

Religion & Liberty

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ECONOMICS AND CULTURE



A free-market agenda for rebuilding from the coronavirus

Should the Catholic Church take government bailouts?

Sweden's response defies, and promotes, big government

What's behind COVID-19 racial health disparities?

EDITOR'S NOTE

Rev. Ben Johnson EXECUTIVE EDITOR

At this time, only one issue dominates our thoughts: the novel coronavirus global pandemic. That crisis dominates this issue of R&L, as well. Our coverage seeks to be as comprehensive as possible: national and international, church and state, body and soul. In our cover story, Henrik Rasmussen puts "medical liberty" at the heart of a nine-point plan to rebuild from the coronavirus. "These proposals might seem fanciful with long odds of success," he writes, "but so did the economic liberalization and revitalization of Europe after Nazi Germany surrendered in May 1945."

Per Ewert brings a native's insight to answer why Sweden responds differently than the rest of the world in peace or pandemic. Dustin Siggins asks whether the Roman Catholic Church deserves a government bailout. Doug Bandow states unequivocally that the media do not.

Anne Rathbone Bradley explains why "economic benefits are moral" as she weighs in on the maladaptive psychological mechanisms behind hoarding.

Anthony Bradley analyzes the racial disparities in health outcomes and concludes "a more sinister culprit than racism for COVID-19 health disparities is the expansion of government power."

Editor-at-Large John Couretas describes how the contagion deflated the city planners' utopia of densely packed urban dwellers herded together on public transportation. Trey Dimsdale reveals how the crisis has trimmed the gossamer threads upholding the European Union's status quo. The sight of member states ignoring EU guidelines poignantly illustrates how, in a crisis, national sovereignty reasserts itself.

As this issue went to press, the department store chain J.C. Penney filed for bankruptcy. Its founder, who believed "business is ... as much religious as it is secular," is the subject of our "In the liberal tradition."

With all this, there is so much more to be said. We pray by the next issue, there will be less need to say it. Until then, may the Lord's unfathomable providence bring you and yours physical, spiritual, and economic health.

This issue has been made possible in part thanks to a generous donation from Jeffrey and Cynthia Littmann. Jeffrey and Cynthia Littmann are champions of conservation and the good stewardship of our natural resources as a gift from God.



(Cover Photo: Reopen North Carolina event; Anthony Childer, CC BY 2.0.)

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FDA slowed approval of machine that could replace 8 million masks

Rev. Ben Johnson

ACTON INSTITUTE

When U.S. healthcare providers began running out of ventilators, the private sector came to the rescue. But when an Ohio-based nonprofit came up with a way to let doctors safely reuse the existing masks multiple times, the FDA took its time granting approval.

Battelle CEO Lou Von Thayer said it created a process “years ago” to clean N95 masks, which the government recommended health professionals wear during the COVID-19 epidemic. He said its Critical Care Decontamination System allows ventilators to be used up to 20 times. Each machine can clean 80,000 masks a day and return them the same day. Battelle tracks each mask, and those that have been used 20 times or that have defects are thrown away.

Together, its five machines could clean 400,000 masks a day for up to 20 uses, reducing the number of single-use masks needed by 8 million.

However, the federal government delayed its response, then imposed a regulation that would have cut the machines’ effectiveness by 88 percent.

The FDA missed its own deadline to respond to Ohio’s inquiry. Officials ultimately called Lt. Gov. Jon Husted at 1:19 a.m. on a Sunday, saying it had granted approval—but only if Battelle limited the machines to cleaning 10,000 masks a day. The FDA offered no reason for the limitation. A letter from FDA Chief Scientist Denise Hinton, which instructed Battelle to “provide FDA weekly reports,” makes it clear the government intended to constrict the technology for weeks or months.

To confound things further, the FDA order acknowledged, “There is no adequate, approved, and available alternative to the emergency use of the Battelle Decontamination System for decontaminating compatible N95 respirators for reuse.”

After President Donald Trump’s personal intervention, FDA officials “compressed what would normally take a number of days ... into a couple of hours,” Gov. Mike DeWine said. But it should not take a call from the president to expedite FDA approval of technology that serves a manifest public health need.

Church spends Easter making face masks

Joseph Sunde

ACTON INSTITUTE

Parishioners of Crossroads Church in Bluefield, West Virginia, spent Easter Sunday using 3-D printers to create face masks, shields, and other personal protective equipment (PPE) for local healthcare workers. A total of 25 families took turns crafting masks, which were then in short supply, all the while assuring their work met or exceeded government standards.

The church’s pastor, Travis Lowe—a leader in the faith-and-work community and a contributor to the Acton Powerblog—organized the event after a series of discussions with the Department of Health and Human Services and a regional hospital.

“We think our church, as well as our lives, should be a gift to our community. The gift that our community currently needs is PPEs, so we responded,” he said. “We have always looked for places where we could work for the flourishing of Bluefield.”

In fact, the facility where masks and materials were assembled is run by Crea Company, a community collective overseen by Lowe and another local pastor, Robbie Gaines. Founded as part of past economic initiatives, the company aims to bring together craftspeople to create “a movement of ‘Make + Believe’ that inspires hope in our community and region.”

Lowe saw both forms of outreach as ways of empowering his community through service and self-improvement. “When our businesses were struggling, we did this through hosting business owner round tables. When grief has been heavy in our community, we hold prayer vigils,” he said. “We do not see the community’s needs as being divided between spiritual and physical, or sacred and secular. We just try to minister to the needs of our community, whatever those needs are.”

It’s an inspiring story, demonstrating the transformative role that local institutions can play in times of crisis. But it also reminds us that institutional strength isn’t just a matter of physical or organizational readiness. As with Crossroads’ previous economic initiatives, the latest effort is simply a byproduct of their theology of work, as well as an overarching vision of the church’s social responsibility.

Science: Humans naturally excel at creative cooperation

Rev. Ben Johnson

ACTON INSTITUTE

New scientific research finds that the human race has a natural tendency to cooperate—and religion increases philanthropic giving and voluntarism during crises.

“Humans are quite possibly the world’s best cooperators,” according to a summary by the Templeton World Charity Foundation, which sponsored research on the topic.

Finding innovative ways to help others crosses all societies. “Need-based transfers are a universal human trait,” said Athena Aktipis, assistant professor of psychology at Arizona State University and co-director of the Human Generosity Project. She and her fellow researchers observed selfless cooperation everywhere from the Maasai tribe of Kenya to ranchers on the southwestern border, from Tanzania to Texas, and from Fiji to Mongolia. They found that generosity produced better results than a transactional relationship for everyone, every time—including for the charitable party.

This deep-seated drive to cooperate takes its cues from the morality embedded within the broader culture. “Reputational concerns shape behavior to be pro-social and altruistic,” said Erez Yoeli, the director of MIT’s Applied Cooperation Team. Hospitality often follows the expectations and norms of our peers.

People of faith are among society’s most active helpers, said Joseph Bulbulia, the chair of theological and religious studies at the University of Auckland. His team of researchers found “a lot more volunteering and five times the level of charitable giving among highly religious people” than among secular people. Their philanthropy creates “a massive hidden giving economy.”

Others have quantified the economic impact churches have on the U.S. economy. The total dollar value of all 344,000 U.S. religious congregations’ action is somewhere between \$1.2 trillion and \$4.8 trillion—“more than the annual revenues of the top 10 tech companies, including Apple, Amazon, and Google combined,” according to a 2016 study by Brian and Melissa Grim.

“Churches,” Bulbulia concluded, “will become much more relevant and important in the longer-term rebuilding phase.”



ESSAY

What's behind COVID-19 racial health disparities?

Anthony Bradley

Soon after COVID-19 infection rates began to skyrocket in New York City and other densely populated urban areas, progressives and Democrats demanded data on the racial disparities of testing, treatments, and deaths. The data showed that blacks and Latinos were much more likely to die from the virus than whites and Asians. As expected, progressives moved to explain these disparities in terms of structural, systemic injustice in America's healthcare system: Such injustice follows the country's material and economic inequality. The truth, however, is more complicated, and if we misunderstand the core issues, we will opt for solutions that could do more harm than good.

The accumulated impact is staggering. According to NPR, in New York City:

[C]oronavirus is twice as deadly for these minorities as for their white counterparts. In both Chicago and Louisiana, black patients account for 70 percent of coronavirus

deaths, even though they make up roughly a third of the population. At Massachusetts General Hospital ... an estimated 35% to 40% of patients admitted to the hospital with the coronavirus are Latino — that's a 400% increase over the percentage of patients admitted before the outbreak who were Latino.

The *Los Angeles Times* reported that, among patients 18 to 49 years old, "black residents are dying nearly two and a half times as often as their share of the population." Overall, blacks and Hispanics are dying disproportionately as compared to whites and Asians. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, "about 68% of the city's deaths have involved African Americans, who make up only about 30% of Chicago's total population, according to data from the Cook County medical examiner's office and the Chicago Department of Public Health."

What is the cause? Why these disparities? Again, the progressive answer is "structural racism." At *Vox*, Fabiola Cineas describes COVID-19 deaths as a racial injustice issue this way:

Still, the emergence of just a smidgen of the Covid-19 data on race already tells a grim story that shouldn't shock anyone who knows a little about the systemic oppression of black people in America. Hundreds of years of slavery, racism, and discrimination have compounded to deliver poor health and economic outcomes for black people — heart disease, diabetes, and poverty, for starters — that are only being magnified under the unforgiving lens of

the coronavirus pandemic. And negligible efforts to redress black communities are being agitated like a bee's nest prodded with a stick.

