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REINHOLD NIEBUHR & THE PROBLEM OF PARADOX

By MARC LiVECCHÉ

THE GREAT WAR & THE DAWN OF THE AMERICAN CENTURY

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WILL CHRISTIANITY SURVIVE IN THE MIDDLE EAST? A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

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ALSO: ROBERT NICHOLSON LOOKS EAST TOWARD THE SYRIAN CRISIS • MARK TOOLEY CONSIDERS CHRISTIANS & EMPIRE • LUBO ONDRASEK PAYS TRIBUTE TO JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN • MICHAEL NOVAK IS COMMEMORATED • WAYNE SCHROEDER CALLS CHRISTIANS TO PEACE WORK • THORIN OAKENSHIELD MAKES A DEATHBED CONFESSION • DOUGLAS BURTON REPORTS ON MOSUL • AMITAI ETZIONI PRESCRIBES MORAL TRIAGE • HERMAN MELVILLE REMEMBERS THE BATTLE OF SHILOH • & ALAN DOWD REFLECTS ON AMERICA'S LONG DEFENSE OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

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A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE



Portrait of Reinhold Niebuhr by Hannah Strauss, original commission, 2017. A pensive Reinhold Niebuhr considers the scene before him, surrounded by iconic images from the Second World War. While referencing historical events, horrific locations, and the machinery of warfare, these images also suggest the focal points of Niebuhr's internal conflicts as he wrestled with his own theological and ethical conceptual dilemmas. Immediately behind Niebuhr is an amphibious assault, with warfighters disembarking a landing craft and wading toward a shoreline already engaged with the fire, smoke, and din of battle. Above him, bombers swarm in deadly formation. Below are rendered scenes depicting the hated guard towers and dreaded gate of Auschwitz-Birkenau and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan. Taken together, these scenes begin to describe the reach, the moral and political complexity, and the devastation of human conflict.

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A FAITH VOCATION: SKILLS & OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEACEMAKING

WAYNE A. SCHROEDER



Portrait of Sir Winston Churchill as a Young Man, Seated at his Desk, by Edwin Arthur Ward, circa 1900. Held in private collection. Source: Sotheby's, via Wikimedia Commons.

The United States is undergoing profound change in its moral, ethical, and spiritual climate. The gradual movement away from objective truth and toward what has become a more subjective understanding of right and wrong—post-modernism—is impacting our daily lives and our relationship to the state. One of the emerging challenges facing Christians living in this changing moral climate involves how to deal with these issues in what is known as “the public square.” Because changes

in our nation’s moral and ethical compass could have the potential to profoundly impact how we interact with other nations and lead world public opinion, an important, far-reaching dimension of this public policy challenge will be how to best address and positively influence national attitudes on matters related to peacemaking and statecraft.

For young American Christians aspiring to a vocation intersecting faith and public life, a career

in peacemaking and statecraft can afford the opportunity to positively influence US national attitudes in this area, if such aspirations are paired with proper training and certain cardinal virtues. By being engaged in peacemaking on a full-time basis, young men and women can help ensure that the foundational, abiding principles that have guided the Republic since its founding can be preserved, protected, and defended. This includes upholding the principle formulated in the Declaration

of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”¹

The foundational assumption of the Declaration is that governments are formed *by the consent of the governed*. President Abraham Lincoln reiterated this theme in his Gettysburg Address, underscoring the role of the people in democratic governance. America’s founding principles thus make it truly exceptional among nations. Democracy and self-governance are not upheld in many regions of the world, with up to one-third of the world’s population living in nations not considered truly free.² Peace in the Christian understanding is not simply the absence of violent conflict but rather the presence of shalom, comprehensive welfare extending in every direction. Peacemaking, and therefore statecraft and its constituent elements, will only approximately achieve its aims until Christ’s return. Nevertheless, peacemaking is a vocation in which one’s highest, biblically-grounded moral principles can be put to work to help expand the cause of freedom everywhere.

