

Progressive Calvinism

Volume II

1956

**ESSAYS ON THE
PEERLESS MOSAIC LAW**

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LUDWIG VON MISES . . .

It is certainly true that our age is full of conflicts which generate war. However, these conflicts do not spring from the operation of the unhampered market society. It may be permissible to call them economic conflicts because they concern that sphere of human life which is, in common speech, known as the sphere of economic activities. But it is a serious blunder to infer from this appellation that the source of these conflicts are conditions which develop within the frame of a market society. It is not capitalism that produces them, but precisely the anticapitalistic policies designed to check the functioning of capitalism. They are an outgrowth of the various governments' interference with business, of trade and migration barriers and discrimination against foreign labor, foreign products, and foreign capital.

None of these conflicts could have emerged in an unhampered market economy. (Pages 680 and 681.)

—MISES, Human Action

EUGEN VON BOHM-BAWERK . . .

Political economy is even yet one of the youngest sciences, and it was still younger in the time of the classical economy, which in spite of its name "classical," given as the event proved, too soon, was only an incipient embryonic science. It has never happened in any other case that the whole of a science was discovered, at the first attempt, even by the greatest genius; and so it is not surprising that the whole of political economy was not discovered, even by the classical school. Their greatest fault was that they were fore-runners; our greatest advantage is that we come after. We who are richer by the fruits of a century's research than were our predecessors, need not work by different methods, but simply work better than they.

* * *

To be sure, the classical economists well knew to what point all their explanations must be traced — to the care of mankind for its own well-being, which, undisturbed by the incursion of altruistic motives, is the ultimate motive-force of all economic action.

—BOHM-BAWERK, "The Austrian Economists"
Annals Of The American Academy Of
Political And Social Science, January 1891

Few are ready to recognize that the rise of fascism and nazism was not a reaction against the socialist trends of the preceding period but a necessary outcome of those tendencies. (Pages 3 and 4.)

The point which is so important is the basic fact that it is impossible for any man to survey more than a limited field, to be aware of the urgency of more than a limited number of needs. Whether his interests center round his own physical needs, or whether he takes a warm interest in the welfare of every human being he knows, the ends about which he can be concerned will always be only an infinitesimal fraction of the needs of all men.

This is the fundamental fact on which the whole philosophy of individualism is based. It does not assume, as is often asserted, that man is egoistic or selfish or ought to be. It merely starts from the indisputable fact that the limits of our powers of imagination make it impossible to include in our scale of values more than a sector of the needs of the whole society, and that, since, strictly speaking, scales of value can exist only in individual minds, nothing but partial scales of values exist — scales which are inevitably different and often inconsistent with each other. From this the individualist concludes that the individuals should be allowed, within defined limits, to follow their own values and preferences rather than somebody else's; that within these spheres the individual's system of ends should be supreme and not subject to any dictation by others. It is this recognition of the individual as the ultimate judge of his ends, the belief that as far as possible his own views ought to govern his actions, that forms the essence of the individualist position. (Page 59.)

There is no other possibility than either the order governed by the impersonal discipline of the market or that directed by the will of a few individuals; and those who are out to destroy the first are wittingly or unwittingly helping to create the second. (Page 199.)

—HAYEK, *The Road To Serfdom*

Things that can be placed in a causal connection with the satisfaction of human needs we term useful things. If, however, we both recognize this causal connection, and have the power actually to direct the useful things to the satisfaction of our needs, we call them goods. (Page 52.)

Thus human economy and property have a joint economic origin since both have, as the ultimate reason for their existence, the fact that goods exist whose available quantities are smaller than the requirements of men. Property, therefore, like human economy, is not an arbitrary invention but rather the only practically possible solution of the problem that is, in the nature of things, imposed upon us by the disparity between requirements for, and available quantities of, all economic goods.

As a result, it is impossible to abolish the institution of property without removing the causes that of necessity bring it about — that is, without simultaneously increasing the available quantities of all economic goods to such an extent that the requirements of all members of society can be met completely, or without reducing the needs of men far enough to make the available goods suffice for the complete satisfaction of their needs. Without establishing such an equilibrium between requirements and available amounts, a new social order could indeed ensure that the available quantities of economic goods would be used for the satisfaction of the needs of different persons than at present. But by such a redistribution it could never surmount the fact that there would be persons whose requirements for economic goods would either not be met at all, or met only incompletely, and against whose potential acts of force, the possessors of economic goods would have to be protected. Property, in this sense, is therefore inseparable from human economy in its social form, and all plans of social reform can reasonably be directed only toward an appropriate distribution of economic goods but never to the abolition of the institution of property itself. (Pages 97 and 98.)

—MENGGER, Principles Of Economics

Declarations of the Progressive Calvinism League

I.

(A) Promote brotherly love as required by the Christian religion; and (B) attack all "extensions" of the scriptural rule which extensions make the rule sanctimonious.

II.

(A) Promote the further discovery of the greatness of God, as revealed in nature and in Scripture, by (1) promoting an attitude toward research in the sciences which will be fruitful in results and will inspire men with humility and awe; and by (2) rejecting the idea that the comprehension of special revelation has been completed; the Scriptures must be reapplied to changing circumstances.

III.

(A) Promote awareness of the limitations of the human mind, that is, promote true humility; and (B) resist the arrogance of all attempts at universal planning, that is, all attempts at pretending we are as God, and all Comtian Positivism.

IV.

