

The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism - Three Liberties

Michael Novak:

I wanted to write a philosophy of the American way of life, so to speak. But behind that, I just wanted to explain to my friends, particularly from Europe, but also from Asia, what it is we have here that's different, what they're missing when they look at us. And I came up with the idea, and I'm not the first to do this apparently, there's lots of thinkers, it's been pointed out to me, who have done it this way, but that there are three sides to liberty. There's economic liberty from hunger and poverty and there's a political liberty from torture and tyranny. But there's also a third, there's a moral or a cultural liberty, which is a little bit different. It's a little bit more positive. It's the requirement to be able to govern one's own passions. The best symbol of it actually is the Lady in the Harbor, the Statue of Liberty. The French liberals, anti-socialists wanted to design a symbol of how American liberty differs from the liberty of the French Revolution.

Michael Novak:

And they chose for the project a woman. That goes with being French, I mean, but it's significant because this great symbol of the Soviets was a young man leaping over the trench with a sub machine gun and martial symbols and Greek symbolism and so forth of war. But here, it's a woman, and in her one hand she has the torch against bigotry and ignorance and passion, and in the other arm, she's holding the book of the law, liberty under law. And if you look at her face, this is a serious face. I mean, this is a somber woman. It's the face of every second grade teacher in the history of New York. She means business. And that's liberty, the self-control. I like the hymn, "Confirm Thy Soul In Self-Control, Thy Liberty In Law." Those go together. Liberty is self-government, self-mastery so one can do with all one's resources what one wishes to do. And that particular idea of liberty is peculiar to human beings.

The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism - Defining Capitalism

Michael Novak:

Yeah, I wanted to have a book I could put in the hands of friends of mine behind the iron curtain in Italy and Latin America, to explain the American system because most of the world has of America, a Marxist view. Marxism is essentially from the beginning anti-capitalist, that's its main message. And even it defines its own system, socialism, by opposition to private property, to personal income and to free decisions, free random decision of people.

Michael Novak:

And, if I ask my research helpers to look up definitions of capitalism in dictionaries, we get eight or nine of them, then they all say capitalism is a free market, private accumulation, and market decisions. And, socialism is the opposite of all of those. And I said to myself that can't be true. There have been free markets since the biblical times, Jerusalem was nothing but a marketplace between three continents. There's no industry there. There's a lot of desert around, the agriculture was poor, but it's a marketplace and marketplaces in history are static. They do progress, every market has somebody competing they have found a new way of fashioning a sword or something else, or make it of a new kind of metal or a new way. And it becomes the marvel of that market. But it's very, very slow. And yes, private property is very important.

Michael Novak:

Even in Jerusalem, "thou shalt not steal" makes no sense if there's no private property and so forth, but that isn't capitalism. Capitalism doesn't come until Abraham Lincoln describes it in the Patent and Copyright Act, about which there was a huge argument among Jefferson and Madison and Hamilton about whether to have such a thing. And, the point of the Patent and Copyright Act is it finally made it possible to create wealth with ideas and to tip the balance away from people who own land. Usually those were the great military victors who as a fruit of their victories, received these lands from the Crown and tip them in the direction of a nobody who has this great idea for the automobile, for the telephone, for the steam engine, for whatever. My idea was capitalism begins in the head. It's not a market system primarily it's an idea system. It's an invention. And, I think it is an accident that it's named capitalism from "kaput" the head, but that's where the dynamism comes from the invention, the discovery, the enterprise to see a new and better way of doing things.

Capitalism: Political Order & Limited Government are Essential

Michael Novak:

Well, in order to have a capitalist economy and patent and copyright laws, you have to have order. You have to have the rule of law. You have to have a constitutional law. A limited government. All these are provided by that other system, the political system. Now the political system does not run by the exactly same rules. Political people and business people talking together, talking different languages and they each look up at the ceiling and exasperation when the other person's not looking. How can they talk that way? Business people and political people typically don't like each other. There may be friendships, but they don't like that way about doing business. And neither one of them like the clergy and the poets and the talking heads each of them has a certain contempt. That's the way of the system is supposed to be.

Michael Novak:

We say, "In God we trust." And that the operational meaning is nobody else. For everybody else there are checks and balances, there are countervailing powers, because we don't trust one another. And the whole system is based on not trusting one another, in a certain sense, is on the ground that we're all sinners. Every man sometimes sins, every man sometimes does what he knows he ought not to do, and he doesn't do what he knows he should do. And therefore he can't put too much power in anyone's hands no matter how good they are.

Radio Free Europe and the Coming Fall of the Berlin Wall

Michael Novak:

Oh, it was so joyous, I can't tell you. I had worked for years and years and years to bring that wall down, partly because I had family there in Little Slovakia. And I visited there in 1974 and had a sense of how backward they were compared to their cousins in America. Still a little old outhouse. My cousin gave me a very valuable present. She was obviously proud to be able to produce it, a big lump of bacon to bring with me to America as if I could have got it back.

Michael Novak:

But anyway, and they couldn't talk at dinner table when I was visiting as my translator was, I knew, was an agent of the other side and would report everything, and in fact later did make life difficult for one of

my cousins there because of something he said. But anyway, but I was on the board of Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty. Reagan put me there. He wanted somebody in theology, not just to say grace, but he knew that the battle was in large part in human souls and he knew that there was a lot, a lot of religiousness in the soil of Russia, and in the hearts of Russian women above all, that and that in the end was going to be what decided the issue.

Michael Novak:

And there had James Mitchner, Lane Kirkland from the FLC, the biggest free labor union in the world. And we had the guy from the PR World, the biggest and best in the world, and a fellow from Bonneville Television out in Utah. But the largest transmitters anywhere in the world knew the technology of broadcasting as nobody else did. We had just a house board. Ben Wattenberg and so forth. Steve Forbes was the chairman, Jim Buckley before him. We brought in some good leadership to be, how can I put this, more combative intellectually. It's not just sit back and report the news, but bring up the issues on things like unemployment or shortage of light bulbs, or whatever it might be. But press, press, press with ideas and get discussions going.

Michael Novak:

Just with so little money for radio, we would be broadcasting night and day in 26 different languages all over, and the most important ones getting to be Farsi and the ones, Muslim-related languages.

Michael Novak:

So, we began hearing stories through our people in the field of things that were happening inside. We wouldn't broadcast unless we got verification. We opened up a free 800 line. So, you'd call in free and report any stories. We began getting loads of information like that.

