



please remember that our position on this is to honor the law and presume the best of our lawmakers, even in things about which we disagree – to the point of defacing the gospel. There will very likely come a day in our world where Christians are asked to dishonor Christ – which we cannot do. But until that day, we seek to honor Christ by honoring the laws of our land.

**Church of the Week:** Let's keep the Pastors John Slider and Will Slider and the Breckenridge Chapel Free Methodist Church in Louisville in our prayers this week.

### **Conference / Superintendent's Calendar** (all times eastern; in-person schedule subject to COVID restrictions)

August 18:	Daryl interview with potential new refugee congregation, Lexington
August 25:	Daryl interview with potential new congregation in middle Tennessee
August 28:	District Leader dinner with Bishop Cowart, WFMC, 4:30p
August 28:	NSC BOA meeting – Wilmore, 6:00p (Superintendent Search Team)
August 29	Breakfast meeting with Adam Teacher – Wilmore, 8:45a
August 29:	NSC Adjourned Sitting / Ordination – Wilmore, 10:00a
September 10:	DL Zoom, 9:30a
September 11-13:	NSC Family Camp – pending restrictions
September 23-25:	New Room Conference, Nashville, TN
October 2-3:	Mustering of the Men – Eagle Ridge Retreat Center
October 6-8:	Global Overseer's Team, Indianapolis
October 16:	DL Meeting – Wilmore, 2:00p
October 16:	BOA Meeting – Wilmore, 6:00p
October 17:	MEG / MAC Meeting – Wilmore, 8:00a
November 12:	DL Zoom, 9:30a
December 10:	DL Zoom, 9:30a
March 19:	DL Meeting – Wilmore, 2:00p
March 19:	BOA Meeting – Wilmore, 6:00p
March 20:	MEG/MAC – Wilmore, 8:00a
June 17-20:	NSC Family Camp – Eagle Ridge (tentative dates)

And now...

### -----The Important-----

#### **Resources**

- 1) Free Methodist Chaplains' Newsletter** – This is a new effort from the new Chaplaincy Directors – [click here to check it out.](#)
- 2) Why I Am Not A Liberal** – a great article (although it may not be exactly what you think) by Ryszard Legutko, professor of philosophy at Jagiellonian University in Kraków, is attached. It's well worth reading.
- 3) Wesley Biblical Seminary - Wesley Institute** WBS offers a lay-Bible program, the Wesley Institute, designed to take churches and people through the entire Bible. [Click here for the information on WBS's website.](#) If you have questions, please contact our own Dave Schreiner at dschreiner@wbs.edu.

#### **Job Openings**

At this point, we have three churches who need pastors:

Greenville (TN)

Bowen (KY)

Harriman (TN)

Please keep this process in your prayers – that the Lord would provide shepherds for His flock.

Remember too that [if you click here](#), you will find job opening listings at FMC Human Resources.

## August Birthdays (\*that we know of)

Ed Bryson, August 27

\*I would love to know the birthdays of all those related to the NSC who receive this communique – pastors, elders, delegates, special friends, etc. Please send month and day to Timothy at [newsouthconference@gmail.com](mailto:newsouthconference@gmail.com)

## This Week's Passage, Quote and Joke

**Passage:** My message this Sunday continues the study of Jude and focuses on Jude's prescription for contending for the faith – how to do that in difficult days, and specifically, how to handle those persons who are challenging our faith as per Jude 22 and 23.

**Quote:** “And first let us inquire, What is salvation? The salvation which is here spoken of is not what is frequently understood by that word, the going to heaven, eternal happiness. It is not the soul's going to paradise, termed by our Lord, 'Abraham's bosom.' It is not a blessing which lies on the other side death, or (as we usually speak) in the other world. The very words of the text itself put this beyond all question. 'Ye are saved.' It is not something at a distance: it is a present thing, a blessing which, through the free mercy of God, ye are now in possession of. Nay, the words may be rendered, and that with equal propriety, 'Ye have been saved.' So that the salvation which is here spoken of might be extended to the entire work of God, from the first dawning of grace in the soul till it is consummated in glory.” ~ John Wesley

## Joke:



Blessings on your worship this weekend!

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# FIRST THINGS

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## WHY I AM NOT A LIBERAL

by  
*Ryszard Legutko*  
March 2020

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I never called myself a liberal. For a long time, however, I considered liberalism a sound theory that, whatever its weaknesses, was committed to freedom of discussion, pluralism, and a general attitude of respect for the beliefs of one's fellow citizens, even when they are wrongheaded. But I don't call liberalism a sound theory anymore. Nor do I think it stands for freedom and pluralism.

