

Religion & Liberty

ACTON INSTITUTE'S INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RELIGION,
ECONOMICS AND CULTURE



How socialism causes atheism

The Burning Bush in
the Communist Desert

Single-payer healthcare:
A Christian view

Should we deep-six
the Jones Act?

EDITOR'S NOTE

Rev. Ben Johnson MANAGING EDITOR

"When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart" (St. Matthew 13:19). No nation has been as uniquely marinated in the Scriptures as the U.S., yet our peril is represented by two crisscrossing charts. Millennials are four times more likely to disdain religion than members of the Greatest Generation, and nine times more likely to view Communism favorably.

This issue of *Religion & Liberty* focuses on the interrelationship between the two words in our title, especially when both are threatened by totalitarianism. Our cover story recounts how socialist utopianism lures believers from true religion to its own secular faith. "Socialism is precisely the religion that must overwhelm Christianity," wrote Antonio Gramsci, as Roger Kiska reminds us.

Mihail Neamtu recounts Marxist oppression of Christians in his native Romania before noting the "stories of resistance and heroism need to be fittingly acknowledged." Additional stories recognize such heroes of the human spirit as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky.

Stephanie Klaves writes the socialist Israeli kibbutz system, often celebrated as a successful example of socialism, failed because it stood at odds with Judaism and "innate human desires."

We also reflect on besieged Iraqi Christians, American farmers struggling against a system that enshrines cronyism, Brits suffering under the NHS, and hurricane victims ill-served by protectionist legislation.

Fr. Robert Sirico returns to this issue's theme in his column, calling atheism and socialism the twin pillars of totalitarianism. His article is perfectly complemented by Acton Institute Director of Research Samuel Gregg, whose new book (*Reason, Faith, and the Struggle for Western Civilization*) presents reason and faith as the foundations of liberty.

Even as we probe the depths of this present darkness, the Acton Institute shines a light on the qualities necessary for freedom and virtue to thrive in the United States and worldwide.



Cover Photo: Minnesota Atheists protest in the Twin Cities. (Photo credit: FibronachBlue, CC BY 2.0)

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Protecting farmers, or crony capitalism?

Michael Matheson Miller

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Reuters has reported that a large portion of U.S. farm aid went to the wealthiest farmers and advocacy groups:

More than half of the Trump administration's \$8.4 billion in trade aid payments to U.S. farmers through April was received by the top 10% of recipients, the country's biggest and most successful farmers, a study by an advocacy group showed on Tuesday.

Highlighting an uneven distribution of the bailout, which was designed to help offset effects of the U.S.-China trade war, the Environmental Working Group said the top 1% of aid recipients received an average of more than \$180,000 while the bottom 80% were paid less than \$5,000 in aid.

The EWG, a Washington-based non-profit, said it obtained data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture through Freedom of Information Act requests for its research, the results of which could not be independently verified by Reuters.

As we discussed in the documentary, *Poverty, Inc.* and the *PovertyCure* DVD series, farming subsidies can have a negative impact on both small- and medium-sized American farmers, as well as farmers in the developing world.

Smaller farmers in the U.S. have to compete with subsidized big agricultural firms, and they must navigate complex regulations that make their farming more difficult and expensive. Joel Salatin highlights this problem in his book *Everything I Want to Do is Illegal*. Agricultural subsidies in the U.S. and Europe also distort world markets and can have negative effects on farmers in the developing world, who cannot compete with the free or artificially cheap food that arrives on an irregular schedule.

Christians in Iraq: The brutal truth

Samuel Gregg

ACTON INSTITUTE

When it comes to understanding the present plight of Middle-Eastern Christianity, one author to whom I usually turn is Father Benedict Kiely. He's the founder of *Nasarean.org*, which tries to help persecuted Christians in the Middle East.

Sometimes Kiely's observations are difficult to read, not least because they force Western Christians to face up to the full nature of the plight confronting their *confreres*, which no amount of happy-talk can quite disguise. In a recent *Catholic Herald* article titled "The Harsh Truth about Christianity in Iraq," for instance, Kiely marshals a formidable array of facts that underscore the bleak future facing Iraqi Christians.

Leaving aside the ongoing harassment, Iraqi Christians face major economic challenges. Once upon a time, Christians in Iraq and many other Middle Eastern nations were disproportionately represented among the commercial and business classes, partly because they were often legally restricted from entering other professions. That overrepresentation of Christians in commerce is still true in countries like Jordan and Lebanon.

However, in today's Iraq, the situation is very different. As Kiely states, "The steady dwindling of the Christian population of Iraq continues because of the lack of security and employment. Without jobs, families have no incentive to stay, and without security they will not stay."

Kiely also underlines another dimension of the problem: the awkward silence from so many Western Christian leaders about the plight of their Iraqi Christian brothers and sisters. He notes how Chaldean Catholic Archbishop Bashar Warda of Erbil in Iraq views such Western Christians as being, as they are on so many other subjects, paralyzed by political correctness and fear of being labeled "phobic."

"A phobia," Kiely writes, "is an irrational fear: There is nothing irrational about the fears of Iraqi Christians."

Should we deep-six the Jones Act?

Jordan Jorritsma

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In the past three years New Jersey, New York, and Massachusetts have announced plans to build offshore wind farms that would generate hundreds of megawatts of power. But they face a major hurdle: the Merchant Marine Act of 1920, commonly referred to as "the Jones Act." The Jones Act is what is known as a cabotage law, which protects a shipping industry from foreign competition.

There are four main requirements to be registered as a Jones Act-compliant ship. It must be built in the United States. It must be controlled by a company that is 75 percent U.S.-owned. It must be flagged (or registered) in the U.S., and 75 percent of the sailors must be American.

U.S. food aid data show that carrying goods on U.S.-flagged ships increases costs by as much as \$50 to \$60 a ton. The Maritime Administration (MARAD), an agency within the U.S. Department of Transportation dealing with waterborne transportation, reported in 2011 that it costs almost three times more to transport cargo on U.S.-flagged ships as opposed to foreign ships. Puerto Rican victims of Hurricane Maria may have lost 10 to 20 percent of their aid by being forced to use Jones Act-compliant vessels. Government reports have also found that it costs more than twice as much to produce a U.S.-flagged vessel than the same type of vessel in another country.

As long as wind farms are placed on the Outer Continental Shelf, the sites are bound by Jones Act restrictions. This means that ships from Europe, which is where the vast majority of offshore wind ships and expertise come from, cannot transport any equipment from the mainland to the worksite. If a company wants to use European installation vessels, they must transfer all of the equipment and components to a Jones Act-compliant vessel before transferring it to the European installation vessel. This only adds extra steps, and cost, to the process.

Americans deserve the benefits of competition in the shipping and wind sector. It is imperative that we realize that goal by repealing the Jones Act.



ESSAY

Single-payer healthcare: A Christian view

Philip Booth

In the UK, our National Health Service was once described by a former Chancellor of the Exchequer as being the nearest thing we have to a national religion. It certainly gets a lot of support from religious leaders. Indeed, many seem to deify the NHS.

The Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said at his enthronement: "Slaves were freed, Factory Acts passed, and the NHS and social care established through Christ-liberated courage." This was not just an off-the-cuff remark; it was one of the most important homilies of his vocation. It is certainly true that Christians have a great deal to be proud of when it comes to the provision of healthcare. However, celebrating the creation of a single-payer, nationalised, and centrally

planned system is not one of them.

The Roman Catholic Church opposed the creation of the NHS. Cardinal Bernard Griffin managed to negotiate an opt-out from nationalisation of the tiny number of Catholic hospitals arguing, "It will be a sad day for England when charity becomes the affair of the state."

The most appropriate role for Christians is not campaigning for the state to be a monopoly provider of healthcare but to be active in the provision of healthcare services. Indeed, before the Reformation, the Church was the major provider of healthcare.

In England, there were 500 hospitals by 1500. St. Bartholomew's, a major hospital in London today, was founded by Augustinian Friars and somehow survived the Reformation. Another great London hospital that is still in existence today, St. Thomas, was the first teaching hospital before the Reformation.

And this involvement in caring for the sick and providing hospitality for those in need was replicated right across Europe until the Reformation. Small hospitals for pilgrims sprung up in the West during the early Middle Ages. Hospitals and alms houses developed for lepers, pilgrims, the sick, the aged, and the poor. Milan, Siena, Paris, and Florence had a number of large hospitals, and their Christian ethos was evident. The Santa Maria Nuova in Florence still exists today and, by 1500, had medical staff, doctors, pharmacists, and surgeons.

Offerings at Mass were used for the

care of the sick. Of course, this work in the first 1,500 years of the Church's existence was a response to Jesus' instruction. As Jesus said in Matthew 25: "For I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you received me in your homes. Naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me. ... [W]hatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me."

After the Reformation, there was a disintegration of this system. However, the one thing that united Protestant and Catholic denominations was the Christian vocation to care for the sick. As such, provision for healthcare grew in all European countries, whether dominated by Protestantism or Catholicism.

Edward Jenner, Louis Pasteur, Joseph Lister, and many other pioneers of modern medicine were devout Christians. John Wesley took a course in medicine so that as a minister he could be of help to those who had no regular physician. And eighteenth-century Presbyterian Edinburgh was a great centre of medical progress. Christian foundations established a huge number of hospitals across Europe and the United States.

As might be expected, just as Christian organisations were the most important providers of healthcare in now-rich countries when they were less well developed, Christian organisations today are the major providers of healthcare in

Photo: Surgeons perform an operation. (Getty Images and iStockphoto.com)

the world's poorer countries. Indeed, the Catholic Church is still the largest provider of healthcare services in the world. It has around 18,000 clinics, 16,000 homes for the elderly and those with special needs, and 5,500 hospitals, with 65 percent of them located in developing countries.

In most Western countries, to a greater or lesser extent, the state has become much more involved with healthcare. In few countries is that involvement as comprehensive as it is in the UK, where the state owns, controls, and finances the system of health provision from top to bottom.