Michael Novak:

One of my favorite inside stories was we learned that there were people selling burned out light bulbs in Moscow Square for a kopek or two kopeks, whatever. And you say to yourself, "I've never heard of anything more stupid." Not stupid at all. You buy a burnt out light bulb as you go into work, you find one in your office that's just been put in. You unscrew the good one, put in the bad one. It's a good day's work. And so we knew it was coming pretty soon.

Prophecy as Plain as Ones Nose: Denied

Michael Novak:

I remember in 1989 trying to publish an article on how the Soviet Union would come down before the end of the year. And that was the best expert our people right there had because it's just coming apart. Nobody would publish it. I tried eight or nine journals. Nobody would publish it. And it was pretty... It was not wild. It was pretty tame and well-argued, I thought. Until finally, Steve Forbes published it in Forbes magazine, because he knew the same materials. And it happened pretty much like that.

Michael Novak:

In the Czech Republic, in... Blocking on the name of this square. Wenceslas Square, I think it was. This young man burned himself alive as a symbol of the hopelessness, but of the longing for freedom. And people streamed there and brought flowers and everything, and working mens, students. There was a

little factory just off the side of it where a man got up on a beer keg and said, "We hold these truths to be self-evident. That all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with unalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." And he led the whole factory, a brewery is what I think it was, out to join the students and it was, as they call it, the Violet Revolution. The name was not to create violence. The name was not to vent anger, but just to assert calmly, insistently, bravely their liberty and the illegitimacy of any other super who pretended to be rulers. They just undercut the legitimacy of the government, so it folded very quickly.

Michael Novak:

One reason for that, I believe is that Gorbachev had been in China at the time of the huge rebellion in Peking in the square where the tank... Memory looking at movies of the tank came down on these youngsters, protestors trying to drive them out. And every time the tank turned a little bit, I mean a young man stood up in front of it to stop it. Every time it turned a little bit, this kid jumped in front of it again. And it just was so funny watching this little man move the tank. That showed kind of the helplessness of it. Well, they did kill a lot of people in the end. Gorbachev, so it's thought, determined that was not going to happen in the Soviet Union. And that's where the test of wills was won.

The Berlin Wall Trophy

Michael Novak:

I have to go back and say something about the day that wall came down at... I had asked, on last visit to Prague, I'd visited some student friends of mine. So, we went up into one of their apartments. Pretty wretched-looking on the outside, and inside everybody has their own little apartment done really, really neat. It's the one little area where they can do something of beauty and that's theirs.

Michael Novak:

Well, there was a big Soviet flag, I mean a big one hanging on the hallway, on the wall underneath the stairs. So, I had mentioned to them that at the end of this, I'd love to have some, I don't know, victory relics. You go in the battlefield afterwards. And so they sent me this flag, which they pulled from the wall, so you could see where the nails were holding it. And they sent me badges for different military accomplishments and medals. The Soviets are big on medals, cheap, tinny medals, but big.

Michael Novak:

So, this whole package arrives, so I spread it out on my bookcase, covered the whole end of my office, it was that big and held it up with little vases or something, I don't remember. And these medals, medallions, insignia of certain Russian units.

Michael Novak:

And a couple of them came to visit, and they were just shocked and sickened. Not the guys who sent it to me, but a couple other people from Eastern Europe. What was I doing? Celebrating this awful horrible thing? They didn't realize I was rejoicing in the victory. It's the victors who get the spoils, after all.

Michael Novak:

Anyway, it was hard to believe. I didn't think it would happen in my lifetime.

After "The Fall," Lunch with John Paul II & Mickey Mouse

Michael Novak:

And she said, "And we got a call from the Pope that he wanted you to come over to lunch." And I said, "And you found me." And she said, "Yeah, I did." So it happened often when I was there. In fact, I got an invitation from the Pope's secretary, every time I was coming to Rome, which is once or twice a year, to write or call and let them know, and if the Pope had some free moments, he'd have me over, just to relax. You always come with a joke, you always... I learned.

Michael Novak:

But on the first time I went, I was very nervous, the more so because you climb up these stairs, they take us through the back way and... Well, no, it's actually the main gate right at St. Peter's, but you have to climb up these immense marble staircases, floor after floor after floor, 30 steps to a landing. And this Swiss guard is right beside me, he's not huffing or puffing. I need to stop and hold the rail for a while to get myself up there. This is a number of years ago.

Michael Novak:

Okay, so I'm in awe. There are just five of us at the table. A good friend of mine, an Italian professor is present and he carries the ball. He knows the Pope very, very well. I studied with him in Poland, even. And so when it finally comes my time to say something, I said, "Holy Father, I want to thank you for the immense miracle of bringing down the Soviet Union. Never thought I'd see it in my lifetime."

Michael Novak:

And he scoffs at me and he says, "Oh Michael," he says, "that was no miracle." He said, "That Mickey Mouse system was coming down of its own," he said, "it didn't need any work from me." And I don't remember that he said the word Mickey Mouse because we were speaking Italian. His English is good, but it was a little bit lighter for him to speak Italian. But that was the gist of it. And I learned then that you need to come to table with him with some funny stories, that's what he... It's to relax. He's got a heavy burden other times and he needs some time for some friends that just let loose.

Doug Monroe:

He needs to lighten up-

WW II's Moral Wreckage: Bourgeois Morality to Socialist Utopia

Michael Novak:

World War II's horrors undermined Christianity in the West, in Europe, rather badly. There was a lot of faith and a lot of energy getting us through the war. But at the end of it, I think the aftertaste was so much incredible violence and barbarity, barbarism, that people couldn't digest it.

Michael Novak:

They started to live for the moment, sitting at the cafes, sipping lattes or whatever, cappuccinos, whatever, be it a coffee, and living the good life. We deserve it after all this sort of... And there's been nothing but horror and we just deserve to sit a little while.

Michael Novak:

Okay, so the West was becoming less Christian year by year, but in China, there's such a vast movement of Christianity. And I'll tell you, there's some reasons for that as far as I can tell. One of the parts of the mess that communism left behind is it had tried for 70 years to persuade people there is no such thing as morality. They prefer to say Bourgeois Morality, that's all illusion.

Michael Novak:

Morality is making sure that socialism wins because that's going to liberate all the people, bring us to paradise. It made it impossible, or dubious, whether one could give a moral talk. People would just say, "Oh, that's your nonsense. You're still under illusion" and just discount it. So it bred utter cynicism through every branch and all down, even in the families, of society, just moral wreckage, like the world has not seen before.

