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Common Grace in Business: A Roundtable Discussion

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A Journal of Religion, Economics, and Culture

Editor's Note

In the fall of 2014, business people, scholars, and theologians converged on the campus of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for the Symposium on Common Grace in Business. The event was conceived and cosponsored by the Calvin business department and the Acton Institute as a way of highlighting Abraham Kuyper's theological work on common grace—the grace that God extends to everyone that enables him or her to do good—in the business world. The gathering was also a celebration of Acton's translation and publication in English of volume one of Kuyper's seminal three-volume work on common grace (*De Gemeene Gratie*).

We're leading this Winter 2015 issue of *Religion & Liberty* with a roundtable discussion by three prominent business people who discuss how common grace has a direct, and transformative, application in their workday lives.

Also in this issue, Ray Nothstine reviews Thomas C. Oden's *A Change of Heart: A Personal and Theological Memoir*. The book chronicles how one of the century's most celebrated liberals made a dramatic turn away from pacifism, ecumenism, and psychotherapy toward the great minds of ancient Christianity.

Critics of the market economy often say it inevitably leads to Black Friday stampedes and gross materialism. We counter with an excerpt from Rev. Gregory Jensen's forthcoming Acton monograph *The Cure for Consumerism*.

Raphael Lemkin was a largely unknown Polish-Jewish lawyer who coined the word "genocide" and almost single-handedly lobbied the United Nations to make it a crime in 1948 under international law. Matthea Brandenburg reviews *Watchers of the Sky*, a new documentary detailing his story, which also reminds us that many of history's atrocities have gone largely unnoticed.

In the Acton FAQ, Executive Director Kris Mauren describes an innovative new program to equip workers in the mission field with resources from the PovertyCure initiative. The PovertyCure Outreach Program aims to transform the thinking among short and long term mission workers, empowering missionaries and volunteers from an aid to a trade mindset. The goal is to influence one million current and future missionaries over the next two years.

In the Liberal Tradition examines the life of Nathaniel Macon (1757-1837), a vigorous dissenter of centralized power and federal expenditures. The Double Edged Sword tackles the problem of evil and suffering in a commentary on Psalm 53:2-4.

In "Faith the Cross," Rev. Robert Sirico ponders Dietrich Bonhoeffer's distinction between cheap grace and costly grace. "Faith offers us no electric blankets and no cheap grace," Sirico writes. "We who believe hold steadfast in courage and hope in eternal life.".

– John Couretas

Editorial Board

The Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty promotes a free society characterized by individual liberty and sustained by religious principles.

Letters and requests should be directed to: *Religion & Liberty*, Acton Institute, 98 E. Fulton Street, Grand Rapids, MI 49503. For archived issues or to subscribe, please visit *www.acton.org/publicat/randl*.

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Cover Photo: The Vegetable Market, by Hendrik Martenszoon Sorgh.
Photo credit: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

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Abraham Kuyper

Common Grace in Business: A Roundtable Discussion

An Interview with Sidney Jansma, Jr., Milton H. Kuyers, and Michelle Van Dyke

In Reformed theology, common grace refers to the special favor of God common to all humankind. But how do you translate this conceptual knowledge into actual understanding and practice in the workplace?

The Acton Institute and the Calvin Center for Innovation in Business at Calvin College explored this question on October 31, 2014, during a cosponsored Symposium on Common Grace. The event in Grand Rapids, Michigan, brought members of the faith, academic, and business communities together to explore and discuss Dutch theologian, journalist, and statesman Abraham Kuyper's work on common grace and how it applies in everyday business relations. Kuyper saw common grace as a biblical concept whereby God enables all of humanity to fill the earth with the products and processes of cultural activity and that the capacity for cultural formation was not lost in fallen humanity. Sidney Jansma, Jr., Milton H. Kuyers, and Michelle Van Dyke participated in a business leaders' roundtable discussion during the symposium. The three discussed how their faith has influenced and continues to influence their businesses and how they lead. Leonard Van Drunen, department chair and professor of business at Calvin College, moderated the discussion.


Pictured from left to right: Sidney Jansma, Jr., Milton H. Kuyers, and Michelle Van Dyke

Sidney Jansma, Jr. *serves as the president and chief executive officer of Wolverine Gas and Oil Corporation, a Grand Rapids-based energy exploration firm. He began his career in 1959 in the domestic energy sector working for his father's private oil company. He serves as a member of the board of directors of Cityhub.com, Inc. and as a director of the Independent Petroleum Association of America and of the American Petroleum Institute.*

Milton H. Kuyers *serves as chief executive officer and chairman of GMK Companies. His recent business experience includes participating as part owner and executive officer of a number of privately held companies. He serves on the board of Calvin College and of Westra Construction. He has also directed U.S. Office Products Company since June 1995 and H.H. West Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of U.S. Office Products.*

Michelle Van Dyke *has been the president at Fifth Third Mortgage Company since September 19, 2014. Before this position, she was regional president and affiliate president of Fifth Third Bank. Previously, she worked for Old Kent Financial Corp., which was acquired by Fifth Third in 2001. She serves as a trustee of Davenport University and is also on the board of directors for Business Leaders for Michigan. In 2007, 2012, and 2013 Michelle was named one of American Banker's "25 Most Powerful Women in Banking."*

The following is an edited version of the October 31 roundtable.

R&L: *How do you see business, your business, and business people being used by God to restrain sinfulness or to protect people from sin's effects?*

Michelle: I would say, first of all, by common grace we have a conscience, and we're able to differentiate between right and wrong. And in various structures within our society, we see that. If you think about the family, even non-believing parents nurture their children. We see that in businesses, where even non-believing leaders nurture employees. They develop them. They help their businesses grow. They manage the risk of the business. If I look at my career in banking, 29 years, I would tell you now more than ever we are risk managers. We manage credit risk, reputational risk, and operational risk. We see sinfulness every day around us manifesting itself in those kinds of risks. People who take advantage of us and don't pay

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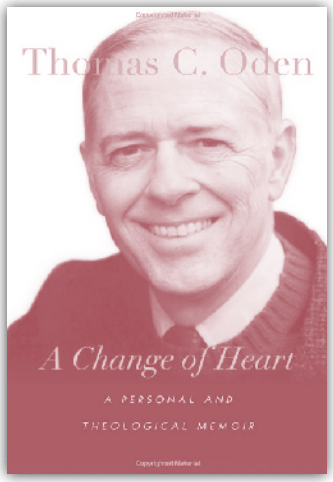

A Journey from Religious Radical to Nothing New

Review by Ray Nothstine

Review of Thomas C. Oden's "A Change of Heart: A Personal and Theological Memoir," (IVP Academic, November 2014) Hardcover, 384 pages, $30.58

One reason Thomas C. Oden wrote "A Change of Heart" was "to alert people to question the realism of those collectivist and unexamined illusions." The "illusions" and collectivism Oden refers to is a fashionable abandonment of the truth and Christian orthodoxy within academia, especially by mainline Protestant seminaries. This abandonment of classic Christianity led to the rise of Marxist liberation theology, sexual libertinism, and the radicalized parish pulpit. Oden offers a fascinating reversal to this popular trajectory. Once himself a mouthpiece for the kind of radicalism that has wrested much of mainline Protestantism from its vibrant roots, Oden has since vowed to "contribute nothing new to theology."