Liberalism has come to have two faces. The first face is a specific political and philosophical doctrine. You can read John Locke, for example, or Benjamin Constant, or John Stuart Mill. Their visions of man in society entail a variety of presuppositions, and like any other theoretical conception, they may become objects of criticism.

The second face is that of a super-theory, a comprehensive and obligatory way of thinking that is enforced in modern society as the best regulator of human diversity and the only sure guarantee of freedom. We, and only we, can and should take over—the liberals say—because we will establish the best rules of cooperation and the most efficient system for the distribution of freedom. Anyone who says otherwise is a fascist or potential fascist. Karl Popper set up this all-or-nothing choice in *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. Isaiah Berlin implies the same in his widely read essay, "[Two Concepts of Liberty](#)."

These two faces—one proposing a set of political ideas, the other insisting that because of its unique inclusiveness and openness, only liberalism can be the basis for a just society—have fused. Liberalism as a specific political doctrine, one of many, identifies itself with liberalism as a super-theory and imposes itself on modern society as obligatory and above discussion.

Attempts to deprive liberalism of its imperial bent, that is, to return to the situation in which liberal ideas could be discussed alongside others as a basis for political judgments (as in John Rawls's turn to political liberalism), have failed. And it does not matter whether liberalism is social-democratic or market-oriented or even anarcho-libertarian. In its contemporary versions, the liberal proposition has become the liberal ideology that describes any deviation as "illiberal," a synonym for illicit.

Here is how the slide from theory to ideology happens. Liberalism's ideal is a society in which there is room for every human desire and life plan, in which all occupations and aspirations are allowed, in which those practicing various religions and those practicing no religion coexist, in which all groups, associations, parties, and clubs may peacefully pursue their goals, provided they do not impose their views on others. It is a society in which there are Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, atheists, heterosexuals, homosexuals, innumerable genders, people of all nationalities or ethnic extractions, conservatives, liberals, socialists, anarchists, communists, pornographers, priests, hedonists, and moral ascetics, all respecting the common rules.

In practice, we never achieve this ideal—the liberals allow—but we should go as far in its direction as possible. The goal of public life is to achieve maximum freedom for people to "be themselves." Existing societies are remote from this model. Therefore, liberalism and its ideal of maximal affirmation of diversity requires that those who have been disadvantaged receive more free space. Old boundaries and limits must be removed. Meanwhile, those who have been privileged must have some space taken away from them so that they can no longer dominate.

To achieve this expansion of freedom, a form of social engineering is required. Some groups, individuals, opinions, and practices must be promoted, others demoted. It becomes necessary to champion women and blacks and to criticize white men and their "patriarchal" institutions, to restrain Christianity from cultural dominance, and to open public space for Muslim communities. These projects require a certain degree of coercion, or at least energetic persuasion, which is usually directed against entrenched ways of life, allegedly anachronistic beliefs, traditional divisions, supposedly sacrosanct norms, and so forth.

In this work of what might be called cultural affirmative action, government as well as the institutions of civil society launch intensive educational programs, preferably starting as early as possible—in

kindergarten, for instance. A particular emphasis falls on the language used (pronouns!) but there is also a concern that children should read only the proper books, see the correct films, and play suitable games. Everything inculcates the sentiments of “openness” that the liberal super-theory insists will bring the advent of a new and freer society. There should be new standards of writing, so inclusive that no one will feel estranged. But sadly, there are those who refuse to go along. Laws must be crafted to ensure their compliance—coercion, true, but for the sake of freedom! And if compliance cannot be compelled, those who will not adopt the new sentiments of openness must be exiled to the margins, where they will not hinder the progress of freedom.

Admittedly, such a transformation may be painful. But, its advocates say, sacrifices must be made if we are to establish a just society. The history of mankind is a history of discrimination—by white races against black, men against women, Europeans against non-Europeans, heterosexuals against homosexuals. The counterforces impeding progress are legion: sexism, racism, homophobia, and many others. All of them must be monitored and eliminated. To this end, the friends of freedom should employ all the instruments at their disposal, from legal punishment to social ostracism, from education to browbeating. The enemies of the needed transformation do not deserve compassion.

This description sounds like a caricature, but it is not. As an example, let us take the new concept of marriage. It is said to be an important sign of progress that marriage is no longer defined as the union of one man and one woman. Allowing anyone to marry anyone without regard to sex is far more “inclusive.” This revolutionary change has met with opposition from various groups, who make many good arguments—biological, moral, historical, theological. But this is of no help. Opposition is met with force, not counterargument.

