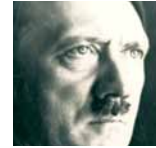


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# Religion & Liberty

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Resisting global governance • **Liberal Tra-**  
**dition** Thomas C. Oden • **Sirico** Humility  
and Power



Fighting for totalitarianism's victims

An Interview with Suzanne Scholte

A Journal of Religion, Economics and Culture

# Editor's Note



Sarah Stanley  
Managing Editor

The unofficial theme for *Religion & Liberty*'s first issue in 2017 is despotism. In the following pages, you'll find stories from the Soviet Union, a close look into the North Korea regime and a re-examination of Hitler's rise to power.

The cover story is an interview with human rights expert Suzanne Scholte, who discusses her passion for fighting the sadistic rule of Kim Jong Un and working with North Korean defectors. After 20 years fighting for those who don't enjoy freedom and democracy, she has countless stories and anecdotes to share. Several harrowing tales of life in North Korea or under other regimes are adapted from the Scholte

interview and featured in "Stories from the worst regimes."

One can't ponder infamously cruel governments for long without thinking of World War II. A newly translated book, *Hitler: Ascent, 1889-1939*, by Volker Ullrich takes a deep look into Adolf Hitler's historic rise to power. Fr. Anthony Perkins reviews the book and explains what this all means for us today.

Moving away from totalitarianism, the "Double-Edge Sword" reflects on John 5:20-21. These short verses demonstrate the complete and perfect unity between God the Father and God the Son.

In an excerpt from Acton's new monograph *What's Wrong with Global Governance?* Robert Gorman explains exactly what global governance is and advises readers to be wary of these encroaching bodies. The Church should especially fight back against many of the unsavory things that come with political bodies that enjoy transnational authority.

Theologian Thomas C. Oden admitted he was "in love with heresies" at one point, but famously had a change of heart and a craving for orthodoxy. Though he passed away in 2016, his legacy will go on. This issue's "In the Liberal Tradition" celebrates his life and work.

Rev. Robert Sirico closes the issue with a reflection on humility and power. He discusses this ongoing theme of totalitarianism and the cruelty of those regimes.

Finally, there's some news for *Religion & Liberty* readers. This issue's FAQ is an important one, as the *Religion & Liberty* editorial board has decided it's time for a change. This publication will be redesigned and will feature a new layout and expanded content starting with the Spring 2017 issue. Kris Mauren outlines some of the new features and what you can look forward to when you receive the next issue.

## Editorial Board

**Publisher:** Rev. Robert A. Sirico  
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Cover Photo: "Wall painting extolling Kim Il Sung in Wonsan, North Korea" by yeowatzup (CC BY 2.0).

Inside Photos: Pg4: "North Korean border guard" by Jon Flawed (flickr.com CC BY-SA 2.0); Pg10: "Graph of startup process" illustration by Rdomino (istockphoto.com).

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# Fighting for totalitarianism's victims

An interview with Suzanne Scholte

*What's the situation in North Korea? It's a difficult question to answer. Refugees from the nation are painted as liars by their former government, and it's nearly impossible for outsiders to get a clear picture of what life is like inside the nation. The few foreigners who do visit North Korea are closely watched and presented an "official" image of the nation by the regime. Suzanne Scholte has spent the last 20 years not only trying to answer this question but also advocating for the rights of the North Korean people. She is president of the Defense Forum Foundation and chairperson of the North Korean Freedom Coalition. She is one of the world's leading activists in the North Korean human rights movement and is dedicated to promoting the freedom, human rights and dignity of the North Korean people. Late last year she spoke with Religion & Liberty's Sarah Stanley in Falls Church, Virginia, about North Korea and the broader fight for democracy worldwide.*

*For more of the interview, visit [blog.acton.org](http://blog.acton.org) and search for "Suzanne Scholte."*

*See also essays about North Korean and Communist defectors in "Stories from the worst regimes," beginning on page 4.*

**R&L:** *What originally got you interested in fighting for human rights in general, but also in North Korea specifically?*

**Suzanne Scholte:** As president of the Defense Forum Foundation, I was organizing programs on foreign affairs and defense

policy. Our foundation was founded during the early years of the Reagan administration to articulate why we needed to rebuild our defenses after the Carter years. DFF's mission is to bring expert speakers to Capitol Hill for bipartisan programs in support of a strong national defense and to promote the concept of peace through strength.

When I became president of DFF, I expanded the focus to also promote freedom, democracy and human rights abroad because in every single case, the countries that are a threat to the United States—or any other democracy—are always a threat to their own people without exception. So I felt we should do more than just promote a strong national defense but also promote freedom, democracy and human rights abroad. So, to start that mission, I decided to bring people who had escaped from totalitarian regimes to come and speak about why they left. What made them turn against the country of their birth? I hosted defectors from the former Soviet Union, Cuba, China and elsewhere. It was remarkable to hear their stories.

I hosted a gentleman named Harry Wu from China, who exposed the Chinese Laogai—the political prison camp system. During those years of bringing speakers to talk about why they defected, I thought, "I really want to hear a North Korean." Back then, just as today, the focus was always on the nuclear issue. So I really wanted to hear from somebody who actually lived in North Korea who had defected. I started beating down the door of the South Korean embassy in Washington in 1996,

because all the defectors were totally under the control and care of the Korean government. At the time, there weren't that many. So I begged them. I said, "Look, I'm doing these programs featuring defectors from these totalitarian regimes. We'd love to hear from a North Korean." And it took a year of trying to convince them this is important for Americans to hear from an actual North Korean, to share their story. I finally won them over. In 1997, DFF hosted the first North Korean defectors who had ever spoken out publicly in the United States.