"A Change of Heart" is a reflective memoir that begins in Oden's rural Oklahoma hometown. Born in 1931, he vividly recalls the devastating Dust Bowl and a world torn apart by war. From an early age, Oden decided his "future had to be with books and ideas, not muscle and sweat." He began to see the Church as an instrument for revolutionary change. "I preferred the radicals. Liberals talk," declared Oden. Explaining his early ways, he says:

> My views on wealth distribution were shaped largely by knowledge elites who earned their living by words and ideas—professors, writers and movement leaders. Like most broadminded clergy I knew, I reasoned out of modern naturalistic premises, employing biblical narratives narrowly and selectively as I found them useful politically. The saving grace of God was not in the mix of life-changing ideas.

Oden received his doctorate from Yale University and served on Yale's faculty. He had other teaching positions at Phillips University, Southern Methodist University, Drew University, and Eastern University. Oden wrote some of the liberal Methodist curriculum that influenced Hillary Clinton's transformation from a young Goldwater girl to liberal ideologue. "Her educational trajectory was remarkably parallel to mine with Yale, Methodist Student Movement activism, experimental ecumenism and Chicago style-politics as prevailing features, which were always leftward politically," declares Oden. They both devoured the writings of Saul Alinsky and dreamt of radical social change through the Church. This theology of political empowerment would soon infect much of Oden's own United Methodist tradition.

By the end of the 1960s Oden had grown disillusioned with radicalized religion and its empty promises. Oden explains, in the next two paragraphs, the transformation he experienced at an Earth Day event in Houston, Texas:

> I sat on a park bench near the amphitheater to a read a handout copy of "Socialist World" a propaganda piece of which I hadn't seen a copy in several years, but its themes were all too familiar to me. The paper was saturated with labor-left messianic rhetoric. I thought back two decades to my Norman Thomas days, when I actually was a socialist. I felt overcome with embarrassment that I had come so close to being trapped in that world. As the tumultuous decade was coming to a close, life on the cutting edge was draining me. I was experiencing a revulsion against self-preoccupation, narcissism and anarchy.
>
> For some reason I had in my pocket that day my India paper edition of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, which I had purchased at Blackwell's Bookstore in Oxford. I turned to the collect for the day. Under the shade of the majestic gnarled tree I read out loud: "Almighty Father, who has given thine only Son to die for our sins, and to rise again for our justification; Grant us to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness, that we may always serve thee in pureness of living and truth; through the merits of the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." My eyes filled with tears as I asked myself what I had been missing in

> all of my frenzied subculture of experimental living.

Oden admits he did not engage seriously with any conservatives until the 1960s. A Jewish faculty member at Drew University named Will Herberg, a onetime communist activist turned conservative, challenged his scholarship. Herberg told Oden he was "ignorant in his Christianity." The blow was no doubt severe for an esteemed scholar and theologian already noticed by the likes of Rudolf Bultman and Karl Barth. Herberg, who often wrote for *National Review* and Russell Kirk's *Modern Age*, challenged Oden to carefully read through Athanasius, Augustine, and Aquinas.

Herberg saw in Oden somebody who desperately needed to be grounded in ancient wisdom. "Could it be that I had been trampling on a vast tradition of historical wisdom in the attempt to be original?" asked Oden. He credits the Jewish Herberg for doing more for his spiritual life than any Christian he had known.

Thus begun a transformation that would produce some of the greatest work in recent classical Christian thought. "As I took a deep dive into the early church fathers, they corrected my modern prejudices." For the next five years Oden committed his time to a rigorous study of patristic sources. "I had been in love with heresy. Now I was waking up from this enthrallment to meet a two thousand year stable memory." He called his not-so-new theology "Paleo-orthodoxy." He wished now that his tombstone would read, "He made no new contribution to theology."

Oden worked tirelessly to bridge the gap between a broken modern world and the answers that flow from the ancient apostolic witness and tradition. "The patristic writers reveal an amazing equilibrium in their cohesive grasp of the whole course of human history through the sacred texts," declares Oden.

Oden defended his own denomination's evangelical witness and doctrinal standards from attack. At Drew University, he challenged much of the faculty, who were immersed in radical feminism and Sophia goddess worship. Oden was an integral part of launching the Confessing Movement in the United Methodist Church, an endeavor to strengthen and return Methodism to its rich evangelical and Wesleyan witness. Brilliantly, Oden notes, "Since God's Word is addressed to all humanity, orthodox Christianity embraces a scriptural inclusivism that is much broader than a politically correct inclusivism."

He took heart in the fact that many of his students at Drew were hungry for classic Christianity and not the stale agenda-driven theology that had shaped so many scholars from his own generation. Oden sums up the appeal:

> Modernity has only lasted less than a dozen generations, while orthodox Christianity has already flourished for more than four hundred generations and shows no sign of fatigue. Yet orthodoxy seems like a newcomer in the university and to the cultural elites, since that is where it has been most forgotten.

While he has kept his commitment of adding nothing new to theology, Oden's theological contribution is immense. He has worked with and been friends with influential theologians such as Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), Wolfhart Pannenberg, J.I. Packer, and Richard John Neuhaus. Oden, an observer at Vatican II, had been present for much of the critical theological events and occurrences of the 20th century. Oden is the author of significant works such as *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy, Agenda for Theology*, and a three volume *Systematic Theology*. Perhaps his most enduring legacy is as general editor of the *Ancient Christian Commentary Series*. Oden credits his discussions with then Cardinal Ratzinger in the 1980s as a factor in helping launch the idea for a monumental patristic commentary of Scripture. Many experts believed the *Ancient Christian Commentary Series* was a logistically impossible undertaking, but many confessing Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Christians now cherish the exhaustive work.