In the U.S., of course, there is pressure for a movement towards a UK-style, single-payer system. Much of that support comes from left-leaning politicians, but some comes from prominent Christian commentators. For example, columnist Jessi Bohon has said: "Christians shouldn't be satisfied with healthcare policy that leaves anyone out, especially those who need care most but can afford it least. Christians should support a universal, single-payer system."

And Elizabeth Breunig of *The Washington Post* has said: "I was on NHS [when in England, and], it ruled. My epilepsy medicine was free. In the USA, there's an entire network of charities devoted to nothing but helping poor people try to buy their life-saving seizure medicines month-to-month." She compares that favourably to the U.S., where she cites a children's hospital in Philadelphia that takes into account the cost of medicines before deciding what to prescribe. Her husband, Matt Breunig, is likewise a huge proponent of the NHS.

So, what are the results of the single-payer NHS system in the UK as compared with other healthcare systems?

There is an annual study undertaken by a U.S. organisation called the Commonwealth Fund. It regularly ranks the UK health system number one. This is widely reported in the UK press and also regularly quoted by U.S. advocates of the UK system.

However, the survey is designed so that single-payer systems are strongly favoured. One question asks whether patients have ever had disputes with their insurers. If the system is nationalised with no insurers, this simply will not happen. Another question asks whether patients make co-payments. You cannot make co-payments in the NHS. However, if the state thinks a drug is too expensive, it is

simply not provided.

The study measures equity of access and ranks a health service where everybody gets equally poor access above a system where everybody gets better access (including the poor) but where access is uneven. In other words, it accepts equality of misery.


When it comes to health outcomes, perhaps the most meaningful indicator of the effectiveness of a system, the UK system does not do well. In healthcare outcomes, the Commonwealth Fund ranks the UK one from the bottom. The U.S. ranks at the bottom, but the systems that rate better are not NHS-style socialised medicine systems; they are European insurance-based, co-payment-based, or mixed systems.

This result led the UK's left-leaning newspaper *The Guardian* to write an article in which it said without any sense of irony, "The only serious black mark against the NHS was its poor record on keeping people alive." In international comparisons of health system performance, the NHS almost always ranks in the bottom third. If, for example, the UK's breast cancer, prostate cancer, lung cancer, and bowel cancer patients were treated in Belgium rather than in the NHS, more than 14,000 lives would be saved every year.

Socialised medicine does not even lead to equality of outcomes. Infant mortality in Glasgow is nearly three-times the level of the City of London. Life expectancy at birth varies by 10 years between the poorest and richest areas of the UK. And these differences are widening.

While the Catholic Church has stated that basic healthcare is a human right, it does not follow that the state should be the provider – just as the state is not generally the provider of food, clothing, and many other basic goods (even if the state supports the poor in buying such things).

The principle of subsidiarity demands that the state should not do those things that can be done by other organisations within society. Traditionally, Christian institutions have provided healthcare themselves. Numerous proofs indicate that we should return to that norm.

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Solzhenitsyn's advice to the free world

David P. Deavel

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1918–2008) was one of the great souls of the twentieth century. The survivor of World War II, cancer, and 11 years in captivity in the Soviet Gulag not only survived but went on to expose for the free Western countries the true nature of the Soviet regime with his breakout work *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1962), as well as *In the First Circle* (1968), *Cancer Ward* (1968), and the monumental *Gulag Archipelago* (three volumes, 1973–78). As the historian and political journalist Richard Brookhiser observed, what Solzhenitsyn taught the West was the word “gulag” and its meaning: that Communism was not the path to freedom but the way of ideological lies, slavery, and violence.

This lesson was important for Westerners to hear. After decades of lies from Western journalists and intellectuals about what life in Communist regimes entailed, this was a man who lived and documented the Communist reality. “One word of truth outweighs the whole world,” Solzhenitsyn declared in his 1970 Nobel Prize lecture. It seemed in the early 1970s that his many words of truth had caused a miracle even greater than Archimedes’ lever: He had changed the minds of some intellectuals and journalists.

But his celebrity and reputation were

short-lived. After he was expelled from the USSR in 1974, he settled in the United States in Cavendish, Vermont, and continued to write and speak about truth, lies, and political matters both in person and in print. For many Western intellectuals, even those who were not Soviet fellow travelers, the problem was that he spoke not just about problems in his native Russia but also those in the free West. In a 1975 address to American trade unionists, Solzhenitsyn prefaced his comments with a warning that he would not offer them “sugary words,” explaining with a fitting Russian proverb: “The yes-man is your enemy, but your friend will argue with you.”

He continued to argue with Americans and the West more broadly over the 20 years he lived in the U.S., offering sometimes “bitter” words in his 1978 Harvard commencement address, his 1983 Templeton address, and a number of other speeches and writings. A close look at them reveals not a Russian chauvinist or anti-Western bigot but a man who had “worshipped the West” as “the sun of freedom, a fortress of the spirit, our hope, our ally,” but who had gradually seen chinks in the fortress.

Those chinks had included a lack of “firmness” in seeking the freedom of people under totalitarian domination. For

Solzhenitsyn, the problem with the Cold War was not that it was happening at all, but that the U.S. and its allies did not prosecute it firmly enough. At Harvard, Solzhenitsyn chastised the American government for its weakness in leaving southeast Asia to the Communists. In other speeches he observed that Western businesses, by doing business with the Soviet government, were propping up an unfree regime that would not have lasted long since it had killed the productivity of its own people. Lenin was right, he sardonically noted: Capitalists would sell the rope to the Communists to hang themselves.

What the West needed was a lesson in what to do with freedom when you actually have it. And to that end, the arguing friend persistently spoke about the enemies of true freedom and the habits needed to live and sustain it.

Solzhenitsyn immensely admired the American founding and considered the Founders’ “original intent,” with its defense of the rights of the individual “under God” and “the assumption of his constant religious responsibility,” a blueprint for a good society. However, he believed too many Americans had fallen victim to an ersatz notion of happiness pursued apart from the “concepts of good and evil.”

This happiness consisted solely in a negative freedom combined with a mate-



rialism that paralleled that of the Marxists. Are plentiful and affordable goods and services a blessing? Yes, but they are not the only blessing to be pursued, and not at any cost. The notion of seeing happiness merely in the availability and possession of goods, which we now call consumerism, creates a malaise that “imprint[s] many Western faces with worry and even depression.” One is reminded of Mother Teresa’s similar diagnosis of Westerners as suffering from a spiritual poverty much greater than that found among the poorest of the poor in Calcutta.

But the problem with false notions of happiness does not limit itself to Westerners’ feelings. It paralyzes them by making them risk averse. Western “well-being” had the effect of making fighting for freedom at home and abroad seem not worth the effort. “And for what should one risk one’s precious life, in defense of common values and particularly in such nebulous cases when the security of one’s nation must be defended in a distant country?” he asked in the Harvard address. “Even biology knows that habitual, extreme safety and well-being are not advantageous for a living organism.”

The second enemy of liberty is a misunderstanding of equality, which is to be applauded when it means equal dignity as persons and equal treatment under the


law but, when applied to economic and societal outcomes, saps the dynamic of action and responsibility that comprise our liberty. “Liberty, by its very nature, undermines social equality, and equality suppresses liberty – for how else could it be attained?” Solzhenitsyn observed. Asked by British journalist Bernard Levin whether it is true that free people could desire to be slaves, he replied, “Yes, today’s Western Europe is full of such people.” Today’s America is similarly stocked.

The third enemy is “legalism.” Like goods and services, a properly functioning legal system is a necessity for a good society. But people whose only boundary is an action’s legal status not “take advantage of the full range of human possibilities” and will instead produce more of the “spiritual mediocrity that paralyzes man’s noblest impulses.” Westerners who only rise to the legal minimums and only stop at the legal maximums are not worthy of freedom, the *telos* of which is moral excellence.

The final enemy is an attitude that only considers human rights and not human obligations. Solzhenitsyn agreed with Lord Acton, who considered liberty had more to do with what we “ought” than what we “like.” Paying attention only to our rights is the broad way that leads to social Hell.

What then ought we to do with our freedom? The answer is to reject these enemies, first and foremost by seeking out the truth about happiness, liberty, equality, law, and rights – all of which are gifts of God. “Truth eludes us if we do not concentrate our attention totally on its pursuit,” said Solzhenitsyn. But we then need to speak the truth courageously, refusing to be intimidated into lying or agreeing with lies. Third, we need to freely act on the truth, doing our duties and going beyond them in charity. When we do that, we will see why God gave us liberty in the first place: to make us extraordinary. Solzhenitsyn said that liberty’s “function was to render possible the emergence of values. Liberty pointed the way to virtue and heroism. That is what you have forgotten.”

Let us who have freedom remember and act. Let us be heroes.

David P. Deavel is editor of Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture and a visiting professor at the University of St. Thomas (MN). He is the 2013 winner of the Novak Prize. His book Beyond the Soul and Barbed Wire: The Continuing Legacy of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Russian Voices in American Culture, co-edited and introduced with Jessica Hooten Wilson, is forthcoming from Notre Dame Press. 

Antonio Gramsci's long march through history

Roger Kiska

The emergence of identity politics in Western Europe has come swiftly and aggressively. One key figure in the mainstreaming of Marxism in Europe, who enjoys little popular recognition for his success, is Antonio Francesco Gramsci. Gramsci, an Italian philosopher and politician who was imprisoned during Mussolini's reign, wrote more than 30 notebooks and 3,000 pages of history and analysis during his imprisonment. Many of his writings can be found in his three-volume *Prison Notebooks*.

Gramsci sought to break with Karl Marx's economic determinism and base his theory on wielding and maintaining power by the ruling class, which has commonly become known as his theory of cultural hegemony. Gramsci believed that the ruling class, the bourgeoisie, used cultural institutions to maintain power. They use ideology, rather than violence or economic force, to propagate their own values by creating the capitalist *zeitgeist*. Cultural hegemony is maintained by the capitalist ruling class through the institutions that make up society's superstructure. Gramscian Marxists define the superstructure as everything not directly having to do with production such as family, culture, religion, education, media, and law.