Governments, courts, and interest groups employ strong, even brutal means. The notion of marriage and family based on the union of two sexes—until recently regarded as the strongest pillar of the social order—is now called “traditional.” The implication is that such ideas are on their way to oblivion. Marriage has changed, as one liberal scholar puts it, from “procreational” to “relational.” This change, we are told, has come about because “traditional” marriage has been an oppressive institution, full of domestic violence, husbands raping wives and daughters, and women trampled by the patriarchy.

Legal regulations connected with the new approach are strict. No one may fail to recognize two men or two women as “married.” The institutions that disagree are punished; dissenters are ostracized; Orwellian spectacles are staged to bully potential objectors. Adoption agencies that resist are dismantled; priests and pastors loyal to their callings are threatened with lawsuits and sometimes taken to court. A propaganda machine supported by big corporations reprograms people’s minds, starting with children in kindergarten and even earlier. Institutions and moral systems that question the change are vilified. Twitter mobs hunt for heretics. The few individuals who dare to say “no” often lose their jobs and become objects of verbal, even physical abuse.

These and similar processes have a debilitating effect on people’s minds, because they destroy language and reverse the meanings of basic concepts. Liberalism from the very beginning presented itself as the champion of liberty, pluralism, tolerance, and diversity, and the enemy of discrimination, intolerance, and exclusion. This etymological trick—the root *libertas* is Latin for “freedom”—works perfectly.

Encyclopedias, handbooks, and political and historical treatises take it for granted that liberalism and freedom go hand in hand. Even our everyday language reflects this assumption. When someone says that a person takes “a liberal approach” or that a law has been “liberalized,” he is taken to indicate an expansion of freedom—despite the fact that the “liberal” West is increasingly homogeneous, characterized by the groupthink of mass culture, and dominated by a technocratic elite.

But reality does not matter. All actions described in liberal jargon are automatically understood as promoting freedom and overcoming discrimination. No matter how brutal the actions are, no matter how much they violate consciences, hinder free inquiry and free debate, and humiliate people, they are proclaimed to serve the cause of freedom.

Some have had doubts about the liberal super-theory. They explain them away by convincing themselves that bad things happen not because of liberalism but in spite of it. They blame progressivism, postmodernism, and some other “-ism.” How can liberalism hinder liberty? By definition, it’s impossible.

**I**t is telling that establishment liberals who protest that our harsh regime of political correctness has nothing to do with liberalism never take measures to reverse recent trends. They rarely criticize these trends in public, afraid to end up “on the wrong side of history.” In truth, the so-called liberals invariably join the chorus that condemns as bigots, reactionaries, and fascists those who resist “inclusion.” This way

of talking is not confined to university radicals. It is the idiom in which the most staid and conventional liberals now talk about their political opponents.

We have become so accustomed to this rhetoric that we fail to notice how it warps the meanings of the words we use. Previously, appeals to pluralism, diversity, tolerance, and openness were employed to soften the relations among people and temper the strictness of our political and moral order. (There were, of course, exceptions to this, such as Voltaire's *Treatise on Toleration*, which was more an anti-Catholic diatribe than a plea to live and let live.) These notions provided shelter for those who were dominated by others. Today, the same words are instruments of liberal social engineering and ideological sticks with which to beat opponents. Their meanings have been inverted.

Pluralism means monopoly; diversity, conformity; tolerance, censorship; and openness, ideological rigidity. In practically all institutions, private and public, in schools and corporations, there are offices of diversity, and all are gruesome ideological agencies, spreading fear and imposing conformity, not unlike their inglorious predecessors in the communist regimes. Those who preach "pluralism" insist upon a monoculture in which everyone must be a "pluralist." The "open society" means that what came before must be jettisoned and those who hang on must be condemned as moral criminals.

In this corrupted language, pluralism signifies not a variety of opinions but the dominance of liberalism. Thus, the ultimate implementation of pluralism will be the absolute triumph of liberalism, and the absolute triumph of liberalism will be the ultimate implementation of pluralism. It will be a society in which everyone will be a liberal and thus by definition a pluralist. Absolute pluralism will be the absolute monopoly of one ideology. The world will be safe for pluralism only when a unanimous affirmation of pluralism prevails and all other opinions about it are silenced.

This absurd conclusion is not a quip or a quibble. It is, unfortunately, becoming a fact. There are European countries in which the media are mono-ideological. But as long as the ruling ideology is liberalism, the absence of non-liberal platforms does not concern the European Union, the Council of Europe, the European and national courts, or influential NGOs. On the contrary, the narrowing of ideological options—the monism of pluralism—is generally regarded as a natural and positive state of affairs. The end-of-history consolidation of all opinion into liberalism is to be emulated by those who are lagging behind. Societies in which non-liberal opinions find strong expression and even dare to influence public affairs are

denounced as “illiberal.” In my country, we are fortunate to have more freedom of speech and more freedom of the press than any other E.U. member, and the mechanisms of parliamentary democracy function well. But this is precisely what the European institutions find disconcerting. Unless we are uniformly dominated at every level by liberalism, Poland is deemed at risk of backsliding into tyranny.