It is abundantly clear that much of the contributions of Oden's liberal colleagues are already long forgotten, while his contribution has proved to be truly ecumenical and timeless. My first introduction to Oden was as a young seminary student at Asbury, where I was shaped by his three volume "Systematic Theology: The Living God," "The Word of Life," and "Life in the Spirit." "The Word of Life" is an enduring and almost daily part of my devotional meditations on the work, person, death, and eternal life of Christ. To follow Christ is so often an experience in suffering, which is something Oden has also experienced. Readers of *A Change of Heart* will benefit from his words and wisdom on the topic.

Oden's memoir, deep with thought, is a significant contribution from an enduring and brilliant theologian. Oden's words and witness offers hope to a world and even our churches that are broken and in disarray. "The seed of the Word was being planted precisely within the fertilized soil of ever waning cultures," declares Oden.

Oden's life has come full circle, and he has returned to his native Oklahoma. After many theological and ideological left turns, Oden has found purpose and peace in a return to the ancient Christian witness and patristic thought. But Oden shows such a return is an essential journey for all of us fatigued by unfulfilling and agenda-driven theology. At the end of his preface to "Word of Life," Oden quotes Henry Vaughan's "The Retreat" as a fitting suggestion for our theological journey:

> O how I long to travel back,
>
> And tread again that ancient track! . . .
>
> Some men a forward motion love,
>
> But I by backward steps would move.

Ray Nothstine is a graduate of the Asbury Theological Seminary and lives in Jackson, Mississippi.

Racing Shopping Cart. © RapidEye; istockphoto.com

The Consumer Conundrum

By Rev. Gregory Jensen

Those of us who affirm the market economy as a path to human flourishing need to offer an alternate to the basically negative view of human consumption that critics as well as apologists of the free market too often assume. This is especially true for men and women of faith who hold to a higher vision of human life, its purpose, and the means required for the person to become fully and truly who they were created by God to be.

To that end, it is worth looking at two seminal figures in the history of economic thought: the mid-20th-century economist and retail analyst Victor Lebow and the late 19th- and early-20th-century economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen. These two thinkers illustrate the analytical dangers inherent in looking at our economic life through the lens of a warped anthropology that sees consumption as fundamentally destructive rather than intrinsically productive.

To be fair to the critics, greed is a problem in the free market. Think about department store customers rioting on Black Friday as they push, shove, and trample each other to buy a deeply discounted flat screen television. And, while we're at it, what does it say about the store and the corporation that owns it that they—knowing what has happened in years past—continue to hold these kinds of sales? Yes, I know people are responsible for their actions. And yes, I know in a fallen world greed is a constant. But the fact that human beings are sinful and that business can make a profit from sin is not a compelling defense for a market economy.

Victor Lebow, in his article "Price Competition in 1955," argues that the free market is motivated by greed. While his argument has some merit, it can easily mislead us as we work to understand the ethical challenges facing our economic life in the context of a free market. Specifically, I have in mind his assumption that consumption is the key to the free market's success. If we make consumption, rather than virtue, the engine that drives our economic life, then I think the Church is right to be skeptical of the free market itself. But what if the market not only fosters virtue but also requires it? What if, as economist Deirdre McCloskey has argued, "Without virtue the machinery of neither the market nor the government works for our good"?

Lebow's work certainly encourages skepticism that the free market is an arena for developing virtue. Take, for example, his contention that mid-20th–century American capitalism's "enormously productive economy demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfactions, our ego satisfactions, in consumption." Although Lebow is wrong in asserting that consumption alone drives the free market, he is partially right when he says, "The measure of social status, of social acceptance, of prestige, is now to be found in our consumptive patterns."

For Lebow it is axiomatic that a growing capitalist economy needs "things consumed, burned up, worn out, replaced, and discarded at an ever increasing pace." For this reason "commodities and services must be offered to the consumer with a special urgency." He goes on to say that the market economy as it existed in the 1950s requires "not only 'forced draft' consumption, but 'expensive' consumption as well."

While there are significant differences between what we see on Black Friday and the consumption that Lebow says drives a market economy, both are modes of "conspicuous consumption," a term that economist and sociologist Thorstein

> "We desire and use goods to create, communicate, and confirm our personal identity and so our place in the community."

Veblen (1857-1929) introduced in his "The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions."

Veblen argues that we want things because in "order to gain and to hold the

esteem of men it is not sufficient merely to possess wealth or power. The wealth or power must be put in evidence, for esteem is awarded only on evidence." In other words, we want things to show off and to show up our neighbors; our consumption is motivated by pride, vainglory, and a desire to inspire envy in others. Our consumption is inherently self-aggrandizing.

Veblen is correct when he says that decisions about consumption are meant to signal the status of the person and that they help to sketch out the boundaries of a community. We desire and use goods to create, communicate, and confirm our personal identity and so our place in the community. This is why we can say with him that all decisions about leisure or consumption are "conspicuous." Veblen is also correct in saying that, like manners and decorum, economic decisions "are an expression of the relation of status—a symbolic pantomime of mastery on the one hand and of subservience on the other." His argument becomes more problematic, and so less useful for understanding consumerism, when he says that conspicuous leisure and consumption, manners and decorum, serve to insulate the wealthier members of society from the poorer neighbor's and to enforce this distinction to the harm of the latter and the advantage of the former.

Shop the 2013 Black Friday Sales © Catherine Lane; istockphoto.com

Critically, Veblen reduces the social function of consumption simply to self-aggrandizement. He overlooks the fact that discrete segments of a society are constituted not only by the consumption decisions of other segments but also by their own internal decisions about the relative value of particular goods and ways of spending time.

In light of this, it is simplistic (and condescending) to assume that members of a particular social classes are incapable of making their own decisions about the nature of what they value. Moreover, Veblen and those who have taken his analysis as their own implicitly deny the moral agency of the poor. To be sure, power can be—and often is—exercised by one segment of society at the expense of another. However, this isn't simply a matter of the wealthy oppressing the poor; different social segments are constantly interacting and seeking to affirm their own vision of life. They do this externally relative to each other and internally among their own members.

While it isn't clear whether or not Lebow and Veblen are speaking prescriptively or descriptively, they clearly see greed and self-aggrandizement as central to a market economy. If we make their assumptions our own, we cannot help but see the pursuit of profit, wealth creation, and private property as inherently immoral. If, in fact, Lebow and Veblen are correct in how the market functions, then Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kyrill is right to worry about the "cult of consumerism." If aimless production and acquisition alone drives the free market, then the market economy doesn't just exploit the moral weakness of the individual, it fundamentally deforms society. While certainly there is evidence that this can be the case, the situation is more complicated. Greed and self-aggrandizement are only two—albeit dark and worrying—elements in the constellation of motives and goals for a market economy. Consumerism is not intrinsic or essential to the free market but is, in fact, a deformation of it. As McCloskey points out, "Vulgar devotion to consumption alone is more characteristic of pre- and anticapitalist than of late-capitalist societies." We need to balance criticism of the excesses of the market with the fact that for the tradition of the Orthodox Church, profit, wealth creation, and private property are all not only morally good but are also part of God's blessing for humanity.