Gramsci's counter-hegemony is also deeply rooted in today's theory of intersectionality. It seeks to dismantle the existing cultural hegemony by ideological subversion and opposition, challenging the legitimacy of existing super-structural institutions like family, religion, and political power. Saul Alinsky describes the *modus operandi* for such an enterprise in the introduction to his book *Rules for Radicals*: "What follows is for those who want to change the world from what it is to what they believe it should be. *The Prince* was written by Machiavelli for the Haves on how to hold power. *Rules for Radicals* is written for the Have-Nots on how to take it away."

A counter-hegemony, in essence, is an alternative ethical view of society that seeks to challenge, undermine, and replace the existing bourgeoisie power structure. It has been described by Neo-Gramscian theorist Nicola Pratt as the creation of a rival hegemony on the terrain of civil society in preparation for political change.

In Gramsci's own words, he viewed the task thus: "Socialism is precisely the religion that must overwhelm Christianity. ... In the new order, Socialism will triumph by first capturing the culture via infiltration of schools, universities, churches, and the media by transforming the consciousness of society."

One of the underlying problems with this type of Marxism is that an attack on the family and the Judeo-Christian values that sustain it leads to catastrophic economic and social effects. For example, in 2014 former British Welfare Minister Lord David Freud suggested that the breakdown of the family in the United Kingdom

would cost taxpayers an estimated £46 billion. In America, the Brookings Institution's Isabel Sawhill calculated that the breakdown of the family extracted \$229 billion from U.S. taxpayers between 1970 and 1996. This figure includes the toll caused by teen pregnancy, crime, poverty, drug abuse, and health problems that have resulted from divorces or broken families. Benjamin Scafidi's 2008 study for the Institute for American Values found that divorce and out-of-wedlock childbirth cost the American people \$112 billion each year. Pope Saint John Paul II could not have been more correct when he called the natural family the building block of society.

This phenomenon, underpinned in part by the Gramscian Marxist rejection of institutions like Christianity and family, has also been premised on greater interference by national authorities into family privacy, whereby governments feel empowered to usurp the parental mantle from families themselves. The UK's Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service, for example, has reported a nearly 150 percent increase in the number of new child care cases since 2005-2006. To put that into perspective, the number of cases in a little more than a decade's time increased from 6,613 new cases a year to 15,485 new cases. The figures from the first five months of this reporting year have shown an increase of 23 percent since the corresponding period last year. The situation has led experts such as Dave Hill, president of the Association of Director's Children's Services (ADCS), to call the situation a "national disgrace."

A similar phenomenon is happening in Scandinavia. In 2015, 53,440 children received care from the Norwegian Child Welfare Services, the Barnevernet. This is a one-percent increase from the previous year and represents nearly three percent of all children in Norway. A disproportionate number of these children were taken from families where at least one of the parents is an immigrant.

Christianity and the concept of the natural family have been the twin anchors on which European culture has relied over the centuries for stability. Gramscian Marxism offers, at best, a self-inflicted wound to culture. At worst, it represents a path to totalitarianism which breeds anarchy and tribalism along the way. In the end, Alexis de Tocqueville's words ring as true today as they did in the nineteenth century: "Democracy and socialism have nothing in common but one word, equality. But notice the difference: while democracy seeks equality in liberty; socialism seeks equality in restraint and servitude."

Roger Kiska is a solicitor for England and Wales and a member of the Michigan State Bar. He is legal counsel for the Christian Legal Centre in London. [R&L](#)

The Israeli kibbutz: a victory for socialism?

Stephanie Klaves

While eating lunch at an Israeli kibbutz last winter, I learned firsthand about what used to be a self-contained, socialist community. I was struck by the local guide's positive view that socialism produces strong communal life and economic prosperity. The guide's praise only echoes A.I. Rabin and Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi from Michigan State University. They wrote that "[t]he most successful attempt at building a Utopian commune has been the Israeli kibbutz." The optimism expressed by these observations is not without cause: The kibbutz movement was foundational to the establishment and success of the Israeli state.

The "kibbutz" system refers to collective communities in Israel that were historically characterized by collective ownership of property, an emphasis on the dignity of manual labor, a system of direct democracy, and communal child care. In other words, no member exercised personal property rights but instead received toiletries, food, and other necessities according to a distribution system. All members earned the same allowance for their work – regardless of whether their occupation consisted of milking cows, preparing meals, or managing a large production facility. Children did not live in their family homes but instead grew up in communal child-rearing facilities. Marx would have smiled in his grave if he knew that communal goods and services were provided "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." Although most of the kibbutzim privatized in recent years, the appeal of its socialist ideology lives on; in fact, Senator Bernie Sanders lived and volunteered on a kibbutz in 1963 and is now a self-described democratic socialist.

Before Israel's independence, the kib-

butz provided a structure for the defense of Jewish settlers and was the backbone of the rural economy. After Israel's independence, the kibbutz supplied around 20 percent of the country's top military officers. Five prime ministers of Israel – David Ben-Gurion, Levi Eshkol, Golda Meir, Shimon Peres, and Ehud Barak – were all at some point members of a kibbutz. In terms of members' satisfaction, life expectancy, economic performance, and demographic growth, the kibbutz society was "relative to the rest of society in Israel – very successful" until the 1990s. These observations have led academics to ask whether the Israeli kibbutz sets itself apart from the myriad of failed socialist societies as a proven paragon of success.


Democratic socialists today like Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez believe that socialism is the key to alleviating poverty, and a rising number of young Americans are attracted to socialism as a moral economic system. A YouGov survey revealed that 43 percent of respondents under the age of 30 had a favorable view of socialism. When asked what socialism is, millennials use phrases such as "nice," "being together," or "the government pays for our needs." Perhaps the success of the Israeli kibbutz is finally a victory for socialism. Whereas communal ideology propelled widespread killing and poverty in the Soviet Union, China, Vietnam, North Korea, and Cambodia, the socialist values of the kibbutz seemed to engender security, harmony, even prosperity.

But eventually the kibbutz would join the list of socialist models that were ultimately unsustainable. Debt and economic crisis were in part responsible for the abandonment of strict communalism. Israel experienced a dire economic crisis in the mid-1980s, with a 400 percent inflation rate and high levels of unemployment. Although the government and banks later agreed to bailouts, the economic situation still disheartened many members of the kibbutz. In particular, the elderly worried if the kibbutz failed to provide for them again in the future, their lack of personal pensions would be problematic. The uncertainty and feelings of vulnerability sewn by the financial crisis incentivized individuals to build personal savings accounts rather than deposit all their revenue into communal funds.

An economic crisis was not the only culprit for diminishing communal values;

quite the opposite phenomenon – a rise in industrialization and an opportunity for a higher standard of living – dealt additional blows to the sustainability of the kibbutz. In their book *The Renewal of the Kibbutz: From Reform to Transformation*, Raymond Russell and his co-authors write that "[i]n the first years of the kibbutzim, kibbutz members had little to share with each other but their poverty. The kibbutzniks' self-denying, ascetic values were well suited to the economic condition of the kibbutzim." While communal ownership of housing, means of production, and cafeterias was feasible – even attractive – when members were themselves impoverished, the pull to community weakened as their potential standard of living rose. The challenge of prosperity to communal life is illustrated by the fact that more children moved to live with their parents as standard house sizes grew. Kibbutzim traditionally decried "the close-knit family" as "a creation of capitalism," but eventually the communities had to bow to the demands of children and parents. The new living situation led to increased privatization and individualization, as communal cafeterias fell out of use and home-cooked meals became an accepted norm.

The popularity of the kibbutz in Israel seems peculiar, given that Judaism emphasizes the importance of the nuclear family. Parents have a sacred obligation to care for and raise their children in the Jewish tradition; children are commanded to respect their parents. Kibbutzim challenged the nuclear household, separating children from their parents. But families eventually united under one roof. Kibbutzim traditionally distributed goods to members according to their needs, regardless of their skill, but individuals eventually requested market-based wages. Members of kibbutzim were willing to share poverty equally, but when individuals experienced prosperity from industrializing, inequality ensued. Ultimately, the story of the kibbutz highlights the crucial problem of socialism: Its core tenants are at odds, not only with Judeo-Christian principles, but with innate human desires to raise a family, compete in the workplace, and act in their own self-interest.

Stephanie Klaves served as an intern with the Executive Department at the Acton Institute. She is a junior at Grove City College (PA), studying political science and Chinese. 

The Burning Bush in the Communist desert

Mihail Neamtu

From Eastern Europe to China, and from Laos to Venezuela, the followers of Marx and Engels used the most extreme forms of violence to annihilate religion. In many ways, the Bolsheviks only continued the Jacobite hostility towards “the throne and the altar.” Vladimir Lenin said in 1905, “Our propaganda, necessarily includes the propaganda of atheism.” Leon Trotsky said, “The highest expression of serfdom’s ideology is religion.” *Pravda* never ceased to call priests the “enemies of the people.” During the Russian famine of 1922, Lenin claimed the Orthodox Church was hoarding gold and food as a pretext to confiscate its wealth. Leading Christian intellectuals such as Nikolai Berdyaev (1874–1948), Sergei Bulgakov (1871–1944), and Nikolai Lossky (1870–1965) were put on “the philosophers’ ship” and forced into exile. Trotsky, who organized this trip, believed that all religions expressed an “illogical primitive ignorance.” This explains how even a scientific giant like the polymath mathematician and theologian Pavel Florensky was regarded as backward. By the late 1930s, Fr. Pavel ended up martyred by the NKVD in the Gulag Archipelago.

The eminent British scholar Andrew Louth described the spiritual devastation that followed the October Revolution:

The state of the Church in the Soviet Union made it impossible for any theology to flourish; it was hard enough for the Church to survive. According to Marxist theory, after the Revolution the Church, as a manifestation of religion, was meant to fade away. As it didn’t, its disappearance had to be encouraged, and the Church experienced persecution far more severe than ever before. The great persecutions of the early Church under the Roman empire were haphazard and episodic; with the structures of a modern state, the

persecution of Christians in the Soviet Union could aim at the extermination of the Church, and very nearly succeeded.

This is why, during the twentieth century, the best works of Russian theology were written abroad. Nikolai Berdyaev, for instance, articulated a powerful defense of individual freedom and Christian personalism, in stark opposition to the horrors of censorship and collectivism.