Michael Novak:

And meanwhile, young Chinese, fortunately the young are born without all those prejudices. They have to be taught to them. And aspiring to something better as opportunity opened up and a little bit more economic liberty opened up, the desire to do more with this and expand it and to oppose the sheer boredom of the apparatchiks who were running things. They're not the brightest people. They're often the most thuggish people. And so the bright Naval often see right through that, but they're powerless to do anything.

Growth of Christianity in China

Michael Novak:

Well, two things happen on the one hand, people began to look around the world and say, where are they free? Where are they prosperous? Where are they happy, even? You just see the ebullience. Crazy ebullience sometimes. But they began to notice they were in places where Judaism and Christianity had long been in force. And they began to see that if you want to advance, that's where advancement's taking place. And then the internal lessons began to be learned too. Well, what is this inner power? What's this inner human capital that keeps being reborn and reawakened in that. Even if it goes through declines, it reawakens in that. And in this too, they began to notice the resilience and the drive and the tremendous visions, never ending visions. The Gothic visions up and up of Christians.

Michael Novak:

And these two arguments, both the internal aspiring one, and the, "Look at the world. Where is there... Where are these liberties? And the science and the advances of all sorts. They come from the Christian world. I asked at a... The lovely thing about living in Washington is you get strange invitations. The government's having some visitors from other, in this case, a Chinese delegation. And for some reason they wanted a theologian. I don't know. I find myself sitting at the table beside the... I don't know her... Finance Minister. I don't remember her title, but Chief Economic Officer of the Chinese Republic. She's a beautiful lady and very, very self-contained and disciplined. And I said to her, after a few words, I said, "May I ask you, what do people say about Marx these days?" And she pushed back her chair with a look of disgust on her face as if I'd asked a really stupid question. And she said, "We don't say anything about Mr. Marx today. Mr. Marx is very old and very dead. We pay him no attention."

Christianity and Globalization

Michael Novak:

The first thing I want to point out about the impact of Christianity in the world is the word of Jesus is go forth and teach all nations. So, this is a message not intended for a tribe, or an ethnic group, or a nation, or a region, it's meant for the whole world. This is the first instance of globalization anywhere. It's in the religious order long before it comes in the political or economic order. We're just seeing the tail end of globalization in our age as we've last got the economic globalization. I don't understand why people are so afraid of it. Jesus taught us that's the way to go. We're all children of one Father, and it'd be odd if there weren't globalization.

Michael Novak:

I was once at an academic conference with a professor of economics from Canada and I regret, I cannot summon up his name, but at my age, there are a lot of names. I see vividly, but I can't summon up. But he pointed out to me, and then he later sent me his essay on it, of St. Paul, as the first free man in history. The very model of the free man. Because he was led to find his identity, not through his family, not through his tribe, not through his religion, but through his encounter with this man, and a mission, and a message. And in choosing to follow him and become a follower of his and become another him, woe to me if I say anything different. He had to choose against every natural connection of his being.

Michael Novak:

Now, in choosing against them, he was also choosing for it. He wasn't contradicting any of the good in any of those, but being led to see that these terms apply analogously to everybody. Jew, or Greek, or Latin. We can all be followers of Christ because each one brings something new to the table. The Greeks bring a philosophical language, and tradition, metaphysical inclination, and the Romans build this great sense of organization, even over a vast empire, and are tremendous at dealing with plural people. Bulgarians, Scythians, Palestinians, Egyptians. Rome unites them all in one empire and finds the way to do that without trying to homogenize them. A huge achievement, and on and on.

Christianity and America's Contribution: Ordered Liberty

Michael Novak:

And the American contribution, JP II said, John Paul II said, is to bring into the world the concept of ordered liberty. It's the Statue of Liberty. Liberty is under the mind, under the intellect, under the light, and under the law. Not against the law, not against the light, but with them. That's a sharpened version of what we mean by liberty than the Greeks or the Romans had, than any previous people had. And ordering a society, finding institutions to realize that out and then to find a way to be a planetary people, discover institutions which allow the real pluralism of every people to flourish and to find a much richer society because of it.

Michael Novak:

Where would we be without hamburgers and pizza and sushi and so on? We have that all. We walk down the street in America and, in an American city, and you'll find those remarkably plural people living in remarkable peace. And this I think is another impact of Christianity. Even the emphasis on individual rights, I would prefer the word 'personal rights.' But in any case, even that emphasis comes

out of Christianity, because it distinguishes the person from the tribe, from the group. I just don't think you can have our civilization without Christianity. I don't like to say it that way, because I'm not trying to force anybody to be a Christian, but I just want to make a kind of prediction that the further away we get from Christian impulse, and it's more than Christian ideas, but a Christian impulse, the less likely it is that our kind of society will survive.

The Pursuit of Happiness: A Tale of Two Sisters

Michael Novak:

So you really have to do what you can to defeat envy, and the best way to do that is to promote the pursuit of happiness. Take two sisters from Missouri who have come to Washington in Truman's time, and from Missouri in Truman's time and they, Sarah and Elizabeth, and they're Depression children. So, Sarah hates to spend. She always likes to have savings set aside. She's neat, and always nicely dressed and everything, but she doesn't like to spend very much on clothing. Neither one has children.

Michael Novak:

And her sister Elizabeth is just a wild one, and she spends, she dresses the best everything. Everything is the best and she goes to the best restaurants. She saves nothing. And she goes on trips around the world as often as she can. And Sarah worries for her and said, "Elizabeth, you don't save a penny. What are you going to do when he hit old age?"

Michael Novak:

And Elizabeth comes back, "Sarah, you drive me crazy. You're saving all this money, and you don't have any money to leave it to. Why can't you live a little bit? It you're missing all of life."

Michael Novak:

So these two don't envy each other at all. In fact, they think the other one is crazy. But Elizabeth ends up with \$2,300 in the bank. Barely pays for her coffin, let alone the funeral. And Sarah ends up through her little mutual funds, which she's plugged money in, with over \$2 million.

Michael Novak:

Now give me a sociologist in the United States who wouldn't say, "This is unfair. This is gross inequality. Two million to two thousand. We got to do something about that." No, we did it beautifully. We allowed each person to pursue what is their dream to pursue, with unequal outcomes.

Michael Novak:

This kid goes and plays banjo in New Hampshire, and perfectly happy. And this kid's working 16 hours a day at General Motors, and perfectly competent and pleased with, always accomplished. And it's like that.

