

# Freedom v. Fear

by Dr. John Attarian

Fear is the opposite of faith. If you truly believe in God, what is there to fear in this life except offending God and being thereby damned?

In the context of eternity, this mortal life of 70-80 years is a triviality, no more important or memorable than the nightmare you had in 3rd grade that sent you running to your mother for protection. Today, you don't even remember that nightmare. Likewise, if you achieve eternal life, one day you won't remember this life, either. If you really believe in God, what does it matter if you are beheaded, tortured or compelled to live a "mere" 70 years in a deformed or crippled body? Within the context of eternity, the worst mortal torment is little more than a mosquito bite, the greatest mortal pleasure no more than a teaspoon of gruel.

To the extent we feel fear, we concede our lack of faith. Consider Revelations 21:8: "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur." Note that the "cowardly" (those who fear) are at

the top of this laundry list of sinners. Why? Because their cowardice is a self-indictment and proof of their lack of faith.

This next article implies that fear is the foundation of all earthly government, and faith is the foundation of freedom.

Friends of freedom rightly see government control as a threat. From this many have passed on to condemn government and to call for anarchy, a minimal state, and so on. But while this line of thought has been insightful, it risks engrossment in technical arcana of libertarian theory —anarchy, public finance via lotteries, and so on — and forgets that freedom's real enemy is not government itself but the frailties of human nature that result in government's illegitimate use. One of freedom's worst foes is, quite simply, fear.

Fear of what? Failure, responsibility, and above all, fear of uncertainty, insecurity, financial loss and suffering brought on by competition, technological change, and the inescapable fact that "time and chance

happeneth to them all" (*Ecclesiastes* 9:11). Fear, in short, of life and its mishaps.

These fears lead to demands for government to protect the fearful from what they fear. Indeed, much of today's government intervention into the free market can be traced to some group's fear or to some politician's appeal to that fear: antitrust laws, to fear of larger or more efficient firms; regulation of railroad freight rates, to large railroads' fear of being underbid by their competition; agricultural subsidies, acreage restrictions, and price controls, to fear of commodity price fluctuations; protectionism, to fear of foreign competition; Social Security, to fear of destitution in old age; Medicare, to the elderly's fear of unaffordable health care; unemployment compensation, to fear of hardship occasioned by job loss; minimum wages, to fear of being paid a lower wage (and labor unions' fear of competition from cheaper labor); graduated income taxes and inheritance taxes, to fear of large incomes and concentrations of wealth; deposit insurance, to fear of losing savings in a bank crash; etc.

### The high cost of fear

All this indulgence of fear has not only severely cramped our liberty but also inflicted serious economic penalties. Thomas Hopkins, of the Rochester Institute of Technology, estimates the 1992 cost of regulations at \$564 billion, counting such things as protectionist trade barriers (e.g., sugar quotas) and paperwork requirements.<sup>1</sup> The huge borrowings needed to finance the federal government gobbled up 62.8 percent of funds raised in our credit markets in 1991 and 51.8 percent in 1992.<sup>2</sup> One would think that, confronted with such huge costs of fear, most of us would find the case for stoicism and freedom self-evident. Unfortunately, thanks to certain hard facts of life, it is not so simple as that.

Freedom is not a free gift. Like everything else in life, freedom has a price: responsibility, insecurity, and the possibility of failure, of unforeseen calamity, of suffering, of paying for the mistakes liberty leaves one free to make.

To most people these burdens are insupportable, or at least onerous. We are all physical beings vulnerable to suffering and aware of our mortality, and therefore afraid for our prospects in the material world. Hence we will always face a powerful temptation to enlist government to interfere in the workings of a free economy to protect ourselves from suffering — and to justify such interference as “humane” or “necessary”.

Enthusiasm for liberty varies with the economy’s position in the business cycle. During a boom, with broadening opportunity and rising incomes and living standards, paeans to freedom and free enterprise abound — witness the business advocates of the nineteenth cen-

tury, the twenties, and the eighties. When prosperity withers, so does allegiance to the free market; every economic downturn brings demands that government “do something”: “stimulate” the economy, pass a jobs bill, drive down interest rates, protect industries from foreign competition, forbid plant closings, provide unemployment compensation, furnish national health care, and on and on.