It was not just the USSR that attacked religion. The repression of religious sentiments was global. In post-1948 China, the Communist Party destroyed Tibetan monasteries. Mongolian Marxists imposed strict limitations on traditional Lamaism. Communist activists distributed a sarcastic commentary on the Holy Scripture (called *The Jolly Bible*) in Eastern Europe to discourage ordinary people from taking Church teachings and the sacraments seriously. Teenagers were taught the basics of “scientific atheism” in public schools instead of religious education, and winter festivals replaced Christmas. Youth organizations such as the Young Pioneers taught children to disrespect family norms and customs of the past. Dictator Enver Hoxha, who ruled Albania from 1944 until 1985, wanted his nation to be the first officially atheistic state on the planet.

After the Second World War, the Romanian Communist Party (which was under the direct control of Moscow) cut off all its relations with the Vatican and abolished the local Greek-Catholic Church. Hundreds of Catholic bishops and priests ended up in labor camps, suffering in the harsh wilderness of the Danube Delta, and many Orthodox monasteries and lay associations were dismantled. In November 1959, a State decree (no. 410) ordered that only elderly people living in Romania could take monastic vows. About 5,000 monks and nuns were forcefully removed from their ancient monasteries. Religious services were tolerated only as part of

liturgical ghettos. For at least two decades, the Church was deprived of any means of organizing social work, missionary activities, or cultural events. The space for personal belief shrank dramatically. Pilgrimages were restricted. Priests performed infant baptisms only in secret. Old books were taken out of circulation. Other faith-based sects, ranging from evangelical Christians to Jehovah’s Witnesses, as well as small communities such as the Old Believers or Jews who believed in Zionism, suffered political persecution.

A particularly striking episode in the history of Romanian Communism was the birth and decline of a unique spiritual movement called the Burning Bush Group (*Rugul Aprins*), which was founded by the summer of 1943. Under the inspiration of a Russian monk, Ivan Kulîghin (“John the Stranger”), this association of laymen and clergymen located primarily at Bucharest’s Antim Monastery engaged in prayer, scriptural meditation, and philosophical reflection. From 1943 to 1947, after barely escaping the Bolshevik persecution in his homeland, Fr. John of Optina Pustyn near Moscow decided to teach his Romanian disciples the art of incessant prayer known as the “Jesus Prayer,” described in *The Pilgrim’s Tale*. After he managed to impart the wisdom of the Hesychast tradition to his new Orthodox friends, the fugitive monk was again arrested and deported to Siberia, where he died.

Romania was a cultural crossroads, where East and West met naturally. Communism, however, hated both the Oriental origins of Christianity and the Western foundations of liberal democracy. For the highly educated friends of the Burning Bush Group, freedom of thought was an essential component of life, especially religious life. The personal encounter with the Jesus Prayer had a transformative effect, by liberating the prayerful believer from the bondage of sin. Crass materialism could never explain how thieves, tax-collectors,



and harlots could be turned into saints. Academics (such as Alexandru Elian, an expert in Byzantine history), poets and artists (Vasile Voiculescu and Paul Sterian, respectively), young novices (such as Sandu Tudor, Andrei Scrima, and Roman Braga), and even a towering theologian like Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae (a well-respected university professor and *doctor philocalicus*) attempted to preserve the values of Western civilization and rediscover ancient texts like *The Philokalia*.

The disciples of Fr. Ivan met regularly in the library of a monastery where they could talk freely about literature, philosophy, and Christian spirituality. Trotsky believed that a “complete abolition of religion will be attained only when there is a fully developed socialistic structure ... free from mystery.” The members of the Burning Bush Group dedicated their lives to an ongoing exploration of the mystery of existence, of the mystery of human consciousness, and of “the mystery of Christ” (Ephesians 3:4), which “has been kept secret for long ages past” (Romans 16:25).

Despite their insistence on non-violent and non-political means of expression, state propaganda branded Burning Bush members “socially deviant people, with mystical tendencies.” Marxist ideology persecuted free speech, especially because Christians believed in the meta-

physical power of the Logos.

On June 13, 1958, most of the group’s members were arrested by the secret police, the Securitate, and jailed on the charge of “religious obscurantism” and “counter-revolutionary activity.” On September 3, the Communist regime sentenced Fr. Stăniloae to five years of solitary confinement. Behind bars, these Christian believers became either victims or eyewitnesses of sadistic acts of barbarism. Sandu Tudor (or monk Daniil) was sentenced to 25 years of hard labor and tortured to death. Roman Braga (who, after 1972, served as a priest in Ohio and Michigan) was sentenced to 18 years in prison. Many were physically abused. Fr. Stăniloae spent most of his time in the dreadful prison of Aiud, where he used prayer (“Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me”) to combat negative thoughts. On January 15, 1963, he was released and a year later, under increasing pressure exerted by international bodies, the political prisoners – most of whom were old and crippled – left the jails.

In brief, the Communist take on religion was ruthless. Very few public advocates of Christianity escaped persecution in countries ruled by socialist hardliners. Just like the KGB, Stasi, or the Albanian Sigurimi, the Romanian secret police violated personal privacy

for decades while trying to annihilate anti-Communist networks and cells. In the late 1970s, the secret police crushed the open dissidence of Fr. Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa (defrocked in 1979, twice imprisoned, and expelled from Romania in 1985). Similar forms of intimidation were leveled against Doina Cornea, a Transylvanian Christian who was surveilled and tortured.

There were, of course, countless examples of personal shortcomings and institutional compromises between the Church and the totalitarian State. However, the true stories of resistance and heroism need to be fittingly acknowledged. Though there were bishops who tolerated the “imperial cult” of shameless dictators, credit is due to those Christians (such as the Russian philosophers or the members of the Burning Bush Group) who were punished, marginalized, and killed because of their unwavering cry for freedom and justice.

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ESSAY

How socialism causes atheism

Rev. Ben Johnson

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Photo: Minnesota Atheists protest in the Twin Cities. (Photo credit: FibonaccBlue CC BY 2.0)

George Orwell's 1984 defines the booming genre of dystopian literature, but Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* provided a more accurate prophecy of the future. In another of his works, *Ends and Means*, Huxley offered deep insights into why people choose to become atheists. In a time when 26 percent of Americans are unaffiliated with any religion, and the number of atheists and agnostics in the U.S. has doubled in the last 10 years, people of faith must pay heed to his observations. Huxley wrote that he and "most of [his] contemporaries" saw atheism's moral vacuum as their "instrument of liberation," because it allowed them to embrace sexual hedonism and socialism:

The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain political and economic system and liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom; we objected to the political and economic system because it was unjust. The supporters of these systems claimed that in some way they embodied the meaning (a Christian meaning, they insisted) of the world. There was one admirably simple method of confuting these people and at the same time justifying ourselves in our political and erotic revolt: we could deny that the world had any meaning whatsoever. Similar tactics had been adopted during the eighteenth century and for the same reasons.

"Serious writers associated political with sexual prejudice" and recommended atheism as "a preparation for social reform or revolution," he wrote. The idea that atheism fomented

the revolutionary spirit was not lost on the revolutionaries. In 1905, Vladimir Lenin encouraged the Bolsheviks to "follow the advice Engels once gave to the German Socialists: to translate and widely disseminate the literature of the eighteenth-century French Enlighteners and atheists."

More than a generation later, a young American radical reiterated to William F. Buckley Jr. that the locus of the strug-

gle lay in the soul. "You have to change the conscience of people," Dotson Rader, a onetime revolutionary who went on to write celebrity profiles for *Parade* magazine, told Buckley during a 1972 episode of *Firing Line*. "You've got to change people's sexual attitudes, people's attitude towards the church, people's attitude towards education, towards business." He admitted that drug use, "sexual promiscuity and sexual deviancy is a device," because they create "natural allies to a revolutionary movement."

Another generation later, America's faithful and faithless voters cast mirror images politically. The Pew Research Forum's Religious Landscape found that 47 percent of those who say religion is "very important" to them call themselves conservative, while 47 percent of those who find religion "not at all important" identify as liberal/progressive. Moreover, this pattern exists on both sides of the Atlantic. "The most left-wing locality" in Great Britain "is the north end of Havelock Road in Brighton," according to political and financial analyst Martin Baxter. Census data also rank it as the UK's least religious city.

Huxley explained that atheists may be more inclined to accept comprehensive socioeconomic ideologies as a substitute for faith. Secularists embrace "absurd" doctrines like Communism or fascism, he wrote, "to satisfy their hunger for meaning." Atheist literature lends credence to this notion. *The Humanist Manifesto III* states that an atheist's "life's fulfillment emerges" from building a "global community" of

God)." Another study found that increased welfare spending "in a specific year predicted lower religiosity one to two years later." It concluded, "The power and order emanating from God can be outsourced to the government."

There is an undeniable correlation between socialism and secularism, but does it prove causation? A strong case is made by analyzing the "Nones" at different stages of their flight from faith. Pew Research asked "Nones" in late 2017 the reason they no longer affiliate with a religion. The overwhelming majority of atheist "Nones" (75 percent) said they do not believe in God, while a plurality of agnostic "Nones" (38 percent) said they "question a lot of religious teachings." Those "Nones" who still believe in God are equally motivated by two factors: They question religious doctrines (25 percent), and they "don't like the positions churches take on social/political issues" (21 percent).

Further, the data show that "Nones" are becoming increasingly secular as time goes on. The percentage of "Nones" who do not believe in God increased by half from 2007 to 2014. This leads to an inescapable conclusion: The social and political issues that drive a wedge between young people and traditional Christianity – including the envy that drives socialism – eventually blossom into full atheism.

For most, the transference of faith is not so coldly transactional as it was for Huxley. Instead, faith in the transcendent gets crowded out by faith in socialism's utopian promise of equality-of-outcome on earth.

This path transformed Michael Harrington from a daily communicant volunteering in the Catholic Worker movement to the atheistic founder of the Democratic Socialists of America.