Although there is no scientific evidence to back this claim, "systemic oppression" provides a simple explanation for poor health outcomes, like heart disease and diabetes, in the eyes of many who seem uninterested in the possibility of multiple correlations. For example, we now know that the most significant factors in the disproportionate deaths of blacks and Hispanics during the pandemic are age; certain preexisting health conditions like hypertension, diabetes, obesity; and respiratory challenges like asthma. One study of New York City-area COVID-19 cases found that 88% of those patients had more than one preexisting condition, while 6.3% had only one, and 6.1% had none at all.

The question that matters, then, is why do so many blacks and Latinos have the types of preexisting conditions that make them vulnerable to the worst effects of a coronavirus that has taken the lives of thousands of people across the United States? The question is complex, but the answers fall somewhere between the expansion of government and cultural norms.

In New York City, it is hard to make the case that poverty-based systemic injustice is the cause of health disparities in COVID-19 infections. New York state already spends billions of dollars providing health care to underprivileged citizens, especially blacks and Latinos. In *City Journal*, Seth Barron observes:

The uninsured rate among black New Yorkers is only slightly high-

(Photo: COVID-19 survivor Avrin McCoy, Millwaukee VA Medical Center. This photo has been cropped. Public domain.)

er than the white rate; Latino New Yorkers, including many illegal aliens, have much higher uninsured rates but a slightly lower death rate. Meantime, Asians in New York City, with higher poverty rates than any other group, show the lowest incidence of COVID-19 deaths, by a significant margin.

The actual data point to something other than systemic racism in the health care system or lack of access. What seems to be emerging is that those who are most at risk of infection and death are those receiving the most government assistance for healthcare, income assistance, and public housing, especially among senior citizens.

It is beyond the scope of this article to lay out the full history of all the policies that have undermined black and Latino striving in the American experience, but a more sinister culprit than racism for COVID-19 health disparities is the expansion of government power. The government continues to restrict the lives of minorities and their ability to exercise their volition and participate in political and economic liberty. One of the important questions we need to ask is this: What kinds of policies undermine the capacity of people to make good choices for food, housing, or other factors that put their health at risk?

In addition to the coercion of government power, many preexisting conditions are behavioral and cultural. Historically speaking, it is the expansion of government power and the social assistance state that continue to keep low-income minorities out of the marketplace. It is the social assistance state that traps low-income minorities in public housing, shackles them to public assistance programs, and usurps marriage and family norms by having government institutions replace parents. Public schools provide up to three meals a day in many cities, and judges discipline children instead of parents. Moreover, government officials refuse to allow parents to choose better schools for their children. They create housing scarcity through red-lining and zoning laws, and they keep low-income people comfortable living at or below the poverty level rather than providing the means, structures, incentives, and opportunities to experience social and economic mobility by divorcing themselves

from the chains of government oversight. For example, it is the federal government that subsidizes the very industries that produce the cheap, processed foods correlated with hypertension and diabetes. It is urban planners in the local government who decided to build pollution-generating public transportation hubs adjacent to dense populations of residential housing, creating the conditions that contribute to generations of asthmatics.

To make matters worse, there are the cultural factors that many of us are unwilling to discuss. For example, the dietary preferences of people correlated with the onset of Type II diabetes include highly processed carbohydrates, whole grains, sugary drinks, red meat, and processed meats. These foods put people at high risk of multiple, long-term illnesses, including the ones most susceptible to COVID-19 mortalities. The personal choice to smoke cigarettes often leads to respiratory challenges that the coronavirus exploits.

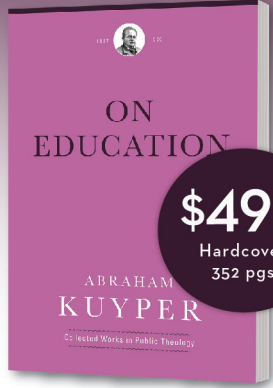
Critics will retort that residents of low-income neighborhoods live in “food deserts” and do not have better food options. The theory holds that if people have better food options, they would naturally choose them, even though there are no data to back up that claim. Perhaps we should ask, why are there food deserts? Why is unhealthy food so cheap? Why do healthy restaurants not locate in certain neighborhoods? What cost barriers keep grocery stores with healthy food from operating in low-income neighborhoods? Could it have anything to do with the fact that neighborhoods with high levels of violence and crime are the ones where businesses are the least likely to operate? Could it be that high taxes, government rules, and regulations all raise the cost of doing business in ways that eliminate margins for reinvestment, which drives low-skilled jobs away?

Finally, there are so many more questions we could ask that one could easily conclude that placing the blame for COVID-19 racial disparities on “systemic injustice” is intellectually lazy, sophomoric, and myopic. These assumptions blind us to better data and better explanations. Better explanations lead to better solutions.

If the public healthcare system treats people poorly, we need to ask what incentives are at work. Racism does not cause diabetes, obesity, hypertension, or asth-

ma but it is easy to put people in positions where their best choices are sabotaged by government bureaucrats. When people are free to make better choices—and they are properly informed to make virtuous choices for themselves, their family, and their communities—we will see health disparities dissipate, and we will be able to focus on effective strategies that lead to sustainable human flourishing regardless of race and class.

Anthony Bradley, Ph.D., is professor of religious studies at The King’s College in New York City and serves as a research fellow at the Acton Institute. His books include Liberating Black Theology: The Bible and the Black Experience in America (2010), Black and Tired: Essays on Race, Politics, Culture, and International Development (2011), The Political Economy of Liberation: Thomas Sowell and James Cone on the Black Experience (2012), Keep Your Head Up: America’s New Black Christian Leaders, Social Consciousness, and the Cosby Conversation (2012), and Aliens in the Promised Land: Why Minority Leadership is Overlooked in White Christian Churches and Institutions (2013). [R&L](#)



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Should the Catholic Church take government bailouts?

Dustin Siggins

When a global crisis hits, what happens to an organization that spent decades undermining its financial stability and driving away its supporters? As much as it pains me to say it, the Roman Catholic Church in America is finding out. CBS News recently reported that 12,000 of 17,000 U.S. parishes requested Paycheck Protection Act funding—government bailouts. Does the Catholic Church deserve a bailout? Should bishops accept the money? If they do, how can the Church's leadership rebuild its reputation with the general public?

U.S. bishops understandably cancelled the public celebration of Mass for weeks during the coronavirus outbreak. Parish budgets are now missing several months' worth of collections. And the National Catholic Educational Association estimates Catholic school tuition receipts fell by 20%.

This has inspired many parishes to turn to the government. But this financial crisis was baked long ago. It follows a 50-year history of increasing Church crises, of fewer Catholic vocations and fewer faithful in the pews, and the abuse scandal's destruction of public trust.

The Church also has a deficit due in part to paying \$3 billion in abuse-related settlements over the years. However, clerics protected \$2 billion in Church assets by shifting the funds around to keep them from going to lawsuit payments. Where is that money now? Has all—or any—of it been distributed to the 12,000 parishes in need?

The abuse scandal has been the leading cause of the public's lack of trust. But some of the faithful also criticize the bishops' handling of the coronavirus lockdowns.

Many bishops framed their decision to close, or reopen, churches as though it had been dictated by secular authorities. One archbishop said he did not allow public Masses to resume because of "the extension of [the governor's] stay-at-home order." Conversely the bishop of Helena, Montana, said he reopened parishes, because the governor's order "does allow us to begin gathering for Mass." While their intentions are good, this language is concerning. Even allowing secular authorities to classify worship as "non-essential" sets a poor precedent, and one not rooted in science. As Monsignor Charles Pope noted, the same politicians say that oft-touched store produce is safe to eat but the little-touched Eucharist is not.

Framing sacramental decisions in the light of government mandates raises serious questions. What if shepherding the faithful requires reasonable precautions that differ from government guidelines? What if a leader elsewhere in the world uses the virus as a pretext to close disfavored religious celebrations? Can the faithful count on their bishops to exert the independence that marked the saints—especially if they're taking government money?

Balancing faith with prudence is difficult enough in the best circumstances. Bishops are caught between traditionalists, who vocally condemn many safety measures, and a secular society that sees anything short of a grinding halt to all public activity as risking widespread death. But even in this unenviable position, there is room for improvement.

The first step is to create a distinctly Catholic implementation of the Center for Disease Control's guidance. Instead of only allowing 10 people in a parish designed to hold hundreds, bishops could direct priests to invite the appropriate number of souls capable of socially distancing and to hold more frequent Masses. Drive-thru Mass and confession may be a necessary bridge to normalcy in some areas. Bishops must observe all prudent health measures, but they should never let unreasonable government policies put parishes in financial crisis or deny the faithful access to the Eucharist—even if only to offer private adoration before the tabernacle.

The archbishop of the Twin Cities may provide an example of public-minded independence. He allowed churches to operate outside the parameters of orders handed down by Gov. Tim Walz—but only if they can "meet the standards set forth in extensive and stringent diocesan protocols." If parishes observe all appropriate safety measures, this could be a trifecta victory that improves public health, focuses souls on liturgy, and proves that the Church thinks deeply and innovatively enough to chart its own course.

Despite the bishops' best intentions, some figures in the media or politics will compare these steps to the Virginia pastor who believed blind faith would shield him and, tragically, died from COVID-19. That is why the bishops should engage in a pro-active communications strategy to show that the Church is saving souls and lives. Their outreach should include videos, press releases, op-eds, and forming relationships with local media.

These policies and plans will begin the process of restoring the Church's reputation, which is at present that of just another scandal-ridden human institution. Accepting government funding while perceived this way will associate Holy Mother Church with the firms that triggered the Great Recession in 2008 and then assumed they deserved to have taxpayers foot the bill to keep them afloat. And since perception is reality, we'll see even more bankruptcies and bailouts as ever-fewer people sit in the pews.

There is a better path. The perception of the Church and the salvation of our neighbors compel us to follow it.