Immediately after that I hosted the first survivors of the political prison camps from North Korea. At the time, there were only five. One of them was a camp guard. I consider him a survivor even though he was a guard, because he turned against the regime. We also hosted other witnesses: women who had been victims of trafficking in China, others who had suffered torture and abuse when they were forced back to North Korea by Chinese authorities. We were just trying to expose what was happening in North Korea by eyewitnesses, by actual people who could share their stories. This issue was really hard to get people's attention. For example, it took me a year of requests to get the South Korean government to allow North Korean defectors to visit the USA, and then it took me another year to get the U.S. Congress to host a hearing on the political prison camps. We finally had a hearing in 1999 on the political prison camps. It was then Senator John Kerry and former Senator Craig Thomas, whose

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# Stories from the worst regimes

By Suzanne Scholte

*The most powerful weapons against totalitarian regimes are the defectors. Their stories of hardship and resilience show us the power of the common man or woman and give us glimpses into the true nature of the regimes. During this issue's feature interview, Suzanne Scholte shared dozens of significant anecdotes about North Koreans and other victims of totalitarianism. These harrowing glimpses into life under a cruel regime are featured here, in Scholte's voice, as stand-alone stories. For more information about Scholte, North Korea and totalitarianism, see "Fighting for totalitarianism's victims," beginning on page 3.*

— Sarah Stanley

## Welcome to Freedom!

Orestes Lorenzo was a defector from Cuba, but first he was an Air Force major who had impressed Cuban leadership. As a result, he and his wife got the opportunity to study abroad in the Soviet Union. While in Cuba, they believed the propaganda that the Soviet Union is the great motherland and they thought, "They're the perfect socialist paradise. That's where we're heading. It's going to be great for us." But when they went there, Gorbachev was in power, so the Soviet Union was starting to open up. Lorenzo was able to read about what was going on outside of the Soviet Union. He and his wife started to have a lot of doubts about socialism and the Castro regime in Cuba. Additionally, his wife was a nurse and saw the Soviet medical system, which was absolutely appalling. This was supposed to be the great paradise, but things in Cuba were not as bad as they

were in the Soviet Union. They started to question this system.

The story gets more interesting though. One of their sons got really ill, and they didn't know what to do because they didn't want to take him to the hospital in the Soviet Union. They felt subjecting him to the Soviet medical system would make his illness worse. So Lorenzo said to his wife, "I don't know what you're going to think about this, but I think we should pray to God to help our son." And his wife said, "Oh, I'm a Christian too. I was just afraid to tell you."

"The propaganda videos they had seen in Cuba always showed that white people had privilege and money. Everybody else lived in terrible poverty. He thought, 'That's the one calculation I didn't make.'"

Having these people come out and tell their stories and their real-life histories of what made them change is huge. In Lorenzo's case, he and his wife went back to Cuba, where he made the decision to defect. He also wanted to turn a Soviet MiG

over to the United States. The plan was for him to defect first and then his wife and sons would follow later. Because he was in the Cuban Air Force, he was able to avoid the surveillance and fly the Soviet MiG out of Cuba. He headed to Florida. He was flying into the U.S. Air Force base at Turkey Point, where he was going to turn over the plane, but the Americans were going nuts because here's this Soviet MiG coming. They didn't know what was going on. So Orestes was signaling, "I'm turning the plane over. I'm defecting. I'm defecting." He said when he was flying into Florida it suddenly passed through his mind that although he had come to doubt socialism, he was suddenly hesitant. One thing he hadn't thought about was the color of his skin. The propaganda videos they had seen in Cuba always showed that white people had privilege and money. Everybody else lived in terrible poverty. He thought, "That's the one calculation I didn't make. How are they going to accept me?"

He was not white; he was Hispanic. He was curious how he would be treated. But when he landed his plane and popped open the canopy of the Soviet MiG, he was greeted by an African American Air Force colonel who shook his hand and said, "Welcome to freedom!" All his fears disappeared.

## Soviets discover faith and swimming pools

Stanislav Levchenko, a man who defected

from the Soviet Union, had been in the KGB. His assignment was to try to turn the Japanese toward the Soviet cause. So he would take Japanese businessmen who visited Moscow to visit different special sites like Red Square and historic destinations.

He would show them the old, beautiful Russian churches that were still there. He said there were these old women who he would always see worshipping there. And he said he could tell when they were going to visit the church because they would look really stressed. But then they would go into the church and pray, and he would see them come out and they would be at peace. He started to think maybe there was something to this religious thing. But he didn't know how to pray because he'd been raised in an environment with no religion. Instead, he started composing letters to God, memos to God in his head. He became a secret Christian and ended up defecting.

There was another Soviet agent. He was in the GRU, which was their military KGB—their intelligence. He came over here to the U.S. on assignment to be a spy. He said what changed his opinion was swimming pools. He was flying over Virginia, and he asked his seatmate, “What are all those reflecting things on the ground?” And his seatmate said, “Oh, those are swimming pools.” At that moment he realized that in a free society there was vast wealth, and he was shocked by that. He thought, “Look at all these people who are living like kings.” That totally changed his view.

### **The North Korean classification system runs deep**

Kim Seong Min is the director of Free

North Korea Radio. His father was a famous poet in North Korea and they lived a life of luxury. They were high on the Songbun classification system. But the father fell out of favor because at the time when North Korea was trying to block the influence of China, his father evidently had close connections to the Chinese. So the whole family was exiled to a rural area, where Kim grew up, but they eventually were allowed back to the capital city. And he became an army captain and a propaganda officer. Kim Seong Min was special because all the North Korean defectors admired him. He had been both high and low on the Songbun classification system. Sometimes the defectors

to die. You're going to be executed because you were in the military. There's no hope for you.” The Chinese turned him over to the North Korean security, boarding him on a train to take him to Pyongyang for execution, but Kim jumped from the moving train and was able to escape again. He worked in China as a laborer and was able to reconnect with his uncle and eventually make it to South Korea. Then his girlfriend, who became his wife, came after. She was Chinese.

When Kim was being interviewed by the National Intelligence Service of South Korea (because every North Korean defector goes through an interview process

when they first come to South Korea), they offered him a drink. He said they asked him, “Would you like tea? Would you like soda?” They offered him all these drinks. He could not believe there were so many choices and so many flavors. They would bring in a different beverage every day. He was convinced it was an elaborate con. He could not believe such a variety of different beverages were available. So he said the first thing he did when he finished orientation at Hanawon (the

facility where North Koreans learn how to adjust to South Korea) was go to a store, where he counted all the different beverages. He was just shocked. That just shows you the deprivation.

All North Korean defectors will tell you that going to South Korea is not like going to another country. It's like going 100 years in the future or going to another planet. They are shocked by what they see in China, the prosperity in China, but they are even more overwhelmed when they get to South Korea.



Statue of Kim Il-sung in Pyongyang, North Korea. credit: Stephan (flickr.com CC BY-SA 2.0)

come out and they think, “Well, I was up here. I was part of the elites. I was important.” So some of the former elites look down on the non-elites. They couldn't help it because they were living in this classification system. But Kim is totally free of that system.