After seeing India's

ghettoes, he wrote in *The Vast Majority* that "if he were half the God he claims to be, he would leave his heaven and come here to do penance in the presence of a suffering that he as God obscenely permits." A lesser-known case can be seen in Guy Aldred, a London "boy preacher" at the turn of the twentieth century who became an outspoken socialist and atheist. He belittled Christians who "never realized that charity,

"As socialism makes inroads among America's young people, it replaces Christian eschatology with a secular narrative. Left unchecked, it erodes both the adherent's religion and society's liberty."

"progressive cultures" that "support a just distribution of nature's resources."

However, a growing body of research reveals that as the welfare state grows, the church shrinks. Adam Kay of Duke University discovered that church and state have a "hydraulic relationship": Events "that lower faith in one of these external systems (e.g., the government) lead to subsequent increases in faith in the other (e.g.,

even continuous and genuine charity, is not enough. It can never compensate for social injustice and inequality.”

The socialist path to atheism begins by substituting a temporal, class-based morality for divine revelation. Collectivists reject the notion that God’s acts of mercy and providence give us our daily bread, that differing talents result in different economic results, and that wealth acquisition funds charity so that “your abundance at the present time should supply their need” (II Corinthians 8:14). Instead, Harrington blamed God for an inequality that he believed should never exist, and Aldred believed the only remedy lay outside the means sanctioned by Christianity.

The cultural revolution has succeeded in changing Millennials’ conscience. Nearly four-in-10 Millennials believe it’s “immoral” for society to allow people to become billionaires, however they earned their money. People under the age of 30 are 30 percent more likely to resent wealthy Americans than those over age 65, although Christianity teaches that envy is one of the seven deadly sins. They are more likely to agree that “very successful people sometimes need to be brought down a peg or two even if they’ve done nothing wrong.” And the Cato Institute study found that “resentment against successful people is more influential than compassion in predicting a person’s support for ... redistributing wealth from the rich to the poor.”

Martin Luther would recognize their reverse evangelization. In his *Large Catechism* he wrote, “A god means that from which we are to expect all good and to which we are to take refuge in all distress.” Socialism looks to the state to establish “equality” instead of looking forward to an everlasting kingdom. “The Revolution did not adopt a Church. Why?” asked nineteenth-century French historian Jules Michelet. “Because it was a Church itself.”

Young people make particularly fit activists for utopian Marxism. Whittaker Chambers wrote in *Witness* that socialism “summons men to struggle against the inertia of the past which Communism claims is blocking the will of mankind to make its next great forward stride.” Soon, they come to revile Western, Judeo-Christian civilization for blocking the road to earthly paradise, as did Huxley and his friends. There is nothing new in the Brave New World.

Decades after Huxley, another collectivist combined personal and economic rationales for secularism. Thomas Nagel studied under John Rawls and wrote that the common good “requires the abolition of private property in the means of production.” Nagel forthrightly discussed his will-to-doubt (call it *der Wille zum Zweifel*) in *The Last Word*. He admits his opposition to religion grew out of its purportedly “objectionable moral doctrines, social policies, and political influence,” but it did not end there:

I am talking about something much deeper—namely, the fear of religion itself. I speak from experience, being strongly subject to this fear myself: I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn’t just that I don’t believe in God and, naturally, hope that I’m right in my belief. It’s that I hope there is no God! I don’t want there to be a God; I don’t want the universe to be like that.

Religion posits another Being as the source and summit of existence. For this reason, Chambers called Communism the “second oldest faith,” the promise “whispered in the first days of the Creation under the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil: ‘Ye shall be as gods.’” Marxism promotes “the vision of man as the central figure of the Creation, not because God made man in His image, but because man’s mind makes him the most intelligent of the animals. Communism restores man to his sovereignty by denying God.”

“The Communist revolution,” Chambers wrote, “like all great revolutions, occurs in man’s mind before it takes form in man’s acts.” As socialism makes inroads among America’s young people, it replaces Christian eschatology with a secular narrative. It supplants traditional morality with alternative ends and means for this life. Left unchecked, it erodes both the adherent’s religion and society’s liberty.


Upholding the morality of a free and virtuous society could be the key to preserving freedom and preventing an entire generation from sliding into spiritual darkness.

Rev. Benjamin Johnson is managing editor of Religion & Liberty and an Eastern Orthodox priest. **R&L**

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VENERABLE METROPOLITAN ANDREY SHEPTYTSKY (1865-1944)

Rev. Ben Johnson

The Venerable Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky dedicated his life to spreading the Gospel of Christ in the shadow of the two greatest totalitarian ideologies of the twentieth century. He promoted peace and upheld public morality, leading to his arrest or persecution by occupying Poles, Tsarist Russians, Soviet Communists, and German Nazis.

Sheptytsky was born into a noble Polish family on July 29, 1865, as Count Roman Alexander Maria Sheptytsky. Although his parents baptized him into the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church, Sheptytsky petitioned to transfer to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church at the age of 23. When he became its leader in 1901, native Ukrainians believed he would further Latinize the church and bring it under Polish domination. Instead, he defended its Byzantine Catholic theology, supported Ukraine's struggle for independence, and spent his family's wealth building educational and charitable institutions.

Encounters with socialists in Russia inspired him to write well-developed social theology. He believed the Marxist doctrine of class warfare violates the Christian spirit of peace. The spread of Communism represented the "advance of the kingdom of Satan" on earth. "The enemies of God and humanity have rejected religion – the basis of social order," he wrote in a 1933 plea for the world to expose the Holodomor, the forced starvation of at least six million Ukrainians by the Soviets.



He encouraged his priests to speak out on the "social question" but limited them to a handful of ethical positions, including the defense of private property. "The first principle of Christian social action is the inalienability of private property," an "essential institution" which is "protected by divine law." He also defended democracy, writing that citizens have "the right to participate in the political process through election."

Although he opposed "hyperproduction," he believed socialism creates strife, empowers an oppressive state, disincentivizes work, and vitiates economic growth. "Whoever helps the Communists ... betrays the cause of the poor," he wrote. He counseled people of all social classes to "turn work into wealth." He also prayed for divine

guidance for every action: "Grant me the wisdom of work and the wisdom of rest; may work for You be luxury for me, and rest without You – fatigue."

Soviet-inflicted mass starvation caused him to welcome the Nazis whom, his defenders say, he believed would be less repressive. After confronting their brutality, he wrote pleas to Adolf Hitler and Heinrich Himmler to stop killing Jews, and he privately informed Pope Pius XII of their murderous actions. Publicly, he denounced "political killing" and said the state "must exercise civil toleration of all faiths."

Most importantly, he hid Jews from the Nazis and instructed his church to do likewise. Some lived in attics or in hidden rooms; Jewish children posed as Ukrainian Catholics living in monasteries. One of them, Rabbi David Kehane, went on to be chief rabbi of the Israeli Air Force, then chief rabbi of Argentina. The metropolitan personally saved more than 150 Jews during the Holocaust.

Met. Sheptytsky died on November 1, 1944, in Lviv. In 2015, Pope Francis declared Sheptytsky "venerable," the first of three steps to canonization as a saint. Israel's Yad Vashem has also reconsidered naming him one of the Righteous Among the Nations (an honor already bestowed upon his brother, St. Klymentiy Sheptytsky).

As a former inmate in the Soviet gulags said, "The spiritual inheritance of the Sheptytsky brothers ... is sufficient to reveal to the contemporary person all the beauty of the love of humanity."

‘The Great Awakening’: The threat of America’s new political religions

Joseph Sunde

Surveys prove the decline of religion in America is real – depending on how you define “religion.”

Weekly church attendance is falling, as is self-identification with a formal denomination, religion, or belief system. Meanwhile, the rise of the “Nones” seems to be steadily replacing the religious-cultural standards and norms of old with a modern milieu of “personal spiritualities” based on any number of humanistic priorities – from humanitarianism and political activism to the exultation of garden-variety hedonism, materialism, and egotism. All these replacement faiths claim they promote the lofty goal of “progress.”

Yet in a striking essay in *New York Magazine* on this phenomenon and its deleterious effects, Andrew Sullivan writes, “We’re mistaken if we believe that the collapse of Christianity in America has led to a decline in religion.” Rather, the vacuum of a robust religious and moral imagination in the culture has led to an over-spiritualization of other aspects of life, especially politics – on the Left, the Right, and the center. “Like almost all new cultish impulses, they see no boundary between politics and their religion,” he writes. “And both cults really do minimize the importance of the individual in favor of either the oppressed group or the leader.”

As a result, Sullivan argues, the Great Awakening has been replaced by a “Great Awakening” of sorts, populated by competing visions of collective identity and an aggressive political exuberance. On the Left, we see the growth of an identitarian culture rooted in self-loathing that pursues “social justice” and “fairness” as its supposed ends. Those who violate its dogmas are deemed heretics, to be dealt with only by coercions into “public demonstrations of shame” or outright cultural banishment. Sullivan holds that, likewise, the Right elevates a narrow nationalism and isolationism to religious heights, conflating Christian witness with political control – and purging those who disagree.

In each case, political orthodoxies assert themselves much like they always have. However, since there is a religious vacuum to be filled, they now masquerade as causes “bigger than ourselves.” Ironically, these movements still place *ourselves* firmly in the forefront.

Prosperity and modernity have amplified the struggle. Though they are not primary drivers, they have introduced new temptations which, in a culture without the proper spiritual foundations or moral constraints, hold significant sway:

Seduced by scientism, distracted by materialism, insulated, like no humans before us, from the vicissitudes of sickness and the ubiquity of early death, the post-Christian West believes instead in something we have called progress – a gradual ascent of mankind toward reason, peace, and prosperity – as a substitute in many ways for

our previous monotheism. ... Our ability to extend this material bonanza to more and more people is how we define progress; and progress is what we call meaning.

But none of this material progress beckons humans to a way of life beyond the mere satisfaction of our wants and needs.

And this matters. We are a meaning-seeking species.