Therefore, it is reasonable that people of faith would offer their vocational energy to the problems found in an increasingly chaotic, disoriented, and violent world. More than that, as Christians, we are called to live in, steward, and help transform this world, as difficult and distasteful as it often can be.³ But as young Christians canvass the current international landscape, with all of its unending tragedies, it is tempting for them to

say “no, thank you” and to forego consideration of the field of foreign policy altogether. Such a decision would be a tragic mistake, for it would further deplete the field of one of its most essential assets—passionate people shaped by Divine love.

This is, in some ways, especially true for American Christians. Because the founding principles of our Republic are backed by unprecedented power and resources, if the cause of peace and freedom is to be advanced, it will rely heavily upon American leadership. The twin themes of American Exceptionalism and Peace through Strength are used frequently to conceptualize approaches for promoting US foreign policy and national security goals and objectives. Properly understood, these themes are entirely appropriate. However, it is imperative to realize that the ultimate aim of American power is closely connected to corollary, higher order themes of peace, human freedom, and self-governance—in the first degree for America but, in the second degree, for our international neighbors. This is not simply a matter of selfless, other-centered concern. Peace across the global landscape reverberates back to the order and peace in our own lands.

A central preoccupation, therefore, is in defining how the US uses its power and influence to advance the cause of peace and freedom throughout the world. Such usage is not automatic, and those involved must first be grounded in the arts and skills of peacemaking. Happily, one can develop and hone the abilities essential to convey and disseminate the moral underpinnings of US foreign and national security policies to a world frequently skeptical, and sometimes hostile, to US values

and interests. The dangerous corollary is that to whatever degree America abandons or fails to maintain its efficacy in the peacemaking playing field, we cede our role to others who may be less committed to, or simply do not share, our basic principles of freedom and self-governance.

But such responsibility has generally been amendable to the American disposition. Support for human freedom and the dignity of man has always been a core national value. The “greatest generation” that rose through the depression era to meet the challenges of World War II saw that much more than power politics, the setting of national borders, and the defeat or triumph of land, sea, and air forces was at stake in the civilizational struggle against fascism and militarism. Moral and ethical issues were on the line. Key foundational themes, grounded in the core Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian ideas that form the Western patrimony, underscored the moral and ethical dimension of the wartime struggle and were clearly laid out in the Atlantic Charter, Franklin Roosevelt’s “Four Freedoms,” and, yes, the charter of the United Nations. All underscored human freedom, self-governance and the dignity of man. Ultimately, this great mid-20th-century conflict would transcend the issues that immediately catalyzed the war-fighting and broach far deeper questions about what kind of a civilization the West would continue to be and what kinds of values, including those of democracy, tolerance, and fair play, it would convey to the rest of the world.

Such profound existential concerns continued to shape the context of those who entered

peacemaking work during the Cold War. With Western civilization having just endured the horrors of World War II and the Holocaust, silence and disengagement were clearly not options for the Western response to the rise of Soviet totalitarianism—not as human freedoms were subjugated behind the Iron Curtain, families were separated behind the Berlin Wall, and human dignity was savaged behind the wire in the Gulag Archipelago. Although vital US and Western interests were clearly at stake and defended by forward-looking and well-integrated foreign and defense policies, once again overarching moral and ethical principles formed the deeper underpinning of the Western response. This is seen in the decisive role played by US Presidents first containing, and then defeating, Soviet Communism.⁴

Sir Winston Churchill once advised, “it is bad for a nation when it is without faith.”⁵ More than this, if we have faith in the American system and its moral foundations, then we must also be willing to defend them. However, even in an increasingly complex and dangerous world torn by radical Islamist terrorism and rising powers that challenge rules-based international order, Americans are increasingly losing faith in our political system, values, and way of life, and consequently our continued willingness to defend them is increasingly in doubt. Ultimately, any loss of self-confidence in the founding principles in which our Republic is grounded could adversely impact our ability to lead the peace-loving world and embolden our adversaries to do so instead.

For all these reasons, young Christians—fortified by faith and hope—will find that their

talents, abilities, and outlook are needed now, more than ever, in the peacekeeping field. Therefore, they should not steer clear of its challenges, but *seek it as their calling* and set out to master the skills of the trade.

STEWARDSHIP OUR TALENTS IN A CAREER PATH

One clear dimension of our stewardship as Christians is how we use our God-given talents in our selection of a career path. God has given each of us of many gifts in terms of our individual talents and abilities—all of us have different sets of strengths in the “tool box” we’ve been gifted.