Kim found out he had an uncle in South Korea and reached out to him. It got discovered and Kim had to flee to China to avoid arrest in North Korea. He got arrested in China and was forced back to North Korea. The Chinese who arrested him actually told him, “We know you were in the army. We're sending you back

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## You can't trust anyone

*North Koreans are so used to fending for themselves, they don't understand why anyone would help them. North Korean ideology teaches that devotion and sacrifice is for the regime alone. Scholte shared several examples of Korean defectors who struggled to understand why strangers wanted to help them.*

There's a North Korean defector; a woman who eventually opened a coffee shop and bakery in Richmond, Virginia. She said one of her first customers was a police officer in uniform. When she handed him the coffee, he handed her money and she wouldn't take it. She was afraid and kept trying to give him the coffee for free. He said, "I can't take this for free. You have to take this money." So they had this long back and forth. Finally, she realized, "The police are here to help me. He's not here to bribe me. He's not here to take advantage of me. He's not here to extort me." She was shocked, because in North Korea, the police are part of the State Security Bureau. They're a part of surveillance. They're against the people. She realized, "This man is here to help me."



"Sariwon, North Korea" credit: Stephan (flickr.com CC BY-SA 2.0)

There's another North Korean defector, Joseph Kim, who's up in New York going to school. He wrote a book about his life and escape titled *Under the Same Sky*. After he defected, he kept thinking, "There must be something wrong with these Christians." He thought they were deranged. They kept giving him money and food and asking for nothing in return. "What do they want back? Why would they do that? It's so weird." He thought there was something literally mentally wrong with Christians.

When many of the defectors had decided to escape, they were told, "Go to a place that has the 't' sign—the Christian cross—because the people there will help you. They'll give you food. They'll give you money." The North Koreans were thinking, "Why would anybody do that? Why would anybody give you something for nothing?" That's why Joseph Kim wrote in his book that Christians were crazy. That whole concept of pure generosity is totally beyond them.

## The sacrificial love of *Titanic*

The greatest threat to the regime is Christianity, because North Koreans are slaves to that dictatorship. Christianity upends everything the North Koreans have been indoctrinated to believe.

The 1997 movie *Titanic* became a big hit in North Korea. It was secretly circulated throughout the country. An elite living in Pyongyang with her son, who wanted to become an actor, was secretly watching Western films. She watched that film and got reported to the State Security Bureau. A bureau agent showed up at her door and said, "If you lend me the film, I won't tell anybody." But this movie got circulated so widely around North Korea that the regime felt they had to respond to it. They explained that the movie was not really a love story but a depiction of the failure of capitalism because the great ship *Titanic*, symbolizing capitalism, sunk on the same day as Kim Il Sung's birthday: April 15, 1912. So they tried to turn the

movie's popularity into positive propaganda for the regime. Several defectors who saw *Titanic* said it was revolutionary for them because North Koreans are taught they should sacrifice only for the dictator, while the film's a love story about somebody sacrificing himself for someone else. Everything is for the dictator, who is their god, so to see this sacrificial love for another person was radical. The idea of helping someone, of giving to someone. That's beyond their understanding.

## Christianity: a bigger threat than capitalism

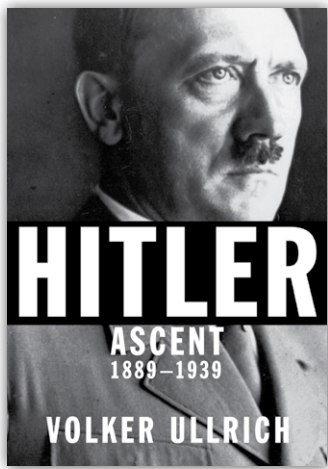
Eom Myung Hui was a marketer working with a South Korean importing seafood. She was a real capitalist. Because of her South Korean business partner, she became exposed to the gospel and became a Christian. When she got arrested by the North Korean state security agents, she thought they were arresting her because they heard she had been part of the underground economy, was involved in the private markets and was a capitalist.

She said they tortured her for a week but never asked her about her market activity; they only wanted to know if she had become a Christian. They couldn't care less that she was illegally buying, trading and selling. She denounced Christianity. Because she was a teacher, she was high up on the classification system and was able to convince them that somebody was trying to ruin her reputation by saying she was a Christian. So she was released. After that she knew she had to escape. And so she did and came to China and was able to eventually get to South Korea. Then she raised enough money to get her two daughters out. She spent \$10,000 to rescue each of her two daughters.

The North Korean officials didn't care about the illegal marketing she was doing. All they cared about was that she may have become a believer. She's a pastor now. She was a believer. She denied her faith, and now she's a very strong Christian.

■■■■





# Can it happen again?

By Fr. Anthony Perkins

*Review of Hitler: Ascent, 1889-1939 (Knopf; Trade edition, 2016) by Volker Ullrich.*

One of the best things about the latest account of the rise of Adolf Hitler is the author's approach. While he is in no way neutral (he uses pejorative adjectives sparingly, but effectively), historian Volker Ullrich tries to present Hitler objectively, free of mythology or fate. His refusal to make Hitler's rise seem inevitable is refreshing. This fact, along with the author's exhaustive use of primary sources, makes the book an ideal resource for those who honestly desire to understand Hitler's rise to power and whether such a thing could happen again. The amount of data provided is enough to begin testing all the usual hypotheses about the dictator's rise and his racist and totalitarian brand of national socialism.

The book provides ample support for the idea that Hitler's charismatic and manipulative narcissism was part of what allowed him to gain and maintain influence over his cadres. This is a common enough idea; some politicians are narcissists, and while some successful politicians are able to control others, all successful politicians are able to persuade people. In the case of Hitler, Ullrich argues that the combination of his charisma, his narcissistic managerial style and the Nazi ideology made his policies more and more radical as his cadres competed to express his will in ways that he himself was often constrained to avoid. Again, the competition of lieutenants is common enough, and narcissists

instinctively play one against the other; what is unique here is the effect of the Nazi ideology.

As Ullrich puts it, "In competing for the dictator's favour, his paladins tried to trump one another with ever more extreme demands and measures. Small-time and medium-level NSDAP functionaries—from the block wardens to the cell, local and district leaders—were also convinced they were 'working towards the Führer' when they harassed Jews and informed on putative 'parasites on the people.' They were not just the willing executioners of Hitler's ideological postulates: they drove racist policies forward."