### The challenge of freedom

All this raises a hard question: does freedom demand too much? Is it unfeasible for fearful, mortal beings? Fyodor Dostoevsky feared so. In the famous “Grand Inquisitor” chapter of Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, the Grand Inquisitor grimly predicted that Christ’s gift of freedom would be spurned by a humanity fearful for its material well-being, and traded for guaranteed sustenance:

“Judge Thyself who was right — Thou or he [Satan] who

questioned Thee then? Remember the first question. Its meaning was this: ‘. . . nothing has ever been more insupportable for a man and a human society than freedom. But seest Thou these stones. . . ? Turn them into bread, and mankind will run after Thee like a flock of sheep, grateful and obedient, though forever trembling, lest Thou withdraw Thy hand and deny them Thy bread.’ But Thou wouldst not deprive man of freedom. . . Thou didst reply that man lives not by bread alone. But dost Thou know that for the sake of that earthly bread the spirit of the earth will rise up against Thee and will strive with Thee and overcome Thee? . . . In the end they will lay their freedom at our feet, and say to us: ‘Make us your slaves, but feed us.’ They will understand at last, that freedom and bread enough for all are inconceivable together.”<sup>3</sup>

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people demonstrated that, on the economics at least, the Grand Inquisitor was wrong: bread for all is inconceivable *without* freedom. And during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Americans and Britons, contrary to the Grand Inquisitor's assertions, were perfectly willing to risk bread in exchange for freedom and a chance of perhaps more bread in the future, and so were the immigrants who came here. That is, they had sufficiently strong *characters* to accept the chances of life, and to function well in a climate of considerable uncertainty offering no guaranteed economic payoff for their actions.

It appears that freedom is perfectly feasible — but only given a certain sturdiness of character. Since the burdens of physical and financial insecurity and personal responsibility are higher in a free economy than in a mixed or socialist one, it follows that the psychological demands of freedom are in many ways far heavier than those of servitude. One need not be sturdy or brave to collect entitlements and be shepherded by regulators and social workers through a life made artificially tidy by miles of red tape. But one must be brave to take one's chances in a free labor market, assume responsibility for one's own well-being, make one's own provision for old age and ill-health. And one has to be something of a hero to venture out into the unknown as an entrepreneur, staking one's all on an idea. A sturdy character is required to make freedom work — and to keep people loyal to freedom in the face of risk and adversity, and brave enough to face them without appealing to the state for succor.

It also follows that whenever widespread sturdiness of character gives way to wide-

spread fearfulness, freedom will suffer, and the Grand Inquisitor will have his grim last laugh. Indeed, amid the current demand for universal health care, one can almost hear the Grand Inquisitor whispering to today's "democratic despots" on the Potomac: "In the end they will lay their freedom at our feet, and say to us: 'Make us your slaves, but protect us.' They will understand at last that freedom and health care for all are inconceivable together."

Growth of government since the onset of the Great Depression in 1929 may indicate an alarming decline of national courage, a decreasing willingness among Americans to take their chances in a free market and to allow market forces free play.

In the same period, American life became increasingly secularized. This doesn't mean that most Americans became atheists or agnostics. Rather, religion's grip on many people simply weakened; attaining earthly happiness and prosperity became a higher priority than leading a life pleasing to God. God was not so much deliberately dismissed as forgotten in the rush to attain an abundant and pleasant lifestyle. Atheism and agnosticism became not only respectable but widespread — not only on the socialist, secular humanist Left but also on the libertarian Right, with the rise to fame of atheist-egoist Ayn Rand.

These are not merely parallel and unrelated developments. As Aldous Huxley observed, a teleological chain runs from metaphysics all the way to economics and politics: "It is in the light of our *beliefs* about the ultimate nature of reality that we formulate our conceptions of right and wrong; and it is in the light of our conceptions of right and wrong that we

frame our conduct, not only in the relations of private life, but also in the sphere of politics and economics. So far from being irrelevant, our metaphysical beliefs are the finally determining factor in all our actions."<sup>4</sup> [I.e., beliefs matter.]

Thus one set of metaphysical beliefs will yield one set of political and economic beliefs, behaviors, and institutions — another metaphysic will generate a quite different politics and economics. The contrast between the limited government and free economy of early Americans who lived in a thoroughly Christian culture,<sup>5</sup> and the total state and rigidly planned economy of the atheist, materialist Soviet Union confirms Huxley's statement. A being dignified by possession of an immortal soul has an "unalienable right" to be free; a mere piece of matter conditioned and determined by forces and relations of production does not.