Failing to take into account the moral goodness of wealth and the moral complexity of the market in order to criticize the cult of material prosperity or the presence of greed and envy in the marketplace can easily lead us to the opposite mistake: the facile assumption that if "more" is the problem, then "less" is the solution. Doing so is to accept as real what the Desert Father Abba Moses calls a "fake and counterfeit coinage" While it has the "appearance of piety," it ends up harming the poor who need (and have a right to) personally meaningful and economically profitable employment. This is especially true for the poorest and most vulnerable members of the human family who cannot

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care for themselves and so are dependent upon society having an excess of wealth sufficient to care for them. The hard and inconvenient truth is that "you" aren't necessarily any better off because "I" have less; shared material poverty isn't to anyone's real advantage.

Anthropologically we can define wealth in terms of the relative amount of resources (e.g., time, money, effort) needed to acquire the basic necessities of life (e.g., food, water, shelter) as well as the range of options one has in choosing among these necessities. If consumption

" ...we can define wealth in terms of the relative amount of resources (e.g., time, money, effort) needed to acquire the basic necessities of life (e.g., food, water, shelter) as well as the range of options one has in choosing among these necessities."

is immoral, if the goal of our economic life is to consume less, then we ought to dismiss the economic gains of the last two centuries as also immoral. Assuming this not only reflects a lack of gratitude for God for his material blessings, but it also condemns our neighbor to poverty.

Rev. Gregory Jensen is a priest in the Orthodox Church in America. He is a social scientist specializing in religion and personality theory. A frequent lecturer at Acton University, in 2013 he was also a Lone Mountain Fellow with the Property and Environmental Research Center (PERC). This essay was excerpted from his forthcoming The Cure for Consumerism *(Acton Institute, Spring 2015).*

Double-Edged Sword:
The Power of the Word

Psalm 53:2-4

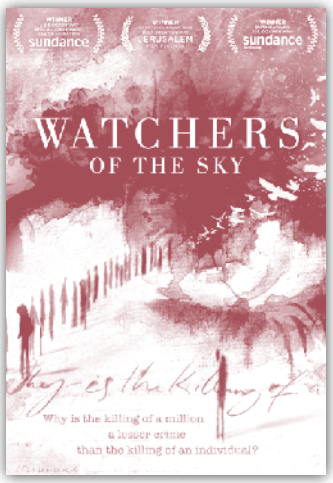
God looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. Everyone has turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one. Do all these evildoers know nothing? They devour my people as though eating bread; they never call on God.

Sometimes it seems evil is more powerful than God. Especially when we see and hear of brutal and devastating beheadings of Christians in the Middle East. The rise of Islamic State group and their ghastly, violent acts is particularly disturbing. If we look at the world, or even our own sphere of influence, it may appear that the wicked prosper and the Lord has little control over the events of the day.

The problem of evil and suffering is one of the chief reasons people abandon their faith and belief in God. The psalmist in Psalm 53 echoes Psalm 14, reminding humanity of its deep sinfulness and shame. The Lord specifically calls out those who persecute and harm His people. The author even mentions in the text that those who devour the Lord's people are lost and vile; they consume them as "though eating bread." They possess no thought or pause for their destruction of human life and heinous acts. With the brutal beheadings of Coptic Christians in Libya this year, Bishop Angaelos, head of the Coptic Church in the United Kingdom, prayed the evildoers "that the value of God's creation and human life may become more evident to them." Those who have no fear of the Lord have little comprehension of the severity of their ways.

The larger point in this passage is that without grace, we are left to our own sinful devices and destruction. Verse 6 declares a prophetic word, "Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion!" The Gospel firmly stands as the good news and answer to evil. We fully learn that the innocent do indeed suffer, but that God has entered into human flesh to take on suffering and deliver us from a meaningless suffering and death.

Everywhere today it seems most people do whatever they want without much of a belief in a higher purpose. But God will exact justice and send judgment for those who wrong His people or continue in unrepentant rebellion. The answer to the plague of sin and evil is, of course, Christ. He is offered to humankind freely, and His birth, life, death, and resurrection, enable us to transcend this world and unite with total love and goodness. The cross of Christ reminds us just how much God enters into suffering for us and how low he is willing to go to reach us. We can cling to its hope and promises and flee from the coming wrath for those mired in the ways of the world.



Awakening the World's Moral Conscience

Review by Matthea Brandenburg

The mass killings of minority groups, which have occurred time and time again throughout history, are often beyond comprehension. How can humans be capable of such evil?

But even more inexplicable and troubling is the fact that many of these atrocities have gone largely unnoticed. They have not received due recognition and response either from heads of states or the public at large.

Fortunately, these tragic historical events have not eluded all. The new documentary, "Watchers of the Sky," released on DVD in February 2015, details the story of Raphael Lemkin, the largely unknown Polish-Jewish lawyer who coined the word "genocide" and almost single-handedly lobbied the United Nations to adopt a convention in 1948, making it a crime under international law.

The film, directed by Edet Belzberg, is inspired by Samantha Power's Pulitzer Prize-winning book, "'A Problem from Hell': America and the Age of Genocide." Power currently serves as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

Lemkin, the documentary's main protagonist, studied mass atrocities from a young age and possessed a unique empathy for distant victims of suffering, while recognizing humans' universal capacity to impose great harm on each other. As Power explains in "Watchers of the Sky," Lemkin often said that a "line of blood ran from the Roman Empire up to the present."

Lemkin knew that mass killings were not just a problem of the past, but a prevailing atrocity that could affect people of any culture. By sharing his experience, the documentary serves to remind us of this reality. It's an important wake-up call for all who believe they are safe from tyranny.

"Watchers of the Sky" uses artful animation and archival video footage to weave Lemkin's fascination with persecution as a youth to his tragic experience as a refugee in World War II as well as his work combatting the greatest crime against humanity. By studying countless "ethnic cleansings" throughout history, Lemkin discovered an alarming trend: Government leaders were able to carry out murderous campaigns within their borders, without interference or punishment from other states.

After asking his law professor why, for example, the Armenians did not have Turkey's interior minister arrested after his government's targeted murder of Turkish Armenians from 1915-1918, Lemkin learned that there was no law under which he could be arrested. The professor said, "Consider the case of a farmer who owns a flock of chickens. He kills them and this is his business. If you interfere, you are trespassing."