America Torn: Libertarianism v. Social Democracy

Michael Novak:

And then you talk about the two mobs, the libertarian side and the social democracy side pulling as well. The Lord says we should love our enemy. He says ourself, the most unnatural thing to do. He doesn't say we have to like our enemies. You just have to remind yourself that the Lord saw something valuable in them when he created them that's lovable. You got to look for it. I have to confess, I've had a number of cases where I cannot find it, and I cannot imagine what the Lord found lovable in certain people, but I'm willing to say He did. I'm willing to take it on faith that he did. And in this instance, something we can learn from each of these. I think the libertarians frequently leave out the side of community, of family. They even leave out the side that's where you learn the libertarian view.

Michael Novak:

Libertarians tend to have libertarian children because they teach them the habits, and they teach them the concepts. I think that more attention needs to be paid to how libertarianism is a community movement and building that community is very important. And on the other side, social Democrats. Well, in Europe, Europe starts out from a position of greater equality. Now that's breaking down because they're more from Africa, and Asia pouring in, and I think they're beginning to experience the strains of our own society which from the beginning has been planetary in its acceptance of people. So that among us, the great, great, great experience of America is the building of communities, people, land, and Jamestown, or wherever. St. Augustine's, Florida, Plymouth Rock. And the most amazing thing is they get a living community able to perpetuate itself. Not in all cases, some of them do die out, but they just keep trying.

Michael Novak:

And we built communities all across America. We're much better community builders than we are individuals. Of course, they know how hard a decision it was for them to break from their families and go elsewhere. So, the real pain they felt was an individual one. So we emphasize the individual, knowing that if we paid attention to others, we wouldn't be here. We had to break free. But when do, the first thing we have to do is build a community. So, I think the libertarians miss a whole side of our nature, and the people who talk community, and communitarianism, and democratic party talk, leave nobody behind, and things like that.

Inequality is nature's natural state?

Michael Novak:

Twist it just a little bit. Pope Leo XIII, was the first Pope to write about economic matters, 1891, in a letter called, Rerum Novarum, new things happening. And why did he write about it? And this touches the third leg, because of the family. He said what's happening in massive numbers is the lands can't support the growing population and people are moving into the cities. So for the first time, the family is not together all day long, not working together. And this one's working here in this factory, and that one in that factory. One relevant really sharp little point he made that's valuable today is about the unnaturalness and the futility and the evil of attacking inequality. Inequality is counter natural.

Michael Novak:

In my own family, my father had a glorious tenor voice. He could stand up in front of 500 people, go over to the pianist at a restaurant and say, "Could you play...?" And he could do a marvelous song, honoring my mother, and get a round of applause. Embarrass the whole family, but get a... And I can't

carry a tune. I have a decent voice, but I just cannot... I drop from key to key, and so forth. That's unfair. It's unequal. When my children say, "She got more than I did." I'd say, "Get used to it, life is unfair."

Michael Novak:

Everything about it is unfair, so to try to impose that, it runs against nature. And it's evil, because it breeds destructive consequences. Envy is the main vice that destroys societies. The envy of the rich by the poor. The envy of families, middle class families in Florence or Siena, the envy of neighborhoods. And this is why democracies have always failed. If you go through history, one side tears down the other side. So you really have to do what you can to defeat envy. And the best way to do that is to promote the pursuit of happiness.

Which way the U.S.?

Doug Monroe:

Yes or no to certain type of question like that, but it kind of hearkens back to what the non-christian, Chinese academics were saying. They concluded that it seems that the reason some things happen in the west and not elsewhere is because of the phenomena that you're talking about right there.

Michael Novak:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Doug Monroe:

Let's go to the question we were talking about at breakfast a little bit, where the baby's getting pulled in both directions-

Michael Novak:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Doug Monroe:

By the mom. The baby being The United States and western European one mom. Let's say some radical free market being over here on the tradition capitalism quote on quote maybe on the left, the baby's being pulled. Are you optimistic about where we are as a country and which way should we go?

Where is America now?

Michael Novak:

I'm less optimistic in the Obama period than I've ever been in my life. I don't want to linger on that, but I don't think the President understands the really crucial role of the American military in the world. And I think that our military capacities are down very far from where they were when he began and are headed on a downward trajectory.

Michael Novak:

And because of human sinfulness, I think it's very important to have the power to police, which everybody respects and everybody fears. And we're losing that. I fear that the real emphasis on

inequality is absolutely destructive. Madison in the Federalist calls it a wicked project to put the emphasis on equality. The other 13 gave their reasons. It's unnatural, it's divisive, it's war causing. Anyway, it's futile, and it will lead to destruction. For those reasons, I'm more down about our future than I've ever been.

Michael Novak:

On the other hand, my father taught me, "Michael, never bet against Notre Dame, the New York Yankees, and the United States of America." He didn't mean they were always the best, but there's a certain spirit there that rears its head every so often when you win, where you should lose. Notre Dame is down, the Yankees are down, and now I'm sorry to say, the United States is down a bit, but I'm going to hold on to that.

Michael Novak:

And this is a country of, also for Christian reasons, of awakenings. We believe in awakenings. Human beings are capable of awakenings. And we've seen it happen three or four times in our country where it's gone in a whole new direction, led by religious awakening. I will be very surprised if we are not building another one, slowly and underneath the table, out of sight.

John Paul II: How to cure poverty? Create wealth!

Michael Novak:

And he follows it up encyclical, another 10 years later. And he says, "What is the cause of wealth?" Now, no pope would ever ask that question. But of course, Adam Smith had, but Adam Smith was all alone in philosophical history. Nobody ever asks how could you create more wealth? And it's the fruitful question. To ask what are the causes of poverty is idle. I mean, okay. Suppose you find out the causes of poverty. Terrific. Now you know how to make more poverty. I mean, it's a useless question. The really interesting question is how do you create wealth? Because if you can create wealth, then there's absolutely no need for poverty.

Michael Novak:

Adam Smith is the first man in history to imagine a world in which there is no poverty. Universal affluence was the term he gave it. I mean, that's a dynamite idea. Well, anyway, there was Pope John Paul II in paragraph 31 or 32 of *Centesimus Annus*, it's the hundredth year, the hundredth year after Leo XIII's first encyclical. The cause of the wealth of nations is primarily knowledge, skill, know-how. It's just an amazing transformation of terms. Transformation and giving capital a new meaning and then just straightening out a whole battery of terms.