Metaphysics affects economics and politics through the prevailing attitude of the population. Faith is a powerful well-spring of courage. Faith in God leads to faith in existence and life. If the world is the work of a benevolent personal God, and one is God's child, then it follows that existence is fundamentally good and that the world is one's home in which it is possible to live, prosper, and work out one's salvation. This bedrock metaphysical confidence enables one to function: to decide, choose, act-indeed, to run risks. To a person with such psychological underpinnings, the hazards and burdens of the free market are tolerable. With faith in the essential goodness of life and in the ultimate outcome, such setbacks as occur can be taken calmly.

Put another way, religion deflects fear upward, replacing

fear of existence with fear of the Lord. In liberating people from fear of living, religion makes them fit for freedom.

### Religious decline breeds fear

A decline of religion, marked by a loss of faith, yields a decline of courage. Without God, the universe becomes inexplicable, alien, and therefore frightening – there is no one to turn to for strength, succor, consolation. Nor does one have metaphysical grounds for seeing life as fundamentally good or for having faith in the future. As one's fear of life rises, his allegiance to the free market weakens and his demand for state succor grows.

The consequences of religion's decline also ramify harmfully in other directions. A declining attachment to God goes hand in hand with greater attachment to the "things" of this world, which produces a greater fear of losing them. This diminishes willingness to run the risks of freedom, and increases appeals to government for protection.

The rising fearfulness attendant on loss of religion results in more government intervention. The problems of sin and fear are intertwined. When people are afraid, they are more likely to be ruthless in pursuit of their interests, partly, perhaps, to create a zone of security and power in an uncertain and frightening world; scruples become unaffordable luxuries, and without belief in a divine Judge, they become impotent to curb wrong behavior. Hence a frightened, secularized population is more likely to engage in fraud, breach of contract, looting of corporations (via exorbitant salaries, bonuses, and stock options), and so on. Observers will perceive this conduct as "greed," "selfish capital-

ism" and "market failure." Blind to the underlying cause, they will proclaim that the market is incapable of policing itself, and therefore demand more government control.

Friends of freedom have done well to master and disseminate economic arguments for free markets and limited government. In economics, liberty's advocates have done the most work, and the achievements of Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, Henry Hazlitt, Israel Kirzner, and others have been enormous. Granted their premises, their arguments for the market are overwhelming.

But we delude ourselves if we think that, having demonstrated logically that the free market is the optimum economic system and that interference is dysfunctional, we have routed the enemy. One of the drawbacks of the assumption of human rationality popular

among classical liberals and libertarians is that it ill equips its believers to cope with irrational fear. It produces the dangerously optimistic belief, as the British historian Correlli Barnett wrote, "that once something has been demonstrated to be absurd or self-destructive, it is as good as written off. However, while you may rightly tell a drunkard that drink will kill him if he does not give it up, how do you stop him drinking?"<sup>6</sup>

Since fear, the true and perennial enemy of freedom, dwells in a part of human nature that is largely irrational, it is only superficially amenable to rational persuasion. Few people frightened of insecurity and hardship are really interested in, or moved by, economic arguments about how freedom and acceptance of risk produce widgets. They do not want abundant widgets, they want their fear to go away. In the eyes of

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the fearful person, the danger is real, and his fear is rational. After all, pain hurts. And anyone promising relief from pain or the threat of pain will receive his unwavering support — witness the incredible loyalty of the American electorate to Franklin Roosevelt, the enduring Democratic strength among poor and blue-collar voters, and Bill Clinton's support in the 1992 election from those worried about health care.

### The necessity of soulcraft

To secure the foundations of a free society we must cultivate the character of the people who live in it. Because fear of suffering and insecurity are inherent in human nature, and because "time and chance happen to us all", we are always vulnerable to the temptation to seek state succor, and the battle against fear and for freedom must be waged anew in every generation. There is no permanent victory. Economic arguments are not enough. Philosophical arguments are not enough. Proofs that yielding to envy, desire for unearned gain, and fear is economically counterproductive are not enough. The only effective antidotes to evil and irrationality are soulcraft and character formation.

And the greater the erosion of character, the more attention lovers of liberty must give to it. The first great economist of freedom, Adam Smith, consciously grounded his economic thought in moral character.<sup>7</sup> But many later economists of freedom — the thinkers of the Manchester School, Carl Menger, Eugen von Bohm-Bawerk, Ludwig von Mises — formulated their theories and economic defenses of the free economy in cultures grounded in Christianity, when the underpinnings of soulcraft were still

in place and when civilized people with sturdy characters were so numerous as to be taken for granted, and rarely considered the interplay of character and economics. For the most part, they did not have to; it was not an issue.