Dustin Siggins is CEO of Proven Media Solutions. A practicing Catholic, he was previously a political journalist covering the federal budget, abortion, and other issues on and off Capitol Hill. [R&L](#)



ESSAY

Creativity will kill COVID-19

Anne Rathbone Bradley

It is in the most desperate of times that we must not forget our principles. Globally, we are facing desperate times. In the United States, unemployment rolls doubled in just one week, climbing to 6.6 million unemployment claims for the week ending March 28, 2020. As more Americans are asked to stay at home, many have become unemployed—38 million as of this writing.

These are desperate times indeed. The potential death toll scares us, and we beg for scientists to expedite new tests, anti-viral drugs, and vaccines. Now more than ever we must adhere to the truth.

These facts remain: We are created in the image and likeness of God; we need each other; and together, we can solve our problems. These are true, because they reflect our God-created human nature. God designed us in His image and likeness. Genesis 1:26–28 teaches us about our nature and our purpose:

Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over

the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

Here we learn about our capabilities and responsibilities. We are created *in imago Dei*. We bear the image of God, and that bestows upon us inestimable dignity.

It also endows us with creativity. We cannot create in the same manner as God, but we must use our gifts and skills to be creative for the purpose of problem-solving and service. When this happens in the context of voluntary market exchange—directed by prices, profits and losses, and supply and demand—we are empowered and encouraged to serve others.

This is precisely what the world needs right now, and the good news is that it is already occurring.

In the face of almost overnight and unprecedented needs, manufacturers and suppliers are shifting production to masks, hospital gowns, hand sanitizer, and ventilators. According to the Milken Institute, there are 75 treatments being developed, including 36 vaccines.

Companies are working around the clock to bring better COVID-19 tests to the market. Abbott Laboratories is working on a five-minute test and aims to manufacture 50,000 tests a day.

In desperate times, this is the creative adaptation that we need. The market is nimble. It doesn't need to wait for committee approval or wade through long bureaucratic processes. Rather, it springs into action.

The role of entrepreneurs, big and small, is to ascertain the most pressing needs of consumers and rush to fill those needs. Almost overnight, some of our most pressing needs have changed. The market is working by allowing people to fill those needs as quickly as possible. Markets are about human discovery, and they provide the setting for each of us to use our human creativity to care for each other.

Creativity will kill COVID-19. If there is a silver lining in all of this, it's that some of the most onerous business regulations are being rolled back. We can only hope that they are permanently swept into the dustbin. After all, if regulations aren't necessary in a crisis, are they ever necessary? How else are they impeding human flourishing?

The best thing the FDA can do now is get out of the way. Allow human creativity and entrepreneurship to step in, and we will beat this thing. There will be a day when we won't have to shelter in place, when we can hug an old friend, when we can go out to eat with our family, and when we can all get back to work.

These unemployment numbers don't have to last forever. But if we don't let entrepreneurship solve the very serious issues we face, they will persist longer than necessary.

Anne Rathbone Bradley, Ph.D., is an Acton Affiliate scholar and the George and Sally Mayer Fellow for Economic Education and the academic director at The Fund for American Studies. Previously, Dr. Bradley served as the vice president of economic initiatives at the Institute for Faith, Work & Economics, where she continues research toward a systematic biblical theology of economic freedom. In addition to her work with TFAS, she is a professor of economics at The Institute for World Politics and Grove City College. She is a visiting professor at George Mason University and has previously taught at Georgetown University and Charles University in Prague. She is currently a visiting scholar at the Bernard Center for Women, Politics & Public Policy. She is a lecturer for the Institute for Humane Studies and the Foundation for Economic Education. **R&I**



ESSAY

How the Church can respond to the coronavirus pandemic

Doug McCullough and Brooke Medina

If you had asked someone on New Year's Day 2020 what they envisioned the year ahead might look like, few would have imagined that the first few months would be spent canceling trips, events, and academic semesters. Families and college students hadn't planned to spend their spring break in quarantine. Most businesses didn't enter the year in fear of stomach-turning Dow Jones plummets and sobering market uncertainty. Regardless of projections, governments across the world are taking

extensive measures to limit the spread of COVID-19.

History is no stranger to epidemics and pandemics. But it's times like this, when looming uncertainty becomes the global *lingua franca*, that Christians have the opportunity to showcase the best of humanity. Yuval Levin, writing for the *New York Times*, urges Americans—particularly those of us who have strong institutional allegiances—to take an honest assessment of ourselves and ask, “Given my role here, how should I behave?” This is the question that those who take their institutional roles seriously are now asking themselves. For Christians, the answer is given very clearly in Matthew 22: We must love God and love our neighbors.

In the second century, the Antonine Plague wreaked havoc and death across the Roman world. Paganism, the ruling religion of the time, did not possess a theology of care and compassion for the sick, which led many of the diseased to be abandoned to their fate.

However, Christians who are compelled by the compassion central to Jesus' commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself,” took a different approach. Professor John Horgan notes that during the plague, “Christians often stayed to provide assistance while pagans fled.”

These early believers regularly risked their lives by taking in the sick and pro-

viding the dead with proper burials. Instead of allowing fear to drive them to turn their backs on suffering men, women, and children, they courageously went into the most perilous areas to bring comfort, care, and the Gospel. Over the centuries, the moral courage and institutional strength of the Church has been one of its greatest assets.

Is the Church of the twenty-first century prepared to handle tragedy and disaster with similar grace? Are our moral muscles conditioned to show compassion and care during times of crisis, or have we allowed them to atrophy, content to allow others to be our brother's keeper?

Lawrence Gostin, a professor of global health law, recently wrote that during this outbreak, “The government will need to provide food, medicine and support for the lonely, fearful or depressed.” Without a doubt, the government has a crucial role to play during such a crisis, and we should pray for wisdom on behalf of our elected officials. But the question remains: How much of the burden to provide food and support for the lonely, fearful, and depressed should the Church help shoulder?

As advocates of limited government, one of the best ways we can promote confidence in civil society's ability to respond to tragedy is by responding to this pandemic ourselves. The Christian example of charity evident in the weeks and

(Photo: Church members perform drive-in coronavirus tests. Photo credit: Church of the Highlands in Birmingham, Ala. / Used with permission.)

months following Hurricane Harvey is a modern-day example of how the Church is at her best when she is carrying the burdens of others.

As this virus spreads, those with weak immune systems are most vulnerable and need to take commonsense measures to avoid infection. However, there are untold numbers who have weakened emotional immune systems and are working overtime to cope with the stress tied to uncertainty and fear. Here are several ways that we can respond to this crisis, showing love and compassion to those who are loaded down with anxiety and fear.

Get creative about fostering community

Few things are more isolating than dealing with physical or mental illness by yourself. The sick often feel discouraged to engage with the outside world, sometimes out of fear of rejection. Longstanding relationships are often forced to come to terms with the new dynamics that the limitations of the sickness demand.

As governments and private entities look for ways to slow down the spread of this virus, events are canceled, travel is restricted, employees are asked to work from home, and many people are undergoing mandatory or voluntary quarantines.

Regardless of the cause, when social interaction is discouraged, or forbidden, it can foster feelings of loneliness and isolation. Without question, these measures are taken to protect individuals, especially those with weaker immune systems, but that doesn't make the feelings of alienation any less painful. Now is the time to think creatively about how we can foster a sense of community, utilizing the digital platforms available to nearly all Americans.

Encourage the fearful

Scripture tells us that we have not been given a spirit of fear. Unfortunately, we see panic set in for the masses quickly, with near non-stop coverage of disasters and outbreaks stoking the tinder of fear that many are already battling.

Because fear of the unknown can have a paralyzing effect, we have to be intentional about combating it. Uncertainty of

what might be lurking around the corner has crippled many.

Yet even when tragedy and suffering rear their ugly heads, 1 Thessalonians 4 reminds us that we don't grieve as those who have no hope. Instead we can take comfort in the truth that no matter what struggles we face in this life, God's sovereignty is a sure anchor. Look for ways to encourage those struggling with debilitating fear. Invite them to view today's concerns through the lens of eternity.

Stand alongside the suffering

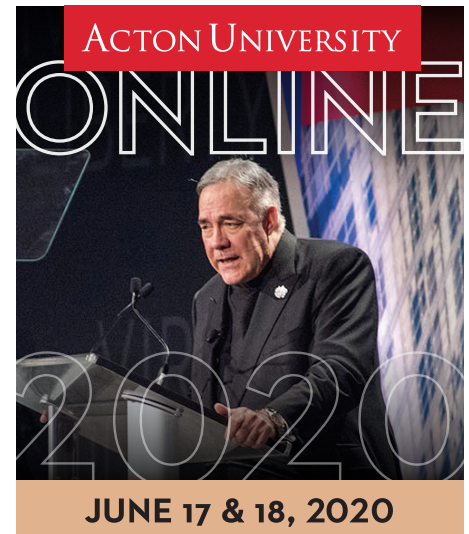
In the parable of the sheep and goats, Jesus suggests that one indication of a person's salvation is how he or she takes care of the sick. History has shown that the early Christians took their mandate to minister to the ill seriously. If Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (which He is), then this directive is no less relevant in our present time.

Instead of succumbing to feelings of frustration over the multitude of people whom we can't help, we can turn our attention to comforting and standing alongside those within our sphere of influence. It's true that we can't help everyone. But those of us who are able-bodied can begin by reaching out to those closest to us.

There are many basic, tangible ways we can meet the needs of the sick that stand to make a considerable difference in their lives and can also serve as a character-forming experience for us.

The integrity of our institutions is tested during times of tragedy. It's usually in such crucibles that our character is revealed. We have an opportunity to exercise our institutional muscles by putting them to good use during this period of uncertainty and fear. Let's roll up our sleeves and get to work.

