

Addenda

A monthly e-mail newsletter from **MARS HILL AUDIO**

November 15, 2004 v Number 9

"When God is not confessed as the Lord of creation, either titanic man or deified gene takes the floor, with the result that both understanding and the world are distorted."

--Colin Gunton, *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study*

New on our desks

Bernard Lewis Sets the Course . . .

"Western visitors to Muslim lands have 'talk[ed] with horror of the subordination and ill-treatment of Muslim women (and, I might add, with ill-concealed envy of what they imagine to be the privileges of Muslim men). Muslim visitors to the Christian world are shocked and horrified by the loose and promiscuous ways of the West and also the absurd deference, as they see it, given to Western women.'" [\[Read more\]](#)

Guest and Topic Preview: David Koyzis on Liberalism

"Many . . . different views of politics, under whatever ideological label they may fall, find their origins in a single religious worldview that sees the cosmos as an essentially closed system without reference to a creator/redeemer. In short, for all the apparent conflict among the several ideologies, all are subspecies of the larger category of idolatry." This provocative statement is from *Political Visions & Illusions: A Survey and Christian Critique of Contemporary Ideologies* by David Koyzis, who is one of Ken Myers's guests on the next issue of the **MARS HILL AUDIO Journal**.

Among other things, Koyzis is interested in questions concerning the liberal political order that most citizens of modern, western democracies take for granted, whether they describe themselves as politically liberal or conservative. Both would agree that the original foundation of the liberal political order (in, for example, John Locke, Adam Smith, the Declaration of Independence, and the Bill of Rights) exemplifies a "philosophy of freedom which made huge strides in liberating humanity from a variety of oppressive institutions, such as chattel slavery [and] feudalism,"(*) and ushered in an age of unprecedented personal freedom, peace, and prosperity.

Contemporary political liberalism, roughly defined as a conviction that the individual is autonomous, with the role of institutions (government, family, churches, etc.) that of facilitating liberation and self-realization, is in varying degrees embodied in politicians, policies, and causes deemed "progressive" and "enlightened." Insistence on the moral necessity of abortion on demand, a comprehensive welfare state, progressive taxation, and race- and gender-based affirmative action typifies this position. This is a type of liberalism from which conservative politicians, red-state voters, and evangelical Christians generally recoil.

The "betrayal of liberalism" approach sees this contemporary political liberalism as a distortion of true liberalism, with the U.S. Supreme Court in its *Roe v. Wade* decision providing perhaps the most salient example of this wayward heir's depravity. To adherents of this view, modern liberal politicians, judges, and activists are false liberals, or no liberals at all, having betrayed the solid foundation laid by the earlier liberal thinkers and given practical expression in the founding documents of the American republic. Listeners of the **MARS HILL AUDIO Journal** will recognize the names of many prominent thinkers more or less in this camp, such as [Richard John Neuhaus](#), [George Weigel](#), and [Robert George](#).

But where many see contemporary political liberalism as a corruption of an honorable tradition, others see a logical extension of the earlier liberalism. Thus, the "continuity of liberalism" school sees abortion on demand, homosexual marriage "rights," and affirmative action, among other ills, as logical outgrowths of the foundational liberalism, so that, for example, "the voting record of a Senator Edward Kennedy stands squarely in the tradition of the American founders."

(*) The chief concern of the proponents of this view is that the liberal order has had a "fragmenting impact on the larger society," with an overemphasis on the rights of the individual at the expense of the individual's responsibilities to society. This imbalance is credited with the corrosion of families, neighborhoods, churches, and other social institutions that shape and protect the individual and safeguard shared moral standards. Many names familiar to our listeners can also be found in this school of thought, including [Stanley Hauerwas](#), [David Bentley Hart](#), and [Robert Kraynak](#).

Koyzis agrees with the "continuity of liberalism" approach and finds both contemporary political liberalism and "conservative liberalism" suspect: "I would argue that liberalism, as an ideology, has a creedal character and is rooted in a fundamentally secular worldview. To begin with, liberalism starts with a basic faith in human autonomy extending well beyond a mere attachment to personal freedom. Autonomy means to be self-directed, to govern oneself in accordance with a law which one has chosen for oneself. Each of the ideologies attaches this autonomy to some manifestation of humanity, be it the individual or some community such as the state or nation. Liberalism assigns this autonomy to the individual, who is deemed to be the centre of the cosmos."(*)

David Koyzis discusses some of these themes on [Volume 71](#) of the **MARS HILL AUDIO Journal**. A self-described "[Byzantine-rite Calvinist](#)," Koyzis teaches political science at [Redeemer University College](#) in Ontario. *Political Visions & Illusions* is published by Intervarsity Press.

(*) Quotations are from an essay by David Koyzis called "[Christianity and Liberalism: Two Alternative Religious Approaches](#)," published in the online journal [The New Pantagruel](#).

***Christianity, Culture, and Common Grace* available online**

"I am convinced that if what Christianity was and what culture was were properly understood, a discussion about the doctrine of common grace would be almost unnecessary. One of the reasons the doctrine of common grace has become a 'lost teaching,' an unfamiliar idea, is that modern Christians, especially evangelical Christians, have made some crucial mistakes in their thinking about Christianity and culture." -- Ken Myers from *Christianity, Culture, and Common Grace*

While no longer in print, *Christianity, Culture, and Common Grace*, a monograph written in 1989 by Ken Myers, is available [online](#) (via PDF file) for those interested in better understanding the tension of being a Christian and being "in the world." Among the topics addressed are the twin errors of either cultural apathy or cultural triumphalism, the insufficiency of Scripture, and the idea of a "Christian culture."

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Volume 71 (November/December 2004) in Duplication

Volume 71 is currently in the late duplication stage of its existence, and we hope to begin mailing it to subscribers right after Thanksgiving. This is also the issue that will be the first sent to recipients of Christmas gift subscriptions. A preview of this issue's guests is available [online](#).

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Published by

MARS HILL AUDIO
P.O. Box 7826
Charlottesville, Virginia 22906

Call 1.800.331.6407
Fax 1.434.990.9090

addenda@marshillaudio.org
www.marshillaudio.org