Michael Novak:

He did the same thing with personal initiative. He talked about how one of the great abuses under communism was the destruction of personal initiative. He's thought of that as a natural right. The biblical text that appealed to him most was Genesis and creation, the creation story. Not the liberation story of the liberation theologians. That story is most human beings on earth are oppressed, overthrow their oppressors. He didn't see it that way, John Paul II. Rather, that God created and endowed in us the capacities to create. And our task together is to create wealth and law and free society, and for that matter, the praise to God, the religious liberty.

Michael Novak:

So, all my life I've tried to take words like self-interest. Self-interest was invented by the economists of the 18th century and I myself think was to put a thumb in the nose, the eyes of the theologians and the moralists. Because when moralists say self-interest, they always mean greed, selfishness. But from the point of view of an economist, if your interest is prayer, then go ahead and pray. If that means more to you in anything of the world, you have a right to do that. Or as Jesus says, what does it profit you if you gain the whole world and suffer the loss of your soul?

Michael Novak:

Well, that's been appeal to profit. What does profit you? If it's your self-interest to live the gospels and to make the sacrifices required and so forth, that's good. Self-interests are not always evil. Self-interests are good. If I want to learn Latin or Greek, I've got to set aside the time to do and go through the conjugations and declensions and learn how to speak these difficult languages. I've got to put in the effort. But that's my self-interest. I want to be a different kind of person. That's not bad. Self-interest is... Okay, I'm overdoing it. But the point is self-interest is a neutral word. It can be bad, it can be good, it can be just neutral. But it's not an evil word. It's not pejorative. And the economies who are trying to make that point, unfortunately, polemically.

Speaker 2:

I'm going to skip to-

Holy Human Capital!

Michael Novak:

There are tremendous terminological verbal problems when you go to speak about freedom, about democracy, about capitalism, about socialism, about inequality, about almost any subject due to public discourse. And that's fun. I mean, it means you have to explore a little, you need a little bit of time with the people, but let me give you an example. In his first letter on the economy, all of them are called in Latin, labor exercens, exercising labor Pope, John Paul II, who from Poland, who had no experience in a capitalist economy, and had been battling Marx's terminology was still using it. And he says that in all cases, labor is to be preferred to capital. Because in his mind, capital is always only things. It's either money or it's machinery. And labor is always persons, and persons have precedence.

Michael Novak:

Well, a few years later, when he addresses a subject again, he does it at every 10 years or so. He has discovered something, I think from conversations with Hayek and from a man they call the Polish Hayek, a man named Jowskey spent a couple hours in conversation with him too. He begins to grasp the idea of human capital, that if you have a population with skills in their fingers and in their hands and in their brains and they can take direction and they can think for themselves, that's a source of wealth that's very hard to destroy. And it's much better than just having the machines. And it's much better than just having the money. You can have all the money in the world, but if you don't have those human qualities, you're not going to go anywhere. So he began to realize that human beings have in them, a form of capital that's much more important than the other forms of capital. So you see how this began to switch his whole categories.

The Right v. The Left: The key to more jobs? More employers!

Michael Novak:

Libertarians have trouble grasping that even libertarianism springs from families, and its lessons and its ideas are passed on and passed on through certain books, laissez-faire books in this country and other institutions and meetings that, which you can count the numbers are growing, but it's the community side of it that they're scant in their discussions. On the other side, there are a few things that, in my experience, and when I was a Democrat, I didn't grasp and had to learn.

Michael Novak:

For example, everybody wants to talk about jobs these days and well we should. The world needs something like half a billion new jobs. And for that, if you want more employees, and here's the point I didn't get for a long time, you have to add more employers. So, you've got to encourage more small business people, more entrepreneurs, people willing to risk what they have in order to create something which may not be created. It may fail, and often does, four out of seven times does. So, it takes pretty gutsy people to do that. But you sure as heck want to prepare them and encourage them and give them every help you can. Why then make so much make businessmen the enemy? It does not make any sense. That's one sort of thing the left doesn't understand.

Michael Novak:

Also, it does not understand the role of incentives. Whatever you think about it, whatever people admit to themselves, you give them a higher incentive to do X or Y. Give extra marks in class for extra work. Some people pick up on that and do it. If you want some more of something, reward it. If you want less of something, punish it.

The Reagan Years: "Bourgeoisie" or Entrepreneurs?

Michael Novak:

Oh. No. I remember I was teaching at Syracuse, Syracuse University, and looking at the bulletin board in the hallway of graduate hallway, and I saw something I'd never seen before. The wall of little index cards saying "We paint basements. We repair roofs. We babysit children. We do home sitting. We do shingles." But all the graduates, all is too strong, but many of the graduate students were going into business as entrepreneurs just to pay for college or give them options as jobs were diminishing in the academic field. More people were getting doctorates than there were jobs for doctorates, and they had to go in another direction, and they did it. And all of a sudden, because enterprise became a good word, for the first time in my lifetime, I heard entrepreneur as a good thing.

Michael Novak:

If I were in graduate school, it would have been just before this, been described in the 1960s as an entrepreneur, that would've been intended as an insult. Now, let me come back to bourgeois, a word I used to hate, but I've really learned to respect. Bourgeois taste, people say, they mean an insult, they don't mean anything good. But think about it. Who made the best cutlery, who made the best swords, who made the best wines, who made the best cheeses, who produced the best vellum paper? Everything beautiful in the world was made by the bourgeoisie.

Michael Novak:

They were the people who were no longer serfs, land workers but people with initiative and artistic skill and the drive and determination to do it well. And they began to live in the cities. They made their little homes in the cities. That's the bourgeoisie. What did the aristocrats do? Mostly locked up their relatives in prison or something. And not a lot of beautiful things were created by the English aristocracy and monarchy. Some were, but most of it was made by the bourgeoisie. But I do think artists identify themselves with aristocrat. They don't do the sweaty labor, they're fine taste, and they're supported by the aristocrats. So, they have the contempt for the Bourgeoisie, which they are taught by the aristocrats who look down their noses at these new votes.