Doug McCullough is a director of the Lone Star Policy Institute and a corporate attorney at the Texas law firm, McCullough Sudan. Brooke Medina serves as director of communications for the Civitas Institute, a state-based public policy organization dedicated to the ideas of limited government and liberty. [R&I](#)



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A free-market agenda for rebuilding from the coronavirus

Henrik Rasmussen

On June 18, 1940, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill steered his people for the Battle of Britain with a stirring speech in the House of Commons that concluded: “Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves, that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, ‘This was their finest hour.’”

The present coronavirus crisis calls for Churchillian statesmanship, yet few, if any, democratically elected leaders have proven equal to the task thus far. This is decidedly not our finest hour.

The leaders of the world’s democracies have virtually shut down democratic capitalism in an attempt to save lives. From Hungary to Michigan, right-wing and left-wing authoritarians are ruling by decree to keep their populations under tight control. Unemployment and government debt are spiraling to levels not seen since the Great Depression and World War II. Europe is disintegrating.

The financial and political costs of this shutdown will be enormous, and it is reasonable to ask if more lives will be lost as a consequence of the shutdown than as a consequence of the coronavirus. How many lifesaving biotechnology companies could have been started with the capital now being sucked out of the economy? How many patients will die as a consequence of normal healthcare operations, such as cancer detection, being delayed or hospitals going bankrupt? How many citizens will have years cut off their lives due to limited economic opportunities? These are just some of the big questions that democratic statesmen should be pondering at this time.

The point here is not that sacrifices and adjustments to our lives are unwarranted. We should absolutely mobilize to fight this virus, and we would do well to invest more in healthcare in the future. The point is that free markets and working economies

are absolutely essential in order to effectively mobilize the resources required to take on COVID-19 and other public health problems. Without essential liberty, there is no safety, to paraphrase Benjamin Franklin.

What would courageous and prudent statesmanship look like in the present crisis? From what roots can we seek strength, wisdom, and insight to make better decisions?

If ever there was a time to revive the best of the Western heritage, now is that time. At the heart of this heritage is the humane and life-affirming worldview of enlightened Christianity, which has always placed a premium on public health. As Rev. Robert Sirico points out in *Defending the Free Market* (2012), “Christendom invented the hospital,” and “modern healthcare institutions originated in Christian charity.”

One might even argue that democratic capitalism itself is rooted in Christian charity and healthcare. Hospitals enabled the systematic study of medicine and human health, which in turn helped spur the innovation of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Age.

Likewise, doctors played a crucial role in the advancement of political liberty led by the British and American middle classes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This movement is epitomized by figures like British physician and philosopher John Locke and Benjamin Rush, “the father of American psychiatry,” a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and a committed Christian and abolitionist.

Locke first articulated the natural rights of every human being to life, liberty, and property. He wrote in his *Two Treatises on Government* (1689) that one “may not, unless it be to do justice on an offender, take away, or impair the life, or what tends to be the preservation of the life, the liberty, health, limb, or goods of another.”

Healthcare, of course, “tends to be the preservation of life,” and Rush made a compelling case for the necessity of liberty to the sound practice of medicine. As noted by Lewis A. Grossman in his article *The Origins of American Health Libertarianism* (2013), Rush argued against at least three types of harmful interference in the free practice of medicine as outlined in a lecture to the University of Pennsylvania Medical School in 1801:

21c. The interference of governments in prohibiting the use of certain remedies, and enforcing the use of others by law. The effects of this mistaken policy has [sic] been as hurtful to medicine, as a similar practice with respect to opinions, has been to the Christian religion.

22.d. Conferring exclusive privileges upon bodies of physicians, and forbidding men of equal talents and knowledge, under severe penalties, from practicing medicine within certain districts of cities and countries. Such institutions, however sanctioned by ancient charters and names, are the bastilles [sic] of our science.

23.d. The refusal in universities to tolerate any opinions, in the private or public exercises of candidates for degrees in medicine, which are not taught nor believed by their professors, thus restraining a spirit of inquiry in that period of life which is most distinguished for ardour and invention in our science.

Interestingly, Grossman suggests that Rush’s passion for medical liberty and freedom to experiment was “at least in part” a result of Rush’s deep disagreements and policy fights with the medical establishment in Philadelphia during the 1793 yellow fever epidemic. The parallels to today’s policy debates are striking.



A visionary political program to deal with COVID-19 and future pandemics would draw on the heritage of Locke and Rush to free up healthcare innovation and point out the life-threatening effects of totalitarianism and groupthink at home and abroad. Such a program would make medical liberty a core pillar of an American-led liberal world order for the twenty-first century, much like the United States rallied the free world after World War II.

It is beyond the scope of this article to outline every detail of such a program, but let me suggest a few key elements:

1. Make a strong moral case for medical liberty, healthcare innovation, and healthcare investment as core pillars of democratic capitalism and a culture that values every human life.
2. Reopen the economies and borders of the world's democracies immediately while closely monitoring COVID-19 hot spots and applying locally driven restrictions as necessary.
3. Prioritize supply-side tax cuts and deregulation over bailouts and unemployment benefits in order to quickly get the economy back on its feet.
4. Launch an ambitious free-market healthcare reform agenda, removing bureaucratic obstacles to private sector innovation and investment in healthcare.
5. Create a transatlantic free trade area for healthcare, giving American healthcare innovators greater

access to European and Canadian health systems and vice versa.

6. Make healthcare and biotechnology integral parts of NATO doctrine and preparedness, preventing totalitarian powers and terrorist organizations from deploying biological weapons and allowing military resources such as hospital ships and field hospitals to be deployed swiftly during future pandemics.
7. Convene a global health summit of the world's democracies, calling out China and other totalitarian governments for their suppression of information and free inquiry on public health matters, including COVID-19.
8. Aim to present a united front of democratic countries within the World Health Organization and build a new global health forum exclusively for democracies.
9. Make medical liberty, doctors, and hospitals core pillars of a free-market development agenda for post-conflict zones, emerging democracies, and nations stuck in poverty.

These proposals might seem fanciful with long odds of success, but so did the economic liberalization and revitalization of Europe after Nazi Germany surrendered in May 1945. Yet this vital development came to pass thanks to statesmen such as Ludwig Erhard. In 1948, Erhard became director of economics at the Bizonal Economic Council set up by the British and American

occupation forces in Germany. Faced with a stagnant and starving postwar Germany, Erhard unilaterally abolished all food rationing and price controls, prompting the military governor of the U.S. zone, General Lucius Clay, to say, "Herr Erhard, my advisers tell me what you have done is a terrible mistake."

"Herr General, pay no attention to them," replied Erhard. "My advisers tell me the same thing."

Erhard's free-market reforms proved a success, and he went on to become Minister of Economics, Chancellor of West Germany, and "the father of the German economic miracle." For the free world to emerge vibrant and healthy from the COVID-19 crisis, we will need similar statesmen willing to challenge "experts" who ignore the full picture of society—statesmen who would stick with the fundamental, time-tested, and life-saving principles of liberty and charity.

Henrik F. Rasmussen is the president of Argonne Ventures, a company focused on international business expansion and investment projects. He is also the chairman of the Center for Expeditionary Economics, a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering entrepreneurship in post-conflict and post-disaster zones around the world. An entrepreneur and an immigrant from Denmark to the United States, Rasmussen has founded or co-founded several companies focused on finance, technology, and international trade. [R&L](#)

Sweden's coronavirus response defies—and promotes—big government

Per Ewert

Thanks to its unique response to the coronavirus, Sweden is once again being discussed as an international oddity. Sweden seemingly relishes its status as a global anomaly: It is the world's most secular-individualistic nation but has a strong apparatus of state control. For most of its history, it has been ruled by the Social Democratic Party. Today, Sweden is praised or disparaged, because it is one of few nations in the Western world that has not enforced a national lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To be sure, Swedish universities, high schools, and churches responded by meeting online. But kindergartens and compulsory schools have carried on as usual. As of this writing, only five restaurants in the nation have been shut down by the authorities for being too crowded. (Two of them were allowed to reopen again within less than 48 hours.) In general, the Swedish Social Democrat-led government has more or less followed the motto: "Stay at home or stay apart. But if you don't follow this rule, we won't punish you."

It is too early to state conclusively whether Sweden's relaxed attitude towards the pandemic has been successful. Some nations with stricter lockdowns have higher death tolls, while others have a lower number of deaths by infection. It must be noted, however, that at this time statistical comparisons between Sweden and other coronavirus-stricken nations or regions show that Sweden has a distinctly smaller increase in the number of deaths. Therefore, it is not evident that this state-sanctioned openness has had worse effects than the strict lockdowns enjoined elsewhere.

How did this *laissez-faire* model emerge in one of the West's most pronounced social assistance states? The peculiar Swedish model of a strong welfare state combined with broad and robust individual autonomy may at first glance appear contradictory. But actually, the Swedish coronavirus strategy constitutes a practical example of what could be called Swedish "state individualism."

Several causes lie behind this particular model of national organization, but it is largely the product of political decisions. Sweden is characterized by the uniquely long hegemony of a single political party. The Social Democrats ruled the nation from 1932 to 1976 and for many years since then. During their tenure, the power of the church, family, and civil society was gradually weakened. Civil society and apolitical connections steadily eroded. All rivals that could compete with the political order's claim on the citizen fell by the wayside.

The Social Democratic vision of government connected an isolated individual to a strong, collectivist state. After Sweden's unique archetype, which accords the highest place to the isolated individual, permeated so many branches of society for so many decades, it became difficult to change perspective even during a crisis. The Social Democratic/Green coalition government's path

of permitting greater personal choice when it comes to social distancing and virus-reducing behaviour grows out of this history.