The idea that state sovereignty effectively enabled a leader to exterminate his own people without recourse troubled Lemkin greatly and led him to ask the question, "Why is the killing of a million a lesser crime than the killing of an individual?"

Though a seemingly basic concept, prosecution of mass atrocities was still an infant idea within the international sphere. "Watchers of the Sky" embellishes this point with scenes from the Nuremberg Trial and the scramble of lawyers to develop a method for trying Holocaust perpetrators. Though an important step toward justice, the greatest murder trial in human history still failed on some levels, condemning mass killing only in times of war but not in times of peace. In addition, Nuremberg's jurisdiction only included *some* types of genocide. For a perpetrator's actions to be considered illegal, they needed to cross an international border; killing minorities within their country was still permitted under the law. Lemkin believed these missing legal pieces were a great disservice to people victimized by their own government.

Depicting both the professional and personal aspects of Lemkin's life, the documentary encourages the viewer to more fully enter into his struggle and uncover why he considered creating and improving human rights law such a necessary cause. For example, we learn that 49 of his family members, including his parents, perished in the Holocaust, a tragedy that only reinforced his commitment to the campaign.

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Creating a word to describe the crime (genocide) was an important first step, but Lemkin's real challenge lay in eliciting concern for mass killings and proving that criminalizing them would be a worthwhile legal advancement.

Through great persistence and exhaustive lobbying efforts, in 1948 Lemkin convinced the newly formed United Nations to unanimously adopt his Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. But Lemkin did not stop there. "Watchers of the Sky" details his tireless efforts to make the convention the most heavily supported in United Nations history. He wanted to ensure that country leaders understood that their actions, no matter how grievous, would not go unnoticed.

Yet throughout this process, Lemkin's efforts were not necessarily admired by his colleagues. The documentary expresses the sentiment shared by many political figures at the time: Lemkin was an annoyance. A man without a formal title, he would lurk around the U.N. headquarters trying to gain support for the convention from anyone he could. Many diplomats didn't consider genocide to be a top national interest or were afraid that condemning it, under the approach offered by the convention, would infringe on the rights of other states, or even their own.

Eventually, in the years following Lemkin's death in 1959, the United States and most other U.N. members signed the convention. In essence, Lemkin's contributions catalyzed the process of building a foundation for international human rights law, an impressive achievement, especially for one man. To this day, the convention remains the hallmark legislative piece for condemning genocidal acts.

Yet, as "Watchers of the Sky" makes clear, this tool for criminalizing and deterring such offenses against humanity has been shamefully underutilized. Since the adoption of the convention, the world has witnessed numerous instances of genocide—in Cambodia, Iraq, the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Darfur—just to name a few. Very few of their perpetrators have undergone examination and prosecution under the international community's jurisdiction.

Even with the sound legal framework Lemkin created, garnering universal compliance has proven difficult. As Luis Moreno Ocampo, former prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), and feature interviewee in the documentary reminds us, "The global community is very primitive." It took nearly 60 years to move from the United Nations' adoption of Lemkin's genocide convention to the creation of the ICC, the international body in charge of adjudicating charges of genocide. And since its creation in 2002, the body has encountered roadblocks in condemning crimes against humanity. Not all countries are signatories to the ICC, rendering their leaders immune from punishment.

> " For when states do not protect their own people, some form of external accountability is needed."


Raphael Lemkin

Nonetheless, Moreno Ocampo and others featured in the documentary—Samantha Power, Benjamin Ferencz (former Nuremberg prosecutor who still tenaciously lobbies the U.N. for peace), and Rwandan Emmanuel Uwurukundo (U.N. refugee agency field director in Chad)—courageously continue to stand up against present acts of inhumanity, even if the broader international community does not listen and treats perpetrators with impunity. Even if a particular mandate does not offer a direct solution to the problem, this does not mean condemnation should cease.

The documentary provides a prime example of this. In 2009, Moreno Ocampo issued the first ever ICC arrest warrant against a currently serving head of state, Omar al-Bashir, the president of Sudan. Al-Bashir's regime had been committing acts of genocide against the people of Darfur for nearly 10 years. Despite significant push-back from members of the international community and the fact that Sudan is not a signatory to the ICC, making it difficult to arrest al-Bashir, Ocampo urged U.N. Security Council members and diplomats to take action. He reinforced that in the face of evil, silence never helps the victims; it only aids the criminals.

Though seen as idealistic and mostly ineffective at intervening and punishing crimes against humanity, international bodies like the United Nations and ICC are depicted in the documentary as playing a vital role: upholding a moral conscience within the international community. For when states do not protect their own people, some form of external accountability is needed.

The portrayal of Lemkin's life and the arduous work of others featured in "Watchers of the Sky" demonstrates that building universal consensus around international law is a gradual process, not to be accomplished overnight. But the film brings a small glimmer of hope through the great work of Lemkin, who to this day is not known or revered in many circles. Despite his impressive contributions, he was largely ignored during his life, before dying in poverty and obscurity, with less than a dozen people attending his funeral. Thanks to this documentary, many more people will have the privilege of learning about Lemkin's story, and thus save it from becoming lost in the pages of history.

In a world full of so much evil and hurt, some, such as Power and others featured in the film are protecting Lemkin's legacy with the understanding that their efforts may not yield transformative results in their lifetime. Nonetheless, they move forward knowing their contributions will add to future comprehensive and effective framework to prosecute genocide perpetrators.

Their efforts also serve to remind that all human lives, no matter how distant from our own, are valuable and deserving of protection. As Lemkin stated, "The main thing is to make the nations of the world feel that minorities are not chickens to be slaughtered, but people of great value to themselves and to the world."

Bringing such genocidal atrocities to the world's attention and exposing the harsh realities they entail is a vital service, especially considering the widespread pattern of inaction that has been established. "Watchers of the Sky" provides this value, offering people from all walks of life a comprehensive snapshot into the horrors of the past centuries.

The documentary's invitation for us to visualize and learn of others' suffering is not ill-founded, however. Rather, it is essential for connecting with those in distress and then working through whatever means possible to mitigate the damage and deter future tragic events. If we avert our eyes from the suffering, we cannot begin to understand global atrocities and propose actions to curb their recurrence.

The ongoing conflicts in Darfur, Syria, and other regions of the world, remind us that genocide is a problem of our time. The struggle Lemkin faced is now our own. While we benefit from the legal framework he provided, international law still requires advancement, and universal consensus around moral absolutes has not been reached. How will we contribute to the cause?

Matthea Brandenburg works on the Acton Institute's initiative, PovertyCure.