Today, with soaring crime and violence, endemic illegitimacy and divorce, and rampant pursuit of "victim" status, we can almost take fear of living for granted, and with it widespread repudiation of the free market and demands for government help. In a disintegrating post-Christian society, friends of freedom can no longer count on family, church, school, and society to instill the metaphysical and other core beliefs underlying a successful free economy.

Unfortunately, no one has ever explained how a free economy can work (if indeed it can) in the context of a decadent national character. Even free market economists continue to spin theories and build models as if the character problem did not exist.

A religious revival would aid the cause of freedom, but religion cannot be preached simply because it supports free societies and free markets. Such a pragmatic approach is too cynical to work and would be worse than no effort at all; atheists and statisticians would see through it immediately, and the resultant firestorm of disdain would set back the causes of both freedom and religion.

Nevertheless, if a return to religion is not feasible until people are genuinely ready to hear it for the right reasons, friends of freedom should meanwhile grasp every opportunity to preach and reward the virtues that make for a sturdy character, and, better still, to provide that most powerful of teachers: a good example. In the end, a society — and an economy — is

no better than the people in it. And in the end, if character formation and soulcraft are neglected, all the other work of freedom, however useful, will be in vain.

Dr. Attarian is a free-lance writer in Ann Arbor, Michigan. This article first appeared in the March, 1994 issue of "The Freeman", and is reprinted with their permission. "The Freeman" is published by The Foundation for Economic Education, Inc., Irvington-on-Hudson, NY 10533.

<sup>1</sup> "Cost of Regulation Isn't Easy to Figure But Estimates Exist," *Wall Street Journal*, September 23, 1992, p. A10.

<sup>2</sup> *Federal Reserve Bulletin*, May 1993, p. A39, Table 1.57, "Funds Raised in U.S. Credit Markets". (% calculations are mine)

<sup>3</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, Constance Garnett, Book v, Ch. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means: An Inquiry into the Nature of Ideals and into the Methods Employed for Their Realization* (New York: Harper & Brothers Pub's, 1937), p.11.

<sup>5</sup> See M. E. Bradford, *A Worthy Company: Brief Lives of the Framers of the United States Constitution* (Marlborough, N.H.: Plymouth Rock Foundation, 1982), and John Eidsmoe, *Christianity and the Constitution: The Faith of Our Founding Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI Baker Book House 1987).

<sup>6</sup> Correlli Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1972), p.48.

<sup>7</sup> Smith's *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* was but an appli-

cation, in both philosophical and empirical fashion, of his moral philosophy -- set forth earlier in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *Lectures on Jurisprudence* -- to market relationships.

If faith is the foundation of freedom and fear is the foundation of government, it follows that the more fear, the more government. Government feeds on fear, grows only in an atmosphere of fear.

It's understandable that a humane government might try to limit or diminish our legitimate fears by increasing government's role in lives. But what about a government that plays on, exploits, magnifies or even creates our fears? Is that just shrewd, cynical politics? Or does the creation of fear (faith's opposite) signal an entirely different motive and nature in government?

What are the "politics of fear" in the USA? According to U.S. Department of Justice statistics, the crime rate in this country has been falling since 1983. Nevertheless, during that fourteen year decline, many Republicans (and some Democrats) cheerfully scared us with threats that criminals like Willie Horton (the black East-coast rapist) were about to get free from prison and, apparently, rape all 250 million Americans. Every election, politicians promise to jail more criminals for longer sentences — despite the fact that we already jail a greater percentage of our population than any other government and are therefore the biggest fear-based police state in the world.

But violent crime isn't the only source of government-hyped fears. What about the "Wars" on drugs and poverty? For years, government relied on

the "Cold War" to justify its growth. Today, with the loss of the Soviet Union, government now focuses on "terrorism" and environmentalism to generate public fear and federal bureaucracies.

But why not pass a law against "fear crimes"? I.e., any person or organization (including public officials and political parties) that intentionally dispersed false information for the purpose of inciting fear in the American people could be indicted for a crime against the American people and their public welfare, or disturbing the peace. Insofar as fear does more harm to Americans than hate (fear may even lay the foundation for hate), "fear-crimes" might make more sense than current "hate-crime" legislation.

Although such legislation is at best unlikely, you should beware of any man, politician, organization or publication that

"sells fear". There are truly scary things in this world, but a man who consistently sells only fear is, at bottom, a builder of bureaucracies, a destroyer of churches, and perhaps an adversary of God. Whether he knew it or not, Chicken Little was a Satanist. The sky will not fall (or remain in place) unless God wills. In either case, there's nothing we can do but have faith and there is no cause for fear.