Swedish state individualism does, however, accord strong powers to governmental decrees. This is why Anders Tegnell, a state epidemiologist at the Public Health Agency, has seemingly replaced Prime Minister Stefan Löfven as leader of the nation during this outbreak. When Tegnell speaks, both government officials and private citizens obey. This may sound contradictory, but it follows the state-individualistic principle. The Swedish people are ready to follow almost any rule proclaimed from above—as long as it maintains the independence of the detached individual as a basic virtue.

The future of this relationship between the individual and the state will largely rest on the social consequences it produces as a result of this health crisis. Sweden could join in the backlash against postwar individualism which has swept parts of the region, complete with the rise of authoritarian leaders. However, such a development remains remote in Sweden. Here, the critical attitude against different forms of authority has permeated Swedish society for so long, and coercive measures are considered so foreign, that they will not be embraced even to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

Still, Swedes' frustration over the practical consequences of their nation's secular-individualistic dynamic has grown in recent years. It remains unclear whether the coronavirus outbreak will provide new impetus for "state individualism" or whether it will strengthen these concerns, awakening a thirst for another way of life. There are signs that people are beginning to resist Sweden's peculiar, purely autonomous pattern and seek new ways to forge relationships within their communities during this time of isolation. They long to end their loneliness by building up Burke's "little platoons," although they would never use that phrase.

In the long run, the COVID-19 crisis will be the pivotal factor in evaluating Sweden's ingrained perspective of the isolated individual dominated by a paternalistic, secular government. Will the global pandemic create new criticisms of the ideological and practical materialism pervading Western culture? Will the populace find state-dominated, autonomous individualism less appealing? Will the need to cooperate within families and civil society open up space for the spiritual values embedded within a community-based way of life distinct from the state? These relationships could allow subsidiarity to replace the anachronism of Europe's most atomized, government-dominated society.

Per Ewert is director of the Clapham Institute, a Christian think tank in Sweden. He is currently studying for his Ph.D. on the historical driving forces behind Swedish secularization and individualism. [IR&L](#)



ESSAY

Global pandemic tries the limits of European integration

Trey Dimsdale

The first political casualty of COVID-19 may be the European Union's dream of an "ever-closer union." However, the victim remains committed to maintaining the illusion of vigorous life.

Consider the speech delivered at the opening of the European Parliament's session on January 29 by Guy Verhofstadt, an MEP from Belgium and the European Parliament's Brexit coordinator. The body had scheduled a vote to approve the terms of the United Kingdom's exit from the EU. In his 10-minute-long oration, Verhofstadt reflected on the events that led to that moment. How could one of the EU's largest member states, which had entered with a resounding popular mandate less than 50 years earlier, now take the unprecedented step of leaving the EU?

In his remarks, Verhofstadt chalked it up to the EU's primordial error: It had left too much national sovereignty intact. "There is a lesson to learn from" Brexit, he

conceded. But it is "not to undo the union, as some are arguing," he said. "No, this lesson is to ... make it a real union in the coming years,' one devoid of the checks and balances individual nations may place on Brussels, including "opt-ins, opt-outs, rebates, and ... unanimity rules and veto rights." In other words, the mistake had been to give member states too much political and economic space for national self-determination.

Just weeks after this lesson on European solidarity, the health emergency in Europe revealed the dramatic weaknesses of such a political arrangement. Although it was unclear to most at the time, Verhofstadt spoke in the early days of what has proved to be a still-uncontained global pandemic. When a crisis hits, and lives and livelihoods are at stake, European governments appear much less committed to these high-minded ideals and much more interested in the welfare of their own citizens.

On March 3, the French government—led by Europhile Emmanuel Macron—confiscated all surgical masks produced in France. Three days later, the government forced a French firm to cancel a large order of masks placed by the UK's National Health Service. In the same week Germany, Europe's largest economy and a world leader in medical technology development, banned the export of medical equipment it needed for its own fight against the coronavirus. Contrary to the ideals of free movement among states represented by the Schengen Agreement, Germany also placed controls along its borders on March 15, following Austria's decision to institute border checks and ban the entrance of anyone from Italy on March 10.

Interestingly, German Chancellor Angela Merkel was hailed as the leader of the free

world when she gave a rare public address on the crisis, but she made no mention of the European Union and made only historical appeals to solidarity. Europe's hardest-hit nations, Italy and Spain, have found their appeals for help rebuffed. Italy found little or no sympathy at the hands of the European Central Bank, and Spain was forced to appeal to NATO for medical supplies rather than the proper authorities in the EU.

It is hard to imagine at this relatively early hour how the global COVID-19 pandemic will impact European institutions. If Europe's future proves analogous to Robert Higgs' understanding of American history, then we can expect to see an expansion of EU authority that will never recede. Verhofstadt's vision will come closer to realization.

But what European crises tend to reveal is that the best solutions are local rather than centrally planned. The migrant crisis of 2014 could not be solved from Brussels: In fact, it is still largely unresolved, although the results are essentially accepted as the new status quo. And while the EU seems to be able to solve non-problems like making it easier for travelers to recharge their cell phones, they do not seem able to navigate the process by which EU member states and NATO allies like Lithuania can gain independence from Vladimir Putin's power grid. It seems even the most outspoken believers in the EU, like Macron and Merkel, have national rather than regional interests in mind as they respond to this crisis.

Global health crises are complex, and experts vary widely on the advice that they give to eradicate the coronavirus. Bearing responsibility for decision-making in this period is an unenviable burden. An effective response is surely one that involves coordination and cooperation. Whatever the answer may be, there is one thing that has become abundantly clear: When a crisis hits, the member states look out for "number one." The EU has proved itself incapable of coping with this reality.

Trey Dimsdale, J.D., is director of strategic partnerships at the First Liberty Institute in Plano, Texas, and an associate fellow at the Centre for Enterprise, Markets, and Ethics, a free-market think tank in Oxford, England. He holds a law degree from the University of Missouri-Kansas City, as well as degrees in ethics and political science. He lives in Texas with his wife, Brooke, and their son, Carter. [R&L](#)



The New York Times

ESSAY

The media do not deserve a government bailout

Doug Bandow

(Photo credit: p103 / Shutterstock.com)

Traditional journalism has been imploding throughout the internet age. The coronavirus catastrophe threatens to deliver the financial coup de grace. Businesses that are closed don't buy ads. Shuttered newsstands and stores kill street sales. Reduced income means fewer discretionary purchases. Papers and magazines that have been desperately searching for a sustainable economic model might use the global pandemic as an opportunity to downsize and reorganize. Instead, some American journalists are looking to the government for help.

Publishers want guaranteed ad buys. The NewsGuild, a journalists' union, called for a range of public subsidies tailored to its members' financial and ideological interests. Such proposals would destroy media independence, undermine media accountability, and reinforce ingrained partisan bias, thus undermining democracy itself.

Last year, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberal government provided \$675 million Canadian (about \$600 million U.S.) in subsidies to private publications. (See Badow's "A government bailout of newspapers threatens free speech and morality" in the Winter 2019 issue of *Religion & Liberty*—Ed.) Criticism of the measure was especially strong from the opposition Conservative Party, a frequent target of media ire.

No similar idea was broached in the U.S., though a decade ago there were proposals to make it easier for media firms to become nonprofits. The principle of journalistic independence, backed by the First Amendment, remained strong. National Public Radio and the Public Broadcasting Service were not seen as threats. They are editorially independent and deliver quality fare but, like the rest of the mainstream media, they are not objective. That should raise widespread concern, since those with disfavored views are essentially paying to be criticized.

Unfortunately, COVID-19's brutal impact has created a sense of desperation among journalists. Some fear that coronavirus just might be the media "extinction-level event" that Matt DeRienzo, then-executive director of LION Publishers, warned of in 2017.

This has the Fourth Estate looking to politicians for salvation. "There is no market option here," Victor Pickard of the University of Pennsylvania argued. He advocated going "bigger and bolder for the

long-term," which naturally meant "the government will have to intervene." He proposed creating a special fund to pay for local news coverage in areas where nothing he deems acceptable exists. *HuffPost*'s Travis Waldron termed this industry slush fund "a public option for news." Pickard insisted that "our democracy depends on it." He said, "It's either that, or we're just going to write off entire communities across the states as having absolutely no access to any news or information whatsoever."

Yet that clearly is not the case. Waldron pointed out that "nonprofit journalism has been a particular success story," citing the *Texas Tribune* as an example. He added, "a growing number of hyperlocal and regional outlets have popped up, too." Pickard still might neither like the alternative sources nor believe them to be adequate, but the people themselves decided against the kind of media sources that he favors.

However, journalists appear more than willing to belly up to the federal trough. The News Media Alliance, National Association of Broadcasters, National Newspaper Association, and America's Newspapers issued a collective call for public assistance. Their first request was that Washington ensure the eligibility of local organizations under the Paycheck Protection Program. While it is reasonable that the media do not want to be treated differently, it also makes journalism dependent on federal funding.

Indeed, dubious political conditions could be imposed here. A group of Democratic senators called for a new stimulus bill to be "tailored to benefit aid recipients who make a long-term commitment to high quality local news." What does that mean? How would it be measured? Who would decide whether the conditions are met?

Far more problematic, however, is the group's desire that Uncle Sam turn advertising into a media dole. The newsies selflessly observed that "Congress can ensure that the people have the information they need most by directing current U.S. government advertising campaigns (such as those promoting the Census) to local news and media outlets, and providing the Department of Health and Human Services, the Small Business Administration and other relevant agencies with an additional \$5 to \$10 billion for direct funding for local media advertising." Such an indirect subsidy would have the advantage of not really looking like a subsidy.