All of this is more than a bit peculiar coming from Sullivan who, as Samuel James aptly summarizes, “spent the better part of his public life rigorously advocating for a Christianity that re-invents itself in the image of modern gods.” Whether this essay is a sign of inconsistency or intellectual sea change, it seems as though Sullivan understands the value of Christianity to the culture and what we will lose in its absence. He writes:

It is Christianity that came to champion the individual conscience against the collective, which paved the way for individual rights. It is in Christianity that the seeds of Western religious toleration were first sown. Christianity is the only monotheism that seeks no sway over Caesar, that is content with the ultimate truth over the immediate satisfaction of power. It was Christianity that gave us successive social movements, which enabled more people to be included in the liberal project, thus renewing it. It was on these foundations that liberalism was built, and it is by these foundations it has endured. The question we face in contemporary times is whether a political system built upon such a religion can endure when belief in that religion has become a shadow of its future self. Will the house still stand when its ramparts are taken away? I’m beginning to suspect it can’t. And won’t.

Sullivan concludes by lamenting the lack of leadership in each political party, asking, “Where is our Churchill?” But as important as strong and virtuous leadership may be, Sullivan’s longing for a Churchillian national deliverer strikes me as another political non-solution to a non-political problem.

Fortunately, we need not wait for political persons or powers to begin repairing what has been broken, holding the light amidst the darkness and confusion. The Great Awakening of old was not the cause of a particular leader’s charisma or cunning, but of a profound and organic ground swell of authentic, culture-level witness to the truth and goodness of God. It was a popular partnership with the divine that led to restoration and redemption in every arena of life, both individually and collectively.

If we are to overcome our political tribalism and its corresponding swells of politico-religious fanaticism, it must begin the same way. **R&L**



ESSAY

Don't write off young 'socialists'

Dylan Pahman

In his State of the Union address this year, President Donald Trump warned of the dangers of socialism. But is there any substance to that worry?

Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), a self-declared socialist, has made headlines with her Green New Deal proposal. And more recently, Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT), who also identifies as a democratic socialist, has been considered one of the frontrunners for the Democratic nomination for president.

Perhaps we should not write off the president's rhetoric as just a call back to a Cold War trope. Real socialists are growing in popularity in the United States and even winning elections. Sanders placed second in the early polls, behind only former Vice President Joseph Biden, who had yet to officially declare his candidacy.

But what is socialism?

I know the technical answer to that question. I could even comment on varying historical and present-day expressions of it and different degrees of commitment to an interventionist, command-economy system, labor unions, the dialectic of a class war, and so on. However, that may not match well with what most supporters of socialism in the U.S. think it is today.

As Geoffrey Skelley wrote recently for *FiveThirtyEight*, "Unlike in the 1940s, Americans today are more likely to identify

socialism with 'equality' than with 'government ownership or control,' according to polling by Gallup."

Thus, while public opinion has softened toward socialism, the public's perception of what socialism is has shifted. Socialism is no longer a specific economic system: It has been reduced to an aspiration for certain economic (and other) outcomes, at least for some.

While Sanders seems to be an old-school socialist himself, we can see this more aspirational socialism in the Green New Deal. It is more an ideological litmus test of commitment to certain economic and environmental outcomes than anything one could call a policy – not to mention concrete legislation – that would realistically achieve those outcomes.

Now, one could rightly point out that in order to achieve those outcomes, a socialist system may be necessary, even presumed. On the other hand, we can also see this aspirational socialism in popular admiration of the Nordic states, which, whatever one thinks of them, are not very socialist today – not in any technical sense anyway. The shift in focus is notable, and it leads to potential miscommunications. As Alejandro Chafuen put it in *Forbes*, "Advocates from both sides speak past each other."

This terminological shift moves the discussion from the mechanics of economic policy to the moral motives used to justify them. Thus, for many to say that they support socialism may mean less that they want the U.S. to be the next Venezuela and more that they simply want more fairness and equality. They perceive our current market economy, to put it in Sanders' terms, as "rigged" in favor of mega-corporations, "millionaires and billionaires," at the expense of small businesses, the poor, and the middle class.

The senator's talk about our economy being "rigged" resonates with the more aspirational conception of socialism, and it is

not without some truth, depending on the market. As I wrote in my book *Foundations of a Free & Virtuous Society*, "Even in some of the freest economies there is inequality generated not through the creation of wealth [which I think is fine] but through restricting markets to favor parties with political connections."

Unfortunately, Sanders' and other socialists' proposed solutions, when they are concrete at all, tend to boil down to more market restrictions. These restrictions will just end up favoring those with the resources to navigate the Kafkaesque legal and bureaucratic web that such restrictions typically require – you know, like mega-corporations, millionaires, and billionaires. They may be different figures than those who currently benefit from the way cronyism and overregulation have rigged certain markets today, but they will not be small businesses, not the middle class or the poor. That you can count on. They often cannot afford the legal teams and compliance costs new taxes and regulations require. And new barriers to market entry would likely mean greater economic inequality, not less. It would certainly mean less fairness. It jeopardizes the rule of law.

In effect, I think today's socialism-as-aspiration won't be satisfied, in the long run, with yesterday's socialism-as-system – or various watered-down versions of that system. But unless one can get beyond writing people off for the labels they pin on their aspirations, I don't see how one can ever hope to gain a hearing among them.

Similarly, calls for "free" healthcare, child care, or higher education may be impractical, but critiquing the mechanics of such proposals is not enough. There is nothing wrong with aspirations for more affordable healthcare, child care, or higher education in themselves, is there? Those aspirations and others need to be met with positive, workable alternatives, rather than being simply dismissed.

A free and virtuous economy may best serve the moral aspirations of the young "socialists" of today. But writing off such socialists without substantial engagement with what socialism actually means to them is only an invitation to be ignored.

Dylan Pahman is a research fellow at the Acton Institute, where he serves as managing editor of the *Journal of Markets & Morality*. He earned his MTS in Historical Theology from Calvin Theological Seminary. **R&L**

ESSAY

The BBC's critique of 'I, Pencil' misses the point

Rev. Ben Johnson

Leonard Read's immortal essay "I, Pencil" has persuaded more people of the wonders of the free market than possibly any other comparable work – so many that the BBC recently posted an article attacking it. However, anyone reading both articles will conclude that Read's pencil comes out looking sharper.

The mere fact that Read's article can still elicit rebuttals 60 years after it appeared in the December 1958 issue of FEE's *The Freeman* is testimony to its significance. The BBC article by Tim Harford – titled "Have we all underrated the humble pencil?" – appears at first blush to be a *Reader's Digest*-style information piece about pencils until 14 paragraphs in, when it pivots to Read's essay.

After calling Read's eponymous writing implement "loud and a touch melodramatic," Harford largely ignores the pencil's

point. Read notes the paradox that no one person in the supply chain knows everything that goes into creating a pencil, yet each person's contribution results in an act of creativity. Harford instead spends most of the essay critiquing a phrase uttered by Milton Friedman in his television series *Free to Choose*, which introduced a new generation to Read's essay. Friedman notes that the pencil was created by "the magic of the price system."

The BBC's rejoinder amounts to three objections, all falling prey to similar errors.

Harford's weakest argument asserts that the existence of corporations somehow invalidates the concept of supply-and-demand. "Leonard Read's loquacious instrument was made by the Eberhard Faber company, now part of Newell Rubbermaid" whose "employees respond to instructions from the boss, not to prices in the market," he writes.

This confuses proximate and ultimate causes. The workers do, indeed, respond to their bosses, who report to a CEO, who reports to a corporate board. However, if those layers of management and administration do not ultimately respond to prices in the market, they will all report to a different line of work.

Price signals direct workers how best to create, manage, and market their products. True, someone has to read the data and decide how to respond to them. Harford's response could serve as an argument for raising CEOs' salaries. But Friedman properly identifies the magic in the machine.

Harford's second argument notes that Read's pencil "underlines its history of forests and railway carts," but "both forests and railways are often owned and managed by governments." True, and more's the pity. Government policies, influenced by environmentalist activists, have fueled annual forest fires, and government regulation of the rails was one of the more egregious forms of cronyism in the Gilded Age.

This argument is also something of a sleight-of-hand. Harford ignores Read's argument that private businesses deliver "oil from the Persian Gulf to our Eastern Seaboard – halfway around the world – for less money than the government charges for delivering a one-ounce letter across the street!" For our purposes we will acknowledge that, though the government

need not perform this function, building roads is one of the enumerated powers granted to the federal government by the U.S. Constitution.

Substantively, the BBC article echoes Barack Obama's famous "you didn't build that" speech. And it suffers from the same fallacies.

This argument confuses necessary and sufficient causes. The ability to transport a product from factory to store shelf is a necessary condition for its sale – and thus, its mass production – but not a sufficient one. If roads created businesses, then there should be no stretch of asphalt in the country not festooned with stores, shops, or offices. Roads facilitate commerce; they do not necessarily cause it. If the government bears responsibility for all the commerce that flows over its roads, then the federal government smuggled all but the 370,000 pounds of drugs stopped at legal ports of entry last year – and the U.S. Post Office trafficked all but the 40,000 pounds of drugs seized in the mails in 2017. Clearly, this is a *reductio ad absurdum* whether applied to narcotics or number two pencils.

The creative process begins when an entrepreneur senses the underlying need for a product or service, which is confirmed by someone's willingness to pay for it. This is the "magic of the price system" that turns creative potential into a reality.

Furthermore, just as no Pencil Czar directs the construction of pencils, no Transportation Czar tells the company whether to transport its cargo by truck, rail, ship, drone, or private courier. The firm chooses the method of shipment that best fits its needs based on price signals.

Finally, the BBC article raises the issue of intellectual property. When war interrupted France's ability to import British graphite, Nicolas-Jacques Conté came up with a new composition for pencil lead, for which he obtained a patent. This, Harford argues, should cause us "to question whether Read's pencil is right to be so fiercely proud of its free-market ancestry. Would Monsieur Conté have put such effort into his experiments without the prospect of a state-backed patent?"

Libertarians have disagreed over intellectual property for more than a century. Murray Rothbard opposed patents (defined as a lifelong government monopoly) but

supported copyrights (which he believed could be written into contract law). But Lysander Spooner wrote that “the right of property in intellectual wealth” is an outgrowth of property rights, and denying it amounted to a form of Communism. Scholars associated with the Acton Institute have reached disparate conclusions.

The BBC’s objections can be resolved by dealing with two erroneous arguments embedded in Harford’s article.