If we have a special talent or abiding interest in a peacemaking discipline, we should pursue it without hesitation. By finding, developing, and using our strongest gifts in the cause of peace, we use them to the glory of God on this earth. Those gifts should then be matured and developed to their fullest potential. Our talents will thus be directed toward making the world a better and safer place for people of all faith communities.

To plan for a career in peacemaking, we need to understand and master the skill sets that can help advance the cause of peace. After reviewing them, there will be some who will challenge that these skill sets can be used not only for peace but also for the conduct of war. It is undoubtedly, and unfortunately, a sad fact that during wartime such skill sets not only can be used for belligerence but must be used in that way. But, and this is crucial for understanding the nature of peacemaking, the moral commitment for the Christian mustn’t be that our skills, resources, and gifts are

never used in war. This is because warfighting too, when waging war meets certain moral requirements including having a just cause, can be a component part of the vocation of peacemaking, as the Christian intellectual tradition—primarily through just war casuistry—has long affirmed. The moral commitment, rather, is our gifts are never used to promote war without cause, to launch wars of aggression, or to bring conflict against the innocent. Rather, whether on the battlefield or off, our gifts must always be focused on the higher objective of securing as best an approximation of a true and durable peace among all nations.

With that conceptual introduction in hand, and before getting into the weeds of specific skill sets required of the peacemaker, let us turn to the vocational fields in which the peacemaker might labor.

International Affairs. Diplomacy and international relations are classic examples of Christian options for a career in peacemaking. Christ’s Sermon on the Mount implores us to seek peace, at all levels.⁶ Conflict prevention and resolution enables us to fulfill God’s greater will, and restore and sustain human life to its natural, peaceful condition (this, of course, assumes that the motivations of both parties toward peace are sincere and genuine). Diplomacy, international politics, international economic and business affairs, international development, global health affairs, and environmental affairs are strong career paths within this discipline. Humanitarian affairs, refugee affairs, and disaster relief are also of increasing importance, both for the US government and international organizations. Politico-military



The Signing of the Treaty of Ghent, Christmas Eve, 1814, by Amédée Forestier, 1914. Source: Smithsonian American Art Museum. One of the key negotiators for the treaty that ended the War of 1812, John Quincy Adams is pictured in the center.

affairs, including arms control and weapons proliferation, are also options for those with interests in broader security-related issue sets.

Organizational options include the US Department of State and its Foreign Service, the United Nations, other international governmental organizations, and international non-governmental organizations. Additionally, there are international departments within most multinational corporations where many of these skills sets can be put into practice.

National Security. At its highest level, through assisting nations to secure peace and maintain a defense posture of peace through strength, the field

of national security is wholly acceptable to Christians considering a career in peacemaking. Many Christian men and women have entered national security, whether directly into the military or in a defense-related civilian profession in government or industry. Many Christians who enter the discipline have been able to make seminal contributions to the cause of peace.

This discipline requires a somewhat different talent set than that of international affairs, although there are overlaps. National security requires an interest in and understanding of the military, its culture and organization, and an understanding of defense technologies and concepts. Nevertheless, it demands a keen understanding

of world affairs, especially regional affairs, as our military and defense professionals must engage with other militaries and defense officials throughout the world. There are also great opportunities for those with proficiencies in defense finance, technology, acquisition, and contracting. Pursuing this calling requires advanced abilities to understand the relationships and synergies between and among these varied disciplines.

The complexity and multi-disciplinary nature of national security makes it an excellent avenue for individuals with particular strengths and interests across diverse skill sets. Indeed, the technological dimension requires one to stay abreast of



science and technology developments throughout one's career—it's essential to learn and grow as new technologies emerge on the defense landscape that can disrupt the military balance of power. Cyber defense and information assurance will be resident within the national security community for decades, but the younger generation should also focus on technology pertaining to aerial, naval, and land weapons systems, and weapons of mass destruction.

There are opportunities in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments (Army, Navy, and Air Force), Federally-Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs), the war colleges of the Military Services,

public policy think tanks, and the defense institutions of the US Congress. There are also opportunities in the private-sector defense industry, both with major aerospace and defense contractors and with the smaller systems engineering, technical assistance and advisory, and analysis communities.

