

MARKETS AND MISSILES ARE NOT ENOUGH

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When I first arrived at The Heritage Foundation in 1987, I was greeted with great skepticism by many who worked there. The D.C. conservative think-tank had chosen me to be in the first “class” of professors who were plucked from academia to spend upwards of a year as a Bradley Resident Scholar; we would spend time writing and establishing contacts with Washington notables. I was welcomed but only lukewarmly, and that is because I was a sociologist who focused on social and cultural issues.

The reason for the cool reception had to do with what The Heritage Foundation does: it is a serious place for specialists to concentrate on public policy matters and foreign policy issues. There was a place down the block, the Free Congress Foundation, that addressed the issues I pursued. Hence, the question: Why was I chosen to be at Heritage?

I was chosen precisely because some top officials at Heritage wanted to broaden its perspective: they did not want Free Congress to have a monopoly on social issues. (Ed Feulner and the late Paul Weyrich founded Heritage in 1973; there was an amicable split when Weyrich wanted to go beyond the economic and international issues, which explains why he founded Free Congress.)

The bias that I had to overcome came from those whose definition of conservatism did not include social issues. I had just published my first book, *The Politics of the American Civil Liberties Union*, and I was seen as a threat to their limited understanding of conservatism. More than that, they were mostly libertarians, persons whose animus against

government was so hostile that it precluded any discussion on the role of the state in promoting traditional values.

To libertarians, and to many conservatives, all that matters are markets and missiles. To be sure, I support a market economy (state-run socialism is a disaster), and I certainly support a strong national defense. But besides markets and missiles, there is a third “M” that they ignore: morality.

Two “M” conservatives suffer from myopia: they do not appreciate the role that morality plays in the making of the good society. To be exact, a market economy depends on morality: a well-educated workforce and a strong work ethic constitute the social capital that allows for economic growth; it cannot be realized without a vibrant moral order. Citizenship, as Aristotle and Aquinas understood, depends on virtue, which, in turn, is dependent on a vibrant moral order; if citizenship is not nurtured, a nation’s people may not want to risk their lives in defense of liberty.

Of course, morality plays a role that transcends its contributions to markets and missiles. Self-destructive behavior and anti-social behavior—drugs and street crime are two quick examples—tear at the social fabric, jeopardizing freedom. A self-governing society, one that seeks to keep the government at bay, is dependent on self-governing individuals; this is not possible without the third “M.”

Morality, of course, is the very stuff of religion. Tocqueville agreed, noting further that religion was the cradle of democracy. Which begs the question: If religion is so indispensable to a free society, why is it under attack?

As you can see from this issue of *Catalyst*, we spent Holy Week this year defending religious liberty. We had to defend it because of the dishonest and malicious effort to paint Christians as anti-gay bigots. It is not a healthy sign when those who reject gay marriage (which up until yesterday was

nearly everyone) are called bigots by our elites. It is even worse when the business community turns on us.

The push for gay rights, like virtually all ideological movements, began in the academy. It moved quickly from higher education to the media, the entertainment industry, the publishing world, and to segments of the clergy. Those are the traditional homes where liberal ideas are fermented.

What is different about the gay rights movement—what makes it different from most other social causes—is the extent to which corporate America got on board.

The war on Indiana, for simply entertaining a religious liberty law (which was hardly unique), was unseemly. When corporations from Wal-Mart to Wall Street sign on, it is not a good sign. Not only has our cultural elite abandoned us, so has our economic elite.

We can cave or fight. There is no mythical “third way.” Yes, we need to respect gay rights, but we must do more than respect religious rights—we must trumpet them. The First Amendment guarantees religious rights, but nowhere in the Constitution are gay rights mentioned, making it ludicrous to maintain that in a showdown between these two rights that gay rights should typically prevail. A free society that does not protect gay rights may be defective, but if it does not protect religious rights it is doomed.

Markets and missiles are not enough. We need markets, missiles, and morality. Those who call themselves conservatives but do not want to conserve the traditional values that constitute our Judeo-Christian heritage are more than myopic: they are working against the moral foundations of a free society.

Unless we challenge our elites, including our corporate elites, the prospects for liberty are inauspicious.