The psychological temptation when reading about Hitler is to use the traits he shares with one's favorite enemy to demonize him and his followers and demonstrate that not only could Hitler and Nazism happen again, it is happening here and now. Because it focuses on both Hitler's mundane and political qualities, Ullrich's book provides enough detail to allow anyone with imagination to do this with just about any modern leader. Is your enemy narcissistic, petty and vindictive, even to the point of mocking the disabled? Does he have effeminate hands? Is he a natural actor or salesman? Is he manipulative and tactically savvy? Does he give his audience simple ideas they can rally around? Hitler did those things too! *Reductio ad Hitlerum*.

It is safe to say that every society creates

enough men with Hitleresque qualities who are to make their presence a given. For the purpose of comparison and answering the questions about future Hitlers, it is at least as useful to look at the many times when Hitler's life could have gone in a different direction as it is to look at his personal qualities. Ullrich does a great job pointing many of these out. Some of these provide reason for hope. For example, increased economic opportunity and social media provide outlets that satisfy the needs of many petty men. A culture that stigmatizes ideas like ethnic cleansing, racial purity and eugenics keeps their proponents in the shadows and political ideologies less extreme; and political systems that make the consolidation of power much more difficult (e.g., federalism and the balance of powers) keep politicians from consolidating and monopolizing power the way Hitler did in the first half of 1933.

However, Ullrich's presentation suggests that some things about today might make it even easier for new Hitlers to cause significant damage. The Nazi movement survived in difficult times and was able to take advantage of tactical opportunities because it was organized and disciplined. The decline in civil society makes it harder to create and sustain such organizations now than back then, but social media provides a cheap substitute for mass mobilization. Moreover, charismatic and manipulative narcissists are naturally drawn to use social media to support their egos, political careers and agendas. The saving grace is that social

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media is less reliable in difficult times than well-organized mass movements, and leaders who rely on it are somewhat less able to insulate themselves and their followers from competing ideas. Monopolizing social media would be as necessary for the new Hitlers to hold on to power and popularity as consolidating control over the government was for the original. All this suggests that technology may make it more probable that new Hitlers will gain power, but that they will be less extreme than the original and have significantly less time in office.

This is not to say that we are out of the woods. Ullrich describes how Hitler's manipulation of his subordinates made his government inefficient and unpredictable; just imagine how much more chaotic it would have been if he had had access to social media! In the hands of a narcissistic executive, social media can be used to abrogate traditional lines of authority and make every decision-maker second guess himself. The lack of a well-specified or radical agenda will make "working towards the Führer" unlikely to result in sustained wickedness, but it will certainly sow confusion (and could easily lead to undisciplined pogroms, at least in the short term).

Ullrich's book succeeds in demythologizing Hitler and thus provides a great service to modern readers. That is not to say that this service is likely to bring us comfort. Studying Hitler as a man makes it clear that the horrific things he did could indeed happen again. He was a wicked man with a horrific agenda, but his enabling trait was his ability as a tactician. What is to keep a similarly wicked man and strong tactical skills from spreading chaos? The answer does not come from Ullrich's book, it comes from our Founding Fathers. The thing that will protect us from new Hitlers is the same thing that has protected us from tyranny for the past 230 years: A liberal democracy that decentralizes economic and political power.

*Fr. Anthony is a priest in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and a professor at St. Sophia Ukrainian Orthodox Theological Seminary.*

# Double-Edged Sword: *The Power of the Word*

## John 5:20–21

*For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.*

One of the greatest themes of the Gospels is the complete unity between God the Father and God the Son. The theological term for this is *homoousios*. It simply means God and Christ are of the same substance. This is not only a great theological truth but also a deep comfort to believers.

The manner in which Jesus deals with and loves us is exactly the same way the Father views and adores us. They are inseparable from each other. God is not somewhere above plotting something different for creation that Christ on earth did not say or teach.

In John 5, Christ was accused by the religious authorities of being a Sabbath breaker. Earlier in the chapter, Jesus healed a man who was paralyzed. But Christ is of course Lord of the Sabbath, and as the Gospels unveil, the Lord over creation and life. He told the authorities they will see "even greater works" and "will be amazed."

Jesus alluded to the fact that even those who deny him or impugn his teachings, or even those who are in the grave, will one day see the full truth of his relationship with the Father. For believers, the essence of the Father's eternal unity and love for Christ is everything. He delights in the ways and works of his Son because they are fully from the Father and in his nature. Even more amazing is that God delights in Christ as one who is now fully human. Christ has united humanity eternally within the Trinitarian relationship. That is great news for humankind. It means that the Godhead will never be without us. We're included!

If you want to know God the Father, look no further than Christ. The Apostle Paul called him the "image of the invisible God." Christ allows us to know God and to be remade in his image. Furthermore, he brings the love and compassion of the Father to us and speaks it to us in the language and through a human body we can understand.

That Christ can resurrect the dead is an essential seal of his oneness with the Father. John's Gospel powerfully points to Christ as Creator and Redeemer, fully God. It's a great book to read to leave behind the false and scarier conceptions of God sometimes transmitted by a broken and lost culture. God not only wills to be in relationship with us, but His deep desire is to be united to us through eternity.





"United Nations General Assembly hall" by Patrick Gruban (CC by-SA 2.0)

# Resisting global governance

By Robert F. Gorman

*The following essay is excerpted and adapted from What's Wrong with Global Governance? (Acton Institute 2016).*

The term *global governance* refers to the political dimension of globalization. Here the question is to what degree governance will be centralized and controlled by international institutions in ways that threaten to diminish national and local governmental capacity. Global governance advocates tend to prefer both transnational regulation of markets and the creation of new human rights norms marked by increased centralization.

In the latter sense, global governance can imply much more than simple international coordination and cooperation, which has existed throughout modern international relations. Now it is also a deeply and widely embedded ideology that seeks global centralization and regulation of wide-reaching areas of international interaction. It is believed and advanced by its devotees with an almost religious zeal. If this growing and increasingly influential body of believers simply wanted to resolve pressing international problems, its effects would be largely unobjectionable. International cooperation is needed to prevent, control and resolve conflicts; provide much-needed humanitarian emergency assistance; and promote increasing prosperity among nations.

Global governance ideology aims at eroding and eliminating national sovereignty by reducing national governmental control

over the movement of people, goods, services and capital across national boundaries. It seeks to establish an entirely secular order in which activities such as education, health care, economic development and justice are fashioned by global experts rather than by the leaders in their natural local and national contexts. Rule by experts, by global bureaucrats, is regarded as the ideal.

