of free-markets. These ideas served as the basis for the Industrial Revolution in England and Western Europe during the nineteenth century. Classical liberal free-market ideas also contributed to the repeal of UK's Corn Laws which was in force from 1815 and 1846 and restricted international trade in the grain market.

Thus, the ascendancy of classical liberalism had three important effects. First, it led to the emergence of political freedom by challenging the 'divine right of the kings to rule'. Second, it led to the enactment of constitutional guarantees for the protection of freedom of speech, press and religion. Third, the free-market ideas of classical liberalism played an important part in the emergence of the Industrial Revolution, which propelled the Western civilization ahead of other contemporaneous civilizations.

The first half of the twentieth century was a turning point in the evolution of liberalism. One of the pillars of classical liberalism – economic freedom, no longer attracted the same attention from liberals. To distinguish this from classical liberalism, we can call this brand of liberalism as modern

liberalism. There were primarily three factors that contributed to the loss of faith in free-markets—business cycles, world wars and the initial success of totalitarian political-economic systems.

Downturns in business cycles, like the Great Depression in the US in 1930, increased the demand for the government to intervene in the economy. The prolonged crisis, which extended to the start of the Second World War, gave birth to the belief that markets are not self-correcting. It was felt that government intervention is needed not only to stabilize economic activity but also reduce income inequality.

This was the basis of the New Deal program introduced by Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933, the then US President, which substantially increased the role of the government in the economy. The rise of government intervention and restrictions on economic freedom was sanctified by Keynes whose theories provided the intellectual basis for tempering free-markets.

The two world wars also had a hand to play in the attack on economic liberty. Government planning was required both for conducting the war and for organizing the post-war recovery. War led to the emergence of central planning on a scale not seen before.

The First World War also led to the dislocation of the gold standard and increased government's role in controlling the money supply in an economy. The Bretton Woods system post the Second World War further cemented the role of the government in regulating the international monetary system.

The emergence of alternative political-economic systems like Fascism in Germany and Italy and Socialism in the Soviet Union further undermined economic freedom. The rapid industrialization of Germany during the 1930s under Hitler's fascist regime led even Britain, the birthplace of free-market economic policies, to question the efficacy of free markets.

The victory of the Allies in the Second World War also had the consequence of establishing Stalin's brand of Socialism as an alternative political-economy system to democratic-capitalism. Post the Second World War, the consensus that government planning and intervention is indispensable had deeply grounded itself.

Thus, the transition from classical to modern liberalism was complete by the 1950s. Economic freedom was removed as the third pillar of liberalism. In fact, economic freedom came to be considered as a hindrance in the achievement of the liberal ideals of freedom and equality.

Liberals started actively speaking of how the government should increase its role in the economy to restrain free-markets. With this, the meaning of the word 'liberal' itself has changed. Apart from continental Europe, where the word continues to refer to adherents of classical liberalism, in all other places, including India, the word 'liberal' has come to denote the followers of modern liberalism.

Looking at the above evolution of liberalism, it is clear to see that if someone was to remark, "I am a liberal," we have reasons to be confused regarding their ideological disposition. Such a statement needs to be clarified by adding the nomenclature of 'modern' or 'classical'. The reason this is not done is that modern liberals consider themselves to be the true inheritors of the liberal tradition, and hence just refer to themselves as 'liberals'.

This is strange because the founders of liberalism may very well take umbrage to several of the policy perceptions advocated by modern liberals. In this sense, modern liberals are at best self-declared inheritors of the liberal tradition. Also, using the term 'liberalism' as an undisputed reference to 'modern liberalism' brushes aside the importance accorded to economic freedom by classical liberals.

This brings us to an important question. If indeed economic freedom is a hindrance in the achievement of liberal ideals, why did classical liberals support free markets? To answer this, we need to look at the close link between political-civil freedom on one hand, and economic freedom on the other.

Contrary to what modern liberals believe, political-civil freedom and economic freedom cannot be segregated. This is because political-civil actions co-exist with economic actions. For instance, what is the point of having the freedom to go on a long drive to a weekend getaway if the supply of fuel is rationed or buying a car requires a government approval?

