

# “Choose How to Use Our Freedom”

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**By Star Parker**

RESTON, Va.—Coincident with the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the American Declaration of Independence is the 250th anniversary of the publication of *The Wealth of Nations*.

The full title of Scotsman Adam Smith’s book, published in 1776, is *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*.

One might say that, in that one year 250 years ago, the American Declaration of Independence provided the road map for political freedoms, and Smith’s book provided the road map for economic freedom.

The result was a great new achievement in the history of human potential called the United States of America.

Smith was first to systematically articulate that free markets, individuals left free to pursue their interests, with law protecting life and property, produce the most prosperous society for all.

Rather than the government deciding who should do what, an “invisible hand” guiding markets maximizes the opportunity for each to do what best suits them and thereby provides most efficiently for the needs of their fellow citizens.

Today, 250 years after publication of Smith’s famous book, its truth still brightly shines.

According to the Fraser Institute’s annual “Economic Freedom of the World” report, average income of the top 25 percent of countries in economic freedom is more than six times greater than the average income of the bottom 25 percent.

So, is *The Wealth of Nations* a book about an economic jungle, with everyone mercilessly out for themselves?

For sure not.

Smith is author of another book called *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Here he adds the moral perspective of the importance of self-knowledge, empathy to others, and meaning.

In other words, the “secret sauce,” so to speak, is allowing individuals the freedom to take responsibility for their lives and to bring their own unique talents and perspective to the marketplace, serving others through empathy and knowledge and moral responsibility.

What about technology?

Technology is the great disrupter. New discoveries and inventions bring to the marketplace new and better ways to do things, upsetting the whole existing apple cart of the way things have been.

There are always going to be those afraid of change, wanting to keep things as they are. Or wanting government to step in and abridge our freedom and our ability to take full advantage of and to use properly new technologies.

The fear of change is not without legitimacy. Technology is a tool in the hands of men.

How that technology is used depends on how human beings choose to use it: for good, or for bad.

- The steam engine
- The automobile
- The computer
- Nuclear energy
- Laptops
- The iPhone
- All great disrupters

Nuclear power has great power to destroy or to produce clean, cheap electricity. The iPhone provides unprecedented communication freedom and mobility. But it can also cause addiction. Social media provides new dimensions for communication and social cohesion. Or it can also provide a platform for horrible distortions and social destruction.

The technology grabbing headlines now is artificial intelligence.

Like other technological breakthroughs, it can do great things or horrible things.

Which it will be is not a function of the technology but a function of the human beings using it.

To go back to *The Wealth of Nations*, the great bounty is produced when people are given freedom and when those same people take responsibility for knowing what is good and knowing what is evil and acting accordingly.

Freedom means creativity.

The U.S. constitutes less than 5 percent of the world's total population.

Yet, Americans account for some 50 percent of all Nobel prizes since the prizes began in 1901.

As we celebrate this year, let's embrace our freedom, and let's push back on those so ready to concede it.

But let's remember at every moment we are a free nation under God, which is the answer to using our freedom correctly.