Taxation and Capital

Michael Novak:

If you want something more of something, reward it. If you want less of something, punish it. And you need to think about taxation in that way too. Remember taxation is reward and punishment. And don't destroy the incentive structure. That's really the energy. That's what makes the society grow in jobs and goods and new industries. Just imagine how much... Well, in my lifetime I saw with my own eyes grow when one man alone, congressman, sought to the passage of the capital gains reduction tax. He had nobody supporting him, blocking on his name from Wisconsin. And then Reagan picked it up and did cut capital gains there. That means that if you invest money and it starts a new industry or something, and it grows and you get lots of new wealth from it, you're not taxed at a high rate on that. You're taxed at a low rate. So you'll do more of it.

Doug Monroe:

Stagger?

Michael Novak:

Yes. The Stagger Amendment. Thank you. And what did we see? We saw Silicon Valley emerge in that period. And we got transistor radios, we got pretty soon cell phones, we got new forms of television, we got new forms of computer and personal computers. We went from a mechanical age to an electronic age in about a 10 year period. We got genetic medicine, we got fiber optics communications.

Michael Novak:

The world was transformed in those 10 years. And all because there were lots of people wanting to use their initiative to bring forward and suddenly there was the capital to do it. Because you can't... Steve Jobs can invent Apple in his garage. But once he makes the decision to start building them, he needs somebody to put down the money for the factory. Capital is the mother's milk of job creation, and I don't understand why people on the left don't see that.

Doug Monroe:

Well...

Christianity: The Source of America's Free Conscience and Limited State Concepts

Michael Novak:

One of the great things about the Virginia Statute on Religious Liberty, Jefferson's version, is he saw how crucial it was to found the nation on conscience. And men of his generation, Christians of all times, believe that in us, there is a spark of light, a spark of intelligence, spark of insight, which shows us what to do and what not to do, faultily and prone to suffering from our human weaknesses, but still always there. And Jefferson very much wanted to establish the pluralism of the United States on that perception, so as not to coerce the consciousness of free men and free women. That's the most powerful restriction on government there is. Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. And it's the first anti-totalitarian principle. Not everything belongs to the state. The state is limited. And it's limited in this very delicate way by the human conscience and allowing access to that conscience free.

Michael Novak:

He even makes the point that ... He was asked, Jefferson, in the assembly when he mentions the holy author of our religion, "Does that mean Jesus? Should we state that in the..." And he was against it. He said, "No, because we want even Hindus, Muslims, anyone who is here to be able to say these words." And it's clear enough what we mean, just because that's the history. I'm improvising now, but just because that's the history out of which these concepts come. It is a Christian history. It doesn't mean you have to be a Christian to see their power and believe them. So distinguish the genesis, the Christian genesis of this from the universal power of it. And therefore, that's how we argue, we don't need the name Jesus here. I think that's just tremendously touching, to restrain oneself from going a step too far and pushing other people's conscience.

Christian Narrative and Progress: The Death of Secularism

Michael Novak:

And one of the most under reported facts of the 21st century is the death of secularism. Let me show you a little bit of what I mean. Maybe I'm wrong about this, but this is what I mean. We are taught to believe by modern scientific method that the world began in chaos, by chance. Now let's say this is what scientists believe, but think what it is to live it on the part of a guy who's working at a gas station late and got dirty hands and not making much headway from year to year in his income. And it's a dirty, difficult task. If it's cold, it's miserable outside. And if it's hot, it's miserable outside. Well, He got this just by chance? This was the luck of the draw? Why shouldn't I be steamed? Why shouldn't I be rebellious? Why shouldn't I be trying to tear this all down?

Michael Novak:

It's hard for people to go through lives with joy and pleasure and sense of vocation, sense of calling. If it's all chaos, I don't think secularists have thought through that. Secondly, I don't think secularists have thought through the implications of their belief or progress because progress is a Christian notion. Our Father who art in heaven give us this day, our daily bread and then on into the building of the kingdom yet to come, but the need to build it up. That's where the idea of progress is born. History is going somewhere. It has a meaning. It has a narrative, and you take away that narrative, and it's hard to measure what's progress or not.

9/11 Nihilism v. Moral Narrative Conscience

Michael Novak:

History is going somewhere. It has a meaning, it has a story, a narrative. You take away that narrative and it's hard to measure what's progress or not. You say, "Oh, that's Deckon. Oh, that's just your opinion."

Michael Novak:

I remember when the towers went down in New York, September 11th, and some people said, "That's the most evil thing I've ever seen." And some people said, "Oh, that's just your opinion." Then it got bopped in the nose for saying, "That's just your opinion." That was evil, catching helpless people, and then bringing about the jumping of these bodies from a hundred floors up, by the dozens, like flies.

Michael Novak:

Under a purely chaos, no conscience, no God theory, it's hard to say. It's hard to say when a country's in decadence, when a country is making progress, you've lost your moral compass. That's your personal moral compass. It has no bearing on reality. And a country can, a nation, a culture can give up a lot following that path without realizing that it's total destruction at the end. It's Nazis at the end or some form of it. It's the thugs rule at the end. Nothing's right. Nothing's wrong. Nothing's true. Nothing's false. So, the guys with the power win. There's nothing wrong with that. There's nothing to protest about that. The guys with the most guns win.

Michael Novak:

I don't think people have faced those consequences yet. And in their personal lives, people allow themselves more liberties than they intend to early on. And one by one, things fall apart. Then you get things like more and more random murders because people felt like it. More and more mass shootings because people felt some urge to do it. There's not taught to people... Well, how can I put it? If you have, in a country like ours, if you have 100 million, 150 million people who have internal policemen, you tell them what to do. What's right. What's wrong. Don't do this. Other many people would do it, don't do it. I'm not going to do that. You don't need 150 million policemen on the street making sure you don't do those things. It's a lot cheaper for a society to have 150 million internal policemen than external policemen.

The Founder's Creator God and Free Will

Michael Novak:

It's crazy to think of Jefferson and Madison as secular people. I could give 100 reasons for that, but the main reason it happens is that many of the historians are secular themselves. And they just can't believe that anybody takes the religious language seriously, so they don't. Well, a lot of us do and let us read the text in our meaning of it. Here's the way Jefferson begins the Declaration of Religious Liberty.

Michael Novak:

"Well aware that almighty God hath created the mind free." Now think about that for a moment. That's where he begins his reflection on religious liberty. That God hath made the mind free. "That all attempts at influencing it by temporal punishments or burdens or by rival by civil incapacitations tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the holy author of our

religion, who being lured both the body and mind. Yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either as was in his almighty power to do that. The impious presumption of legislators and rulers, civil as well as ecclesiastical."

