

Writing from Left to Right: My Journey from Liberal to Conservative

Michael Novak

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"In heavy seas, to stay on course it is indispensable to lean hard left at times, then hard right. The important thing is to have the courage to follow your intellect. Wherever the evidence leads. To the left or to the right." -Michael Novak

Engagingly, writing as if to old friends and foes, Michael Novak shows how Providence (not deliberate choice) placed him in the middle of many crucial events of his time: a month in wartime Vietnam, the student riots of the 1960s, the Reagan revolution, the collapse of the Berlin Wall, Bill Clinton's welfare reform, and the struggles for human rights in Iraq and Afghanistan. He also spent fascinating days, sometimes longer, with inspiring leaders like Sargent Shriver, Bobby Kennedy, George McGovern, Jack Kemp, Václav Havel, President Reagan, Lady Thatcher, and Pope John Paul II, who helped shape—and reshape—his political views.

Yet through it all, as Novak's sharply etched memoir shows, his focus on helping the poor and defending universal human rights remained constant; he gradually came to see building small businesses and envy-free democracies as the only realistic way to build free societies. Without economic growth from the bottom up, democracies are not stable. Without protections for liberties of conscience and economic creativity, democracies will fail. Free societies need three liberties in one: economic liberty, political liberty, and liberty of spirit.

Novak's writing throughout is warm, fast paced, and often very beautiful. His narrative power is memorable.



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