However, these groups are pikers com-

pared to the NewsGuild, a media union that is part of the Communications Workers of America. In a recent press release, NG lamented the fact that "declining advertising revenue, leveraged corporate consolidations, and asset-stripping by vulture capitalists have put this industry under financial duress." Now the viral crisis "is triggering business slowdowns and further eroding advertising revenues." So, the union's executive council called "for federal, state, provincial, and local governments to provide public funds to sustain news operations." Although the demand is couched in terms of responding to the coronavirus, the desire is for a permanent financial commitment: "Public stimulus funds are quite possibly the only way to ensure long-term viability for these vital news-gathering operations."

The idea of journalists finding and keeping an audience would no longer apply if the NewsGuild got its way. Uncle Sam would guarantee publications' survival and workers' jobs:

The federal government should establish a publicly-financed fund to support newsrooms and media workers to prevent layoffs.

Such a fund would also serve to promote journalism in news deserts in all 50 states and territories to supplement or fund additional positions in private-sector news organization, but not be used to replace existing employees. This fund would also support independent reporting in partnership with other news organizations.

That's not all. The news union also insisted on: creating "an indefinite program of no-interest loans for the creation of news start-ups, including nonprofits and employee-owned co-ops" from the Small Business Administration, "making tax-deductible the cost of subscriptions for any news product," creating undefined "incentives for local ownership," and "establishing a nationwide advertising purchasing program to promote the public health, participation in the federal census and other topics of national interest." Is that all?

The union justifies its proposal by claiming that "reliable local, regional and national journalism is an essential service." But that is not what the NewsGuild wants Washington to fund. Instead, the plan would offer a massive subsidy for every-

one in the mainstream media, reinforcing its ingrained biases. And the plan would underwrite start-ups seemingly irrespective of merit. Unlike the rest of the economy, journalism enterprises would no longer face a market test. As in Canada, the media enterprise, which generally (though not entirely) leans left, would force its targets to pay their tormentors.

Such a system could not help but encourage the use of press coverage as a political pay-off to the legislators most instrumental in ensuring the media's continued funding. After all, it would not behoove any publication dining at the federal trough to criticize those who assure it remains full. Even modest shifts in coverage could undermine the fairness of elections.

Nor would the NewsGuild's proposal do anything to promote quality. Rather, it assumes every existing publication is an "essential service" providing "accurate, reliable" information. Of course, every publication believes that about itself. And at least a few people dispute that about every publication. The bailout is incumbent protection for the media.

NG is determined to take care of number one, namely itself and its members. The union would be empowered help choose one-quarter of company board members. Any aid recipient would be "prohibited for five years from engaging in mergers and acquisition activity or leveraged buyouts that result in job losses or pay reductions." For a similar period of time, firms could not use "public money for executive bonuses, dividends or stock buybacks; stock options, or golden parachutes. Executive pay could not be more than double the editor-in-chief's earnings.

Moreover, there would be "no layoffs, no furloughs, no buyouts or pay cuts" since it is "essential that we invest in and retain journalists and other media workers." Most important, any firm collecting a federal check "must not interfere" with (read: oppose) a union organizing campaign. The requirements here would be quite detailed: no hiring of consultants, no mandatory meetings on unionization, mandatory acceptance of signed cards rather than employee elections, compulsory arbitration over first contracts, and no abrogation of bargaining agreements for a period of time.

Finally, the NewsGuild's proposal ostentatiously flags its political nature.

Recipients would have to "remain independent from partisan influence." That sounds fair, but who gets to decide if a news source is partisan?

Moreover, there is the usual "diversity" boilerplate, with the demand that "any employer taking public funds should be required to implement plans intended to advance diversity across their staff and report their annual diversity statistics." It doesn't take a genius to realize that those collected statistics likely would turn the exercise into a quota system. And who would get to decide whether plans had been implemented satisfactorily?

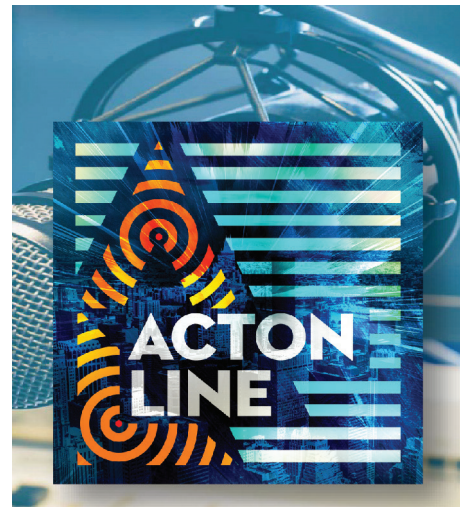
Thoughtful journalists have criticized such proposals to turn journalism into essentially a federally-subsidized public utility. Freelancer Jen Gerson complained to *HuffPost* that "in a time where we're shoring up our credibility and making sure people have faith that they can trust the information coming from us, taking a media bailout is absolutely fatal to those efforts."

Even politicians sympathetic to the idea of government subsidies remain wary. "We cannot do anything that would in any way undermine the integrity and independence of the media, and I worry that if there is government assistance, in terms of money, you begin to blur those lines," allowed U.S. Rep. David Cicilline, D-R.I., who introduced legislation to allow joint rate-setting for advertising. John Stanton, co-founder of the Save Journalism Project, warned that any case approved by Congress would likely "come with a lot of weird, terrible strings."

Waldron talks up the idea of a special fund "overseen by independent actors and accountable to local communities and journalists themselves." However, the ideological and political biases of such parties should be obvious. Even if the system were not corrupt per se, it almost certainly would be ideologically biased. That might not bother those who end up in control and receive the funds, but those of us paying the bills could rightly complain.

Putting journalists on a federal dole is dangerous for liberty and democracy. At some point Congress must say no to new industry subsidies. This is that point.

Doug Bandow is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. A former special assistant to President Ronald Reagan, he is author of The Politics of Plunder: Misgovernment in Washington. **R&L**



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JAMES CASH (J.C.) PENNEY JR.

REV. BEN JOHNSON

J.C. Penney may be best-known for his eponymous chain of department stores, but he attributed his rags-to-riches ascent to following the Bible's most famous virtue.

James Cash Penney Jr. was born on a farm near Hamilton, Missouri, on September 16, 1875. His father, a bivocational Baptist minister, taught his son the value of money by having him buy his own clothes beginning at age eight. His father, unable to pay his son's college tuition, started his son's career as a salesman.

The younger Penney came to a turning point in 1898, when he opened a butcher shop in Colorado. The chef at his main client, a local hotel, expected a kickback of one bottle of bourbon a week. Penney refused—and his business closed. Without that failure, he may never have left the meat counter.

The experience freed him to become first a manager, then an investor, in a dry goods chain known as the Golden Rule stores. He opened his own location in 1902. He insisted on stocking quality goods at a fair price and accepted only cash—to keep his customers out of debt. Within five years, his two partners sold their shares to him, and Penney began a frenzied nationwide expansion.

He changed the store's name to the J.C. Penney Company in 1913 and made its motto, "Honor, Confidence, Service, and Cooperation." He pioneered a new brand of participatory capitalism. Initially, all managers were partners and, after he went public, managers received company stock. All employees took part in profit-sharing. By 1917,



its 175 stores sold \$14 million worth of merchandise.

Penney's philanthropy supported a wide range of religious and civic charities: a farm for destitute farmers of good character, a retirement home for clergy, and the *Christian Herald* magazine, among other ventures. He tithed out of his belief that "a man's duty was to support the church with money in addition to living in a conscientious and upright manner."

But tragedy marked his life. His first two wives died, leaving him to raise three sons. His third wife, who bore him two daughters, outlived him.

During the Great Depression, he lost much of his fortune when he took out loans to finance his charitable activities. By 1932, he ended up in a sanitarium in Battle Creek, Michigan, where he had a mystical experience. One night, as a hymn wafted out of the hospital chapel, he cried out, "Lord, will you take care

of me? I can do nothing for myself!" He said that he felt the Lord tell him, "Only believe." His spirit, health, and fortunes rebounded. By 1950, one out of every four Americans shopped at his store.

He disputed the assumption "that business is secular ... Is not service part and parcel of business? It seems to me so; business is therefore as much religious as it is secular."

He encouraged everyone to meditate on "great principles," which "have persisted for thousands of years simply because their truth is unassailable." These include "great Proverbs, the Golden Rule, the Decalogue, the Sermon on the Mount, and ... the testimony of men who have sought their way to the rare privilege of doing what they most wanted to do."

He told the Associated Press, at age 85, "I know" the secret of the J.C. Penney stores' success "was the Golden Rule." When he followed the Golden Rule, "things went well; when I became neglectful, I got in trouble." He died on February 12, 1971, at the age of 95, as the founder of the nation's second-largest department store behind Sears.

In May 2020, the J.C. Penney chain announced it would close nearly one-third of its remaining 846 stores after filing for bankruptcy. This may have less to do with deviation from the Golden Rule than its inability to keep pace with a changing market. Piety is no substitute for innovation.

Rev. Ben Johnson is an Eastern Orthodox priest and the executive editor of Religion & Liberty.



ESSAY

The economic and moral case against hoarding

Anne Rathbone Bradley

We live in strange and unprecedented times. The exponential spread of COVID-19 has created chaos, fear, and panic. One of the scariest aspects of living through this pandemic, besides the health and safety of our families, is our uncertainty about the future. Each of us asked the same questions: How long will it be until we are safe? How long until we can browse through stores, have play dates, attend church, and hug an old friend? Uncertainty leads to isolation, fear, and panic. That fear sends people rushing to the store. Packing our pantries may give us a false sense of control, but it is not the best response morally or economically.

If you are now reading this from your home on one of your many electronic devices, you are likely living in a

country better equipped to get through this pandemic. Not all our fellow human beings can say the same. What is the difference? Those of us who live in countries like the U.S. daily experience the benefit of market economies, rather than the command economics marking so many struggling and impoverished nations around the world.