These experts in turn share a common set of outlooks about the world. They are secularists who are at best suspicious of but often outright hostile to religion and traditional culture as influences on civilization. They are bureaucrats or advocates of bureaucracy who believe that government by expert rather than by elected officials is the only way to advance a progressive agenda of modernization. They are environmentalists who, to varying degrees, regard human beings and human population growth as a scourge on global ecology. They are thus almost universally population-control advocates who regard the family, especially the traditional family and the religious beliefs of families, as a threat to environmental integrity. They are transnationalists who believe that the nation-state is an anachronistic cultural construct in need of deconstruction. They are materialists who ultimately deny the transcendent spiritual nature of human beings and who thus are concerned almost exclusively about the physical and emotional needs of people. They are relativists who generally reject the concept of objective moral truth, of natural law or of the religious and spiri-

tual dimensions of the human person. They regard power and control as the mechanisms by which to remake the world in their own image. They are centralists who have little regard for the rights of subsidiary bodies, local agencies of mutual aid and support, churches, local governments or even national governments that wish to preserve their distinctive ways of life. In the name of global solidarity, they violate basic principles of subsidiarity.

The traditional teachings of Christianity, rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ, are a major target for advocates of global governance. They have adopted the mantle of peace, justice, human rights and humanitarian advocacy—the social gospel of the Church—but have systematically attacked the Church as an institution, the traditional family and traditional moral values, and love of country and love of God. They seek to supplant the Church's historical role in the provision of corporal works of mercy. They are opponents of religious liberty and even of freedom of conscience.

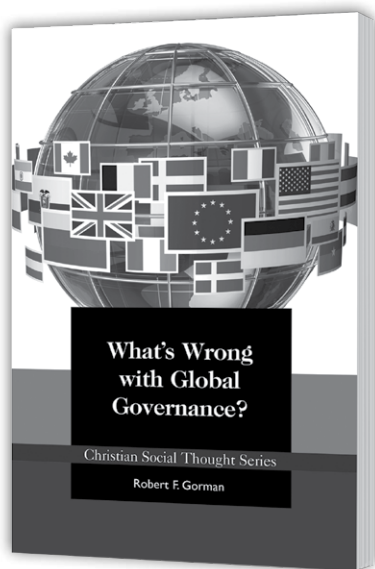
This sinister version of global governance is a sign of our times. It is fed at an ever-increasing rate by the globalization of electronic communication. In this new virtual world, peace and justice contend with violence and depravity. The Church must be aware of the ideological movements at work under the guise of secular humanism and progressive liberalism. Global governance ideology is the intellectual stepchild of Marxist materialist thought. In an age of actual globalization,

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it is the reigning worldview of elites. The Church therefore must understand it and resist its most sinister goals by serving as a sign of contradiction; by cooperating with international institutionalization where it is most justified; and by opposing it when it violates basic human dignity, the subsidiary rights of the Church and the imbedded agents of mutual aid and support on which local communities depend.

The Church must foster a humane and just form of global governance while resisting the features and political commitments of the ideology that encourages a culture of death rather than a civilization of life and love. The true good and happiness of human persons rests on a genuine respect for human dignity and the advancement of the common good in light of the deepest truths of human nature. The Church—as well as all people of good will—must work to ensure that global governance promotes rather than frustrates this end.

*Robert F. Gorman is University Distinguished Professor of Political Science and International Studies at Texas State University.*



*What's Wrong with Global Governance?* by Robert F. Gorman is part of the Christian Social Thought Series and can be purchased online at [www.acton.org](http://www.acton.org).

# Acton FAQ

## Why is Religion & Liberty being redesigned?

Just as Acton's website was redone in the beginning of 2017, it's time to give a fresh coat of paint to this publication you're reading now. The next issue of *Religion & Liberty*, Spring 2017 Vol 27 Number 2, will look very different from what you're currently reading.

The scope of the magazine will be different. For the past several years, *Religion & Liberty* has focused on an American audience. The new tag of the magazine will read "Acton Institute's *International Journal of Religion, Economics and Culture*." The theme will continue to be the intersection of faith and economics, but now with an added transatlantic focus. Connecting good intentions with sound economics goes beyond our national borders.

The format will be different. Along with a larger audience comes a need for more space and more content. The current magazine runs with 16 pages, but the new design will include a total of 24 pages.

The look will be different. If you've visited [www.acton.org](http://www.acton.org) recently, you'll notice our website features more imagery and brighter colors. The new *Religion & Liberty* will mirror that with a bolder shade of red and a full-color interior. You can expect stunning visuals to accompany new essays and articles.

Much will stay the same, however. Acton's commitment to quality, well-researched pieces will remain. Our commitment to reaching a broad interfaith audience will remain the same. Many of the essays, reviews and articles will be consistent with content found in *Religion & Liberty* archives.

The new product will also reflect our commitment to good stewardship with sustainable packaging and paper. We will look into options that are not only a good use of the money so generously given to us, but are also ecologically-friendly.

We don't want to reinvent the wheel. Ultimately, the goal of the redesign is to reflect the quality of the writing and content in an updated, bolder design.

We hope this new look improves the readability of this publication and that you, our readers, will enjoy the change.

Kris Alan Mauren  
Executive Director

staff members helped me put that hearing together.

It was nonpartisan, with support from both the Republican and Democrat senators, and it was the first time there had ever been a hearing on the North Korean political prison camps. But it was very frustrating to make that happen. I have to confess I really wanted to give up on the whole issue and go do something else. The American policy regarding North Korea was totally focused on the nuclear issue. It was frustrating because people didn't believe

"I would host these defectors from North Korea and listen to what they went through, and I'd have nightmares. I could hardly sleep at night..."

the stories, and it was debilitating to listen to the stories. I would host these defectors from North Korea and listen to what they went through, and I'd have nightmares. I could hardly sleep at night because it was so horrible. The reason I stayed with this work was because of answered prayer. In terrible frustration, I cried out to God, "Why did you put this North Korea work on me?" He reminded me that he had simply answered my prayer. Then I remembered, I had prayed once that God would break my heart for what was breaking his heart. I realized at that moment in frustrated angry prayer to God that what was happening to the people of North Korea was breaking his heart, and I had to do this work; I had to keep at it. Only because of my faith have I been able to walk this walk, because it is really, really hard.

*What is it about totalitarianism that is so violent against religion in general, but especially Christianity?*

Christianity teaches that you're free. Under totalitarianism, you're a slave to the state and therefore they're very anti-religion.