(A) Promote a single rule of morality; and (B) reject a dual rule, namely, one rule for individuals and a conflicting rule for groups.

V.

(A) Promote confidence that prosperity obtained in a *free* market society is the result of obedience to the law of God; and (B) discontinue all apologies for that prosperity and all policies which will undermine that prosperity.

VI.

(A) Promote a program for this life (1) which will be distinguishable (antithetical) from a nonfaith program, (2) which will bring good temporal results, and (3) which, therefore, cannot discredit Christianity's message in matters beyond this life; and (B) resist all programs borrowed from non-Christian sources which science and experience will reveal as unsound for this life, and which will consequently discredit Christianity's supernatural message.

If you subscribe to the foregoing Declarations and wish to become a member of the Progressive Calvinism League, write for a membership blank. Your signature, together with \$2 for annual membership fee (\$1 for students), will make you a member of the League and the recipient of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM for one year.

Foreword

Many of the articles in the 1956 issues of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM are about the matchless laws in the Second Table of the Law of Moses. That explains the selection of the title for this volume.

Volume I, *Essays Against Sanctimony And Legalized Coercion*, should be read before reading Volume II. Paperbound copies are available at \$2, (or \$1 for students).

Readers will discover that PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM is in the historic Calvinist tradition. We have a "cloud of witnesses" on our side — the Puritans and the other Calvinists of the Golden Age of Calvinism, whose achievements are part of the imperishable glory of Calvinism.

But we represent more than mere traditionalism. Christianity, and that branch of it known as Calvinism, needs to be made relevant to the practical affairs of the modern world. That relevancy we attempt to accomplish by two policies: (1) faithfulness to the teaching of Scripture; and (2) careful synthesis of the teaching of *sound* modern praxeology (social sciences, especially economics) with the teaching of Scripture.

Our orthodoxy does not consist in repeating the statements of those who were, recently or long ago, "authorities" of some sort on Calvinism, as if modern Calvinism consisted merely in the repetition or exegesis of their ideas. Our base is Scripture and the praxeological sciences; not some highly regarded man of the past.

We consider knowledge of sound praxeology to be required of Calvinists if Calvinism is in this age to be influential in solving modern problems. We quote Professor Ludwig von Mises:

People may disagree on the question of whether everybody ought to study economics seriously. But one thing is certain. A man who publicly talks or writes about the opposition between capitalism and socialism without having fully familiarized himself with all that economics has to say about these issues is an irresponsible babbler.*

Calvinists do unhesitatingly undertake to judge on the greatest practical issue of the day — Capitalism versus Socialism. But it

*Ludwig von Mises, *The Anti-Capitalistic Mentality*, p. 47.

is obvious that many of them are uninformed on both (1) the teaching of Scripture regarding the relation of men to men and of men to things, and (2) the laws discovered by modern praxeology.

In an Open Letter* to Dr. John C. Bennett of Union Theological Seminary of New York who is one of the aggressive promoters of the Social Gospel, the Reverend Mr. Edmund A. Opitz writes (our italics):

After perusing the books of the social gossellers and the welfarestaters, and after conversations with you and with men professionally engaged on one or the other of the various church councils for social action, I am forced to conclude that the reason why the libertarian case is not taught in seminaries is that *the case is not known in theological circles!* Neither is it a fashionable mode of thought among our intelligentsia; the climate of opinion is unfavorable to it.

The real meaning of the Law of God — which teaches a great and wonderful freedom or libertarianism — is as unknown in many "Christian" circles today as it was unknown in the time of King Josiah (645-608 B.C.), when the priest Hilkiah found a copy of the Law during the renovation of the temple, and astonished Josiah with what it taught.

The essays in this volume are designed to direct attention (1) to the modern validity of the ancient Mosaic Law; (2) to the modern validity of the rest of Scripture which all has its foundation in that Law; and (3) to the harmony which exists between those two and *sound* modern praxeology.

If Calvinism will restore itself by a return to its first principles, it can again become a great influence in the world. If it does not return to its first principles, it will continue to decline in influence and prestige.

However, if it returns to its first principles it will find itself, not in the rear ranks of the battle line of the somewhat absurd social gospel, but in the forefront of a *genuine and desperate* fight for righteousness. If Calvinism lacks the courage to become militant again, it should not seek to rediscover the truth.

**Truth In Action*, Spiritual Mobilization, September 15, 1952.

PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM submits each month 32 pages of reading material. It takes about an hour to read one issue. The whole volume for a year can be read in about twelve hours.

We lack space for the presentation of contrary ideas. This does not mean that we are reluctant to consider any questions about or contradictions to what we have presented. We are prepared to respond, in public debate, at any reasonable place and time, to any proposition or argument against what we have written.

In regard to anything concerning which we may be in error we shall be pleased that we are shown in what respect to amend our ideas.

South Holland, Illinois
December, 1956

Errata

Page

- 38 Seventh line should begin: "Lord *Acton*."
- 187 Last sentence of second paragraph should read: "And such declining prices will prove to *be* beneficent for everybody."
- 188 Second sentence of third paragraph should read: "Whenever a country is on *a* paper money standard conservatism is folly."
- 198 Last line of first paragraph should read: "economists (Smith, Ricardo, Malthus, *Mill*, etc.)."
- 259 Last line of article should read: "*the* Christian Reformed church have departed from that tradition."
- 320 Chodorov quotation is independent of "Correction" and should be separated from it.
- 377 Second sentence of first paragraph should read: "This is the most valuable of any publication in the field of money and credit."