Intelligence. The Intelligence Community (IC) is yet another discipline where a young Christian can answer a call in the field of peacemaking. While professionals in the fields of international affairs and national security interface with issues of public policy, intelligence professionals play a more supportive role. As an executive order from the Reagan Administration on US intelligence activities advised, the purpose of intelligence is to develop timely information concerning the "capabilities, intentions and activities of foreign powers, organizations, or persons and their agents" that is "essential to informed decision-making in the areas of national defense and foreign relations."⁷

As in the national security field, a key decision juncture involves the specific kind of intelligence career path. There are rewarding career opportunities throughout the Intelligence Community, cutting across a wide range of analytical, scientific, and technical disciplines.⁸ There are sixteen organizations within the IC from which to consider a career path, including the CIA, NSA, DIA, FBI, DEA, INR, DHS, Treasury Department, and the Military Services. There are also opportunities with private contractors supporting the work of the IC.

MASTERING KEY SKILLS

Within the parameters of each

these three peacemaking disciplines, there is ample opportunity for young Christians to explore the possibilities of a peacemaking career and find the right match for one's individual skill set. In preparing for a such a career, young men and women should devote special attention to advancing their capabilities in three areas: writing, knowledge in one's discipline, and history. When offering vocational counsel to such young people, this is what I say to them:

- **Writing.** An absolutely critical skill to develop, writing will allow you to convey concepts and ideas in an understandable, logical, and persuasive way in your chosen discipline. Continue to take writing courses in college, even beyond basic requirements. Master your own language and continue to work at improving your communication skills all throughout your career.
- **Cross cultural literacy.** Additionally, beyond being able to communicate in English, an understanding of a foreign language will enable you to better comprehend foreign cultures, societies, and political systems and to communicate cross-culturally. To do this well, exposure to and curiosity about other cultures is invaluable. If you're a Christian in the peacemaking field, you are already cognizant about how faith commitments can shape worldviews and political outlooks. Being able to recognize how faith grounds the beliefs and actions of other nations,

both allied and adversarial, is often critical to effective communication.

- **Knowledge in your own discipline.** Stay current in your chosen discipline. Master it. To do that, you must continue to read widely in that discipline—and never stop reading. Don't think your knowledge as a second-year graduate student will suffice to take you all the way through your career. Read constantly, and stay open to reading works from all points of view. Develop your own home library of works directly related to your field of specialization. Whenever possible, cultivate relationships with important thinkers in your field and utilize them. Seek advice, never be afraid of what you don't know, ask questions, and know to whom to go to find answers
- **History.** Much has been written about the failure of the US educational system to effectively educate students generally in the field of history.⁹ How can one truly understand the present without understanding the past? Make every effort to expand your knowledge of the history of your chosen discipline. Look at history holistically. Do not be afraid of chronologies, geographies, or biographies related to your subject matter expertise.

The 21st-century international problem set is much more complex than that which faced world leaders throughout the 20th century. Staying current in one's chosen discipline is absolutely critical to mastering

rapid-paced changes in today's world. Success will require not only knowledge and subject matter expertise, but also wise judgment, effective resource planning, and sound decision-making.

LIVES OF VIRTUE

Peacemaking has always underscored certain basic themes to connect our public policy with our values and ideals. These include a love of justice, fealty to the truth, and a respect of basic human rights as exemplified by being principled, developing greater empathy and comprehension of others, striving with perseverance, and maintaining good will—cardinal values to foster and maintain peace. A review of the biographies of several great world leaders will help showcase how these virtues can be a beacon for us to follow.

John Quincy Adams was one of the most gifted individuals ever to become President of the United States. In one sense, his whole life had been a preparation for the presidency. The son of the second US president, John Adams, "John Quincy" served his country as minister to The Hague, England, and Russia, a US Senator, and as Secretary of State. Adams is acknowledged as the primary author of the Monroe Doctrine, which established the principle of nonintervention by the European colonial powers in the affairs of the Western Hemisphere.