It is generally considered anomalous that in some places the liberal monopoly has not yet been achieved—or, what is worse, that somewhere it might be jeopardized. The liberal super-theory adopts a version of the Brezhnev Doctrine: Any threat to liberal dominance anywhere is a threat to liberalism everywhere, justifying immediate and forceful intervention by any means necessary. Fire is directed at countries such as Poland, where the unanimity of the media has eroded and a genuine pluralism of opinion exists along a wide spectrum from left to right. For the ruling liberal orthodoxy, this is bad pluralism and needs to be abolished. Lost territory must be reconquered.

The monopoly of the liberal super-theory sustains itself by identifying ever-new enemies of freedom. The monopoly cannot survive without mobilizing its functionaries to fight what Orwell called thought crimes. Today’s thought crimes are many: sexism, racism, Islamophobia, binarism, misogyny, homophobia, eurocentrism, and ageism, to name a few. I find myself impressed by the number. It is larger than the number of thought crimes that existed in the communist system, which was, one might have thought, unsurpassable in its determination to find the enemies and destroy them. But liberalism has surpassed it.

Today’s dense system of taboos has created an unpleasant environment for the thinking person. In a world of mandatory pluralism and compulsory inclusion, the mind cannot roam, engaging ideas freely out of sheer curiosity. Jordan Peterson gets reprimanded for entertaining the thought that men and women are different. The prudent strategy in this environment is to avoid ideological booby traps. All of them are deadly. This means not saying out loud what you are thinking, a policy of self-policing familiar to anyone who has lived under a totalitarian regime.

**W**hy is there so little resistance to the mendacity that surrounds us? For one thing, liberalism’s dominance has diminished our moral imaginations. In the main, liberalism teaches us that freedom requires being unhindered in the project of becoming whoever and whatever we want. This view has a corollary: the minimalist conception of the human self. If we wish to promote a truly liberal society, we should refrain from ascribing too much to human nature. We must forswear appeals to natural law, for

such concepts put limits on what and who we can become. More broadly, historical, communal, or metaphysical dimensions need to be downplayed or repudiated. It is for the rights-bearing individual to decide what truth, if any, he will take as his own. In this way, the liberal ideal of freedom, if put in practice by a society in a thoroughgoing way as the liberal super-theory requires, erodes the substantive basis for moral and political analysis. The perfectly liberal society is a thoughtless society.

In the first book of his *Politics*, Aristotle distinguishes between the master and the slave. The slave, says Aristotle, is one who obeys others because he is incapable either to set for himself any ambitious aims or to select the right means to accomplish his aims. The slave is obedient not so much because he is forced to obey, but because his weak moral constitution requires him to depend on others. The free man, by contrast, is not necessarily someone who rules others, but someone who rules himself. He has acquired the skills and aptitudes necessary for self-command, such as courage, justice, resolution, fortitude, magnanimity, and self-control.

Aristotle's distinction is moral and anthropological in nature and has little to do with the endorsement of the institution of slavery as it existed in his time. The fact that a man owned slaves did not make him a free man in the Aristotelian sense; the fact that a man was a slave did not mean he could not be a free man in the moral sense. St. Paul assumes a version of this classical view of freedom when he urges Christians who are slaves to obey their earthly masters, not fearing them, but rather obeying them in love of the Lord. "Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men" (Col. 3:23). The Christian ideal of faithful obedience to Christ differs from Aristotle's notion of the virtuous Athenian. Nevertheless, both Aristotle and Paul see that freedom requires becoming a person capable of self-command rather than commanded by his instincts, desires, fears, impulses, and whims.

The rights-bearing individual is not a free man in the classical sense. He is the opposite, for his freedom must be indeterminate—the freedom to become anything he wants to be. The problem is that there is not much in him, and therefore the promise of the infinite possibilities that lie before him is vacuous. Despite occasional associations with remnants of the old views, the concept of the rights-bearing individual no longer denotes anything concrete. But the whole point of the classical view is that freedom means not the absence of obstacles but the possession of the attributes necessary either to overcome obstacles (Aristotle's

emphasis) or to make them irrelevant to one's self-conception as a fulfilled person (the Stoic and to some degree the Christian view).