Markets deliver goods and services in a decentralized way. They use prices to direct the activities of consumers and sellers. As a result, market economies are nimble and adapt quickly to changing circumstances.

When we browse grocery store shelves, we are seeing just the tip of a deep and vast iceberg. What we see as consumers is the end of a long series of activities that crosses the globe and requires millions of people—all of whom coordinate peacefully for weeks or months—to bring us the things that we need. There are long, global supply chains behind the neatly stacked toilet paper, butchered chicken, and rows of egg cartons.

On a normal day, we get to take this for granted. Right now, even in the richest countries, that isn't the case. You may have to go to four grocery stores to find toilet paper, or you may need to visit for several days in a row. This is costly and makes us stay outside the house longer, when we are supposed to "stay inside."

Hoarding exacerbates the existing supply disruptions. Each time you en-

ter the store and fill your cart, you are sending a message to that supplier: You are voting for the product. Our signals get sent to the producers of toilet paper, chicken, eggs, and other goods. When we hoard, we speed up the signal, and the shelves are left empty. The producer must now act quickly to try to speed up the production process in response to the empty grocery store shelves. But in most cases, this cannot be done instantaneously; it takes time to ramp up production. Because we don't know the date this virus will be cured, we don't know how much we need, and producers don't know how long the increased demand will last. The once-clear signal is now obfuscated because of hoarding.

The lesson here is that refusing to engage in hoarding will keep our stores from selling out. In economic terms, this is known as sending a clear consumer demand signal. Less hoarding will allow everyone to adjust to the new world we live in without unnecessarily exacerbating the disruption of necessities. It will generate the most efficient producer response. More hoarding will lead to greater short-term shortages.

Markets are at their core about cooperative exchange through profit and loss. Hoarding will lead to less cooperation: As we hoard, we send the system into overdrive. But scarcity will always be our reality, and scarcity requires that we ration resources. Prices allow us to do this.

The best bet against hoarding is to allow prices to rise. Rising prices slow consumption and allow producers to respond, because they have the incentive (through the new price signal) to earn elevated, short-term profits. Make no mistake: This is not an endorsement of "price-gouging." Rather, rising prices are a natural response to increased demand. These price increases are the very thing that will induce producers to make more of the supplies we all want. As more producers rush to fill the demand, prices will return to normal, or perhaps even lower, than before the outbreak.

There are both economic and moral benefits to this system. In fact, the economic benefits *are* moral. Markets are necessarily humanitarian in that they deliver necessities to people who lack them. Markets increase access and affordability and, in this, they are egalitarian.

(Photo credit: Ingrid_Gold/CC BY-SA 2.0.)

Keep in mind, that while our shelves in the U.S. empty daily, they also refill daily. Compare this with socialist economies, where the shelves are permanently bare. Markets allow us to coordinate with our neighbors peacefully and extend the fruits of our labor to others. We need this now more than ever.

Anne Rathbone Bradley, Ph.D., is an Acton affiliate scholar and the George and Sally Mayer fellow for economic education and the academic director at The Fund for American Studies. Previously, Bradley served as the vice president of economic initiatives at the Institute for Faith, Work & Economics, where she continues research toward a systematic biblical theology of economic freedom. In addition to her work with TFAS, she is a professor of economics at The Institute for World Politics and Grove City College. She is a visiting professor at George Mason University and has previously taught at Georgetown University and Charles University in Prague. She is a visiting scholar at the Bernard Center for Women, Politics & Public Policy. She is a lecturer for the Institute for Humane Studies and the Foundation for Economic Education. [R&L](#)

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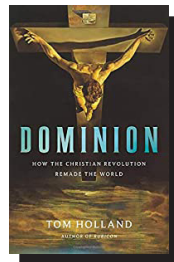
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BOOK

25 centuries of Christian history

Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World.
Tom Holland | Basic Books | 2019 | 624 pages

Reviewed by John D. Wilsey



Reading Tom Holland's new book, *Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World*, one is tempted to exclaim, “The grand narrative is dead. Long live the grand narrative!” *Dominion* charts the history of Christianity, spanning 2,500 years of the faith's engagement with humanity. It is designed to show how our most basic presuppositions have been shaped by the teachings of Christ and the apostles.

Holland writes that he set out to “explore how we in the West came to be what we are, and to think the way we do.” This outlook conflicts sharply with notions that Christianity has lost its hold on the Western mind. Even to make the assertion that Judeo-Christian principles shaped modern society brings forth a series of outraged denials. A predictable series of questions follows in retort: Is not Christianity in decline? Are we not living in an increasingly post-Christian world? What are we to say about the “rise of the nones”? Are not millennials and members of Generation Z staging a mass exodus from the churches? Is it not a fact that Christian mores are a thing of the distant past, mere relics of an America once dominated by a Protestant consensus that is now long gone?

Perhaps some of this is true. Christianity, if measured by church attendance or adherence to the doctrinal precepts of any orthodox understanding of the faith, is in decline in many places in the Western world and has been for some time. Still, a large body of scholarship proves that reports of Christianity's demise have been greatly exaggerated. The enduring cultural and social impact of the Christian faith has been chronicled in works like Rodney Stark's *Victory of Reason* and his *America's Blessings: How Religion Benefits Everyone, Including Atheists*. We could add to this works like Philip Jenkins' *The Next Christendom* and his book *Crucible of Faith: The Ancient Revolution that Made Our Modern World*.

From Stark, Jenkins, and many other thinkers—whose ranks now include Holland—we learn that terms such as “post-Christian” are ill-informed by history. In violation of the multicultural philosophy that dominates academia, prophets of Christianity's imminent extinction ignore the demonstrable growth of Christianity outside the West. This continuing conversion of the non-Western world is expertly detailed by Mark A. Noll in *Clouds of Witnesses: Christian Voices from Africa and Asia* and *From Every Tribe and Nation: A Historian's Discovery of the Global Christian Story*.

Reading their work alongside Holland's, we would learn that in the history of Christianity, the church has weathered profound threats to its existence: wars, pestilences, corruption, moral failures, doctrinal divisions, widespread persecution, revolutions, social upheavals, political uprisings, economic disruptions, intellectual challenges, and technological advancements. Through them all, the faith has not only survived, but thrived—much to the consternation of its enemies.

Holland joins his voice to many others who have argued that Christianity is basic to human existence, that its influence is much broader and more resilient than we often assume. They collectively argue that, despite the generational shifts that we in the West are experiencing—shifts which appear to highlight the growing irrelevance of the Christian message for modern youth—the same Christian message continues to advance.

The chief value of Holland's work, and others like it, is that it presents the history of Christianity as a grand narrative. In so doing, *Dominion* departs markedly from the spate of atomized personal stories and postmodern epistemologies of identity that so often dominate academic history. Holland's broad scope classifies Christianity as an "inescapable" influence on modernity.

This work is not a church history textbook but rather a coherent story of the growth of the faith through the twists and turns of often-obscure events over the course of 25 centuries. Holland begins his history with the Persian invasion of Greece in 479 B.C. and ends it in 2015 with references to mass migration, the #MeToo movement, *Charlie Hebdo*, and the effects of secularism. Throughout his sweeping account of a period that includes eons of the human experience, the deepening indelibility of Christianity's influence on the West is the abiding theme of *Dominion*. Holland does not recount the familiar chronology of Christian history from the first century to the twenty-first, following the familiar grooves of persecution, institutionalization, theological development, reformation, and the like. Instead, he often assumes that his reader is already familiar with these well-worn paths. His panoramic epic guides the reader through the history of the Christians by going down little-known alleys to present the coherent theme of pervasive Christian influence.

Holland is a brilliant storyteller, and his book is a grand and great story. Still, while Holland achieves coherence in general—no small achievement for a work spanning such an unfathomable time period—he often jumps around in his chronology while developing his chapters. In doing this, it is necessary for the reader to have a fair level of comfort with Western history in order to appreciate and be convinced of his overall theme. At the same time, Holland's style is what sets his work apart from scholars whose works are similar in theme, including Stark, Jenkins, and Noll.

In 2014, David Brooks lamented a "spiritual recession" among Americans as they seemed to be abandoning, and even disparaging, lofty liberal ideals that transcend the individual experience. Six years later, we can see that Brooks' lament remains appropriate. But to those who would express a similar concern for the church, a work like Holland's offers comfort by demonstrating that the power of the Christian message transcends the peculiarities of passing human circumstances. *Dominion* is an important work for this moment in our culture, which sees the still-Christian West threatened with the undermining of the very institutions which have upheld it and made such an undeniable and enduring benefit to the entire human race.

John D. Wilsey, Ph.D., is Affiliate Scholar in Theology and History at the Acton Institute. He is associate professor of church history at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and author of *One Nation Under God: An Evangelical Critique of Christian America* (Pickwick, 2011) and *American Exceptionalism and Civil Religion: Reassessing the History of an Idea* (IVP Academic, 2015). He also edited *Alexis de Tocqueville's Democracy in America: A New Abridgment for Students* (Lexham, 2016). **R&L**



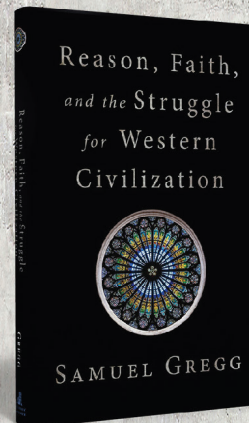
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(Photo: An aerial view of Los Angeles. Photo credit: MarshallAstor, CC-BY-SA3.0.)