Similarly, you may be free to choose your beverage, but if the government promotes tea because it is indigenous and restricts the consumption of coffee because it is imported, the freedom of choice is spurious. Classical liberals recognized this dichotomy and hence were unflinching in their support of individual liberty – political, civil, economic or otherwise.

Frédéric Bastiat, the great nineteenth-century French liberal said that whether the discussion is on religion, philosophy, politics, economy, or for that matter anything else, the solution is general to be found in individual liberty.

The link between political-civil freedom and economic freedom was also highlighted by F.A. Hayek, the principal intellectual opponent of Keynes. In his book, *The Road to Serfdom*, published in 1944, Hayek warned that increasing centralization of economic powers with the government could undermine political and civil liberties. An important reason for this is that increasing government power in one area increases the tendency of such power being misused to curtail rights and liberties in other areas. Also, implementation of economic planning by the government gives it the pretext to subjugate civil rights. For instance, arming the government with the power to control business cycles through output management could require the suspension of your right to choose a job.

A similar sentiment was echoed in Milton Friedman's book *Capitalism and Freedom*, published in 1962. Commenting on the relationship between political-civil liberty and economic liberty, Friedman wrote, "I know of no example in time or place of a society that has been marked by a large measure of political freedom, and that has not also used something comparable to a free market to organize the bulk of economic activity." It would be difficult to find such an example even today. The co-existent nature of political-civil freedom and economic freedom, as described by Friedman and Hayek, has been summarized in the Friedman-Hayek Hypothesis which states that societies with high levels of political freedom must also have high levels of economic freedom.

The differing focus on economic freedom sets apart classical liberalism from its modern version. It is unfortunate that the contemporary use of the word 'liberalism' does not take cognizance of this fact. Underlying this obfuscation is the disregard of the fact that economic actions co-exist with political-civil actions. This can have grave consequences.

As the relationship between economic freedom and political-civil freedom shows, dilution of economic freedom could also unwittingly dilute political-civil freedom. It took centuries for liberal ideas to provide us with rights and liberties that we take for granted today. It will be a strange travesty if the modern avatar of the same movement leads to their destruction in the future.

Source: https://swarajyamag.com/ideas/the-modern-obfuscation-of-liberalism/?fbclid=IwAR0AaYN16wLU2g1HLh-9ylfgmRn_U599UyaqrqInDkjanCSd4SFmS91-WQ

Lawless Law

A recent news item stated that a court in Kirby, Great Britain, ruled against Amanda Egan, age ten, who was crossing over a crosswalk on roller skates. A truck struck her, but the court ruled, because Amanda had been on wheels, she lost her rights as a pedestrian and had no right to the pedestrian crossing or to damages.

Of course, had Amanda been skating elsewhere in the street when struck, she would have also lost, because the court would have ruled that she had no right to the street.

The court, in this case, because of a technicality, the wheels, deprived Amanda Egan of justice. The court was lawless in the name of the law. The law was used to pervert the purpose of the law. We should not be surprised at this.

Last month, a state official told me that the law itself means little. "If," he said, "I owe you a thousand dollars, it makes little difference whether you have my signed note for it, or just my word. The note is worth only as much as my word is. If you go to court against me, it will cost as much or more to win, and winning is no guarantee you can collect. The note and the law are no better than your character and mine."

This is the heart of the matter. If men are not godly, the best-intentioned laws can serve ungodly and lawless ends. This was true in Amanda Egan's case, and in many other cases. The law becomes a force for lawlessness when the people and the courts are ungodly.

To trust or hope that a new law is the answer is to be a fool. I know people who have spent years and money agitating for new laws to remedy all manner of problems, and they cannot understand why matters get worse. They insist on believing that another election and another law will somehow solve the problem.

The Psalmist wisely saw the issue: "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain" (Ps. 127:1). New and good laws without new and godly men are like houses with roofs but neither walls nor foundations: they cannot stand.

We have some bad laws on our books in America, but also thousands of good ones. We were a godly people before we passed many of those laws; we have neither been made better nor preserved from ungodliness by having them.

Laws are good, in their place. But first and last, we need godly men and soon. God, give us men!

Rev. R.J. Rushdoony, *California Farmer* 236:1 (Jan. 1, 1972), p. 23.

Source: <https://chalcedon.edu/resources/articles/lawless-law>