The Creator God & Free Will: the Virginia Declaration of Rights

Michael Novak:

One other line I love very much from the four religious documents of Virginia, mostly on religious liberty. This is from Virginia's Declaration of Rights, which is 1776, George Mason, author. But this last section 16 is Madison's. "That religion or the duty which we owe to our creator." And the founders, particularly the Virginians, thought this was a self-evident proposition, that if you think about what a creator is and what a creature is, the duty of the latter is just pressing and it's self evident, you owe everything to the creator. "So that religion or the duty which we owe to our creator and the manner of discharging it can be directed only by reason and conviction."

Michael Novak:

And this is the great insight of the Christian faith that God has to be imagined as insight and judgment, that is his reason and conviction. Not will, not arbitrary will, not power, but in the beginning was the word, the insight into all the things that were to come, the active intelligence of which everything is born and their connections. "And this religion can be directed therefore, only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence. And therefore, all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion." Some receive it at one point in their lives, others in another point, sometimes in turmoil, sometimes in rejection. "So equally entitled to the free exercise of religion according to the dictates of conscience, and that it is the mutual beauty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love, and charity toward each other."

Michael Novak:

What I love about it is that the language of the conclusion, to practice Christian forbearance, love, and charity toward each other in announcing religious liberty for all, it does it in a completely Christian language. And I think as a matter of fact, only Christian language is able to handle it. You have to have a God who wishes to speak only to the conscience of persons and one and another, and who wants to be worshiped by women and men who are free, who choose him. He's not the worship of slaves who submit to him.

Michael Novak:

My favorite images for this are I think of pictures of St. Joan of Arc, the leader of all France, and she's usually pictured kneeling erect with her eyes to the sky. This is a strong, free warrior. And then the picture, the symbol of his lamb is of the ruler or the man touching his head to the floor, and his forehead to the floor, in real total submission. It's two very different gods. One a God of will and you must accept his will no matter what, and one a God of conscience and light who created the world in light, wants you to come to it in light, and only values you're coming to him in light. These are very, very different fundamental realities and we will see the history of these two realities played out over the next hundred or two years.

Human Rights Rooted in Duty to Creator

Michael Novak:

When the fundamental ground of religious liberty is duty and you better not interfere with the call of a woman or a man directly to their God. That's sacred, that's between them and you must not interfere with it. And therefore that's the Ground of Rights. That creates a right for that person to fulfill the duty, which they have to something much greater than society, much greater than their parents, much greater than anything is, but to God, directly. To their creator directly. It's a very powerful theory of rights, rooting them in duty. And then recognize that this duty is to the creator is supreme over any duty to state, or civil society, or family. I think Locke here makes a mistake in that he doesn't see the, he argues that the contractor is with civil society, the individual in the civil society. Mason and Madison with him, Jefferson are arguing that, "No more important, deeper than the civil society is the relation of the person to God." No relation is deeper than that. I think the Virginia documents, these two and then Madison's Remonstrance are unequal in the history of liberty. There's a different version in Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Constitution, third constitution, but it has much the same logic to it.

Michael Novak:

It calls though upon the duty, the Massachusetts one, calls upon the duty of the people and the magistrates to allow for religious education. And so, it sees a social duty from this duty to God. The Virginians did not want to go that far.

Conscience

Michael Novak:

And where does conscience come from? People have conscience. Christopher Hitchens, the great famous atheist, told me once, stopped me at the elevator, "Michael, you should make more of the argument from conscience. Where does conscience come from? What does conscience point to?" And in fact, a lot of people in the 20th century in the concentration camps began to rediscover God through conscience. They were being asked to lie, to sign a document they didn't believe, and they were being tortured in every possible way.

Michael Novak:

"Why don't you just sign and we can stop the pain? In just a minute, it will all be over, and who will ever know? It's going to be written down and put in a file cabinet somewhere. Have no effect on the world. Well, why don't you just say yes?" To where the real answer was no. And they couldn't bring themselves to do it. Now where does that resistance come from? It doesn't come from my body. My body would sure like to stop hurting. I'm not a believer in God. Where is it coming from? But I have got to be faithful to this light. Can you imagine there's a little bit of light?

Liberty: A Human Only Riddle

Michael Novak:

Liberty is self-government, self-mastery so one can do with all one's resources what one wishes to do. And that particular idea of liberty is peculiar to human beings. Animals, dogs, tigers live free they say. But all they can possibly do is do what their instinct determines them to do, tells them to do. So we had my daughters brought home two cats when they were very young and persuaded us to allow them to adopt and they would take care of them. They would bathe them, they would feed them. And so they

were actually pretty good in doing that until they left home and went to college. Then we had to deal with those damn cats.

Michael Novak:

And I got partly to love them partly to hate them I must say. But one thing I learned about bringing up cats and bringing up children is totally different. With your cats you just learn if they're thirsty they meow and they want some attention or they want to eat or they want to go outside. And sometimes I would not pay attention to them. And then we had one smart little cat. She would jump up on the table, black and white one. The other one was orange and slow and stupid. And this one was so bright and she'd move a cup or saucer closer to the edge of the table meow and you look up and then see. And if you didn't get there quickly enough she'd push it over the edge and you'd yell and scream and throw the newspaper at her. Then you'd go and do what she wanted to do, let her out or give her some milk or something. So she had me trained completely.

Michael Novak:

But with children you don't have to train them only not to do things by instinct but to see how many different instincts they have and then learn the difference among them and which ones to pursue and which ones to resist. In fact, it's a much more complicated deal. And with cats you don't really have to worry who they're going to marry or what career they're going to choose. I mean they go on the same thing for 5,000 years. I bet cats still do what they did in ancient Egypt when one of them posed for a statue. Raising a human being is a much more delicate thing than that.

In The Founders' Opinions: How good is man? Our saving Grace!

Michael Novak:

By the way, that reminds me of something else. One of the great differences between the French Revolution and ours is that our founders, nearly all Protestant, not quite, John Carol and some others, were proud and they were especially attached to Saint Augustine, not generally speaking to the early church. That was Catholic. They loved that. Well, St. Augustine through Luther I think really stuck with them. And this I think was the saving grace of the U.S. founding.

Michael Novak:

Because if you read the Federalist papers they go for a pessimistic page after pessimistic page about the sinfulness of human beings. And it gets so bad that towards the end they say now the British parliament is not completely evil. For example, they once voted for, as I'm doing this by memory, but voted for the corn laws even against the self interest of the corn growers.