BOOK

In praise of suburban sprawl

City on a Hill: Urban Idealism in America from the Puritans to the Present
Alex Krieger | Belknap Press | 2019 | 464 pages

Reviewed by John Couretas

In the catalog of things that are getting a hard rethink in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we must include the disparagement of suburban sprawl and the virtues of urban densification. Yes, much of this critique can be dismissed as elite snobbery. But now it is looking increasingly like sprawl is very good indeed, while the global coronavirus pandemic has set people fleeing the nation's packed, vertical cities.

"New York's wealthy are moving their money—and often their families—into surrounding suburbs and exurbs as they look to escape the coronavirus hotspot and a crowded lifestyle," CNBC reported in May. "It's too early to tell how many New Yorkers will leave the city, or if the mass exodus that many are predicting will come true. Yet sales activity and interest, especially at the high end, is already shifting from New York City to the surrounding areas."

The network spoke with real estate brokers reporting "a rush of buyers and renters from the city who are asking for the same thing: more space and more distance from neighbors and crowds." Some of the wealthy are looking to rent, and "others are checking out second homes a short drive from the city and still others want more permanent primary homes

for their families." New York's status as the epicenter of the U.S. coronavirus outbreak only intensified these yearnings.

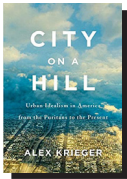
At the other end of the country, demographer Joel Kotkin reported that "our much-maligned dispersed urban pattern has proven a major asset." Los Angeles and its surrounding suburbs, he wrote, "have had a considerable number of cases, but overall this highly diverse, globally engaged region has managed to keep rates of infection well below that of dense, transit-dependent New York City."

Kotkin explained that, by its nature, the "sprawling, multi-polar urban form" of Los Angeles "results in far less 'exposure density' to the contagion than more densely packed urban areas, particularly those where large, crowded workplaces are common and workers are mass-transit-dependent." The history of that form "emerged early in the last century as civic leaders such as Dana Bartlett, a Protestant minister, envisioned Los Angeles as 'a better city, an alternative to the congestion and squalor so common in the big cities of the time. Developers and the public embraced this vision of single-family homes, as Los Angeles became among the fastest-growing big cities in the country.'"

Kotkin notes that the dispersed model for city development, which some pejoratively describe as sprawl, has "been increasingly disparaged by politicians, the media and people in academia who tend to favor the New York model of density and mass transit. Yet even before COVID-19 most Angelenos rejected their advice, preferring to live and work in dispersed patterns and traveling by car. This bit of passive civic resistance may have saved lives in this pandemic."

Every good urban snob has a totem for his or her revulsion for suburban living: the automobile. In 2018, a writer for *Outside Magazine* bemoaned what he saw as a besetting problem: "[P]eople in private vehicles run roughshod over the city." This malady "causes crushing traffic jams, delays public transit, pollutes the air, creates noise, wastes public resources, and takes up an obscene amount of space in a city that doesn't have enough of it. Oh, and there's also all the people these automobiles kill." He asked for leaders to design a "bold car-free policy" for urban life.

This antipathy for chrome and sheet metal welded into personal transportation



also explains the current enthusiasm for a utopian vision of driverless cars. At the same time, urban planners scrawl wretched bike lanes across city streets. This policy seems designed to make downtown driving so miserable that people will abandon their sedans and minivans for mass transit.

As with all utopian fancies, this vision cannot withstand reality. Experts tell the urban planners, in effect, “Not so fast.” In 2016, the *Wall Street Journal* asked Robert McDonald, lead scientist for the Global Cities Program at the Nature Conservancy, how autonomous systems would affect city traffic. He responded, “The faster humans move, the bigger and more sprawling our cities become.” Researchers from New York University and the University of Connecticut examined a global sample of 30 cities and found that population density has been declining between 1% and 1.5% each year since 1890. “Not coincidentally, this is the era when electric street cars were introduced in major cities,” technology writer Christopher Mims wrote.

But don’t millennials prefer to live in cities? “That is widely believed, but not true, according to Jed Kolko, former chief economist at real-estate site Trulia,” Mims reported. “Not only do 66% of millennials tell pollsters they want to live in the suburbs, they are moving there, as population growth in suburbs outstrips growth in cities.”

“This points to an important fact often overlooked by the people—primarily in dense coastal cities—who write about the impact of self-driving cars,” Mims concluded. “About half of Americans live in, and are perfectly fine with, suburbs.”

Kotkin points to a 2012 *Slate* article predicting that Los Angeles would become the nation’s “next great mass-transit city.” But the number of commuter trips has increased by 770,000 each day, while transit commuting declined by 75,000. “Indeed, the Los Angeles Metro system carried approximately 120 million fewer riders in 2019 than in 1985, even including

transfers, despite subsequently opening a huge rail system, with six lines radiating from downtown,” Kotkin writes.

In his new book *City on a Hill: Urban Idealism in America from the Puritans to the Present* (Belknap Press, 2019), Alex Krieger looked at the “case against suburbia” that is prosecuted by proponents of urban densification. Krieger noted that “most critics assailed the physical environments produced by low-density settlement because they were untidy, generic, boring, and ugly. Some conjured up images of the human body sprawling across and disfiguring nature.”

development. That said, environmentalist “concerns about the waste of land, resources, and attention spent negotiating dispersed patterns of settlement have done more to arouse opposition than any complaints about the lifestyles that suburbs allegedly promote.” In this view, “the low-density subdivision will be seen less and less as a form of smart growth.”

But Krieger is not buying in. “The appeal of a house and a yard will not dramatically diminish,” Krieger concludes. “It embodies too many attributes, especially for those simultaneously working and raising families, even if it is



There was another common element to the indictment of suburbia, Krieger notes. Suburban life was assailed as “conformist, drab, and isolationist.” What’s more, the criticism deepened over time “to suggest correlations between suburbanization and deepening social apathy and intolerance of neighbors of different classes, races or political views.” The more people own their own property and form bonds with their neighbors, the more conservative they become.

Environmentalists have also piled on, although Krieger is careful to frame their critique by saying that sprawl is more about affluence than any pattern of

becoming a less universal ideal. ... Yes, the suburb remains a paradise for more than a few.”

Let the workers have their paradise.

John Couretas is Editor-at-Large for the Acton Institute. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in the Humanities from Michigan State University and a Master of Science Degree in Journalism from Northwestern University. [R&I](#).

(Photo credit: Brian Holslow / CC BY-ND 2.0)

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The notion of shared values on both sides of the Atlantic has received new attention. Leaders like French socialist president François Hollande cite “democracy, freedoms and the respect of every individual” as key values. But what about religious liberty, the breakdown of the welfare state, advancing secularism and the health of civil society? R&L Transatlantic will cover these issues here with new articles.

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ANCHORING OURSELVES DURING IMPOSSIBLE TIMES

Rev. Robert A. Sirico

A crisis is not a time to develop one’s philosophy. Crises catch us off guard, and if we don’t have a firmly grounded worldview prior to their arrival, we will find ourselves desperately grasping for one. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to sweep the globe, many are trying to make sense of this new world in which we find ourselves. We live in the midst of a real crisis, which has sent people grasping for values that can make sense out of the world around them.

It has been the business of the Acton Institute for the last 30 years to promote a set of clearly developed principles and, in so doing, to advance the United States and the broader global community toward a free and virtuous society. These principles only give us a sure footing to meet the challenges of such troubling times, because they are universal and foundational to the common good.

The principle that faith and reason are both compatible and essential allows us to understand the crisis and plan our actions in the middle of its tempest. We cannot dismiss the reality of the virus and must resist any notion that it can merely be “prayed away.” Prayer is real, powerful, and sustaining—but it is no substitute for the rigorous application of science. Practitioners must rely on their expertise to research the virus, craft fitting interventions to minimize its damage, and develop treatments or vaccinations. All of God’s gracious gifts to us, spiritual and temporal, must be brought to bear to address this international problem. Science alone, however, cannot tell us how to live our lives together. The realities of human dignity and our transcendent destiny must come into play if we are to have the hope needed to see ourselves through this present crisis.

On a practical level, the principle of subsidiarity is one which must be brought to the fore as governments act to contain this pandemic and coordinate our response to it. When confronted with such a contagion, the state has an important but limited role in containing the virus until such a time as public health can be restored.

Champions of liberty since Adam Smith have all seen the wisdom of such modest and temporary government interventions. When the emergency subsides, we must demand forthrightly that the interventions likewise subside. However, as Robert Higgs has detailed in his brilliant book *Crisis and Leviathan*, interventions applied during times of crisis tend to remain long after their initial justification has subsided. These cascading interventions ratchet up, slowing economic development, and constraining and restricting the resources available for society to meet the next crisis. This is a perennial temptation that faces our political leaders. It also explains some of the difficulties we are experiencing in responding to the present crisis. This, however, is a discussion for another time.

Another danger of government intervention and overreach is that it leads us to downplay the importance of social institutions. The reality that informal communities—families, neighborhoods, churches, and voluntary organizations of all kinds—are essential to the common good is readily seen in moments such as these. This is because these building blocks of civil society meet people where they are in times of crisis, providing invaluable aid and information. They are a vital and normative part of society, both in and out of crisis.

Liberty must be used responsibly. Without conscience, there is no social order. We are now painfully aware that human life and liberty are fragile. Having a transcendent vision helps us to order our lives in the here and now. We are always accountable to God, Who is not only our judge but our great consoler.

It is my hope for you, for your families, and for your communities that you will experience the comfort and sustenance of our benevolent God—the God Who sees our needs better than even we can see them and Who wills for us to have an eternal relationship with Him.

Be safe, and may God bless you.

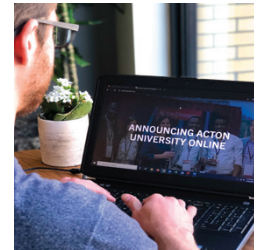
Fr. Robert A. Sirico is the co-founder of the Acton Institute. [R&L](#)

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