Their religion is the state. North Korea is unique because of their ideology. They're not a purely Communist state, although they're definitely totalitarian. Kim Il Sung, the founder of North Korea, was raised a Christian—his parents were Christians.

I believe that as Kim Il Sung was growing up during the Japanese occupation of Korea, he witnessed the power of the Christian faith. In the Korean Declaration of Independence, you will see that over half the signers of that document were devout Christians. The general population was maybe 20 percent Christian. Christians dominated the movement for Korean independence. Kim Il Sung saw firsthand the power of the Christian faith, and when he took over North Korea, he took the tenets of the Christian faith and turned them into the worship of himself. For example, he set himself up as the god. Juche is the Holy Spirit, the ideology they operate under. Then Kim Jong Il, his son, was like the Christ figure, the father, son and Juche. North Koreans have to pray after a meal: "Thank you father, Kim Il Sung." They say a creed that's very much like the Apostles' Creed to the dictatorship. They have study centers all over North Korea where people have to study the ideology and the words and teachings of Kim Il Sung. It's a complete perversion of the Christian faith.

The greatest threat to the regime is Christianity because the people are slaves to that dictatorship. He is their god. I point out to the North Koreans, "My God is alive; yours is dead. Kim Il Sung is dead, so is Kim Jong Il."

*You've said North Korea is the "world's worst human rights tragedy." Why is that?*

It's the only country in the world that does not enjoy a single human right. North Koreans do not have the right to travel. They don't have the right to choose their profession, go to school where they want to go to school, even live where they want to live. Their entire lives are controlled by the regime and by the Songbun—this elaborate system of how every citizen is classified according to their loyalty to the regime. In Songbun, you have a booklet, and all this data about you is continually kept. How

loyal you are to the regime is how you move up. But you could be classified for your entire life and never actually make it up. It's similar to apartheid.

*So even if you're doing everything right, but your parents were listed for something, you'd be considered less loyal?*

Exactly. You're marked for life. So the system was set up as part of Kim Il Sung's regime. People who were loyal or fighting against the Japanese were high up, but anybody who was a landlord, a Christian, a land owner, all of them were considered hostile to the regime and on the lower end of the Songbun classification. There are three major categories: loyal, wavering and hostile. If you were loyal to the regime, you got rice. But if you were classified as wavering in your loyalty, you may only have access to corn. In addition to deciding if you got food, the Songbun system would also control your access to material goods. If you had a refrigerator, if you had a car, all the positions you have in life—everything.

It's also important to note: The political prison camps in North Korea have been in existence longer than the Soviet gulags, longer than the Nazi death camps, even longer than the Chinese laogai. The fact that children are in these camps shows that most of the people in these camps are innocent. They haven't really committed a crime. Generations of a family are locked up in these camps.

I absolutely believe David Sneedon (American who disappeared in China in 2004) is in North Korea right now teaching English. This is a regime that abducts citizens from other countries. I don't know of any other country in the world that's involved with the abduction of citizens of other countries.

There has never been, in modern history, massive starvation and death in a so-called industrialized country. That has never happened when there hasn't been war or some kind of armed conflict that created the famine. Millions of people starved. The reason why that happened was a combination of factors. It was their terrible agriculture policy and the collective farms rather than private farming and the fact that they used food aid as a weapon. Colonel Choi

*continued on pg 12*



Joo Hwal, one of the first defectors I ever hosted, said that during the famine when the humanitarian aid trucks would arrive, they would go to a town (whether it was a world food program or whatever relief agency) and deliver the rice to the different families. They would take that written receipt that the Kim family got this rice and the Lee family got this rice. Then they would take that written confirmation of the delivery of the aid, and then they would go onto the next town. Colonel Choi testified that the army, in unmarked trucks, would roll into that town and take all of that rice back. This is why people starved. That's why Action Against Hunger, Doctors Without Borders, very well-respected humanitarian relief agencies with no political agenda, left North Korea in protest. The humanitarian aid was sent with the good intentions of the people of the international community, but it ended up helping the regime because they transferred it into cash and used food aid as a weapon against the North Korean people.



Editorial cartoon created by North Korean Regime shows Scholte approaching South Korea and attracting conservative flies with propaganda. Image courtesy of Suzanne Scholte.

Here's an interesting fact to confirm the regime's plans to divert the aid for the outset: When the famine was at its height in the 1990s, and when the world community decided they were going to send humanitarian aid to North Korea, the regime required that the people who were delivering the aid not speak Korean.

*So they can't talk to the people. They can't find out what's going on.*

Exactly. They wanted to be able to control

the people who were delivering the aid. So no Korean speakers allowed. That's the reverse of what you would ever want if you really cared about your people.

Another aspect of North Korea that sets it apart: It is a crime punishable by death to leave the country without permission. That's just terrifying.

The U.N. Commission of Inquiry concluded in February 2014 that North Korea does not have any parallel in the contemporary world for their human rights violations. The U.N. COI did interviews with hundreds of defectors and came to the exact same conclusion as what all of us were saying in the human rights movement: North Korea is the world's worst human rights tragedy.

*Why do you think China collaborates with North Korea to hunt down and arrest refugees?*

That is an extremely good question, because China is so key in all of this. I believe they would rather have a fellow dictatorship on their border than a unified and free Korea. They continue to prop up the regime. One of the ways to do that is to control the people who are trying to escape. China and North Korea are in close collaboration. It actually

intensified when Kim Jong Il died. The Kim Jong Un regime was afraid more people would escape. So they intensified the border to prevent people from escaping. If the regime did collapse, I think China fears that they would be infiltrated by refugees. What I point out to the Chinese is that they want North Korea to take on Chinese-style reforms. China has encouraged North Korea: "Why don't you open up to more markets like we've done? We're still a Communist country, but our people are doing so much better. Why

don't you do the same thing?" North Korea won't do that.

The North Koreans have always had the policy of block the "yellow wind." North Korea is racist against the Chinese. If a North Korean woman gets repatriated back to North Korea from China and she's pregnant, the North Koreans force her to abort the baby because it's half Chinese. That's a racist policy. We ask the Chinese, "Why are you propping up this dictatorship that's committing crimes against humanity, that's racist against the Chinese people, that refuses to accept your recommendations on reforms? You are relieving North Korea of the pressure that could be made to make them adopt Chinese-style reforms."