Acton FAQ

Why is PovertyCure starting the Outreach Program?

PovertyCure is an initiative of the Acton Institute that works to bring about change in the way we think about aid and poverty alleviation. PovertyCure has interviewed hundreds of entrepreneurs from developing nations, former NGO leaders, nonprofit leaders, and more in the hopes of finding out what leads to economic growth and prosperity. This program works with students, nonprofits, and the PovertyCure Partner Network to share this message. We know that enterprise, not aid, is the longterm solution to poverty. And who would benefit more from this knowledge than churches and missionaries?

Missionaries are the boots on the ground in poverty-stricken nations. While they work tirelessly to bring their faith to new nations, they often also bring material goods and their own labor. It aims to transform the paradigm of thinking among short- and long-term mission workers, empowering missionaries and volunteers to leverage their efforts for the greatest long-term impact.

Unfortunately, many churches and poverty-alleviation charities suffer from well-meaning but misguided charity and aid efforts that undermine entrepreneurial efforts and individual dignity. Bob Lupton discusses this in his excellent book "Toxic Charity" he writes, "When we do for those in need what they have the capacity to do for themselves, we disempower them."

With a proper framework and by asking the right questions, these individuals could be contributing real, lasting change. This program will work to educate missionaries and volunteers by providing resources such as the PovertyCure video series in combination with a tailored missions field guide. The ultimate goal is to influence one million current and future missionaries over the next two years by building individual relationships with leaders of charitable organizations and churches.

Now through PovertyCure resources, anyone engaged in mission work can use this information to bring sound economics with their good news message.

Kris Alan Mauren
Executive Director

their loans back. We see it. All you have to do is point to information security in today's world and look at the security breaches in our largest retailers and our largest financial institutions to see the magnitude of that sinfulness and the risks that really brings us to in our businesses.

One of the things that has interested me is looking at the organizational culture not only of Fifth Third Bank but of other organizations. I look at organizations that are

very rooted in the past, kind of stodgy thinking in terms of "don't rock the boat." Don't be the first one to come up with a new idea. Don't be the bearer of bad news. Don't share information with others. Don't be associated with failure. If you have people in your organization who are thinking that way, you have a culture ripe for issues and for risks.

I think leaders (and their talents) who are being used by God are forward-thinking leaders, the ones who do share information; they treat everyone with respect and are a potential source of insight. They encourage people to suggest new ways of doing things. They initiate changes. They're willing to take responsibility. When you have leaders like that in an organization, they can help you manage. They, as you say, restrain that sinfulness in the organization. So for me, business leaders try to lead this way, to be transparent, to be authentic, to have the courage to raise issues. When you have leaders that will do that, you get better outcomes for all of your constituents, for your shareholders, your customers, employees, for the communities where we do business. And I would just sum it up that way. I think it's really important for us, as business leaders, to manage those kinds of risks by being transparent and authentic.

Milt: Some years ago I worked for a man who was a non-believer. We faced a major crisis in that company that threatened its very existence. We found out that one series of sprinkler heads we had manufactured, fire protection sprinkler heads, would not necessarily go off under actual fire conditions. We had some testing done, and we found out that two out of ten would not go off. We had two options. We could take a chance that no fires would ever occur in the facilities—primarily one-level nursing homes—that had these sprinkler heads installed. Second option was we could to tell the world, recall, and replace all of those sprinkler heads that were problematic. The recall would bankrupt the company because of the enormous liability for the cost of the recall and their replacements. My boss, the owner of the company, and I made the decision to tell the world.

Sid: Well, as I thought about this question I first got going in my mind about how complex this is, but it hit me that it's actually pretty simple. And for me the simplicity was gracious; businesses do things in their normal course of business that actually, by God's grace, protect our culture from sinfulness. So here are three things.

The first thing is we, as business people, have to emphasize relationships. We, as business people, have to address competition. The third one that hit me was we, as business people, need to talk about metrics. So those three things, how do they play out? Well, in relationships, I, as a leader, articulate values for my company, but I also solicit values from everyone with whom I work. I have to live those values. I have to empower my peers to live those values. The biggest thing for me, as a leader, is to empower the people with whom I work to do good jobs and to have the values come through their lives. We can restrain sin (in the relationship side) by having good procedures in our company; procedures that people will follow. Now, we've all been in a lot of places where we read these procedures and think, "This is crazy." But I'll just say this: In my company we have an employee manual that has a lot of good things in it, but that employee manual tells an employee that they're very valued and, "Here are some things that are important for you to know and for the management to know." So that first issue is relationship. And in relationships, then, we can constrain evil.

The second issue is competition. I look at competition as another group of people looking at the same facts that I'm looking at and coming up with a better solution. Maybe cheaper or whatever. And so in business you have competition, and the competition itself constrains evil in our culture, doesn't it? I mean, if I'm doing something that has a certain functionality in business and I'm wrong, you may come up with a better idea and boot me out of the business. So I see competition as a really great way of restraining bad actors. We can all name times when none of these apply. The thing about nature is there are humans out there who will try to twist every good thing we've got. But competition is a good thing.

The third thing that I saw was metrics. We, in business, all have to watch our numbers. But the numbers themselves are a way of being accountable. And you and I are accountable to whomever by looking at our numbers. The bank looks at my numbers, and that's how I'm accountable to them. In a way the metrics are like a little light shining in the darkness and showing what's happening.

How do you promote the use of God-given creative and cooperative abilities? How do you identify new opportunities to meet your stakeholders' needs?

Milt: In all of our companies we use listening sessions to include individuals and small groups. As some of you know, I've

been involved in a number of turnaround businesses and, especially in a distressed business, this has been the most important thing we have ever done in any of our businesses. We listen to individual people talk about what they believe the problems are and how we ought to solve those problems. In a distressed company, the entire workforce is often unmotivated. We change that through this focus on listening. You wouldn't believe what happens when you use all of God's image-bearers to solve problems. We bring all employees into "the know." We're completely transparent as to what's going on in a business. "We are in trouble," let's say. "And if we all work together, we should all have a job in the future." We give them ownership in the process of change. "We want to listen to you because we believe that you know what the problems are and, more importantly, you may already know the solutions to those problems. We want to hear them all." And we respond positively to every suggestion. We make rules based on the listening sessions. Sometimes stupid ideas are built on by other people and become the best ideas that we've ever pursued. We record each idea, we evaluate them, and then we respond individually to each person who has given a suggestion. We purposely give individuals both private and public acknowledgment of their good work. Daily, if there are reasons to do it. You can compliment publicly, but you never, never discipline publicly.