In short, the free man must have "character." For this, he must have a larger view of himself and the world around him, a view that provides moral criteria for an objectively good way of living. Such a view may come from an articulated philosophy or, more often, from the religious and cultural traditions that inform his education. This means that the truly free man derives inspiration from outside the political system. He cannot be wholly determined by and immersed in the dogmas and presuppositions of the reigning political ideology, whether monarchic, socialist, liberal, or democratic.

Liberalism and its development into a super-theory make it difficult for human beings to attain such a perspective. Two factors are at work. On the one hand, liberalism addresses people as individuals. It tells each person that he has rights and that insofar as liberalism reigns supreme, he will be free to become whoever and whatever he wants. On the other hand, liberalism is a political construction that promises to secure individual rights only on condition that people adhere to its increasingly intrusive regulations and, more importantly, embrace the entirety of its ideology concerning right and wrong, what to love and whom to hate. The combination of these two elements, plus the general thoughtlessness of liberal society, creates a mental trap: The more one sees one's independence in liberal terms, the more one succumbs to ideological conformity; the more one thinks of oneself as a master bearing innumerable rights, the more one resembles the Aristotelian slave.

The problem with liberalism as a super-theory is therefore not just its inconsistency but its inhumanity. Denied permission to entertain alternative views of what it means to be a free man (the sin of "illiberalism" must be avoided), the denizen of a liberal society has a slim chance of becoming one. He is internally too weak, too dependent on external factors, too confused about his identity, and too attracted to a mystified view of himself as an already completed person awaiting only self-expression, recognition, and inclusion. He is an exemplary consumer and easily absorbs mass opinion. In that sense, those formed by the liberal monoculture are docile citizens, perhaps unhappy with their allotment of utility and rankled by whatever remains that crimps their freedoms, but satisfied with the liberal regime, trusting in its promises.

The liberals have one more argument in defense of their anthropology. They contend that people with thick selves—nationalists, moral absolutists, religious believers—are intransigent in their convictions and

therefore inclined to impose their beliefs on others. This intransigence, whether moral, political or metaphysical, has been—the liberals believe—the root of all evil, from slavery to concentration camps. Abolishing the thick self is therefore a prerequisite for eliminating intransigence and bringing about the reign of openness and toleration.

There may be some truth in the warning against thick selves. A view of the good life that gives strong justifications to strong claims will inspire intransigence in the defense of those claims. But liberalism is hardly superior to “illiberalism” in this respect. Liberals, despite their thin view of the self, are in fact more intransigent in their views, showing a marked unwillingness to compromise and tirelessly tracking down dissenters who are invariably accused of authoritarian crimes. Locke was far more dogmatic than Burke, though his view of man was minimalist and Burke’s was not. Aristotle gave only a tentative judgment about which political system was best, allowing that others had their virtues. One is hard pressed to name a prominent liberal in the twentieth century or our own who does not insist that liberalism and only liberalism is legitimate.

**L**iberals claim for themselves the values of tolerance and moderation, inclusion and empowerment, while denying these values to others. Advocates of liberalism believe they can force it on society quite ruthlessly because thereby they enforce tolerance and moderation, inclusion and empowerment. They are replicating Rousseau’s idea that good government properly forces an individual to be free by subjecting him to the general will.

In this process of ensuring liberalism’s monopoly, the thin view of the self serves as a weapon against thick views. It generates hatred of “oppressors,” about whom one hears a great deal in the discourse of identity politics. It mobilizes supporters and gives them an ideological orientation—a false one, but one that unites them behind a political strategy of universal conquest. It destroys the real historical and social bonds among people, vulgarizes their culture, waters down their moral consciences, and deprives them of a substantive basis for formulating alternatives. What liberalism and its thin view of the self cannot do is give people a reasonably stable sense of freedom.

It has been almost thirty years since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. With the disappearance of communism, political freedoms increased in formerly oppressed lands, but almost immediately thereafter a new system of taboos and restrictions emerged. This system grows stronger and stronger. The sad truth is

that one can say less today than one could during the first years after the liberation, and new laws, “liberal” in character, inhibit rather than inspire free debate. Freedom of thought is in danger. The dominance of the liberal super-theory has undermined the social forms that encourage self-mastery. A generation after the commissars left the scene, positive freedom is more difficult to attain, and the West is populated by people who are less and less capable of an agency free from the banalities of the marketplace, the media, and mass opinion. It is not clear that our institutions can survive without a free people, or at least a plurality capable of self-command. The challenge of the next decade will be to break the ideological monopoly of liberalism so that thick views of the self can guide the education of future generations. Unless we succeed, we will lack the men of character we need to defend and renew the institutions that secure freedom in the West.

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