What would happen if the North Korea regime collapsed and Korea unified? You would have an economic boom in that region. China would benefit economically because North Korea would be free to develop. They have a terrible infrastructure. They need railroads. They need electricity. It could be a huge boon to the economy. Also, the Chinese don't want American troops there, but those troops are only at the DMZ because of the threat from North Korea.

We could make many arguments with the Chinese Communist government about this, but they continue to support the dictatorship in North Korea. However, the Chinese citizens are on our side in this issue. The Chinese citizens who know about this issue don't see South Korea as a threat. They see the tremendous, robust trade relationship South Korea and China have. They know South Korea is the future. They're embarrassed that their government keeps bailing out this dictatorship that is loathed by the world community and committing crimes against humanity.

Finally, we point out to the Chinese government, by supporting this regime, that they are complicit in crimes against humanity. Unfortunately, the Communist government in China would rather have a fellow Communist leader, a totalitarian state, rather than a democracy. That shows you the poor judgment the government of China has. They want to be seen as a world leader. Instead, they're causing terrible instability in Asia. It's going to get worse because

South Korea is going to develop the missile defense system, and China is totally against that. But the only reason why South Korea wants to develop a missile defense is because of North Korea's nuclear threat. If Kim Jong Un wasn't threatening South Korea, they would have no interest in developing a nuclear defense.

*Can you talk about the underground economy in North Korea, and how it works as a market-based culture to undermine the regime?*

The amazing thing about the market economy is that it's a testament to the power of the human spirit, capitalism and self-determination. The North Korean people created this economy themselves. It shows the resilience of the North Korean people as well as the power of free enterprise. When the Public Distribution System broke down, whereby food and material goods were distributed according to your Songbun classification, the North Korean people saved themselves from a system whereby everything came down from the great dictator who bestowed upon you all your needs.

The distribution system broke down because of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the lack of support coming in, aggravated by the famine, which was partially triggered by the regime's agricultural policy. Also, the collective farms were failing to produce.

There's a North Korean defector, Lee Min Bok, who was an agricultural specialist. During the time of the famine he went around the country to look at how the farms were functioning. He put together a report for the "dear leader," Kim Jong Il. He said, "I see that the collective farms are not performing as well as the private farms. If we privatize more farms, we will be able to avert famine." He turned that report in and he was called in for a meeting with higher-ups in the regime. He thought he was going to get a reward. But his friend said, "Don't go. You're about to get arrested because you have questioned Kim Jong Il's policies through your report. You're going to be sent to a political prison camp." So he fled. Any doubt against the regime will lead to imprisonment.

What happened when the PDS system collapsed and millions of North Koreans were

starving? The North Korean people started trading among themselves.

I know a woman who was a teacher, Eom Myung Hui. The system couldn't support her teaching anymore because the whole education system collapsed as well. She was able to connect with a South Korean trader and they set up a business together. They would import seafood. Then she would go to one part of the country and trade to make money. People would use whatever means they could to try to survive.

There were over 200 steady markets that were regularly functioning. The regime tried in vain to control the market. First it said, "Ok, we'll allow you to have the markets, but only women over 35 can use the markets." Then they changed and said, "Ok, if you're 25 or older you can use the markets." They tried to restrict it, but the people were starving, and with these markets they were making money, and they were finding out how to survive on their own. So these markets continued to spread. Because of the famine, people had started to lose faith in the regime and they realized that the most important thing was to make money. That was the only way you could feed your family.

In 2009, a very critical thing happened. The regime realized that it couldn't control this anymore. They could not put the toothpaste back in the tube. So they decided to devalue the currency and create a new currency. The people would have to trade in their money for the new currency. But something happened that had never happened before in the whole history of North Korea. There was such an uproar because this was not just the hostile class, this was the wavering and the loyal class; they were all up in arms. The regime thought, "We better do something or we're going to have a revolution." So they backed off. They blamed one of the leaders in the regime. They executed Pak Nam Gi and made him the scapegoat. I've heard it was Kim Jong Un who came up with this idea; certainly Kim Jong Il instituted it. They had this guy shot and killed, and they did something they have never done in their nearly 70-year history—they actually apologized and let the markets function. Now the elites are all involved in all these

markets and there are plenty of material goods in Pyongyang that the elites have access to.

Today you have a new generation—the market generation, the North Koreans who are in their 20s and 30s who were young enough to experience the famine but also saw the market system. The stories they tell about survival and whatever their mother did to try to make money to feed

*"Women are treated terribly in North Korea. They are like second-, third-class citizens. The markets allow them to empower themselves because no one else will."*

the family. The stories that they've told are amazing. It's a great change inside North Korea, because people are no longer counting on the regime to survive. They depend on each other and their own resilience.

*Do you think these markets have empowered women? You say it's primarily women working in the market.*

Totally. Women are treated terribly in North Korea. They are like second-, third-class citizens. The markets allow them to empower themselves because no one else will.

A North Korean defector living in Virginia tells me that when she got to America, she came through New York City. She said she couldn't believe men opening a door for her and men picking up her heavy luggage. She was immediately suspicious. She said to somebody, "Why are they doing this?" The person said, "Oh, that's how their parents raised them. In America, women are valued." It was shocking to her. She says, "I've come to realize my value as a woman now that I've lived in America."

In South Korea, a lot of North Korean women marry South Korean men. They also respect women in South Korean society.

■■■■

## Thomas C. Oden [1931–2016]

*The reason I am now trying to write almost nothing that is currently relevant is that tomorrow it will be less relevant. I am seeking to understand what is perennially true, not ephemerally relevant.*

It might have been safe to assume that Thomas C. Oden would continue the well-worn path of so many contemporaries into theological and political liberalism. “I reasoned out of modern naturalistic premises, employing biblical narratives narrowly and selectively as I found them useful politically,” writes Oden in *A Change of Heart*. Before his transformation, Oden was a strong adherent of the social gospel and admitted to being in love with heresies.

However, after being confronted by a Jewish colleague and mentor to study classical and patristic Christian texts in the 1960s, Oden’s career and spiritual trajectory dramatically shifted. He then had to admit that he did not know his own religious tradition well enough to repudiate it. Oden’s reading of patristic writings led him to affirm the great truths of the Christian faith, and then he vowed to “contribute nothing new to theology.” He would go on to become one of the preeminent theologians within Christian orthodoxy. He believed more modern theologies had become compromised by political ideologies and agendas. Oden too is known for coining the term “paleo-orthodoxy,” which simply stresses doctrinal guidance by the Church Fathers and the ancient Christian texts.