Despite his eminent qualifications and extensive experience on both the US and international stage, John Quincy's presidency is seen as largely ineffective. It was marked from the start by the determined opposition from what was to become the Jacksonian wing of the

early-19th-century Democratic Party, still smarting from what it deemed the "corrupt bargain" of the 1824 election. Defeated for reelection by Jackson in 1828, Adams' real service to the nation was only just beginning.

John Quincy soon returned to public service in 1831, this time in the US House of Representatives. There he immediately took the principled lead in the House on a critical moral issue: opposition to slavery, and in particular, the "Gag Rule" in the House of Representatives, which forbade raising the discussion of the abolition of slavery and the slave trade within the District of Columbia. He later opposed US annexation of Texas as upending the free v. slave state balance, and also firmly stood in opposition to the Mexican War.

Adams always held fast to the cardinal value of *principle over expediency*—even in what was for him a decidedly smaller station in life than the presidency. Adams exemplified the traits of determination, patience, and courage in seeking policy changes in the midst of vehement opposition and rebuke from opponents. Young Americans pondering a career calling in peacemaking would do well to study and learn from the career of our sixth president.¹⁰

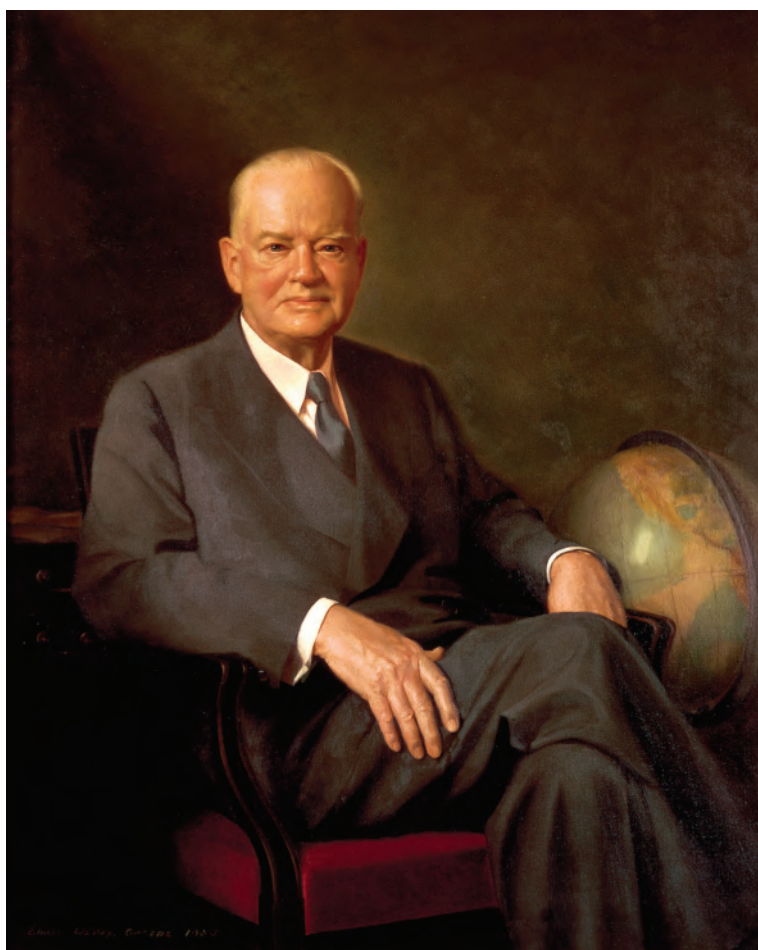
Herbert Hoover is one of most maligned US Presidents, suffering historically for serving in office during the start of the Great Depression. A stalwart proponent of economy and efficiency in government, Hoover's legacy is somewhat mixed on the international front. For while he had a reputation of being an advocate of capitalism and staunch opponent of socialism and Soviet Communism, he also held decidedly non-interventionist

views concerning the political scene in pre-World War II Europe and how best to deal with the probability that the democracies would once again have to go to war with Germany.

