

version." Banfield's insights underscore the fact that poverty is basically rooted in a state of mind rather than in external circumstances.

The Work Ethic

It is intriguing to study modern history and notice how nations such as the United States, Canada, England, Germany, the Scandinavian countries, and Switzerland, which were significantly affected by the Protestant Reformation, have enjoyed great economic prosperity. Many factors were at work, of course, but nevertheless the sense of personal responsibility encouraged by the Reformation gospel was a powerful stimulus to economic improvement.

One of the ironies of the modern world is that the "Protestant work ethic" seems best exemplified in non-Christian states such as Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Insofar as these new industrial giants of Asia have applied the biblical work ethic they have enjoyed remarkable economic prosperity. This is no confirmation of a doctrine of "salvation by works," but of the simple principle that God can grant temporal blessing to righteous behavior wherever it may be found.

When Kim Kyang Won, secretary general to South Korea's president, was asked about the reasons for his country's progress, he replied, "It's the culture of discipline and post-

poning immediate satisfaction for the future—even for posterity."¹⁴ Such character traits have encouraged a national investment rate of 25–35 percent of the Gross National Product, twice the U.S. rate.

Americans of all faiths can learn from the Asian example of diligence and future-orientation. Being the "salt of the earth" in our own society implies the demonstration of such character traits. God's temporal blessings can then be directed not toward needless self-gratification, but toward the meeting of legitimate needs in the wider human community. ☪

—FOOTNOTES—

¹Cited by Charles Krauthammer, "Rich Nations, Poor Nations," *New Republic*, April 11, 1981, p. 20.

²Cited by Jim Wallis, "Of Rich and Poor," *Post American*, February/March 1974, p. 1.

³Henry Hazlitt, "The Problem of Poverty," *Freeman*, June 1971, p. 323.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 324.

⁶*Boston Herald American*, December 21, 1979, p. A9.

⁷Michael J. Boskin, "Prisoners of Bad Statistics," *Newsweek*, January 26, 1981, p. 15.

⁸Nick Eberstadt, "Hunger and Ideology," *Commentary*, July 1981, p. 41.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁰Louis Kraar, "Make Way for the New Japans," *Fortune*, August 10, 1981, p. 176.

¹¹Max Singer and Paul Bracken, "Don't Blame the U.S.," *New York Times Magazine*, November 1976, p. 34.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³P. T. Bauer, *Western Guilt and Third World Poverty* (Washington, D.C., 1976), pp. 3–5.

¹⁴Kraar, *op. cit.*, p. 179.



Edmund A. Opitz

The Genial Mr. Nock

BRING TOGETHER the shades of Erasmus, Shakespeare and Goethe and try to imagine what they would do. Play poker? Visit the Stock Exchange? Absurd! They would talk together. The precious converse of noble minds is the most truly human of all human relations, and demands at least as much artistry as Kreisler brought to the Mendelssohn Concerto. It need not be argued that Albert Jay Nock belongs on the same plane as the aforementioned to assert that he was of their spirit and that he did bring a considerable finesse to any discussion. Nock loved good talk; kindled by a responsive companion he was a brilliant conversationalist. He loved good food as well, but a meal was primarily a

means of lubricating the flow of ideas. To the table he brought a mind trained and tuned to concert pitch, a mind well stocked with ideas gleaned from great literature and broadened by wide experience here and on the continent.

Nock's ideas were perhaps not so original as he was, but he had made them his very own; his thinking ran along lines quite at variance with the familiar channels scooped out by the popular pundits of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Having framed his convictions independent of any school or party, he was able to view the intellectual passions and battles of the day with clinical detachment. Consequently, he appeared to many of his contemporaries as a man of monumental prejudices, almost an anachronism.

Convictions or prejudices, Nock orchestrated his brilliantly, and

The Reverend Mr. Opitz is a member of the staff of The Foundation for Economic Education, a seminar lecturer, and author of the book, *Religion and Capitalism: Allies, Not Enemies*.