Oden, a United Methodist, was committed to 20th-century ecumenical movements and helped the clergy and layperson alike to see Christianity’s timeless truths and appeal, despite the rising secularism, materialism and hedonism within culture. He helped chart out renewal

within his own denomination and the larger Christian community. “The church is imperiled when it becomes intoxicated with the spirit of its particular age, committed more to serve the gods of that age than the God of all ages,” declared Oden.

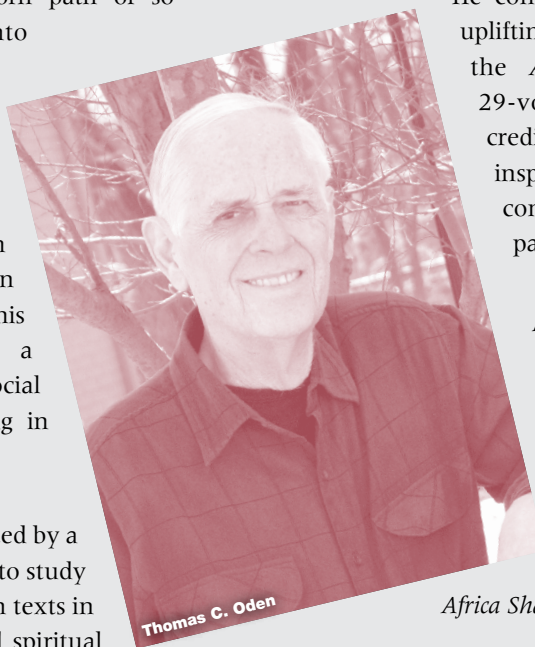
He contributed a significant amount of his life to uplifting patristic sources and was general editor of the *Ancient Christian Doctrine* series and the 29-volume *Ancient Christian Commentary*. He credited Pope Benedict XVI for helping provide inspiration for the exhaustive work on biblical commentary exclusively from the texts of patristic writers and sources.

As a professor of theology and ethics at the graduate school of Drew University, he continually critiqued the bankruptcy of modern liberal theology. “Political ideologies read history as an opportunity for empowerment. Classic Christianity reads history as an opportunity for living out the truth revealed in history,” he writes in *How*

*Africa Shaped the Christian Mind*.

Oden’s life work was one of calling the Church back to its roots and eschewing the ideologies that paralyzed and harmed its witness. He noted that his life story and experiences allowed him to be “a prodigal” witness for the gospel. “The church is not a group of people groping for a philosophy of life appropriate to modern conditions, but a living body already being shaped by apostolic teaching,” he writes.

He noted too that his once admiration for socialist economic ideologies allowed him to better critique its follies. His numerous books, while scholarly, possessed a devotional quality as well. “The most enjoyable of all subjects has to be God, because God is the source of all joy,” Oden notes in *The Living God*. The massive amount of books and theological work he left behind will undoubtedly influence a new era of Christians to embrace the ancient truths over the empty promises of modernity.







## Humility and power

In his landmark collection of essays, *Ideas Have Consequences*, political philosopher Richard Weaver neatly sums up the cultural neuroses afflicting the modern condition as he observed them circa 1948. A man of immense intelligence and humani-

ty, Weaver witnessed a world finally free of Axis horrors yet insistently embarking on a decades-long journey through unexplored terrains of human cruelty and oppression.

I'll come back to Weaver, but first a recap of the evidence presented within these pages. First, the Nazi scourge foreshadowed in the review of *Hitler: Ascent, 1889-1939* wasn't the only source of despair for the fate of the human race. As Sarah Stanley's interview with Suzanne Scholte abundantly displays, no one group held a monopoly on the indescribable anguish inflicted on whole populations, from North Korea and Cuba to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Space permitting, Scholte, I'm certain, would've also recounted the Killing Fields of Cambodia's Khmer Rouge under Pol Pot as well as brutalities committed against the people of China since the Communist takeover.

How best to avoid repeating the past's mistakes requires serious historical and cultural soul-searching. One requirement is for contemporary civilization to remember that totalitarianism is but one extreme form of cruelty on the spectrum of human oppression.

The unattainable utopian urge to control people, resources and wealth manifests itself in countless ways, including the metasizing global government agenda, as noted by Robert F. Gorman in *What's Wrong with Global Governance?* Although the entirety of Gorman's essay bears quoting, space only permits me to reiterate two key passages that reveal the global government *schema*: "Rule by experts, by global bureaucrats, is regarded as the ideal." Indeed it is, and by that Gorman identifies the culprits agitating for control under the guise of such secular euphemisms as environmentalism and population control, and unmask them as "relativists who generally reject the concept of objective moral truth, of natural law, or of the religious and spiritual dimensions of the human person."

In light of the totalitarian mantra "the ends justify the

means," Richard Weaver notes that humanity divorced from its divine genesis is exiled to any number of mad fates devised by humankind:

Since under conditions of modern freedom the individual thinks only of his rights, he does not refer his action to the external frame of obligation. His wish is enough. He cannot be disciplined on the theoretical level, and on the practical level he is disciplined only by some hypostatized social whole whose methods become brutal as its authority turns out to be, on investigation, merely human.

This has been the case every time humans "lose sight of their original source and decide to set up godheads in their own right," writes Weaver. Think of the signs, flags and fashion apparel emblazoned with the visages of the world's most notorious oppressors. Is it only coincidence that George Orwell concocted Big Brother to watch over the denizens of Oceania in his dystopian novel *1984*? The novelist was capturing the earthbound self-deification of present and future tyrants, such as Chairman Mao, Joseph Stalin, Fidel Castro and his thuggish chief hit man Ernesto "Che" Guevara as well as any number of dear and/or fearless leaders.

This imperiousness derives from what Weaver describes as "egotism," wherein "self-absorption is a process of cutting one's self off from the 'real' reality and therefore from social harmony." For Weaver, egotism is one form of ignorance. Whereas he recognizes inherent humility in the work of medieval philosophers and scientists, Weaver upbraids Renaissance thinkers for what he perceives as jettisoning meditation in the pursuit of knowledge, resolving itself in the unfortunate belief that, in the words of Francis Bacon, "knowledge is power." The result of deploying that power to control others, Weaver points out, is evident throughout the modern era: "It is knowledge of the useful rather than of the true and the good, of techniques rather than of ends."

In other words, knowledge untethered from the humility of our respective faiths is antithetical to the free and virtuous society we work toward at the Acton Institute.

*Rev. Robert A. Sirico is president and cofounder of the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty.*

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