Whatever our views on Hoover, it is abundantly clear that he lived a life that promoted peace, justice, and the relief of human suffering. Hoover earned the title “Great Humanitarian,” due to his extensive relief efforts during and immediately after World War I, including leading the Commission for the Relief of Belgium (1914-17) and the US Food Administration (1917-18). Following the war, he led the American Relief Administration, where his efforts focused on organizing food relief for Central Europe. His post-war efforts also included food relief for Bolshevik-occupied portions of Russia. One cannot read a Hoover biography without capturing his abiding hatred of war and its profoundly negative impact on society, and its tragic human and economic consequences.

Hoover saw the costs of war as including not only the direct cost of the conflict, but also its profoundly negative economic byproducts. The cost of the Great War also included enormous economic and financial dislocations from:

- The loss of human capital caused by the deaths of millions;
- Assumption of large national wartime taxation and debt;
- The attempted liquidation of war debt through wartime and post-war currency inflation;
- Postwar gold drains and repudiation of war debts; and



Official Presidential Portrait of Herbert Hoover, by Elmer Wesley Greene, 1956. White House. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

- The inevitable social and cultural instabilities these events had on the self-confidence of the peoples of Europe and the US.

During and after his presidency, Hoover continued to make a compelling case that the real cause of the worldwide Great Depression was not simply stock market speculation originating in America, but the accumulated, cascading effect that these gross economic insults had upon all of the countries that participated in the Great War.

For Hoover, it was critical to *comprehend the big picture* and see the deeper societal and economic consequences of war, not just its military and political consequences. As an eyewitness

to the destruction of Europe after both world wars, the resultant loss of tens of millions of human lives, and the waste of economic resources, Hoover understood the deep impact war had on culture and society—and its legacy in giving rise to Nazism, Fascism, Socialism, and Communism in Europe after World War I. Even the just warrior knows that war is always tragedy, even when it must be waged to avoid a greater tragedy.

Winston Churchill appeared to be permanently out of political power in Great Britain at the age of 55, on the occasion of the Labour Party's victory in 1929. Even with his Conservatives' return to power in 1935, Churchill's outlook

for a leadership role looked improbable.

The former Home Secretary, First Lord of the Admiralty, Secretary of State for War and for Air, and Chancellor of the Exchequer had far more experience and knowledge of the European scene than any of his Conservative contemporaries. But he also took a far different view on the threat posed to Europe by German Nazism and its aggressive rearmament program than did Conservative leaders Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain. Excluded from Conservative cabinets from 1935-39, and with little hope of returning to national prominence, Churchill continued on in what became known as his “wilderness years.”¹¹

Rather than be silenced, Churchill doubled down on his craft, mastering the intricacies of defense and foreign policies. He stayed current on the scope and pace of German rearmament through an excellent network of international and British government and press contacts. He argued forcefully for stronger air, land, and naval forces, and especially for the adoption of new air defense technologies. Churchill’s mastery of the details of the European scene led him to a difficult but inevitable conclusion: Britain had no choice but to contest the Nazi’s rearmament program and prepare for a potential second conflict with Germany. Few would listen. But Churchill would *persevere and never give in*.

War broke out in Europe in September 1939. Chamberlain finally relented and asked Churchill to serve as First Lord of the Admiralty, a role in which he had served in during World War I. With the fall of Norway

and France, Churchill went on to become the Prime Minister and led his country to victory during World War II. These character traits stood Churchill in good stead once he became Prime Minister. Churchill’s leadership was instrumental in helping save Western civilization from the brute force of Nazi tyranny. His six-volume history of the World War II provides his legacy on the history and lessons of the conflict for future generations. In it, Churchill offered the following moral for mankind to follow: “In War, Resolution; In Defeat, Defiance; In Victory, Magnanimity; *In Peace, Good Will*.”¹²

LESSONS FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

Devoted and dedicated young Christians, firmly grounded in the moral and ethical foundations of their faith, can provide an able service to mankind by seeking out the noble calling of peacemaking. By maintaining a strong value system for engaging in peacemaking, we will act from our highest moral principles, supporting key virtues such as humanity, integrity, transparency, and reciprocity in our dealings with other nations. And in doing so, we will also fulfill the great Christian command—to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. P

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Aeronautics and Astronautics, and a member of the US Naval Institute, the Economics of National Security Association, and the Intercollegiate Studies Institute.