The first is that the government’s secondary role of providing roads or patents is a primary driver of creativity. Necessity, not infrastructure, is the mother of invention. Ingenious people will always invent and build devices to improve their own lives. The government’s respect for property rights merely determines whether they will mass produce and sell them, so that others benefit from their discoveries.

The second fallacious assumption is that everyone who supports the free market is an anarchist. The Lockean conception of ordered liberty tasks government with defending the right to life, liberty, and property – a position that Read and Friedman shared. Read wrote in his lesser-known work *Government – An Ideal Concept* that the State should be confined to “protecting the life and property of all citizens equally, and invoking a common justice under law.” Friedman believed the government had three primary functions: to “provide for military defense of the nation,” “enforce contracts between individuals,” and “protect citizens from crimes against themselves or their property.”

The point of “I, Pencil” is best captured by Read’s successor at the helm of FEE, Lawrence W. Reed. “None of the Robespierres of the world knew how to make a pencil, yet they wanted to remake entire societies,” he wrote. Ambitious bureaucrats, eager to impose their ignorance on economics or politics, lack the information and creativity generated spontaneously by free people. “Leave all creative energies uninhibited,” wrote Leonard Read. “Permit these creative know-hows freely to flow.”

Read’s essay is no brief for anarchy. “I, Pencil” is a plea for humility among economic central planners which is desperately needed by the utopian tinkers of our day, and every era. All of which leaves Harford without a point to make.

Thankfully, pencils have erasers. **R&L**

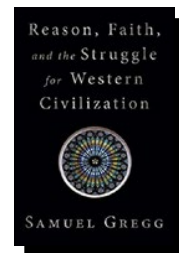
BOOK

Renewing the West, through the renewal of our minds

Reason, Faith, and the Struggle for Western Civilization

Samuel Gregg | Regnery Gateway | 2019 | 192 pgs

Reviewed by Rev. Ben Johnson



Next to his ubiquitous quotation about the corrupting nature of power, Lord Acton’s best-known aphorism may be that “liberty is the delicate fruit of a mature civilization.” In his newest book, Samuel Gregg plunges deep into the roots that nourish the ecosystem of human freedom. *Reason, Faith, and the Struggle for Western Civilization* explores how *ratio et fides* – reason and faith – have been integrally conjoined as the foundations of liberty and human dignity.

Western civilization blossomed as three tectonic intellectual foundations converged. The Jewish diaspora familiarized the Roman Empire with monotheism and the ethics embodied in the Decalogue. Greek philosophy, which had reasoned its way to an embryonic and incomplete monotheism of its own, taught that an unseen wisdom, or *logos*, ordered all of creation and allowed the human mind to participate in the transcendent. Philo of Alexandria harmonized these two systems of thought as completely as Scripture and conscience allowed. Finally, Christian universalism taught that all people are children of one God and subject to one standard of truth. Thus, the rational order embedded in natural law revealed, in a rudimentary sense, the character of the Almighty.

The notion of a rational God animated theologians, from the Christian Platonists and Augustine to Maimonides. In due time, when the civilization matured, it would have profound meaning for human rights and limited government. The rejection of a God Who is pure will leads to constitutional limits that constrict the arbitrary exercise of power. “Arbitrary government, [even European monarchs] understood, was widely regarded as infringing the demands of justice and reason and thus risked resistance, as Charles I of England discovered,” Gregg writes. It is “much harder to imagine the delegitimizing of slavery, the affirmation of the essential equality of men and women, or the de-deification of the state and the natural world without the vision of God articulated first by Judaism and then infused into the West’s marrow by Christianity.”

Having enjoyed the fruits that the two historic faiths of the West brought to maturity, humanity seems determined to decouple reason and faith, from one another and from everyday life. With a philosopher’s insight, Gregg pinpoints the consequence of this great divorce. “Do you understand,” he asks, “that unless the West gets the relation between reason and faith right, it will be unable to overcome its inner traumas or defend itself from those who wage war against it in the name of particular ideologies?”

The heart of our cultural confusion beats in nearly every undergraduate survey class. In academia’s telling, faith – which is contrasted with reason – ruled during the “Dark Ages,” when regal churchmen persecuted the development of science and free inquiry. The Reformation legitimized theological speculation, while the Enlightenment gradually removed the blinders of faith altogether, allowing Westerners to think rationally and empirically. This history – which conflates all of Christendom with the condemnation of Galileo and all of the Enlightenment with the skepticism of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Hume – has become the modern secularists’ founding *mythos*.

The book proceeds to prove its thesis about the proper alignment of faith and reason, as Gregg demonstrates the philosophical trends that created what he calls “faiths of destruction.” He is at his most provocative, and relevant, when discussing “authoritarian relativism.”

Appropriate tolerance, which is rooted in the Judeo-Christian respect for humanity's freedom to search for truth, devolves into tyranny by first leveling, then proscribing, all truth claims. This "dictatorship of relativism" as Pope-Emeritus Benedict XVI called it, promotes polylogism every time its foot soldiers beg people to speak "my truth," especially if their "lived experience" never intersects with ontological reality. It is this milieu which must be redeemed.

In this volume, Gregg accomplishes two breakthroughs. The first is that he covers the birth of Western order until the twenty-first century, and takes the reader from despair to hope, in the space of 166 pages (and 15 pages of footnotes). The second is that he leaves the reader hoping for more. One would have been fascinated to read his thoughts on transhumanism, the offspring of Prometheanism and scientism, for example. However, delving into contemporary issues may have unnecessarily dated this volume. *Reason, Faith, and the Struggle for Western Civilization* is a compact and accessible introduction to the history of Western thought that any undergraduate could digest in an afternoon – and profit from for a lifetime.

People of faith may be challenged by a book that calls on them to broaden their mind, no less than to deepen their faith. Yet repairing this breach in popular imagination is the point of Gregg's book. It would be incorrect "to say that devout Christians were universally opposed" to philosophy or even "to various Enlightenments," Gregg notes. He shows how Catholics and Protestants, both French Jesuits and Scottish Presbyterians, cultivated critical engagement with Enlightenment thought.

Just as materialists cannot experience life to its fullest by reducing all human thought to flashing neurological impulses, neither can Christians reach their potential apart from the renewal of their minds. This Pauline phrase implies that, for God to put their full talents to use, their sanctification demands that they develop their mind to its highest extent. In so doing, they will follow the footsteps of the greatest thinkers, writers, and saints of their tradition.

St. Clement of Alexandria – in ways, an intellectual heir to Philo Judaeus – wrote in his *Stromata* that he would "not shrink from making use of what is best in philosophy" in service of the faith once delivered unto the saints. He ascribed to philosophy among the Greeks an analogous role to that which he assigned to the Hebrew Bible among the Israelites: to prepare them to accept the Gospel. He suggested philosophy had been revealed directly by God to the Greeks. (He also believed, erroneously, that Plato had read the Septuagint.)

This late-second/early-third-century authority shows that the tension between faith and reason within faith communities is hardly new. He rebuffed those who said Christians should have no recourse to philosophical concepts and categories. "I am not oblivious of what is babbled by some, who in their ignorance are frightened at every noise, and say that we ought to occupy ourselves with what is most necessary, and which contains the faith," he wrote. "Others think that philosophy was introduced into life by an evil influence." Instead, he held that, by facilitating contemplation and self-control, "philosophy is in a sense a work of Divine Providence" that is "conducive to piety." Conversely, it was Tertullian – who asked rhetorically, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" – who ended his life in heresy, a critic of the civilization constructed by the fruitful dialogue between those two citadels.

People of faith recognize that the West is crying for rejuvenation. Thankfully, those who follow this program of reintegrating piety and reason will find that the Western mind has within itself the seeds of its own renewal. **R&L**



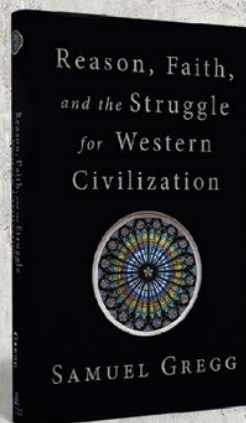
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cavalry exploits during the American Revolutionary War, and Washington became a frequent visitor in the Lee family home. However, like other Founding Fathers, Lee's life and legacy would prove to be much more tragic and complicated than the virtuous model that Washington made of his life.

Cole is adept at capturing Lee's bravado on the battlefield as a cavalry officer continually seeking honor and prestige, beginning with the outbreak of the war. Lee harassed and created havoc for British patrols, an especially important mission in opening supply lines for Washington's beleaguered army at Valley Forge in 1777. At one point the British, growing frazzled by Lee, sent out a convoy of 130 men to capture him, and the young officer found himself walled off and surrounded by the enemy in a house with just eight others. Miraculously, they fought back and forced a retreat against overwhelming odds.

Washington, impressed with Lee's skills and bravado, offered him a coveted position as an aide-de-camp in his inner circle. "It represented a major promotion and a chance to join a family that included [Alexander] Hamilton and other young warriors," writes Cole. Lee, seeking greater heroics and glory, declined the plum offer and announced himself "wedded to his sword."

He believed that glory on the battlefield was his true destiny, and a medal was commissioned in his name for a daring nighttime raid that captured the fort at Paulus Hook in New Jersey in 1779. Lee continued his success on the southern front and helped Nathaniel Greene pin down General Charles Cornwallis at Yorktown, essentially ending the war on American terms.

Complaining that he was not getting the proper praise and acclaim, Lee sulked about and soon left the Continental Army. His desire for more recognition, riches, and prestige would ultimately result in a tragic fate. Lee began to aggressively chase wild land speculation schemes that eventually buried him in mountains of debt he was unable to escape.

In the short term, Lee settled down, married, and was a proponent of the new Constitution. He became a congressman and governor of Virginia. He was known as an ardent Federalist but was not afraid to buck that agenda when he felt it violated the law and spirit of the Constitution.