In our world we learn a lot by listening. Sometimes we listen with our eyes. Other times we listen with our ears. The sense that I've honed and developed best during these past 50 years that I've spent in the business world has been listening with my heart. I've listened to all of the employees, both Christians and non-Christians, of the companies with which I have been involved. As I view each one as an image bearer of God, I use my heart, I use my eyes, and I use my ears. Christians and non-Christians together often listen to the cries of people around the world and then pursue opportunities to be involved both personally and financially and making a difference in people's lives. And in my life, it has been primarily in the area of the creation of sustainable jobs.

Sid: I try to listen to where I can bring God into the picture. But what I've learned is that's such a tender thing because people will not listen. It doesn't matter what you say if people don't hear you. When I was a young business person, just out of school, starting to go, I bought a little cross and stuck it on my lapel. I used to wear suits all the time. I don't anymore. And what I discovered with the cross is it pigeonholed me. People, if they were Christians, that were willing to talk. But other people would stay away from it. And I realized that after about a year, and I thought, "Well, I'm going to do something..." So I actually designed an ichthus, which is the symbol for the Christians and the catacombs of Rome, and it looks like a fish. I would get asked if I liked to go fishing. And that was a lovely opportunity. But what I'm trying to say is that as a believer, we have the ability in secular business to witness for the Lord in many ways, the way we have integrity. Focus on the little ways. If we're in a meeting and we're struggling with an answer, I'll say, "Well, you know, if God wrote it on the wall for me, I think all of us would follow it, wouldn't we? But He hasn't, so it's your problem to solve."

Michelle: There's a common theme here about listening. And I think that's probably the one word I would take away from all of this—listen. We call ourselves the curious bank. And to be curious is to ask questions. We ask a lot of questions. We ask a lot of questions of employees in listening sessions and just hearing what they have to say. How do we make things better? What gets in your way? How could I be a better leader? We ask questions of our customers. And our mission statement reads this way: To listen to customers and inspire them with smart financial solutions that continually improve their lives and the well-being of our communities. So we expect that our employees will be better listeners, that we'll bring better ideas, that we'll bring better commitment, better solutions to our customers.

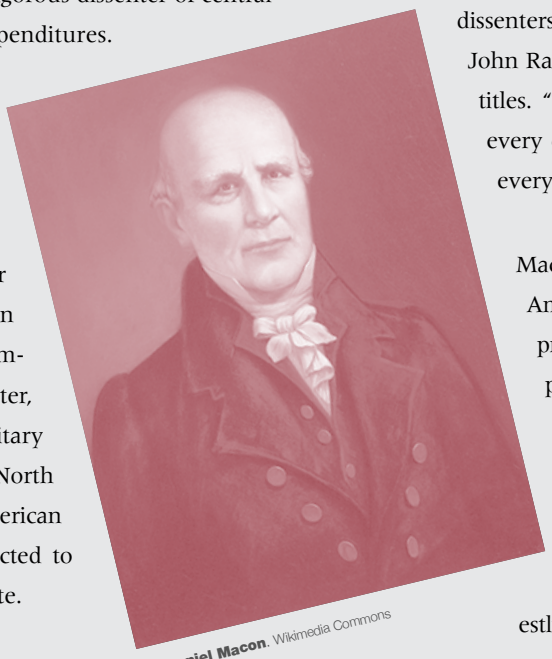
We asked during the financial crisis, what is the issue with people who are in foreclosure? We don't want to own somebody's home. We want to keep them in their home. What can we do to help? And we came to the conclusion that it's all around employment. When people have jobs, they're able to stay in their homes. When they don't have jobs, it really puts the pressure on them, and we end up foreclosing on the homes. But we do not want to own people's homes. So what did we do? We partnered with a company called NextJobs that helps people who are unemployed find jobs, but we make those connections. We help them with job searches, with counseling sessions. We pay for those so that people can find employment. Just a couple of statistics: Thirty-five percent of our borrowers who entered the job coaching program found employment. Seventy eight percent of them that found employment actually became current on their home payments or housing payments and kept their homes. And so we see those kinds of real-world impacts because we were curious, because we asked a question that seemed at the time not logical for a banker to ask. But part of curiosity is that innovation. It's about asking those questions. The world is constantly changing, so we've got to keep asking those kinds of questions. How do we get better? How can we do things differently to be able to make that kind of an impact? And I would say the best leaders of the best companies are the ones who look for those innovative ways to improve their work, improve their organization. The best leaders seek and accept challenges. They don't sit back and wait to be challenged. And I think that that's really a key.

I would just finish by saying one thing. When I first got this question, and I looked at the words "cooperatively and creatively working together," I thought, "What do those two things have to do with each other?" And then as I sat back and thought about it, when you work cooperatively, that's really assumed in most organizations. But creativity on its own can run amok. You've really got to have that kind of collaboration within the company so that you get diversity of thought, that you get different ideas. Not to try to stifle any kind of creativity, but really to bring more ideas to the table. ■■■■

Nathaniel Macon [1757 – 1837]

Ours is a government of suspicion; every election proves it; the power to impeach proves it; the history of Caesar, of Cromwell, and Bonaparte proves that it ought to be so to remain free.

Long before there was Jesse Helms, dubbed "Senator No," North Carolina had another vigorous dissenter of centralized power and federal expenditures. Nathaniel Macon was born in Warrenton, North Carolina, almost two decades before American independence. After attending The College of New Jersey, later renamed Princeton, Macon joined a New Jersey militia company in 1776. Four years later, Macon turned down a military commission and enlisted in a North Carolina unit during the American Revolution and was soon elected to the North Carolina State Senate.



Nathaniel Macon. Wikimedia Commons

Macon married Hannah Plummer in 1783. She died seven years later, and a young son died a few months later. Macon, now more firmly committed to public service, was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, holding office in the House from 1791 to 1815. Gaining popularity and influence among Democratic-Republican leaders like Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, Macon served as Speaker of the House from 1801 to 1807. Throughout his political career, which would extend to the U.S. Senate, Macon prided himself on never actively campaigning for office or soliciting votes. Deploring political patronage, he turned down every cabinet position offered to him and refused overtures to run for vice-president and later president.

His biographer William Dodd wrote in 1902 that Macon's life was a "protest against every extravagance for which the name of the national government has become synonymous." Writing in *National Review*, Ryan Cole called Macon "an early-19th-century version of Dr. No — Ron Paul in a frock coat." He opposed taxes and tariffs, believing they caused undue burden to his constituents, who were largely agrarian and owners of small farms. Macon joined forces in Congress with other dissenters of federal power like John Taylor of Caroline and John Randolph of Roanoke, while eschewing their elitist titles. "The attempt to govern too much has produced every civil war that ever has been, and will, probably, every one that ever may be," declared Macon.