(Endnotes)

1 Declaration of Independence in Congress, July 4, 1776.

2 See Freedom House. freedomhouse.org/about-us

3 A sad witness to the distasteful aspects of today’s world was recently captured in the photograph of the bloodied Syrian boy, Omran Daqneesh, sitting in an ambulance in Aleppo after being rescued from the destruction of a Syrian airstrike. It starkly emphasized the human cost, destructiveness, and waste of war when waged against the innocent.

4 For an excellent review of the role of US Presidents Truman, Kennedy and Reagan during the Cold War, see: Anders Fogh Rasmussen, *The Will to Lead: America’s Indispensable Role in the Global Fight for Freedom* (New York, NY: Broadside Books, 2016). For an exceptional exposition on the role of world leadership, see Richard Nixon, *Leaders* (New York: Warner Books, 1982).

5 Winston Churchill. (n.d.). AZQuotes.com. Retrieved October 27, 2016, from AZQuotes.com Web site: <http://www.azquotes.com/quote/1395241>. See also James C. Hume, *Nixon’s Ten Commandments of Statecraft* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1997), p. 159.

6 Matthew 5:9, “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”

7 Executive Order 12333 of December 4, 1981, *United States Intelligence Activities*, Part 2, Conduct of Intelligence Activities, Sec. 2.1, Need.

8 Human Intelligence, Signals Intelligence, Imagery Intelligence, Measurement and Signature Intelligence, Electronic Intelligence, and Communications Intelligence.

9 For the views of popular US historian, David McCullough, see: Daniel Lattier, “David McCullough on What’s Wrong with History Education Today”, *Intellectual Takeout*. intellectualtakeout.org/blog/.

10 For an excellent book on the life of our sixth President, see: Harlow Giles Unger, *John Quincy Adams*, (Boston, MA: Da Capo Press, 2012).

11 Martin Gilbert, *Winston Churchill: The Wilderness Years*, (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1981). American edition.

12 See Winston S. Churchill, *The Gathering Storm* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1948). emphasis added.

The question is not whether humans merely have these two capacities, “reflection” and “choice.” If they didn’t, there would be no point in proceeding with public debates, arguments in journals and pamphlets, and long deliberations. The question is whether these observed capacities are strong enough for the great social task of forming governments.

Since no other earthly creature except human beings acts from these two capacities, reflection and choice are nature’s testimony to human destiny. To live according to reflection and choice is, therefore, the law of nature. It is also the law of God. Since both nature and God command humans to exercise their liberty, it follows that humans must have a natural right to liberty. Without such a right, they could not obey either the law of their own nature or the law of God. Further, since to be free is to incur responsibility for one’s own deliberate choices, no one can hand off his liberty to others: liberty is not alienable.

To violate a person’s natural liberty is, therefore, to deface, deform, and frustrate the laws of nature and nature’s God. It is both a sin against justice that cries out to heaven and a crime indictable before the tribunal of humankind. In religious terms generic enough not to be limited to Christians solely, Jefferson wrote: “The God who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time.” It is a self-evident step from this conviction to the phrase of the Declaration, “endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.”

In memoriam, Michael Novak (1933-2017)

Reflections on Federalist No. 1, in *On Two Wings: Humble Faith and Common Sense at the American Founding*



DOMINION /də'minyən (IS NOT)
DOMINATION /dəmə'nāSH(ə)n/

“Let us make mankind in our image; and let them have dominion over all the earth...” Called to share the Divine likeness, human beings were made to exercise rule in the form of dominion: delegated, providential care—responsibility—for the conditions of history, in history. Such care is characterized by other-centered acts of self-donation. This contrasts sharply with domination. Since the Fall in the Garden of Eden, human beings have been afflicted by the *libido dominandi*—we have been ruled by the lust to rule. Domination is characterized by self-centered acts of other-donation that feed our hunger for power, advantage, and glory through the forced submission of the powerless to our will.

The political-theological patrimony of the Christian intellectual tradition, including just war casuistry, helps guide human beings back to the just exercise of our governing vocation. In our private and public lives, including through the work of government, human dominion is approximate, limited, and imperfect. Following after God’s work of creating, sustaining, and liberating all of creation, human beings exercise power with the aim of peace, characterized by the presence of justice and order as oriented toward genuine human flourishing.