Michael Novak:

And I just love that how human beings are not to be trusted, how if men were angels and then they had to come in and say, sometimes people do good for selfless reasons only occasionally. That's such a refreshing point of view from the French, which went on to the Soviets at building the society, the perfect man, the socialist man, who's going to be without fault because there won't be any private property. There won't be any self-interest. There won't be any money.

"Human Capital" and the Liberty to be a Creator

Michael Novak:

There are these three liberties one, the more difficult, the trading of the soul, of the self control, of the ability to have insight into many different areas of human life. And so know how to shape your own conduct, that's one liberty. And the others two are more apparent the liberty to live free of tyranny and torture. The second one came later on the scene, economic liberty, it never occurred to human beings until about 1800, little before 1800, that we could create plenty. Nobody ever asked what's the cause of wealth before.

Michael Novak:

And by the way, the best answer to that was given many years later, well, not that many years later by four score and seven practically by Abraham Lincoln. When he said that he, he discussed, as a very young man, the seven great steps in the history of liberty and in the sixth one, he called attention to the patent and copyright clause of the U.S. Constitution. It's the only place in the whole constitution where the word "right" appears. The right of authors and inventors to the fruits of their inventions for a limited time.

Michael Novak:

And he pointed out that how this transformed the whole economic structure of the world. Here to fore wealth was mostly land, where you had extensive lands, you could live from the wheat, the barley, the fruit trees and the wines that would fall from them and thus. And s,o Oxford University had thousands of acres around the world, bringing in its, their abundance to, and now suddenly you switch from the wealth of the land, to the wealth of the human mind.

Michael Novak:

And all kinds of things came to be invented. Lincoln himself had two patents. Now my wife's father and grandfather had 50 patents between them. Some very important ones, the extension ladder, the binder for international harvester still using to bind up hay and things like that and the best electric rod at use at the time and so on and so forth. All these discoveries, chewing gum, great boon of the human race. All these things were, and almost everything around us was invented since the patent and copyright law. Practically all American wealth is built on an invention or discovery. It might be discovery of a new way of doing things or a new way of analyzing things or of organizing things. But a lot of them are just different products that didn't exist before.

Is human nature good enough for democracy?

Michael Novak:

Reinhold Niebuhr had a sentence that said, "Human beings are good enough, just good enough to make democracy workable, but they're wicked enough to make democracy necessary." You have to have the check and the balances of it. Now, here are some friends of mine, purists' comment that what I really mean is republic, not democracy. Democracy, the rule of the majority is something our fathers, founders terribly feared, because the majority is a mob is worse than a tyrant. Because you can reason with a tyrant, you can't reason with the mob. So part of their effort was to create and construct a system of polity that put brakes on the majority.

Family: The Foundation of Human Society

Michael Novak:

The family used to be called the health and humans ... No, HEW, health, education, and welfare. If the family breaks down, you need lots of HEW. It needs to get bigger and bigger. And if the family is healthy, you don't need much of it. It's the only HEW that really works. And so the family is so crucial to hold a society together, to noble it with its own ideals, and to give people the moral capacities to execute the original covenant in the Constitution itself and the free society and the limited government. If you have children who have internal policemen in them, they don't need a big government. So the family is so vital and it's a shame that we've lost all control of it and it's disintegrating before our eyes generation by generation or worse.

The Creation Story's Heart: God Created Man and Woman

Michael Novak:

I'm not going to quote it exactly, but right at the top of the book, near the beginning of Genesis, the story of the creator says, "In the beginning, He created man. In His image, He created them. Male and female, he created them." So I deduce from this that there's something very important in the difference between male and female that gives us two different ways of seeing God, that add up to something complimentary about God. And you don't understand God fully unless you understand both the male and the female principal. Now, I have to tell you a funny story about this. One of the favorite stories of Lady Thatcher, Prime Minister of United Kingdom, she attends her first G8 meeting, I think it was. G7, G8, I don't remember the number at that time. And President Mitterrand was in the chair because the meeting was held in France, and he didn't introduce her to the group, and a little black cloud was forming over her head.

Michael Novak:

And finally he recognized his faux pas and, "Oh, I apologize. I apologize. I forgot to introduce the new Prime Minister of Britain who will be joining our efforts and I am certain she will be to us, as it says in the Bible, a help mate." Bigger black clouds over her head. She buys her time and when she is finally given a moment to speak she thanks President Mitterrand for his courtesy and says, "But I think we must read a different Bible in Britain from the one you read in France, because in our creation story, the way it's told is that first God created Adam, then having learned from his mistakes, he created Eve." I just adore that story.

God's Working Symbol of His Covenant of Love for Mankind: Marriage

Michael Novak:

The image of God's covenant with his people, a covenant is not subject to divorce. I mean, you can't get out of a covenant. It's not just a contract. It's something deeper than that. And the image of his covenant with his people is the covenant of man with woman. They are a symbol of the steadiness of God toward human beings. Those bound in his covenant, those chosen to be his people, and that's... Matrimony is considered absolutely fundamental to our understanding of God. And as Mary Eberstadt notes in her recent book, if we begin to misunderstand the family and try to begin from the breakdown of the family to come to an understanding of God, it breaks. And the ability even to understand God breaks. How can you understand the father when he's abandoned the children? How can you have any image of the Christian God that way?

Michael Novak:

So, the family is the greatest part of human capital that the human race can possess. It's there that children first of all learn love. From, as John Paul II says, from the first glance they see in their mother's eyes, they see the glance of total love, total commitment, total forgiveness, if you will, and total service, because the infant is so utterly helpless. And that's where human beings first get the idea of unconditional love, from the look in their mother's eyes at birth.

Michael Novak:

And if your family starts out teaching the alphabet and telling you stories every night and giving you moral instruction through these stories, and shows you what this word with this sound, and if you learn to read by the time you're three or four, you don't need pre-kindergarten school. You're there already. But when the family breaks down and doesn't do that, when a huge plurality of families don't have any books in the house, where the inequality of books in homes is absolutely striking.

Michael Novak:

When I gave up my library and gave it to Ave Maria University Library, it was over 22,000 volumes. I'm not unusual. I think there are many lawyers and others who have much larger libraries than I do or did.

Michael Novak:

But in any case, the family is so indispensable to your intellectual development, to your moral development, to that great American word, stick-to-it-iveness, not allowing you to quit too soon, and teaching a sense of duty and respect. If you don't get these in the families, if those are broken, then all King Harry and all his king horses can't put it back together again. Just can't.