Macon even voted against a national monument for America's beloved George Washington, believing the proposal too expensive and would only set a bad precedent of what he called "monument mania." Writing to a friend in North Carolina, Macon warned, "Be not led astray by grand notions or magnificent opinions; remember you belong to a meek state and just people, who want nothing but to enjoy the fruits of their labor honestly and to lay out their profits in their own way."

"Macon's bible shows much use and his letters over 30 years bear testimony to his familiarity with the scriptures," declared Dodd. Macon attended Baptist services regularly near his Buck Spring plantation and openly professed a Christian faith. In 1835, he was elected to preside over the North Carolina Constitutional Convention. He argued for religious liberty and defended full political rights for Roman Catholics in North Carolina. "But of all the attempts to arrogate unjust dominion, none is so pernicious as the efforts of tyrannical men, to rule over the human conscience," Macon said. Thomas Jefferson called Macon "The last of the Romans," for his selfless service and disinterest in political power. The Richmond Enquirer eulogized Macon at his death in 1837, calling him, "*justum et tenacem propositi virum.*" (a man upright and firm of purpose).

Faith is the Cross

Sitting in a comfortable chair in a warm home makes it easy to forget how close religious persecution really is. The 20th century saw the most martyrs in recorded history, and the 21st century is off to a bloody beginning. As I write this, the world mourns the deaths of 21 Coptic Christians in Libya at the hands of the Islamic State group.

The remarkable writer, Flannery O'Connor, once said in a personal correspondence, "What people don't realize is how much religion costs. They think faith is a big electric blanket, when of course it is the cross. It is much harder to believe than not to believe." Unfortunately, far too many in our world today know exactly how much faith costs. From the current persecution of Jews in Europe, to the slaughter of Christians by Islamic terrorists, to those who struggle to bring faith to nations with dangerous regimes, our world is sadly skewed against people of faith.

This is nothing new. Jesus said, "If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you" (John 15:18–19). The world hates you. Hates you. Because you believe. That should shake any believer to the core of their being.

Good people are persecuted because they stand up for the truth; they hold fast to it and refuse to be swayed, even in the face of persecution, violence, and imminent death. The best of these people we call "martyrs."

This is the part where I am supposed to say something pastoral and uplifting and consoling. I cannot do that. Our God calls us to steadfast faith in the face of evil. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German Lutheran pastor who lost his life to the Nazis, drew a sharp line between "cheap" grace and "costly" grace. His thoughts are worthy of pondering:

> *Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life.*

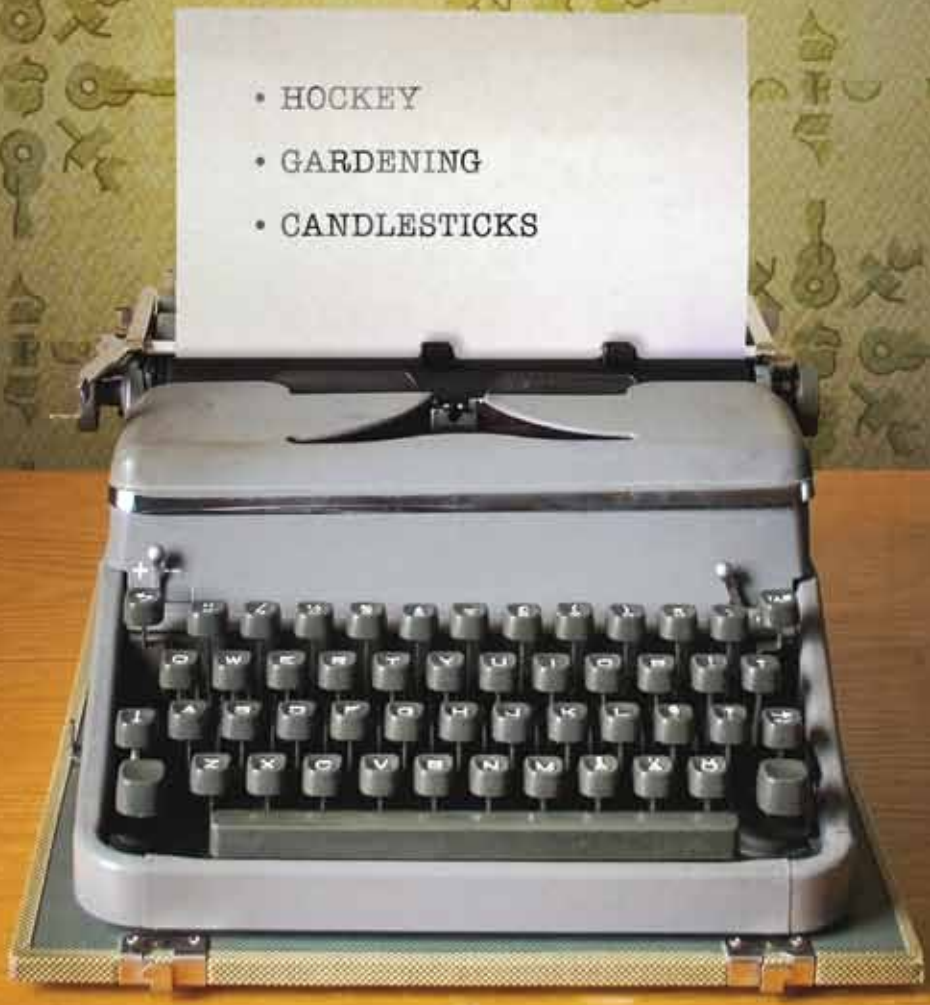
For people of good faith who strive to serve God every day, the idea of cheap grace is an anathema. We want "real" grace. Most of us have had a taste of what Bonhoeffer is talking about here: We have clung to our faith through illness, family tragedy, unemployment, and other times of hardship. We have been driven to our knees, time and time again, asking for God's mercy and grace. Yet, most of us still do not know the true cost.

Cross of Rusty Nails

Faith offers us no electric blankets and no cheap grace. We who believe hold steadfast in courage and hope in eternal life. This should not alarm us, but rather stir up courage within us. This should not cause us to cower in fear, but rather embolden us with fortitude. We who believe hold steadfast in courage and hope in eternal life.

Rev. Robert A. Sirico is president of the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

IF A HEADLINE WITH THE WORD 'JUSTICE' DOESN'T GRAB YOUR ATTENTION, HOW ABOUT:



Justice — or order — is a lot like HOCKEY... and GARDENING... and one VERY IMPORTANT role that God has for each of us. How do we show God's justice here in exile? Find out in Episode 4, The Economy of Order.

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