BOOK

The hard fall of the Light-Horse

Light-Horse Harry Lee: The Rise and Fall of a Revolutionary Hero – The Tragic Life of Robert E. Lee's Father | Ryan Cole | Regnery History | 2019 | 426 pgs

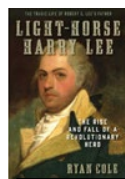
Reviewed by Ray Nothstine

Henry Lee III, besides being the father of Confederate General Robert E. Lee, may be best known for his masterful eulogy of George Washington: "To the memory of the Man, first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

In *Light-Horse Harry Lee*, historian Ryan Cole offers a comprehensive portrait of the oft-forgotten Lee whose rapid rise as a brilliant military leader was overshadowed by his descent into scandal and poverty.

Lee grew up in one of Virginia's most prominent families. He was ambitious, studious, and attracted to the warrior spirit and ethos. Lee was a student at the College of New Jersey (now Princeton) in the early 1770s, at a time when colonial furor at the Crown was already in full force. John Witherspoon, the school's president, would sign the Declaration of Independence a few years later. John Adams bragged about Lee's graduating class, calling them "all Sons of Liberty."

The moniker "Light-Horse" came out of recognition of his horsemanship and heroic



Tragedy entered his life when he defended the spirit of the Constitution by sticking up for a newspaper editor's right to free speech against Anti-Federalist mobs. That earned him a bloody beating in Baltimore in 1812, which nearly left him dead. Lee, left disfigured and permanently ailing after the mob attack, would never recover.

He had already spent time in debtors' prison before his final downfall at Baltimore. Lee became more desperate as his financial situation deteriorated. He traded and sold land he had already sold and embarrassed himself by doing this to prominent figures, including Washington. And while it's not certain he was always acting maliciously, he earned a reputation as reckless and a swindler. He could no longer make sense of his own land speculation schemes and was rebuffed by Hamilton and others for seeking inside information from government leaders on land contracts and monetary policy.

It would get worse for Lee. "The root of Lee's downfall had been reckless optimism," wrote Cole. "But when his financial dreams collapsed and he was backed into a corner, his scruples were gradually discarded in the desperate attempt to preserve his freedom and protect his family. Now, in this last act of his life's story, he was little more than a scoundrel attempting to survive to see another day."

One area where Cole excels in his review is in the illuminating assessments of leaders like Washington. He notes that Washington, while less educated and scholarly than many Founders, had a level of deep emotional steadiness and virtue unmatched by his peers. Lee himself noted that nobody was more virtuous than Washington in the private arena

of life. While Washington had a fondness for Lee, he later kept his distance when he saw the path of financial destruction that was awaiting his former officer.

Lee fled to the Caribbean to recover from his physical wounds after the Baltimore mob attack and to escape the never-ending line of creditors hunting him down. "The American hero, crowned with a 'halo of fame,' who had entered his life with prospects so fair, had ended it by swindling a kind old widow," notes Cole of Lee's last days. Lee swindled his way back to America and died in 1818 at the estate of Gen. Nathaniel Green's daughter in southern Georgia. He ended his life as a beggar and incorrigible con artist, living off the charity of others. He never made it back to his family.

while his father's pride caused him to chase schemes in search of more wealth, power, and fame. But for all his faults, Light-Horse always remained loyal to the idea of the Union. "In all local matters I shall be Virginian: in those of a general matter, I shall not forget I am an American," declared Lee. Ultimately, his son did not share that oath.

Cole notes that at every point when there was a chance that could promote civil unrest or even war in America, Lee remained loyal to the idea of a united nation and a strong Constitutional government. When Virginia reclaimed his body in 1913 and Light-Horse was laid to rest at Washington & Lee University, the American flag draped his coffin as he was interred next to his son, the former



Lee never really knew his youngest son, Robert Edward Lee, born in 1807. While they shared the gift of military prowess, they had enormous differences. Lee abhorred debt and was more religious than his Deist-minded father. "The son was a devout Episcopalian, praying and poring over the Bible daily," writes Cole. The son's piety has a profound impact on shaping his humility and his vow to spend more time with his children,

commander of the Confederate Army.

*Ray Nothstine is editor at the Civitas Institute in Raleigh, North Carolina. Previously, he was managing editor of the Acton Institute's Religion & Liberty quarterly. In 2005 Ray graduated with a Master of Divinity (M.Div) degree from Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. He also holds a B.A. in Political Science from The University of Mississippi in Oxford. **R&L***

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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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COLUMN

THE TWIN PILLARS OF TOTALITARIANISM

Rev. Robert A. Sirico



Pope Leo XIII's prescient 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum* delineated the perils of Marxist collectivism, especially the horrors that would follow in its wake. Drawing both from historical observations and his own projections, Pope Leo wrote:

Hence, it is clear that the main tenet of socialism, community of goods, must be utterly rejected, since it only injures those whom it would seem meant to benefit, is directly contrary to the natural rights of mankind, and would introduce confusion and disorder into the commonweal. The first and most fundamental principle, therefore, if one would undertake to alleviate the condition of the masses, must be the inviolability of private property.

Mind you, that was not Friedrich Hayek writing during World War II but Pope Leo writing at the end of the nineteenth century.

It wasn't as though there hadn't already been enough history for Pope Leo to recite prior to its writing. The collectivist anarchy of the Jacobin Reign of Terror and Paris Commune preceding the writing of *Rerum Novarum* were a windup for the large-scale events inaugurated in Russia less than 50 years after he penned his encyclical.

During roughly the same period bookended by the bloody French and Russian revolutions, another pernicious ideology began winding its wormlike way toward undermining the *zeitgeist* of Western civilization. In time, atheism became the symbiotic leech on collectivism's emaciated underbelly.

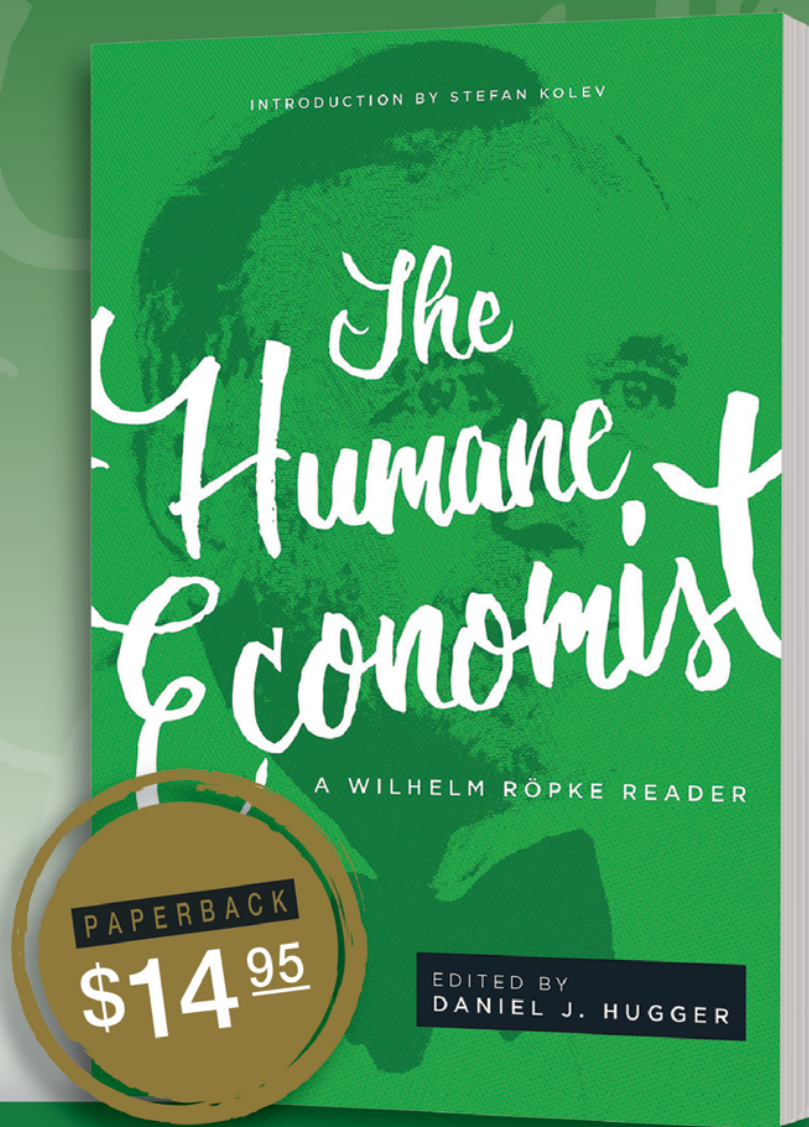
In addition to Karl Marx declaring religion "the opiate of the masses," there existed a phalanx of writers, scientists, and philosophers eager to place a headstone on God's final resting place. They reasoned that if doubt in the existence of God could metastasize into full-blown atheism, their ideology would occupy the subsequent vacuum. Religious fervor was redirected to a presumed worship of nature on one hand and the adoration of government on the other: Talk about worshipping the creature more than the Creator.

Unfortunately for these enthusiastic unbelievers (but to the great benefit of the rest of humanity), reports of God's death were premature. Oppressive regimes attempted to replace the voluntary worship of the Eternal with involuntary thrall to the state. Yet God could not be euthanized.

However, the pause in the slide toward radical secularism and central planning was short-lived. Neither atheism nor collectivist schemes were held in abeyance upon the end of the Cold War in the latter decade of the last century. Similar to the strategies deployed by nineteenth-century intellectuals, a new generation of anti-religious belligerents assaulted the public consciousness anew. Once this movement gained traction, the resulting vacuum was vulnerable to a resurgence of the mischief that wrought so much human misery over the last century throughout Eastern Europe, Asia, and South America. Even the United States, once a bulwark of freedom, has been beset upon by statist officeholders of every stripe, aided and abetted by a media and those who would replace spiritual faith with envy-based socialist enterprises.

Acton's efforts to promote and protect religious and economic liberties are needed now more than ever.

Fr. Robert A. Sirico is the co-founder of the Acton Institute. **R&L**



THE HUMANE ECONOMIST: A WILHELM RÖPKE READER

EDITED BY
DANIEL J. HUGGER

INTRODUCTION BY
STEFAN KOLEV

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Nobel laureate Friedrich Hayek once warned that "the economist who is only an economist is likely to become a nuisance if not a positive danger." As an economist and theorist of liberalism, Wilhelm Röpke was acutely aware of this danger. His combined commitments to sound economic analysis, the importance of social institutions, and

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