Is there anything that can be done about politicians or political parties that "sell fear"? We are regularly reminded that, "You can't fight city hall," but most likely, the source of this ancient cliché was city hall, itself. The idea that city hall or the federal bureaucracies are too big, too powerful, too fearful to fight is a lie designed to protect big government from personal accountability. I think you can fight 'em, I think you can sue 'em, and if push comes to

## American Patriot Needs Help!

I have fought for years against the **Ungodly** who, today, almost totally control America. Because I've fought corruption, our government has charged me with several felony indictments in a U.S. District Court. I, and others, believe these charges were filed to shut me up.

It's time for us to reclaim God's country — which He ordained for us — and live under God's laws and not man's laws. God's warnings are coming to pass; they are being fulfilled every day. This is our last chance to stand up for God before *God's* second and final coming.

My most precious possession is my soul that God gave me. If we sacrifice our souls to survive in this world, on judgement day, God states, "**He will know us not**".

The cost for my upcoming court trial will exceed \$100,000. As one of God's children, I am asking for any donations you can afford to send to me, to offset the cost of my upcoming trial and defense.

Let us all join together and create a united house and fight God's unholy evil enemies. We will then be blessed by our God. God bless all who have eyes to see and ears to hear. To paraphrase Patrick Henry, "give me God's liberty or give me death".

**Celeste C. Leone**

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shove, I think you can run 'em right off the face of the Earth — and they know it.

Article I, Section 6, Clause 1 of the Constitution declares in part that Senators and Representatives, “. . . for any Speech or Debate in either house, shall not be questioned in any other Place.” In other words, Senators and Representatives can say virtually anything they want (even bald-faced lies) “in either House” and not be sued for libel, slander, whatever.

Conspicuously absent is a proviso that Senators and Representatives are also shielded from liability for lies or slander outside their respective “Houses” — i.e., in public. If the Constitution wanted our elected Representatives to be completely shielded from liability in all cases, it would not have restricted that protection to “in either house”.

Therefore, could lying politicians be sued for . . . hmm, false advertising? Fraud? How 'bout deceptive trade practices? The first answer is No, since they are probably guaranteed their 1st Amendment right of free political speech.

But what if it's true that our government has shifted from a “republican form” into a corporation? Are our “politicians” now engaged in politics — or business and commerce?

After all, if government

has gone “corporate,” it's just another business and should be subject to the same rules of false advertising as any other business.

Interesting notion, hmm?

#### Addendum 9/20/1999:

It occurs to me that government seemingly relies on the “commerce clause” of our Constitution to establish jurisdiction and control over virtually any person or activity that remotely resembles “commerce”. Until now, I've assumed that private citizens acting in commerce with *each other* became subject to government regulation and control.

But maybe the real explanation, is that our “government” is no longer a *political* entity as described in the Constitution, but rather a *corporate* entity whose only activity is “business” as in “the business of government” (commerce?). If our government has incorporated, it might no longer be a “political” entity as described in the Constitution, but only a corporation engaged in commerce. Thus as a corporation, it's authority over you and me might *only* be “commercial” and never constitutional/ political.

If so, our corporate “government's” only basis for a jurisdictional-like relationship with any of us might be the fact

or presumption that we have individually and voluntarily entered into a commercial relationship (probably by contract) — not with other private citizens — but with the *corporation* we mistakenly identify as the former political-constitutional government.

If this speculation were true, the controlling paperwork in trials involving the corporate government would be the commercial *contract* (not political Constitution) that established the “business” relationship between the individual and the government-like corporation.

If so, you might do well to demand proof that a contract exists which created the commercial relationship between you and the U.S. Inc.. Your best defense might be to allege no such contract exists, and even if said contract does exist, it is unconscionable since it's full meaning and legal implications were never explained to you. You might also declare that your commercial relationships are strictly with other private persons (controlled by the Constitution and the political government) but that you have no commercial dealing with the government-like corporation.

In essence, I'm wondering if — whenever government acts against you based on “commerce” — it's acting as a true *political* government based on the commerce clause of the *Constitution*, or if it's acting as a corporation attempting to enforce a purely commercial agreement/ contract between itself and you? In other words, can our government-like corporation claim to have power, authority or jurisdiction over any private citizen without an underlying commercial contract and relationship?

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